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## Introduction

The processes of modernization, nationalization, westernization, and distinction have had profound impacts on Jewish communities and individuals, shaping the environments in which they live. These processes have resulted in the fragmentation and varying degrees of institutional differentiation within cultural and political structures. Additionally, Hebrew, once primarily a sacred language used in scholarly, halachic (Jewish religious legalistic), and liturgical texts, has undergone a transformation. It has evolved into a spoken language and a vehicle for literary and cultural expression in the context of modernity and the revitalization of the Jewish nation. Furthermore, these processes have played a significant role in the emergence of Zionism, the modern Jewish national movement, influencing the production of texts on secularities in various forms such as literature, art, poetry, religion, history, philosophy, as well as academic, legal, educational, and political works.

Notably, the social and political landscape of Jewish-Israeli history has been significantly shaped by two pivotal events: the systematic and devastating destruction of European Jewry during the Second World War, and the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948, accompanied by the Arab-Israeli War. The latter marked the onset of a post-British colonial era, characterized by the subsequent displacement of a majority of Palestinian Arabs and its profound impact on Jewish immigration to the region and the establishment of Jewish settlements in what they perceived as their ancestral homeland. Over the past century, Jews have transitioned from being dispersed among geographically scattered and culturally diverse communities to becoming a primarily concentrated population within a specific territory, asserting their own sovereignty. This transformative process has unfolded within the intricate context of a nation-state guided by the ideology of Zionism, which has significantly influenced the understanding of secularization and secularity within the Jewish-Israeli context. Throughout the 20th century, Jewish public figures and thinkers have engaged in extensive debates concerning these concepts, taking on a distinct form within this transformed landscape.

The Jewish textual traditions often encompass both religious and cultural dimensions, thus adding complexity to discussions regarding the intersections of religion and politics, as well as the boundaries between religious and national communities. Moreover, Jewish individuals and communities have resided, written, and practised within diverse regional, political, religious, cultural, and linguistic landscapes over

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the past two millennia. This intricate reality gives rise to an extensive and diverse range of textual works that merit thoughtful consideration for a project of this nature. It is important to note that texts in other languages, such as Arabic and Yiddish, which may have had a lesser impact on contemporary Jewish and Israeli secularisms, were not included in this volume.

While most of the selected texts were written before the establishment of Israel, we decided to include those that remain relevant to contemporary dilemmas of Jewish secularism in Israel and the wider Jewish world. It is important to note that Jewish secularities should not be anachronistically viewed solely through an Israeli lens. The fact that the texts represent and were written in different Jewish diaspora centers, such as Eastern and Western Europe, North Africa, and Iraq, by authors of Mizrahi and Ashkenazi backgrounds, attests to the diversity of Jewish experiences.

Some texts exhibited a clear rejection or wholehearted embrace of religious tradition (Brenner and Yosef, respectively), while others advocated for a separation of religious institutions from the state, emphasizing the mutual benefits (Leibowitz). Furthermore, certain texts highlighted different ways of accommodating religious sentiments or traditions within a secularized context (Herzl, text no. 60; Tchernichovski, text no. 61; Bialik, text no. 64; Gordon, text no. 62; Nissim, text no. 65; and Kahanoff, text no. 66)

We aimed to include texts that explore various themes, encompassing explicit socio-political inquiries (Herzl; Leibowitz, text no. 67), different perspectives on Hala-cha (Jewish religious law) and Jewish life (Bialik; Gordon; Yosef, text no. 68), as well as addressing more abstract cultural and/or political issues (Brenner, text no. 63; Nissim; Kahanoff; Tchernichovski; and once again Bialik and Gordon) that hold significant influence and relevance in everyday life.