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The Story of the Museum of Mediterranean Archeology at Nir David

Galia Bar Or*

This article relates to the story of the founding of a small museum in Kibbutz Nir David in the Beit She'an Valley in the early 1960s. The core of this essay, however, lies not in anything that may be identified as a consensus, or as a harmonious and unified community – as the kibbutz is sometimes mistakenly thought to be. The story of the museum tries to trace "the face of history" in what eludes cohesion in powerful, many-layered, and intergenerational tensions across waves of immigration, tensions that find echoes in deep cross-sections of every single kibbutz and of Israeli society as a whole.

Keywords: museum; culture; immigrants; Holocaust; Kibbutz Nir David; Meir Ya'ari; Abba Kovner

During the twentieth century, research on the kibbutz focused mainly on sociological, political, and educational aspects, and for many years largely ignored culture and art. In the past decade a number of studies have been published on patterns of festival celebration, commemoration practices, and institutions of art and culture in kibbutzim. The new publications are gradually bridging the long-standing historiographical gap in this field,[1] although many of the important cultural institutions, publishing concerns, and cultural centers have not yet received appropriate research attention.

One of the more fascinating phenomena in the field of culture in the kibbutz is the establishment of museums on an unprecedented scale in relation to the size of the population, the peripheral location, and the sociocultural structure of the kibbutz. From the 1930s on, dozens of museums – of nature, archeology, history, Holocaust remembrance, and art – were founded in kibbutzim. Many of these are still active to this day. Recent research has discussed the phenomenon of museums in the kibbutz and has emphasized the different conceptions of culture of the various kibbutz movements and their impact on the characters of the museums established in the kibbutzim.[2] Analyses of the social and cultural visions of the kibbutz movements supported the perception of the kibbutz, not as a single homogeneous unit, but as a space in which different and even polar conceptions existed side by side – the small, closed, and intimate kibbutz (*kvutzah*), where the principle of sharing was extended to all aspects of life and the economy was based solely on agriculture, as opposed to the large and growing kibbutz, a large society that endeavored to establish industry as well as agriculture and proposed a form of settlement that was an integration of "village" and "city." These different social visions were not the only factor that influenced the creation of different versions of kibbutz society and its institutions; each individual kibbutz is different in its character and fabric, and the composition of its population and the internal relationships within it are in constant flux.

*Email: bar-or@einharodm.org.il

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The present study relates to the story of the founding of a small museum in Kibbutz Nir David (Tel Amal) in the Beit She'an Valley in the early 1960s. All the components present in the familiar framework for the establishment of a museum will be found in it: a valuable collection as a basis for founding a museum; an enthusiast who commits himself to raising the funds necessary to build the museum; and a social context in which the sociocultural conditions ripen into an agreement to establish an institution called a museum in the kibbutz. On the face of it, a simple story: bring all the components together and the vision of a museum will become a reality.

The focus of the present article, however, is not a teleological story with a happy ending that is evident to all – a museum still active today, in which conflicts are seen as obstacles to be overcome on the way to a success story. Nor is it a history in the sense of a project that has been accomplished, or an enchanting image of an always harmonious whole. The museum in this story is a subject of research, but the pulse to which the story is oriented is to be found beyond it, in what happens around it. As will be seen from what follows, the founding of the museum in Kibbutz Nir David ignited a dispute that divided the kibbutz. The rift exposed subjective psychological sediments, both individual and collective, in the kibbutz as a society of immigrants, and the case of the museum is also a microcosm that represents the whole of Israeli society.

Act 1, August 1958–February 1960: "We will have a serious museum"

When Dan Lifshitz arrived in Kibbutz Nir David in the summer of 1958 and told his comrades about the coins and archeological findings he had collected, he also told them of his dream: "to establish a museum of ancient art in the kibbutz that I will live in."[3] In those days, when a rare story such as this was brought to the kibbutz, the members had a fair idea of what it entailed. In 1951 a museum had been opened in Kibbutz Hazorea, situated not far from Nir David, on the basis of a rich collection of Oriental art that had been offered to the kibbutz. That collection (and a sum of money for erecting a museum building) was from the estate of Wilfrid Israel, a friend of members of Kibbutz Hazorea who had died in 1942 while trying to find an escape route to bring Jews out of Europe. After weighing the options for a few years, Kibbutz Hazorea had finally established the Wilfrid Israel House, an active museum that became well known. During its first years of existence the museum was immensely successful. It became the pride of the members of Hazorea and a proof that dreams of a museum in a kibbutz could be realized. Shmuel Sarig, one of the small group of Nir David members who were active in establishing the museum, told me years later: "I visited Dan in an apartment in Bern, in Switzerland. Three rooms, with hardly any space to put a bed, everything was full of antiquities. I saw that the matter was a very serious one. We already knew the Wilfrid Israel House, and we thought: what could be more beautiful than this? The museum in Kibbutz Hazorea gave us the inspiration and the impetus to implement the idea."[4] At both Hazorea and Nir David, recommendations were received from professional sources, averring that the collections proposed as a basis were of a high standard and of much professional importance.

Dan Lifshitz, who was only 20 in 1958, stayed at Kibbutz Nir David for a few months that year. He was one of the 30 young men and women from Switzerland, Italy, and Austria in the "Omer" group of the Hashomer Hatza'ir youth movement that was scheduled to join the kibbutz. Most of its members were absorbed into the kibbutz that year, while Dan and two other members returned to Switzerland to do leadership work in the movement while completing their higher education. It was agreed in the kibbutz that Dan, who was coordinating the movement branch in Bern and studying archeology at the University of Bern, would be the director of the museum.[5]

In an interview in the kibbutz bulletin, Dan recounted that when he was ten his grandfather had given him a collection of coins that "implanted in me a desire to engage in this field." He devoted himself to building the collection beside his activity as a counselor in Hashomer Hatza'ir. When the Omer group was assigned to Kibbutz Nir David, he thought the kibbutz would be a worthy home for the collection, and decided to change its orientation, thinking "that the collection should not be limited to coins, and should contain examples from ancient culture in general." From then on young Dan began specializing in ancient art, acquiring ancient ceramics, figurines, and archeological items, mainly Greek and Etruscan, upgrading the collection through exchanges – and in only a few years turned it into a substantial and crystallized collection that filled the small apartment in Bern. "In this way the project expanded, and my rooms are now full and crammed with the collection."[6] In those days, three members of the kibbutz – Shmuel Sarig, Helmut Lasker, and Elazar Unger – had already been impressed by the collection, each of them on a different occasion. They bonded with the talented and resolute youngster, and their enthusiasm stirred them to act, and at the highest possible level.

In Bern, Lifshitz continued expanding the collection while also absorbing donations from other private collectors, including a collection of Islamic art. He sent certain items from the collection to Israel with friends, to be stored in a temporary place that had been set aside for this purpose, and activity began to create a committee to take the museum planning under its auspices. Elazar Unger reported to the kibbutz members in December 1959 that "the plans for the final form of the museum are extensive and bold!"[7]

The crystallization of the organizational structure of the museum ripened into deeds, and already in early 1960 the founding assembly of the committee for the museum was convened at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. It was no coincidence that an academic venue had been chosen for this event. Elazar Unger, who had led the efforts to found the museum and soon became its first director, emphasized the uncompromising professional basis of its activities and those of its members: "The principal line that has guided me from my first steps in constituting the museum is that in the first place it will be you [the Department of Archeology] who will determine its character and its contents – hence the great caution I exercise with all the proposals that come up every day, for in our country there are many who from one day to another become authorities, people who determine."[8]

On 9 February 1960, the founding assembly and the Working Committee were registered as a non-profit organization. Its members included some of the most esteemed figures in Israel's intellectual and academic life: the president of the Hebrew University, Professor Benjamin Mazar; Professor Martin Buber; Professor Yigal Yadin; Professor Mordechai Avi-Yonah; Dr. Avraham Biran; Israel's Minister of Education Zalman Aranne; Member of Knesset Meir Ya'ari; the poets Avraham Shlonsky and Natan Alterman; the director of the Bronfman Archeological and Biblical Museum, Dr. Penuel Kahana; Avraham Yaffe; Dr. Shmuel Avi-Tzur.[9] The Working Committee was composed of people from the Archeology Department of the Hebrew University, the Antiquities Department, the Regional Council, and the active members from Nir David.

The distinguished personages were not there merely to add prestige to the museum and to grace its letterhead. Many of them would invest time, effort, and involvement, and would make both personal and professional contributions to the project. Not for nothing did the active members say that the committee would have to give the museum "moral support in its first steps,"[10] although they did not foresee how much they would need in the following stages.

The museum's supra-party position was emphasized again and again. In the correspondence it was stated explicitly that the museum sought to provide facilities for

cultural and educational activity in all the diverse streams of kibbutz, moshav, and other kinds of rural settlements.[11] Elazar Unger, in his opening address at the museum's inauguration, stressed its country-wide character: "I once again emphasize that the museum is general and for the whole country and that it has no particular political or party basis. I have made every effort to keep this museum beyond all those divisions."[12]

The list of personages in the museum's Honorary Committee and Executive Committee reflects this conception of the museum. The authority of most of those selected stemmed from their personalities, their accomplishments, and their values. It did not include any representatives of the Workers' Federation (Histadrut), or of other organizations, who were not authorities by virtue of their public or academic status. Two of the personages on the list had local significance – Meir Ya'ari, the leader of Hakibbutz Ha'artzi (with Ya'akov Hazan) and a Member of Knesset for Mapam (the United Workers' Party), and Uri Yaffe, a member of the neighboring kibbutz, Ma'oz Haim, an esteemed figure in Israel and in the region who in later years would become chairman of the Beit She'an Regional Council. Yaffe and Ya'ari, representatives, respectively, of the region and of the kibbutz movement to which Nir David belonged, cooperated for a long time with the active members from Nir David, and the relationships of trust that developed were based on years of shared work and mutual esteem.

The vision shared by all the partners laying the foundations for the establishment of the museum was the idea that the struggle for culture at the periphery was a struggle for the culture and the character of the entire society. The region was "thirsty for knowledge and education," the active members stated, and it was necessary to invest and to develop every cultural project and asset "that has the potential to enrich our cultural life."[13] Avraham Biran connected the inclusive political and social strategy with its significance on the cultural level: "Everyone is talking about population dispersal.... Population dispersal requires dispersal of cultural assets.... I welcome the fact that students, teachers, researchers, and scholars will have to make an effort to come here to look at the beauty of Japheth in the tents of Gan Hashlosha."[14] After the museum opened, Elazar Unger noted with satisfaction: "The first visitors have begun streaming into the museum – people from Degania and Kinneret and many more places, and all of them express only praise and joy about the fact that art has descended from the heights of Jerusalem to the valleys."[15] And Martin Buber, in his characteristic way, spoke of the distinctive relationship between the individual and the collective as his main reason for supporting the museum: "On the one hand we have the individual who gives up a career and descends to the Beit She'an Valley and, on the other hand, the kibbutz that is willing to take upon itself a project such as this for the sake of the individual."[16]

At this stage, the founders had not yet drawn up an inventory of the collection or formulated the importance of its orientations in the broad context of Israeli cultural discourse and archeological research. A few years later, when the collection arrived in Israel and the museum was opened to the public at large, its founders emphasized support for openness to the cultures of the world and expressed reservations about isolationist tendencies in the name of a local identity. Later discussions focused on the Greek and Hellenistic art that constituted the main and most important part of the collection. The small collection of Iranian Islamic art the museum had already received during the early stages (the "Heinrich Collection") served as a point of departure for an additional, though indeed limited section of Islamic art.[17]

The important tiers of Greek and Hellenistic culture represented in the collection served as a point of departure for the message about the positive significance of intercultural cross-fertilization. "The Judaism that grew stronger in the Talmudic period did not fear foreign

influences and adapted foreign motifs that stemmed from the Greco-Roman culture to its own purposes," Biran explained, emphasizing that much evidence of this could be found "in this region in particular." He mentioned the evidence of the Greek inscriptions on the ossuaries and the traces of Greek influences in the Mishnah, the Talmud, and synagogue art, and noted that "there has been lively debate on whether our culture belongs to the East or the West, but it is without doubt a good sign of our national and cultural maturity that we wish to extend our scope and to go beyond *Eretz Yisrael* archeology, which is the air we breathe, to encompass now the general culture of the Mediterranean as well."[18]

On the day of the inauguration, Mordechai Avi-Yonah was in Paris, taking part in a congress on a subject relevant to this matter: "The Influence of Greco-Roman Culture on Cultures in its Environs." In a congratulatory letter that he sent to the inauguration, he emphasized the geographical position of *Eretz Yisrael* on an intersection of routes and cultures, "the Eastern sphere and the Mediterranean circle sphere." Avi-Yonah wanted to convey a topical message by means of the Nir David Museum's special collection. "Especially at this time, when cultural values in Israel are being severely tested and our people stands at a crossroads in its spiritual life, the time has come to emphasize and to learn the artistic achievements represented in this museum, their standards, and their eternal character."[19] In the special circumstances of the time, in his opinion, geocultural connections that had been essential to the region for thousands of years had become severed. *Eretz Yisrael* was an inseparable part of a broad culture, and more than having been one another's enemies, the peoples living on the shores of the Mediterranean had exchanged and shared cultural values, profound Eastern religious feelings and wisdoms, Roman systems of rule and law, and all of them together had created a Mediterranean culture. "The capacity of artistic perception needs to be restored to the broad strata of the people," Avi-Yonah said, and wondered whether "we can dream about a revival of Mediterranean culture in our days."[20]

The founders sought to create a firm framework because they understood that they were building a museum in a small kibbutz at the periphery with a universal, open message that invited and required spiritual and visual human input. A broad, state-associated basis for its organizational structure, they believed, could stand firm against internal isolationism or shocks and changes with the passage of time.

Act 2, February–November 1960: From the public dimension to the physical

The Honorary Committee and the Working Committee had already been active for some time, and soon the collection was to be brought to the kibbutz. It was now time to prepare a worthy home for it – to draw up a program, an architectural plan, and to erect a building, and to organize funding for all these.

In February 1960 the kibbutz bulletin reported that a list of the items in the collection was being completed in Bern, and the collection was being organized to be sent to Israel: some 3,000 items, among them key items of an international standard, as well as a thousand books, many of them rare and precious, some of them hundreds of years old.[21] Subsequently a letter was sent by the directors of the Nir David Museum to the Customs and Excise administration, asking them to assist the kibbutz, which had been suffering from droughts for the past two years and was in a difficult economic situation, by exempting the delivery from travel tax.[22]

Despite the kibbutz's economic difficulties and the recession current in Israel at the time, no one doubted that Elazar Unger should travel to Switzerland to try to raise funds to build the museum, and his journey was approved by the kibbutz assembly without

reservations.[23] On the face of it, it seemed unlikely that an ordinary kibbutz member traveling abroad for a short period in 1960 would succeed in the task of raising a considerable sum sufficient to finance the museum. In order to understand the kibbutz's unanimous approval of Unger's projected journey abroad and its expectations that he would be successful, we need to examine the social fabric of the kibbutz and the social position of Elazar Unger and of his comrades who were active in the museum committee.

The first characteristic that we can derive from a survey of the circle of members who united around the idea of the museum is that all of them without exception were from the core group that had founded the kibbutz. This core group included 35 members of the Israeli kibbutz-training (*hakhsharah*) group that had been formed in the Borochov neighborhood in Givatayim in 1932, and 150 members of a kibbutz-training group called "Massad" from Galicia. The Israelis were all graduates of agricultural and other tertiary schools, among them the Mikveh Israel agricultural school, the Technion in Haifa, and the Teachers' Seminary in Jerusalem (Shmuel Sarig, who belonged to this group, served as secretary of the kibbutz during its first years). The Galicians, most of whom had higher education and a socialist consciousness, had immigrated to Israel in the early 1930s and united with the Israeli kibbutz-training group in 1933. Some additional members (Elazar Unger and Helmut Lasker among them) joined the group on an individual basis a short while later. After the groups united, the members lived together in temporary places until they managed to raise funds to acquire land at the present site of Nir David. They founded the kibbutz, which they originally called Tel Amal – the first of the "Tower and Stockade" settlements" – in 1936. Shmuel Sarig remarked:

> This was a period in which the kibbutz wanted culture, and culture flourished here; both the Israelis and the Galicians knew: with our composers, our museum, our theater, we would not be like the farmers in Poland, we said. We were a group of people for whom the kibbutz was a great value. Our dream was to seek out the most difficult place and to settle there. We were the first kibbutz in the Beit She'an Valley, in the great heat. We were pioneers in the full sense of the word.[24]

In 1947, after the Second World War, 100 or so new members joined the kibbutz, most of them from the Vilna region and a few from Poland. They had lived through the war period in Russia, had experienced years of suffering, wandering and loss, and most of them had not received a formal education. They entered Israel after the war as illegal immigrants. With their absorption into the kibbutz, Nir David became the largest concentration of immigrants from Vilna in the country. In the late 1950s, the 30 young people of the Omer group from Switzerland, Italy and Austria, of which Dan Lifshitz was a member, joined the kibbutz, and in April 1960 were accepted as members. Several years later only 15 of them remained in the kibbutz.

The supporters of the museum, all of them from the Israeli and Galician core group, mostly belonged to the leadership circle and held responsible positions in the kibbutz, in its agricultural branches and its social and cultural life.[25] Shmuel Sarig and Helmut Lasker (who for a time had been a counselor to the Omer group in Europe) were the first to embrace the vision of the museum. When a coordinator became necessary for the project, they drew Elazar Unger to the idea. Helmut Lasker explained why they chose Unger:

> Elazar knew Switzerland and Germany. He spoke several languages fluently and was well versed in European culture. He had a good approach to people, and knew how to make connections with important people. And so it worked out: Dan Lifshitz and Elazar met, and immediately found a common language, and from that moment Elazar became the person responsible and the main instigator in getting to where it would be possible to establish the museum. Shmuel and I were beside him.[26]

The work was divided among the comrades: Unger concentrated on the fundraising, Shmuel Sarig on the planning and building of the museum, Moshe Lahav acted as treasurer and did the accounting, and Helmut Lasker served on the supervising committee.

Unger, born in Sokal in Galicia in 1908, grew up in a home where Jewish culture was integrated with general education. When his family moved to Lemberg, Unger joined the Massad kibbutz-training group, looked for a profession that would be useful for kibbutz life, and completed his studies in garden architecture and biology. He was the kibbutz's first garden planner, and in later years was in charge of the laboratories at the Beit Alfa regional high school institute, a biology teacher, and a lecturer at Ruppin College.[27] In the mid-1950s he and his wife spent some time in Switzerland, where she studied dance and he studied agronomy. His father, Israel Unger, a religious scholar and observant Jew, was also "very well versed in the treasures of German literature, and admired its greatest authors."[28] Elazar's knowledge of and affinity to Jewish thought, coupled with a deep sense of belonging to German and European culture, helped him to make connections with both Jews and non-Jews from a broad range of fields of interest, culture, and professional activity.

In April 1960 Elazar Unger left for Switzerland with the aim of raising funds for the museum building. One of the significant points in his trip was an exhibition organized by Lifshitz of selected items from the collection, to which experts with international reputations were invited. Connoisseurs praised the high standard of the collection, and their accolades were published in the Swiss press.[29] When the exhibition closed the collection was packed in cardboard boxes inside two large wooden crates and began its long journey from Bern to be taken by sea to Israel, to Kibbutz Nir David.

Despite the success of the show in Bern, Unger quickly realized that in Switzerland the chances of raising the considerable sum required to build the museum were slim. He continued his journey from Switzerland to Germany. There, on the recommendations of people of the Jewish Agency and through the connections of friends of the museum, he began to develop connections with the leaders of the Jewish community in Frankfurt and with the city's mayor, the well-liked and esteemed Werner Bockelmann. Bockelmann, who was considered a supporter of Mapam, and had been an anti-Nazi fighter, worked extensively in Frankfurt to imbue the population with the memory of the Holocaust so that the younger generation would not forget the crimes of the Third Reich. The peak of Unger's activity for the museum was a lecture by Dan Lifshitz in the hall of the Frankfurt Chamber of Commerce and Industry in June 1960. The lecture was preceded by addresses by experts and professionals, and Dan told his audience about how he had found his way to the Zionist movement, about his belief in the kibbutz and his vision of establishing a museum there. The mayor, Werner Bockelmann, announced that he would assist actively. Being aware of the sensitivity to German financing, he promised that he would personally supervise the sources of the donations to ensure that the donors would be without blemish and the money worthy of its purpose.

On 10 July Unger returned to Israel to report to the committee and the kibbutz about his activities abroad. At a meeting in the kibbutz secretariat office, discussions took place on the museum's character, dimensions, and other subjects related to it, in consultation with Yehuda Roth, the founder and director of the Museum of Yarmukian Culture in the neighboring kibbutz, Sha'ar Hagolan.[30] On 11 September Unger left for Switzerland and Germany again to finalize the matter of the financing for the museum. On the agenda was a considerable sum that Werner Bockelmann had raised in the name of the Frankfurt municipality in memory of the Jewish residents of the city who had been victims of the Holocaust. In November an exhibition of many of the items of the museum collection, organized by Yehoshua Segal (a sculptor and a member of the kibbutz) and Dan Lifshitz,

opened at Nir David. "The many comrades who visited the show expressed their amazement at the abundance of exhibits, their great beauty, and the fine arrangement and the good taste reflected in the presentation."[31]

At this time discussions were also held about whether the museum should be located inside the living space of the kibbutz or outside it, on a main road or at an adjacent site. This debate did not go on for long because the areas available for development were in any case limited and also because it seemed best to associate the museum with the Gan Hashlosha park (also known as the Sahneh), the landscaping of which had been planned not long before this by the landscape architects Lipa Yahalom and Dan Tzur. So the choice fell on a relatively high point at the edge of the park, on top of a mound (which was later identified as an archeological tell) overlooking the impressive vista of the valley, and architects were chosen for the project. I have found no evidence of a tender, and it seems that the committee approached a firm of architects that was known to them and that had already done some planning for Nir David and for Mishmar Ha'emek – the firm of Shimon Pevsner, Raphael Avraham, and Ezra Rosengarten.

The architects who began working on the plans were aware of the need to build a significant affinity between the park architecture, the archeological conception of the museum, and the site of the tell, and sought to turn the limitations of the terrain into an architectural advantage. The Antiquities Department suggested that they build a hanging floor so as not to interfere with archeological excavations if they turned out to be necessary. Biran collaborated with the architects to consolidate a plan that would meet the challenges set by the archeological requirements.[32]

In June 1960 a special issue of the journal *Das Neue Israel*, devoted to the planned museum and to Dan Lifshitz's collection, was published in Zurich. It began with an introduction by Professor Avi-Yonah, who described the museum and its importance. The issue mainly contained spectacular photographs of special items in the collection, a photograph of Gan Hashlosha, and drawings of the museum building, with four wings – uniform oblong one-story structures with broad flat roofs, encompassed on all four sides by an open oblong square, like a Roman house. It also contained a number of opinions of experts who praised the uniqueness of the collection and wrote of its importance. These included appreciations by Pierre Devambez, a curator of ancient Greek and Roman art from the Louvre in Paris, Professor Bloch, director of the Sorbonne, and Professor N. Dürr. curator of the Museum of Art and History, Geneva.[33]

On 1 October 1960, the Jewish New Year was celebrated at the kibbutz amidst the general feeling that the museum with its stimulating architectural appearance would soon be built, and that positive possibilities for the financing of the building were already in sight.

Act 3, November 1960–June 1962: A reversal

In November 1960 it seemed that this combination of unanimous agreement, talent, and luck were imbuing those doing the work with confidence, and that what had seemed like a fantasy at the start was becoming a reality. The collection was ready and waiting in two rooms that had been set aside for it in the kibbutz, in the "Green House" where bars had been affixed to the windows; the plans for the museum in the beautiful park had been drawn; and the considerable donation that had already been promised was enough to build a first wing of the museum. The donation of the Frankfurt municipality, "a modest donation as a sign of esteem and thanks for the role of the Jews of Frankfurt in the city's cultural life," had been reported in the German press; a representative of the Jewish community had promised that the community would make an additional donation of

money as well as some items of Judaica to be shown in the museum in memory of the Jews of Frankfurt who had perished in the Holocaust.

A ceremony to lay the cornerstone of the museum building was planned for 19 November 1960. On this date Werner Bockelmann was to arrive in Israel for a congress of mayors, and the cornerstone-laying ceremony was included in a schedule that had been arranged in advance so that he would be able to participate in it during his planned visit. But when this plan for the ceremony was announced at the kibbutz assembly, people became very emotional and a number of members refused to accept a situation in which a German would be a guest of the kibbutz, and opposed the participation of Werner Bockelmann in the ceremony. The assembly therefore decided to postpone the ceremony.

Unger, who had been informed of this, sent a letter to the kibbutz that was read out to the members at a kibbutz assembly. In this letter, as reported in the kibbutz bulletin, "he expressed his opinion, which was not that of the majority, about the laying of the cornerstone of the museum. Nonetheless, the decision of the previous assembly was approved – to postpone the cornerstone-laying and thus to avoid holding the official ceremony in the presence of the 'honored guest.'"[34] Unger was asked to inform Bockelmann that the cornerstone-laying ceremony had been postponed. Against his own will, Unger reported this to Bockelmann at a meeting also attended by Fee Lifshitz, Dan's mother, who had taken part in the effort to assist in realizing the project. Bockelmann asked no questions about the reason for the postponement, and Unger was not required to provide an explanation.[35] A short while after this the question of the sources of the funding from Germany was raised at the kibbutz assembly, and a proposal was made to hold a referendum of members on this issue, but the proposal was rejected by a large majority and it seemed that with this the matter was closed and that from now on the museum was on track.

On 11 November Unger returned to Israel and gave a detailed report to the kibbutz assembly on the appeal and its results. Bockelmann arrived in Israel for the mayors' congress as planned, and on 19 November he visited Nir David as a guest of the committee members, with no official reception. Bockelmann had a high regard for the kibbutz movement and in particular for Hakibbutz Ha'artzi, which was the mainstay of the Mapam Party that he admired, and although he had been warned that Hakibbutz Ha'artzi (to which Nir David belonged) opposed connections with Germany,[36] he did not avoid the visit. A day before it he had visited Kibbutz Metzer (also of Hakibbutz Ha'artzi) and was enthused by what he saw. The day after his visit to Nir David, a meeting of the museum committee was held at the guest house of Kibbutz Ein Harod, with the participation of Biran, several other dignitaries, and committee members from Nir David. At this meeting the building plans were finalized, and it was decided to present Mayor Bockelmann a formal certificate of the planting of one hundred trees in his name in the Herzl Forest as an expression of esteem.[37] Three weeks later, a letter was sent from Nir David to Frankfurt confirming receipt of a donation of 251,650 Deutschmarks.[38]

But in Nir David the emotional turbulence did not die down, and in December 1960 three kibbutz assemblies were devoted to the subject of the museum, but the discussions – as reported in the bulletin – "went beyond the narrow subject of the building of the museum." The article in the bulletin also said that "In everyone's opinion, the discussions were important and penetrating, and reached a high level of clarification of problems, and in the opinion of many they also added significantly from a cultural perspective." It noted that for years there had been no such opportunity to discuss questions of principle at kibbutz assemblies, and that in the course of these discussions "questions were raised that touch on the personal and ideological world of each and every comrade." At the conclusion of the third assembly it was resolved to refer the matter to the movement's highest institution and

to send representatives to inform the movement's secretariat of the "diversity of opinions that were expressed at the assemblies" so that the discussion could be taken up again by the kibbutz itself after the movement's secretariat made its position clear. These assemblies, the article continued, had proved that "we are indeed capable of listening to one another, of understanding each other's deepest feelings, even when the opinions are divided and very different from one another. And we know that understanding one another and listening to one another are a fundamental element of shared kibbutz life." In his conclusion, the author took the position that members should welcome the fact "that in a complicated and difficult situation such as this, both the kibbutz and its institutions were able to transcend temporary and material interests and to take a position of principles and conscience, with concern for the cohesion and psychological wholeness of the kibbutz and all its members."[39]

To illuminate the nature of the discussion and of the opinions expressed in it, I will quote one example here, a tip of the iceberg of this emotionally charged and complex discussion. One member who was for accepting the donation from Germany berated those opposing it, saying there was an element of racism in their position – racism not against Jews but against Germans – because their stand entailed a collective accusation of the German people. He was answered by Rachel Lurie, who said that after so few years one could not expect the victims to be ready for understanding and friendship with citizens of the nation that had caused them so much suffering. In another stage of the discussion, probably referring to a related issue that was the subject of much emotional discussion in kibbutzim at this time – the requests of groups of young Germans to make extended visits to kibbutzim as volunteer part-time workers – she said that the kibbutz should probably accede to such requests, "but it's difficult, especially difficult in these days. Is not the psychological price too high? . . . What are we arguing about? Whether we should give priority to educating the younger generation of Germans or to considering the feelings of members who are not yet ready to accept that?"[40]

At this time the kibbutz received a letter from Zvi Lurie, who was a member of Kibbutz Ein Shemer, head of the Organization Department of the Jewish Agency executive, and one of the founders of Hakibbutz Ha'artzi movement and Mapam. Elazar Unger had consulted him before setting out on his fundraising journey, and considered him a friend. In the letter, which was read out to the kibbutz assembly, Lurie stated categorically that he "most strongly opposed all connections with Germany and even with Jews now living in Germany." He added that he had long since expressed his opinion that Jews living in Germany should be refused representation at the Zionist Congress, and also that he would never set foot "in the land of bloodshed."[41] A few years later, however, according to Unger, Lurie admitted to him that it had been "a grave mistake on his part to have been drawn into Abba Kovner's opposition and to have acted as he had."[42]

Indeed, Abba Kovner, a poet and one of the leaders of Hakibbutz Ha'artzi and a former leader of partisans and fighters in the Vilna Ghetto, who had been against "the museum case," as he called it, acted both overtly and behind the scenes. In December 1960 he sent a letter to the secretariat of Nir David informing the members of a query he had addressed to the secretariat of Hakibbutz Ha'artzi's Executive Committee, with a demand that the subject of the museum at Nir David be included in the agenda of its next meeting. Above his signature to the letter he wrote the words "Most regretfully."[43]

Elazar Unger sent two successive letters to Hakibbutz Ha'artzi's Executive Committee, in which he detailed the concatenation of events from his point of view. He wrote about the courage, honesty, and resoluteness of Werner Bockelmann and several other German supporters of the project. "They acted in sincere good will, and without any ulterior thoughts. No conditions were posed for giving the money to the museum, and from the many

conversations I had with both of them I know with absolute certainty that there is no political intention in this project." He pointed out that to return the money would offend good people and hurt the movement itself, and that "such an act would be unprecedented, and without minimal public tact." It would cause a public scandal, and "we will have no way of excusing the sudden opposition of a very small handful of people. . . . It seems to me that the test you are putting me to is extremely hard. Every public act entails conscience and morals, and these are obligatory."[44] Bunim Shamir, of Hakibbutz Ha'artzi's Executive Committee, confirmed receipt of the two letters and replied that "after we hear the proceedings of the clarifications in the kibbutz we will have to consult on the matter once again."[45]

After Abba Kovner's query, the secretariat of Hakibbutz Ha'artzi's Executive Committee was obliged to discuss the matter at its next meeting, which was held at Kibbutz Reshafim. Abba Kovner opened the discussion, saying "I have tried to intervene so as to prevent the museum at Nir David from proceeding," and asked what the Executive Committee could do to "thwart this plan" without publicity. In the discussion that followed diverse views were expressed. It was evident that the Executive Committee preferred to leave the decision to the kibbutz but was aware of the special situation in which the kibbutz found it difficult to decide by a majority of votes and reach an unequivocal resolution in a direct democratic procedure, Ya'akov Hazan summed up: "Nir David is in a dilemma. This is an unfortunate matter and we have to help them find an honorable way out of it. To my regret, the Executive Committee will have to deal with this because the matter is becoming complicated."[46]

The discussion came back to the kibbutz, and at an assembly held on a Saturday evening at which the different opinions were raised once more, it was unanimously decided to choose an elegant solution: to pass the matter on to "one of the appropriate public institutions," so that the kibbutz could sever any direct connection between itself and the funds donated by the Frankfurt municipality. This decision then had to be approved by Hakibbutz Ha'artzi's Executive Committee. The assembly ended with a general feeling that a worthy compromise had been found and that "despite the divided opinions on the basic question we have reached a uniform agreement as to the concrete and practical solution that we are all interested in at the moment."[47]

The "appropriate public institution" was found a few weeks later. The kibbutz would transfer the donation to the cultural department of the Histadrut, to establish a fund for the support of museums in the kibbutz movement. This was done on the initiative of Yehuda Roth, with the assistance of Dr. Shmuel Avitzur. This solution was accepted by Hakibbutz Ha'artzi's Executive Committee, and approved by the kibbutz assembly "unanimously and with a sense of relief."[48] Years later Unger wrote that "after the decision there was pandemonium, incited mainly by Abba Kovner, and I went through seven circles of hell and suffering that are hard for me to describe."[49]

Act 4, April 1961–December 1962: The rift

The sense of relief in the kibbutz was indeed premature. Emotions continued to run high, and the level of the responses rose. In March 1961, shortly before Passover, a letter arrived from Werner Bockelmann, asking if his son, who was about to complete his final high school examinations, could come to the kibbutz as a guest during March–April 1961 together with a friend of his age. Bockelmann's request was brought to the kibbutz assembly for discussion and was approved with no opposition.[50]

The situation was described by Miriam Yechieli, wife of Baruch Yechieli, one of the leading opponents of the funding proposal:

> During the war my husband and I were in the Soviet Union. The problem of the Holocaust is very close to our hearts. On Passover night Unger invited two "good Germans," and then several comrades left the Seder. After all, the Seder was an intimate family affair. I gave birth to my daughter that night. It had probably been a surprise [the presence of the Germans at the Seder], he [Unger] didn't ask [if they might attend], and that was the straw that broke the camel's back: my husband and the Palgi family announced that they were leaving the kibbutz.[51]

From the records we can trace the concatenation of events and the accumulation of exasperation and ire that reached their peak with Baruch Yechieli's announcement that he was leaving the kibbutz. The visit of the two young Germans, and their having been invited to the Seder, had led to the demonstrative exit of two members from the Seder celebration. The saga of the dispute in the kibbutz broadened in the second half of 1961, with two further unpleasant events. As for the museum, the kibbutz did not manage to implement the decision to transfer the money to an independent public body, and in early 1962 the opponents of the funding proposal, together with Abba Kovner, demanded a discussion of the matter. Abba Kovner also addressed another query to the movement's leadership body. The secretariat of Hakibbutz Ha'artzi convened a discussion at Nir David, but the opponents' expectations for an unequivocal decision were not realized. The kibbutz bulletin reported only that "the discussion was of a high level" and gave the names of those who had spoken from both sides of the divide.[52]

Baruch Yechieli did not accept this. "He has not calmed down," the secretary of Nir David reported to Hakibbutz Ha'artzi secretariat, "he has announced that he is leaving the kibbutz." It is hard to confirm this today, but the story goes that there were also some who threatened a hunger strike.[53] The kibbutz's great fear was of a rift, an actual split of the kibbutz. The secretary of the kibbutz argued that "if Baruch Yechieli does leave, this will be a very grave matter for the kibbutz and may have an ongoing impact on the entire framework of our social life." In his distress he approached Shmuel Avidan of the Executive Committee of Hakibbutz Ha'artzi, requesting assistance from the higher body: "It seems appropriate to me that you invite him to a personal discussion and try to dissuade him. By the way, his wife is doing all she can to stop him."[54] A week later the secretary of Nir David approached Avidan once again, and the great urgency can be seen between the lines: "as many among us estimate, this may drag us into social problems that are undesirable to us."[55]

Baruch Yechieli and his family did not leave the kibbutz. "It was only thanks to the intervention of the secretariat that we drew back from this step. But the blow to the heart remained for many years. Two secretaries came and said 'We will lie down here on the threshold, you're not leaving here.' We felt their sincerity, and that's probably what changed our decision."[56]

In the second half of 1962, too, the emotions did not subside. The delays in the matter of the funding caused financial problems for the museum, and the distressed Elazar Unger wrote to the secretariat of Hakibbutz Ha'artzi's Executive Committee: "All my actions for the museum have always been clean, with personal and public decency that is evident to all." He added that "with an aching heart and with a sense of bitter disappointment" he felt that the Executive Committee had not provided the intervention appropriate to the seriousness of the matter – the financial complications caused by the Executive Committee's decision and unresolved issues with the kibbutz. "I could have taken these matters to Ben-Gurion without any difficulty, and there they would have been speedily and positively resolved," he wrote, "but as a member of the movement I did not want to ask for help from outside the movement." The Executive Committee, he said, had absolved itself by according "sovereignty" to the kibbutz, "which has been drawn into this whirlpool quite unwillingly."[57]

As a way out of the complications, it was decided to hand responsibility for the museum to the Department for the Improvement of the Country's Landscape and the Development of Historical Sites, a move that was justified by the museum's proximity to the Gan Hashlosha Park.

The face of history

In May 1960, a short while after Unger left for Switzerland and Germany to raise funds for the museum building, Adolf Eichmann was apprehended in Argentina and brought to trial in Israel. This event was accompanied by unprecedented coverage in the media, and had a sweeping and extensive impact. In April 1961, when the two members walked out of the Seder at Nir David, this was shortly before the opening of the Eichmann trial. During all the six months the trial lasted, from April to November, and until the announcement of the death sentence in December, emotions in Israel were boiling over. The ongoing confrontation with the Holocaust seeped into every home and there was no one who did not listen to the radio broadcasts of the evidence given by the survivors, men and women whose stories were the stories of neighbors who lived next door, or in the same street, in the same neighborhood, in the same kibbutz. The descriptions and the scenes, and the clearly identified figure of Eichmann, reawakened the trauma of the survivors and shook the fragile barrier between the shocking experiences of surviving and the frameworks of the present. This is how one of the survivors described it: "Suddenly everything unraveled, as though someone had pulled a thread and the entire weave that had encased me for years as a comfortable protection against the past completely disappeared."[58]

At the same time, channels were opened for speaking about the Holocaust, conditions were created for collective listening to testimonies about it, and engagement with the Holocaust became legitimate. The Eichmann trial aroused feelings of solidarity and identification, appreciation of the efforts made by survivors to build a new life after their experience of hell, willingness to exercise tolerance in cases of harsh and charged emotional responses, and awareness of the need to make concessions. The tension between opposed positions toward Germany had begun earlier, and even though the reparations agreement between Germany and Israel had been signed in 1952, it continued raising difficult and stormy disputes, especially in the Hakibbutz Ha'artzi movement where Abba Kovner acted resolutely and tirelessly against any connections being made with Germany. At that time the use of the identifying term "Holocaust victims" had only begun gaining currency, enabling survivors to identify themselves as such and investing those who had experienced unimaginable suffering with an authority that enabled them to influence the collective domain on the subject of relations with Germany. The quintessential Holocaust survivors were those who had survived the death camps and the forced labor camps. At a kibbutz assembly, one of the women members wondered: "And who are the victims – only those whose bodies were slaughtered? What about the torn and wounded human soul?"[59] It was not self-evident that the notion of "Holocaust victim" should also include refugees who had spent the war years in Russia and whose souls, too, were "torn and wounded." Members of the Polish and Lithuanian group saw themselves as spokesmen for and representatives of the Holocaust victims; probably, too, their need to strengthen their legitimacy vis-à-vis their surroundings made their level of response to topical events more extreme.

Beyond this, there was the complex encounter of the different worlds the members had grown up in, and of their different ways of orienting themselves to face present challenges – disparate language worlds, different emphases, which found expression in all spheres of life. The tense encounter of the different worlds at Nir David, with Baruch Yechieli on one

side, as the survivor who represented fierce opposition, and Elazar Unger on the other, as the spokesman of those who were calling for a kind of normalization, was in fact occurring in every kibbutz, indeed everywhere in Israel. No live documentation of this complex meeting would be found in the archives, only the cover-up phrasing of the placatory report: "the discussions were important and pointed, and reached a high level of clarification of problems."[60] But a memory like the following, of someone who was a child in Kibbutz Ein Hahoresh at that time, can illuminate the emotional intensity that did not find expression in the kibbutz bulletin:

> From a distant memory of my youth I draw up two peak moments from that agitated night. . . . Comrade Itkin, he was very emotional when he got up to speak. he was trembling all over, and his chair fell behind him. . . . The secretaries tried to calm him; his faithful wife, who was sitting beside him, pleaded with him to calm down, but he was insistent. Denouncing, warning, threatening and protesting. Until suddenly, as he was struggling to conclude, he rose up on his toes and screamed from the depths of his torn heart to the pale Alfred: "He who forgives the devil, who travels to the devil's land, who gives his hand to the devil – is a filthy worm!!!" But in the kibbutz bulletin – not a mention of the threats, of the outburst of tears, of the vows of vengeance. There is no record of the verbal struggle, laced with curses, between the small camp of *Yekkes* [Jews from Germany] amd the large camp of "Poles." The tension in the air during the assembly was immense.[61]

The description in Hannah Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem* of Ka-Tzetnik fainting at the Eichmann trial is a further example of an angle of observing the kind of encounter that was part of the consciousness of the period, and which recurred in a variety of versions. The researcher Hanna Yablonka notes that "with not a little malice," Arendt wrote that in response to a remark from the presiding judge, "the disappointed witness, probably deeply wounded, fainted and answered no more questions." It later turned out, Yablonka adds, that this was not a minor fainting episode, and that Ka-Tzetnik was hospitalized for many days, and that the event engraved Ka-Tzetnik's failure "to build the bridge between the dead and the living" in the minds of an entire generation.[62]

Everywhere in Israel there was a survivor of the camps like Itkin in the story quoted above, in whom the discussion of these matters may have awoken a flood of traumatic experiences, and there was an Alfred, whose confrontation with them was more restrained. In the case of Nir David, the latter "determined to remain silent," as Unger described his own choice,[63] perhaps because he understood that the dispute, or even a mere continuation of the discussion, might do more harm, and that rational arguments would be out of place. Unger did not try to persuade or influence; he believed that what was needed of him was self-control and movement discipline, but his silence was interpreted by the opponents as a strange self-distancing and as aggravating behavior.

In Nir David the minority who objected to accepting the donation from Germany was concentrated in the group from Poland and Vilna, while the group that supported the museum contained many from the Israeli and Galician core group and all the members of the group of younger people who had come from Switzerland, Italy, and Austria and were Dan Lifshitz's comrades. Two members of the kibbutz were survivors of extermination camps – one from Czechoslovakia, with a number from Auschwitz on her arm – and neither of them maintained that connections with Germany should be opposed. Among the young people of the Omer group who had joined the kibbutz quite some time before this there were some who had experienced the Holocaust in the Bergen-Belsen camp. The activities of those who opposed the donation angered them. They naturally viewed the museum as their contribution to the kibbutz, which accorded them symbolic capital; beyond this, however, the opponents of the donation also negated the life-choices of those of their parents who had

returned to live in Vienna after the war, and the young members of the Omer group saw this criticism as invasive and violent, or, more simply, as "chutzpah."[64]

The rift at Nir David was not only about the story of the museum, and it points to issues beyond the impact of the Eichmann trial and beyond the dispute over relations with Germany. What burst through the crack that opened up over the question of the museum were tensions and deep conflictual precipitates that had been compressed many years earlier and had caused distress without finding an outlet. As in a pressure cooker, contradictory forces dividing different groups in the kibbutz and successive waves of immigration collided. We have to recall that in the late 1940s the kibbutz had absorbed a group that increased the number of its members by a third – a group whose socio-economic structure was characterized by a relative uniformity and was to a large extent different from the structure of the society that had already crystallized in the kibbutz. The massive absorption of large groups in a short space of time was a complex challenge for the kibbutz movement and was accompanied by ambivalence on the part of the absorbing society. On the one hand, everyone held aloft the ideal of the "Ingathering of the Exiles," which was supported by the interest in increasing the size of the kibbutz population and by the demand for manpower, an especially meaningful factor in a society that had inscribed the principle of self-labor on its banner and negated hired labor.[65] On the other hand, after years of displacement, shortages, and loss of family, what the immigrants from Europe longed for most of all was to build a home and to be able to rest a little, legitimate desires that did not cohere with the conceptual systems of a society that to some extent still preserved its avant-garde character and demanded social alertness and collective discipline.[66]

A clearer sense of these things may be gleaned from the forthright description by Shmuel Sarig, a member of the group that founded Nir David:

> The refugees who arrived after five years of being moved from place to place in Russia had only one dream – to marry and have children. Many of them had very little education, some hadn't even been to primary school and came from small townlets, to many of them the concept of the museum meant nothing, they were not involved in the discussions about building the museum – until the subject of the funding came up. The person who determined the outcome was Meir Ya'ari, we were "his" kibbutz, he himself was from Galicia, it had been his idea to combine the Israeli nucleus with the group from Galicia, he accompanied us all his life and I esteemed him greatly.[67]

And from the other side, this is how these things looked from the point of view of Miriam Yechieli:

> My husband and I were in the Soviet Union, the problem of the Holocaust is very close to our hearts. In 1947 we arrived at Tel Amal (Nir David) via Poland, Germany, Italy, Cyprus [where the "illegal immigrants" were detained by the British]. There was a member here called Elazar Unger. He was a teacher at the kibbutz high school, he was the secretary, he had an academic education. He took it upon himself to look for money to build a museum. I don't know if he asked the kibbutz or not – but in that whole collection of money there was already no Jewish money, there was German money. It got quite to the point of insults. The secretariat [the Executive Committee of Hakibbutz Ha'artzi] didn't oppose him, perhaps some of its members were for it. Abba Kovner opposed it, and a debate was also conducted with Hakibbutz Ha'artzi.[68]

The covert confrontation between Abba Kovner and Meir Ya'ari around the dispute at Nir David was a confrontation between ideological views that were inextricably bound up with biography and habitus. The discussions were conducted publicly, in the secretariat of Hakibbutz Ha'artzi and in the movement's periodicals, mainly during the 1950s and 1960s but also during later years. In 1964, when the movement formed closer relations with Germany, Abba Kovner resigned from the Executive Committee of Hakibbutz Ha'artzi, but returned to it in 1965 when the committee decided not to purchase German

equipment, not to visit Germany, and not to host Germans.[69] Ya'ari continued to argue that a boycott against Germany would be a two-edged sword. He vigorously opposed the boycott and stated that while there might not be a different Germany, there were different Germans.[70] Although diplomatic relations were established between Israel and Germany in 1965, in 1971 relations between Ya'ari and Kovner again reached a crisis on this subject, and agreement was reached only when Ya'ari backed down.

In addition, organizations based on the cities of origin of the immigrants had been formed in Israel, and these also played a role in the absorption of their fellow townspeople in the country, assisting them in many ways, helping to establish memorials for their relatives who had perished, and initiating projects to preserve the pasts of the places they had lived in before the Holocaust.[71] As mentioned above, the group of survivors of the Vilna region in Nir David was considered to be the largest group of immigrants from that region in Israel, and among them Abba Kovner was a prominent figure.[72] At the same time, the members who actively supported the building of the museum were associated with the organization of immigrants from Frankfurt who, after the donation received from Frankfurt and the initiative to use it as a means of perpetuating the memory of the community that had perished in the Holocaust, viewed the museum as a memorial building.

The struggle in Nir David was also a struggle about culture-shaping. In this sense, the establishing of the museum and the emphasis on openness to a broad Mediterranean culture on which the Western cultural and artistic world is based entailed a message that was directed not only outwards, but also inwards, to the life of the kibbutz. The boycott demanded by Kovner entailed a negation of the mother-tongue of the members, not only of those from Galicia but also of those from Austria and Switzerland. Greek culture, which was at the center of the collection, was an inseparable part of the culture they had come from, a world of meanings that was an intrinsic part of their identity.

When Elazar Unger died in 1975, Ya'ari wrote the following in his eulogy:

> The expulsees from Spain did not boycott the culture, the language, and the poetry of their country of origin that had treated them so badly. . . . And before Hitler there was a Germany of Lessing and the humanists, and the world still hopes, as I do too, for a different Spain and a different Portugal, and it is not an unforgivable sin if we hope for a different Germany. For me, the essence of socialism is the belief in man, for even if sin couches at his door, he has the chance to reform, and the gates of repentance are not locked and barred before him.

He concluded with a message to the members:

> I have spoken at some length, thinking that this is that grace of truth that I owe to my departed comrade, Elazar, who passed away so suddenly and is no more. I was a partner in the initiative to establish this museum project, and I believe that you will see its continued development as a kind of testament and legacy.[73]

Epilogue

Despite the dispute in the kibbutz, the construction of the Museum of Mediterranean Archeology was not halted. In April 1961, in the midst of the crisis that surfaced at the Passover Seder, the plans for the building were completed, and a request for a tender by contractors was issued.[74] Almost a year later, in March 1962, a short while before Abba Kovner's query to Hakibbutz Ha'artzi secretariat on the subject of the museum, the building work began. At the same time, work commenced on an archeological survey, because during the laying of the foundations it had become clear that archeological excavations had to be conducted. The Antiquities Department and the Ministry of Employment provided 25 laborers for the digging, and the excavation work went on for

three months under the supervision of Elazar Unger. A report was published, and while the work on the survey progressed so too did the work of construction. In July 1962 Unger could already report to the Honorary Committee that the construction of the first building was almost completed, and that efforts were being made to raise funds for the interior furnishings.[75] The building contained a spacious 160 sq. m exhibition gallery and two large patios, as well as a basement and a storeroom.

The several seasons of excavation exposed two layers of settlement: burial caves from the Middle Bronze Age I (ca. 2000 BCE), and above them a flourishing settlement from the First Temple Period. This ancient settlement was founded in the tenth century BCE, and had evidently been a village that specialized in the weaving and dying of fabrics. The diggings unearthed hundreds of utensils dated to the Second Israelite period. At the foot of the tell, close to a stream, the excavators discovered the opening of a carved tunnel leading into the depths of the tell. The burial chamber and the exhibits were incorporated into the museum. The wishes of Professor Avi-Yonah and some members of the Honorary Committee that the museum participate in a new revival of Mediterranean culture did not really come to fruition. The local archeology drew much interest, especially in the later years, and in the local political and cultural climate it was difficult to cultivate any large-scale interest in world culture.

On 11 September 1963 the museum was inaugurated in the presence of guests from Israel and abroad, among them many immigrants from Frankfurt, representatives of the Antiquities Department and of various museums, as well as Werner Bockelmann, who gave an address at the inauguration. A memorial plaque was affixed on the museum's entrance wall: "The Museum of Mediterranean Archeology is dedicated to the memory of the Jews of the city of Frankfurt, lovers of art and culture." The kibbutz bulletin reported:

> The visitors and the comrades circulated for a long while and looked at the marvelous exhibits (which are only a part of the museum's rich collection!). Through the northern window one could see the Assi Stream in all its splendor in its winding course at the foot of the hill, blending marvelously with the display in the museum. Everyone praised the handful of our comrades who, without broad backing in the kibbutz, had toiled literally day and night to prepare the building for the inauguration. And indeed to the toilers be the praise![76]

The museum continued developing, and in 1967 construction began on its second building, containing a library and an exhibition gallery, funded by the Rothschild family.

Members of the museum's Public Committee assisted and gave support at times of crisis, and contributed of their knowledge and professionalism to the construction of the museum. The museum was established, and it seems that the opponents accepted this fact, although with heavy hearts, because of the lengthy process of frank communal confrontation with the crisis. Through this process it became clear to the survivors that they could trust the intimate public space of the kibbutz, which in spite of everything could listen to them and contain their anger and distress. The dozens of discussions had created the conditions for them to construct their traumatic experience as a verbal narrative and, no less importantly, the community had understood that before anything else it had to express recognition of their suffering and identification with their pain. Such a challenge is not a simple one in a democratic society, because post-traumatic states are characterized by an absence of mediating cognitive structures, and any trigger can send the sufferer back into a situation over which he has no control. In this sense, the painful process described here represents a complex community dynamics (which includes mediation by the movement's leadership) that in the end repairs the rifts within the society, although the scars of the division and the rift would heal only many years later.[77]

The idea of the unity of the Mediterranean world and the Mediterranean identity was assimilated into the museum's name. That title transmitted a message to Israeli society, a historiographical message as a formulation of emphases in a perception of history that was perhaps influenced by the French historian Fernand Braudel.[78] A museum of Mediterranean archeology implies a perception of history as a "long duration" (*longue durée* in Braudel's term), and entails relating to a topographical and climatic region, to characteristics of and relations among civilizations, to cultural and mental systems as deep shaping layers.

The core of the present essay, however, lies not in the idea that was formulated by the museum when it was founded, and certainly not in anything that may be identified as a consensus or as a harmonious and unified community – as the kibbutz is sometimes mistakenly thought to be. The story of the museum that has been woven here tries to trace "the face of history" in what eludes cohesion and is many-layered and intergenerational in the powerful tensions between waves of immigration, in the struggles, and in the emotional worlds involved in those struggles. It seems that we can identify "the face of history" between the lines even more than in the object itself, the museum – in the nerves of the time that are exposed here, which find echoes with varying frequencies in every single kibbutz and in Israeli society as a whole.

Translated from Hebrew by Richard Flantz

Notes

1. One of the pioneering publications in the research of kibbutz culture was Zeira, *Kru'im anu*.
2. Bar Or, "*Hayenu mehayevim omanut*."
3. "Yihiyeh lanu muze'on retzini: Re'ayon im Dan Lifshitz" (We will have a serious museum: An interview with Dan Lifshitz), *Alon Tel Amal*, 29 August 1958, 2.
4. Author's interview with Shmuel Sarig, Nir David, 3 August 2002.
5. The members of the Omer group stayed at the kibbutz, served in the army, took a course at Givat Haviva, and in 1960 were accepted as members. The archives of the Museum of Mediterranean Archeology at Nir David contain Dan Lifshitz's correspondence on the subject of the coin collection from 1950 on, professional literature, matters connected with the collection, as well as his correspondence with his teachers in the Department of Archeology at the University of Bern from 1959 on.
6. "Yihiyeh lanu muze'on retzini."
7. Elazar Unger, "Mi-pe'ulot va'adat ha-muze'on" (From the activities of the museum committee), *Alon Tel Amal*, 25 December 1959, 8.
8. Letter from Elazar Unger to Ruth Hestrin of the Department of Archeology at the Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 2 April 1963, Archive of the Museum of Mediterranean Archeology, Nir David (hereafter AMMA).
9. "Hurkav va'ad ha-avodah la-muze'on" (Working committee formed for the museum), *Alon Tel Amal*, 18 March 1960, 5.
10. Unsigned letter, entitled "The Museum of Mediterranean Archeology," to Professor Martin Buber in Jerusalem, 12 February 1960, AMMA.
11. Ibid.
12. Letter from Elazar Unger to Dr. Niebenzahl in Jerusalem, 24 September 1963, AMMA.
13. Unsigned letter to Professor Martin Buber (n. 10 above).
14. Avraham Biran, from his opening address at the museum's inauguration, *Alon Tel Amal*, 18 September 1963, 8. Gan Hashlosha is a national park adjacent to Kibbutz Nir David.
15. Letter from Elazar Unger to Dr. Niebenzahl in Jerusalem, 24 September 1963, AMMA.
16. "Hurkav va'ad ha-kavod la-muze'on" (Honorary committee formed for the museum), *Alon Tel Amal*, 18 March 1960.
17. The "Heinrich Collection" is mentioned in a typewritten report in German by Dan Lifshitz addressed to the Nir David Museum team, 28 June 1960, AMMA. A proposal to emphasize this section of the museum's collection, and a detailed list of material existing in Israel on the subject of Islamic art, are mentioned in a letter from Yehuda Roth in Kibbutz Sha'ar Hagolan to Elazar Unger in Nir David, 31 December 1963, ibid. Roth wrote: "Islamic art is a little-known field in

Israel, and to show this art in a museum connected with our kibbutz movement would certainly be of special significance and much importance."

18. "Divrei ha-ptihah shel ha-Dr. Biran" (The opening address by Dr. Biran), *Alon Tel Amal*, 18 September 1963, 8.
19. Mordechai Avi-Yonah, from a typewritten letter to members of Nir David, 6 September 1963, AMMA.
20. Mordechai Avi-Yonah, "Mavo" (Introduction), in *Muze'on le-arkhe'ologiyah yam tikhonit Nir David* (The Museum of Mediterranean Archeology, Nir David) (Nir David, 1966), 1 (unnumbered) and 8.
21. "Yedi'ot be-kitzur" (News in brief), *Alon Tel Amal*, 12 February 1960. Items from the collection had also been brought (smuggled) into Israel in the course of the previous two years by members returning from Europe.
22. Letter from Nir David secretariat to the Customs and Excise Administration, addressed to Uri Schneider in Jerusalem, 28 February 1960, AMMA.
23. "Mi-sihot ha-kibbutz" (From the kibbutz assemblies), *Alon Tel Amal*, 12 February 1960, 4.
24. Interview with Shmuel Sarig, 12 August 2002.
25. For example, Naftali Golomb, farm manager; Moshe Lahav, secretary of the kibbutz and its first teacher; Zillah Unger, choreographer.
26. Author's interview with Helmut Lasker, 26 August 2002.
27. Elazar Unger was the first to create a green strip separating the agricultural area from the residential area of the kibbutz, and planned the open gardenscape – "the park" – at the kibbutz's center.
28. Ya'akov Efrat, "Yedidi Elazar" (My friend Elazar), in *Elazar Unger* (pamphlet issued on the anniversary of his death), Nir David, 29 December 1975, AMMA.
29. "Mi-pe'ulotav shel Elazar Unger be-Shvaitz" (On Elazar Unger's efforts in Switzerland), *Alon Tel Amal*, 22 April 1960, 9.
30. Letter from Elazar Unger to Prof. Mazar in Jerusalem, 22 July 1960, AMMA.
31. "Mutzagei ha-muze'on le-ra'avah" (The museum exhibits on display), *Alon Tel Amal*, 5 November 1960, 9.
32. Letter from Raphael Avraham to Elazar Unger, 27 November 1960, AMMA.
33. *Ein Museum für antike Kunst in Israel* (A museum for ancient art in Israel), special issue of *Das Neue Israel*, Zurich (June 1960).
34. "Mah hayah ba-sihah" (What transpired at the assembly), *Alon Tel Amal*, 11 November 1960, 8.
35. See the letter from Werner Bockelmann to Elazar Unger (in German) (Frankfurt, 7 November 1960), AMMA.
36. Hakibbutz Ha'artzi was the most extreme among the kibbutz movements in its opposition to any normalization of relations with Germany, even though its leader, Meir Ya'ari, disagreed with this position (see below). In the 1960s the population of the movement's 73 kibbutzim numbered some 30,000, while that of all the kibbutz movements together came to 78,000, in 229 kibbutzim.
37. Letter from Elazar Unger to the Executive Committee of Hakibbutz Ha'artzi in Merhavia, 23 December 1960, AMMA.
38. Typewritten letter in German to Werner Bockelmann, with no name of sender and no signature, 14 December 1960, AMMA.
39. All quotations in this paragraph are from M.H., "Beirurim hashuvim" (Important clarifications), *Alon Tel Amal*, 23 December 1960.
40. Rachel Lurie, "Hirhurim ba-she'elah ha-ke'uvah" (Reflections on the painful question), *Alon Tel Amal*, 23 December 1960, 2.
41. Letter from Zvi Lurie to the secretariat of Kibbutz Nir David, 14 December 1960, AMMA.
42. Letter from Elazar Unger to Efraim Elroi, Haifa, 20 December 1974, AMMA.
43. Letter from Abba Kovner to Kibbutz Nir David, 19 December 1960, AMMA.
44. Letter from Elazar Unger to the secretariat of Hakibbutz Ha'artzi's Executive Committee (to the attention of Bunim Shamir), estimated date: late January 1961, AMMA.
45. Letter from Bunim Shamir in Tel Aviv to Elazar Unger in Nir David, 9 February 1961, AMMA.
46. All quotations in this paragraph are from the minutes of the meeting of Hakibbutz Ha'artzi's Executive Committee at Reshafim, 30 January 1961, Yad Ya'ari Archives, Givat Haviva (hereafter YYA), 5–10, 7(5), p. 88.
47. "Mah hayah ba-sihah" (What transpired at the assembly), *Alon Tel Amal*, 10 March 1961, 8.
48. "Mah hayah ba-sihah" (What transpired at the assembly), *Alon Tel Amal*, 13 March 1961, 14.

49. Letter from Elazar Unger to Efraim Elroi, Haifa, 20 December 1974, AMMA.
50. Letter from Werner Bockelmann in Frankfurt to Elazar Unger in Nir David, 10 February 1961; letter from M. Varon, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Jerusalem, to secretariat of Kibbutz Nir David, 20 March 1961; minutes of the kibbutz assembly, Nir David, 25 March 1961 (all in AMMA).
51. Author's interview with Miriam Yechieli, 25 September 2002.
52. "Mah hayah ba-sihah" (What transpired at the assembly), *Alon Tel Amal*, 23 February 1962.
53. Interview with Shmuel Sarig, 19 August 2002.
54. Letter from Shlomo Mann to Shmuel Avidan, 20 February 1962, YYA, 44.4(3).
55. Letter from Shlomo Mann to Shmuel Avidan, 26 February 1962, YYA, 44.4(33).
56. Interview with Miriam Yechieli, 25 September 2002.
57. Letter from Elazar Unger to Shlomo Rosen at the secretariat of Hakibbutz Ha'artzi's Executive Committee, 31 August 1962, AMMA.
58. Paltchi, "Za'akah ilemet," 232.
59. Lurie, "Hirhurim ba-she'elah ha-ke'uvah," 2.
60. M.H., "Beirurim hashuvim."
61. Elisha Porat, "Sheretz tame" (Filthy worm), *Ha'aretz*, 2 July 2011.
62. Yablonka, *Medinat Yisrael neged Adolf Eichmann*, 127.
63. Letter from Elazar Unger to the secretariat of Hakibbutz Ha'artzi's Executive Committee (n. 44 above).
64. Author's interview with Talma Segal, Ein Harod, 24 July 2011. In addition to the differences of habitus among the members, we need to relate to the Holocaust survivors' different models of coping; for example, a model characterized by a high penetration of the trauma and extreme general sensitivity, or a model that develops mechanisms of denial and suppression that act as adaptive coping mechanisms; see Kaminer, "Hadhakah ba-erut uva-sheinah," 86–87.
65. In late 1961 Kibbutz Nir David numbered 280 members (not counting offspring doing military service), 210 of whom were over 40 years of age, and 242 children. Because of the climatic conditions, the kibbutz's agriculture was based on crops that required manpower for limited periods of seasonal work. See letter from Shlomo Mann of the kibbutz's secretariat to the Social Department of Hakibbutz Ha'artzi in Tel Aviv, 6 December 1961, YYA, V.4–44 (3).
66. On the relationship between the older members of the kibbutz and the immigrants, see Yablonka, *Ahim zarim*, 175–80.The study cites members' complaints about the immigrants' non-involvement in the kibbutz, and, on the other side, the feeling that there was a lack of empathy on the part of the society toward the immigrants, or of desire to get to know them (177).
67. Interview with Shmuel Sarig, 19 August 2002. Ya'ari was the only person in the Hakibbutz Ha'artzi leadership who explicitly opposed the move to return the donation.
68. Interview with Miriam Yechieli, 22 August 2002.
69. *Ha-Shavu'a [ba-Kibbutz ha-Artzi]*, 2 April 1965.
70. Ibid., 19 April 1965.
71. For a concise survey of these organizations, see Shalev, ed., *Anahnu po*, 210.
72. The kibbutz bulletin reports a discussion about holding a conference of these immigrants from the Vilna region at the kibbutz. *Alon Tel Amal*, 1 April 1960, 7.
73. Meir Ya'ari, "Dvarim le-Elazar Unger" (Words for Elazar Unger), Merhavia, 30 December 1975, in *Elazar Unger*, pamphlet printed on the anniversary of his death, Nir David, 1976, AMMA.
74. Handwritten letter from E. Rosengarten, Tel Aviv, to Elazar Unger, 31 [*sic*] April 1961, AMMA.
75. Letter from Elazar Unger to the Honorary Committee of the museum, Nir David, 17 July 1962, AMMA.
76. Y.P., "Be-tekes hagigi niftah ha-muze'on" (Museum inaugurated at festive ceremony), *Alon Tel Amal*, 18 September 1963.
77. Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*.
78. See Elyada, "Ha-yam ha-tikhon."

Notes on contributor

Galia Bar Or is the Director and Curator of the Museum of Art, Ein Harod (since 1985). Her publications include *"Hayenu mehayevim omanut": Binyan tarbut ke-binyan hevrah: Muze'onim*

le-omanut be-kibbutzim 1930–1960 ("Our life requires art": Culture building as society building: Art museums in kibbutzim, 1930–1960) (2010), which was awarded the Ben-Zvi Prize in 2010.

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