

## **Becoming Hebrew: Religious and/or National Motives of Hatam Sofer's Disciples Immigration to the Land of Israel**

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Of Rabbi Moshe Sofer-Schreiber's numerous disciples, a small, yet qualitative, group of individuals decided to relocate in the Land of Israel. Some of these individuals followed Schreiber's direct orders (i.e. rabbis Mendelssohn, Baumgarten, Shlank, Novomesta), while others merely adhered to his teachings. All perceived Schreiber's influence on their geographical move as critical. Many, by the way, never left Jerusalem after entering it, as part of this adherence.

As Zahavi portrays them (in his work *From the Hatam Sofer to Herzl*, Jerusalem, 1965), many of these students were ideologues, who wanted to recreate a Jewish sovereignty in the Land of Israel. However, we attempt to point out a much broader sense of Jewish revival in their endeavors. They attempted to create a cultural, religious and many perhaps even a redemptive change within the world of Jews in Israel, not to import the Orthodox model to Israel. They tried to influence the ultra-conservative community to open itself to new paths of self-funding, education and agriculture as means of creating a new form of Jewish life in the Chosen Land, "becoming Hebrew" (of these one could mention Rabbis Isaac Oplatka, Moshe Saks, Moshe Aharon Baumgarten, Yisrael Zeev Horowitz, David Friedland, Naftali Hirtz Weiss). Endeavors as the establishment of the *Doresh Zion* school (combining religious and general education – a combination unheard of in Hungarian Orthodox tradition), mainly for the Sephardic community, buying lands and agricultural attempts were part of the actions of these disciples. Needless to say, these efforts were met by zealot resistance by many who were perceived themselves as continuers of the Schreiber Hungarian Orthodox legacy.

Some attempts in the academic world dealt with the ideological and political actions of a later generation, mainly students of Rabbi Abraham B.S. Schreiber, Schreiber's eldest son and successor (especially rabbis Schlesinger and Sonnenfeld). Yet, understanding the work of the generation of Schreiber's direct students in a comprehensive context of being emissaries of his original spiritual teaching, and adhering to his religious language with a very modern interpretation, has yet to be done.

As rabbi Horwitz defined it (*Nahalat leYisrael 'Avdo*, Jerusalem: 1882, p. 1): "Most of those coming from abroad to the Land of Israel feel immediately a new spirit and vitality, ... a new soul from the world of Creation comes to the newcomer".

Our paper will present how these rabbinic figures understood the spiritual mission given to them by the Schreiber and underwent tremendous efforts in order to execute it and to create a new Jew, in a new world.