

**FROM BOBOWA TO MAGENZA TO JERUSALEM.
THE BIOGRAPHY OF AVRAHAM SHLOMO STUB
– BETWEEN HASIDISM AND ZIONISM**

Andreas Lehnardt

(Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz)

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Abstract: The article summarizes and highlights some sections of the autobiography of Abraham Stub, a Jew born in Bobowa into a family of adherents of the Bobower Rebbe. In his early childhood Stub migrated with his parents to Mainz in Germany, later escaping the Shoah to Palestine, where he managed to establish a store in the center of West Jerusalem (*Ma'ayan Stub*). The autobiography, written in Hebrew, was until recently unknown, although it contains interesting information about the relationship of Jews from Bobowa with their home town after migration, as well as transmitting remarkable biographical details about Rebbe Ben Zion Halberstam's life in Bobowa. Stub depicts himself as a traditional Jew who during and after World War I and his service in the Austrian army became more and more a religious Zionist. His book thus also provides many insights into the early development of the Mizrahi movement in Germany, where Jews from Eastern Europe, especially from Galicia, were often discriminated against by German Jews and therefore established their own small prayer circles (*Mahzike ha-das*). Stub's life story developed from this traditional Hasidic Diaspora background into a typical religious Zionist, so to speak Israeli orthodox biography. It might serve as an example for further studies about migration from the East to the West and further on to Israel, where Jews from Poland or a Polish background still play a dominant role in the political and religious public sphere.

Introduction

Recent years have seen a growing interest in Jewish migration from eastern parts of Europe to the West at the beginning of the 20th century, until World War II and the Holocaust. Although quite a number of studies on Jewish migration to Western Europe already exist, the sources available for the reconstruction of the social and religious history of specific Jewish groups of migrants in Europe before the wars are still rather limited.¹ While research has concentrated on the Jewish migration to larger cities, like Vienna and Berlin,² there is scant evidence of the living conditions of Jewish families

¹ Cf. on the vast literature on Jewish migration in the 19th century and until 1914, e.g. Berger 1983; Gartner 1996; 1999; Brinkman 2013. On the Jewish migration to Germany see, for example, Richarz 1997; Maurer 2011. On the migration from Galicia, see e.g. Kuzmany 2011, esp. pp. 72-78.

² Cf. e.g. on Vienna: Hödl 1999; Staudinger 2015. For Berlin see, for example, Geisel 1981; Maurer 2011. On the migration to larger cities in Germany, see Wertheimer 1986 (Appendix IIIb). For other larger or

from smaller villages and towns in Galicia who migrated to Germany. In addition, for certain groups of Jewish migrants, like the followers of certain Hasidic courts, there are only very few sources available – be it because many of these migrants did not publish their memoirs, mostly due to their low social status, or because they could not transmit any of their private letters or autobiographical documents to public archives owing to the fact that they or their families had perished during the Holocaust. On the other hand, the lack of interest in the topic might still be a late reflection of the pre-Holocaust attitude towards Jews from the eastern parts of Europe (in German “Ostjuden”) within the German-speaking Jewish communities themselves.³ A number of testimonies and documents support the assumption that besides anti-Semitic circles and nationalist parties also well-educated and enlightened Jews in the West in some way discriminated against these mainly Yiddish-speaking Jews, sometimes to the extent that these migrants were made responsible for the growing anti-Semitism or other problems within particular communities themselves.⁴

With these preconditions in mind, it might be of some interest to give a short summary and description of one interesting example of an autobiography of a former Hasidic Jew from Bobowa (Yiddish: Bobov) who migrated with his parents to Mainz (Magenza in Hebrew) in Germany at the beginning of the 20th century, escaped Nazi persecution in that country and managed to resettle in Palestine, where he successfully built up his still existing company, *Ma'ayan Stub* (Stubs Quelle), on King George-Yaffa crossing in the center of the modern part of Jerusalem.

The report of Avraham Stub (1898-1987), the founder of *Ma'ayan Stub*, a well-known textile store in Jerusalem, is a remarkable ego document. It was written down by a relative in rather simple language and privately published in 1986 in Jerusalem. More than thirty years after its publication in Hebrew, an annotated German translation makes this book of 378 pages known to a wider readership and shares interesting insights into the inner development of Jewish migrants to the West and their survival in the newly established state of Israel after the Holocaust.

Stub's autobiography first of all gives insights into the small and almost unknown Hasidic community of Mainz. This community was established under the German name *Israelitischer Humanitätsverein* (Israelite humanities society), in Hebrew *Mahzike hadas* (Preserver of religion). It was built according to the model of similar societies for the preservation of Orthodoxy in Galicia, which at their beginnings were the most active anti-Zionist element among ultra-Orthodox Jewry.⁵ The members of the Mainz branch called their minyan simply the *Bet ha-Midrash* or “Lehrhaus” – in fact it was a kind of

middle-sized or larger cities in the western parts of Germany with Jewish communities including members from eastern Europe, see, for example, on Chemnitz: Diamant 2002; on Cologne: Carlebach 1984, p. 351; on Hamburg: Goldberg 2006; on Duisburg: van Rhoden 1986; Heid 2010; on Frankfurt: Heuberger, Krohn 1988, pp. 133-141; on Munich: Angermaier 2006, pp. 117-118; on Offenbach, see Werner 1988, pp. 13-16; on Wiesbaden: Bembeneck 1991; on Zurich in Switzerland, cf. Bugmann 1998.

³ For the time prior to and during World War I, see Locker 1916; Friedemann 1916; Horst 1917; Lewicky 1917; and cf. also Maurer 1986. Concerning the time after World War I, see e.g. Pinner, Hammerschlag 1920; Goldmann 1922.

⁴ Cf. Weiss 2000, pp. 24-27. See also below.

⁵ Cf. on this society, which was directed against the Maskilim in Galicia, see Salmon 2002, p. 258; Manekin 2006, pp. 457-460.

Eastern European shtetle. The rooms where the community gathered were located at 13 Margarethengasse, in a building adjacent to the Orthodox synagogue. While the Orthodox synagogue on Flachsmarktstrasse at the corner of Margarethengasse was partly damaged and looted during the Pogrom Night of 1938, this shtetle was not touched by the Nazis. It remained intact until the outbreak of the war, and during this period it was also used by the Orthodox community. However, no photos or images of this prayer room have survived, and therefore we do not know what the room looked like. Attached to this synagogue there was also a cheder and a teaching room for adults.⁶

The scarceness of information about this Eastern European minyan makes Stub's *zikhronot*, who served as a gabbai (warden) in that small Yiddish and Polish speaking minyan, so important. His report not only gives detailed insights into the history of this particular community, but he also describes some of its leading characters, and depicts their relationship with the larger Orthodox community,⁷ which, as in many other German cities, had been founded in 1853-1854 and was called the *Israelitische Religionsgesellschaft* (Israelite society of religion) of Mainz.⁸ In addition, this remarkable autobiography provides further insights into the development of religious Zionism in Germany and in the newly established state of Israel.

Childhood in Bobowa – migration to Germany

Stub's autobiography has six chapters: the first four of them deal with his life in Galicia and Germany, and the last two are a summary of his life in Israel after his *Aliyah*. Following some genealogical preliminaries, Stub starts with a description of his childhood in a traditional Jewish environment in Bobowa. He was born into

a warmhearted, vibrant Jewish world of a Galician *shtetl*, crowded with pious and God-fearing though poor Jews, who arduously tried to nourish themselves, but for whom the Torah always remained the center of their lives.⁹

In fact, he himself was educated in this traditional way in a cheder under very poor conditions, but, as he emphasizes, these were the happiest days of his life. Since his father died rather early, he was never able to attend an institution of higher Jewish education, such as a yeshiva. And so this cheder experience was very crucial to him, but he was also educated by his grandfather, who came from Brzeskow (Briegel), and was a well-known merchant.

⁶ I am grateful for this information to Zvi Cahn, Kefar Pines, one of the last eyewitnesses and as a young man a member of the Orthodox community, *Adas Yeshurun*, of Mainz (in a letter via email, 14.02.2008).

⁷ A list of some community members from 1928 seems to have been preserved in a document from a "Hevra qinyan sefarim Mainz" (CAHJP D Ma 8/8). This "Kassobuch" lists all books donated to the cheder of this particular community. The first name on this list is "A. Stub." The list was published in Lehnardt 2009, p. 241.

⁸ On the history of this larger community, founded by Rabbi Samuel Bondi (1794-1877) and Rabbi Marcus Lehmann (1831-1890), among others, see e.g. Keim 1978, p. 72; Dörrlamm 1995, p. 35; Schütz 1999, p. 695, and in more detail Drobner 2000, p. 164-167.

⁹ Stub 1986, 25; 2012, p. 29 (German).



III. 1: Family of Abraham Stub (together with his father from Yehuda Alexander Stub from Bobowa)

In 1903 Stub's parents moved for medical and economic reasons from Bobowa to Mainz in Germany, while he remained for some time with his uncles and aunts in Galicia. Only after quite some time did the parents manage to bring their son to the booming and growing city in the Rhineland, then part of the state of Hesse. Yet the migration to Mainz caused a deep disruption in his life. The little boy did adapt well, and found himself isolated in contrast to Bobowa. Since his family only spoke Yiddish and Polish, his parents were also dropped from the Jewish society.

Characteristic of this situation and these social relations within the community is a short passage about the religious life in the Orthodox community in the synagogue on Flachsmarktstrasse:

The Orthodox community mainly gathered German-speaking Jews. Only a minority came from the eastern lands of Europe. I can assert with clear conscience that most of the German Jews – with a few exceptions –, religious or not, did not like the Jews from the East. They were not accepted as equal and their status changed only after they could manage to stay for several years in town. Jews from Galicia therefore were seated always in the last benches of the synagogue, and it took them great pains to grab a more prestigious seat.¹⁰

In light of these circumstances and with the growing number of immigrants from the East, the need for an additional separate community was felt more strongly. The exact incident that led to this small shtetle-community being established are not transmitted, but Stub's biography provides at least some insights that are not to be found in any other sources:

¹⁰ Stub 1986, p. 11; 2012, p. 16 (German).

In the year 1908 a Jew from the East called Biner founded the “humanitarian” *Bet ha-Midrash* (Israelitischer Humanitätsverein), which was opened especially for members from the East. This house of study was located in Margarethengasse, but the entrance was located in the backyard. In this building complex, on the third floor, two rooms served as a house of study. The larger room was used for prayers by men, while the smaller room was used as the women’s section. The building adjoined in the yard to the Orthodox Bondi-synagogue, but there was no visual contact between the two synagogues. The interior fittings were donated by community members.¹¹

Amazingly, Stub then also informs his readers about the later “career” of this Mr. Biner, a character who until now has remained totally unknown to the annals of the Jewish community of Mainz:

Biner was a pious Jew who at the same time also joined a goyish carnival club. At the annual carnivals parade (in Mainz) he even used to ride on a horse. After the number of supplicants at this house of prayer had grown and more Jews joined the shtible, a different, more Orthodox person was elected head of this institution. Biner left the community also because the community had split due to his public appearance.¹²

The discipline in this minyan must have been rather strict. A short episode depicting an incident during the high holiday service seems to have been most typical. At that time Stub served as a shamash in the small community:

I remember an incident when I was a young man: A certain David M.¹³ began to read the newspapers during the Yom Kippur service. In my function as a gabbai I immediately gave him the order to stop or to leave the synagogue. When he refused to follow my order, I gave him two slaps in the face and threw him out. The guy then complained about my behavior before the head of the main synagogue. To my great surprise, though, I received a letter of appreciation from the president of the main community.¹⁴

Stub’s rigor and dedication to religious matters as well as his eastern Jewish identify are also noticeable in another affair. In a number of German Jewish newspapers at the time, marriage advertisements were published. Many advertisements, however, included the remark that Jews from Eastern Europe were not welcome. Also in the most popular newspaper of the German Orthodoxy, *Der Israelit*, published in Mainz,¹⁵ marriage advertisements with these discriminatory comments were published. Evidently, members of the old Jewish establishment were using these notes to try to prevent Eastern Jews from marrying into their community. Stub himself wrote several letters of protest against these advertisements, and according to him these letters were a success, at least in Mainz.

Interesting in this regard is the fact that his parents used to support Jewish transients from the East. On almost every Shabbat evening, he writes, his parents invited poor and needy Jews from Poland and Galicia to their home. This widespread means of

¹¹ Stub 1986, p. 25; 2012, p. 30 (German).

¹² Stub 1986, p. 25; 2012, p. 30 (German).

¹³ The identity of this person is unknown.

¹⁴ This letter was sent by Bernhard Albert Mayer, who functioned from 1908 until 1941 as president of the main Jewish community of Mainz, often designated as the Reform or Liberal Jewish Community. He has also been elected as city council member (“Stadtverordneter”). See on his life Mayer 2007, p. 7.

¹⁵ Cf. [Editorial Staff], Art. Israelit, der, in *Encyclopedia Judaica* 9 (1971), pp. 1066-67.

poor relief (*tzedaka*) strengthened his Eastern Jewish identity. And even during World War I, Russian Jewish prisoners of war imprisoned in Mainz occasionally had the chance to get a kosher meal at his parents' home. From these Shabbat guests he learned of what he had missed in his assimilated German Jewish environment.

Stub's childhood and youth proceeded under difficult circumstances. Due to the difficult economic situation, he could not study, but started to support his father's haberdashery business. During World War I, he had to serve in the Austrian army. Although he tried to avoid military service with every swindle, only bribery saved him from fighting on the frontline, with the result that in the end he managed to survive under difficult circumstances at a far-off military base in Bochnia, close to the town of his birth.¹⁶



III. 2: Abraham Stub sitting, Soldier in the Austrian Army, 1916

All the more difficult must have been the inter-war time for Stub and his family. The growing anti-Semitism and economic difficulties stiffened his thoughts about emigration. The religious Zionist movements, however, at that time did not intend to build up

¹⁶ Cf. Stub 2012, pp. 50-55.

an independent Jewish state. They supported the idea of a Jewish settlement (*Yishuv*) in Palestine. Many Jews who survived World War I therefore remained hesitant in making any plans for *Aliyah*, the immigration to Israel.

Hasidism

Like his forefathers, Abraham Stub was deeply influenced by Hassidic belief and religious practice. When the first Bobover Rebbe, Rabbi Shlomo Halberstam (1847-1905), suddenly died while being treated in Bad Nauheim (a spa town 28 km north of Frankfurt), his father took him from Mainz to this small town in the foothills of the Taunus to grieve. They stayed there until the corpse had been transported back to Bobowa by train.¹⁷

In particular the Second Rebbe from Bobowa, Ben Zion Halberstam (1874-1941),¹⁸ later had a great impact on Stub's life. Like his father, he was not afraid of travelling long distances to meet and counsel with the Rebbe. On these occasions, he used to donate great sums to receive his blessing and spiritual guidance. Many times, Stub therefore praises his spiritual leader and emphasizes that only this Rebbe made his small hometown known in the Jewish world and a place of joyous occasions:

The grandson of the Rebbe from Sącz (Sanz), Rabbi Shlomo Halberstam, the author of the book *Divre Hayyim*, had chosen Bobowa as his residence. With his arrival, the name of the town scattered in all cardinal directions. If he had not settled there, the Jewish people would never have learned anything about the existence of this town. Only upon the Rebbe's arrival did the place become awake – now many visitors arrived for a meeting with the Rebbe. On Shabbat and on the holidays a vast number of Jews populated the streets, and the people of Bobowa were happy about it.¹⁹

Also interesting in this regard is a short note on the wedding celebrations at Bobowa on the occasion of the marriage of Ben Zion's daughter Nehama (Nehumza). He even remembers certain students who came to Bobowa for study and prayer at the Rebbe's *Bet ha-Midrash*. For example, the son of a certain Mr. Stampfer from Krakow who was the owner of Hotel Royal, an inn which still exists today.²⁰

Stub's close connection to the Hassidic leadership of the Halberstam clan becomes more evident in another episode depicting the Rebbe's visit to Wiesbaden (Hesse) for spa treatment. His father took him from Mainz to the other side of the River Rhine and they both met Ben Zion at one of the hotels for Jewish spa guests. He writes about this remarkable get-together in one of the most eminent health spas at that time – with Jewish spa guests even from far eastern parts of Europe:²¹

In 1928 Rabbi Ben Zion from Bobowa arrived in Wiesbaden for spa treatment. He wanted to spend a few weeks recovering there. My father and I traveled there, and he received us with

¹⁷ Cf. Stub 2012, p. 37. For the *Ohel* of Rebbe Shlomo in Bobowa, which is frequently visited even today, cf. Majcher 2008, p. 189.

¹⁸ Cf. Galas, Żebrowski 2003, p. 547; Skotnicki, Klimaczak 2009, pp. 43-50.

¹⁹ Stub 1986, p. 11; 2012, p. 16 (German).

²⁰ Cf. Stub 1986, p. 11; 2012, p. 17 (German).

²¹ Cf. Fritzsche 2014.

great sympathy. Later he used to make my father an example of economic success and held him in high esteem, serving as a positive model for all of his Hasdim. He assumed that my father's success was evoked by his blessing only, and everyone can see that it was only his blessing which evolved. As a matter of fact, after the meeting my father provided him – as was the custom – with a great amount of money.²²

This short last remark noticeably reflects a greater distance to his master and to his father's traditional behavior, so typical of Hassidic life. The way of religious practice at the Rebbe's places became more and more questionable, and Stub did not hesitate to express his skepticism towards these forms of payable piousness.

Noteworthy in this regard is one more passage reflecting on Ben Zion's attitude towards the question of escape from Poland shortly before the Nazi invasion, in 1935. Despite the clear evidence of the great danger for the Jewish community in Bobowa, the Admor refused to give any orders to his followers and adherents. A short passage depicts a meeting with the Rebbe in Trezbinia, after Stub's visit to Leżajsk, where he prayed at the *Ohel* of Rebbe Elimeleh (1717-1787). This episode also stands for Stub's growing Zionist commitment after his first visit to Palestine. On the other hand, it bears witness to his greater identification with a more Westernized Judaism. At that time he had already become a representative of a small group of successful "Ostjuden" who were starting to leave tradition and to change their attitude towards their religious roots.²³

The Rebbe, he reports, received him like many others, only in the middle of the night. At this meeting, Stub tried to inform him of his positive impressions from the Holy Land – about the building projects in Jerusalem and the growing Jewish community he had become aware of. The Rebbe, however, only wanted to know:

What about the "Yiddishkeit" there? And I answered him that someone who wants to live according to the Halakha can do this. The Rebbe, though, replied that it is easier for a Jew to live amongst the goyim. He was therefore not pleased about me and my account from the Holy Land.²⁴

Another passage in this part elucidates his changing opinion about his fellow Jews from Eastern Europe before World War II. A poor Jew, who is introduced as a "Schlumpfer," a poor peddler from Wiesbaden, a simple Hassid Belz,²⁵ with the Yiddish name Avromle, serves as an astonishing example. This certain Avromle, whose identity is not revealed, is depicted as a nervous figure, always asking about his future in Germany:

What will happen? What will happen? And I told him that he should go to Eretz Israel. Also I by myself would find this way one day. But he then went to his Rebbe and asked him for advice over whether he should leave (Germany). The Rebbe, though, asked only if he had an income. When he replied in the affirmative, the Rebbe counselled him not to worry and to stay in his country where he has his income.²⁶

²² Stub 1986, p. 77; 2012, p. 74 (German).

²³ Stub visited Bobowa several times between 1916 and 1918 from Bochnia, where he was stationed as a soldier. For the last visit he came in 1935 to Bobowa, on his way back from his first visit to Palestine.

²⁴ Stub 1986, pp. 110-111; 2012, pp. 98-99.

²⁵ This Hassidic group was founded by Rabbi Shalom Rokeach (died 1855) from Belz. The Belzer Rebbe at that time was Rabbi Aharon Rokeach (1877-1957). A great number of the Belzer Hasidim were murdered by the Nazis during the Holocaust.

²⁶ Stub 1986, p. 87; 2012 (German), pp. 83-84.

With these experiences, more and more Stub became a strong supporter of the Mizrahi movement. And in retrospect, after the Holocaust he must have seen that counsels like these caused many difficulties. The Mizrahi (acronym for *Merkaz ruhani*) had been founded in 1902 in Vilnius, and Stub was among its first representatives in Germany.²⁷ This political involvement changed his life, and later became so important for him that in retrospect he confessed:

At this point I need to remark that my whole family and I are aware of the fact that it was only because of my support for the Mizrahi that I succeeded in convincing my father to immigrate to Eretz Yisrael. This has saved my whole family.²⁸

The Orthodox Mizrahi movement, founded in 1902, enabled Stub to undertake the first steps for his immigration to Palestine. The Mizrahi was the only organization that managed to bridge the gap between the anti-Zionistic Agudat Yisrael and other Orthodox organizations. Later, therefore, when the Aguda became *non-Zionistic* (in the 1930s), members of the Mizrahi movement received more influence and took over significant political functions within the newly established Orthodox political spectrum.

As mentioned earlier, Stub visited Palestine as soon as 1935, also because he wanted to prepare his immigration. Typical of the situation in Germany in those days is Stub's report on a conversation with the president of the main community of Mainz, councilor of commerce Albert Mayer. After his return to Mainz, Stub met Mayer and described to him his views on Palestine and the great opportunities for Jewish life there. Mayer is said to have answered him:

What's all this (the dispute over Israel) good for? I don't mind if after my death goyim play football on my bones. I will stay here, no matter what!

Even the Orthodox rabbi, Rabbi Yona Bondi, is cited by Stub. He is said to have uttered the statement: "Abraham Stub is a nice man, but concerning *Eretz Israel* someone put a bee in his bonnet."²⁹

The attitude of the Jewish middle class in Mainz was, as in many other cities in Germany, often anti-Zionistic, or at least indifferent. Most members of the Jewish main community, however, were very skeptical towards any plans of emigration or building a new Jewish homeland. This is testified to not only by several biographical reports published in the same series as Stub's autobiography.³⁰ It can also be confirmed by the observation that more than half of the Jewish emigrants from Mainz escaped to the Americas, not to British-mandate Palestine. However, those who managed to make *Aliyah* before the war had mostly been active Zionists previously. Or they were at least religiously involved or attracted by the ideas of the different Zionist movements.

²⁷ Later he became a friend of Hermann Pick (1879-1952), the founder of the Mizrahi movement in Germany, who from 1921 until 1927 was also president of the *Mizrachi World Executive*, see Stub 2012 (German), p. 22, note 34. On the early history of the Mizrahi see e.g. Morgenstern 2002, pp. 82-84; Salmon 2002, pp. 163-168.

²⁸ Stub 1986, p. 67; 2012, p. 67.

²⁹ Cf. Stub 1986, p. 67; 2012, p. 67.

³⁰ Cf. Ronell 1995; Simon 2003; Schwarz 2007; Meyer-Jorgensen 2010.

Palestine – Medinat Israel

Another interesting chapter of the book deals with the life of German immigrants into Palestine. After his dramatic escape from Nazi Germany in 1938, Stub and his family reached Palestine and managed to reopen his shop, even with the same name as in Mainz, but now in Hebrew.³¹ Stubs Quelle became Maayan Stub. This store quickly developed into a meeting place for many Jewish immigrants from Germany and Galicia. Even today, therefore, Stubs Quelle is well known among the older citizens of West Jerusalem.

At this time Stub began to become a religious activist, for example with regard to the debates on the Sabbath laws in the future Jewish state. Even years before the acclamation of the State, a serious debate between secular and socialist Zionists and the religious observant population of Jerusalem had escalated.

Concerning Sabbath observance, Stub's practice served as an example. Since he had already been one of the few Jewish shop keepers in Mainz who strictly followed the *Halakha*, not allowing even his non-Jewish employees to keep his shop open, also in Jerusalem he kept his business strictly closed on the Sabbath and holidays. This remarkable example was later also credited with appreciation by the Rebbe, Shlomo Halberstam (1907-2000), the only descendent of the Bobover dynasty to escape Nazi persecution. When he had to fight for similar strictness in Crown Heights (Brooklyn), according to Stub the Admor would point to his exemplary observance of the Sabbath Halakha.



Ill. 3: Maayan Stub Jaffa Rd. – King George Av. crossing, Jerusalem

³¹ Cf. https://he.wikipedia.org/wiki/מעין_שטוב. On the confiscation of the store in Mainz see Keim 1983, p. 258.

Observance of the Sabbath, however, caused many serious debates, and the issue continues to be a controversial one when it comes to cinemas and cafés in certain quarters of Jerusalem. Since the Jews who had escaped Europe often had no experience with public Sabbath observance, the controversies also afflicted Jewish identity. Stub tried to bring in his view, but failed. And this also changed his religious point of view. For Stub, as for similar religious laymen, Sabbath observance was regarded as a test case for the growing state. After his fellowmen and he, trying to impose strictness, had failed, he quickly began to change his point of view. He identified less with his Hassidic milieu from Bobowa, which was then beginning to develop in the Ultra-Orthodox quarters of Jerusalem, like Mea She'arim. Furthermore, as in Germany, he became more attracted by Religious Zionism, mainly influenced by the then widespread teachings of Rav Avraham Isaac Kook (1865-1935). According to an oral communication with his relatives in today's Jerusalem, he never attended the *Shul* of the Bobover Hasidim in Jerusalem, but found his way into a national Zionistic Orthodox community.

Summary

The Hebrew autobiography of Abraham Stub is a remarkable document of a dual assimilation. First the assimilation into a hostile, mainly anti-Semitic society, in Germany, and second into a Jewish milieu and political environment in the developing state of Israel. It thus reflects major changes in the religious biographies of many Israelis, so typical of many other middle-class immigrants who in retrospect tried to explain to their children and grandchildren how they had succeeded in surviving and in what way they had tried to preserve and develop their formerly Eastern Jewish identity.

With regard to the Jewish history of Mainz, this biography is a unique record of the disintegration and marginalization of the Eastern Jewish tradition into the German Jewish bourgeoisie before the Shoah. The social pressure on Jews like the successful merchant Stub to assimilate into the main German Jewish society must have been immense. In Israel this pressure was lifted, but also continued under totally different circumstances. Stub's Jewish identity was therefore steadily changing. And this might have been the reason for which in the end he felt the need to report to his children why and how his life had shifted so dramatically within the space of a few decades.

At the close of his book, Stub resumes his life with the following words:

After I received my religious identity in Bobowa, my journey brought me to a hopeless place with regard to religion, to Mainz. This town had once been the place of an ancient tradition of Jewish learning, but Jewish religious life, even a cheder, that might be addressed as such, nowadays is absent. Even if Magenza is still considered as a place with a great Jewish tradition, a town which was once the home of a great Yeshiva with famous teachers and Torah scholars, nowadays it is a place without any Jewish presence and certainly without any Jewish future.

This very pessimistic view of future Jewish life in Germany after the Shoah, written in the 1980s, cannot be substantiated in 2015. After many ups and downs the situation of the Mainz community changed considerably in the 1990s, and in the last decade even a new synagogue has been built and is once again in use for regular services. Today again there

is Jewish presence in town, again mainly recruited from the Eastern parts of Europe. Most of the members of the Jewish community, however, are coming from the former Soviet Union, and not from Galicia. These modern “Eastern Jews,” however, are struggling with some of the same problems with which their predecessors had to deal. Yet in most of the cases, they are not even aware of their successful forerunners from Galicia.

The translation and analyses of similar autobiographies and biographic accounts from Jewish migrants (written in Polish, Yiddish or Hebrew) will surely help to understand better why some of these seemingly poor and less educated Jews were so successful and even managed to survive the Holocaust.

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