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Building a Zion in German(y): Franz Rosenzweig on Yehudah Halevi

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ABSTRACT

Among the diverse positions on the question of Zionism held by early-twentieth-century German Jewish intellectuals is the eccentric “non-Zionist” stance of Franz Rosenzweig (1886–1929). In a translation and commentary called Sixty Hymns and Poems of Yehudah Halevi (1924; 2nd ed. 1927), Rosenzweig aimed to contribute to and shift the discourse concerning Jewish distinctiveness and belonging in German culture. Critical in this effort was Rosenzweig’s attention to the scriptural and liturgical elements of Yehudah Halevi’s poetry, which he argued were emblematic of Jewish literary and textual culture. The structure, poetic choices, and commentary of Hymns and Poems, a volume long overlooked in Rosenzweig’s oeuvre, is properly understood as a sustained meditation on Jewish diasporic life and the role of textuality in preserving it.

Key words: Franz Rosenzweig, Yehudah Halevi, Zionism, German-Jewish culture

In early 1923, Franz Rosenzweig wrote to his friend Joseph Prager that he had undertaken a new project: “I have translated a little volume of Yehudah Halevi with an afterword and notes. In the commentary on it I note the places where I was not able to translate literally. Rhyme and meter have been reproduced precisely. The whole thing owes its genesis to Emil Cohn . . . , [whose book] got me so annoyed that these verses came out.”¹

Emil Cohn, a Berlin-born rabbi, dramaturge, prolific writer of popular works on Jewish history and education, and outspoken Zion-

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ist, had published a German translation of selections from the collection (*Diwan*) of the twelfth-century Hebrew poet and philosopher Yehudah Halevi.² Rosenzweig's intemperate letter refers to the volume that he published a few years later, which he called *Sixty Hymns and Poems of Yehudah Halevi*.³ Rosenzweig's translation of and commentary on the poems of Halevi, a project that began as a simple corrective to Cohn, grew into something much grander. Indeed, as I show in this article, Rosenzweig's volume should be understood as a proposal for the creation of a distinctively scriptural and liturgical Jewish identity in German language and culture.

Among Rosenzweig's works, *Hymns and Poems* has suffered from scholarly neglect.⁴ Encountering it yields a significant, and notably different, picture of the Rosenzweig associated with *The Star of Redemption* (1921), because *Hymns and Poems* marks the beginning of a shift in Rosenzweig's thought that culminated in his translation, beginning in 1925, of the Hebrew Bible into German with Martin Buber.⁵ But an investigation of the work is valuable beyond the ways in which it offers a new understanding of Rosenzweig's corpus. *Hymns and Poems* stands as a testament to the dynamics of German-Jewish cultural and intellectual politics during the Weimar period, when Jewish intellectuals grappled in new ways with the problem of distinctiveness and belonging in German culture. Rosenzweig's work on Halevi was shaped by these larger debates, and the book that resulted from his initial encounter with Cohn's *Ein Diwan [von] Jehuda Halevi* offers a glimpse of the profound questions that drew Rosenzweig into his new project. More than that, the book serves as a proposal for how Jews should find a place in the modern German state and society.

Rosenzweig in the Mirror of Halevi

Upon a first reading of *Hymns and Poems*, it becomes clear that, for Rosenzweig, the figure of Halevi—apprehended not through his biography but rather by his textual legacy—became emblematic of a religious ideal. Rosenzweig saw in Halevi the reflection of his own spiritual and textual quest; at the same time, the medieval poet and philosopher represented the authentic, rich Jewish past that Rosenzweig found so elusive. Consider the sense of poverty in the heritage most proximate to him that he expressed in a 1917 letter to his confidant Gertrud Oppenheim. It testifies to the superficiality Rosenzweig perceived as permeating his German-Jewish background, indicting his very name:

Certainly I have no relationship to my first name. As to why, I naturally have only guesses. I believe that it's because my parents gave it to me without any connection to it, simply because they "liked" it (and why did they like it? Because it—*back then!* And in *Kassel!*—was still "different" ["apart"], only after me were there the other Franzes in the Kassel Jewish community...), that is to say, they saw it in a shop window, went in the store, and bought it. It has no inheritance, no memory in it, no history, and even less any anecdote, hardly any personality—only a whim. A family name, a saint's name, a hero's name, a poetic name, a mysterious name...—all of these are fine, all are somehow organic [*irgendwie gewachsen*], not bought at Whitley's.⁶

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Rosenzweig contrasts his alienation from his own name—associated with the bourgeois ethic of consumption (a name "bought" on a frivolous whim)—with an organic but inaccessible ideal. This contrast is particularly striking when compared to Rosenzweig's deep identification with the name and person of Halevi. In a letter written to his mother the summer before his death, Rosenzweig inscribed a sense of spiritual kinship onto his genealogy. Pointing out that his father's Hebrew name was Shmuel and his grandfather's Hebrew name was Yehudah, he wrote, "Correctly I should have been given the name Yehudah ben Shmuel [Judah, son of Samuel], which is precisely the name of the great man of whom I am a middling reincarnation on the way to transmigration: Yehudah [ben Shmuel] Halevi."⁷ Rosenzweig's gesture toward re-naming himself emerged out of an effort to be granted a more meaningful heritage. His felt connection to Halevi expressed simultaneously his dissatisfaction with the superficiality of the liberal-bourgeois heritage bestowed on him and his hopes for the possibility of actively constructing an alternative name and alternative history. Of all his published endeavors, his work on the poems of Halevi afforded Rosenzweig a deeply personal connection with the text; his sense of spiritual kinship gave the work tremendous passion.

This very identification with Halevi, however, also confused the boundaries between authorial voice, translation, innovation, and interpretation in the volume that emerged from the encounter. Rosenzweig's correspondence from the period of his labors on the translation and notes attests to tensions within his thought about the goal and the approach of the project: Was the book's purpose to bring Halevi to a new readership? Or was it to provide a forum for Rosenzweig to express his own developing ideas on language, poetics, and translation?

A Post-Historicist Corrective

[130] All of these questions surface immediately when juxtaposing Rosenzweig's edition to the volume produced by Cohn. German readers had recently been presented with Halevi's *Diwan* via Cohn's edition, so Rosenzweig had to justify his endeavor. He did this by making the argument that his version was truer to the spirit and meaning of Halevi. Yet his own identification with the poet permeates *Hymns and Poems*. These two competing values found an uneasy resolution in the tacit interpretive stance of the book, in which the effort to bring Halevi's poetry to life necessitated an alternative reading strategy from that offered by Cohn.

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Rosenzweig's deliberations regarding the format of the book provide a useful point of entry into understanding the contradictory concerns that animated the eventual volume's content and structure. In *Hymns and Poems*, Rosenzweig included the selected poems, an "afterword" commenting on the enterprise of translating Halevi into German, and then his own notes, which commented on theological, translational, and interpretive issues connected to each poem. Rosenzweig argued that the poems themselves constituted the main purpose of the book and the focus of his energies. "To translate ten lines is time better spent than [writing] the longest things 'about' [them]" Rosenzweig wrote to Buber in 1922. "Admittedly, the public wants the 'about' and abandons the most wonderful food (or, worse yet, gobbles it down unthinkingly) if you don't hold the menu right under its nose."⁸ The analogy implies that any commentary or explanation is the "menu," in which explanations of the gastronomic delights of the poetry obstruct one's experience of the food itself. This kind of frustration at his readership recurs throughout Rosenzweig's correspondence; his letters testify, furthermore, to his worry that readers would ignore Halevi's poetry in favor of what they perceived as the more accessible text, namely, his own afterword: "[Florens Christian] Rang is now the third one who has noticed that the afterword does not belong in there. The first two," Rosenzweig wrote to Buber, "are me and you. But the funny thing, which I knew beforehand, is that it's only the afterword that keeps the reader from throwing the book away from the get-go."⁹

The frequent recurrence of this lament raises suspicions; after all, Rosenzweig's book contained as much "about" as Cohn's. It would seem that Rosenzweig doth protest too much. His book, rather than fighting the tendency to marginalize the poems themselves, actually accommodated that proclivity; *Hymns and Poems* foregrounds Rosen-

zweig's commentary and afterword by design. For instance, in the first and second editions (both overseen by Rosenzweig), the poems are presented first, followed by Rosenzweig's afterword, concluding with Rosenzweig's notes on each poem. The Hebrew original is not present. (The publishers of the third [1983] edition made the book more accessible to scholars by placing each note alongside its corresponding poem and adding the Hebrew text.) Rosenzweig wrote to Buber in early 1924,

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Regarding the sequence, I see the organization . . . not going from beginning to end but rather from the outer shell toward the middle. . . . That an exactly inversely constructed book would be read just this way—this I indeed experienced with *Star*. Now therefore under no circumstances do I want the snotty [*schnodderig*] afterword to be the conclusion of the book; the real conclusion is to be the last note. The afterword works only if it is as it is now, bound in front and back.¹⁰

Notably, the result of this organization is that Rosenzweig's own meditations, and not Halevi's verse, occupy the "heart" of the book. Much like a folio page of the Talmud, in which the central position is accorded to the most authoritative sources, Rosenzweig's afterword constitutes the privileged "middle" toward which the poetry (and his notes) point.¹¹

Likewise, the premium that Rosenzweig wished to place on Halevi's material at times came into conflict with his own sense of artistic creativity: "I am still fiddling around with 'The Good News' ['Die Frohe Botschaft'],"¹² Rosenzweig wrote to Buber, "but it remains a bad poem. I translated it only in order to be permitted to write the note on it."¹³ The notes provided Rosenzweig with the freedom to present his own ideas, a freedom he exercised even as he endeavored to suppress the idea that the book was his own mouthpiece. The division Rosenzweig insisted on between translation, on the one hand, and afterword and commentary, on the other, aimed to reinforce the primacy of the poems over and above Rosenzweig's own subordinate additions. Yet *Hymns and Poems*, the only work in Rosenzweig's corpus explicitly presented as "text and commentary," in fact jettisoned Halevi's "original text" for a text entirely by Rosenzweig. In part because it was absent, the Hebrew could hold what Robert Alter has called the "allure" of "the archaic as a source of authority and aesthetic power."¹⁴ Rosenzweig's tactic heightened the authority of the (absent) Hebrew by keeping it ever out of reach, allowing Rosenzweig free rein in constructing an imaginary Hebrew in German letters.¹⁵ Although Rosen-

zweig quite deliberately chose a format in which text and commentary would remain distinct, the entire book was thoroughly marked by an agenda defined by Rosenzweig himself.

This agenda is particularly visible when compared to the structure and content of Cohn's *Ein Diwan*. The subtitle of his volume is emblematic of the differences between the two volumes: Cohn's 40-page biography, entitled "Yehudah Halevi, His Time, His Life, and His Work," provided an appendix for readers that placed Halevi's poetry into the context of the poet's biography and historical circumstances. Rosenzweig, by contrast, avoided or redirected any mention of historical themes or Halevi's life story. Rosenzweig decisively oriented his own reading of Halevi away from the aim of "educating" the reader-ship or leading it to a scholarly encounter with the poetry.

To underscore the antihistoricist thrust of the book, Rosenzweig chose not to include a list of sources for the poems (in contrast to Cohn); instead, Rosenzweig included extensive notes (*Bemerkungen*), in which he expounded on the theological meaning of each poem, and an "afterword," in which he reflected on the task of translating Hebrew poetic language into German. Cohn followed the scholarly convention of leaving Halevi's poems untitled; Rosenzweig gave each of the poems a title that, for him, bespoke the essence of the poem. In addition, where Cohn had included poems concerning a wide range of topics (God; Israel; Love; Friendship; Life, Suffering, and Poetry; Zion; the Sea; and Final Days), Rosenzweig's *Hymns and Poems* consistently excluded poems usually classified as "secular." Rosenzweig sought instead to highlight and privilege the "religious" poems out of a conviction that religiosity—the same religiosity that inspired him while working on the translations—should be made available to the reader.¹⁶

The deliberate choice to eliminate explicit historical and biographical explanation or accompaniment to the poetry in *Hymns and Poems* testifies to Rosenzweig's hermeneutic stance. He argued not that Cohn's book was historically inaccurate but rather that Cohn had either misconstrued or simply missed the transhistorical, theological significance of the poetry, reducing it to an epiphenomenon of history and biography. Rosenzweig's notes, as if in direct rebuke to Cohn, single-mindedly addressed the meaning of the poems for the contemporary reader. He sought to make Halevi and his passions immediate and proximate rather than historicized.¹⁷ Rosenzweig's attempt to give voice to Halevi by excising the historical, explanatory mode present in Cohn's edition testifies to a post-historicist sensibility that animates *Hymns and Poems*.¹⁸ This approach formed a critical component of Rosenzweig's approach to Hebrew texts, exemplified

in the translation of the Hebrew Bible he undertook as his next project.

Rosenzweig's orientation in reading and recasting Halevi's poetry for his German-speaking audience interests us not just for its choice of interpretive stances. The choices he made as to the book's content and format were also expressions of a broader vision for how readers—especially Jewish readers—could find a new source of identity in the ever-renewed meaning in classical texts. In constructing the volume around the location of the poems' religious meaning rather than their historical (or "antiquarian") significance,¹⁹ Rosenzweig expressed a conviction that this model could be used for contemporary readers who seek a post-historicist encounter with the texts of the past.

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Translation as Praxis

Translation was a practice that lent itself to contradictory aims and ideals in Rosenzweig's work. Rosenzweig exploited both the opacity of the translated text and its supposed transparency; he portrayed himself as laboring only for the cause of an accurate translation and simultaneously insisted on the necessity of interpretive license. These contradictions in the work of translation became central to Rosenzweig's mature work and animated it.

Yet the volume of translated works Rosenzweig produced does not adequately capture the role that translation symbolized in Rosenzweig's work. *Hymns and Poems*, like the translation projects that came before and after it, was, fundamentally, a call for a Jewish world built upon language rather than deed. This proposal for a textually centered Jewish identity appears in Rosenzweig's correspondence from the time just before he undertook the Halevi project. Rosenzweig's very first attempt at translation was undertaken jointly with his wife Edith while on their honeymoon, in early 1920. The text they tackled was the grace after meals.²⁰ Yet in a letter from the same period, Franz wrote to Edith about another, more practical aspect of mealtime: the degree to which the couple would adhere to traditional Jewish dietary restrictions:

We want a *house*, not a ghetto. Any Jew whom we invite should be able to eat with us, but we also want to be able to go to the homes of those Christians who invite us. The Orthodox compromise—to go out but not eat (or only eat select things)—is really *only* a compromise. That this is "to the credit" of our *Jewish* friends who eat everything, whom we visit, is a

shame. In the end they also should believe that our Jewishness does not consist in eating and drinking.²¹

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The very week in which Rosenzweig rejected the implication that his Judaism should “consist in eating and drinking,” he asserted through his translation of the grace after meals that the Jewish liturgical accompaniment to eating and drinking deserved a new German voice and a new German audience. Judaism, for Rosenzweig, did not concern what one ate—where eating was perceived as a system of physical and social restrictions—but what one read. “Reading,” with the help of Rosenzweig the translator, signified an activity that transcended all borders.

This argument will likely sound strange to readers familiar with Rosenzweig’s famous letter to Martin Buber known as “The Builders.”²² The letter has widely been understood as signaling Rosenzweig’s willingness to engage or even embrace mitzvot (commandments), and to do so fully aware of the Kantian critique of Jewish law that had bedeviled Jewish praxis since the beginning of the modern period. But Rosenzweig articulated in this letter a much more ambivalent relation to the commandments than has been widely appreciated. In his argument with Buber, Rosenzweig articulated the need for openness toward what the mitzvot and *minhagim* (customs and traditions) of Judaism might bring to the tentative individual engaging with them, not their necessity or authority.²³ Rosenzweig’s work on Halevi, as the culmination of his early translational endeavors, shows his attempt to create a sphere in which the problems associated with the mitzvot—in particular, their demarcation of a separate social sphere for Jews—could be avoided. He aimed to create a poetic and liturgical, rather than a practical, Jewish sphere of life.

Rosenzweig’s ambivalence toward the strictures of traditional Jewish ritual life persisted alongside his serious engagement of traditional Jewish prayer. Liturgy eventually became one of the few realms in which Rosenzweig expressed a wholesale willingness to submerge himself in the literary texts of the past, even as he increasingly transformed these texts into his own creations. In the new concept of Jewish praxis Rosenzweig proposed, Jews were to perform their identity not primarily through the adherence to the traditional commandments—that is, through “eating and drinking,”—but by viewing the world through the lens offered by what Rosenzweig called “Jewish words.”²⁴ The Jew who would inhabit this home would take up residence not in the synagogue or even the domicile—a home that could all too easily become “a ghetto,” as Franz reminded Edith—but in the Lehrhaus, where adult Jews would study Jewish texts together. For Rosenzweig, the engage-

ment with Jewish texts sought to serve as an alternative to other dominant modes of Jewish expression: religious adherence such as that demanded by traditional Orthodoxy, liberal assimilationism, and Zionist political action. As new activity for the expression of Jewish being in the world, translation served Rosenzweig and his bourgeois, liberal audience well: it required neither adherence to Jewish religious practice nor the packing of bags for Palestine.

Moreover, the textual space created through the translation of Halevi's poetry was not to be exclusively Jewish. Rosenzweig's *Hymns and Poems* proposes a new kind of Jewish praxis for Jews attracted to neither Orthodoxy nor Zionism (or any combination thereof). Rosenzweig also envisioned his book as speaking to both Christian and Jewish audiences. Writing of his frustration in attempting to get the book published, he wrote to Buber that he did not wish it to be published by a Jewish press. "My feeling is that it has become a book for Christians *and* Jews, although and because it speaks very Jewishly [*es sehr jüdisch spricht*]." ²⁵ The *lingua franca*, as it were, of the new realm was to be a Jewish language, yet literally, and simultaneously, German as well. Rosenzweig's aim was to create a German that could be more expansive than that which occupied the cultural center of his intellectual world but which, in his view, had no room for Hebrew (read: Jews) in it. ²⁶

In this effort to create a linguistic realm for the larger society, or even for humanity as a whole, based on a language marked as "Jewish," Rosenzweig participated in a project shared by Jewish intellectuals before and after his own time. Jewish languages—whether modernized, reclaimed, or transvalued—promised the possibility of an alternative, superior language to those spoken in the worlds where Jews themselves were not always welcome. ²⁷ Rosenzweig identified "scripture"—specifically biblical Hebrew—as having the power to strip German of its exclusive, monochromatic associations with Christendom and the state. Language held the key to both marginalization and redemption. Rosenzweig proposed to create a German that would be "foreign" to all of its speakers by "speaking Jewishly" and thus become the potential property of any and all of them. It is to this quixotic endeavor that we now turn.

Aesthetics and Politics

In rising to the challenge of besting Cohn's book, Rosenzweig began to develop his own unique aesthetic for translating Hebrew texts into German. Although *Hymns and Poems* shows, in Rosenzweig's choice of

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vocabulary and the fragmentary, patchwork narrative of the notes, the influence of both modernism and a romantic reaction to it, the result is not reducible to literary choice alone.²⁸ Rather, Rosenzweig identified Halevi's poetry as manifesting a specific "scriptural" or "liturgical" element that became central to the cultural and political enterprise of *Hymns and Poems*. (It was not accidental that Halevi's poetry served as the testing ground for the translational approach that came to be widely associated with the Buber-Rosenzweig Bible translation. The "scriptural" quality Rosenzweig saw in Halevi's poetry apparently led him to undertake the Bible translation several years later.) Rosenzweig's notes on the poems discuss this intrinsic connection between the medieval Hebrew poet's work and the Hebrew Bible and suggest that this connection had particular potency for Rosenzweig. He sought to create, through the translation of Halevi's Hebrew poetry, a German in which the classical Hebrew of Jewish scripture and liturgy formed the horizons of the German language-field. The language of the Hebrew Bible was to provide German with the vocabulary, cadences, and reference points that had been marginalized before. The political implications of this enterprise come into view as we analyze Rosenzweig's remarks—both on the distinctive qualities of Halevi's poetry and on the relation of these qualities to the Bible.

The note on the first poem presented Rosenzweig with his first opportunity to allude to his new approach. The poem corresponding to the note, which Rosenzweig titled "Praised!" (*Gelobt!*), is a translation of Halevi's "Yah shimkha aromemekha" ("God, I Will Exalt Your Name"). Although the poem is too lengthy to reproduce here, the first stanzas of Rosenzweig's rendering (and Barbara Galli's English translation of them) give us a sense of Rosenzweig's tone:

Ja Herr Dich	Yes, Lord, You
dich rühme ich;	You I praise;
dein Recht, durch mich	your justice, through
leucht' es weit.	me may it shine widely.
Horch, ein Ton—	Hark, a tone—
gehorch ich schon,	I obey already,
Frage schmilzt	question melts away
und Widerstreit.	and strife.
Und glich' es dem	And was it not as
nicht, wie wenn Lehm	if the clay
den Töpfer: „Was	accused the potter
Tust du!“ zieht?	“What are you doing?”

Des ich verlang,
den ich empfang
zu Turm und Wehr
und Sicherheit:

All-um glühnd,
Geleucht aussprühnd,
schleierlos,
verhangbefreit—

Daß gelobt,
O daß umkränzt,
O daß gerühmt
er, und geweiht.

Whom I desired,
whom I received
as a tower and defense
and security:

Shining all around,
sending forth light,
without a veil
freed of a cover—

That he be praised
Oh that he be garlanded
Oh that he be extolled
and consecrated.²⁹

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The four-fold refrain that closes these stanzas is Rosenzweig's rendering of Halevi's *yishtabakh ve-yitpaer ve-yitromem ve-yitnase* ("may he be praised, glorified, extolled, and exalted"). These words echo the Kaddish, a resonant prayer in Jewish liturgy. Cohn, in *Ein Diwan*, excised the refrain entirely. Rosenzweig, by contrast, retained and visually offset the recurring chorus for emphasis. In his note on the poem, Rosenzweig pointedly remarked,

The refrain here is, as is often the case, the nucleus of the poem, the point that every stanza empties out into and the one which determines its course. . . . Thus it is no coincidence that both the earliest and the most recent translators have simply left out the refrain, apparently because it repeats five times and therefore must be "tiresome."³⁰

The critique is clear. Rosenzweig insisted that repetition was an irreducible aspect of the experience that the poem could incite in the reader. In doing so, he insinuated that those who, like Cohn, found Halevi's repetitions "tiresome" rejected precisely what made this poetry uniquely potent.

Rosenzweig's emphasis on and revaluing of the supposed blemishes of Halevi's verse forged a distinctive aesthetic, one Rosenzweig described, in speaking of one of the poems, as "unpoetic-superpoetic" (*undichterisch-überdichterisch*).³¹ This aesthetic placed a premium on literal, even hyperliteral, translation, even or especially for features of the original that the translator might otherwise be tempted to smooth over so as to accommodate the text to the target language's conventions. Rosenzweig claimed this approach was simply the one best suited to the poetry, but it grew out of his eagerness to reject what he perceived as

bourgeois literary convention, in which a repeated phrase would more likely be found redundant than essential.

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This attitude moved Rosenzweig toward the distinctive style of translation that culminated in the Bible translation, a project that gained much attention for its deliberately awkward—or, as Rosenzweig argued, its authentically Hebraic—vocabulary and style. In the Bible translation, Buber and Rosenzweig both developed a style that emphasized the distinctive economy of biblical Hebrew. Their invention of neologisms and their insistent use of highly unusual German phrasing and word choice were, for them, necessary accommodations to the original text. All of these efforts aimed to force the reader to appreciate the recurring linguistic patterns in the Bible.³² Just as Rosenzweig portrayed Halevi's poems as "unpoetic-superpoetic," so too would he eventually call the Bible "unaesthetic-superaesthetic," and "poetic only against its will."³³ This aesthetic, much debated by cultural critics as the Bible translation began to appear, has been described by Peter Gordon as "archaic modernism"³⁴ and rightly recognized as an expression of modernism rather than a simple rejection of it. Rosenzweig's insistence on retaining the "repetitions" in Halevi's poem represented the first step toward this translational approach.

Rosenzweig's determination to preserve the "tiresome," repetitive Hebrew in spite of the dictates of "good taste" was the product of an aesthetic agenda, but it was an agenda bolstered by social and political concerns. As stated in the book's afterword, Rosenzweig's goal was "not to Germanize what is foreign but to make foreign what is German" (*nicht das Fremde einzudeutschen, sondern das Deutsche umzufremden*).³⁵ He believed that the retention of what he claimed were the characteristic elements in Halevi's poetry amounted to an act of defiance and even of cultural resistance. He constructed this distinctiveness in his translations as emblematic of a more important cause: the ability of the difference and "otherness" of Hebrew to persist in the dominant German environment. This agenda first appeared in *Hymns and Poems* and then gained full expression in the Bible translation and Rosenzweig's working papers on the latter project (published in *Die Schrift und ihre Verdeutschung*).³⁶ In both cases, Rosenzweig's main concern was to demand recognition, rather than assimilation, of the "foreignness" that, he claimed, inhabited the German linguistic field. His goal in this effort reached beyond the limited aims of what we might be tempted to call multiculturalism; rather, in seeking to "foreignize" German (*das Deutsche umzufremden*), Rosenzweig sought a kind of reverse assimilation, in which the Hebrew (and, by tacit extension, the Jewish) would modify the German. The echoes of a

broader debate on the proper strategy for perpetuating Jewish existence in the dominant German environment, though never explicit, are resonant within this argument.

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***Musivstil* as Exilic Consciousness**

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Rosenzweig's signature translational style was first developed through his work on Halevi. This style informed the approach to the Bible that was more widely read—and often decried—by contemporaneous critics and recent scholars alike.³⁷ But this connection between the two bodies of literature was, for Rosenzweig, not incidental but organic and unified.

The link between the poetry of Halevi and the Bible centered on the prominence of “inlaid style” (*Musivstil*) in Halevi's poetry. *Musivstil* refers to the heavily intertextual element of medieval Hebrew poetry vis-à-vis the Bible, in which passages from the Bible are “inlaid,” as in a mosaic, within the poem.³⁸ Halevi's poetry, like that of other medieval Andalusian Hebrew poets, is steeped in the widely recognized convention of tessellation (*shibuts*). For Rosenzweig, this stylistic feature of Halevi's poetry revealed a critical and characteristic element of Jewish Andalusian poetry: “It [medieval Spanish Hebrew poetry] allows itself what is effective in language [*Sprachwirkliche*], only what is—provable in Scripture. ‘Scripture’ [*die ‘Schrift’*], not ‘language’ [*die ‘Sprache’*], is the norm here.”³⁹

It was not so much the literary as the philosophical implications of tessellation that interested Rosenzweig. In his eyes, Halevi's reliance on *Musivstil* gave his poetry an exilic quality in which the poet's primary reference points were not his own contemporary circumstances but the biblical world from which he had been temporally and geographically exiled. Rosenzweig's attention to the way Halevi exiled himself from the surrounding world through the use of biblical references reveals his attempt to define an alternative locus and orientation for contemporary Jewish-German life in his own era.

For Rosenzweig, *Musivstil* proposed a mandate for a mode of being in the world that Rosenzweig himself sought to develop. On the basis of the prevalence of biblical allusion in medieval Jewish Andalusian poetry, Rosenzweig concluded, “All Jewish poetry in exile refuses to ignore its being-in-exile [*ihr im-Exil-Sein*].”⁴⁰ *Musivstil* revealed this quality of Jewish existence, for Rosenzweig, because the “inlaid style” interrupts and fragments the present of the poem and, by extension, the poet's present, with biblical references. Although it might just as

easily be concluded that this form of intertextuality in fact assimilates the biblical past into the present and harmonizes it with the poet's post-biblical reality, Rosenzweig draws the opposite conclusion: Musivstil amounts to "exiling of the surrounding world" through "the constant pressure of the scriptures."⁴¹ Note here that, in Rosenzweig's conception, the Jewish poet participates in enacting this exile: he or she drives out the world so as to reside in the text. The task, Rosenzweig concludes, is not to end the exile but to preserve it; not to flourish in spite of it but to flourish because of it. Rosenzweig ignores the historical circumstances that resulted in exile as a condition and instead seizes on an exilic Jewish consciousness that, in his view, medieval poetry not only exhibits but actively creates:

This exiling of the surrounding world is achieved through the persistent presence of the scriptural word. With it, another [world] thrusts itself in front of the surrounding one and reduces the latter to an appearance, or more precisely, to a parable [*Gleichnis*]. Thus it is not that the scriptural word is drawn upon, in the manner of a parable, as an illustration of the life of the present, but exactly the opposite: events serve as an elucidation of the scriptural word and become the parable of it. Thus the relationship is exactly the opposite of what we imagine from the expression "inlaid style." . . . When a Jewish poet represents Christianity and Islam with Edom and Ishmael, he is not commenting on the present on the basis of scripture, but rather on scripture on the basis of the present.⁴²

On the surface, this critical passage defines what Rosenzweig holds to be the essential characteristic of Hebrew medieval poetry: the use of scriptural allusions and metaphors to overtake the contemporary world, subordinating it to the world of the Bible. But the significance of this statement goes far beyond the scope of literary history. Rosenzweig proposes none other than an ideal relation between the world of ordinary language and ordinary historical time, on the one hand, and the world of biblical language and the mythical axes on which the biblical world turns, on the other. For Rosenzweig, Halevi achieved this ideal: his vocabulary was "essentially purely biblical," yet his poetry, like liturgy, transformed the words of the Bible into living speech, much as "a word that appears in daily prayer is familiar even if the concordance lists it as a *hapax legomenon*,"⁴³ a word that appears only once in the biblical lexicon.

Rosenzweig saw the poet's achievement as that of quickening the biblical vocabulary with the breath of his own life and speech and thus turning it into an orientation in the world. By placing the words

of the Bible within the poetry of medieval Andalusia, Halevi had, in Rosenzweig's eyes, created not so much a synthesis as a form of resistance. Rosenzweig, in turn, aimed to give new life to Halevi's words in contemporary German and thus to set forth a model of Jewish exilic consciousness, in which he, like the poet, would resist incorporation or assimilation into the dominant cultural sphere by making the German foreign to itself (*das Deutsche umzufremden*). In doing so, Rosenzweig ironically conformed to the pattern of Weimar Jewish intellectuals who claimed to distance themselves from the very culture in which they were fully apart.⁴⁴

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The Scriptural Zion

The scriptural, exilic consciousness that Rosenzweig attempted to forge with *Hymns and Poems* is illustrated most forcefully in how he addressed the question of home and homelessness. The relation of the poet and pilgrim to the Holy Land had been a focal point for interpreters of Halevi since the beginning of the Jewish Enlightenment, when the predominance of Zion-themed poems and Halevi's own biography served as lightning rods for questions of home, exile, diaspora, and acculturation. These nineteenth-century interpretations informed the contours of Rosenzweig's reading of Zion in Halevi. Yet Rosenzweig's novel, almost existentialist interpretation of "Zion" in the Halevi poems is entirely his own. Rosenzweig's commentary on the poems concerning Zion serves as a rich source for understanding how he aimed to excavate the scriptural layer of Halevi's poetry and rebuild it as an alternative locus for Jewish-German belonging. Moreover, Rosenzweig's notes on Zion both amplify and shift the tone of his better-known remarks in *The Star of Redemption* toward a concept of a "scriptural" Zion.

The poems in *Hymns and Poems* were organized around four sub-headings: "God," "Soul," "People" (*Volk*), and "Zion."⁴⁵ Besides the inclusion of the afterword and notes, Rosenzweig's edition differed in significant ways from previous German editions of Halevi's poetry. The loosely constructed, almost impressionist format and style Rosenzweig chose for the volume not only departed quite deliberately from Cohn's edition but also diverged from every printed collection of Halevi's poetry with which Rosenzweig was likely familiar, such as the editions edited by Samuel Luzzatto and by Heinrich Brody.⁴⁶ Yet its content was shaped in great measure by tensions inherited from a century of contradictory Jewish encounters with Halevi and what he seemed to represent, from the Enlightenment through Weimar.

Scholars who have studied the reception of Halevi have noted that a wide variety of post-Enlightenment readers found in him what they hoped to find.⁴⁷ This seems particularly true for appropriations of Halevi concerning social and political orientations toward, or away from, the “holy land.” Throughout the nineteenth century, as Adam Shear has observed, a “‘cosmopolitan’ Halevi coexisted with a ‘nationalistic’ Halevi.”⁴⁸ For maskilic readers such as Luzzatto, Leopold Zunz, and others, Halevi was the paragon of a thriving diaspora Jew, whose cosmopolitan yet fiercely particularistic poetry represented the possibility of flourishing in two cultures at once. This “cosmopolitan” Halevi was identified with the “Golden Age” of Spain, an era idealized by German-Jewish maskilim as “a paradigmatic model of Jewish integration and acculturation.”⁴⁹ Maskilic interest led to the publication, for the first time, of collections of Halevi’s poetic works (which had until then been known only via their inclusion in the daily and holiday prayer books of local communities).⁵⁰

The “nationalist” Halevi, meanwhile, was favored as the Zionist movement took root in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. A resurgence of romantic nationalism attracted Jewish philosophers and activists to Halevi once again, but for different purposes from those that motivated the maskilim. For some Jewish intellectuals such as Isaac Breuer, Halevi’s famous philosophical work, the *Kuzari*, became the focal point of interest during the 1920s as new justifications for Jewish particularity were sought out. David Myers has explained this philosophical interest in Halevi as “a form of dissent from the ideal of Enlightenment rationalism, whose celebrated prototype was Maimonides.”⁵¹ Indeed, in the climate of deep disillusionment following the Great War, the *Kuzari*’s lack of emphasis on human reason in the schema of redemption resonated deeply among some Jewish religious thinkers. And turn-of-the-century Zionist thinkers found in the figure of Halevi himself, especially as pilgrim to the Holy Land, a source for their own efforts to make a Jewish homeland in Palestine a tangible reality. Halevi’s image as a passionate defender of a particularist Jewish identity and the role of divine providence in Jewish history appealed to the Hibbat Tsiyon movement, whose poets glorified Halevi in their search for their own ideological predecessors.⁵²

Rosenzweig’s reading adds another layer to this complex history of interpretation. Like the maskilim, Rosenzweig embraced Halevi as a model of diasporic Jewish life. Like the romantic nationalists, Rosenzweig gravitated toward Halevi’s unapologetically essentialist concept of Jewish peoplehood. And just as Zionist readers seized on Halevi’s longing to make his home in Zion, Rosenzweig was drawn to the poet’s

story of pilgrimage to the holy land. Yet Rosenzweig's take on Halevi cannot be reduced to any of these readings. Rather, he saw in Halevi the model for the construction of a scriptural world, in which the words of the Hebrew Bible and Jewish liturgy would create a distinctive and textually oriented world within the diaspora. Nowhere does Rosenzweig's unique take on Halevi come into view as sharply as in his struggle to interpret the meaning of Zion.

The first several notes on the poems in the "Zion" section focus on the specifically future-oriented nature of the messianic hope for Zion. The note on the poem "The Good News" ("Die Frohe Botschaft")—Rosenzweig's chosen title is striking—focuses on Jewish messianic expectations and hopes, declaring, "For rightfully has [Halevi's] publisher Luzzatto assumed—Geiger's opposition and that of others has not convinced me—that it arose under the immediate influence of news about the appearance of a messianic pretender." The comment seeks to make clear that messianic hopes—even the hope in a false messiah—must be taken utterly seriously. Rosenzweig's point is not historical but metahistorical; continuing on, he writes that the expectation of the Messiah (*Erwartung des Messias*) is that "because of which and for the sake of which Judaism lives."⁵³

A comparison to *Star* is instructive. Readers of that work will recall that Rosenzweig declared the Jewish people to be "the eternal people" who "bind creation as a whole to redemption while redemption is still to come."⁵⁴ This group alone constitutes a "community of fate," a "redeemed community" that uniquely enacts the possibility of living "with God."⁵⁵ The Jewish people's fundamental inability to have any territorial foothold in space and its existence outside of the history of the nations demonstrate this community's anticipatory enactment of redemption. In the Halevi book, elements of this view find greater elaboration and definition: *Star*'s emphasis on the Jewish people's unique manifestation or modeling of redemption is secondary to the people's longing for redemption, which now receives fuller accentuation. In *Hymns and Poems*, the Jews' exilic, diasporic condition is their eternal burden and *raison d'être*; Jewish expectation of the Messiah leads neither the Jews nor the world as a whole closer to the telos of history. (The Christians of *Star*, eternally "on the way" in their progression toward redemption, served to draw the world toward its telos in that work.) The note on the next poem, "The Calculation of Salvation,"⁵⁶ confirms this observation. Rosenzweig focuses on the repeated despair of arriving at the calculated time of the Messiah's arrival and the renewed faith that comes in the wake of the deferral of redemption. His note suggests that Jews' continually potent yet unful-

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filled hopes for the messiah's imminent arrival must *remain* unfulfilled in order for Judaism to retain its meaning.⁵⁷

[144] In the notes immediately following, Rosenzweig establishes a link between the Jews' eternally frustrated messianic expectations and the hope for Zion. Here again a comparison with *Star* is instructive. In that work, Rosenzweig wrote of the Jewish people, "The land is in the deepest sense theirs only as a land of its longing—a holy land."⁵⁸ In his remarks on Halevi's poetry, the theme of longing and unattainability emerges once again, but the holy land is now tied explicitly to the Jewish scriptural and liturgical imagination and textual tradition. For instance, in his note on "In the Sanctuary" ("Elohai mishkenotekha yedidot"), Rosenzweig writes, "The longing for Zion of the Jewish people has never been merely the longing of those who toil for rest, but always also the desire for a higher life from a debased one."⁵⁹ Zion, in other words, is the "higher form of life" that is longed for, yet unattainable. Yet if Zion is unrealizable as a worldly, geopolitical, national reality, it nonetheless can attain an altogether different yet visceral reality as it is conjured through words of the prayer book, in which the prophetic hope in Zion is alive. Rosenzweig writes that the liturgy of the Sabbath and holidays is recited at the time when "the prayers for earthly needs should be silent" (*die Bitten irdischer Bedürftigkeit schweigen sollen*). The liturgy for those days, which calls for God's grace to "return to Zion" and for the reestablishment of the Temple sacrifices, is the textual locus in which Zion truly comes to life. No less important, this liturgy is the temporal locus for the realization of Zion. We note here that Rosenzweig draws an opposition between Zion and the "earthly needs" of unhallowed daily life. It may thus be concluded that, for Rosenzweig, when these temporal needs are silenced—that is, when messianic time reigns—Zion emerges in full force.

This other-worldly role for Zion stands in direct opposition to the view of cultural and political Zionists for whom the biblical and prophetic call to Zion was to be answered by creating a territory for the very earthly needs of real people. For Rosenzweig, a territorial home in Zion was neither, as for Herzl, a practical answer to the perennial problem of antisemitism (a topic Rosenzweig rarely broached)⁶⁰ nor, as for Ahad Ha-am, a solution to the spiritual fragmentation of the Jewish people. It was, rather, the "miracle" promised by the prophets as the time, not place, of messianic fulfillment. Rosenzweig writes, "For miracles remain ever out of reach when a 'where' seeks them. They want to be conjured with a 'when.'"⁶¹ Zion was, for Rosenzweig, just such a "miracle": conjured in time but not in space.

Zion as Telos

Given his reluctance to accord Zion a place in earthly space and historical time, the challenge before Rosenzweig was clear: how could he convincingly interpret the ardent expressions of longing for “Zion” that pervade Halevi’s poetry? According to legend, Halevi’s deep, personal yearning for the actual land associated with the biblical and prophetic writings led him to undertake a dangerous voyage to the holy land near the end of his life. In the famous story of his last days, Halevi arrived in Jerusalem in his old age only to be slain while beholding the gates of the city.

Historians have long agreed that Halevi died in Egypt, not at the gates of Jerusalem. But Rosenzweig was drawn to the legend nonetheless. In choosing to make it central to his interpretation of the poet and his end, Rosenzweig abandoned critical scholarship to follow instead a precedent set by the imagination of Jewish poets as diverse as Heinrich Heine and Micah Joseph Lebensohn, for whom Halevi’s end claimed an integral place in their portrayals of him.⁶² Rosenzweig could not resist the lure of the legend. Yet he had to neutralize the claims of the “nationalists” for a Halevi made in the Zionist image, and in this endeavor he had to confront the pilgrim’s longing for the actual place—the geographic, spatial Zion, rather than the merely imagined, temporalized Zion. To this end, Rosenzweig recast Halevi’s ardent yearning for the earthly Zion into a longing for the end of both the poet’s own personal history and the end of earthly time itself.

A revealing line in Rosenzweig’s commentary suggests how he accomplished this feat. He writes, “The poet, as did many thousands in later centuries, takes the wish to die in Jerusalem with personal seriousness.”⁶³ Rosenzweig chose his words with care: Halevi did not wish to *live* but rather to *die* in Jerusalem. In a parallel to the messianic telos that awaits the Jewish people at the end of time, Rosenzweig imbricates Zion with the poet’s personal death and expectation of it.

The emphasis on death as the apex of the journey to the holy land pervades this section. In making his journey, Rosenzweig writes, Halevi “gives up on a world that is living to him” out of his “longing for the living God.”⁶⁴ The “final goal” of his journey, in Rosenzweig’s view, was “the grave in the holy earth.”⁶⁵ In Rosenzweig’s retelling, Halevi was determined to survive and persist in his life until he reached his destination, but, on his arrival, his death in the holy land occurred immediately. On a narrative level, Halevi’s death *had* to occur, for Rosenzweig, upon beholding the vision of Jerusalem: the

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longing that gave the plot its dramatic tension was resolved and thus the protagonist was rendered superfluous.

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This theme reaches its apex in the final comment on the last poem in the volume, where Rosenzweig underscores the necessity of the journey to Jerusalem as culminating in death, not life. The comment on the poem entitled “Ode to Zion” (Halevi’s famous “Tsiyon halo tishali,” included in the liturgy for Tisha b’Av) expresses this certitude, closing the volume with the following words:

One is used to dismissing as a legend the story that Yehudah Halevi—at the goal of his pilgrimage, in view of the holy city—was slain by an Arab with this song on his lips. It is one, without a doubt. But there is still less doubt that the story could not have been much different. This poem must have accompanied the one who composed it into his hour of death. It does not leave room for anything else.⁶⁶

Rosenzweig’s book has no use for Halevi’s biography until the very last page: the volume meets its end as Halevi meets his. But the final note resounds not only with death but also with Zion and the inextricable connection between them. Zion, like the messianic era it stands for, remains reachable only at the point of death or in death, an imagined future that always eludes while orienting the present. In Rosenzweig’s view, “Zion,” like the final poem composed in its honor, “does not leave room” for anything but the hour of death.

The culmination of *Hymns and Poems* in death had clear personal and existential resonance for Rosenzweig. He embarked on the project of translating the poems from Halevi’s Diwan not long after he received a diagnosis of amyotrophic lateral sclerosis and was told he would not survive the year. In the face of this dire news, Rosenzweig dove into his work on Halevi with great enthusiasm. Although he lived seven years more with the progressively debilitating condition, a consciousness of imminent mortality suffuses the commentary on Halevi that Rosenzweig produced.⁶⁷

It would be a gross simplification, however, to reduce Rosenzweig’s insistence on death as the telos, and not merely the end, of life to his confrontation with his own mortality. The solution he arrived at—Zion as the permissible object of collective orientation but the impossible goal of political activity—forms its own “poetics of exile,” to use the term favored by Sidra DeKoven Ezrahi.⁶⁸ Ezrahi claims that twentieth-century Jewish literature is marked by a deep ambivalence toward the fulfillment of the longing for the holy land. This ambivalence expresses itself through a “diasporic consciousness” that suffuses both pre- and

postwar European Jewish literature. From Sholem Aleichem to Paul Celan and even to Philip Roth, an orientation toward Zion, the holy land, and finally the State of Israel itself contends with a profound rejection of the possibility of ever finding a home in this world.

This is precisely the paradoxical impulse toward Zion that animates Rosenzweig's *Hymns and Poems*. His allegiance was to the Zion of song, lament, and supplication; to Zion as individual, communal, and cosmic telos. Though he had little interest in *Zionism*, Rosenzweig engaged the Zion of the biblical and liturgical imagination.⁶⁹ He aimed to rekindle the diasporic meaning of Zion by insisting that only by longing for the Zion of the scriptural text could the truly utopian (literally, "nowhere") meaning of the place be fulfilled. Rosenzweig's interpretation and appropriation of Halevi thus marks this volume as the expression of a unique diaspora consciousness.

In the course of time, Rosenzweig softened his position on Zionism yet further. Calling himself a "non-Zionist," he neither opposed the creation of a cultural, political, and economic center in Palestine nor endorsed it. In a remarkable exchange of letters in 1927, Rosenzweig publicly criticized his interlocutor, Benno Jacob, for trivializing the Jewish hope in the Messiah and severing this hope completely from the activities of settlers in Palestine.⁷⁰ In the correspondence between the two, subsequently published in *Der Jude* in 1928 as "Letters of a Non-Zionist to an Anti-Zionist," Rosenzweig declared that he did "not begrudge contemporary Palestine its 'factories and highways,'"⁷¹ and he admitted that he was "impressed" by the closing of shops in Tel Aviv on the Sabbath.⁷² The prophets, he declared, spoke about "an *earthly* Zion of the future. . . . The eternity that we Jews mean lies not in the indefinite future, but in the 'soon, in our days.' What comes only in eternity . . . comes not at all."⁷³ And though Rosenzweig could not himself believe in the imminence of this future, or in the building of a territorial land as a means to it, he greatly admired this belief in others and held that a messianic yet "earthly" Zion was the true meaning of the biblical promise. Even if one did not believe that this promise would be realized within one's lifetime, he held, it was nonetheless a duty to pray that it would arrive tomorrow. A letter to Jacob states this position unequivocally:

I cannot say exactly how I think of the messianic future. But that is hardly counter-evidence. When it is time, the details will emerge. I am not naïve enough to be able to imagine the occurrence of peace among nations and groups without a radical recreation of human nature, one that is, viewed from today, incredible. *That I have a belief in such a future I*

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owe to the siddur [Sabbath prayer book] *and mahzor* [holiday prayer book].
*I cannot expunge Zion from this belief.*⁷⁴

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The “Zion” section of the Halevi volume is Rosenzweig’s most developed and nuanced elaboration of this declaration. It served as the site in which exilic consciousness and scriptural thinking met; together, they became the foundation for a new type of Jewish orientation in the world.

Conclusion

Rosenzweig’s most sympathetic readers responded to his effort to create a new Jewish language, drawn from the textual sources of antiquity, in German. In her laudatory review of *Sixty Hymns and Poems of Yehudah Halevi*, published in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* in October 1924, the journalist and essayist Margarete Susman argued that the success of the volume rested on Rosenzweig’s overall conception of language. The experiment in “making the German foreign” was successful, she concluded: the poems “are German—totally and only German—but it is a German that we didn’t know before,” Susman wrote. For all the similarities to the experimental, high-modernist poetry of Stefan George—to which frequent comparisons were made by reviewers of the Halevi book and by Rosenzweig himself—Susman argued that Rosenzweig’s work contained something that George’s lacked: “the expression of an objectivity and breadth of the religious realm . . . which announces itself in ever new forms.” This was accomplished, in her view, by virtue of the fact that the translation had “immediately created its own language.” Susman continued,

When [Rosenzweig] says in his *Star of Redemption*: “Language is truly the wedding-gift [*Morgengabe*] of God to humanity,” it is so, as if he had wanted to bring out his conviction clearly in the translation of these songs. . . . We will feel in these powerful melodies both voices, the one of the “once” and that of now, clasped directly together. Visions of biblical power find their form in newly forged words.⁷⁵

This, for Rosenzweig, was surely the highest praise that could have been bestowed on him.⁷⁶ Susman’s enthusiastic response to the Halevi translation signaled the success, at least among like-minded readers, of his concept: the creation of a new German language, oriented toward the Hebrew of the Bible, which could provide the building blocks of a Jewish home that would exist on the page, in the word, in

speech. This new German linguistic realm would be, in addition, an *unheimlich* home, foreign to the wider German society and at the same time home to Jews for perhaps the first time since the advent of modernity in Germany.⁷⁷ Halevi's poetry provided the model for the endeavor that was paralleled in Rosenzweig's leadership of the Lehrhaus and that would ultimately continue in the translation of the Bible into German. It was an attempt to fashion a distinctive Jewish language out of the past in order to express both the longings for and the belonging to a home in exile.

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Notes

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- 1 Letter 843 (Jan. 12, 1923) to Joseph Prager, in Franz Rosenzweig, *Gesammelte Schriften I: Briefe und Tagebücher*, 2 vols. (Haag, 1979), 2: 878.
- 2 Emil Bernhard Cohn, *Ein Diwan [von] Jehuda Halevi, Übertragen und mit einem Lebensbild versehen von Emil Bernhard [Cohn]* (Berlin, 1920).
- 3 Franz Rosenzweig, *Sechzig Hymnen und Gedichte des Jehuda Halevis* (Konstanz, 1924). The second edition was published three years later as Franz Rosenzweig, *Zweiundneunzig Hymnen und Gedichte des Jehuda Halevis* (Berlin, 1927).
- 4 The principal exception is Barbara E. Galli, *Franz Rosenzweig and Jehuda Halevi: Translating, Translations, and Translators* (Montreal, 1995). A second translation into English was published as Franz Rosenzweig, *Ninety-Two Poems and Hymns of Yehuda Halevi*, ed. Richard Cohen, trans. Thomas A. Kovach, Eva Jospe, and Gilya Gerda Schmidt (Albany, N.Y., 2000). See also Michael Oppenheim, "The Halevi Book," *Modern Judaism* 19, no. 1 (1999).
- 5 After Rosenzweig's death in 1929, Buber continued to translate the remainder of the Bible, completing the project in 1961.
- 6 See Letter 421 (Aug. 21, 1917) to Trudi Oppenheim, in Rosenzweig, *Gesammelte Schriften I*, 1: 432. Ellipses and emphasis in original.
- 7 Letter 1245 (June 5, 1929) in *ibid.*, 2: 1216. Halevi's patronymic was ben Shmuel. Rosenzweig's father's Hebrew name was Samuel, as was Halevi's father's name; his own Hebrew name was Levi. Rosenzweig here builds on the tradition of naming a son after a deceased grandfather; his logic is that Judah (which means "lion") is the true equivalent of Louis — not

- Levi, which is the Hebrew name Franz was given. Although he was not a Levite (a descendent of the ancient cast of Temple caretakers known until today by the added name “haLevi” [the Levite]), Rosenzweig adds the Hebrew name he was given to the name he “should have” been given. Since his grandfather’s name was Louis, his “proper” or rightful name, Rosenzweig argued, was Yehudah ben Shmuel haLevi.
- 8 Letter 841 (Dec. 20, 1922) to Buber, in *ibid.*, 2: 875.
 - 9 Letter 941 (June 17, 1924) to Buber, in *ibid.*, 2: 973.
 - 10 Letter 900 (Jan. 8, 1924) to Buber, in *ibid.*, 2: 938.
 - 11 I thank Peter Gordon for his insight about the resemblance to the organization of the Talmud page.
 - 12 “Yonat rehokim,” in Dov Jarden, ed., *Shirei ha-kodesh le-rabi Yehudah ha-Levi: Al pi kitvei yad u-defusim, im perush, mekorot u-makbilot, mavo, maftet-hot, milon u-bibliyografyah* (Jerusalem, 1978), 764.
 - 13 Letter 858 (Mar. 1923) to Martin Buber, in Rosenzweig, *Gesammelte Schriften I*, 2: 900–901.
 - 14 Robert Alter, *Necessary Angels: Tradition and Modernity in Kafka, Benjamin, and Scholem* (Cambridge, Mass., 1991), 105.
 - 15 Peter Gordon discusses this phenomenon in relation to the Bible translation in his *Rosenzweig and Heidegger: Between Judaism and German Philosophy* (Berkeley, 2003).
 - 16 Rosenzweig’s cryptic explanation for his choice to emphasize the “religious” or liturgical poems is found in Franz Rosenzweig, *Gesammelte Schriften IV*, vol. 1, *Sprachdenken im Übersetzen: Jehuda Halevi. Fünfundneunzig Hymnen und Gedichte, Deutsch und Hebräisch*, 3rd ed. (The Hague, 1983), 15, and Galli, *Rosenzweig and Halevi*, 182.
 - 17 For a detailed discussion of Rosenzweig’s antihistoricism, see David Myers, *Resisting History: Historicism and Its Discontents in German-Jewish Thought* (Princeton, 2004).
 - 18 On German-Jewish hermeneutics in the early twentieth century, see Steven Kepnes, *The Text as Thou: Martin Buber’s Dialogical Hermeneutics and Narrative Theology* (Bloomington, Ind., 1992).
 - 19 See Friedrich Nietzsche, “On the Use and Disadvantage of History for Life,” in *Untimely Meditations: Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy* (New York, 1997).
 - 20 Franz Rosenzweig, *Der Tischdank* (Berlin, 1920).
 - 21 Letter 621 (Jan. 13, 1920) to Edith Hahn, in Rosenzweig, *Gesammelte Schriften I*, 2: 659.
 - 22 Franz Rosenzweig, *On Jewish Learning* (New York, 1965).
 - 23 For further analysis of “The Builders,” see Arnold M. Eisen, *Rethinking Modern Judaism: Ritual, Commandment, Community* (Chicago, 1998), chap. 7.
 - 24 Franz Rosenzweig, “The New Thinking,” in *Philosophical and Theological Writings*, ed. Paul W. Franks and Michael L. Morgan (Indianapolis, 2000), 131.
 - 25 Letter 849 (Feb. 4, 1923) to Martin Buber, in Rosenzweig, *Gesammelte Schriften I*, 2: 659.

- 26 See Rosenzweig's comments on this concept in his "Die Schrift und Luther," in *Die Schrift und ihre Verdeutschung*, ed. Martin Buber (Berlin, 1936), 53, and his "Scripture and Luther," in *Scripture and Translation*, ed. Lawrence Rosenwald and Everett Fox (Bloomington, Ind., 1994), 49. I discuss this concept at length in "Franz Rosenzweig and Scripture" (Ph.D. diss., Stanford University, 2005), chap. 3.
- 27 See Amir Eshel, "Von Kafka Bis Celan: Deutsch-Jüdische Schriftsteller und ihr Verhältnis zum Hebräischen und Jiddischen," in *Jüdische Sprachen in deutscher Umwelt: Hebräisch und Jiddisch von der Aufklärung bis ins 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. Michael Brenner (Göttingen, 2002), 96–97.
- 28 See Siegfried Kracauer, "The Bible in German," in *The Mass Ornament*, ed. Thomas Levin (Cambridge, Mass., 1995), and Ernest Rubinstein, *An Episode of Jewish Romanticism: Franz Rosenzweig's "The Star of Redemption"* (Albany, N.Y., 1999). On modernism in Rosenzweig, see Zachary Braiterman, *The Shape of Revelation: Aesthetics and Modern Jewish Thought* (Stanford, 2007), and Gordon, *Rosenzweig and Heidegger*.
- 29 Rosenzweig is referring to the poem "Yah shimkha aromemekha," in Jarden, ed., *Shirei ha-kodesh*, 30. See Rosenzweig, *Gesammelte Schriften IV*, 1: 22, and Galli, *Rosenzweig and Halevi*, 10–11.
- 30 Rosenzweig, *Gesammelte Schriften IV*, 1: 25; Galli, *Rosenzweig and Halevi*, 185.
- 31 Galli, *Rosenzweig and Halevi*, 251; Rosenzweig, *Gesammelte Schriften IV*, 1: 181.
- 32 Buber and Rosenzweig attributed significance and intentionality to these repetitions without ever making explicit claims about the authorship of the Bible. For their attempt to negotiate this issue, see the chapter "Naïve Narrative in a Disenchanted Age: Rosenzweig on Scripture, 1925–1929," in Benjamin, "Franz Rosenzweig and Scripture."
- 33 Letter 1154 (May 30, 1927) to Trudi Oppenheim, in Rosenzweig, *Gesammelte Schriften I*, 2: 1153. See also Letter 1173 (Sept. 2, 1927) to Martin Buber, in *ibid.*, 2: 1171.
- 34 For "archaic modernism" in the Bible translation, see Gordon, *Rosenzweig and Heidegger*. For other treatments of the aesthetics and philosophy of the Bible translation, see Martin Jay, "Politics of Translation: Siegfried Kracauer and Walter Benjamin on the Buber-Rosenzweig Bible," *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 21 (1976), and Leora Batnitzky, *Idolatry and Representation: The Thought of Franz Rosenzweig Reconsidered* (Princeton, 2000).
- 35 Galli, *Rosenzweig and Halevi*, 169–70; Rosenzweig, *Gesammelte Schriften IV*, 1: 2.
- 36 Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig, *Die Schrift und ihre Verdeutschung* (Berlin, 1936). Translation published as Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig, *Scripture and Translation*, ed. and trans. Lawrence Rosenwald and Everett Fox (Bloomington, Ind., 1994).
- 37 Rosenzweig's approach to translating the Bible has been discussed at length in Batnitzky, *Idolatry and Representation*; Jay, "Politics of Translation"; and Gordon, *Rosenzweig and Heidegger*.

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- 38 See Ross Brann, *The Compunctious Poet: Cultural Ambiguity and Hebrew Poetry in Muslim Spain* (Baltimore, Md., 1991), 24.
- 39 Rosenzweig, *Gesammelte Schriften IV*, 1: 166; Galli, *Rosenzweig and Halevi*, 244–45.
- 40 Rosenzweig, *Gesammelte Schriften IV*, 1: 10; Galli, *Rosenzweig and Halevi*, 177. Peter Gordon has analyzed similar statements of Rosenzweig's, found in letters to Rudolf Hallo from 1921 and 1922 in Gordon, *Rosenzweig and Heidegger*, 219.
- 41 Rosenzweig, *Gesammelte Schriften IV*, 1: 10; Galli, *Rosenzweig and Halevi*, 177.
- 42 Rosenzweig, *Gesammelte Schriften IV*, 1: 10; Galli, *Rosenzweig and Halevi*, 177.
- 43 Rosenzweig, *Gesammelte Schriften IV*, 1: 12; Galli, *Rosenzweig and Halevi*, 179.
- 44 This trope has been analyzed famously in Peter Gay, *Weimar Culture: The Outsider as Insider* (Westport, Conn., 1981). For more specific discussions of this phenomenon in Rosenzweig, see Gordon, *Rosenzweig and Heidegger*.
- 45 Of the 60 poems in the first edition of Rosenzweig's translation—he expanded it to include 32 more poems in the second (1927) edition—almost half were poems presented to the same readership only a few years before in Cohn, *Ein Diwan*. Rosenzweig, in other words, took it upon himself to retranslate many of the poems that Cohn had allegedly butchered, including almost every poem classified by Cohn as concerning “God,” “Israel,” and “Zion.”
- 46 Yehudah Halevi, *Diwan des Rabbi Jehuda Ha-Levi*, trans. S. D. Luzzatto (Lyck, 1864); Yehudah Halevi, *Divan des Abu-L-Hasan Jehuda Ha-Levi*, trans. H. Brody (Berlin, 1894). Rosenzweig refers to both of these editions in his notes on the poems.
- 47 Shumuel Werses, “Yehuda Halevi ba-aspaklaryah shel ha-meah ha-tsha esreh,” in his *Megamot ve-tsurot be-sifrut ha-haskalah* (Jerusalem, 1990).
- 48 Adam Shear, “Judah Halevi's Kuzari in the Haskalah: The Reinterpretation and Reimagining of a Medieval Work,” in *Renewing the Past, Reconfiguring Jewish Culture: From Al-Andalus to the Haskalah*, ed. Adam Sutcliffe and Ross Brann (Philadelphia, Pa., 2004), 84.
- 49 Adam Shear, “The Later History of a Medieval Hebrew Book: Studies in the Reception of Judah Halevi's ‘Sefer Ha-Kuzari’” (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2003), 512–34. See also Michael Brenner, *The Renaissance of Jewish Culture in Weimar Germany* (New Haven, Conn., 1996), 17–18.
- 50 See Shear, “Judah Halevi's Kuzari in the Haskalah,” 73.
- 51 Myers, *Resisting History*, 131–32. Adam Shear has noted that this typology of Halevi (the antirationalist) versus Maimonides (the rationalist) must itself be historicized and placed in the context of the “prevailing view of twentieth-century scholarship” (Shear, “Judah Halevi's Kuzari in the Haskalah,” 85).
- 52 Shear, “Later History of a Medieval Hebrew Book,” 512–34.
- 53 Rosenzweig, *Gesammelte Schriften IV*, 1: 202–3; Galli, *Rosenzweig and Halevi*, 259.

- 54 Franz Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, trans. William Hallo (New York, 1971), 335.
- 55 See Gordon, *Rosenzweig and Heidegger*, 207–20, and Batnitzky, *Idolatry and Representation*, 72–77.
- 56 “Yonat rehokim nadedah yaarah,” in Jarden, ed., *Shirei ha-kodesh*, 827. For an English translation, see Heinrich Brody, ed., *Selected Poems of Jehudah Halevi*, trans. Nina Salaman (Philadelphia, Pa., 1974), 118.
- 57 Rosenzweig, *Gesammelte Schriften IV*, 1: 205; Galli, *Rosenzweig and Halevi*, 260.
- 58 Rosenzweig, *Star*, 300.
- 59 Rosenzweig, *Gesammelte Schriften IV*, 1: 207; Galli, *Rosenzweig and Halevi*, 261.
- 60 Rosenzweig, *Star*, 413–14. See also similar discussions of Christian antisemitism from 1916 in Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy and Franz Rosenzweig, *Judaism Despite Christianity: The Letters on Christianity and Judaism between Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy and Franz Rosenzweig* (University, Ala., 1969), 113.
- 61 Rosenzweig, *Gesammelte Schriften IV*, 1: 177; Galli, *Rosenzweig and Halevi*, 249.
- 62 Heinrich Heine, *Hebräische Melodien* (München, 1920); Micah Joseph Lebensohn, *Shirei bat tsiyon* (Vilna, 1902).
- 63 Rosenzweig, *Gesammelte Schriften IV*, 1: 214; Galli, *Rosenzweig and Halevi*, 264.
- 64 Rosenzweig, *Gesammelte Schriften IV*, 1: 223; Galli, *Rosenzweig and Halevi*, 266.
- 65 Rosenzweig, *Gesammelte Schriften IV*, 1: 226; Galli, *Rosenzweig and Halevi*, 267. The phrase *Grab in der heiligen Erde* is repeated several times; see also Rosenzweig, *Gesammelte Schriften IV*, 1: 248; Galli, *Rosenzweig and Halevi*, 283.
- 66 Rosenzweig, *Gesammelte Schriften IV*, 1: 254–55; Galli, *Rosenzweig and Halevi*, 286.
- 67 As Zachary Braiterman has pointed out, thoughts of morbidity had long lured Rosenzweig and are evident in his early correspondence as well as in *Star* (Zachary Braiterman, “‘Into Life’? Franz Rosenzweig and the Figure of Death,” *AJS Review* 23, no. 2 [1998]). See also the discussion of Halevi’s book on this point in Braiterman, *Shape of Revelation*, chap. 3.
- 68 Sidra DeKoven Ezrahi, *Booking Passage: Exile and Homecoming in the Modern Jewish Imagination* (Berkeley, 2000).
- 69 A heated debate among Rosenzweig scholars on precisely this question was conducted on the list-serve of the Textual Reasoning group in March 2004. I am grateful to those who contributed to the debate, especially Peter Gordon, Zachary Braiterman, and Dana Hollander, for furthering my thinking on the question of Rosenzweig’s Zionism. As part of that discussion, Hollander suggested the possibility of differentiating between Zion and Zionism; my argument verifies the fruitfulness of that suggestion.

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- 70 May 23, 1927, Rosenzweig, *Gesammelte Schriften I*, 2: 1150.
71 May 17, 1927, *ibid.*, 2: 1145.
72 May 23, 1927, *ibid.*, 2: 1149.
73 May 17, 1927, *ibid.*, 2: 1145. Emphasis mine.
74 May 17, 1927, *ibid.* Emphasis mine.
75 Margarete Susman, "Eine Übersetzung Jehuda Halevis," *Frankfurter Zeitung und Handelsblatt*, Oct. 25, 1924, pp. 1–2.
76 See Letter 963 (Oct. 26, 1924) to Margarete Susman, in Rosenzweig, *Gesammelte Schriften I*, 2: 659.
77 On *unheimlichkeit* and the Jews, see Susan Shapiro, "The Uncanny Jew: A Brief History of an Image," *Judaism* 46, no. 1 (1997). For this term in Rosenzweig's thought, see Batnitzky, *Idolatry and Representation*, 90–94, and Gordon, *Rosenzweig and Heidegger*, 214.