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"FOR KING OF JERUSALEM IS YOUR NAME"

OFFERINGS TO FRANZ JOSEPH FROM THE *OLD YISHUV*

Abstract: Choosing or creating a gift requires givers to engage in an imaginative process to empathize with recipients and their preferences, while also conveying their own particular identity. Tributes to Franz Joseph were perceived by the court not only as signs of appreciation and gratitude for benefits that he granted: most importantly, these were acknowledgments of his authority at a time when ethno-national loyalties competed with loyalty to the dynastic state and he was struggling to keep his empire from disintegrating. The homages were expected to awaken national pride, solidarity and devotion, and became a means to construct an ideal image of national identity and loyalty to the monarch. For this reason the imperial court developed special ceremonies for their presentation and display as a means to exalt the monarch and to spread national myths constructed around his image.[1] Given the long lists of tribute appointments, audiences lasted only a few minutes; therefore artists strove to attract attention and express the donors' identity and messages. How did offerings presented by the *Old Yishuv* to Franz Joseph I function in their historical, socio-political and religious contexts? What were the incentives for and rationale behind the design, production and presentation of these objects? How did material, form and content tell a relevant story in the Austrian imperial and the Jerusalemite Jewish contexts? We propose that these objects were expected to play upon the Emperor's piousness and self-perception as holder of the Crown of Jerusalem and thereby ensure a sympathetic attitude toward the *Old Yishuv*'s plight, while enhancing the community's own self-image as well as its status in the eyes of the monarch and of Jewish benefactors on whose generosity it depended. A further contribution of this study will be an improved understanding of the ways in which social groups constructed and used narratives and images of a space, in this case the unique space of Jerusalem.
Keywords: Jewish identity, cultural memory, holy sites.

A local tradition tells that on the last day of his visit to Jerusalem, in November 1869, Emperor Franz Joseph I received a delegation from the *Old Yishuv* led by Rabbi Nissan Beck, who asked to present him a memento: a precious bowl carved some years earlier by the prestigious artist Mordechai Schnitzer in the

1 Praschl-Bichler 2007. 207–208.

local Moses or Bethlehem stone. Deeply moved, Franz Joseph said that he would never forget the Jerusalemite community and the many attentions they showed him, and expressed a wish: "May my Jewish subjects always remember me."[2] Another tradition tells of an imperial gift to Jerusalemite Jews. When touring the Jewish Quarter guided by Rabbi Beck, Franz Joseph passed by the Tiferet Israel Synagogue and asked why it was standing without a roof. The witty Rabbi quipped, "Why, the synagogue took off its hat in honour of Your Majesty!" The Emperor smiled and donated money for its completion. The story became widespread not only in local Hasidic circles, and the dome became popularly referred to as "Franz Joseph's cap".[3] Events were embellished and stories invented. The image of Franz Joseph became a myth.

Sophisticatedly coordinating textual and visual imagery, Franz Joseph's subjects and protégés in Jerusalem acclaimed, thanked and expressed loyalty to him in epistles and offerings;[4] although unsaid, they also expected recompense: protection and support in the future as well. Images of Jerusalem stood out in the decoration: the aura of holiness that Jerusalem could confer on a monarch by the Grace of God held tremendous value, since the concept of divine support was a basic tool in the construction of his legitimacy, invulnerability and absolute power.[5] These images also best conveyed the *Old Yishuv*'s self-perception as keeper of religious precepts, as a community that studied the Bible and Jewish ethics not just for its own sake but also for the sake of Jews in the Diaspora. Hence it regarded their support as a just return for its endeavours, since "where there is no Torah there is no bread" (Avot 3:17).[6] Thus images of venerated sites, decorated books and cultic objects were sold or offered in the Diaspora with the aim of touching the heart and increasing the material support.[7]

Holy places and their images are perceived, constructed and reconstructed based on narratives of the sacred and the profane, ancient past and eschatological future, myths and a variety of modes of perception of reality. The *Old Yishuv* represented biblical sites in a concise and schematic visual language, existing in perfection and quietude as if no time had passed. No unseemly element mars the spiritual beauty of the site nor disrupts the emotional stillness of the moment; holiness is immanent and the absence of figures suggests the presence of God. The timeless images link between the biblical past, the present and the long-awaited ideal future. In contrast, Orientalist painters depicted small towns with crowded houses, domes, minarets and bell towers, sparse vegetation, unpaved roads and scattered ancient ruins as evidence of a magnificent but long-lost past; small figures in pseudo-Oriental colourful garments, camels and palm trees all of

2 Yellin 1916. 13.
3 Hayardeni 2013. 47–49.
4 Important collections are kept in the Kaiserliche Schatzkammer and Österreichische Nationalbibliothek Wien (Kohlbauer 2007, 116–139 on offerings by Jews)
5 Arad 2012. 109–124, 147–166.
6 Liberal Judaism at the time interpreted this saying in an opposite sense: a person should work to sustain himself and study Torah, a still dividing controversy.
7 Genachowski 2002. 35–36.

them bathed in bright light, completed the scenery.[8] These elements confirmed the authenticity of the biblical stories in a romantic spirit. As a pious believer, Franz Joseph saw Jerusalem with the eyes of his soul; he focused on what he expected to see rather than on the real city: the imagined became real.[9]

Most blessings are organized in a gate of honor, an element that since ancient times celebrates a triumphant king and symbolizes the Gate of Heaven, bridging between the secular and the sacred, and between earth and heaven. The symbolic meaning and consequent mental and emotional impact are a function of the general layout of word and image, their place, size and colour, and the relations between them no less than the verbal praises and blessings. In effect, the writing is carefully planned as well: key words, including the name and title of the monarch, appear in larger characters usually embellished in gold, silver or purple, and placed on compositional axes. Traditional Hebrew calligraphy endows the text with authority when compared with Western styles, among them the Secession fashionable in Vienna at the time. The whereabouts of many of the objects are unknown and so are the names of most artists and writers.[10] Some chose well-known schemes to coordinate word and image, others aimed to attract attention with less-known ones; most sought a middle path.[11]

Two Poles

The blessings in the Austro-Galician Esther Scroll (ÖNB Reg. J./55) (fig. 1.) and the Austro-Hungarian, Bohemian and Moravian epistle (ÖNB Reg. J./95) (fig. 2.) offered on the occasion of Franz Joseph's Golden Jubilee are paradigmatic opposites. The Austro-Hungarians chose micrography, a traditional Jewish art form that reflects the priority of the word in Judaism and highlights a Torah crown, whereas the Austro-Galicians preferred an eclectic Neo-Baroque style prevalent in European courts and only the Hebrew characters and the seal of the kolel reveal their identity. Obviously, only Hebrew readers would appreciate the special attention given to texts and their visual arrangements, for example, the double acrostic spelling of monarch's name in the latter blessing.

8 Ben-Arieh 1996.
9 Arad 2015. 264–272.
10 A Moses-stone vase and plate by Mordechai Schnitzer sent to the Emperor in 1853 in celebration of his escape from an attempt on his life is at the Natural History Museum, and a coffee set at the Weltmuseum, both in Vienna. For other presents: Grayevski 1930. 4, 7, 22; Eliav 1985. 166–167.
11 For detailed analysis see Arad 2016. 133–166.

1. Austro-Galician kolel, 1898. Blessing in Esther Scroll.

2. Austro-Hungarian, Bohemian and Moravian kolel, 1898. Epistle.

Two questions arise: Could one of the opposite styles more effectively draw the attention and touch the heart of the Emperor? And, how could the donors convey their singular identity as pious Jews who dedicated their lives to prayer, study and good deeds in Jerusalem? In fact, no matter which style was chosen, images of the Jewish holy places were considered essential: they decorate the carved olivewood Esther Scroll of the Austro-Galician *kolel* (fig. 1.1.) the wood and mother-of-pearl box of the Austro-Hungarian, Bohemian and Moravian *kolel epistles*[12] (fig. 2.1.) and other objects (figs. 3.1., 4.1., 5.1.). The venerated sites most often represented are the Western Wall, usually flanked by the Dome of the Rock representing the site of the Temple and the Al-Aqsa Mosque as Solomon's School; the Site of the Temple in the image of the Dome of the Rock popularly and wrongly called Mosque of Omar; Zion, the citadel with its iconic minaret; David's Tomb as domes and a minaret rising behind a wall; Rachel's Tomb as a small domed cubic-room and the anteroom added in the early 1840s by Sir Moses Montefiore; and the Kidron Valley tombs from the Second Temple period known as the tombs of Zechariah, Absalom and Bnei-Hezir.[13] The schemes vary slightly, even in works by an artist who signed his works, Abraham Keller: the 1898 Jerusalemite Rothschild Hospital offering-case (fig. 5.1.) and the 1908 Austro-Galician scroll case (fig. 3.1.) and in our opinion also the 1898 Austro-Galician scroll case (fig. 1.1.) based on style similarities. Interestingly, in the 1898 Austro-Galician box the Bnei-Hezir Tomb is labelled Beth Ha'Hofshit (House of the Free), following

12 In the Austro-Hungarian *kolel* box the Hungarian seal is exceptionally flanked by a figure holding a scroll and another holding a sword instead of the usual angels in what could be a local invention.
13 Genachowski 2002. 35–36; Einhorn 1979. 17–70.

3.1 Scroll-case. ÖNB Reg.J.II/40

1.1 Scroll-case. ÖNB Reg.J./55

2.1 Gift box. ÖNB Reg.J./95

4.1 Gift box. ÖNB Reg.Jub.II/6

5.1 Gift case ÖNB Reg.J./96

an ancient local tradition that the leper King Uziah/Azariah, free of the burden of reigning, lived in this tomb, actually built about 600 years later, similarly to nineteenth- and twentieth-century lepers; ancient traditions were collected and spread as means to confirm the authenticity of the Bible.[14] Whereas the Austro-Galician *kolel* identifies the sites in Hebrew, the Austro-Hungarian *kolel* chose German. Naturally, the Austro-Hungarian *kolel* addressed Franz Joseph by means of heraldic symbols of the Dual Monarchy.

14 Vilnay 1973. 254–256, 335.

Between Local Jewish and Western Visual Language

3. Austro-Galician kolel, 1908 offering. Blessing in Esther Scroll.

The Esther Scroll offered to Franz Joseph by the Austro-Galician *kolel* on the occasion of his Diamond Jubilee is paradigmatic of such combination (ÖNB Reg.J.II./40) (fig. 3.). The blessing preceding the biblical story and Abraham Keller's olivewood scroll case present traditional Jewish-Jerusalemite, Neo-Baroque and Orientalist imagery certainly apt to catch the eye of the Western audience (fig. 3.1.). As in the 1898 offering by the same *kolel*, text and images are organized in a Neo-Baroque gate of honour lacking any architectural logic. However, the 1908 work includes four icons of Jerusalem and symbolic imagery carefully coordinated with the text, which add to its impact. Thus, Franz Joseph's coat-of-arms; his motto as Austrian emperor, *Viribus unitis*, that gained new currency as nations struggled for various measures of autonomy[15], and oak and laurel branches signifying victory and glory are highlighted on the painted tympanum. Moreover, below it an eagle with spread wings, holding in its beak the parchment with the text, binds the heavenly and the earthly layers of meaning: based on biblical passages, it is a metaphor for God and the Emperor who protect their people under the shadow of their wings (e.g. Ps. 36:7; 57:1; 61:4; 63:7). Images and text reinforce the prayer to God to bless the righteous monarch and his realms, and express the Jews' heartfelt gratitude. Franz Joseph's name appears in large golden letters with a witty interpretation of his title below: "[a blessing from] the city after which you are named, for King of Jerusalem is your name," playing to his self-image as a monarch by the Grace of God and holder of the Crown of Jerusalem.[16] Wishing the monarch the prosperity and glory of Solomon's kingdom, the writer adds a messianic layer of meaning: "In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace as long as the moon endureth" (Ps. 72:7). This meaning is reinforced by the four iconic images of Jerusalem: the Western Wall with cypresses behind it in the seal of the Austro-Galician *kolel*; the paradisiacal view of this wall with rich vines (Isa. 5:1-7; 1 Kings 4:25; Mic. 4:4) painted below; and two images on the gate's columns, Mount Zion and the Temple Mount, illustrating Psalm 128:5: "the Lord shall bless thee out of Zion and thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life." Remarkably, Keller added to his striking scroll-case an unmissable

15 e.g. Beller 1996; chs. 4, 5. Gero 2001.

16 Arad 2012, esp. 49–62 for the evocation of this title in the contemporaneous mosaic at the Austrian Hungarian's Houses in Jerusalem.

Orientalist element unusual in an Orthodox context: three kneeling camels support a huge column, the scroll-case proper; yet he kept to traditional schemes for the holy sites carved on it.

The offering of the Austro-Hungarian *kolel* at the same event, an Esther Scroll in a silver filigree scroll case with the Hungarian shield in gold set in a wooden box (ÖNB Reg. Jub.II/6) (fig. 4.), also reveals two attitudes: the carver kept to traditional icons of the holy places, whereas the painter of the prayer preceding the story innovated by staging the monuments as in painted postcards and in more realistic settings, probably influenced by the high popularity of that medium and photography, for example, believers praying at the Western Wall. The postcards also present new Jewish neighbourhoods and institutions in Jerusalem that the senders were proud of, for example, Batei Ungarin, the first neighbourhood built by a *kolel*,[17] along with agricultural settlements and towns established on the principle of self-sufficiency – an ideology close to that of the *New Yishuv* – and other towns with a small Jewish population. In fact, the whole design and iconography of this blessing reflect significant changes in the *Old Yishuv.* Instead of a gate of honour, a delicate frame in the Secession-influenced Bezalel School of Arts' style, bordered on its sides and bottom by the postcards, encloses the painted parchment and text. The verse highlighted in royal crimson at the head of the parchment, "Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty" (Isa. 33:17), adds a messianic meaning to the prayer, namely, that the just Franz Joseph will see the Glory of God; its juxtaposition with the postcards brings to mind its second part, "They shall behold the land that is very far off," that is, the promised Land of Israel, lyrically binding imagery and text. The text is written as a prayer rich in praises to God and the Emperor; it adapts references to the ideal biblical kings, such as "Thou wilt prolong the king's life: and his years as many generations" (Ps. 61:6) – a plea to God that establishes a parallel between Franz Joseph and King David, while also characterizing the Diamond Jubilee as "a great event in the History of the World." In addition, at the centre of the Habsburg eagle to which golden rays of light add a heavenly touch, appears the portrait of Franz

4. Austro-Hungarian, Bohemian and Moravian kolel, 1908 offering. Epistle.[18]

17 The Hungarian *kolel* was the best-organized and most pious – its official name – Guardians of the Walls, in a religious sense.

18 Friedman 2001.

Joseph on a clipeus as a victorious Augustus, a well-known laudatory scheme of portraits of European monarchs. The rays lead our eyes to two small medallions enclosing a Star of David flanking the frame on top, and above them the blessing, in crimson too, "Long live the King" to the right and "The Lord our King" to the left, an expression usual in prayers and poems to God, that could be interpreted as "the King, our lord," namely, Franz Joseph. As in this *kolel*'s 1898 offering, the prayer is written in Hebrew but the sites are titled in German, thus greatly increasing the immediate impact of the whole image.

Jewish Philanthropists' Offerings

A comparison between offerings presented by Jerusalemite Jewish and Christian entities shows that each community naturally chose its own holy places and religious texts, and the *kolelim* usually used simpler materials. Fancier materials also distinguish offerings from Jewish entities in Austria-Hungary from those of the *kolelim* and, significantly, they depict institutions they founded there. These institutions expressed their pride in their integration into Austrian society and gratitude to the monarch for making it legally possible, and were presented as signs of loyalty and contribution to the kingdom's prosperity and glory. Moreover, they were built in the eclectic classicist style popular in Vienna at the time; thus "Jewish architecture" became part of the Austrian narrative. In 1898 Franz Joseph thanked social benefactors, proclaiming that no homage gives him more joy than acts of charity.[19]

Wealthy assimilated Jewish families also founded hospitals, vocational schools, hospices and orphanages in Jerusalem, instead of directly supporting the *Old Yishuv*'s reliance on alms, with the aim of helping it change its way of living and not only providing temporary relief.[20] These virtuous deeds would earn the benefactors merits and blessings in the heavenly and also in the earthly realm; their names would be displayed or institutions would even be named after them. Nevertheless, these acts must be seen as stemming from the interests of liberal Jewish circles in Europe in gaining legitimization as loyal citizens and demonstrating their patriotism by promoting the interests of their specific monarch in Palestine.[21] Because any such project required the permission of the monarch, expressions of praise and gratitude were essential.

The Mayer Rothschild Hospital, originally founded in the Old City in 1854 by James Mayer de Rothschild, one of five brothers bestowed with the title of Baron by Franz I of Austria in 1822, is paradigmatic. Although named after the father of the family, it constituted a homage to Franz Joseph who granted it his

19 Brix 2007. 48–75.
20 Ben-Ghedalia 2009.
21 Ben-Ghedalia 2008. 112.

auspices and saw in it a statement of his presence and influence in Jerusalem. In 1888 it moved to a new complex in the new city, designed in the style dominant in Vienna at the time: a higher central section with a gabled roof, elaborate balconies and balustrades, flanked by symmetric receding wings.[22]

Like Jewish foundations in Austria-Hungary, the Rothschild Hospital, sent a tribute to Franz Joseph on the occasion of his Golden Jubilee (fig. 5.) Similarly to those offerings, the hospital's laudatory epistle is decorated with an image of the institution and two more appear on the carved olivewood case housing it, together with images of holy sites; both also include Austro-Hungarian heraldry. Most interesting is the decoration of the epistle, which, though it does not present images of venerated sites, suggests the holiness of Jerusalem as well as its Oriental flavor while addressing both the donors and the monarch. As in many epistles, a gate of honor organizes the imagery and text: the hospital appears in the right spandrel, identified by its seal and the Mayer de Rothschild shield on the background of an Orientalist cityscape with the essential domes, minarets and palm trees; the coats-of-arms of Austria and Hungary crown the opening of the gateway, and the years of Franz Joseph's reign until then, 1848 to 1898, appear in the left spandrel. Unlike gates in other *Old Yishuv* epistles, this one is skilfully drawn in a typical local Muslim style and the right column fades away to make more space for the text, as often in postcards at the time. Another interesting feature in our context is the Oriental cityscape above the gateway that would be perceived as Jerusalem. This iconographic scheme was common not in the nineteenth century but in medieval Jewish and Christian art. In the well-known Worms Mahzor dated to 1278, with additions around 1280 (Jerusalem, NLI, MS Heb. 4" 781. C, II, f. 73a), this would be the New Jerusalem, a time of never-ending peace and prosperity. Like most medieval German *mahzorim*, the miniature shows a gateway, an architectural element that became a symbol of the Gates of Heaven through which prayers reach God. The prayer for Atonement Day enclosed in it blesses God who "opens the Gates of Mercy" on that Holy Day;[23] similarly, the

5. Rothschild Hospital 1898 offering. Epistle.

22 This was a political strategy current in Jerusalem in the nineteenth century: the European powers built in a style clearly identified with them, to better state their presence and influence in the Holy City, and often added a local touch to suggest their deep and strong roots here. Arad 2012. 31–33.
23 Cohen-Mushlin 1985. 90.

Rothschild Hospital epistle begins: "on this Holy Day," yet meaning the Golden Jubilee. Did the artist of the Rothschild Hospital epistle conceive this iconography or perhaps know the medieval and Early Modern Jewish and Christian tradition? Both possibilities should be considered. The originality and high quality of this object are consonant with the prestige of Dr. D'Arbela, the hospital director, in Jerusalem and European courts, and the growing artistic activity in Jerusalem.

The Holy Places: A Cornerstone of the *Old Yishuv* Essentiality

Offerings from the *Old Yishuv* to Franz Joseph functioned as a tool in the construction of the self-image of the monarch and the Jewish communities alike. Donors and addressee wished to proclaim and demonstrate their deep devotion and commitment to Jerusalem, and saw themselves as fulfilling religious precepts and deserving of heavenly blessings. Therefore images of venerated sites became an essential element in the decoration of these objects, created to thank the monarch for his benevolent attitude, to praise and bless him in the hope of ensuring his support in the future as well. *Old Yishuv* artists ignored the sad present and represented the holy places as if time had left no marks on them: their aim was to construct a timeless image that would reinforce the belief in God and the soon-to-come redemption that their pious way of life was making possible. The iconography of holy sites underwent only minor changes. Winds of change affected other imagery and style. The works reveal a dynamic discourse between the *kolelim* and their brethren in the Dual Monarchy – a continuous transfer of ideas and images that underwent the necessary adaptations according to the specific context. Likewise, they disclose many nuances; for example, the Austro-Hungarian, Bohemian and Moravian, and the Austro-Galician 1908 homages show that at the beginning of the century, when hard-line Orthodox circles parted ways with progressive Jewish movements, the conceptual and practical borders were still flexible: Eretz-Israel could be presented as a national space in an Orthodox offering and Orientalist trends could be adopted to add to its appeal. The offerings also show that the visual images that accompany the text do not necessarily illustrate it. Rather, they explain, interpret and complement the narrative and contribute to a better understanding of the messages encoded in it. Moreover, artists and writers often consciously created subtle and multivalent literary and visual metaphors adopting, quoting and transforming sources, manipulatively omitting or emphasizing selected elements, thus strengthening impressions and memories and inspiring new narratives. The images are ideologically driven and show the way in which people want to represent themselves, their world, their ideals and aspirations.

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