

*“This is the touchstone distinguishing the true from the false prophet: when the true prophet stands up to share rebuke with his congregation, his teeth are on edge; he fears lest they toss him from the stage in their fury, for his rebuke is directed against them, against his own congregation. In contrast, the false prophet stands surely on his platform and lightheartedly glances about, basking in the appreciation of his congregation while he furiously rebukes others (Tamaret 1992: 51-52).”*

*“Calmly and with equanimity, I have attended to the... sound of the blood-red nationalist rooster that today stands in the center of Europe, flaps its wings and cries out “cockadoodle doo! I am and there is none but me! (Tamaret 1905: 32).”*

*Jewish culture has become “a despicable maidservant, perpetually fucked (nivelet kol ha-yom) by that filthy deity called nationalism (Tamaret 1905: 89).”*

### **Introduction**

One day, during the Russo-Turkish war, a gentile resident of the Polish village of Malecz received word that her son had been killed on the front. She dissolved into bitter tears and one of her neighbors, a Jewish boy, cried with her. That boy was Aharon Shmuel Tamaret (1869-1931), who many years later explained that on that very day his convictions as to the moral obscenity of war and all that goes into it began to take shape (Tamaret 1993: 3).

The boy hailed from rabbinic lineage and though he began his education in the local *heder*, quickly distinguished himself, joining adult students in the *kollel* and earning his reputation as a talmudic prodigy (*ilui*). He later went on to join the famed *Kollel ha-Perushim* in Kaunas, Lithuania. However, a talmudic prodigy concerned with “struggle against... wicked governments and [with] negating war” by suffusing “the human heart” with “reason, understanding, and a sense of justice (Tamaret 1993: 164)” could not help but be disappointed by an institution primarily dedicated to training in practical rabbinics.

Thus did the young Tamaret abdicate for the more intellectually rigorous Ets Hayyim yeshiva in Valozhyn, Belarus, where he became a close student of R. Hayyim Soloveitchik and forged links to the proto-Zionist Hibbat Zion movement, which was highly active there. His tenure in Valozhyn, however, was cut short by its dissolution in 1892. Following this crisis he assumed the mantle of rabbinic leadership in the Polish village of Milejczyce, where he remained for the rest of his life in spite of more prestigious offers later on. However appreciative of Milejczyce’s bucolic atmosphere, his isolation there prompted Tamaret to publish. Reflecting his time in Valozhyn, his first essays — which appeared under

the lasting pseudonym “A Sensitive Rabbi (*Ehad ha-Rabanim ha-Margishim*)” — embraces the nascent Zionist movement and criticize its ultra-orthodox opponents.

Following this trajectory, Tamaret attended two Zionist congresses during a period in which the so-called “cultural” question concerning the relationship between Jewish religion and nationality was hotly debated (Rinott 1984). He was dismayed by the cavalier attitude of secularists, by the way in which this attitude was reflected in their use of power, and especially by their embrace of the “new Jew” who yearned for the land “on which our fathers fought wars” rather than that on which the prophets “cast fire and brimstone on wars (Tamaret 1993: 173).” Thus disappointed, Tamaret announced an end to his dalliance with Zionism on the pages of *Ha-Melits*, a flagship Hebrew-language periodical, and proceeded to blaze a new path that he called “personal human liberation” or “spiritual autonomy” and defined as “a religious-ethical position based on the Torah, the prophets, and the traditional Jewish ethicists” that “has no part in statecraft or class politics, but attends to the purification of the human heart (Tamaret 1993: 167).”

Thus reoriented, Tamaret went on to publish a number of books and articles elaborating what amounts to a theological foil of political Zionism (Gendler 2003): a vision of Jewish tradition that is pacifist, anti-nationalist, and anti-statist. As we shall ultimately see, he did so by reframing diaspora as a condition of moral restoration in the wake of a corrupting descent into statecraft (Gendler 2010), as ideal and not as tragedy. While Tamaret was neither the first nor the last traditionalist to oppose the Zionist revolution in Jewish life, it is the form of his opposition that makes him unique. Firstly, he did not object to Zionism as a modality of Jewish modernization; indeed, he embraced progress and was adamantly opposed to orthodox anti-modernism. Secondly, he considered Zionism a betrayal less of the awaiting redemption, and more of the historical mission of Judaism (Wokenfield 2007). Thirdly and most importantly, Tamaret — unlike ultra-orthodox anti-Zionist groups like the *Neture Karta*, which restrict their condemnation to Zionism and to State of Israel but have no position on equivalent gentile phenomena (Lamm 1971) — Tamaret framed his rejection of patriotism, nationalism, and statism in universal terms. In his view, such things are bad in themselves and *for that reason* the congregation of Israel is morally bound to resist them and thus to serve as a living example for other communities.

In this chapter, we will to examine Tamaret’s case for this position as comprehensively as possible. First, we shall consider his typology of religious phenomena, in which he offers a moral critique of the antitheses of pagan consciousness and “pure faith,” identifying too the synthesis he calls “religion.” We shall then discuss his interpretation of nationalism, patriotism, statism, and militarism (NPSM) as modern idolatries. Then proceed to examine Tamaret’s alternative in depth: galut as moral ideal, or anarcho-diasporism. This is framed as a response to modern ultra-orthodoxy on the one hand, and

Zionism on the other, both of which Tamaret regards as pagan regressions from the pure faith of Israel. Thereafter, we examine the institutions of the anarcho-diasporic Jewish community and close the chapter with an account of Tamaret's Tolstoy-resonant take on the revolution of the heart on the one hand, and Israel's role in realizing it on the other.

### **Tamaret's Typology of Religious Phenomena**

His contribution to anarchist theory and practice aside, Mikhail Bakunin's most important bequest to contemporary political theory is undoubtedly the idea that a strict parallel is to be drawn between theological and political notions. In other words, human political comportment is modeled on pervasive tropes as to the relationship between gods and men. As he considered the very idea of a god to imply human nothingness, he concluded that atheism and a religion are necessary prerequisites of political liberty. While there is no direct evidence that he read Bakunin, Tamaret draws the same parallel and from it similar conclusions. However, he distinguishes between religion and what he calls "pure faith," which affirms man and so conduces to liberty.

Tamaret's *Emunah ha-Tehorah* begins with a classical question: how is it that "faith" seems to involve opposing tendencies, violence on the one hand and spiritual profundity on the other? His answer begins with the contention that religion reflects "the way man understands himself and his place in the world;" as his standing changes, so too the forms of its religious manifestation (Tamaret 1992: 58-59). Surprisingly materialist in orientation, Tamaret states that this depends on the degree of human control over natural forces; in other words, religious ideas are indexed to technological progress (Tamaret 1992: 60-61).

It is between poles of helplessness and dominance vis-a-vis these forces that Tamaret locates a range of religious ideas between poles paganism and pure faith. Primitive man's *concrete* inability determine his own fate made for his paganism; that is, for religious forms characterized by "sorrow, hopelessness, and the negation of humanity before the order of heaven (Tamaret 1992: 59-60)." However, as man learned to subdue and to harness the forces of nature he began to regard himself differently; he came to see himself "as a *free citizen*" of the universe. Accordingly, the "buds of true faith began to sprout (Tamaret 1992: 61)" — man developed an *emunah*, "which suggests endurance and strength (Tamaret 1992: 116)," confirming his existence rather than quashing it.

To the antinomy of paganism and pure faith corresponds the attendant antinomy of tyranny and liberty. Just as the "kingdom of creation" assumes pagan and divine forms, so too the kingdoms of men. There are, Tamaret avers, "two [general] forms of earthly governance, of political citizenship: autocracy and democracy." Under the first, "man is bound and subjugated, formed only to administer to" others;

under the second, he is “free to wander the earth in its entirety, to suck at the breast of nature” as he sees fit (Tamaret 1992: 61). The first is a pagan political ethos, the second a political ethos of pure faith.

Having defined the opposing poles of his theopolitical schema, Tamaret proceeds to complicate it: the conquest of nature demands organization, which entails a technical division of labor. However, that division ossifies, producing distinct classes of exploiters and exploited, rulers and subjects. Herein lies conundrum: a spirit emboldened by faith is the prerequisite of progress, yet the man of pure faith will neither become the tool of another,” nor conquer himself “for the sake of any master.” That is the pagan’s lot. The solution is a theological hybrid: paganism “infused with traces of divinity” sufficient to motivate while yet ensuring submission. This hybrid, Tamaret calls “religion,” as opposed to pure faith. In a particularly striking passage he remarks that religion “strokes the cheek of the common man while whispering pleasantries into his ear... that humanity supersedes the angels, that he is a spark of God, that he can himself become a God if he so desires.” Thus seduced by the veneer of faith, he does not notice the pagan core of the appeal when it unfolds: man is so important “because he was chosen for and sanctified to the service of the Creator such that he ought do nothing more in life than kneel and bow to the God in heaven *and to his holy ones, his saviors* [i.e. his representatives] *on earth* (Tamaret 1992: 62-63).” As a hybrid phenomenon combining paganism and pure faith, religion ennobles the common man for the conquest of nature while yet delivering him to his earthly masters.

Thus, whereas Bakunin paints all theopolitical phenomena in the same color, Tamaret has a more refined palette. Bakunin operates within a clean opposition of thesis (theology, tyranny) and antithesis (antitheology, liberty) that is without synthesis. Tamaret eliminates the category of anitheology and redistributes the opposition between tyranny and liberty: some theologies annihilate man and ground political oppression, others valorize him and ground liberty. Strictly speaking, this distinction plays out in a divide between paganism and pure faith that coincides with with a material opposition between stagnation and progress. However, because progress goes hand in hand with the division of labor, which can degeneration into fixed class structures, an insidious hybrid takes shape: religion. A paganism superficially inflected with faith, it facilitates what Tamaret takes to be a paradoxical coincidence: the conquest of nature and the conquest of man.<sup>1</sup> It is not a choice between theology and antitheology, but *among theologies*: a person must choose faith and reject paganism together with its religious spawn. What exactly Tamaret intends by faith in distinction from religion, we shall observe later in our analysis of exile as a positive ideal. For now, it is simply important to emphasize that in his view, the division between true

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<sup>1</sup> For Tamaret, this seems paradoxical. One wonders how he would have reacted to Murray Bookchin’s social ecology, his contention that in fact the two fundamentally coincide and that abrogating relations of domination and subjugation among men goes hand in hand with a reconfiguration of our relationship with nature.

faith and paganism boils down to a distinction between the valorization of man and his humiliation, — between liberty and tyranny — and that this distinction bears gradations or hybrids.

### **Modern Idols and Their Worship: Nationalism, Patriotism, Statism, and Militarism**

Many theologians, Jewish and otherwise, have theorized the opposition between paganism and what they take to be pure faith. It is less the distinction itself that interests anybody than the particular way it is substantiated and made relevant. Tamaret agrees with the substance of Bakunin's critique if not its form: annihilation is *theologia non grata* and it corresponds to political tyranny. In this section, we shall observe how this conviction applies to NPSM. I contend that, for Tamaret, these phenomena are structurally analogous to religion as he conceives it. Just as religions seduce the masses by superficially translating pagan attitudes about man and his place in the world into the more flattering language of pure faith, so too these modern idolatries. Not the content, but the form is crucial.

According to Carl Schmitt, the mark of an anarchist thinker is the conviction that man is naturally good, but that he is corrupted by government (Schmitt 1985: 55). This is only partially true of Tamaret. He distinguishes between two types of evil. On the one hand, he acknowledges our animal nature; a man, he says, is prone to be overcome by violent passions. Yet, such crimes are not systemic; they are explosive in character and come with no elaborate justification. On the other hand, he follows Solomon in asserting that "God made man upright; but they have sought out many contrivances (Ecclesiastes 7:29)." Subjected to the influence of an iniquitous society, the human mind can be "perverted." Then, it is not simply that that evil happens; rather, evil appears *good*. This violence arising from false consciousness is far more dangerous because it "walks upright in the streets of the city and struts about without meeting any opposition (Tamaret 1968);" on the contrary, it is often applauded. In Tamaret's view, NPSM arise not from natural human passions, however violent, but from passions born from hearts and minds corrupted.

"The normative meaning" of nationalism, says Tamaret "is an enhancement of coarse egoism and an increase in concern for filling one's own belly (Tamaret 1905: 90)." The tone of this definition is several degrees below warm; all the same, it does not seem to fit with his account of paganism. Paganism entails the annihilation of self; here we speak of its aggrandizement. If, however, we consider both the anatomy of this egoism and the pattern of its alimentary ken, we shall discover that for Tamaret it functions just like a religion.

In his account of nationalism, Tamaret appeals to two medical analogies. Mutuality obtains among parts of a healthy body; "each both feeds and is fed (Tamaret 1905: 83)." Since the vitality of the whole depends on that of its parts, each part is significant. Likewise in a healthy body politic, each man

takes what he needs and leaves the surplus “for the benefit of society as a whole.” Understanding that “each person on earth is created by God” for his own use and is “not to be sacrificed for someone else (Tamaret 1905: 84),” men “treat each other like brothers, benefitting from one another in a way that (Tamaret 1905: 86)” exhausts none — “there are neither oppressors nor oppressed, consumers nor consumed (Tamaret 1905: 83).”

While this implies the legitimacy of attending to parts of the body or the body politic independently, this is only so when the whole remains in view. Drawing on another medical analogy, Tamaret explains the alternative. As the diminished pathogen inoculates the body, so too humane feelings in reduced form — concern, but only for one’s own (Tamaret 1905: 82) — immunize the body politic against the “plague” of justice and equality; paradoxically, against health itself. This is primarily what he means by “coarse egoism;” it refers not to the individual, but to the collective.

From this nationalist “vaccine” that ostensibly enhances group cohesion, the body politic contracts a sort of autoimmune disorder and turns against itself. Directing the flow of hatred outward, eliminating foreign bodies it sets in motion an alimentary process whereby the weak “become food, to be chewed and digested for the benefit” of the strong, who are themselves ultimately “swallowed by those still stronger (Tamaret 1905: 84).” Thus:

“All of the despicable inclinations of individual members of the nation are focused in a single direction, constituting a flooding river of national egoism that is embodied in the magistrates of the parliament who sit and devise statist schemes in the name of the good of the people as a whole, something which really means: I am, and there is nothing other than me (Tamaret 1905: 24; Isaiah 47:8; Zephania 2:15).”

By appeal to the biopolitical image of the distinction between supple and diseased bodies Tamaret shows that nationalism is grounded in an “alimentary” or “sacrificial” logic whereby, for the sake of a supposedly common good, some individuals and individual groups are consumed and absorbed, *used* others. As he dramatizes the situation, it is as if the latter declare “individual men do not have the right to live and endure! Long live the nation! Long live the state! Let man go to hell (Tamaret 1905: 87)!” Whereas the healthy body politic regards the individual as an end unto himself, the body politic infected by nationalism reduces him to the collective; he no longer stands alone, but becomes part of a tide. Perhaps a “flooding river of national egoism” flatters the vanity of the masses, providing a false sense of freedom and importance. In the end, this only serves to consolidate the power of those who direct its flow, reducing the individual to a use-value vis-a-vis the greater good of the whole as manifest in the will of its representatives.

Conceived in this way, nationalism takes on a distinctively pagan hue. As we have already seen, pagan consciousness entails the feeling that, viewed in light of greater forces, man is nothing. The

ancients prostrated before Baal and Asherah; modern men proclaimed their loyalty the French, or German, or Russian peoples. For Tamaret, the distinction is immaterial. All conclude that “man was created for the sake of some god or another;” none protect from the elite “agents of the angel of death” who resolve “to destroy individual human lives, to offer, on the altar of the law, real human life, flesh and blood, for the sake of some figurative life (Tamaret 1905: 85).” In this respect, modern nationalism is very much a “religious” phenomenon in Tamaret’s sense of the word: a dangerous hybrid of paganism and pure faith. Its constitutive egoism gives the impression of liberty while actually destroying it, annihilating the self and subjugating it to the whims of other men by way of its fictive aggrandizement.

Tamaret rejects patriotism and statism on similar grounds.<sup>2</sup> Ancient paganism, he says, was not *merely* a passive reaction to inadequate agency; it was also existential: deficiency was experienced as an active need to serve something greater. Likewise was “the god known as Birthplace” created to fill an existential abyss. Like Weber and the Frankfurt school theorists that followed him, Tamaret speaks of a world disenchanted by enlightenment rationalism and of souls “progressively emptied out (Tamaret 1920: 16-17)” by its egoism yet unsatisfied by distracting entertainments. Rather than addressing the problem, however, its symptoms are superficially assuaged.

In essence, Tamaret argues that the spiritual desolation of the modern egoist is alleviated by extending himself over others by force. Extracting recognition from without, his own frail sense of being is confirmed; conversely, “he who expresses his somethingness by waving around a sword expresses nothing more than his nothingness and his degradation.” Ability alone becomes the measure of existence. Yet, ability is optimized when pooled. So construed, individual being is paradoxically solidified when it disappears into the collective. Thus is modern man:

“Prepared to transfer his particular glory, his particular self-inflation, into a collective store of arrogance called the state, which enables them to join all their individual swords into one large sword that extends over a territory... to hang this sword on the thigh of the giant idol called the birthplace.”

“Hewn from the collective,” children of the motherland, citizens of the state, welcome abasement at “the feet of their god in order to” partake of its conceit; when its mighty sword flashes, each “experiences this as if he himself had lifted his sword (Tamaret 1920: 19).” Being is experienced vicariously through the power of state over an expanding homeland. Appealing to a strikingly scatological image, Tamaret explains it elsewhere as follows. The world of today, he says:

“Is like a tall ladder that is built of rungs: one on top of the other, one below the other. The head of each citizen is tucked under the tail of another who is above him, while the tail of each is

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<sup>2</sup> Patriotism, properly speaking, refers less to people or to political entities, and more to *places* and our attachment to them (Orwell, G. 1968. *The Collected Essays, Journalism, and Letters of George Orwell*. Vol. 3. Edited by Orwell, S. & Angus, I. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World. p. 362).

nestled on the head of one below him. Thus, each man is in one respect a lord and in another respect a slave. Before the one above him, each squirms along like a worm crawling through garbage while at the same time trampling someone else like a bear.”

The disgraced souls that party to it are “half prideful and half ashamed,” but “none are free (Tamaret 1920: 47).” In this way, “spiritual plagues like patriotism (Tamaret 1923: 6)” and statism, as “racist, statist, nationalism” (Tamaret 1920: 82),” constitute “religious” phenomena from a structural standpoint. All respond to the existential component of an agency deficit. All fraudulently proffer the liberty of pure faith while liquidating it in fact by subordinating the individual to the collective.

Let us now consider the question of war. As we have already seen, nation, state and homeland function according to an alimentary logic. The weak allow themselves to be consumed by the strong, the particular by the collective, so as partake of their strength and thus be confirmed in being. This strength is expressed through conquest of the foreigner: the foreigner within, who is excluded from the nascent body politic, and the foreign enemy without, with which it competes. In this sense, consumption is not only governance, but *war*. In every way, Tamaret explains, war permeates “the knot of politics: either war in the simple sense, blood and fire and the shooting of real bullets... or, at least, a war of words, of mutual jealousy and rancor (Tamaret 1905: 26).” Indeed, if the gods of modern men are called “nation, homeland, and state,” then their “service... is called war (Tamaret 1920: 16).” It is through war that they are maintained.

A better sense of what Tamaret means by this claim can be gleaned from his efforts to explain the origin of war. The ancients may have believed that war is the earthly manifestation of heavenly conflicts; but having killed the gods, modern men seek naturalistic explanations. One of these is held by adherents of the modern idolatries: war is the natural result of equally natural hostilities among nations and races. Another is held by social democrats: war is the work of the ruling class and disappears with the abolition of class. Both represent war as the decree of necessity; the first sociological, the second economic — again, the pagan tendency to erase human agency rears its head. While he acknowledges that unlike the first explanation, the second does not cover for, but correctly identifies a responsible party, it nonetheless condones or actively promotes war. If the abrogation of war is tied to the abrogation of capitalism and necessary in the meanwhile, then there is no reason to impede capitalist war efforts in the interval and every reason to foment violent revolution (Tamaret 1920: 6-8).<sup>3</sup> Thus, socialist opposition to exploitation encourages its worst form: forcing “men into the fields of slaughter (Tamaret 1929: 6).” In the end, “they adopted the view that the ends sanctify the means (Tamaret 1993: 167).” Thus, apart from the fact that

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<sup>3</sup> This distinction between non-opposition, or even support, of capitalist war efforts and the incitement of revolution, Tamaret explicitly links to the debate over evolution versus revolution that marked the divide between the second international — the members of which supported their countries during WWI — and the third.



war serves and maintains our three modern idols, it is in itself an idolatrous practice; it arises from the belief that human agency disappears in the face of mysterious forces beyond its control and consists in a willingness to sacrifice individual human lives for the sake of something greater — be it a country or an economic ideology.

In sum, we find that nation, land, and state function, according to Tamaret, as modern idols worshipped through war, which by constitution is a pagan practice in its own right. These idols take shape through a process of alimation whereby the power of the collective is centralized and consolidated by absorbing the particulars of which it is composed. The latter disappear as subjective entities, becoming objects of use for the former. While in some respects, this process is thoroughly violent — e.g. where the foreigner is concerned — it also has voluntaristic elements: the ego disenchanted with itself seeks resolution to creeping nihilism by appeal to external affirmation via conquest that it vicariously enjoys through the mediation of nation, state, and fatherland. In this respect, all three bear structural resemblance to religion as conceived by Tamaret: pagan servility covered by a gleaming veneer of counterfeit faith, of spurious freedom. War is the means by which these idols are constituted. More importantly, it is organized within the space vacated by human agency and operates through a logic of sacrifice; it is therefore pagan in form and substance.

### **Anarcho-Diasporism, or Galut as an Ideal**

Otherwise antagonists, Zionism and Ultra-Orthodoxy fundamentally agree as to the meaning of the Jewish diaspora. It is exile, *galut*: a problem ultimately to be overcome. As Tamaret put it, both consider exile to be a “festering wound (Tamaret 1992: 87)” in need of salve. As we shall see in the present section, he disputes this characterization in a rather profound manner. Before proceeding to elaborate, however, it is necessary to explain how the preceding two sections provide a sort of faint outline of his unique position.

On the one hand, we see that Tamaret finds religion in the normative sense to be abhorrent. As he later represents it, exile was primarily a spiritual tragedy for the orthodox; without land and Temple, the Torah could not be observed in its fullness. As it alone is “your life and the length of your days (Deuteronomy 30:20),” they concluded that the days of Israel had come to an end and resolved to “gradually liquidate (Tamaret 1992: 78)”<sup>4</sup> her through a program of extreme renunciation he calls “neurotic piety (Tamaret 1992: 76-78)”<sup>5</sup> that extinguishes “every spark of self-awareness (Tamaret 1992:

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<sup>4</sup> This, he Tamaret further supports by reference to a second anecdote appearing on the same page, where representatives of the ascetic faction are reported to have said “we ought by rights to bind ourselves not to marry and beget children, and the seed of Abraham our father would come to an end of itself.”

<sup>5</sup> *Hithasdut hashashanit*; the word *hashash* connotes concern or worry. I have translated *hashashanit* as

82)” and ensures “the negation of man and his submission to hidden powers (Tamaret 1992: 76)” — supernatural and otherwise. In brief, though he was undoubtedly a proponent of *traditional* Judaism, he believed that orthodoxy as it came to be in the modern world had picked up the pagan “scent of nihilism (Tamaret 1992: 74),”<sup>6</sup>

Another response to the tragedy of exile was its negation, as Zionists proposed (Ratzaby 1995). This entailed embrace of all four of the aforementioned modern idolatries: nationalism, patriotism, statism, and militarism (NPSM). Tamaret’s reaction to Zionism was extensive and space does not permit its thorough elaboration here. In sum, beyond objections to NPSM in general, he rejects Zionism as a liquidation of Judaism and of the Jewish mission. Zionists, on his account, abdicate from uniquely Jewish values such as: iconoclasm, the irreducible value of individual life, non-violence, decentralization, and the notion of chosenness as a call to moral leadership.<sup>7</sup>

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“neurotic” in order to convey the sense of persistent anxiety or worry. Tamaret’s terminological choice is also attuned to the rabbinic idea of *hashash*; if there is reason to worry that one may come to transgress some prohibition — if there is a *hashash* — the rabbis tend to rule stringently so as to allay that concern. In adopting this position, Tamaret explicitly explicitly rejects the position held by H. Graetz, who believed that the isolating force of talmudic piety had a preservative function vis-a-vis Jewish identity (Graetz 1987: 217-241; Glatzer 2009: 161).

<sup>6</sup> *Afisat ha-adam*.

<sup>7</sup> Tamaret characterizes Zionist embrace of NPSM as “ape-like imitation of Western customs” or, echoing the prophet Samuel, of seeking the dubious “distinction of being *like the rest of the nations* (Tamaret 1905: 33-34).” Appealing to midrashic accounts attesting to the Abrahamic destruction of patrilineal idols (Genesis Rabbah 38:13), Tamaret speaks of a “Jewish vocation of swimming against the tide” — especially *this* tide. He interprets the verse “go out from your land, from your birthplace, and from your father’s house (Genesis 12:1)” as a divine imperative to part even from intangible idols like NPSM (Tamaret 1920: 73-74). Zionists, in contrast, court this “poisonous god (Tamaret 1905: 60),” thus constituting “a plague on the Jewish people” threatening the “liquidation of Judaism (Tamaret 1926c).”

One element of this liquidation is Zionist acquiescence to the supposed pagan viewpoint that the individual is subordinate to the collective and that people are therefore expendable. The Torah, he says, “despises separation among people” and cannot abide by the conclusion that nationalist monstrosities are inevitable and that Jews may therefore partake in “racial division and *exploitation* (Tamaret 1905: 90).” Neither does it cohere with the “despicable doctrine of patriotism” that “sows death and hatred into the relation between peoples (Tamaret 1992: 51-52).” Similarly, Tamaret rejects Zionist adoption of the abominable “way of the state (Tamaret 1929: 51),” which treats human blood as “a form of transferable property with which its owner can, without impediment, do with as he pleases (Tamaret 1905: 12).” Finally, Tamaret considers Zionist militarism a “betrayal of our national ethic” as expressed in the prophetic utterance “not by force, not by strength, but by my spirit (Zechariah 4:6)” — that is, he explains, “not with armies and not with raw power (Tamaret 1926a).” To behave otherwise is to disgrace “the image of God that is in man (Tamaret 1920: 22)” and, in this way, an act of idolatry.

Another element of this liquidation is the related issue of centralization, which has both geographical and political aspects. Jewish identity, Tamaret maintains, is fundamentally grounded in Torah, which “cannot be confined to a single land,” for scripture teaches that it is “longer than the earth’s circumference (Job 11:9; Tamaret 1923: 71).” True “Judaism has its center fixed in the heart (Tamaret 1985: 60),” it cannot “be confined to or materialized in a definite territory (Tamaret 1929: 71).” The idea of a national home or a spiritual center constitutes a “spirituality of the center,” which Tamaret considers to be fundamentally pagan in character and describes in terms evocative of the Mosaic response to the ancient sin of the golden calf (Tamaret 1985: 60-61).

The problem of centralization also arises in relation to the question of political power. The anti-authoritarian bent of Tamaret’s thought can be traced back to his earliest writings, in which his hostility to secular authority quickly extended itself to human authority in general. Whenever someone takes the lead, he says,

While Tamaret is unabashedly anti-Zionist, his position is truly unique. In no manner can it be reduced to familiar forms of ultra-orthodox anti-Zionism. Tamaret had no sympathy for the religious sentiments of the ultra-orthodox. Contrary to groups like Satmar and Neturei Karta, moreover, his antagonism is articulated in universal terms. He rejects Zionism because, on moral grounds, he says “to hell... with nationalism,” patriotism, and statism (Tamaret 1905: 98) in general. That is, for any group and not just for the children of Israel.

In sections to come, we shall consider Tamaret’s view as to the constructive role which Israel is to play in the world. This role, however, is grounded in his vision of return from religion broadly construed — that is, paganized modes of thought that appeal to individuality while subverting it — to pure faith. This shift is indicated by the verse “I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them (Song of Songs 5:3)?” According to Tamaret, it expresses a radical reversal of

traditional Jewish attitudes toward the diaspora. State and homeland become forms of defilement from which the congregation of Israel has been cleansed. In other words, Tamaret calls for what Anna Torres has called “Anarchist diasporism” — “the anti-statism of stateless peoples (Torres 2016: xiii-xv).”

Interpreting the phrases “I have put off my coat” and “I have washed my feet,” Tamaret asks: which coat has been removed? Which filth has been cleansed? He answers as follows:

“The bow of our strength was broken together with our arm of state two thousand years ago. Since then, we have organized ourselves so as to live without a Jewish government. Having tasted once the death of a state, *we merited to undress our national soul from that ugly body, from state*

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“always, the question will be raised: who made you head? On what basis do you take it upon yourself to respond to the lack of a center? You want me to obey you? Why not the opposite?” The Torah, he says, already serves an organizing function, and “its authority over the people comes from God who alone has the right to rule over us (Tamaret 1901a).” As for its practical application, Tamaret maintains that as they “have always done,” the people will “produce groupings without organization and administration... without police and taskmasters (Tamaret 1901b).” In short, a factional power struggle became a *struggle against power*. Contra Zionist vanguardism (Tamaret 1905: 3), which divided the “people into two camps, those who lead and those who are lead (Tamaret 1905: 53),” Tamaret contends that Israel must “purify and cleanse itself from within of... the Leviathan (Tamaret 1920: 73)” because “Jewish identity is not constructed around a state; its spirit and form is preserved without the coarse sheath of sovereignty (Jeremiah 35:7; Tamaret 1920: 74).”

A final element of this liquidation has to do with the idea of Jewish chosenness as a real moral vocation and responsibility. When Zionists “take refuge in the shade of the new *ashera* called Hebrew Nationalism (Tamaret 1905: 95),” or embrace the sodomite ethos of “what is mine is mine, what is yours is yours (Avot 5:13; Tamaret 1929: 71)” underlying patriotism, it discredits the very idea of justice. Not only did Israel introduce the world to notions like the “image of God” that *all* men share, and that the earth was given to *all* “the children of men (Psalms 115:16; Tamaret 1905: 37),” but Israel has suffered the most from neglect of these principles. To then affirm the correctness of opposing principles is to support transgressors (Tamaret 1929: 72). Likewise, when the only “people that has until now rejected the sword (Tamaret 1926b),” relying “solely on its moral strength (Tamaret 1929: 39)” and dreaming that “in the end” all men “will turn from their errors (Tamaret 1926b),” suddenly behaves like “a pack of wolves (Tamaret 1926a),” it is “a death blow to Isaiah’s ideal of ‘nation shall not raise a sword against nation (Isaiah 2:4; Tamaret 1926a)’” — especially when that same people suffered from the sword most.

*machinations, from dealing with kings and princes, which are like a body and a sheath for the soul of the people* (Tamaret 1905: 98).”

It the coat that has been removed, the filth that has been cleansed, is state and homeland. Accordingly, he interprets the phrases “how shall I put it on” and “how shall I defile them” as follows. How can a people thus liberated “wish to go back and to be embodied in the ugly material of the state (Tamaret 1905: 100)?” Here, we see that against the grain of tradition as expressed among Zionists and the orthodox alike, Tamaret regards exile as a manifestly positive transition from moral contamination to moral purity (Weinstein 1978).

To fully appreciate just how radical a shift this is, it is necessary to observe how Tamaret essentially reinterprets Jewish history from the Exodus through the Roman destruction of the Second Commonwealth. Let it be recalled that we earlier spoke of Tamaret’s distinction between relatively benign natural evils and those artificial, political evils that arise from a mind corrupted. He holds that though earlier civilizations — e.g. the antediluvians and Sodomites — behaved wickedly, they did so merely out of instinct; artificial evil had its inception in Egypt.

Masters, Tamaret asserts, must “legitimate their claims to sovereignty” over their slaves and show that the “slave together with his possessions was legally acquired just like any other object.” Naturally fraudulent, such claims are nonetheless self-validating: the slave’s degraded condition warrants his animalistic treatment by the master who is responsible for it. Thus, unlike crimes of passion, enslavement is always bound up with an elaborate system of justification. This, so Tamaret contends, is indicated by the Pharaonic invitation, “come, let us deal wisely with them” lest they multiply and join our enemies (Exodus 1:10).” It is with cunning that the Egyptian institution of mass-enslavement began: “pretending that they were threatened by the Israelites... they bent their bodies to the ground (Tamaret 1968).”

Yet, as Tamaret tells it, the story is considerably more complicated. It is not simply about villains and victims; it is also a story about false consciousness and complicity that goes back to Abraham. We have learned that pure faith involves the conjunction of *Deus Creator* and *Homo Faber*. But God is more than a creator, he also cares for and mercifully sustains his creation; in Jewish tradition this distinction is articulated in the difference between two divine names: respectively, “God (Elohim)” and “the Lord (Yahweh).” Tamaret explains that while Abraham himself undertook to imitate God in both respects (Tamaret 1912: 81-82; 87-89), “by my name, the Lord, I did not make myself fully known to them (Exodus 6:3).” That is, while the necessity of conquering nature became clear to others, the necessity of mercy did not; it seemed to them that “just as might makes right in the conquest of nature,” so too among men such that the imperative could be fulfilled by “conquering the conquerors and forcing them to labor on one’s behalf (Tamaret 1912: 87).”

In this perverted form, Tamaret explains, the Abrahamic faith penetrated human society, reaching its apex in Egypt, where Pharaoh saw himself as acting on divine mandate (Tamaret 1912: 86) when he systematically pressed others to “conquer nature on his behalf (Tamaret 1912: 84).” This is how Tamaret interprets “who is the Lord (Yahweh) that I should heed him (Exodus 5:2)?” He has Pharaoh say “I despise this *schnorer* god of yours in the name of whom you propose to withdraw from labor (Exodus 5:5)” and obliquely affirm his faith in God (Elohim) the creator-conqueror who validates man’s conquest of nature.<sup>8</sup>

That this Pharaonic perversion had Abrahamic roots raises the problem of complicity. Interpreting rabbinic traditions attesting to Israel’s unworthiness of redemption from Egypt<sup>9</sup> on account of their reluctance to renounce idolatry (Exodus Rabba 16:2), Tamaret asserts that Egyptian domination could not have been accomplished without Israelite collusion. Constantly exposed to “violence and cruelty of their Egyptian masters,” he contends, “the descendants of Abraham were desensitized over time and came to respect the power of the fist which their masters used (Tamaret 1912: 40).” Evidence, he draws from the incident of the beaten Hebrew slave (Exodus 2:11). Nobody but Moses, Tamaret observes, intervened; so they believed, the taskmaster was within his right. They had purchase with the pagan notion that men are expendable and, for that reason, could not yet be redeemed.

In this respect, the plagues served a threefold function. One, they demonstrate the Lord’s attribute of care and mercy. God empathizes with the suffering Israelites endured in service of the Egyptian conquest of nature (Exodus 6:5), thus indicating that alone is not enough (Tamaret 1912: 88). Two, they clearly expressed “how completely the Holy One, blessed be He, loathed the deeds of the tyrants” and how absolutely he rejected “that most vile falsehood, the domination of one man by another (Tamaret 1968).” Finally, they could not be reduced to retribution. Presaging Walter Benjamin’s later contribution in the “Critique of Violence” — wherein “divine violence” displaces its human counterpart — Tamaret avers that, rather than intervening directly, God could certainly have facilitated Israelite rebellion.<sup>10</sup> Building on a midrashic tradition that “when the destroying angel is given permission to do harm, he does not distinguish between the righteous and the wicked,”<sup>11</sup> he explains that God excluded them:

“In order not to give permission to the destroyer within them, for once having permission there

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<sup>8</sup> Here, he builds on traditional distinctions between “the Lord (Yahweh)” and “God (Elohim),” which correspond to mercy and judgment respectively (Bereshit Rabba 33:3).

<sup>9</sup> See, for instance, Shemot Rabbah 13:18, where the the verse “armed (*hamushim*), the children of Israel left Egypt (Exodus 13:18)” is understood to convey the idea that they left “*me-humashim*” — that is, divided into fifths, for but one fifth of the people actually left — the rest having perished during the plague of darkness (Exodus Rabba 14:4).

<sup>10</sup> See, for instance Mekhilta 13:17, which reports an unsuccessful Ephraimite rebellion.

<sup>11</sup> This being the reason the Israelites were not permitted to leave their homes during the plague of the first born (Mekhilta, 12:22:2. Cf. Bar 2014).

will be no distinguishing between righteous and wicked, and from ‘defender’ one becomes in the end ‘aggressor’ ... [Thus,] your abstention from any participation in the vengeance upon Egypt will prevent the plague of vengeance from stirring the power of the destroyer which is in you yourselves (Tamaret 1968).”

This is why scripture sees fit to have God emphasize that “I will go through the land of Egypt (Exodus 12:12)” — the Israelites were excluded so that the law of violence and the perverted reasoning that justified it, might finally be broken.

Thus, the Exodus served a law-destroying function. More profoundly, it served to elucidate an important interpretive gap in the Abrahamic covenant. Contra Pharaonic perversions, nature is to be conquered, but man is to be set free and treated with mercy. In this way, the Exodus served as a sort of preface to the law-creating function of Sinaitic revelation. Having witnessed the downfall of Egypt, “the negation and the absolute nothingness of material power... of sovereignty, and of the state,” and likewise come to be as a people “in the middle of a desolate wilderness, without a state and without an organized army (Tamaret 1920: 28),” Israel was prepared to receive a Torah existing to instill the heart with a “love of justice” and a “hatred of evil (Amos 5:15; Tamaret 1912: 89).”

So Tamaret explains, this is why Sinaitic revelation begins with the announcement “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery (Exodus 20:2)” — the *Lord*, the attribute of *mercy*, is introduced *not as creator* but *as redeemer*.<sup>12</sup> In the wilderness, Israel is called into being not to conquer nature, but to conquer and purify the human heart. Positioning himself in a longstanding dispute concerning the force of this statement,<sup>13</sup> Tamaret emphasizes its second clause and therefore its moral over its ontological sense.

To be more precise, Tamaret elides the Maimonidean distinction between essential attributes and attributes of action,<sup>14</sup> substantializing the latter and, in this way treading a path later followed by Levinas, for whom God signified an ethical relation and not a being (Levinas 1987: 153-173). He tacitly admits that the Sinaitic preamble is about God, but insists on a quasi-Sabbatean distinction between the inscrutable God and the “God of Israel (Maciejko 2017: 69)” — the latter being the divine aspect

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<sup>12</sup> Here, Tamaret draws on a long homiletical history. The question “why did god say “who took you out of Egypt” and not “who created heaven and earth” appears over and over again in the traditional literature. To cite a few examples, it appears in Ibn Ezra’s commentary on the Torah and in the first part of Judah ha-Levi’s *Kitab al Khazari* (indeed, ha-Levi derived his response directly from Ibn Ezra). It likewise appears in the writings of the R. Judah Loew, the Maharal of Prague (*Tiferet Yisrael*, ch. 37) Similarly, it appears in the writings of 20th century and contemporary figures such as the Lubavitcher Rebbe (Schneerson 1993: 124-128) and Lord Jonathan Sacks (Sacks 1992: 1).

<sup>13</sup> Maimonides held that Exodus 20:2 constitutes a positive command to “know that there is a God (*Sefer ha-Mitsvot*, Positive Commandment 1); Others, like Hasdai Crescas disagreed. See also R. Shimshon R. Hirsch’s commentary to Exodus 22:24, where the *moral* sense of the statement is given primacy over its ontological sense; it is not about what God is, but what God does.

<sup>14</sup> Guide for the Perplexed, 1:54.

disclosed at Sinai. This God is identical to its moral attributes: “justice and uprightness and, above all, *hatred of the coarse power of the fist... of the raw power of violence, hatred of man’s rule over man to his detriment* (Tamaret 1921: 126; Cohen 2015).” as expressed in having extracted Israel from Egypt, from “the house of bondage.” It is after the truth of *this* God that Israel is instructed to strive.

This account of the Mosaic covenant as embodied in the preamble to the decalogue and distinguished from the covenant with the Patriarchs situates us to consider the final frame of the exodus narrative. The exodus means freedom, but of a special sort. It certainly means more than material comfort; the house slave is not his own man. It even transcends release from “being subject to the whims of a master.” However legitimate, these objectives circumscribe a negative and external conception freedom for which the term liberty is more apt (Tamaret 1912: 33). Its externality is twofold. It is regarded as something “held by others, from whom it must be taken,”<sup>15</sup> the slaves in revolt are concerned with what “their lords *do to them*.” Consequently, “consciousness” is treated as a synonym of power, having “no foundation other than ability” vis-a-vis the oppressor (Tamaret 1920: 42-43). Reflexive self-consciousness disappears.

Tamaret objects to this consequence on moral grounds. A material and external notion of liberation bears no assurance that the liberated man “will not himself become an oppressor.” The violent means to which resort, moreover “bode... poorly for the prospect of a better future” for the man who stands with a “sword hanging from the thigh indicates that” he “himself is hanging from his sword” — his sense of self is bound up in the power he exercises over others. The inner desolation of the man who is *merely* liberated shows that he differed from his masters not in substance, but in position only (Tamaret 1920: 44).<sup>16</sup>

R. Joshua b. Levi long ago punned the phrase “graven (*harut*) upon the tablets (Exodus 32:16)” to suggest that freedom (*herut*) is only found through Torah (Avot 6:3). Tamaret concurs and poses this freedom as the constructive alternative to mere liberty (Tamaret 1920: 44). So he interprets the ancient sage, the Torah is the work of a “people contracting... to live intimately with the divine presence (Tamaret 1920: 32, 35).” This means that freedom is something determined from within, “needing no external confirmation.” It is identical with self-consciousness, which is associated with the image of God in man. Thus construed, freedom entails a moral striving: that the sign better resemble what it signifies.

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<sup>15</sup> Tamaret quotes Schiller here (though attributes the quote to “the socialists”), “freedom is not given, but taken (Schiller 1827: 15).

<sup>16</sup> Tamaret provides an interesting modern example: “when strikers (*shovtim*) are promised an increase in pay, they gladly return to the service of their employers, even if the work is in Krupp’s factory, a facility dedicated to the production of tools for crushing skulls (Tamaret 1920: 44).” Today, Krupp is best known for coffee makers, but it was the largest company in Europe at the turn of the twentieth century and had been associated with arms manufacture since the Thirty Years War (Manchester 2017).

Less troubled by “exploitation of the body than exploitation of the soul,” men strive to be released from the “impure things that lords *force them to do.*” Such freedom therefore carries a guarantee that liberated men “*will not themselves become oppressors*” and thus “constitutes in itself an emphatic curse upon the despotic kings and princes” who force their will on others (Tamaret 1920: 45-46).

This is how Tamaret interprets the biblical vision of the “priestly kingdom (Exodus 19:6).” In the wilderness, “without a state and without an organized army,” Israel undertook a “complete withdrawal... from the sheath of material nationalism,” from the state and from all its accompanying institutions. They lived by “the Torah of exile... the Torah as it is understood among the exiled (Tamaret 1920: 42)” — by a Torah in which exile and redemption overlap.

Now, many traditional sources celebrate the period of desert wandering as one of miraculous intimacy with the divine. Most, however, acknowledge its fundamental discontinuity with subsequent Israelite history; the “redemptive exile” gives way to a settled mode of life, to the establishment of the monarch, and eventually to the construction of a Commonwealth. Indeed, this shift even assumes a utopian tonality (Cohn, 2007; Neusner 2007). What makes Tamaret such a unique thinker is the radical consistency of his ideas; he utterly rejects discontinuity together with the changes it bore. In his view, the period of desert wandering established a precedent and a model to be followed for the future.

Against the tide of rabbinic opinion, Tamaret adopts a literal reading of 1 Samuel chapter eight, according to which the institution of the monarchy and the foundation of the state are treated as rebellions against divine sovereignty<sup>17</sup> in fulfillment of the Mosaic prophecy that upon settling the land, Israel would “become proud and... forget the Lord (Deuteronomy 8:14).” The divine presence, he says, was gradually “repulsed and driven away from them by the coarse statist spirit that then took hold of them... The Torah became their constitution (Tamaret 1920: 29)” rather than the medium of their connection to God. Their kings lead them into “cruel wars,” and Israel lost sight of its calling.

While critique of the monarchs, or even the monarchy in general, are not rare, Tamaret’s *total rejection* of the cultural and political project of the so called “golden age” of the ancient Hebrew commonwealth — the Davidic and Solomonic period — *as a whole* is unique. While acknowledging David’s piety, he also speaks of his “kingly, tyrannical soul.” Likewise, while admitting that Solomon was not a man of war, he maintains that “a king of peace remains a king” and that the “sovereign disposition to extend [oneself] over others was not abandoned” by him; it just assumed a finer form. He ruled his neighbors by drawing them close with a “magisterial pat on the back (Tamaret 1920: 31).” Perhaps most profoundly, he reinterprets 1 Chronicles 22:8 to the effect that their ambition to construct a

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<sup>17</sup> This view had its historical supporters, as we have observed in the introduction to this text. However, it was undoubtedly a minority position.



temple for God was one “better suited to the soul of a king than that of a pious man” who ought rather to “absorb [himself in] divine wisdom and sanctity (Shabbat 30a).” Far from advancing the cause of faith, “the temple and its sacrifices... supported the authority of the kings by serving as a charm, drawing the people to their side (Tamaret 1920: 33).”

Thus having transformed the Torah into a constitution, subordinated themselves to kings, and limited their divine service to the four walls of a temple, the people degenerated spiritually. This process ultimately culminated in the destruction of the first Temple together with the corresponding Commonwealth. As Tamaret explains, this meant disabusing the people of “their statist arrogance,” thus restoring “the divine presence to its place in hearts that were isolated and numb (Tamaret 1920: 33)” and planting the seeds of a long process of internal reform that blossomed many generations later.

Though the Babylonian captivity concluded with a reconstruction of of both Temple and Commonwealth, Tamaret believed that a fundamental change had occurred. The Mishnah was composed during this period, the center of communal life shifted to the house of study, and Torah came to displace the institution of sacrifice. Though the external institutions of religion and governance persisted, they were hollowed out by the rising spirit of pure faith. Indeed, Tamaret believes that the religious leaders of that period had no interest in rebuilding the Temple at all and that the project was undertaken only at the behest of the Persian emperor (Tamaret 1920: 34; Ezra 1:2).

This is why, when these institutions ultimately collapsed under the weight of Roman violence “the sages did not press for a war of liberation.” What they truly esteemed, the Romans could not take from them. When the sacred implements of the Temple were carted off to Rome, he says, “we took the craft which constituted the substance of those implements, the holy spirit.” Likewise, it was no tragedy when Israel was driven from “the earthly foundation, the territory.” It was then that “the people of Israel grew wings of liberation,” divesting of “the remaining traces of the ugly husk, the tools of material nationalism (Tamaret 1920: 36).”

Here, we observe Tamaret at his most radical. The the Babylonian Captivity and ultimately the Roman diaspora that continues until today become analogues of the Exodus from Egypt; exile becomes redemption. In taking leave of its land, Israel returns to itself; “annexing exile” and becoming a “mobile civilization (Tamaret 1923: 8)”<sup>18</sup> dependent “on no land, no king, and no prince (Tamaret 1920: 67),” Israel brings to an end the long period of iniquity that began with its neglect of Samuel’s rebuke. Divorced from territory and state, it once again undertook its mission: “spreading justice and uprightness,

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<sup>18</sup> This notion has a surprisingly long history. It was innovated by I.M. Jost (Jost 1824: 103), reincarnated in the later work of Graetz (Graetz 1987) and Dubnov (Dubnov-Erich 1991; Dubnov 2012; Dubnov 2011), given poetic expression in Heine (Schröder-Simonsen 2016), and recently reprised by Daniel Boyarin (Boyarin 2015).

hatred for the oppressor and mercy for the oppressed (Tamaret 1912: 127),” respect for everything that “is created in the image of God,” and empathy with its pain. In short, the “exile of the divine presence” means “the divine presence of exile (Tamaret 1920: 24)” — it means stateless anti-statism, or anarcho-diasporism.

### **Institutions of Jewish Anarcho-Diasporism and Modes of Leadership**

Having rejected land and state as organizing principles for the Jewish people, Tamaret embraces the Torah and the Torah alone. This, however, raises the question of means. If not after the fashion of the ultra-Orthodox pietists, in what way *is* Jewish life concretely built on the foundation of the Torah? The answer to this question involves communal institutions, modalities of leadership, and public ritual. Tamaret proposes a version of the traditional *beyt midrash* and moral guidance over formal authority.

The anarchist theorists Peter Kropotkin and after him Gustav Landauer on several occasions discussed the notion of civic architecture as the embodiment of communal values. Though not religious men, both regarded the cathedral as a preeminent example, somehow concretizing the mutuality expressed in the charter of the medieval commune (Kropotkin 1902: 211; Landauer 2010: 127-33).<sup>19</sup> A similar line of reasoning was applied by Abba Gordin (Nedava 1974) to the Jewish institution of the *beyt midrash*, or study hall, where an “interindividual” entity called the “congregation of Israel” could collectively articulate its norms independently of the state (Gordin 1940: 40-41, 164-65, 168-80). So Gordin conceived it, this cooperative institution ought to serve as a model for others; thus he positioned the Jewish community at the cultural core of world revolution.

Long before, Tamaret articulated a similar vision. On his reading of the historic encounter between R. Yohanan b. Zakkai and Vespasian, the Roman commander who sacked Jerusalem (Gittin 56b), when the former sought to establish the academy of Yavneh it was not in deference to, but in revolt against everything Rome represents. He sought neither to maintain the state, nor to protect the city and the Temple because these institutions were incompatible with the vocation of a “nation of priests (Tamaret 1920: 36).” He replaced them with the *beyt midrash*, where intimacy with the divine presence was restored. While the claim that “since the day that the Temple was destroyed God has nothing in this world but the four cubits of the law (Berakhot 8a)” is often regarded as an expression of loss, Tamaret reads it in an exultant tone: as an accomplishment.

The *beyt midrash* serves as a site of resistance: “so long as the voice of Jacob is heard in the synagogues and houses of study, the hands of Esau have no authority (Tamaret 1920: 37; Pesikta Zuta,

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<sup>19</sup> This notion likely has Hegelian roots (Hegel, G. F. W. 1975. *Aesthetics: Lectures on fine art*. Trans. T. M. Knox. Vol. 2. Oxford: Clarendon Press. p. 692).”

Genesis 27:22).” It unifies the community: “when a Jew enters the *beyt midrash* to present himself before He who rests his name thereon, he feels that he has entered into society with his brothers (Tamaret 1912: 24).” It also refines the spirit and spreads “intimacy with the divine presence, to all the Jewish homes connected to it,” thus realizing the biblical vision of the kingdom of priests. By preserving and uniting the community, the *beyt midrash* facilitates the perseverance of exile as a moral ideal by maintaining the distinctness of a people sans state; exilic resistance to the state. Assimilation, simply dissolving into another people and serving their worldly idols, would spell the effective end of exile “together with it the rectification and purification” that come about through it (Tamaret 1920: 38). Jewish continuity as guaranteed by Jewish communal institutions thus maintains the idea of exile as a general revolutionary force.

In addition to the institution of the *beyt midrash*, there is also to contend with the normative content it generates and the way the latter is produced. Gordin spoke of collectively determined “social-ethical teachings.” However, he failed to contend with the fact that these teachings bear organizational power insofar as they are grounded in tradition. Tamaret, in contrast, upholds *halakha*, Jewish law, not in the abstract but as a living tradition of jurisprudence. In this way, he fills a major gap in a theory of Jewish radicalism that he and Gordin largely share.

Returning to an earlier question, whether the law exists for man or man for the law, sides again with man. Appealing to a traditional distinction between precepts regulating relations among men and precepts regulating relations with God (Mishna, Yoma 8:9), he holds that “commandments governing the relations between man and God were given by the Creator in order to widen the human heart so that it loves and feels mercy for others (Tamaret 1912: 54).” Subject to command, man is “regarded as substantial, as something which occupies a place;” naturally, he extends the same regard to others, empathizing “with everything created in the image of God.” For this reason, Tamaret defends the integrity of the law as a whole, including its ritual elements: to negate precepts regulating relations with God is to “destroy the source of human dignity (Tamaret 1912: 57)” and thus undermine the foundation of precepts regulating relations among men. In short, traditional law in its comprehensive sense is treated as mechanism for instilling attitudes and establishing collective practice conducive to human freedom.

Viewed in this manner, the *halakha* is less a “law” than a form of moral guidance. If it exists for man and not the reverse, compulsion is naturally excluded. Thus Tamaret remarks:

“I recognize no duties (*hovot*) in the world; a person must be free of duty. Even the *mitsvot* of the Torah are called commands, not duties. They are called commands only in order to sweeten these actions, for a man is pleased to fulfill the will of God above... How could it possibly be appropriate to speak of duties where men are concerned, the creation made in the image of God? Just as the Creator is free in all of his actions, so too man has no duties; not even duties involving good deeds. Rather, it is fitting for man to *will* good deeds. Perhaps this is the idea of ‘[I adjure

you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles, and by the hinds of the field], that you awaken not, nor stir up love, until it please (Song of Songs 3:5)' — i.e. until you want to do it (Tamaret 1986: 220)."

The *halakha*, literally the "walking," promulgated by the *beyt midrash* qua anarchist municipal institution is an ideal, but naturally a freely-willed practice in the love of God and of men alike. It cannot be forced. Indeed, by Tamaret's interpretation of the fourth commandment, not to make graven images (Exodus 20:4), one may not behave like a "cossack of religion (Tamaret 1992: 115-116)," forcing his fellow "to be responsible for commandments against his will (Tamaret 1968)." To strengthen the Torah, one must "take care above all not to choose... means which contradict it (Tamaret 1992: 115)," avoiding "guardianship (*apotroposut*) and rule over others (Tamaret 1920: 53)" and encouraging "free development (Tamaret 1905: 37)" by serving as a living example and by sharing the light and depth of Torah (Tamaret 1992: 116).<sup>20</sup>

Public ritual is a particularly important way that that the light of Torah as a liberating force is communicated, an example being Tamaret's interpretation of the Yom Kippur fast. Traditionally understood as a penitentiary practice (*Hilkhot Ta'anivot* 1:1-3), Tamaret understands it more expansively. Bodily needs, he points out, are satisfied by "annihilating and eradicating the objects of nourishment" On the holy day, one "ought not fill his body via the destruction of another" but rather exercise restraint such that he "himself undergoes annihilation (Tamaret 1912: 17)."

Though one cannot fast forever, Tamaret believes that the force of public ritual has a broadly transformative effect on individuals and the community alike. Thus, he links the fast to the liberating Jubilee, which was historically announced on the same day (Leviticus 25:9). Because only bodily drives "muddy the relations among us, dividing us into those who subjugate and those who are subjugated (Tamaret 1912: 22)" these distinctions disappear when the drives are dampened or eliminated. The personal renunciation marking the holy day translates directly into acts of renunciation where other people are concerned, into a general repudiation of exploitation and oppression.

The emphasis, as I see it, is not the the specific legal institution of the Jubilee, but the more universal value it indicates. These rituals are supposed to instill the Jewish community with an intuitive sense of justice and an abhorrence for violence, exploitation, and oppression of any kind.

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<sup>20</sup> This approach seems to be reflected in Tamaret's account of his own practice as a rabbinic figure in Milejczyce. In his biography, he writes that "In my sermons I taught that the prophets and the sages approached the people not as lawgivers and decree mongers, but endeavored calmly and pleasantly to affect hearts." He also reports that these sermons drew also the experience of nature and that they were not so much intellectual as aesthetic and emotional (Tamaret 1993: 164-65). In the same text, he also writes that "when members of the congregation came to me for judgment, I ruled according to the *Hoshen Mishpat*, identifying the guilty and the innocent parties. But when the innocent asked me to force the other party, to realize the judgment by coercive means, I refused categorically, maintaining that the rabbi is not a policeman, but a fair judge (Tamaret 1993: 168)."

Thus, through diasporic consciousness in combination with the libertarian institution of the *beyt midrash* and the public rituals of the Jewish community, true freedom becomes “the sole inheritance of this exiled people of the Torah (Tamaret 1928: 48).” Thus, having “abandoned the sword” together with the land and become a subversive spiritual “kingdom within a kingdom (Tamaret 1920: 68),” the Jewish community becomes a “messianic font,” bringing redemption to the earth” by planting “the seeds of the prophetic mission, which is our exilic formation (Tamaret 1920: 40).”

### **The Revolution of the Heart and the Jewish Diasporic Mission**

In the course of our exposition of Tamaret’s thought, we have often made passing reference to his understanding of Israel’s role as a moral and political exemplar. In the present and final section, we shall examine this suggestion in greater detail. To do so, we shall consider Tamaret’s affirmation of revolution by way of the heart and then Israel’s role in realizing it.

Tamaret’s conviction as to the “uselessness and emptiness of responding with force” to force (Tamaret 1992: 111) will come as no surprise. For one, it is idolatrous in itself, involving a utilitarian attitude toward human life. Furthermore, he considers it ineffective; echoing his critique of Israelite complicity with pharaonic tyranny, he concludes that because domination cannot “persist for any length of time unless the subjugated themselves” live by the principles which their masters turn against them (Tamaret 1968), resort to revolutionary violence invites the “blemish of despotism” to bloom anew (Tamaret 1912: 32).

So Tamaret contends, revolutionizing the external order of things “by shooting arrows at some tyrant” does not actually transform them in substance; that is accomplished only by “strengthening the spirit of the oppressed from within such that the arrows of the tyrant have no effect on them (Tamaret 1992: 111)” — by a “revolution of the heart” that neutralizes “wolf-like relations among men (Tamaret 1920: 21).” Thus, Tamaret writes:

“To rectify the social order, the evil inclination of the heart must be conquered. Social justice does not depend on politics, but on the purification of the human ‘I’ — opening a man’s eyes so that he reflects upon and recognizes who and what he is, and where he is going. *Then*, all of his aims will be transformed [and he will acknowledge that] communal life is based on mutual aid (Tamaret 1993: 169).”

This change, he explains, is one that every man can and must bring about in himself. It is not a task for vanguardist political parties, but permeates every day life.

How is this revolution conducted? While confessing the historical transgression of *religions*, Tamaret contends nonetheless that moral progress goes hand in hand with *faith*. For one, God serves as object of human emulation. As perfect and self-sufficient in himself, God demonstrates his

imperviousness to suffering violence or sympathizing with it. As creator and sustainer, he demonstrates his care (Tamaret 1912: 12).

God as creator of man in particular, establishes that “man is not an ownerless object, but sanctified property” that “cannot be infringed upon for any reason, good or bad (Tamaret 1992: 72).” Furthermore, that a man exists shows that God wishes it so and confers upon us a duty to help; it implies that he did not raise man from the dust to compete for survival, but “to assist one another in achieving victory over nature and so preparing from it sustenance for all (Tamaret 1912: 20).” Like Tolstoy, Tamaret thus appeals to the prophetic utterance “have we not all one father? Has not one God created us? Why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother (Malachi 2:10; Tamaret 1905: 77)?” The message of human brotherhood, he says, “comes from the depth of the soul and therefore touches the souls of those who listen more than the message of the priests of darkness (Tamaret 1992: 70-71).”

Finally, the idea of God supplies the existential foundation of moral progress. Without God as the answer, Tamaret argues, the question “for whom and why do I labor?” would poke his thoughts like a burrowing moth and dull his spirit.” If this applies to the material conquest of nature, all the more so to “man’s conquest of himself, his natural selfishness (*anokhiyut*) (Tamaret 1992: 68-69).” It is for all of these reasons that true progressives ought, in Tamaret’s view, pray for the kingdom of God in which “wickedness shall be silenced and every form of violence will vanish like vapor, because thou wilt cause the tyranny of evil to cease from the earth (Tamaret 1992: 72)!”

Beyond the idea of God, the revolution of the heart has other tools at its disposal. We have already observed the central role that ritual can play. Though Tamaret focuses on Jewish ritual in particular, there is little reason to suppose that the same approach could not be extended to other traditions. Here, however we shall not speculate but instead proceed to other revolutionary methods. Like Tolstoy, Tamaret maintains that while authority may be grasped via material force, it cannot be maintained; “to plant or uproot permanently the essential source, the human will to act,” he says “is possible only by virtue of spiritual force.” Thus, people otherwise deficient in wealth and in access to the institutions of power, people with “little power to affect the body,” may yet “have much power over the soul, over the human spirit (Tamaret 1992: 113).”

Exercise of this power involves regarding man as a creator of worlds — this, Tamaret interprets as another implication of the image he shares with God. Invested with this power, human behavior produces the social world in which he lives. “When a man raises his fist against another man, the air surrounding him is” as it were, “filled with waving fists;” the same being true of dismissive glances or neglectful inaction. In contrast, “good vibrations” are emitted when the right choices are made (Tamaret 1912: 39). In short, we are personally responsible for the world we live in, for good and for bad.

Therefore — interpreting the *Tosefot* to Baba Kama 23a to the effect that a person must be more careful about harming others than avoiding harm himself — Tamaret holds that where one's own wellbeing is concerned, one must heed the advice of the psalmist and “resign unto the Lord (Psalms 37:7)” in “sacred silence,” enduring torture modestly. This will move the oppressor to feel regret; he will then “be ashamed before the tortured and withdraw its hand... [For God implanted] feelings of justice and mercy... in the human heart (Tamaret 1905: 29).” In contrast, “when it comes to things which will tarnish your soul,” when one is compelled to behave wickedly, “to punish or to strike,” one must resist with all his strength, letting the thug “know that you are already chained firmly in the service of the Just Master, who resides in your heart and that you are unable to be anybody's bruising cane (Tamaret 1986: 219).” This will impress upon the oppressor that he and not his victim is the subhuman, for he is tasked with the despicable labor of persecution. Tamaret believes the micro-transformations born of passive resistance build momentum and enthrone “the God of truth and righteousness in the world,” adding “power to the kingdom of justice (Tamaret 1968).”

Like Tolstoy, Tamaret insists that “stubbornness is our primary weapon” because we fight for that which “cannot be taken by means of a sword (Tamaret 1920: 41-42).” He recommends that we learn the secret implied by the verse “and he shall smite the land with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked (Isaiah 11:4)” — we must learn to kill “the wicked with spirit,” forcing them to feel for “the degradation of the oppressed” and thus causing the “downfall of tyranny by throwing at the tyrant not bombs, *but a look of deep contempt.*” We must be diligent in the field of “of deep hatred and absolute disgust for murder and violence;” for its “power exceeds all others .” and “all the oppression and violence in the world can take place only” when such feelings are numbed (Tamaret 1992: 112-13).

Having thus accounted for the general content and methods of the revolution of the heart, we may now conclude this chapter by inquiring as to the special role that Jewish communities play in the process of world redemption as understood by Tamaret. In our analysis of his anti-Zionism, we saw that because it first introduced the world to pure faith, Israel has a special responsibility for promoting it.. The question is how.

Tamaret denies that the message of pure faith, so far as any particular *Jewish* mission is concerned, has anything to do with spreading monotheism, ethical or otherwise.<sup>21</sup> Such convictions “can exist in the world without Israel (Tamaret 1920: 54);” indeed, they already do. Moreover, responsibility *directly to instruct* others would carry with it an implicit duty to assimilate, for a teacher must adapt to the worldview of his students. To insist on “the persistent value of our difference” is to admit that Israel was not dispersed in order to school the nations in doctrine.

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<sup>21</sup> This stands in stark contrast to the popular views discussed by Benor (Benor 2017).

Rather, Tamaret contends, the “divine message (*da’at*) taught by the prophets comes from the word *mudeh*, which means familiarity, or closeness” — intimacy with God. Thus to live “in communion with the divine presence” means to “render man a soft, pure, and refined creature who celebrates life and hates death and evil (Tamaret 1920: 54).” It is not a matter of how God is understood, but how he is *related* to and how this transforms human relations.

In line with his approach to communal leadership, which emphasizes guidance and modeling over authority, Tamaret contends that Israel is tasked with becoming first “a light *unto itself*... and *incidentally* becoming a light *unto the nations*.” Like the flames of the candleabrum in the ancient Temple, which were inclined inward but nonetheless radiated outward, so too Israel among the nations (Tamaret 1920: 52). For Tamaret this involves the idea of Judaism as “a unique civilization (Tamaret 1920: 56),”<sup>22</sup> that is, “as a living example of the concretization of the divine ideals (Tamaret 1920: 53).”

This brings us back to Tamaret’s view as to the redemptive function of exile. While people tend intuitively to grant that a man retains his humanity even when he is homeless, the same cannot be said of peoples without states. Jewish life in diaspora is the counterexample; it demonstrates not only that collective life is possible “without a kingdom or a state” or territory, but that when identity is bound up in such things, “it relies on a fragile reed (Tamaret 1920: 59-61).” Thus, Tamaret declares:

“To maintain the existence of our people in exile, the existence of the ‘national example,’ is our universal obligation in exile. It is not to spread the diasporic doctrine of Israel that we went into exile among the nations. Rather, it was to raise and sustain before the nations a Jewish-diaspora people and a living example of the doctrine (Tamaret 1920: 75).”

The task of dispersion, in other words, is to demonstrate the force of dispersion as living ideal: collective identity sans territory and state.

By extension, he suggests that when the sages said that a home absent of Torah will be destroyed (Sanhedrin 92a; Mishneh Torah, Hilkhoh Talmud Torah 3:13) they spoke not only of “an individual structure, but also peoples and whole countries (Tamaret 1920: 17).” Jewish anarcho-diasporism, the Torah broadly construed, is the prophylactic to collective destruction, to war. In the gruesome wake of WWI, Tamaret therefore writes that “the time has come for the revival of Judaism (Tamaret 1992: 109).” By that, he means that it is time for all people to avow “the exile of the divine presence and the divine presence of exile (Tamaret 1920: 24).” Thus “amputating” the “arrogant wings of the citizenship (Tamaret 1920: 64),” to create a civilization organized around moral principles and in rejection of “the ugliness of one man’s rule over another, which is to his detriment (Tamaret 1912: 38).” Then, “the era of sacrifices, when one swallows his fellow,” will be brought to an end (Tamaret 1912: 84) and “the culture of Esau,”

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<sup>22</sup> Here, Tamaret prefigures thinkers like the American founder of Reconstructionist Judaism, Mordechai Kaplan who articulated similar ideas in his magnum opus *Judaism as a Civilization*.



which “lives by the sword and is likewise consumed by it” will be shattered so that “the footsteps of the messiah... will become audible (Tamaret 1920: 22).”

To summarize this section, we found that in keeping with his pacifism, Tamaret rejections not only traditional state violence, but also revolutionary violence. In his view, the only legitimate revolution and effective revolution is the revolution of the heart. This involves living with pure faith which, in this context implies: empathy, respect for the image of God in man, appreciation for the brotherhood of man. This pure faith not only supplies the existential ground for moral labor, but also a basis for discerning the course of revolutionary action. In essence, Tamaret concurs with Tolstoyan practices of passive resistance, though the Russian religious anarchist is not referenced directly. Unlike Tolstoy, however, he finds room for religious ritual as a modality of resistance and moral instruction. Moreover, while Tolstoy’s assessment of Jews and Judaism was often short of favorable, Tamaret presents the Jewish community as a living example to others of anarcho-diasporic religious resistance to the state and, in this way, believes this people plays a crucial revolutionary role.

### **Conclusion**

Let us now review. We began the chapter with Tamaret’s typology of theopolitical phenomena. Like Bakunin, Tamaret asserts that there is a parallel between theology and politics. Operating on a quasi-dialectical basis, he presents thesis and antithesis: pagan consciousness and pure faith, representing the annihilation of man and tyranny, and his valorization and liberty respectively. These antitheses are synthesized by “religion,” which Tamaret considers regressive, putting the language of faith in the service of essentially pagan theopolitical objectives. This dialectic is also indexed to a materialist schema of technological progress: pagan nihilism corresponds to human helplessness in the face of natural forces; faith to process of overcoming them.

We then proceeded to consider NPSM as modern forms of pagan consciousness: the individual is subsumed in the collective, a process which Tamaret represents through the image of alimation. This process is violent, but it also has a voluntaristic element. The fragile ego seeks vicarious affirmation by way of the collective and its triumphs. In this way, NPSM resemble religion as conceived by Tamaret: pagan servility painted in the hue of freedom.

Next, we examined in considerable detail Tamaret’s reconstruction of the sacred history of Israel. While Zionists and the ultra-orthodox differ in their responses to it, they agree on the tragic character of exile. Tamaret rejects this consensus. As he understands it, the exodus story expresses God’s disdain for NPSM as exemplified by Egypt. Thus, when when Israel settled into the land and adopted the life-ways of landed peoples, it lost touch with its soul. In this way, the eventual destruction of the ancient

Hebrew commonwealth is not mourned but *celebrated*; exile becomes redemption. This consequence then opened into a brief discussion as to the institutional manifestation of this restorative exile. Tamaret proposes the Torah as the organizing principle of the community. Unlike the ultra-orthodox, however, he treats it less as law than as guidance, *hora'ah*. Paralleling anarchist thought stretching from Kropotkin to Gordin, Tamaret proposes that this guidance emerge from the study hall, the *beyt midrash*, in lieu of the state.

Thereafter, we addressed the question of revolution. For Tamaret, the means of revolution must correspond to its ends. Therefore, violent uprising is anathema; like Tolstoy, he proposes a revolution of the heart as fomented via methods of passive resistance. In Tamaret's view, the Jews have a special role to play in this revolution. Though he strongly objects to the idea that Jews are to function directly as pedagogues to humanity, he believes in teaching by example. Israel, he argues is the historical exception to the view that a people stands secure only when bolstered by NPSM. Armed with its Torah, Israel has constructed its collective life on other grounds and survived in spite of constant persecution. If Israel can do so, then others can too.

In this way, we finally grasp the radical contours of R. Aharon Shmuel Tamaret's pacifist anarcho-diasporism. It involves a total transformation of the historical, social, and political consciousness of modern Jewish communities as they emerged from the ideological ferment of the late nineteenth century and ossified into the categories familiar to us today. Tamaret shatters these categories. He sides with Zionists in rejecting nihilistic pietism and demanding material reconstruction of Jewish life. Yet, he rejects the Zionist alternative on moral grounds. Israel is tasked, he maintains, must stand firm in its commitment to Abraham's mission. It must resist the temptation of foreign gods, but smash the idols of nation, land, and state, reject the hypnosis of the spinning sword. While Tamaret's message was drowned out in his own time and promptly forgotten, in an era such as ours, when the old orthodoxies have begun to collapse under their own weight, when the moral and practical unsustainability of religious isolationism and of Zionism alike has become painfully clear, and yet when solidarity with others has been translated into insidiously unconscious self-hatred, Tamaret's vision has perhaps found its day.

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