I would like to start by thanking Dr. Hillery Bosworth and the Program Committee of Columbia University Center for Psychoanalytic training and Research, and by thanking Prof. Jeremy Dauber and the Institute for Israel and Jewish Studies, for co-sponsoring this scientific meeting. In order to keep my lecture not too far from being interesting I am joined here tonight by a distinguished scholar from yet another department: Anne Golomb Hoffman, a professor of English at Fordham University - who kindly agreed to discuss my paper.

Some time ago, while translating Freud’s (1937) *Analysis Terminable and Interminable* into Hebrew, I was struck by a particularly provocative statement. In the course of his discussion of the possible effects of inborn tendencies on the direction in which the ego develops, Freud claimed

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that it does not imply any mystical overvaluation of heredity to think it is credible that the psychological peculiarities of families, races, and nations, even in their attitudes toward psychoanalysis, are already laid down for the ego even before it has come into existence.

Anyone who is familiar with Freud’s bold repudiation of the essentialist paradigm held by the leading psychiatrists of his day is likely to be disappointed by his implied association in this text of culture with heredity, or indeed by his emphasis on a constitutional factor in the reception of psychoanalysis.

Luckily, psychoanalytic historiography has come a long way beyond the polemical constraints, cultural prejudices, and partisan agendas of its early days. The study of the reception of psychoanalysis and of the emergence of particular psychoanalytic cultures illuminates the history of the political and cultural milieus in which psychoanalysis took root. In a way quite unprecedented in the history of science, the institutionalization and professionalization of the new discipline were followed immediately by its popularization and stigmatization. People who never read a line written by the Viennese physician felt either terribly repelled or madly attracted to him. It was as if Western civilization had much more then a need for a new theory of man; it had a place marked out for a Freud-like individual, and once a person who insisted on playing this historical role begun to publish his ideas, an over-determined drama of unique proportions began to unfold.
Russian revolutionaries, American psychiatrists, Bloomsbury Circle writers, and French existentialists—these as well as other more or less heterogeneous groups developed their own versions of Freud. So did Jewish intellectuals and pioneers of the Jewish community in Palestine under the British Mandate before and after the founding of the state of Israel in 1948.

The formative years of psychoanalysis in Israel were informed by migration, separation, and loss, continuity and new beginnings. But, beyond that, they serve the cultural and intellectual historian as a slate on which the meeting between three intellectual movements – Socialism, Zionism and Psychoanalysis -, or if you like, three modern European radical interpretations to history, can be juxtaposed and reinterpreted. The encounter between psychoanalysis and Jewish society was in part a re-enactment of the encounter between psychoanalytic theory and Russian Marxism, and in part a continuation of the encounter between the youth culture of Central Europe and German neo-romanticism.

The three main contexts through which I view psychoanalysis’s formative years in the Land of Israel are: the appearance of the Zionist version of the European “New Man”, and its connection to the Freudian view of man. The second is the migration, following the rise of the Nazis in Germany, of psychoanalysis out of Central Europe. The third is the consolidation of a local psychoanalytic discourse following the arrival of
immigrant analysts and the founding of the Institute for Psychoanalysis in Jerusalem in 1933. [I note in passing that the last two contexts I just mentioned were, to a greater or lesser degree, detrimental for the development of psychoanalysis in this country as well. By 1948 about one third of the 150 members of the New-York Psychoanalytic Society were émigrés].

How are we to understand the affinity that early Zionists professed to find in Freud’s theory?

Beginning in the second half of the eighteenth century, the Jews, as an ethnic minority, were referred to in both Jewish and anti-Semitic works as an atrophied and sickly body that required different physical and cultural conditions to “repair” it and restore it to normality. The Zionist revolution understood itself as a total “Makeover” of the Jew, stereotypically perceived as an effeminate luftmensch. Quite a few Zionist thinkers conceptualized the Jewish problem in medical or psychiatric terms. Not only were sickness and degeneracy central tropes in Zionist representations of European Jews; the field of psychology also played a role in replacing Judaism’s traditional theological discourse with Zionism’s political discourse. An inseparable component of this healing process was the refurbishing of the Jewish mentality.

Notwithstanding Freud’s repeated warnings to his students to keep their analytic identity apart from their Jewish identifications, it was unavoidable that psychoanalysis would be drawn into the modernist
vortex in which theological concepts were exchanged for psychological ones, the same current that swept in political–Zionist and medical–Darwinist images. In 1922 Franz Kafka wrote to Franz Werfel: “Psychoanalysis offers contentment to no man, and I do my best to keep my distance from it, but as a commentary of the Modern Jew, it’s no less real and alive than the Rashi commentary”. Note the intuitive link implied in Kafka’s words between psychological theory and theological text. This connection would be made by many of Freud’s Zionist readers, whether implicitly or explicitly, and would become an inseparable part of the story of psychoanalysis’s acceptance in the Yishuv.

Zionism’s program was, first and foremost, political, but the movement also encompassed philosophical doctrines, literary writings, and ideas that were more intellectual and theoretical than practically political. Zionist thinking, at the start, was characterized by its pragmatism and its ideological eclecticism. In engaging with Darwinism, Nietzscheism, socialism, existentialism, and psychoanalysis, Zionist thinking ranged far and wide across the field of modern science and philosophy. These intellectual movements played an important role in the process of secularization that European Jewish society underwent, and provided justifications, arguments, and values that were appropriated into the Zionist movement’s variegated ideological arsenal.

Zionist discourse deemed especially important those scholarly works that could offer alternatives to the traditional religious
explanations for the existential plight of the Jewish people. Such scholarship could serve as a source of legitimacy and authority for the fundamental Zionist demand to gather the world’s Jews in their ancestral land, where they could exercise sovereign power over their own society, politics, and culture.

In pitching itself to young Jews, the Zionist revolution often played on eroticism and gender issues. The Jewish collective’s national aspirations were depicted as physical and mental desire. The Hebrew pioneer returning to the land of his forefathers was likened to a small child returning to his mother, his desire for the land like the desire of an infant for his mother’s breast.

For those who saw Freud’s teachings as a call for humans to enter into themselves, to return to the “original” and the “authentic” self, Zionism took on therapeutic meaning. Almost immediately, psychoanalysis found enthusiastic followers among champions of Jewish national particularity. In the new discipline, they found a fusion of radicalism and tradition amenable to their ideological ends.

Early attempts made in Vienna by leaders of Jewish youth movements, as well as by analysts such as Siegfried Bernfeld, to reconcile Freud’s ideas with both Marxism and the life philosophy (Lebensphilosophie) of thinkers such as Martin Buber were an early indication of the contending philosophical outlooks and the convoluted
context in which psychoanalysis would gain a footing in Jewish Palestine and, later, in Israel.

Moreover, some Freudian texts – notably the *Interpretation of Dreams* and his book of Jokes: *The Joke and its relation to the Unconscious* would served as an intellectual arena where the East-European and Central-European intellectual traditions, with their corresponding Zionist self-understandings, could contend and reconcile. As early as 1920, Ernest Jones reported to Freud a conversation with Chaim Weizmann, in which the Zionist leader (who would become Israel’s first president) took pride in those “poor Galician immigrants who arrive in Palestine with no clothes but holding Marx’s Capital in one hand and in the other, Freud’s Interpretation of Dreams”. At about the same time Sandor Ferenczi, while visiting in New York would also come across Weizmann, and report to Vienna emphatically: “p. 39”

In ensuring that the association between personal suffering and the plight of the Jewish collective would not remain within metaphorical boundaries, a scientific connection had to be found between the private and the public, between the sickness of the individual and that of the collective. It is hardly surprising, then, that the first of Freud’s essays to be translated into Hebrew was *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* (1921c), published in 1928. It soon became a required reading to every Zionist pedagogue or schoolteacher.
At about the same time that Weizmann noticed the interest that is shown by the Jewish immigrant to Palestine in psychoanalysis, two analysts were already located in Palestine: David Eder, in his political capacity as Weizmann’s right hand, and Dorian Feigenbaum. David Eder, in his person and in his actions, was the archetype of the interdisciplinary analyst who seeks to expand his analytic field of action beyond the treatment room and to integrate analytic insights with public life. He believed that psychoanalysis could illuminate not only the masses’ relationship to their leaders, but also the leaders’ relationship with the public they were supposed to represent. Whereas Eder would eventually go in annals of psychoanalysis as the first psychoanalyst in Great Britain, rather then the first analyst to settle in Palestine, Feigenbaum did his best to introduce clinical psychoanalysis to the Jewish Society of Palestine. The first analytic patient we have on record in Palestine was a patient of Feigenbaums’, and he is no other then the philosopher Hugo Bergamnn, Martin Bergmann’s father. [I met Martine Bergmann, who passed away two weeks ago aged 100....]

Feigenbaum was the only soul-doctor in the Promised Land that gave a serious thought to the extremely high suicide rate. [In the years 1910–1923, suicide reached epidemic proportions, making up some ten per cent of all deaths among the pioneers]. He rejected the formal explanation given by the Zionist leadership that the suicide cases were merely the result of the dire economic situation and living conditions the
newcomers were facing. In an article titled “Palestine must have sound nerves” (in *The Jewish Ledger*), he described cases of Jewish youngsters he treated in Palestine who suffered from a traumatic past that made them more susceptible to mental illness. Unconsciously torn between his commitment to realizing Zionist ideals and his yearning for his parents, who had not always consented to their sons’ leaving them, the young pioneer had to fight a “terrible battle” with himself. “The psychoanalyst”, Feigenbaum concluded, “was the only witness of the silent battle the Chalutz [Hebrew pioneer] has to fight, not only with malaria and the stony soil, but with an easily comprehensible longing that has been sacrificed to his ideal”.

From the 1920s a number of papers on the dreams of Jewish settlers in Palestine appeared in psychoanalytic journals. Particularly revealing was the conclusion reached by one physician from Tel-Aviv. Analysis of the dreams of his German and Russian-speaking patients who recently arrived in the country convinced him that they had an unconscious knowledge of Hebrew. Apparently, in Jewish Palestine the Freudian Unconscious was not structured just like any language (as Lacan would have it). It was structured like the language of the prophets.

Several dispatches from Palestine were sent directly to Freud. During the bloody events of the 1936-39 Arab Revolt, a dentist from
Berlin, who had recently joined a kibbutz, wrote to inform Freud that some Arab villagers in Palestine were blessed with telepathic powers and that the only method of transmitting information available to the Arabs was by thought transference. Freud cordially thanked the dentist for providing him with further evidence on the subject of telepathy, a secret passion that he was advised to suppress but could never really overcome.

Feigenbaum and Eder left Palestine and before long an anonymous author issued a warning in *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis*: "in certain quarters (especially among the young immigrants) there is a tendency to introduce so-called ‘psychoanalysis’ far too carelessly, and in a ‘fashionable’ and vulgarized form". The author of this report, who may have been Feigenbaum himself, was clearly referring to a special brand of Freudianism that began to take root amongst Hashomer Hazair (the Young Guards) youth movement. Meir Yaari, the mythological leader of the first group Zionist Youth group to settle in Palestine would often refer to Freud in his speeches when speaking of “the pure and open-hearted generation that had come to Palestine, a generation which had broken free of the hysterical neuroticism of its parents and from sanctimonious, bourgeois repression of natural instincts”. “We wish’, Yaari proclaimed, ‘to extol the unfettered young person who as an adult remains a child, who prizes and acts on his instincts, rather than treating them with contempt”. “I seek, with all the powers of my mind, to penetrate into my
unconscious universe and reveal myself. I feel that this is the only way to independence, that only thus will life burgeon and grow. Your eyes see it, I am speaking in the language of Freud”.

It is hard to imagine Freud endorsing Ya’ari’s faith in the ability of the will and the intellect to “get through the shell”. It is undoubtedly not coincidental that, in Hebrew, Ya’ari used a word charged with kabbalistic meaning—klipa, or shell—to refer to the false outer countenance of the human being. In Jewish mysticism, the word also denotes a foreign or false covering that keeps the spirit from expressing itself and from being known. Creativity and “self-sufficient caprice” were, for Freud, objects of scientific study, not means of liberation from the repression and conflict built into the individual psyche. Some of Freud’s early writings, such as his essay, “Civilized’ sexual morality and modern nervous illness” (1908d), could be cited by advocates for reforming the institution of the family or marriage in its Roman–Christian form. But putting all the onus on society for being the central cause of the development of neurosis was never a position that spoke to Freud. Ya’ari’s psychoanalytical critique, thus, remained loyal to German Philosophy of Life and neo-romanticism, which viewed self-searching itself as the key to salvation. The goal of this sort of self-inquiry was to allow a person to uncover his real nature and the essence of things as they are. The different understanding of the place of infantile sexuality in shaping the path followed by the adult is evident not only in the HaShomer HaTza’ir interpretation of
Freud, or in the pedagogical practices that the movement fostered in the framework of communal education in the Kibbutz, but also in the desire to integrate the teachings of Freud with those of Martin Buber, who, at that time, had already come out explicitly against psychoanalysis and was hugely influential among Zionist youth in his time.

Freud’s first Hebrew translator, who did not rank amongst the socialist-constructivist ideological camp had his own agenda in introducing Hebrew speakers to the work of Freud. He believed it was important to provide Freud’s *Totem and Taboo* with a foundation in Jewish sources, and notified Freud of his intention to add to the translation a number of references to biblical and Talmudic literature, which he argued would “strengthen and corroborate your claims, and occasionally cast them in a new light”. The translator peppered his published version with pedantic translator’s notes that sought to collate nearly every paragraph of Freud’s with a biblical verse. At one point he offered a counterpoint of some twenty footnotes one after the other debating with the author. Dvir-Dwosis did not just hijack Freud’s essay for his own ideological ends or to offer biblical citations in support of Freud’s arguments. In some places he debated with the author in his footnotes. For example, where Freud wrote that “In later antiquity there were two classes of sacrifice: one in which the victims were domestic animals of the kinds habitually used for eating, and the other
extraordinary sacrifices of animals which were unclean and whose consumption was forbidden”, Dvir-Dwosis added a footnote:

“There was never, of course, a place for such things in the Israelite religion. The Torah stresses and repeats: “When any man of you brings an offering unto HaShem, you shall bring your offering of the cattle, even of the herd or of the flock” (Lev. 1:2); “You shall therefore separate between the clean beast and the unclean, and between the unclean fowl and the clean; and you shall not make your souls detestable by beast, or by fowl, or by any thing wherewith the ground teems”; (Lev. 20:25); or “And if it be any unclean beast, of which they may not bring an offering unto HaShem” (Lev. 27:11), and in many other verses.”

These unauthorized footnotes may bring to mind Freud’s critical footnotes which he, also without permission or warning, inserted in his translation of Jean-Martin Charcot’s Lecons du Mardi a la Salpetriere, however Dvosis’ footnotes were not only directed towards the text, but towards the special introduction Freud provided for the Hebrew edition. There he stated that his view of the origin of morality and religion should not be tied to the Jewish tradition specifically. Rather, he meant it to be based on objective and universal scientific principles devoid of any ethnic or religious presuppositions.

Keeping psychoanalysis from deteriorating into a cultural and ideological curiosity in Palestine seemed to require a special brand of
psychoanalytic emissaries whose self-conception as Zionists would not be incommensurate with their identities as psychoanalysts.

Max Eitingon (1881–1943), who would found the Palestine Psychoanalytic Society in 1933, was just this combination, a committed political Zionist as well as a staunch adherent of psychoanalysis in its clinical, less ideological version. As Freud’s most loyal representative in the “Secret Committee” his personal wealth also made him the movement’s most important financial benefactor, in addition to what became his historically most significant role as the founder, in 1920, of the Berlin Psychoanalytic Polyclinic, the movement’s first out-patient treatment center and its most esteemed training facility.

Amongst Max Eitingon papers I discovered a letter that speaks for the resistance Eitingon had to face when he decided to settle in Palestine. The letter was written by Albert Einstein (the father of an ex-patient of Eitingon):

“You are probably surprised to be receiving a letter from me at all, let alone one meddling in your most private affairs. Nonetheless, I am certain you will understand. These are the days when each of us must take a good, hard look at the possibilities open to intellectuals seeking suitable employment, be it here or elsewhere. In fact, I have noticed a lack here of serious, knowledgeable professionals in the field of mental therapeutic methods. Yet I have heard that you are looking into establishing your professional base in tiny Palestine... (t)hat being the case, I feel obliged to urge you to strongly consider settling in America, rather than Palestine. I am convinced that you would have an easier time finding a broader and more satisfying niche here than in Palestine, where intellectuals merely hinder one another. I wouldn’t consider making such a claim to a doctor in any other field, since America’s urban centers are teeming with such doctors, and there is no real lack of luminaries.”
Eitingon’s letter to Freud, written shortly after he established the Palestine Psychoanalytic Society testified to a determination to not let historical and societal circumstances excessively interfere with the establishment of psychoanalysis in Palestine: “The intensive building that characterizes this place forces us to follow our own private path and not become absorbed too early in public life,” Eitingon wrote to Freud, and then added, “after all, it is the same people, with the same problems we had been used to dealing with, as clearly neither orthodox Jews nor Arabs are suitable in any way for psychoanalysis.”

Blinding himself to the two "Others" of Jewish nationalism – religious orthodoxy and the indigenous Arab population - Eitingon was deploying the same strategy used by those constructing the new Jewish self. The Jerusalem Institute which Eitingon and 5 of his former Berlin colleagues established combined rigorous training, an outpatient clinic offering gratis treatments for those unable to afford the fees, and an uncompromising loyalty to Freudian Psychoanalysis. The casting of the Institute as the avatar of the Berlin Institute had a great impact on both the analysts and their patients, all of whom felt that they had created for themselves, under the tragic circumstances that had led to their arrival in Palestine, a “Little Berlin” that assisted in their acclimatization to their new home. The Jerusalem Institute’s bylaws contained an unusually draconian provision aimed at ensuring that none would use the name of Freud’s theory in vain. It stipulated that any member who wished to give
a public lecture on any topic relating to psychoanalysis was to inform the Institute’s governing committee in advance and receive the committee’s consent.

As mandated by both their psychoanalytic and Zionist self-conceptions, the psychoanalysts who came to Palestine did not view their relocation as stressful in and of itself. Margarete Brandt claimed that, among her patients, she discerned no connection between the development of neurosis and the fact that they were immigrants. A person who links her mental suffering to immigration would not, in any case, seek out treatment, she maintained. Such downplaying of real life events, on the level of the individual as well as on the group level, became one of the hallmarks of the theoretical and clinical psychoanalytic discourse carried out by émigré analysts in America too.

I will soon touch on this question from today’s perspective yet historically speaking, what may seem today as a defensive dismissal of the role of trauma on the individuals mental functioning, should be qualified and evaluated differently in an ideological environment that tended to appropriate the individual’s private sphere for the benefit of public interests. Freudian psychoanalysis as it was carried over from Berlin to Jerusalem in the 1930’s offered the immigrant, on both sides of the couch, the ability to reexamine the borders between inside and out, between his inner world and the reality outside of it. The writer Arnold
Zweig, who was in analysis in Haifa during the war year in which he found refuge in Palestine would put it this way, in a lecture he gave before the Palestine Psychoanalytic Society on “Immigration and Neurosis”: He attributed the special difficulty that immigrants like him had in adjusting to their new circumstances to memories of the expulsion from the paradise of their childhoods—separation from the mother’s body or eviction from the parental bedroom. Zweig took the same opportunity to express his skepticism about the likelihood of a “Zionist solution” to the Jewish nation’s chronic migration problem. Palestine, he told his fellow psychoanalysts, was a sham solution. It could never take in all the world’s Jews, and its immigrants were led astray by the delusion that their wanderings had reached an end.

Interestingly enough, yet consistent with the reaction of most psychoanalysts at the time, neither the encounter with murderous anti-Semitism in their countries of origin nor the imminent Arab-Jewish conflict were openly acknowledged by Freud’s acolytes in Palestine. It was only in the late 1950’s that Israeli analysts would gradually acknowledge the Holocaust’s direct and indirect effects on the survivors, and on the members of the second and third generations.

Let me stress this paradox once again: on the one hand, in the collectivist social reality that characterized life in Palestine, the ability of the analysts to “retreat to the clinic” and offer an individual the opportunity to recover her own private language and history was of great
significance; however, this very retreat to the clinic distanced
psychoanalysis from critical intellectual discourse, where it could have
contributed its share to the liberation of society from the neo-romantic,
utopian, and almost messianic ideological elements then so dominant.

Yet despite its contradictions and paradoxes, the reception of
psychoanalysis by Jewish immigrant society in Palestine and later on in
Israel would eventually reverberate quite clearly the immensity of
anxieties, anguish, and doubts that were the lot of those who tied their
personal redemption to reborn Jewish nationalism in the Land of Israel.

Towards the 1970s, Central European Germanic influence on
Israeli psychoanalysis gradually gave way to other influences: American
ego psychology was followed by British object relations, later replaced by
self psychology, and, still more recently, by the Kleinian, relational,
intersubjective, French, and Lacanian influences. Just as Israeli society
became increasingly pluralistic, and prone to internal splits, intense
ethnic rivalries, and a sense of victimization, so did the Israel
Psychoanalytic Society, now one of the largest societies in the
International Psychoanalytic Association.

Contemporary Israeli psychoanalytic discourse can offer us still
more food for thought on the relationship between science and history,
between therapy and ideology, between political culture and analytic
theory. Consider, for instance, the pronounced “trauma-centrism” of the
analytic discourse in present-day Israel. The scientific discussions held by the Israel Psychoanalytic Society and the case reports of its graduates demonstrate that the vast majority of younger analysts in Israel today are inclined in their clinical work towards psychoanalytic models of the mind that emphasize the role of actual trauma in mental life. [I note in passing that Israeli literary criticism, which has been heavily influenced by psychoanalysis from the early 1930’s has developed a clear taste for psychoanalytic theory of trauma].

The “imagined patient” of Israeli psychoanalysis seems to be the diametric opposite of the “New Man” of the Zionist revolution - a fairly passive individual, mostly reactive to his environment and, therefore, hardly accountable to his interiority and his mind. Such theorizing tends to portray the patient as a passive template on which social atrocities or the shortcomings of his significant others are inscribed, rather than as an active agent. Clearly, one must be careful not to draw simplistic analogies between political cultures of blame and analysts’ preferences for psychoanalytic models of the mind that emphasize the impact of environmental calamities on mental functioning. It stands to reason that working analytically at the frontier of militant nationalism and religious fanaticism will continue to pose a unique challenge for those seeking to translate their patients’ concrete reality into meaningful psychic experience.

Thank you