

## Introduction

In the summer of 1917, a collection of photographs in the journal *The Maccabaeian* (hereafter, *TM*) conjured images of the landscape and life of the Holy Land for Zionist Americans (fig. I.1). A postcard image of the heart of the old city of Jerusalem shows its domes and courtyards. Another image shows Herzliah, Palestine’s first Hebrew high school “with its harmonious blend . . . of Oriental lavishness and Occidental comfort,” designed by Joseph Barsky (1876–1943) and inspired by architectural descriptions of Solomon’s Temple. Alongside this new Temple educating the children to establish the new epoch of Jewish civilization, *chalutzim*—Zionist pioneers—work the fields of the first Jewish agricultural school in Palestine, Mikveh-Israel. In other images, children lead the way to an agricultural fair celebrating the Jewish New Year for trees, while adults labor in the Bezalel school for the arts, in recently constructed factories, and in boats on the Mediterranean.<sup>1</sup> Ancient architecture—and its contemporary reinterpretations—invigorated by modern technology and communion with nature created a stage for the Jewish American imagination.

These images visualized “the Orient” for American viewers, creating the possibility for Jewish Americans to understand themselves through imagining “Oriental” counterparts. Through these images, Ittamar Ben-Avi (1882–1943) issued a call to Jewish American youth to hear the strength and regeneration of the voice of Palestine. “If you only were to lay aside your daily interests for a little while; if you were—no, not to travel to Canaan, for the hour has not yet struck—if you were to let your fancy fly towards the Hebrew Orient . . . then indeed you would be amazed at the panorama which unfolded itself before you.”<sup>2</sup> Ben-Avi was a Zionist activist and, in Jewish nationalist heritage, the first native speaker of Modern Hebrew. Born Ben-Zion Ben Yehuda, he was the son of celebrated figure Eliezer

# We Young Palestinians

To the Jewish Youth of America

By ITTAMAR BEN-AVI

**T**HERE is a voice calling from afar, young and strong, fresh and vigorous; and you, the Jewish youth of free America, lend us your ears, if only for a moment, and hearken to the message of this ringing voice. For, although it calls from the far away East, and although some of you will not grasp immediately its true meaning, yet it is a voice not wholly unknown to you.

For it is the voice of your brethren, the voice of the younger generation of modern Palestine, which echoes from mountains as lofty as Hermon, which fords torrents as mighty as the Jordan, which leaps over valleys as fertile as Sharon, which sweeps over vast seas as the Mediterranean and the Atlantic, until it reaches the shores of America, America the happy and the prosperous.

It is the voice of your brethren, which has burst from that very land so dear and so cherished to each Hebrew heart, the land which was once the possession of your renowned forefathers, and which a new generation, proud and resolute, is striving to make the land of the Jewish people in the not far distant future.

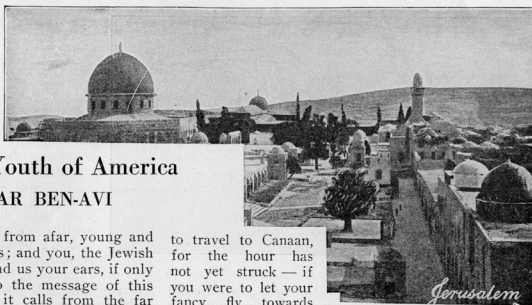
Surely you know it now, that voice of young Zion, that voice of new Canaan.

For after all you also are Jews. If you were to respond to this appealing voice, which brings you a hearty greeting, a resounding and oriental "Shalom"; if only you were to lay aside your daily interests for a little while; if you were—no, not

to travel to Canaan, for the hour has not yet struck — if you were to let your fancy fly towards the Hebrew Orient,

fly and wander to and fro throughout the country, for at least a few days, then indeed you would be amazed at the panorama which unfolded itself before you. In all the principal cities, from Beer-Sheva in the south to Sidon in the north, and in the forty-seven Jewish colonies, from Ruchamah in the desert of Idumaea as far as Metullah in the crags of Upper Galilee, there you would find a hundred and fifty thousand Jews who are courageously continuing the life of the ancient nation. After the destruction of the land at the hand of the Roman Emperor Titus, and after two thousand years of black and bitter exile for the great majority of the people of Israel, this is perhaps the greatest event in the history of our people, — that history which is already so rich in incidents of tremendous import. Babylon and Egypt, Assyria and Persia, ancient Greece and mighty Rome have passed from the

face of the earth, they who believed that they had completely annihilated this, our little nation, — but they were mistaken; for, to this very day, this same nation still exists on the same consecrated soil.



Jerusalem

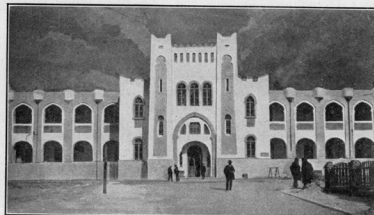


ITTAMAR BEN-AVI  
of Jerusalem



You will surely recognize Mikveh-Israel . . .

June-July, 1917



. . . And what is that which rises before us in white splendor?

Two-fifty-nine

Figure I.1a. Images accompanying Ittamar Ben-Avi, "We Young Palestinians: To the Jewish Youth of America."

## THE MACCABAEAN



They are all here to attend the famous yearly agricultural fair

It is only thirty years since the first Jewish child opened his small mouth to pronounce the endearing term of "Abbah" (papa), in that same tongue in which the child Isaac spoke to his father Abraham; and today, thirty thousand boys and girls, most of them born in Palestine, fill our two hundred schools with their noisy chatter, our Kindergartens and Hadarim, our Talmud Torahs and High Schools. It is a great host, a powerful host, the like of which our land has not seen since the time of Shimeon Ben-Shetah, the inspired founder of the first schools in Palestine,—until the beginning of our new epoch, the epoch of the Hebrew renaissance and the pride of the Jew in Zion. It is in truth an army, our army of boy scouts and young soldiers, of whom each one, the baby of three, the girl of seven, the Bar Mitzvah boy, the adolescent of over sixteen, bears in his hand the banner of the nation, blue and white, consecrated through a generation of renewed Hebrew vigor; and that army of our Palestinian youth, be sure, will not relinquish it until it breathes its last.

Only two years before the beginning of this terrible war, the young Palestinians demonstrated to the whole world what stuff they were made of, and what the nation might expect from them,—when, one fine day, thousands of the pupils of Palestine deserted their schools because their teachers wanted to replace their beloved Hebrew by German, a foreign language. Jerusalem will never forget, and the Hebrew Diaspora will ever remember, that moving episode when the little orphan girls in the picturesque "Rehov Ha-Habbashim" (Abyssinian Street), children of five and six defied their principal, whom they loved intensely because of her former devotion to Hebrew, as she was trying to have them remain true to her new theories, and submit to her sudden German words of command. They cried bitterly, for they had to leave their school house; but no matter, they clung to their older

schoolmates, who left the Germanized institution never to return, thus proclaiming in their childish voices:

"We will not be traitors to the Hebrew tongue! We will not be traitors!"

What is that commotion in the streets of Jerusalem? What is that long, almost endless procession? What is the meaning of these columns of boys and girls passing towards the outskirts of the city? They are all dressed in white, with blue bands across their chests. There are fresh flowers in the boys' button-holes, and the girls are crowned with gay wreaths. Each group carries its standard and the band at the head of the procession urges them on with martial tunes. Where are they going, these care-free children, notwithstanding the war and their unprecedented isolation? What can be the cause of their singing so joyfully psalms of the past and songs of the future?

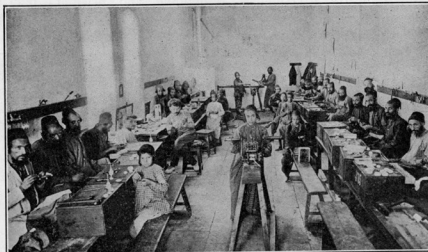
It is the fifteenth of Shebat,—not a Shebat of Europe or America with its February winds and snows, with its freezing cold, with its stormy skies, with its bare trees, but a Shebat of Jerusalem, of all Eretz-Israel. It is the New Year of the Trees, because between the Mediterranean and the Jordan, and especially between the Jordan and the Euphrates, the winter has come to an end at last, the rains and the hail have almost ceased. The sun has resumed its glorious dominion; the kindly winds announce the approach of Spring, the trees are bour-

geoning once more, and the fragrance of myriads of wild flowers, daisies and lilies and anemones, saturates the clear atmosphere.

This is why the city is rejoicing. This is why the young generation of rejuvenated Jerusalem is happy; for they love the light and the sun, the warmth and the verdure. For they see in that festival of the



Bezael, with its two rampart-like wings



Over a hundred and fifty artisans are sitting at their tables . . .

Figure I.1b. Images accompanying Ittamar Ben-Avi, "We Young Palestinians: To the Jewish Youth of America."

Ben Yehuda (1858–1922), who is credited as the driving force behind the revival of Modern Hebrew. His call had the authority of the reborn Jewish nation, and he announced that Jewish Americans did not have to travel to Palestine for “the Orient” to influence their lives. Ben-Avi petitioned Jewish American youth to exit space and time momentarily to enter an imaginary world. Jewish Americans who saw a variety of different futures for Jews, the United States, and Palestine heard this call to imagine an idealized “Orient” rather than to physically enter Palestine during World War I. Accordingly, their visions were of an imagined “Orient,” not of Palestine: they saw themselves and life in the United States by creatively picturing “the Orient” as a laboratory for understanding the Jewish past, present, and future. The idea of “the Orient” as the geographic place of Jewish origin has been important to many Jewish Americans as a means of articulating an authentic heritage as a community, even though many never set foot in Palestine and could not point concretely to ancestors who hailed from the Middle East. Jews themselves or those whose parents, grandparents, or older progenitors hailed primarily from Europe made themselves over in their visions of “the Orient” as homeland. Paradoxically, imagining “the Orient” as heritage made many Jewish Americans feel more “at home” in the United States.

This book lays out the panoramas of “the Orient” that Jewish Americans could imagine through the visual culture of multiple organizations and movements, revealing the complex issues of time and materiality for Jewish Americans in the early twentieth century. Given the cultural embeddedness of Jewish Americans in the United States and their shared political, religious, and social practices with non-Jews, I use the term “Jewish Americans,” despite the popularity of the term “American Jew” with many scholars. In other words, I do not consider a goal of my work to be to demonstrate the “Americanness” of those whom I study. They are American. Many of those who produced, circulated, and viewed the visual culture I analyze were not just second generation, but third, fourth, and so on. However, no matter how recently immigrants arrived or stayed, or whether they had received legal citizenship, I consider their presence a key influence on life in the United States and their contributions as significant and as American as anyone else. While acknowledging the significant place for Jewishness in their lives, the word order of “Jewish American” affirms the belonging, cultural rootedness, and sociopolitical structures of the Jews I study in the United States.<sup>3</sup>

For Jewish Americans, looking toward “the Orient” was explorative and aspirational: through this visual culture, they imagined themselves by imagining others. They looked for how they wished to see themselves and to be seen by other Americans. By envisioning “the Orient,” Jewish Americans created a tangible heritage to cite as their central role in world history and American society. Such heritage and roles never became a given in the United States, but they were continually created and maintained through visual culture. “The Orient” offered Jewish Americans a homeland, countering antisemitic ideas of Jews as rootless or parasitic. By visualizing this heritage, Jewish Americans could also map themselves onto American history and values. By doing so, Jewish Americans not only saw a place for themselves in the United States and the world, but they also constructed new ways that all Americans might see inclusion in citizenship and heritage. Jewish American visual culture imagining “the Orient” not only pictured Jews as part of the United States. Jewish American visual culture redrew ways that any minority could be seen in the United States. Jewish Americans revised concepts such as race, gender, and American culture, even as imagining “the Orient” had limits in deconstructing traditional ways of viewing those concepts within the many competing visions of Jewish and non-Jewish American heritage.

New technologies in the twentieth century transformed how Jewish Americans and so many others understood space and time. It is an obvious point in physics that distance equals speed multiplied by time. The change of speed technology, therefore, inevitably altered how Jewish Americans calculated the values of distance and time. Enda Duffy shows that “access to new speeds . . . has been the most empowering and excruciating new experience for people everywhere in twentieth-century modernity.” Moreover, these new speeds are political.<sup>4</sup> Duffy emphasizes both the pleasure and the pain of moving in new ways never before experienced and in ways that are uncommon to the human body. Speed can be exhilarating, from ship to car to airplane. But speed is also terrifying, always threatening injury or death in its deviation from control of movement and our expectations thereof.<sup>5</sup> “The very notion of life as the capacity for energetic movement . . . took on a new valence.” This new valence took multiple forms, from nostalgia for a different form of life energy to “need for new levels of visual alertness.” New technologies of speed transformed possibilities for representation and vision; film, the moving image, epitomized this transformation, but this should not distract from how this transformation

permeated twentieth-century human experience technologies for viewing. As a political issue, movement and energy related to the new ways that people in the twentieth century could access speed, an access that must be understood intersectionally, looking at ability to financially afford travel (physical or simulated); the spaces and methods of movement available to different genders; and the institutional regulation of movement, from nation-states to religious and ethnic organizations.<sup>6</sup>

Heritage is spatialized because of the conceptual link of time and space, mediated by changes in technology.<sup>7</sup> Space is neither obvious nor natural. However, visual culture such as photographs, drawings, and reconstructions of historical spaces can cover over the ways that connections to these spaces are mediated. Speed transformed how people in the twentieth century could understand place. Because it became possible to move quickly between places, whether a person actually could access that travel or not, place and space collapsed.<sup>8</sup> By this I mean that the very difference between once place and another became muddled and intertwined. Twentieth-century technology, from photography to travel, allowed people in one place to quickly experience another place. This experience was so fast as to be simultaneous: in this way, photography offered a spectacle of movement more immediate even than technologies such as the steamboat, railroad, car, or airplane. The intertwining of two places through new technologies necessarily affected new experiences and imaginations of time. The ability to experience two or more places seemingly at once collapsed not just space but time. Time and space are constitutive elements of each other, inextricably linked in how we understand human experience. And if it was felt possibly to be in two or more places at once, why not two or more times at once? New speeds, and the ways people understood the benefits and experience of those speeds, led to new views not only of local and global distance but also historical time and its relevance to the construction of “heritage.” These speeds made history seem like it was not cut off from the present.

Through new technologies, humans had amazing but dangerous access to all kinds of places and times. However, the simultaneity of speed is merely a spectacle. No matter how fast the speed, no one can be in multiple places at once. The strength of the spectacle of speed depended especially on vision, seeing oneself in these places. This new and unfettered access was dangerous not only because of the possibility for physical disaster, but perhaps more importantly because of the unfettered access to the concept of speed. Visual culture in particular brought speed to the masses. The politicization of speed resulted from institutional attempts to control

and regulate this democratization of speed. Even for those who could not travel, they could see what was afar. I use visual culture as a methodology in this book because it offers a window into the public culture that Jewish organizations formed in the early twentieth century and because it provides a glimpse into what everyday people saw when Palestine-turned-“the Orient” was presented to them. What people thought of the images before them is hard to recover, but this project seeks to see what Jewish Americans saw and how that structured their possibilities for interpreting “the Orient,” whether they took up the ideologies of institutions or not. Nation-states began to issue increasingly complicated passports and track human movement.

Photographs in particular play an important role in many of the images discussed throughout the following chapters. The word “photograph” simplifies the many different methods for capturing an image through some type of camera, and the linguistic roots of “photograph” literally conveyed these images as writing with light.<sup>9</sup> At first glance, it seemed “photography confirmed the image as natural, for was not the process instantaneous and automatic, unmediated by hand?” But humans construct the camera, the lens, and the framing of the shot. This leads Hubert Damisch to argue against seeing photographs as natural or unmediated. “It is a product of human labor, a cultural object whose being . . . cannot be dissociated from its historical meaning and from the necessarily datable project in which it originates.”<sup>10</sup> If photographs themselves are human products, all the more so is their circulation and (re-)use historically and socially located. “Destined by the medium’s technology to represent a specific moment in the past, they are also free to serve any representational function desired by a photographer and his audience.”<sup>11</sup> Photographers select the visual context of a photograph’s frame, but viewers continuously recontextualize the photographer’s choice with every display and observation. Photographs are simultaneously timeless—a certain moment is frozen, it documents the past, a moment that happened at a certain point in history—and they are futuristic—they represent a new technology that offers a distancing lens from the subjects and they allow the moment to be endlessly reexamined in the future. Why take a photograph if not with the expectation that it will be viewed in the future, for myriad reasons? But while photographs may seem to document a particular moment, they are never unmediated presentations. Instead, photographs are always mediated representations. Even “documentary” photographs, images that seem or seek to present “the real,” cannot do so without framing, without perspective—though photographs, their photographers, and others who circulate the images may nevertheless claim access to “the real” through them.<sup>12</sup>

Photographs and all images' meanings are not solely defined by the agency, vision, or interpretation of their original artist. Once in circulation, viewers interpret the photographs themselves based on their own personal and communal experiences, sometimes with little or no knowledge of the photographer, and it is to these recontextualizations that I turn my attention. Images and especially photographs have become a key artifact of the production of heritage precisely because they appear "natural" or even "unmediated," as if their meanings are reproduced in each copy citation. "Images become history, more than traces of a specific event in the past, when they are used to interpret the present in light of the past, when they are presented and received as explanatory accounts of collective reality." New contexts continually reframe photographs.<sup>13</sup> A dialectic between past and present, which produces imagined futures, constitutes the production of heritage.

### Reimagining Orientalism

From 1901 to 1938, Orientalism was a key means of the construction of Jewish American "imagined community."<sup>14</sup> As described by Benedict Anderson, any community might be considered an imagined community. The continual process of articulating the shared values and practices of an in-group, however large or small, as well as of articulating boundaries between two groups, is the very construction of community. Accordingly, I consider all of the sets and characters within the Jewish American panorama equally "Oriental," that is, equally integral to Jewish American heritage construction. Some may closer resemble "Western" ideals and some may serve more clearly as foils; some may be overtly "modern" while others are "ancient," and yet others a collapse or hybrid. That is to say, complicated and contradictory representations of "Orients" and "Orientals" are prolific in these constructions.

Ivan Davidson Kalmar and Derek Penslar's collection *Orientalism and the Jews* looks at cases of Orientalism that have not been readily categorized or whose categorizations have shifted. They ask, what about groups such as Jews who fit ambiguously? How has their intellectual and cultural interaction with the discourse of Orientalism shaped their subjectivities? And how have Jews in turn engaged, suffered, or benefited from and generally influenced Orientalism? Jews were both objects and viewers of these Orientalisms, and multiple "Orients" and "Wests" were



manifested through these Orientalisms. Such “Orients” included East European Jews, and Sephardic and Mizrahi Jews, Byzantium and the Eastern Church, Turkey and Turks, and the Middle East and Arabs. Such “Wests” and “Westerners” included Europe, Western Europe, Christianity, Judaism, Zionism, Ashkenazi Jews, secularism, and nationalism. Their collection illuminates the ambivalent place of Jews in Europe, Palestine, and elsewhere in the Middle East, but each chapter tends to show one focal position of viewers and one object of their Orientalist imagination. My research reveals to me messy, contradictory uses of multiple Orientalist visions. At the same time, Jewish Americans had to pick and choose the ways they wanted to see themselves in contradistinction to Europe. Palestine provided an imaginary panorama that served as a cipher for “the Orient,” Europe, and the United States and the relationship between Jewishness and each space.

My definition of Orientalism refers to the construction of heritage, especially through visual culture, and the continuous revision of communal identities. The process of constructing “heritage” is ongoing, disputed, and creative. Constructing Orientalism is, at its core, a process of “Westerners” looking at others to understand themselves (as “Westerners”) by creating a narrative about where they came from, whether they have been to that imaginary homeland or not. This narrative is neither preexisting nor natural: calling it “heritage” distinguishes the stories people tell about themselves from history. History, in part, seeks to uncover and interrogate the implications of the very ways that people have constructed heritage by selecting and excluding details that they consider desirable or representative of their values and how they wish to be seen. The idea of the “West” is produced through imagining “the Orient.” “The West” exists nowhere but imagination, just like “the Orient.” Orientalism is the practice through which those in Europe and America have imagined “the Orient” to understand themselves as members of various European and American nations and subgroups within those nations. This process depends on a treatment of those inhabiting “the Orient” as somehow existing differently in time than those from “the West.” Orientalism is a very specific form of heritage, one that became possible in new ways in the specific sociohistorical context of the late nineteenth and especially early twentieth centuries, although Orientalism dates back to the end of the Crusades, the moment of Christian Europe’s military loss and abandonment of attempting to seize Jerusalem from the Muslim Ottoman Empire. This book shows how Jewish American views of Palestine engage Jewish

traditions to value “heritage” while revising specific historical moments and their integration into, exclusion from, and contours in Jewish life in the United States from 1901 to 1938.

In other words, though Orientalism depends on engagement with the lives and spaces of the Middle East, it treats the lives of those who inhabit “the Orient” as “contemporaneous” but not truly “contemporary.” Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett defines this distinction. “Contemporaneous” describes “those in the present who are valued for their pastness” and “contemporary” as “those of the present who relate to their past as heritage.”<sup>15</sup> This process of Orientalism, sorting that which matters as “heritage” and that which matters as “modern,” has aided Jewish Americans in defining themselves exactly as such: simultaneously Jewish and American. Jewish Orientalism creates a “heritage” that depends on the East, a sense that Jews have a history related to the Holy Land but not trapped in it or the past. Jewish Orientalism contrasts sharply with Christian Orientalism, which has depended on treating Jews as contemporaneous people, valued only as living proof of the supersession of the Old Testament by the New. Jewish and Christian Orientalisms share practices of looking toward the East and defining a “West” against romanticized visions of various “Orientals,” including Jews and Muslims, Arabs and Bedouins, and other groups sometimes melded together as a single group and sometimes arranged in a hierarchy “proving” that “the West” belongs atop that hierarchy as an organizing, civilizing force. Moreover, Orientalism posed as irredentism. Among Jews and non-Jews, “the Orient” was imagined as a rightful homeland and state for Jews, although Jews had not constituted a majority in the territory for nearly two thousand years. The only way to see “the Orient” as a homeland for Jews was to envision its inhabitants as contemporaneous relics of the past waiting to be replaced or improved by civilized contemporary Ashkenazi Jews. This often froze the politics of “the Orient” in what many imagined as the biblical era.

Jewish Americans, like many immigrants and especially those not presumed to be white prior to their arrival in the United States, had to walk a tightrope between being able to claim a heritage in order to seem “normal” and not allowing that heritage to compromise their perception as loyal Americans. The new concept of cultural pluralism paved the way for new practices of Americanism that allowed Jewish Americans to do this. Popularized by Horace Kallen and Louis Brandeis, cultural pluralism denounced the need for assimilation in the United States, instead asserting that connections to other nations and culture do not threaten a person’s

status as a loyal United States citizen. Cultural pluralism also became a dominant language for hegemonic conceptions of the role of immigrants among established and recently arrived Americans. Accusations of rootlessness had weighed heavily on Jews in Europe and influenced the development of what Jewish Americans in the early twentieth century called cultural pluralism. However, rather than looking to various European countries as their homelands, Jewish Americans constructed “the Orient” as a homeland, though most Jewish Americans had not lived there in the past or even visited. Increasingly in the twentieth century, being in the US was a choice *not* to be in Palestine. Many did not have pleasant memories of their political and social status in European countries, and they sought a “homeland” with a solely and explicitly Jewish nature. “The Orient”-as-homeland allowed them to look structurally like other immigrant groups without grouping themselves along with non-Jews who hailed from the same places of origin in Europe.

Therefore “the Orient” as heritage simultaneously distanced Jewish Americans from other immigrants arriving from the same Central and East European regions, places that Jewish Americans sought to reject as homelands from which they or their ancestors had emigrated. Moreover, “the Orient” as heritage produced Jewish difference through a pseudo-immigrant status for generations to come. Even if Jewish Americans’ families had been in the United States for decades or over a century, envisioning “the Orient” engaged a type of ongoing immigrant status, including those born in the United States. Nostalgia for “the Orient” marked Jewish Americans as somehow native and foreign at the same time. In this way, imagining “the Orient” helped situate Jews as part of a pan-ethnic whiteness that perhaps enabled the inclusion of other groups as white, such as Irish and Italians, by the 1940s and 1950s. Inventing a new nationalism requires “plausibly” “rediscovering” a past. This presents constructions of national and religious heritage not as new but old. Orientalism offered a perception of Jewish heritage as ancient. This had historically been problematic for Jews, othering them as less-than compared to non-Jewish Europeans and Americans who characterized Jews as “Oriental.”<sup>16</sup> By appropriating and adapting Orientalism, Jewish Americans could benefit from the value of oldness in validating Jewish nationalism while attempting to dispense with the negative ways that non-Jewish Orientalism often portrayed Jews as inherently unable to “modernize.”

Studying Orientalism as a scholarly approach at once opens a perspective of the role of “the Orient” in the United States beyond Zionism and shifts away from measuring the “success” of American Zionism by

goals formed outside of the United States. This forms a new assessment of the nature of American engagement with both the politics of Palestine and the imagined “Orient.” I argue that the two are difficult or impossible to disentangle fully. But the richness of Jewish American visual culture differs from such scholarship as that of Naomi Cohen’s assessment of American Zionism as reduced to weak and watered-down “Palestinianism” as compared to robust European Zionism. “Palestinianism” as a frame for understanding Jewish American history suggests that Jewish Americans were less engaged with Palestine than other Jews throughout the world. Instead I assert that all Jews viewed Palestine through the lenses of their local contexts and ideological visions of Jewishness. Seen this way, Palestine is always mediated, informed by an imagined “Orient.” My analysis takes up this process of imaginative Orientalism to better see Jewish American visual culture from 1901 to 1938.

### Envisioning Jewish Heritage

Analyzing the construction of “heritage” interrogates the place of the past—both time and space—in the performance, maintenance, and dispute of contemporary identities. Each chapter in this book demonstrates how a different group of Jewish Americans participated in and deployed Orientalism as Jewish heritage in their vision of the future of Jewishness, in the United States and in the world. In this way, “heritage” points to a subsection of memory, which is multifaceted. My sources in this book, for example, largely cannot speak to subjectivity or reception. However, I read how Jewish American visual culture representing “the Orient” created a specific and tangible heritage in the United States in the early twentieth century, mediating potential conflicts in contemporary Jewish conceptions of heritage among various interpretations of Jewishness, Palestine, and the United States. Jewish Americans in the nineteenth century argued for the compatibility of Judaism and democracy, a compatibility so successfully established that Jewish Americans have taken this construction to be a timeless natural fact in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Beth Wenger argues, “What they produced was not history but heritage.”<sup>17</sup> With qualifications, Wenger borrows the concept of heritage from David Lowenthal, who argues that through heritage, “we tell ourselves who we are, where we came from, and to what we belong.”<sup>18</sup> Jewish Americans “designed their Jewish past as an expression of their own interests and

expectations for Jewish life in the United States.”<sup>19</sup> Through the production of heritage, Jewish Americans argued for their place in the United States and Jewishness. I commonly refer to “Jewishness” rather than “Judaism” to point to broader performances and identities not limited to interpretations of halakha or Jewish law. If “Judaism” seems to refer to some engagement with the Hebrew Bible and the Talmud as commanding, “Jewishness” offers vistas that engage practices that offer new centers of Jewish heritage, such as early Jewish history or extra-synagogue communal organizations.

To create and debate their heritage, Jewish Americans produced a great number of images from 1901 to 1938. The study of the images of the “the Orient” is a matter of visual culture, meaning an analysis of the contexts in which anything we see is produced, presented, and perceived. The study of visual culture includes the content of any single image; the study of iconography or how certain topics are depicted over time; the technology and media by which anything visible is produced; artists’ intentions and actions to create an image; the various political, social, religious, and other contexts in which the image is produced; identifications brought to bear on the image, such as nation, race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and religion; the presentation of any image, including verbal and nonverbal texts and environments; the influence, funding, or exhibition, by various institutions; and various audiences, including the moments different people view images as well as critical and popular responses to images. All of these may be difficult to trace for any single image or group of images, and visual culture should not be limited to what consumers, practitioners, critics, and scholars might label “art.” Visual culture includes anything the eye can see, as well as all the mental processes brought to bear at the moment of seeing. S. Brent Plate defines these many different factors as the “field of vision.” The “message” or meaning of any image is not stable or predetermined but the result of the interactions of the many factors of the field of vision at play for an individual or community.<sup>20</sup> Similarly, David Morgan considers visual culture a method rather than a discipline. It is not separate from other historical interpretations, but only a new emphasis on evidence that might expand all disciplines. “Visual culture refers to the images and objects that deploy particular ways of seeing and therefore contribute to the social, intellectual, and perceptual construction of reality.” This definition privileges attention to the social construction of reality; in other words, individual images and experiences of viewing those images are placed in a social and cultural context. Religious practice could not be the same without images, sites,

and sights, and the goals of visual religion might include any of several practices: to “order space and time, imagine community, communicate with the divine and transcendent, embody forms of communion with the divine, collaborate with other forms of representation, influence thought and behavior by persuasion or magic, [and] displace rival images and ideologies.” The goals and functions of religion are not discrete; practices typically display a combination.<sup>21</sup>

Scholars such as Rachel Gross and Ken Koltun-Fromm have analyzed Jewish anxieties about authenticity. Like Gross and Koltun-Fromm, I do not seek to confer authenticity on any examples of visual culture. Gross analyzes how the emotional aspects of nostalgia confer authenticity on Jewish constructions of heritage from “historical synagogues” to food.<sup>22</sup> The sources I have gathered do not belie the emotional reactions of their historical viewers or the meanings Jewish Americans made with these visions. I agree with Koltun-Fromm’s description of “visual authenticity” as “a *rhetorical activity*—it is a mode of argument and persuasion—in which visual discourse, images, and bodies critically inform and anxiously produce the authentic self.” Visual culture is a central mechanism by which Jewish Americans “[cultivate] Jewish bodies, texts, images, and faces.”<sup>23</sup> By focusing on the formal constructs in visual culture, I assert that images and visual culture are texts as significant as verbal texts, that verbal texts are also visual texts, and that verbal and visual texts interact with each other in ways that can complicate, contradict, embellish, amplify, or undermine any given text seen in isolation.

Visual texts have their own “grammar,” or set of rules by which the world may be organized and categories may relate to each other. Part of the reason it is important to examine Jewish American visual culture representing “the Orient” is to analyze how texts form new grammars when combining multiple grammars. This is not to claim that any texts ever follow the rules of a single grammar. Rather, visual and verbal texts always integrate multiple grammars. Jewish American visual culture representing “the Orient” combines grammars and tropes of Orientalism, Judaism, and Americanism to create new grammars. Jewish Americans combining these grammars did not agree as to the new rules, thus each of the following chapters addresses a different visual grammar and vision of Jewish Americanness through the cipher of “the Orient.” Additionally, even if a text seeks to cite or reproduce a certain grammar, that text inevitably alters the grammar. Joan W. Scott’s attention to “grammar” in her argument for the usefulness of gender as “a useful category of historical analysis” calls attention to more than just “discourse,” as Foucault frames the evolving

meaning of words. Discourse matters, but the formal grammar or rules of the larger context and multiple relations are an essential piece of how texts attempt to shape meaning. Moreover, the combination of grammars may lead to the subversion of one or more of those grammars. Jewish Americans combined Orientalism with Judaism and Americanism to subvert aspects of all three grammars. This produced new rules in those grammars that formally positioned Jews in places of authority and power, attempting to remedy Jewish insecurity in the United States and abroad.

Rather than toggle between concepts such as “grammar” or “discourse” to encapsulate the goals of Jewish Americans or any community, I turn to the larger category of “heritage.” The production of knowledge of individual or communal heritage depends upon grammar, rhetoric, and discourse. “Heritage” is a version of the past created in a community’s own image and vision, knowledge that Jewish American Orientalist visual culture produced in the first half of the twentieth century. Jewish Americans in the nineteenth century knowingly constructed the compatibility of Jewishness and democracy in the United States, a compatibility so successfully established that Jewish Americans have taken this construction to be a timeless natural fact in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. In the diverse ways that Jews in the United States have made this argument, they drew heavily on the Jewish past. Jewish Americans did not have unmediated access to the past. Rather they turned to the production of heritage, meaning that Jewish Americans “designed their Jewish past as an expression of their own interests and expectations for Jewish life in the United States.”<sup>24</sup> Invoking this notion of heritage—centrally about communal myth-making—Beth Wenger focuses not on the history of academics, but on popular narratives and understanding circulated throughout Jewish communities in the United States. In telling these stories, two myths have been central: 1) Europe served as a foil to the possibilities for Jews in the United States, and “the mantra that ‘America is different’ emerged as perhaps the most fundamental axiom of American life.” 2) The Hebrew Bible as a foundation for American culture—first articulated in the Puritan vision of America as the New Israel—became a space for Jews to insert themselves into American historical narratives and traditions.<sup>25</sup> Through civic celebrations, Jewish Americans performed and produced identities that incorporated these myths and asserted the place for Jews in American democracy. Many groups attempted to envision themselves as part of American heritage and to claim their own stake in the Revolution and its resulting rights. Such efforts were as much about molding the heritage of minority groups as remodeling the fabric of the United States as a whole.

## Gender and Jewish American Visual Culture

Women's and gender studies, as academic pursuits, are intertwined with but conceptually separable from feminism. Narratives of Jewishness in the United States are incomplete without a complex analysis of the many roles gender has played in the construction of Jewish heritage. Although feminism as a political ideology can be separated from the study of gender, I echo Rita Gross (and many other scholars) in arguing that scholarship that omits women for an androcentric version of history obfuscates the reality of historical experience. It is androcentric history, not intersectional feminist history, that skews our vision. Gross specifically advocates for feminist scholarship because it creates a less biased view, not a skewed vision.<sup>26</sup> In this book, I pursue the goal of including women in the study of Jewish American visual culture in order to better understand both women and men. This is in service of both my academic and feminist goals of telling a more inclusive account of Jewish life. As Judith Plaskow asserts, "'Judaism' has always been richer, more complex, and more diverse than either 'normative' sources or most branches of modern Judaism would admit."<sup>27</sup> While Plaskow focuses on rabbinic texts to argue for the need to make women visible in Jewish history, she points to the need to find new methods of uncovering women's roles. It is not that women were ever absent from Jewish life, but certain normative texts have simply not considered women's lives important to record or integrate in the telling of Jewish heritage. The study of visual culture is an especially strong methodology for making women visible precisely because it is more or less nonnormative, quotidian, and gives us a window onto the images that Jewish men and women used to imagine themselves. I am wary of falling into the trap of a study of gender that suggests women's worlds are created by men as a result of the hierarchical and relational nature of men's and women's lives.<sup>28</sup> For this reason, I begin each chapter with a brief history of the movement that led to the production of the examples of visual culture at hand. This background shows how men and women created the worlds in which the primary visual sources existed and helps fill out how I understand the field of vision that each example of visual culture (re)represents. Chapter 3 on the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods and chapter 6 on Hadassah pay particular attention to the ways that women created their own worlds through these groups and how women turned to the production of visual culture to materialize the power they sought through organizing.

Furthermore, the question of feminism is relevant not only on the second-order level of my own motivations as a scholar and author, but also



on the first-order level of the people I study. Most of the women in the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods and Hadassah did not consider themselves or their work to be “feminist,” including these organizations’ projects that I discuss in chapters 3 and 6. However, that subjects of study would not use terms such as “feminism” does not preclude scholars from using those terms to understand their subjects. Many of these women engaged in what could be labeled either “feminism” or at least “protofeminism,” most minimally defined as the belief that women are equal to, if not the same as, men in their ability to contribute to communal life. And although these women may not have considered themselves feminists, contemporary feminists look back to the work of women in the early twentieth century as laying a base for feminist projects in the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Scholars such as R. Marie Griffith and Saba Mahmood provide excellent models for research that shifts from “feminism” to how women have always negotiated their positions in various religious communities, even those who have defined themselves against feminism. Even when women appear to reinforce a hierarchy with men at the top, they may create space and power for themselves.<sup>29</sup> Rather than spend space in this book arguing for or against the feminist nature of any Jewish Americans, I focus not on drawing this boundary but rather on the ways that men and women included or excluded women from Jewish American visual culture and various visions of Jewish heritage and future. Envisioning roles for women necessitated looking toward the future. But this view toward the future is interwoven with imaginations of the past or Jewish heritage. Men and women argued for what they considered the future of Jews in part through a focus on the future of Jewish women, and Jewish heritage plays a central role in how Jewish Americans in the early twentieth century attempted to authenticate various visions of women.

In primary sources, gender is not necessarily explicitly invoked through language marking “men” and “women” or “masculine and feminine,” though it sometimes is. Joan W. Scott succinctly addresses an assumption now prominent in gender studies, that “figurative allusions by employing grammatical terms to evoke traits of character or sexuality” must be dissected.<sup>30</sup> These allusions may cite known tropes such as supposedly positive concepts of motherhood and “the fairer sex” or derogatory critiques of women as “hysterical” and “shrill,” all of which place women lower than men in a gender hierarchy. I examine the visual grammar through which Jewish Americans have figured gender, attending to the ways that gender may be detached from the physical bodies of males and females. Riv-Ellen Prell has demonstrated how Jewish and non-Jewish Americans

detached the stereotype of the JAP (Jewish American Princess) from women and from Jewishness to use as a critique of capitalism or questions of assimilation.<sup>31</sup> In studying gender, we must examine how masculinity and femininity are both constructed in connection with and apart from physical bodies. This idea of not only malleable but gloating gender constructions detached from the supposed physical sex of the subject plays an important role in Orientalism. For one, “women have long served as a template for Jewish and Muslim apologists seeking acceptance in European and American societies, and as lightning rods for those seeking to exclude Jews and Muslims.” Addressing gender norms, in other words, is a key part of ongoing arguments for social belonging and political citizenship. Jewish Americans have continuously surveilled gender performance and sought to represent Jewish gender in ways that were acceptable according to Jewish and non-Jewish Americans. Visual culture has been a particularly powerful mode for negotiating Jewish American norms because of the mobility of visual culture and the ability of visual culture to serve as an aspiration, ideal, or fantasy rather than to present reality. Moreover, “the treatment of women became an index for the degree of ‘orientalism’ marking Judaism in the nineteenth century, and of ‘fanaticism’ and ‘irrationality’ marking Islam in more recent decades.”<sup>32</sup> Non-Jews in Europe and the United States have othered Jews and Muslims via Orientalism, and the mechanism for that Orientalizing is often gender. A sophisticated study of gender shows “how gender inequality structures all other inequalities,” making connections that do not seem obvious, such as between internal Jewish hierarchies of gender and external relationships and representations of non-Jews.<sup>33</sup> Gender is a means to better understand Jewish American men and women, but also to see how Jewish American men and women used gender in Orientalism to, for example, feminize Arab men as a foil to Jewish masculinity (chapters 1, 3, 4, and 6) or to discredit “Oriental” women as mothers (chapter 6). Jewish Americans turned to Orientalism to construct social hierarchies that placed Jews at the top. These hierarchies also reveal, however, the ways that Jewish men and women attempted to remedy their own social anxieties by perpetuating the inequality of others.

That women have gender can be obvious. Masculine visual culture—meaning representations of men, visual culture made or collated by men, visual culture designed to be consumed by men, or visual culture emphasizing masculine gender norms with or without the representation of men’s bodies—is and was often assumed to be unmarked. To use a mathematical analogy, masculinity is the 1 before the x. Masculinity is assumed, it need not be marked, and marking it is frequently interpreted as unnecessary or

even a mistake. It can be difficult to mark masculinity precisely because part of its power lies in being unmarked and therefore appearing as the “natural standard.” An important aspect of gender studies is to tease out the embeddedness, embodiedness, learnedness, and malleability of all genders. Sarah Imhoff helpfully articulates that although a “construct,” this does not mean that iterations of gender, or religion for that matter, are “simply acts of will.”<sup>34</sup> Individuals and even groups cannot simply make changes to gender without a communal process of naturalization—of acceptance, rejection, and inculturation. Our worldviews are cumulative, and so instant change is difficult to accomplish. Accordingly, we tend to see what we expect to see and can only recognize what we have already been taught. In instances of cultural contact, misrecognition can fuel misunderstanding because vision is a cumulative process, dependent not only on the biological process of eyes sending messages to our brains, but our brains making sense of our eyes’ messages given our experiences and knowledge to date.<sup>35</sup> For example, a news story spread in January 2010 of a flight out of LaGuardia Airport that a pilot grounded due to an airline attendant’s alert that there was a potential bomb scare. She did not recognize a Jewish teenager’s tefillin, small leather boxes that the boy had wrapped around his head and arm to perform morning prayers on the plane, as tools of prayer. The FBI met the plane in Philadelphia to investigate. Commenting on what was an unexpected experience for the teenager given the prevalence of tefillin in Orthodox Jewish visual culture, FBI agent J. J. Klaber explained the flight attendant’s reaction by saying, “This is something most Americans probably have not seen before.” Vision was key to interpreting the entire event. The FBI agent did not consider the flight attendant’s lack of recognition of the tefillin as ritual tools to be a failure of vision or an unacceptable reaction. In contrast, *New York Daily News* writers who undoubtedly had prior knowledge of the common use of tefillin commented, “What schmucks.”<sup>36</sup> Their language invoked Jewish vision through the use of the Yiddish insult. Multiple sets of visual knowledge collided here, indicating the possibility for entirely different interpretations of an interaction depending upon how people see visual culture.

Visual culture is useful for understanding the ways that gender, religion, heritage, and other “constructs” come into being because vision demonstrates the scientific and social processes taking place in moments of recognition. Moreover, primary sources of visual culture give us durable examples to follow changes in iconography. Attending to the formal changes in iconography can quickly condense the process of visual change over time right before our eyes, giving the opportunity to 1) notice that

change more easily; 2) see how experiments arose, which are no less meaningful in their moments of appearance even if they did not continue to be cited; and 3) see continuities and how Jewish Americans and other groups introduced new traditions into visual culture and naturalized these new representations into conceptions of heritage.

All the members of the organizations or movements in this book were publicly labeled “men” and “women.” The gender plurality that shapes subjectivity and public debate in the twenty-first century did not exist in the same way in the first half of the twentieth century. This is not to say gender plurality did not exist, however. Jews and non-Jews experimented with gender through secret or semi-public life worldwide. From clothing to fine arts, visual culture played a key role in these Jews lives. Their experimentation with and critique of gender norms likely haunts the firm gender binaries presented in the visual culture of “the Orient” that I analyze in this book. The masculinity and femininity that Jewish Americans emphasized in Orientalist visual culture actively and continuously worked to order the world according to a gender binary. Orientalism critiques Arab and Muslim culture as being backward for failing to live up to binary gender norms, but we might ask ourselves what other invisible anxieties underlay the heteronormativity in Jewish American Orientalism. This also does not mean that some members of the organizations and movements I discuss did not chafe at the norms of the very existence of binaries. Sexuality and the production of heteronormativity are also key aspects of the study of gender. Like masculinity and whiteness, heterosexuality also appears as a “1 before the x.” Heterosexuality can appear so naturalized as to seem invisible, but this invisibility is of an entirely different nature from that of the invisibility of Jewish women in Jewish heritage. Jewish American women struggled to make themselves visible. As scholars, we struggle to make masculinity visible and interrogate its forms and intersectionality with other identities. We must analyze the implications of both masculinity and femininity, whether attached to “male” and “female” bodies or detached and tied to various representations of heritage.

### The Ottoman Empire, the British Mandate, and the United States

The Ottoman Empire controlled the region of Palestine until World War I, and then the British Mandate gained control over the territory. Under