Making the Dewey Jewey: Gershom Scholem as a Librarian

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Summary: After immigrating to Palestine in 1923, Scholem worked as a librarian at the Jewish National and University Library in Jerusalem before embarking on a full-time academic career in 1927. This brief episode was nonetheless highly influential in the field of Judaica librarianship because of Scholem's adaptation of the Dewey Decimal Classification for the library's Judaica Department. This article outlines the characteristics of Scholem's scheme, and it describes the institutional and historical context in which he worked during this period. It analyzes how the scheme was shaped both by this specific context and by Scholem's family background and early life, his Zionist outlook, his distinctive approach to Jewish Studies, and his academic interests.

Keywords: Dewey Decimal Classification, Jewish librarians, Jewish literature, Jewish National and University Library, library science

"The profession of librarian surely suits me best," wrote the youthful Gershom Scholem in his diary in 1918—though he apparently changed his mind a few days later.[1] After immigrating to Palestine in 1923, Scholem was indeed appointed as a librarian at the Jewish National and University Library in Jerusalem, before embarking on a full-time academic career in 1927. This brief episode in his life was nonetheless highly influential in the field of Judaica librarianship because of his adaptation of the Dewey Decimal

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[1] Scholem, *Lamentations of Youth*, 282, 289.

Classification for the library's Judaica Department, which he devised in 1924 and published

in 1927 as *Seder ha-miktzo'ot be-madde'e ha-Yahadut* (*Order of Subjects in Judaica*).[2]

There were three subsequent editions and an English translation.[3] The scheme had an

impact well beyond the Jewish National and University Library, becoming one of the three

major classifications for Judaica compiled in the twentieth century (the others being the

Freidus and Elazar systems). It was adopted by other Israeli and Judaica libraries, as well

as being incorporated into the Hebrew translation of the Dewey Decimal Classification. It is

still in use in some libraries to this day, though not at the National Library of Israel itself.[4]

A library classification has three main purposes: to enable the library user to find

material on a given subject; to show what the library holds on a given subject or in a given

kind of literature; and to aid browsing by placing materials on similar subjects next to one

another. Library classifications use some type of notation—letters, numbers, symbols, or a

mixture thereof—to denote a particular subject. The classification can be used to arrange

materials on the library shelves, or to arrange cards in a card catalogue (although these are

now largely obsolete), or as the order for a printed catalogue or bibliography. At the time

that Gershom Scholem devised his scheme, the dominant general classification scheme in

the English-speaking world was the Dewey Decimal Classification, which was created in the

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[2] Literally "the Science of Judaism." Scholem, *Seder ha-miktzo'ot*.

[3] Jewish National and University Library, *Classification for Judaica.* The English version includes a translation of the introduction to the first edition.

[4] Adler, "Judaica Cataloging," 10; Cohn and Plesser, *Gershom Scholem (1897–1982)*, 5; Lazinger and Adler, *Cataloging Hebrew Materials*, 127; Adler, "Judaica Librarianship," 135; Association of Jewish Libraries, "Members' Catalogs"; Leshem, "Gevulot."

United States by Melvil Dewey in 1876; by 1924, it was in its eleventh edition.[5] It uses a decimal notation and is structured in ten main classes, which are each subdivided into ten subclasses, which are further subdivided as necessary to signify specific subjects.[6]

1. Scholem and the Jewish National and University Library[7]

Scholem came to librarianship as follows: he had emigrated from Germany to Palestine in 1923, obtaining a visa on the basis of a bogus offer of employment at the Jewish National Library in Jerusalem. He was then appointed to a genuine post as head of the library's Judaica Department despite not having been trained as a librarian, and librarianship was apparently not his intended career. In 1918, he had written in his diary that "the profession of librarian surely suits me best, and is the one I'll have," but a few days later he wrote: "What I'll become one day is a matter of complete indifference to me. I'll always be a teacher of untaught subjects, regardless of whether I'm formally a teacher, an academic, or a worker. All three are entirely possible."[8] At the same time, he continued his academic work, being appointed as a lecturer at the Hebrew University in 1925. In 1927, he left the library for a full-time academic career at the Hebrew University.

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[5] Dewey, *Decimal Clasification*.

[6] Broughton, *Essential Classification*, 177, 179.

[7] Unless otherwise stated, all biographical information is from Scholem, *From Berlin to Jerusalem*, and all information regarding the Jewish National and University Library is from Duke, "The Jewish National and University Library."

[8] Scholem, *Lamentations of Youth*, 282, 289.

The Jewish National Library was formed by the World Zionist Organization in 1920,[9]

becoming also the library of the new Hebrew University in 1924. Its first director was

Samuel Hugo Bergman, who held the post from 1920 to 1935. Bergman devoted his initial

energies to expanding the library's holdings to support the university's teaching and

research, but eventually turned his attention to the organization and professionalization of

the library.[10] He sent a number of library staff abroad for professional training and

recruited two American librarians while at the same time appointing scholars, including

Gershom Scholem, to develop the collections in their respective fields. Bergman has been

characterized by Dov Schidorsky as "neither an innovator in library techniques nor an

international leader in librarianship, [but] successful in exploiting the advantages of

foreign methods and adapting them to local needs, after consulting with colleagues

abroad."[11] In 1924, after considering the merits of various classification schemes, the

decision was made to adopt the Dewey Decimal Classification both for the classified

catalogue and, initially, for shelf arrangement.[12] This decision may have been influenced by

the American librarians recruited by Bergman.

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[9] Hebrew University, Jerusalem, *The Hebrew University*, 99.

[10] Haezraḥi, *Bet ha-sefarim*, 22.

[11] Schidorsky, "Modernization and Continuity," 21.

[12] Jewish National and University Library, *Classification for Judaica*, ii; Haezraḥi, *Bet ha-sefarim*, 67; Joel, "The Jewish National and University Library," 108f. Joel explains that in 1935 the shelf arrangement in the closed stacks was changed and that they are now ordered by two or more of the following criteria: type of publication and/or size, general content, year of cataloguing, and ordinal numbers.

The Dewey system was a logical choice for a large general library, but it was problematic for one with a focus on the Jewish People and the Land of Israel, as almost the whole of the religion class in the Dewey classification was devoted to Christianity. Only one number (296) covered Judaism as a whole: a much more detailed classification was clearly required. Moreover, the scope of the Judaica collection was much wider than Judaism as a religion; it aimed rather "to bring together all items, great or trivial, that [had] any relation to Jews and Judaism."[13] It was therefore decided to adapt and expand the Dewey system to meet the needs of the Judaica Department, and this work was undertaken by Scholem.

2. The Scholem Classification

In compiling the classification scheme, it "was not intended to place the Jewish subjects in a completely new organic order, but to supplement and expand the already existing classification."[14] The Dewey classes for Old Testament, Hebrew language, Hebrew literature, and biography of Jews were therefore retained with some modifications, such as placing the biblical books in the Jewish rather than the Christian order.

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[13] Jewish National and University Library, *Classification for Judaica*, ii.

[14] Ibid., iii.

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                                    ┌─────────────────────────────┐
                                    │       General (296.0)        │
                                    └─────────────────────────────┘

                                    ┌─────────────────────────────┐
                                    │  Theology, fundamentals      │
                                    │  of religion, philosophy     │
                                    │         (296.1)              │
                                    └─────────────────────────────┘

                                    ┌─────────────────────────────┐
                                    │    Anti-Semitism and         │
                                    │   apologetics (296.2)        │
                                    └─────────────────────────────┘

                                    ┌─────────────────────────────┐
                                    │    Worship and prayer        │
                                    │         (296.3)              │
                                    └─────────────────────────────┘

                                    ┌─────────────────────────────┐
                                    │    Jewish ethics and         │
                                    │    sermons (296.4)           │
┌──────────────────────┐           └─────────────────────────────┘
│                      │
│   JUDAISM (296)      │           ┌─────────────────────────────┐
│                      │           │      Halacha (296.5)         │
└──────────────────────┘           └─────────────────────────────┘

                                    ┌─────────────────────────────┐
                                    │    Sects, religious          │
                                    │  movements, mysticism        │
                                    │         (296.6)              │
                                    └─────────────────────────────┘

                                    ┌─────────────────────────────┐
                                    │   Daily life, popular        │
                                    │ literature, folklore (296.7) │
                                    └─────────────────────────────┘

                                    ┌─────────────────────────────┐
                                    │   Talmud and midrash         │
                                    │         (296.8)              │
                                    └─────────────────────────────┘

                                    ┌─────────────────────────────┐
                                    │  General subjects in         │
                                    │  relation to Jews and        │
                                    │       Judaism                │
                                    │      (296.9, 'ע)             │
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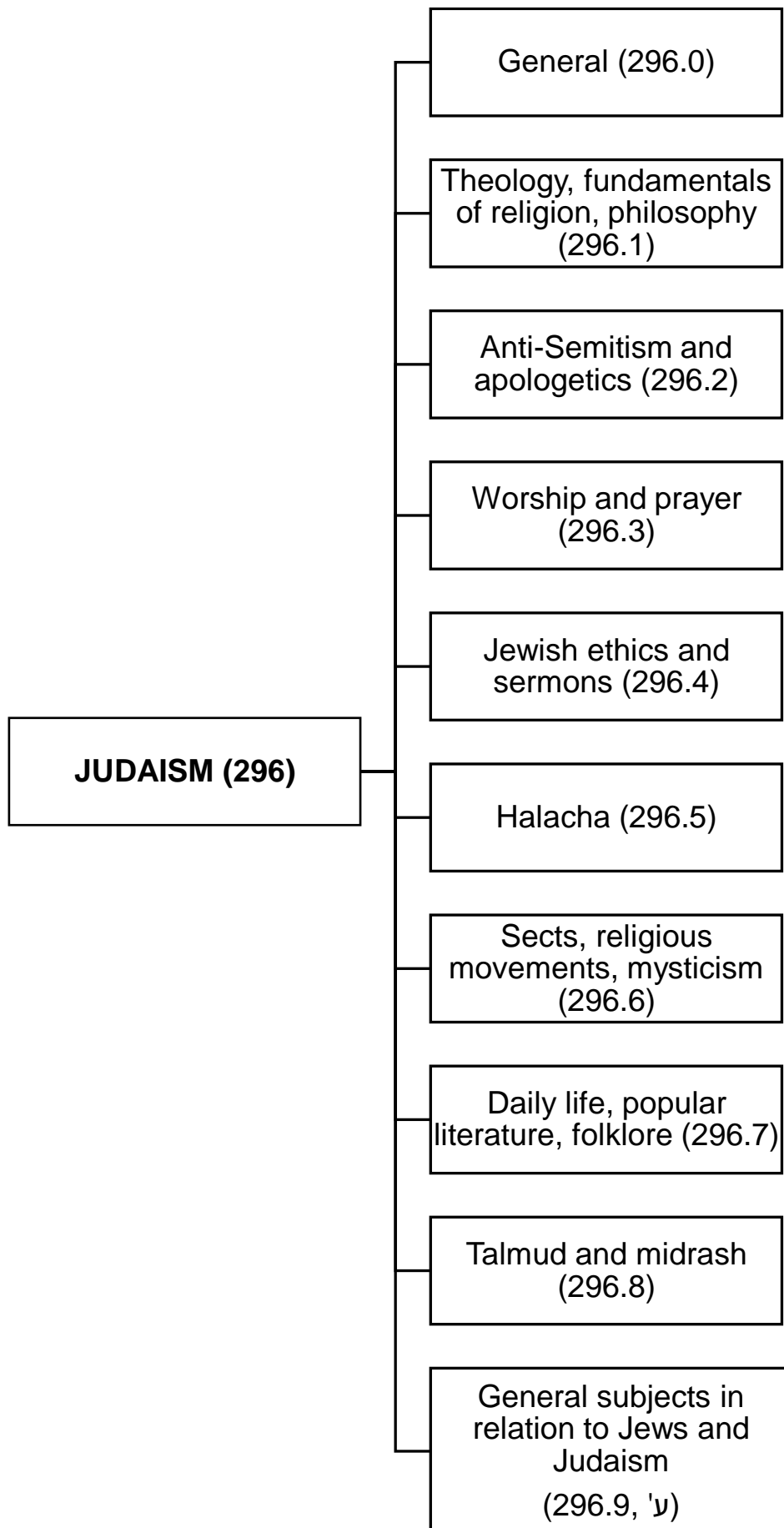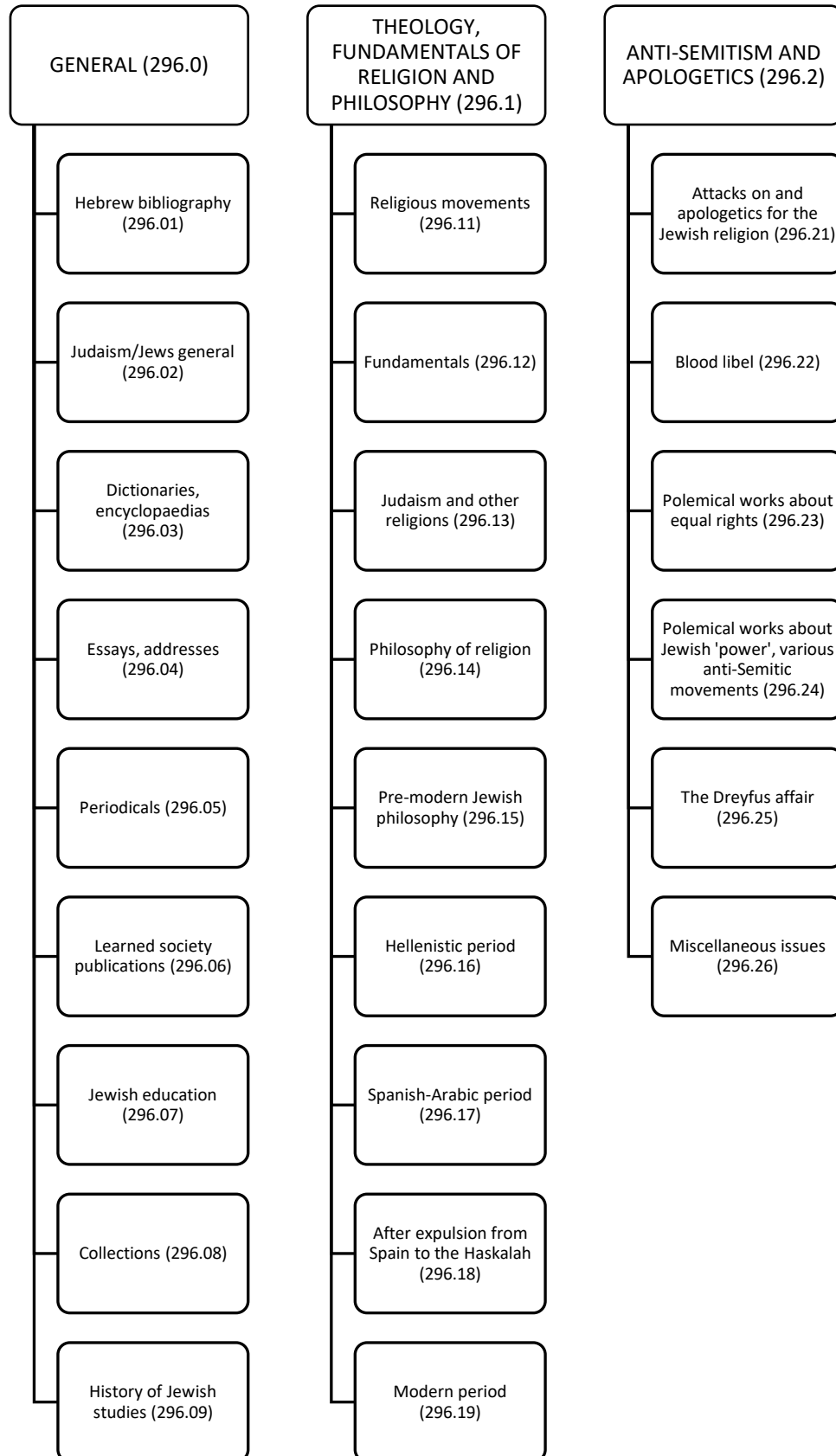
The scope of Dewey's Judaism class (296) was broadened considerably (Fig. 1). The scheme's introduction states:

> We enlarged the scope of 296 to make it the comprehensive number for Judaism, not merely from the "religious" aspect.... Therefore we brought together in 296 all topics relating to Jews and Judaism that do not belong to one of the other classes.... Not only the specific subjects that form an organic part of Jewish studies go here ... but also borderline subjects.[15]

These borderline subjects are accommodated in 296.9 (abbreviated to ע׳), to which the relevant Dewey number is added. For example, the Dewey number for natural sciences is 500, so 296.95 (or ע׳5) denotes natural sciences in relation to Jews.

The general structure of the Judaism class was based on the subdivisions for religious subjects in the *Manuel du répertoire bibliographique universel*, an expanded and improved version of the Dewey Decimal Classification published by the Institut international de documentation in Brussels in 1905, and later known as the Universal Decimal Classification. The order of the scheme's main divisions is thus largely dictated by Dewey and the Universal Decimal Classification, which means, for example, that Bible is in the Christianity rather than Judaism section (221–224), and *halakhah* (296.5) precedes the Talmud and other legal works on which it is based (296.8).
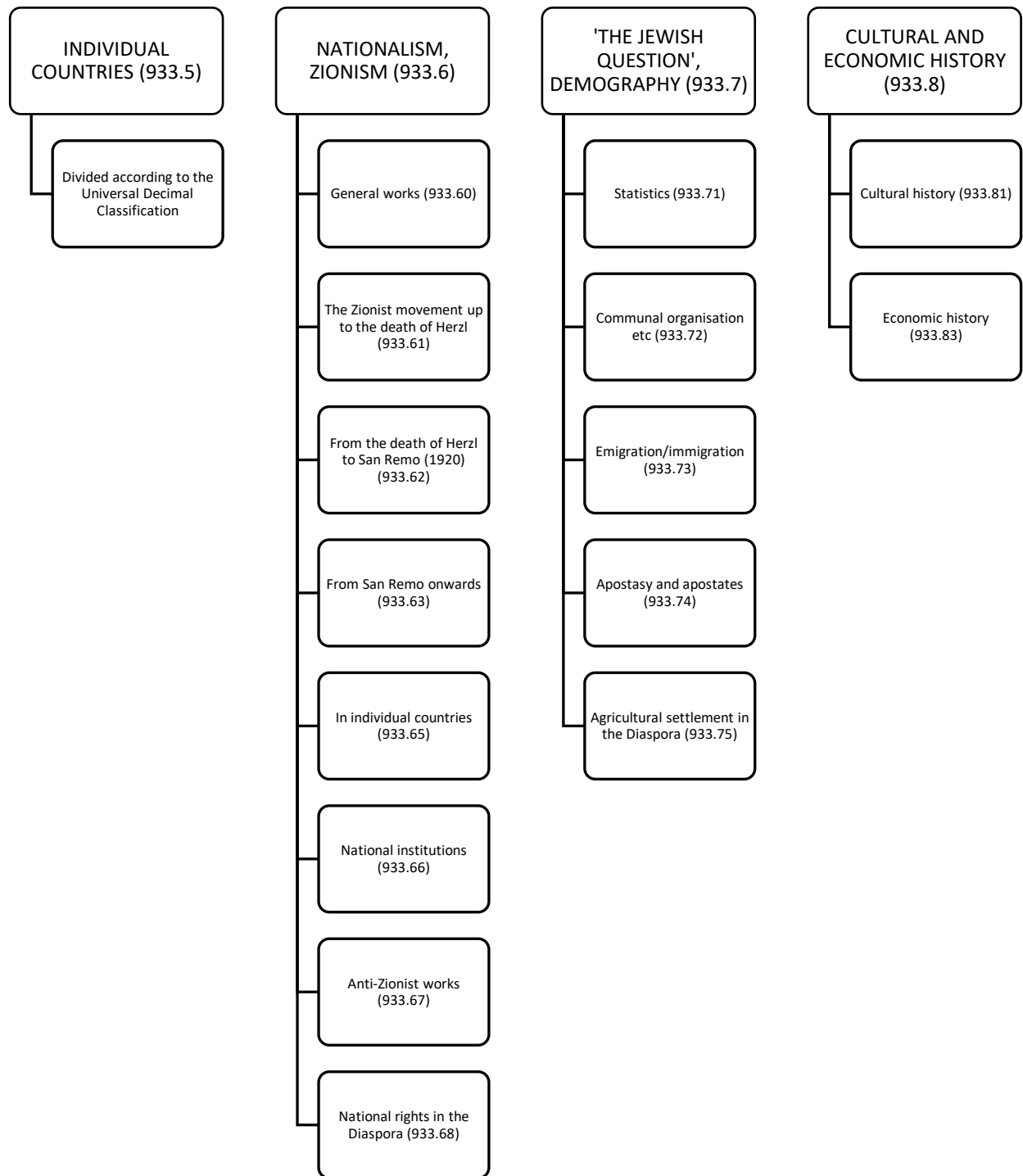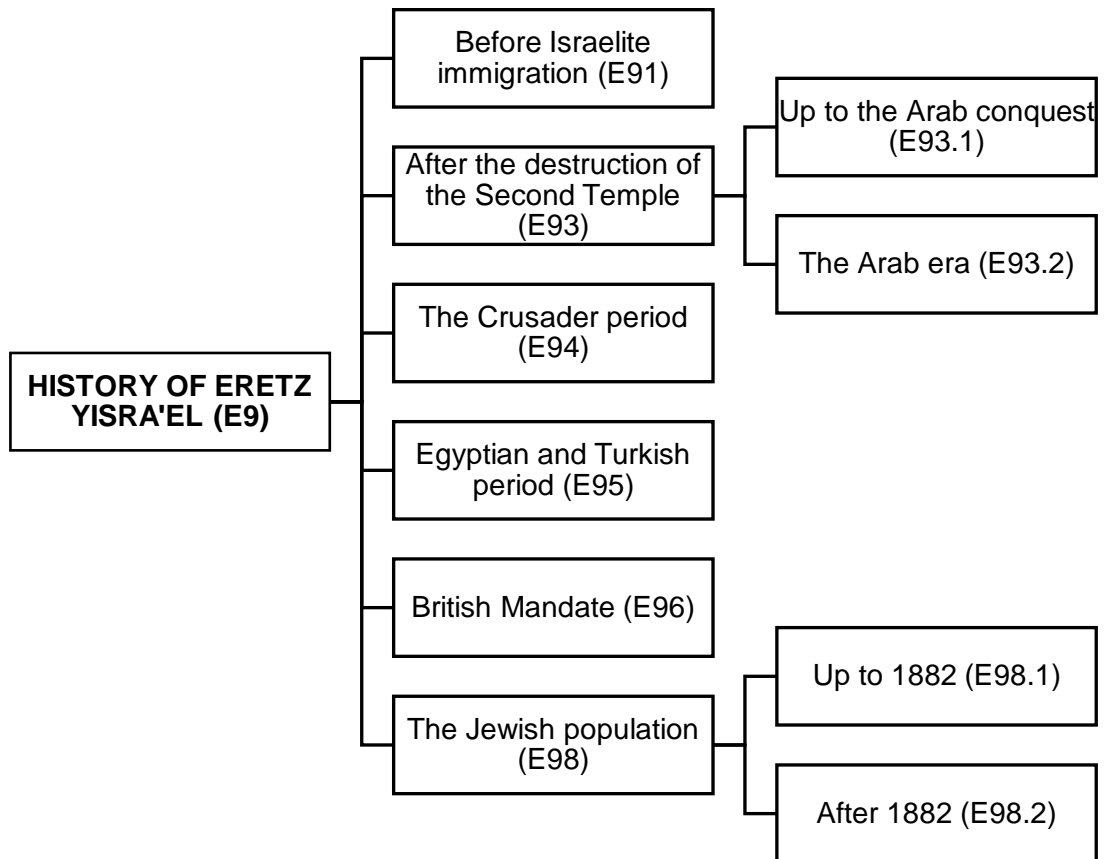
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[15] Ibid., iii.

GENERAL (296.0)

- Hebrew bibliography (296.01)
- Judaism/Jews general (296.02)
- Dictionaries, encyclopaedias (296.03)
- Essays, addresses (296.04)
- Periodicals (296.05)
- Learned society publications (296.06)
- Jewish education (296.07)
- Collections (296.08)
- History of Jewish studies (296.09)

THEOLOGY, FUNDAMENTALS OF RELIGION AND PHILOSOPHY (296.1)

- Religious movements (296.11)
- Fundamentals (296.12)
- Judaism and other religions (296.13)
- Philosophy of religion (296.14)
- Pre-modern Jewish philosophy (296.15)
- Hellenistic period (296.16)
- Spanish-Arabic period (296.17)
- After expulsion from Spain to the Haskalah (296.18)
- Modern period (296.19)

ANTI-SEMITISM AND APOLOGETICS (296.2)

- Attacks on and apologetics for the Jewish religion (296.21)
- Blood libel (296.22)
- Polemical works about equal rights (296.23)
- Polemical works about Jewish 'power', various anti-Semitic movements (296.24)
- The Dreyfus affair (296.25)
- Miscellaneous issues (296.26)

The detailed subdivisions (see Fig. 2) were, however, completely new and were said to be based on "the internal structure of these classes."[16] The general organizing principle of the subdivisions seems to be chronological. The latter part of the section for theology, fundamentals of religion, and philosophy (296.1) is organized according to historical periods, as is the *halakhah* section (296.5). The Talmud and Midrash section (296.8) also follows this principle with the earlier halakhic midrashic collections (296.84) separated from the later aggadic ones (296.86). The order of the different sects and movements (296.6) is also roughly chronological.

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[16] Ibid., iv.

GENERAL (933.0)

- General, philosophy of history (933.01)
- Comprehensive works (933.02)
- Articles (933.04)
- Periodicals (933.05)
- Historical societies (933.06)
- Textbooks (933.07)
- Collections (933.08)
- Sources, historiography (933.09)

UP TO THE DESTRUCTION OF BETAR (933.1)

- Up to the destruction of the First Temple (933.11)
- Babylonian exile and Second Temple era (933.12)
- Up to the destruction of Betar (135 CE) (933.13)
- Josephus (933.17)
- Hellenistic Judaism (933.18)

TALMUDIC ERA (933.2) (undivided)

MEDIEVAL ERA (933.3)

- Sources, travels (933.31)

MODERN ERA (1789-) (933.4)

- First World War (933.46)

INDIVIDUAL COUNTRIES (933.5)

- Divided according to the Universal Decimal Classification

NATIONALISM, ZIONISM (933.6)

- General works (933.60)
- The Zionist movement up to the death of Herzl (933.61)
- From the death of Herzl to San Remo (1920) (933.62)
- From San Remo onwards (933.63)
- In individual countries (933.65)
- National institutions (933.66)
- Anti-Zionist works (933.67)
- National rights in the Diaspora (933.68)

'THE JEWISH QUESTION', DEMOGRAPHY (933.7)

- Statistics (933.71)
- Communal organisation etc (933.72)
- Emigration/immigration (933.73)
- Apostasy and apostates (933.74)
- Agricultural settlement in the Diaspora (933.75)

CULTURAL AND ECONOMIC HISTORY (933.8)

- Cultural history (933.81)
- Economic history (933.83)

Class 933 (Fig. 3), which in the Dewey Classification was called "History of Judea," was expanded to cover the entire history of the Jewish People. It is divided into four historical sections. The first covers the period up to the destruction of Betar, which ended the Bar Kokhba revolt against the Romans in 135 CE (933.1). The second section (933.2) is the Talmudic era, followed by the medieval era (933.3), and the modern era (from 1789, the year of the French Revolution). The latter section has a single subdivision, World War I (933.46). There is also an entire detailed section (933.6) for nationalism and Zionism.

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                                    ┌─────────────────────────┐
                                    │   Before Israelite      │
                                ┌───│   immigration (E91)     │        ┌──────────────────────────┐
                                │   └─────────────────────────┘     ┌──│ Up to the Arab conquest  │
                                │   ┌─────────────────────────┐     │  │        (E93.1)           │
                                │   │  After the destruction of │     │  └──────────────────────────┘
                                ├───│  the Second Temple        │─────┤
                                │   │       (E93)               │     │  ┌──────────────────────────┐
                                │   └─────────────────────────┘     └──│   The Arab era (E93.2)   │
                                │   ┌─────────────────────────┐        └──────────────────────────┘
                                │   │  The Crusader period     │
 ┌─────────────────────┐        ├───│       (E94)              │
 │ HISTORY OF ERETZ     │        │   └─────────────────────────┘
 │ YISRA'EL (E9)        │────────┤   ┌─────────────────────────┐
 └─────────────────────┘        │   │  Egyptian and Turkish    │
                                ├───│  period (E95)            │
                                │   └─────────────────────────┘
                                │   ┌─────────────────────────┐
                                ├───│  British Mandate (E96)   │        ┌──────────────────────────┐
                                │   └─────────────────────────┘     ┌──│   Up to 1882 (E98.1)     │
                                │   ┌─────────────────────────┐     │  └──────────────────────────┘
                                │   │ The Jewish population    │     │
                                └───│       (E98)              │─────┤  ┌──────────────────────────┐
                                    └─────────────────────────┘     └──│   After 1882 (E98.2)     │
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separate class was created for Eretz Israel (the Land of Israel), which uses the prefix E followed by the Dewey number in a similar way to the general section of the Judaism class (e.g., E5 for natural sciences in relation to Eretz Israel). There are two exceptions to this system: E1 has been reallocated from philosophy to geography: according to the introduction, "since the most important topic in E is undoubtedly geography (in the broad sense), we placed this first, in E1 (this number is available since we do not require it for philosophy, in this context),"[17] and there are detailed subdivisions for the history of Eretz Israel (E9, Fig. 4). Divisions E91–E96 are reserved for periods when Eretz Israel was not under Israelite/Jewish sovereignty: the user is referred to the Jewish history section, 933.1, for the period from Israelite immigration to the destruction of the Second Temple.

One notable feature of Scholem's scheme is the varying level of detail in different sections. Some sections—for example, liturgy (296.31), kabbalah (296.65), and folklore (296.78)—are extremely detailed, while others, such as Talmud and Midrash (296.8), are much less so. This can be seen by comparing the Zohar (296.652) and Mishnah (296.82) sections: the Zohar section has eight subdivisions, while the Mishnah section only has four. Similarly, the modern philosophy section lacks detail, with the only individual philosopher specified being Krochmal (296.191). A great deal of space (the whole of section 296.2) is devoted to anti-Semitism and apologetics, with subdivisions for the Dreyfus Affair (296.25) and polemics and apologetics about Jews and World War I (296.263). Some of this unevenness was ironed out in the third and fourth editions, which were published in 1968 and 1981, respectively. Some sections, such as Torah and liturgy,

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[17] Ibid., v.

were given more detail, while others, such as individual philosophers and specific mystical works, were discontinued.

3. The Scholem Classification and Its Creator

The thesis of this article is that the distinctive features of Scholem's scheme reflect his own preoccupations, academic interests, and outlook. Indeed, any library classification scheme is shaped by the biases and interests of its creator(s) and by the historical and organizational context in which it was created. An example of this is an assertion by Richard Garnett of the British Museum in 1877:

> The classification of a great library is equivalent to a classification of human knowledge, and may, if men please, become the standard or symbol of conflicting schools of thought…. Fortunately for the neutral bibliographer, there exists a book which not only holds in civilized countries a place unique among books, but which has further established its claim to precedence by the practical test of being the first to get itself printed. The Museum classification accordingly begins with the Bible and I venture to express the opinion that every sound classification will do the same.[18]

While Garnett may have considered himself a "neutral bibliographer," it is apparent from this quotation that he was in fact rooted in a rather chauvinistic Christian tradition that considered other cultures uncivilized. As Jens-Erik Mai asserts, "it has been shown in

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[18] Quoted in Langridge, *Classification*, 4.

numerous papers that any classification is, in fact, biased and it is generally accepted that classifications cannot be neutral and objective…. Subject representation is tied to the purposes, cultural, and contextual circumstances in which the representation is produced."[19]

It must be borne in mind that Scholem's scheme was created early on in his academic career, so one should be wary of reading back his later ideas into this early stage in his life. However, there is quite a lot of source material for his thought at this stage: not only his academic publications from this period, but also his diaries and letters, and his autobiography, *From Berlin to Jerusalem*, which covers precisely the period from his childhood until the beginning of his career at the Hebrew University.

Most scholars, including Yosef Ben-Shlomo, Joseph Dan, Shaul Magid, and Anthony David Skinner, seem to agree that Scholem approached Jewish Studies primarily as a historian and philologist. Daniel Abrams, however, cautions that Scholem's life and work can be approached from many angles, while Moshe Idel states that early in his career "Scholem had used an anti-historicist approach, using history simply as a partial tool in a larger search for the essence of reality." Yet the historical approach can be clearly seen in the chronological structure of the subdivisions in the Judaism section and, as Zvi Leshem has pointed out, Scholem also organized his own library chronologically.[20]

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[19] Mai, "The Future of General Classification," 10f.
[20] Ben-Shlomo, "The Spiritual Universe," 37; Dan, "Gershom Scholem—Between History and Historiosophy," 134; Magid, "Mysticism, History, and a 'New' Kabbalah," 521f.; see also Skinner's introduction to Scholem, *Lamentations of Youth*, 2; Abrams, "Presenting and Representing," 239; Idel, *Old Worlds*, 29; and Leshem, "Gevulot."

The chronological arrangement also reflects Scholem's inclusive view of Judaism. As Ben-Shlomo puts it, Scholem "came to Jewish studies without any preconception about what is legitimate or illegitimate in Judaism, and with a desire to relate to historical phenomena as they were, without prejudging them as 'positive' or 'negative.'" This outlook dates back to well before the Scholem classification, as can be seen in some of his letters.[21] Indeed, Scholem came to regard "heretical" movements, such as Jewish Gnosticism and Sabbatianism, as central to the development of Judaism. While his work on the Sabbatians postdates his classification scheme, he had first learned of the movement while a student, and had already begun during the 1920s to develop his ideas on its role in Jewish history.[22] As regards Gnosticism, his contention that there was a tradition of Jewish Gnosticism going back to late antiquity, which led to the development of kabbalah, can be seen in a letter written to Chaim Nachman Bialik in 1925;[23] in 1921, he argued that Hasidism "must not be understood as a rejection of Kabbalistic Gnosticism, but as a dialectical development within it."[24]

Given this inclusive attitude, it is understandable that Scholem did not structure his section for "sects, religious movements, and mysticism" (296.6) in order of perceived importance or authority, but roughly chronologically. Meir Wunder contends that such an

[21] Ben-Shlomo, "The Spiritual Universe," 24; see also Idel, *Kabbalah*, 11; Aschheim, "The Metaphysical Psychologist," 905.

[22] Biale, *Gershom Scholem*, 128, 149, 155, 158, 161; Idel, "Scholem (Shalom), Gershom Gerhard," 158. See also Altmann, "Gershom Scholem (1897–1982)," 11; Idel, *Old Worlds*, 138.

[23] Scholem, "Mikhtav le-Ḥ. N. Bialik," 60–61. See also Biale, *Gershom Scholem*, 133.

[24] Biale, *Gershom Scholem*, 168.

order renders the Scholem Classification unusable for a religious library, since the Zohar is preceded by other kabbalistic works (implying that it could not have been composed by Shimon bar Yoḥai in the second century CE), and the heresy of Sabbatianism appears between kabbalah and Hasidism. Wunder argues that this sequence exhibits a particular outlook that is incompatible with Orthodox Judaism.[25] This is a sound assessment, though the issue of the dating of the Zohar is actually neatly sidestepped in the classification. This was the subject of Scholem's inaugural lecture at the Hebrew University's Institute of Jewish Studies in 1924, where he argued against the theory that the Zohar had been composed by Moses de León in the thirteenth century. After further research, he subsequently came to accept the de León theory, which he expounded in *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, which was first published in 1941.[26] In the classification, the heading reads "Sifre kabbalah lifne hitgallut ha-Zohar (be-me'ah ha-13)," which is translated in the English edition as "Works of Kabbalah before the Appearance of the Zohar (in the Thirteenth Century)." This ambiguous formulation does allow for a belief in the antiquity of the Zohar, which "appeared," but was not necessarily composed, in the thirteenth century.

The differing levels of detail in the classification can be accounted for by Scholem's academic interests. He focused exclusively on the field of Jewish mysticism throughout his academic career. Joseph Dan points out that in the areas of Bible, Talmud, and Midrash, Scholem relied on the expertise of other scholars and his thinking was "unoriginal and

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[25] Wunder, "Ha-sifriyot ha-toraniyot u-ve'ayotehen," 75.

[26] Altmann, "Gershom Scholem," 9f.

conservative."[27] Scholem himself admitted to having "only a general understanding" of

halakhah.[28] Eliezer Schweid deduces from this exclusive focus on mysticism that "in

Scholem's view, mysticism constitutes Judaism's substantive essence while all other

elements are merely receptacles or accoutrements" and that he "regarded mysticism as the

source from which the Jewish religion regenerates itself."[29] This argument from omission is

unconvincing, and it is more likely, as Dan suggests, that Scholem was simply following

"one of the accepted norms of scholarly research" by "limit[ing] himself to a well-defined

area and invest[ing] his best scholarly efforts in it."[30] Similarly in his classification, the

considerable space devoted to mysticism in comparison with other subjects, such as

Talmud and Midrash, does not necessarily indicate Scholem's view of its importance in

relation to other aspects of Judaism, but rather reflects his academic preoccupations.[31] One

exception to this could be the lack of detail in the philosophy section. According to David

Biale, Scholem viewed "historiography and not philosophy [as] the proper discipline for the

modern Jew," while Dan comments on Scholem's "negative and diffident attitude towards

Jewish medieval philosophy."[32] The singling out of Krochmal is telling, as he was a

philosopher who also paid attention to kabbalah and whose work Scholem admired.[33]

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[27] Dan, "Gershom Scholem: Between Mysticism and Scholarship," 6.

[28] Tsur and Shapira, "With Gershom Scholem," 46.

[29] Schweid, *Judaism and Mysticism*, 21 and *passim*.

[30] Dan, "Gershom Scholem—Between History and Historiosophy," 135.

[31] Cf. Leshem, "Gevulot."

[32] Biale, *Gershom Scholem*, 111; Dan, "Gershom Scholem—Between History and Historiosophy," 173.

As regards the Jewish history class, the prominence given to Zionism can be explained by Scholem's own Zionist outlook, as well as by the needs of the National Library of Palestine, while the prominence of anti-Semitism reflects Scholem's preoccupation with this subject as a young man. Although he claimed to have experienced little anti-Semitism himself as a boy, it was on the rise in Germany, and he was also prompted by the notorious Beilis blood libel case of 1911 to make a study of anti-Semitic literature and apologetics. He would go on to encounter anti-Semitism personally during his brief military service in World War I as well as at university in Munich.[34] It is therefore understandable that he devotes a division of the anti-Semitism section to the war; indeed, in a 1975 interview Scholem calls the prewar and war years "a critical period for the world as a whole and for the Jews in particular."[35]

The periodization in the Jewish history class, where the modern period begins with the French Revolution, can be seen as part of Scholem's rejection of the politics of *Wissenschaft des Judentums*. The *Wissenschaft* scholars generally viewed the modern period as beginning with the Enlightenment in general and with Moses Mendelssohn in particular. This attitude is exemplified by Heinrich Graetz, who dates the modern period from Mendelssohn. Scholem's periodization instead follows that of Graetz's critic Simon Dubnow, who dates the modern period from the French Revolution, which marked the

[33] Biale, *Gershom Sholem*, 26–30; Dan, "Gershom Scholem—Between History and Historiosophy," 182, n. 45.

[34] Tsur and Shapira, "With Gershom Scholem," 7; Scholem, *A Life in Letters*, 47, 53, 109, 111.

[35] Tsur and Shapira, "With Gershom Scholem," 4.

beginning of Jewish political emancipation.[36] Scholem's periodization may also reflect his

Zionist views, as the first section (933.1) terminates with the fall of Betar, which signaled

the end of any hope of Jewish sovereignty in the Land of Israel until the Zionist movement

began in the nineteenth century.

The scheme exhibits some Ashkenazi bias. For example, the folklore class has

sections for Hebrew and Yiddish folksongs (296.784), but not for ones in Ladino or any

other Jewish language. Similarly, there is a class for Yiddish linguistics (492.49), whereas

Ladino and Judaeo-Persian are classed in the miscellaneous 296.9 (ע׳) section. This can be

accounted for by Scholem's interests, as well as by his own European descent. As a

teenager, he encountered Jews from Eastern Europe, and states in his memoirs that "there

was something of a cult of Eastern Jews among the Zionists.… These contacts and

friendships with Eastern European Jews have played a great role in my life.… Yiddish

presentations … by students from Lithuania or Byelorussia made a profound impression."[37]

He could read Yiddish, and his first book was a translation of a memorial book in Hebrew

and Yiddish, although as a Zionist he had professed an abhorrence for Yiddish in a diary

entry from 1919.[38] In Jerusalem, his closest circle consisted of fellow immigrants from

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[36] Hyman, "The Ideological Transformation of Modern Jewish Historiography," 144. For Graetz's views, see, for example, "Introduction to Volume Four," 130; for Dubnow's views, see his "Jewish History," 314; see also Meyer, "Where Does the Modern Period of Jewish History Begin?" 331f.

[37] Scholem, *From Berlin to Jerusalem*, 44f.

[38] Scholem, *From Berlin to Jerusalem*, 170; Catane, *Bibliografya*, 7; Aschheim, "The Metaphysical Psychologist," 917.

Germany,[39] who "created an enclave in Jerusalem which became known as 'Little Berlin.'"[40] Arnaldo Momigliano comments that while "Scholem has not overlooked Islam … [he] remains the historian of the European Jews living within the boundaries of Christendom."[41]

4. The Scholem Classification as a Subjective Document

The Scholem Classification was a major achievement in the field of Judaica librarianship, adapting—as far as the restraints of its structure allowed—a scheme that was highly unsuitable for a Judaica library. Consciously or unconsciously though, Scholem's academic outlook and preoccupations, as well as his political views and cultural background, influenced the scheme's structure and differing levels of detail. This is indeed unavoidable, and other Judaica classification schemes, such as the Freidus and Elazar classifications, were equally products of their historical contexts, their institutions, and most of all, their original creators. Scholem's classification scheme amply supports the claim that there can be no such thing as a "neutral bibliographer."

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[39] Scholem, *Lamentations of Youth*, 326. See also Aschheim, "The Metaphysical Psychologist," 911; Geller, "From Berlin and Jerusalem," 225; and Idel, "Messianic Scholars," 42f.

[40] Myers, "The Scholem–Kurzweil Debate," 280.

[41] Momigliano, "Gershom Scholem's Autobiography," 191.

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