

Behind bars: Abba Ahimeir's prison diary and its portrayal of politics, history, and culture

Daniela Ozacky Stern

To cite this article: Daniela Ozacky Stern (05 Dec 2023): Behind bars: Abba Ahimeir's prison diary and its portrayal of politics, history, and culture, Jewish Culture and History, DOI: [10.1080/1462169X.2023.2290392](https://doi.org/10.1080/1462169X.2023.2290392)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/1462169X.2023.2290392>



Published online: 05 Dec 2023.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

DOCUMENT



Behind bars: Abba Ahimeir's prison diary and its portrayal of politics, history, and culture

Daniela Ozacky Stern 

Holocaust Studies Program, Western Galilee College, Akko, Israel

ABSTRACT

This paper explores journalist Abba Ahimeir's six prison diaries (1934–1935), shedding light on his thoughts and emotions during British Mandate imprisonment. Written in Jerusalem's central prison, these diaries delve into Ahimeir's multifaceted personality, covering personal, familial, political, and public aspects. With a focus on the unsolved Arlosoroff murder, the paper examines the events leading to Ahimeir's diary creation, emphasizing his perceptions of prison reality, insights into the Arlosoroff affair, and broader observations on culture and history. The goal is to present the complexity of Ahimeir's character and offer historical context for the tumultuous years of the Yishuv under British rule.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 5 November 2023
Accepted 28 November 2023

KEYWORDS

Diary; imprisonment;
British Mandate;
Abba Ahimeir;
Revisionist movement;
Haim Arlosoroff

Introduction

The focus of this paper is a recently published book¹ that showcases the contents of six diary notebooks written by the journalist and intellectual Abba Ahimeir (Figure 1).² Authored during his imprisonment by British Mandate authorities from 1934 to 1935, these diaries were composed in the central prison in Jerusalem, situated within the bounds of the Russian Compound.

After the assassination of Dr. Haim Arlosoroff, the head of the political department of the Jewish Agency, on 16 June 1933, Ahimeir was arrested and came under prolonged suspicion of involvement in the murder. Despite being acquitted of all charges, he was sent to a twenty-one-month prison sentence in Jerusalem, where he meticulously penned his diary. On the windowsill of cell number 19, he etched his name, the Beitar Menorah, and the Star of David symbol, reflecting his sense of isolation and confiscation. Ahimeir dedicated the majority of his time in confinement to reading, contemplating, and documenting his experience.

Indeed, the diary stands as an exceptional ego document, offering a vivid depiction of Ahimeir's thoughts, emotions, and keen observations within the confines of his imprisonment. In the diary entries, Ahimeir presents the prison environment through the lens of an intellectual endowed with vast, profound, and remarkable knowledge spanning a multitude of subjects. These encompass insights into prison life, insightful examinations of fellow inmates and guards, and contemplations across



Figure 1. Abba Ahimeir, 1 August 1935, *Jabotinsky Institute Archive*, TZ-3483.

diverse domains such as literature, art, poetry, Jewish heritage, and historical narratives. His entries delve into analysis of international affairs and the histories of various nations. Naturally, the diary also addresses the matter of the Arlosoroff murder case while exploring the dynamics of the protagonist's relationships in this unsolved drama.

Within its pages, the diary unveils the intricate facets of Ahimeir's personality, embracing his personal, familial, political, public, and intellectual dimensions. This comprehensive perspective of his character paints a captivating portrait, underscoring the complexity inherent in his identity.

Ahimeir composed the diary with the intent to eventually publish it. Indeed, segments from the diary were published in the Revisionist movement's newspaper, *HaYarden* (The Jordan), under the signature 'A', which stands for Asir Zion (Prisoner of Zion). The newspaper was edited by historian and medievalist Benzion Netanyahu (1910–2012). In 1946, portions of the diary were included in a book titled *Reportage of a 'Yeshiva' Boy*, prefaced with an apologetic note instead of a conventional introduction. In 1984, the book was published in a new edition.³

This paper tries to delve into the reasons for Ahimeir's imprisonment and explore the events that led him to write about it. To accomplish this, it features selected segments from the diary, focusing on three main topics: his perception of prison reality, the Arlosoroff affair, and general reflections on general and Jewish culture and history.

My aim is to present to the readers the multifaceted and fascinating character of Abba Ahimeir as reflected in his diary and make parts of its content accessible to English readers. I have also provided an extended historical background to the diary, depicting the events of the tumultuous years of the early 1930s in Eretz Israel under the British Mandate and how Ahimeir perceived them.

Biographical notes

Abba Ahimeir was born Abba Shaul Gaissinovitch on 2 November 1897 in the village of Dolgoe near the city of Babruysk in eastern Belarus. Even in his early years, he exhibited exceptional academic prowess and intellectual acumen. In 1912, he embarked on his first solitary journey to Eretz Israel, where he attended the Herzliya Gymnasium in Tel Aviv. Two years later, during a family visit to Babruysk, the outbreak of the First World War stranded him there. Tragedy struck in 1919 when his younger brother, Meir, a Red Army officer, fell in battle. As a tribute, Abba changed his surname to Ahimeir (Hebrew for 'the brother of Meir'). In 1924, he earned a doctorate from the University of Vienna, focusing his PhD research on Oswald Spengler's *The Decline of the West*.⁴ During the same year, he immigrated to Eretz Israel.

By 1928, Ahimeir joined the Revisionist movement and would soon become one of the shapers of its nationalist ideology. According to Ahimeir, the entire Land of Israel should belong to the Jewish people, who must fight for it and establish their state there in the future. His transition from theory to action gained significant momentum following the pivotal event that unfolded in the city of Hebron and across the country: the 1929 Palestine riots.⁵ It was during this time that he founded the first anti-British underground organization, Brit Habirionim (the Union of Zionist Rebels or the Brotherhood of Zealots).⁶

The violent events of 1929 sent shockwaves throughout the country. What particularly troubled Ahimeir and others was the apparent lack of protection or security for the Jewish population during the massacre. The atrocities evoked memories of the 1903 Kishinev pogrom, where Jews were left helpless, unarmed, and defenseless. This underscored the urgency for a different approach to governance and state-building. Ahimeir and his companions were compelled to establish the organization Brit Habirionim in response to these events.⁷

Abba Ahimeir, a historian well versed not only in Jewish history but also in the history of other nations, was known for his gentle demeanor. Physically frail and nonconfrontational, he recognized the need for a shift in the Jewish community's approach when he observed the lack of effective action to alter the course of the Yishuv's direction.⁸ Ahimeir called for a revolution of thought and action. To his mind, mere agricultural cultivation and the establishment of kibbutzim and settlements, while essential, would not suffice in achieving the national objective. He coined the term 'foreign rule', alluding to the British Mandate and the Arabs whom the Jews had to contend with as they shared the same land. To counter these two challenges, the concept of revolutionary Zionism, as championed by Ahimeir, emerged. Initially, the organization was known as the Revolutionary Zionist Alliance (*Brit Hazionim Hamahapchanim*) and was centered around the figure of Ahimeir. The organization eventually adopted the name Brit Habirionim, suggested by the poet Uri Zvi Greenberg (1896–1981).

Ahimeir had initially proposed naming the organization the Shin A. Association, drawing inspiration from the initials of Sara Aharonson's name. Sara Aharonson was a Nili Group⁹ member who, in 1917, participated in acts of rebellion against the Turkish government in Palestine and eventually died at her own hands to avoid captivity. Ahimeir perceived Nili as a model of sacrifice and self-determination, emphasizing the importance of self-reliance and a proactive stance against the British and defeatist sentiments within the Jewish community. Several articles were published by him on this subject, reflecting the organization's ambition to instigate a military revolt against the British.

The emergence of Brit Habirionim was met with criticism and opposition, particularly from the organized Yishuv circles and leftist factions who disapproved of their activities. The term *birionim*, 'thugs', referred to a group of fighters during the Second Temple era, approximately 2,000 years beforehand, who resolved to resist the foreign Roman conquerors. Some referred to them as Zealots or Sicarii, named after the small swords they carried. 'Birionim' represented courageous fighters willing to make sacrifices and remain resolute in their struggle for their beliefs.¹⁰

The group issued a periodical known as *Habirion* (a thug)¹¹ and published a biweekly newspaper titled *Hazit Ha'am* (The People's Front), starting in 1931, edited by Ahimeir, the poet Uri Zvi Greenberg, and the journalist and writer Dr. Yehoshua Yievin.¹² The publication adopted a militant standpoint, amplifying their positions and messages through striking headlines. Their goal was to demonstrate the autonomy of the Jews in determining their own fate. Established as the first underground organization in Eretz Israel, Brit Habirionim embarked on defensive operations, initiating a rebellion against British rule.

The first significant action of Brit Habirionim took place on 9 October 1930 with the arrival of the British Deputy Minister of Colonies, Dr. Drummond Shiels, in Eretz Israel. A reception was organized in his honor at the Palatin Hotel in Tel Aviv, situated at the intersection of Nachalat Binyamin and Ahad Ha'am streets. As the entourage departed from the hotel, a mixed reception awaited them. Initially, the crowd greeted Shiels with applause, but the mood quickly shifted as cries of 'Long live the Jewish Hebrew State' and the 'Hatikvah' anthem echoed through the air. While the initial perception was that of joyous acclamation, it soon became apparent that a demonstration led by Abba Ahimeir and a group of approximately five or six individuals was underway. British law enforcement swiftly intervened, employing a forceful approach to disperse the protesters. During the commotion, Ahimeir was forcefully brought down to the ground, his glasses were broken, and he was subsequently taken into custody and held in the Jaffa prison. Following an investigation and trial, he and his friends were eventually released after several days of detention.¹³

The significance of this event was underscored by the attention it garnered in the press, marking a notable shift from passive to proactive engagement within the Jewish community. It sent a fervent call to the youth to seize control of their destiny, encouraging active participation in demonstrations and a readiness to make sacrifices in the struggle against those who sought to deprive them of their rights.

In 1932, an inauguration ceremony was planned at the Hebrew University for a chair for international peace, named after Norman Bentwich (1883–1971), the legal advisor of the mandate regime. The university was home to various student cells and organizations, including students who supported the positions of Brit Habirionim and Abba Ahimeir.

These students did not approve of the decision to name the chair of law as a chair of international peace, given the persecution, deprivation, and dependence of the Jewish community in Eretz Israel, on the mercy of foreigners. During the ceremony, held in a large hall, members of Brit Habirionim and their supporters among the students disrupted the event. They advocated for the establishment of a Jewish military chair in honor of Zeev Jabotinsky rather than a chair for international peace named after Bentwich. They dispersed proclamations prepared the day before into the air, and someone even deployed a stink bomb, leading to the abrupt halt of the ceremony.¹⁴

The incident generated prominent headlines in the newspapers in the days that followed, causing significant uproar and leaving a tremendous impact. The demonstration also gained attention abroad. In response to this event, Jabotinsky penned his renowned article 'Al Ha'Aventurism' (On Adventurism), urging people to take a stance and act.¹⁵ He specifically referenced the demonstration at the Hebrew University organized by Ahimeir. Regarding the establishment of the chair, Jabotinsky wrote: 'If you were a young man in the Land of Israel and a student at the same university, what would you do? Would you quietly watch and listen as they turn a Jewish institution into a snake's nest? . . . Would you watch with equanimity and listen like a good boy?' . . .¹⁶ In the article, Jabotinsky also addressed the issue of imprisonment, which would later become pertinent to Ahimeir, stating, 'Prison is not at all a tragedy for those who are inside it; it is often a tragedy for those who put honest people in prison. Britain has now reached this stage: it controls the territories by the imprisonment of honest people.'¹⁷

Members of Brit Habirionim carried out additional demonstrative actions against the British, such as blowing a shofar in the Western Wall square at the end of Yom Kippur, despite its being illegal at the time. However, the peak of criticism and accusations against Ahimeir and some of his friends followed the murder of Arlosoroff.

Indeed, in 1933, Ahimeir faced charges related to the planning, organization, and incitement of the murder of Haim Arlosoroff, a prominent leader in the Socialist Zionist sphere and the head of the political department of the Jewish Agency. Arlosoroff was tragically killed on Shabbat eve, 16 June 1933, along the Tel Aviv beach, with the circumstances of his death remaining vague until today. Three suspects were arrested following the murder: Avraham Stavsky, Zvi Rosenblatt, and Abba Ahimeir (Figure 2). All three were acquitted, under what Ahimeir called 'the blood plot' against them, and it would haunt him for the rest of his life. During the trial, Ahimeir was referred to as 'the third defendant' (with Stavsky being the first and Rosenblatt the second), and this is how he refers to himself in his diary.

Although Ahimeir was eventually acquitted of any involvement in Arlosoroff's murder, he was detained due to his affiliation with an illicit organization – Brit Habirionim. He was imprisoned again and sentenced to one and a half years in prison and was released only on 4 August 1935. This accusation marked a turning point in Ahimeir's life. Following his release, his political involvement waned, and he immersed himself in scholarly pursuits and writing. He started to write a book to be titled 'Introductions to the History of the Russian Revolution', but it was never completed. In 1939, fearing additional imprisonment, he fled the country and sought refuge in Warsaw with his family for a year, eventually returning with the onset of the Second World War and resettling in Jerusalem.

As the State of Israel took shape, he relocated to Givatayim and became a regular contributor to the newspaper *Herut*, where he continued to write until his passing.



Figure 2. Abba Ahimeir and other members of Brit Habirionim are brought to trial in Jerusalem, 1933, *Jabotinsky Institute Archive*, TZ-1069.

Simultaneously, he assumed an editorial role for the Hebrew Encyclopedia, contributing entries on Russian history, literature, and general history. He notably authored the entry on Adolf Hitler.¹⁸

In 1952, Ahimeir's family transitioned to a senior housing complex in Ramat Gan, where he resided until his demise. On 6 June 1962, on the eve of the Jewish holiday Shavuot, he succumbed to a heart attack at his daughter Zeeva's residence in Ramat Aviv at the age of 65. He left behind his wife, Sonia, whom he had married in 1935 following his release from prison, a daughter, and two sons, Yaakov and Yossi. To commemorate his legacy, Yossi Ahimeir, his youngest son, established the 'Beit Abba' memorial site and museum at the family's home in Ramat Gan. This space is dedicated to preserving Ahimeir's archival materials and original artifacts, ensuring that his contributions are remembered and treasured. The archive contains his six prison notebooks, which serve as the focal point of this paper.¹⁹

Abba Ahimeir was a prominent figure within the extreme wing of the Revisionist movement. He was a multifaceted individual, encompassing roles as a journalist, publicist, historian, and writer. His complexity made him a captivating and unconventional character in Israeli history. On the one hand, Ahimeir was a broad-minded and erudite scholar, a well-versed historian renowned for his extensive knowledge of diverse periods and events in human history; on the other hand, he

held a position among the extreme spiritual leaders of the Revisionist movement. He acted with an unwavering commitment to his inner convictions and the values he upheld.²⁰

In an interview with his son, Yaakov Ahimeir, a well-known television anchor and journalist in Israel, he conveyed the belief that Israeli society, in hindsight, failed to fully appreciate his father. This sentiment arose primarily due to Abba Ahimeir's alignment with the 'wrong' political faction. More than that, even within his own right-wing camp, Ahimeir was considered an atypical figure, known for his unapologetic and, at times, extreme expressions – a testament to his firm commitment to honesty.²¹ Abba Ahimeir possessed significant intellectual prowess, dedicating extensive hours to reading and writing. He was characterized by his reserved and introspective nature, as well as by his deep knowledge of the philosophy of history.

The background of Ahimeir's imprisonment

The conflict between the two factions in the Yishuv was extreme. The most severe criticism against the Revisionists arose during the summer of 1934 amid the Arlosoroff murder trial, which escalated the political tensions within the Yishuv to precarious levels. What led to this trial? In the spring of 1933, Arlosoroff journeyed to Europe, including a visit to Germany, aiming to facilitate the migration of Jews to Palestine during the ascent of Nazism. Concurrently, Jabotinsky and the Revisionists imposed a comprehensive embargo on all interactions (political and economic) with Germany. The Revisionists spearheaded anti-German activities, partly to repair their tainted image resulting from a series of pro-Nazi and pro-Hitler statements and articles previously published in the Revisionist press. Brit Habirionim members led the anti-German campaign, including the removal of the Nazi German flag from the consulate in Jerusalem. During this time, the Revisionists launched a series of assaults on Arlosoroff, depicting him as a betrayer willing to sacrifice the Zionist cause for personal gain. Arlosoroff was negotiating with the Germans on what would be known as 'The *Ha'avara* [Transfer] Agreement',²² viewed as a betrayal by the Revisionists, who now began to attack him openly in their publications.

On the day of the assassination, 16 June 1933, the Revisionist newspaper *Hazit Ha'am* issued the following statement:

The Jewish public in Israel and abroad will meet the Stalin–Ben Gurion–Hitler triple alliance with contempt and disgust. There will be no forgiveness for those who, because of greed, sold the honor of their people to the anti-Semitic madmen before the eyes of the entire enlightened world. The Jewish people always knew how to properly regard those who sold the honor of their people . . . Even today, they know how to respond to this scoundrel, which is being done under the sun and in front of the whole world.²³

Additionally, Ahimeir's essay 'The Scroll of the Sicarii', written in 1926, was used as key evidence against him for inciting the murder of Arlosoroff.²⁴

In the prevailing political climate, Arlosoroff became an easy target for Revisionist propaganda, symbolizing the link between Socialist Zionism and materialism, contrasting the idealistic image that the Revisionists sought to promote. Following Arlosoroff's assassination, the left-wing movements immediately accused the Revisionists of the crime, intensifying the conflict between the two principal political blocks in the Yishuv.

On 16 May 1934, Ahimeir was acquitted of the charges relating to the Arlosoroff murder, but Rosenblatt and Stavsky stood trial. They were eventually

acquitted due to a lack of corroborating evidence. Stavsky, initially sentenced to death, was eventually acquitted on appeal a month later. Nevertheless, despite the acquittal, the Revisionist movement remained associated with the murder.²⁵

Although acquitted, Ahimeir remained in jail and began a hunger strike as a protest to release his two friends, Stavsky and Rosenblatt, which he continued for four days and ended only at the prompting of the chief rabbi, Avraham Yitzhak HaCohen Kook.²⁶ On 12 July 1934, he was further charged, alongside other members of Brit Habirionim Yehoshua Yevin, Yehoshua Lichter, Chaim Dviri, Moshe Svorai, and Yacob Orenstein, for 'conspiring to effect acts in furtherance of a seditious intention, advocating and encouraging unlawful acts, being a member of an unlawful and seditious association, and being in possession of seditious literature.'²⁷

The Arlosoroff murder marks one of the central unsolved cases in the history of the Yishuv and one that would affect Ahimeir emotionally and physically and would change the course of his life. His prison diary is one of the important ego documents that shed light on the events connected with the murder from one of the suspects' points of view.

What happened on the night of the murder and in the following investigation? On that night, which was a Friday, Arlosoroff and his wife Sima had dinner in a local hotel and went out to stroll down the beach of Tel Aviv. Somewhere around the intersection of Hayarkon and Frischmann streets, they noticed two individuals following them. They tried to avoid them, but a final face-to-face encounter happened during which one of the men asked in broken Hebrew what was the time, and before the couple managed to respond, one of the men shot Haim in his stomach. He was rushed to the hospital but eventually died from his wounds. Sima was interrogated and gave a description of the two men. Following her description, Avraham Stavsky was arrested.²⁸ He was a radical right-wing activist and a close associate of Ahimeir. Several other Revisionists were arrested, including Ahimeir, and from then on, an entire political sector of the Yishuv – the Revisionists – was accused of a 'blood plot' to kill Arlosoroff. Ahimeir wrote in his diary: 'Sima knows several secrets. Many secrets regarding her wish to murder Stavsky and Rosenblatt. How did she "know" them?' (7 June 1934).

Ahimeir's son Yaakov emphasized in an interview that the most profound and enduring impact on his father's life stemmed from the blood libel accusation against him and his associates in connection with the murder of Haim Arlosoroff. This accusation remained a source of profound anguish for him until his final days and possibly contributed to his premature passing. As his son noted,

My father consistently asserted that this conspiracy was even more egregious than the notorious [Menahem Mendel] Beilis blood libel, for the Gentiles had falsely accused Beilis, whereas in our case, those who framed Ahimeir for Arlosoroff's murder were fellow Jews.²⁹

The prison diary

Ahimeir's prison diary portrays the perspective of a despairing man, one who feels unjustly persecuted (Figure 3). He laments the injustice inflicted upon him solely due to

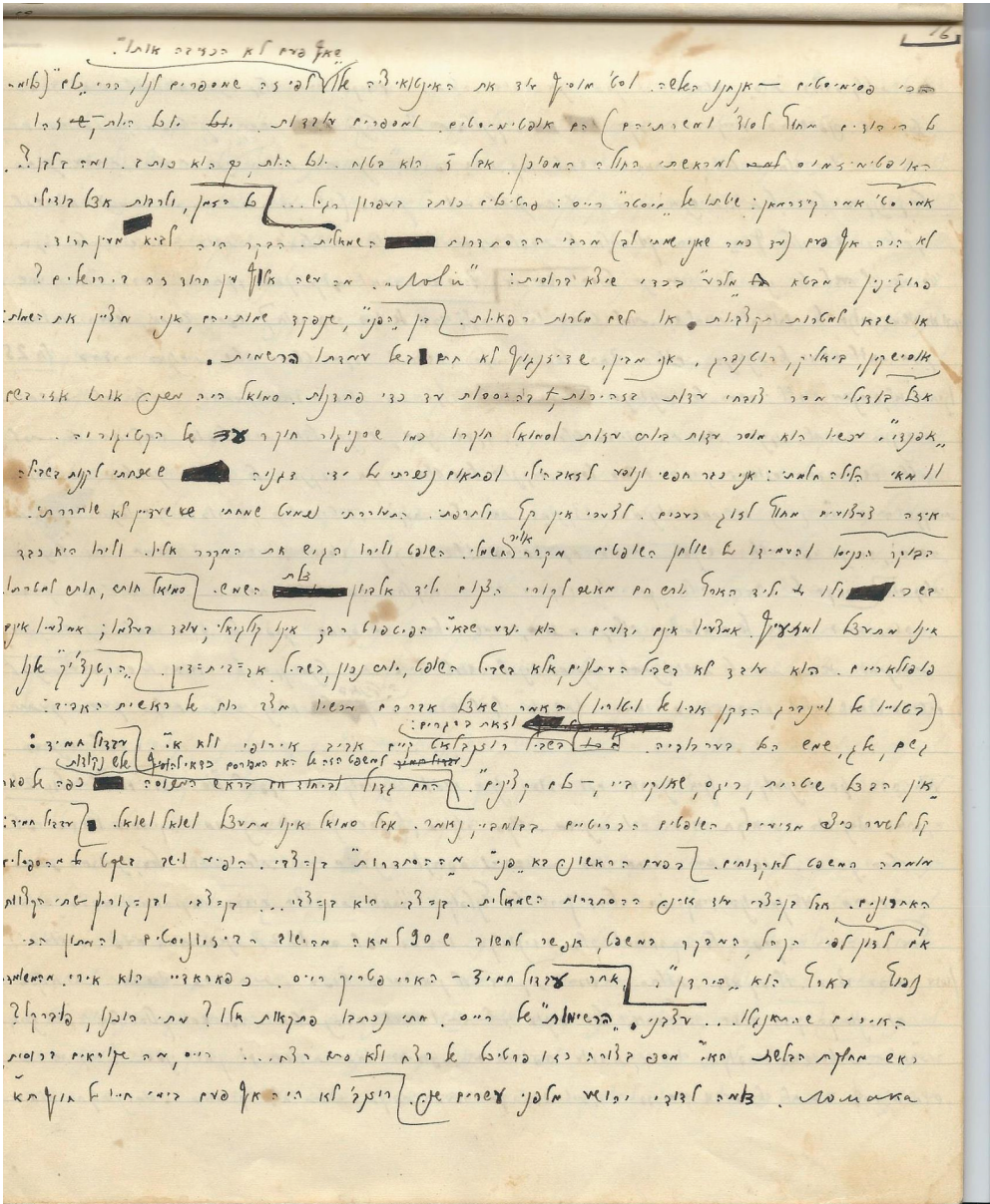


Figure 3. A page from the prison diary of Abba Ahimeir, courtesy of his son Yossi Ahimeir.

a malicious conspiracy and the petty politics that led to his uncertain and confined situation. He grieves the wasted time, yearning to be outside the prison walls. Struggling to preserve his sanity and intellect, he immerses himself in reading, contemplating, and deriving philosophical insights, attempting to engage his spirit while enduring the harshness of his material confinement. Sharing a cell with five other prisoners, he feels at the mercy of the guards, witnessing events that reinforce his profound sense of helplessness.

The diary serves as his refuge, with entries echoing his daily thoughts and reflections, intermingled with moments of introspection and emotional turmoil. Striving to maintain his resilience, he grapples with occasional waves of suicidal ideation, all set against the backdrop of the ‘blood plot’ accusations against him. Drawing parallels with the Dreyfus and Beilis cases, he perceives his predicament as part of a continuing tragic legacy within Jewish history. As he writes, his concerns extend beyond himself to his dear friends, especially Avraham Stavsky, and his family, including his beloved Sonia. He contemplates how to safeguard his well-being in the oppressive and gloomy prison environment, keenly aware of his own potential contributions and the limitations imposed on him by his captivity. While the diary unveils feelings of despair, between the lines, a sense of contentment also becomes evident. His imprisonment serves as the embodiment of his own advocacy for self-sacrifice in the struggle against British rule.

In the following sections, I will present key excerpts from Ahimeir’s prison diary, categorized into three main themes: the prison experience, the Haim Arlosoroff murder case, and general entries on culture, history, and literature. These themes span across the six notebooks of the prison diary.

‘I’m not suited for imprisonment’: observations on the prison experience

I still don’t know how long I will have to be here. . . . Now I must think about what to fill this time with. First, one needs to take care of one’s health. Secondly, one needs to write a kind of autobiography, in which I have to go through the thesis of how I became a ‘revolutionary Zionist.’ One needs to read classics and, maybe, learn Arabic. Will I be able to concentrate to such an extent and create something (writing, reading) to the point that while reading, I forget the situation I am in. . . . Is a sick person able to create during his pain?

Ahimeir confesses that ‘I’m not suited for imprisonment: The ideal prisoner should be phlegmatic, apathic, and not melancholic like I am’ (21 June 1934).

Two days later, on 23 June, he ponders whether he will be able to sustain his health throughout the extended period of his prison term and whether he will effectively utilize this time.

On 23 July 1934, which marked one year of his imprisonment, he writes:

On no day of the year have I thought so concretely about suicide as I am thinking now. As I am writing these things down, I know that these are theoretical thoughts. But theoretical thoughts along these lines are also dangerous. The prospect for a little personal happiness in the future, the hope that I would still be able to accomplish something – all this stops me [from committing suicide]. But I am sufficiently tired of life itself.

Then he continues to explain what makes him feel so desperate:

When I was imprisoned last year, it was clear to me that it wasn’t a matter of days, weeks . . . and then I consoled myself: and maybe all of this is for the better. I will stay away from politics and focus on research. To create something sustainable for one or two generations in the philosophy of history . . . but this is ‘vanity and vexation of spirit’³⁰: I decided to live. I must take myself and my nerves in my own hands, and that’s it. What is my suffering compared to the suffering of others? And the main and first thing is – to take care of my health. Do you hear? Take care of your health!

It is interesting to note that his diary is full of suicidal thoughts. Another example is this entry written on 8 February 1935, where he elaborates on the phenomenon of suicide:

I am attracted by the personality of Zubatov,³¹ who was a much greater man than his contemporaries thought. Only the future historian will appreciate him. ... With the outbreak of the 'February Revolution' [March 1917], Zubatov committed suicide. What greatness! He came to know that what he had dedicated his life for failed. ... During the reign of the monotheistic religions, there were few cases of suicide or none at all. A devout Jew, a devout Catholic – would not commit suicide. On the other hand, during the period of biblical Judaism – when the belief in one God either did not exist or was at the beginning of its formation – suicide was a very common thing, just as it was common in Greece and Rome. Among the Japanese, the hara-kiri custom entered the way of life ... Suicide is a disease of a civilized society, and now, many suicides are caused by economic reasons. Why does one commit suicide? Because of everything. Until recently, people had committed suicide due to more spiritual reasons: statesmen or strategists due to their failure; others due to love or feeling the emptiness of life. (8 February 1935)

The diary reflects time and again Ahimeir's agony in prison. As a philosopher, he tries to find reasons for his anguished feelings:

How horrible is the imprisonment? Life in prison is so empty. As they say, 'One is cooked in the juice of oneself.' Books? Are they good enough to release the pain of being imprisoned? With all due respect to the books, only those who haven't smelled the custodial taste can think that a book can play a major positive role here. What is the difficulty of imprisonment? Lack of freedom, but even more terrible than that – subjugation. You are a slave to a master of the crudest human type, the minister of the prison and his assistants. ... In a few more years, I will be 40 years old. I've accomplished little in my life! How sad to think about it. My life ... how few were the moments of happiness ... I was standing on the verge of personal happiness ... Sonia, with her intoxicating smile, is my personal happiness. (26 July 1934)

On 6 August, he writes,

I think I've gotten used to being a prisoner. A gray day follows another gray day. Two months have passed, and another 14 months to go. They will pass. As everything passes, for better or worse, and time should not be pushed ... How would my spiritual powers last afterward?

And later in the passage, he describes the books he plans to read, despite his previous statement that books are no solution to his situation:

I put Goethe and Schiller aside. We Russians like the French. For now, I will read Stendhal and Macaulay,³² Carlyle and Turgenev. ... In the publishing house I dream of, I would publish the Hebrew translation of Macaulay's introduction to his 'History of England,' and especially the two chapters on the two conquerors of India, Cleve and Hastings. For the education we must give to our youth, I would translate a few more writings of Macaulay, the liberal. They are very good. (6 August 1934)

On a previous occasion, he told an anecdote regarding books he wished to read: The days are crawling in complete idleness; I approached Kupper, a communist, and asked him for books to read. 'I am especially interested in Marx and Stalin.' ... Kupper asked for some time to consult his colleagues and came back with the decision: It was decided not to give books to Ahimeir. 'To another Revisionist, we might have given, but not to you.' Ahimeir writes that he was filled with pride that the communists appreciated him so. (29 June 1934).

In July, Ahimeir was transferred to a cell with an Arab leader named Sheikh Muzaffar. 'Why not, I asked myself, it should be interesting!' Indeed, they held some interesting conversations.

I entered the cell and [saw] an esteemed Arab walking along the long room. He addressed me in Arabic: 'Inta machbush?' (Are you a prisoner?) Yes, I answered, and added that I do not speak Arabic. Then he turned to me and asked if I spoke French. Yes – Who are you? – I am Ahimeir. 'Are you Ahimeir?' Yes. 'Are you Ahimeir? You are a hero.' ... Sheikh Muzaffar asked me about the Nazi revolution in Germany. I answered: In my opinion, it is not a revolution but an uprising.

He expresses his opinion that it was arranged by the French and the Jews. In his view, Hitler was wrong in his wish to deport all the Jews. 'In my heart, I thought he was forcing them to immigrate to Israel and hence Sheikh Muzaffar's dissatisfaction with Hitler's anti-Semitism.' He continues: 'The main thing is the economy. Compared to the economy, politics takes last place. ... The Jews beat Hitler with the economy,' he concluded. 'And I continued in my mind the thread of his thought: the Jews are a huge power. If we don't appreciate our strength – well, at least the enemies appreciate it' (6 July 1934).

In the same entry, Ahimeir contemplates his feelings towards Zeev Jabotinsky with mixed emotions: 'Jabotinsky loves me with fatherly love, love mixed with fear. My future is unclear to him. He fears that I might rebel against him. He does not understand that by nature, I am a devoted man. This is it' (6 July 1934).

In a conversation with another Muslim prisoner, Sheikh Nazar,³³ the latter told Ahimeir: I used to think that you Jews would occupy the land within the next thirty years. ... But recently, I realized how great the division is among you, and I have become completely relaxed regarding the fate of the Arabs in the land. Indeed, thought Ahimeir, 'the Jews from Mapai³⁴ ... were happy when they heard about my rough arrest; they would not have been so happy had they earned a thousand Lira [Eretz Israel money]' (23 June 1934).

At the beginning of the third notebook, on 20 September 1934, he writes again on the various ways to pass the time in prison:

Today marks two months since Stavsky's release, and yesterday - three months since the verdict given to us, Habirionim. If the appeal ends with no results, I will have to wait another year until my release. Very difficult experience. It's hard for me, it's hard for Sonia, and it's hard for many young people who are left as sheep without a shepherd. And maybe in a year of imprisonment, while keeping good health, one can study a little Arabic and improve one's English, and read the books of the great philosophers and historians. In any case, to bear the prison regime, one must be either a moron or a philosopher. (20 September 1934)

On daily life in prison and the small things that give some comfort, he writes a week later:

The great hope in prison is – freedom. But fulfilling it is far in the distant future. Therefore, we live with small hopes, hopes that would be accomplished in the near future: soon we will go out to the yard for ten minutes, soon we will go out to the yard for an hour, soon we will receive the newspaper, in a few days Chinkis³⁵ will go to the National Library, and two weeks later he will bring some of the books you ordered. In a few days holiday and visits. (27 September 1934)

Nights were particularly hard to bear:

Mostly at nights, I am sometimes attacked by a wave of terrible despair. Despair the likes of which I have never known, neither after the death of my brother Meir nor immediately after

the blood plot [of the Arlosoroff murder]. The source of this despair is the feeling that your suffering is in vain. . . . Everything irritates me, starting with the lack of talent of the *HaYarden* newspaper and ending with some stupid policeman. If I had a writer's skill, I could have taken revenge on them. But I'm a weak writer. I am too kind. While I am writing, I feel that what I write does not convey the depth of my agony and misery. Lately, I often ask myself if I will have the strength to live later. (20 November 1934)

The Arlosoroff murder case

The accusation against Ahimeir connecting him to the Arlosoroff murder affected him for years to come. Some of his close acquaintances even believe that his sudden death at the age of 65 was a result of the heavy burden he had carried for decades. It's no wonder this matter appears so frequently in his diaries. Despite his acquittal, he was put in prison again, charged for his underground activities. His mood was gloomy and depressive.

The first notebook of the diary, covering the dates 23 April to 6 August 1934, is full of trial descriptions as he interprets them. He was completely invested in proving the innocence of his friends Stavsky and Rosenblatt and writes about the conduct of the trial in a burst of emotions. Reflecting on the trial, Ahimeir notes that the English and Bedouin witnesses were more honest than the Jews, even better than Mrs. Arlosoroff herself. As we already saw, he suspects that her motives are political: The most interesting [of the witnesses] is Mrs. Arlosoroff, of course. If she loved her husband, she would be interested in finding the murderers. But since she insists that Stavsky and Rosenblatt are the assassins, it means that it's not the feelings towards her husband that motivate her, but a completely different matter . . . politics. Not politics in the conventional, prosaic, masculine sense, but a kind of transcendent, feminine politics. Lady Macbeth.

He then adds a philosophical reflection: A thought: Man is very lonely nowadays. He sees only the people and their actions. In the past, there was primal nature with animals, forests, and swamps, and there was God or many gods; there were saints, angels, and demons. Now, there is nothing but a man. How terrible is our loneliness? Family life was also destroyed. Terrible loneliness (30 April 1934).

Today is Tuesday. Stavsky and Rosenblatt stand to trial. Today, tomorrow, the day after tomorrow, and on Friday – during these four days, the trial should end. I am very weak. Palpitations. With fear, I await the end. Who knows, who knows . . . last night I thought I was going to explode when Avraham started asking . . . details about the one who was sentenced to death . . . will he soon be dressed in red clothes, will he be allowed to receive food from outside? How long does it take until the appeal?. (5 June 1934)

A few days later, he wrote:

The verdict was given. Stavsky was sentenced to death by hanging. . . . Stavsky's intuition did not deceive him this time either . . . Stavsky – a rock. He worried about his mother and asked to call her and ask how she was. . . . If Stavsky had been released, he would have shouted, 'Long live Jabotinsky!' Avraham takes care of his mother, and we take care of Jabotinsky. And I remember the words of Avnieli,³⁶ who told me a year ago upon hearing of Arlosoroff's murder: 'This man (Jabotinsky) is unlucky. He rolls a ball to the top of the mountain, where he reaches the top, and something happens, and the ball rolls back.' When I was young, I knew the art of crying. Now, I don't know how to cry. Fate prevented joy from us, from me. When

will I be happy? When? The current sorrow reminds me of my feelings when I found out about Meir's death.³⁷ If a gun had fallen into my hands now, I don't know if I would have stood the test and not killed myself: I am so disgusted with life. (8 June 1934)

He continues to write two days later: Three days after the verdict. I feel a sort of emptiness. The human spirit cannot bear the disaster for too long. ... Yesterday, Avraham asked his mother to send him tefillin and a siddur ... I wrote him a letter today and gave it to him. He kissed me after reading it and said: 'You write better than you talk' (10 June 1934).

Stavsky's mother, Ita, asked Jabotinsky to help free her son, and this was his response, dated 8 June 1934: 'We will not rest or be satisfied until our struggle to restore honor and freedom to your innocent son is crowned with success.'³⁸

On 11 June, Ahimeir writes one of the most tragic and moving entries in the diary:

Morning. In the morning, the feeling is extremely difficult. At night, it's as if you forget, and in the morning, you get up, and the feeling is like the morning of a shiva.³⁹ 'He's really dead!'

The [Jewish] prisoners ... of Mapai are extolling: 'Stavsky will be the first Jew to be hanged.' ... The only hope is if we manage to make a big noise and arouse the [public] conscience, and only if a person of conscience is found on the opposite side. ...

On Saturday night, I wanted to entertain Avraham and offered to play chess. I sat at the table until tears filled my eyes. I bit my lip and got over myself. I play better than him. I decided to make some mistakes unintentionally ... I stood up and said: 'Let's stop the game.' Once again, I realized what a bad actor I am. Today, we tried to play again, and we both played poorly and with not much interest, so we stopped in the middle. ...

I can't think of friends or of enemies: The disaster hides everything like a veil of fog. (11 June 1934).

Ten days later, he writes more about Stavsky: He has reconciled. He hardly believes that he can be saved. Prays three times a day and reads the Psalms of the day ... I now believe that even God is not interested in his release. ... Stavsky complains that in recent days, the food has deteriorated again. He does not mention women at all; reaching them is like reaching the planet Mars (21 June 1934).

Despite the pessimism and losing hope, Stavsky was released from prison, following an appeal, and his death sentence was overturned. 'He's free!' wrote Ahimeir enthusiastically. 'I've known this for half an hour. I don't want to write, but it's necessary. ... We kissed through the grates. He kissed me hard. When he turned his head, I shouted at him: "Long live Jabotinsky!" And he said: "Long live!" ... Well, I was right when I had told Avraham that he would be free before me, and he used to be cross ...' (20 July 1934).

Although Ahimeir states at that time that he is interested only in one thing – Stavsky's fate – he allows himself to discuss other matters in his diary, such as the 'Hitler problem,' as he calls it.

While the late Arlosoroff was negotiating in Berlin on transfer [of Jews from Germany to Palestine], we removed the Nazi flags here and began a boycott on Germany. **Because of our war against Hitler, we were accused of murdering Arlosoroff. The war against Hitlerism should be continued and doubled.** ... [bold letters in the original text] The war against Hitler has the power to unite the entire nation. Hitlerism forces the Jews to remain Jews, even those who had assimilated in search of refuge from Judaism. ... Hitler is an enemy. There is no dispute about it. We should get experience in fighting the visible enemies, so we'll thereby learn to fight the hidden ones. ...

He continues to write at length about Hitler, and some of his thoughts sound prophetic.

Hitler showed that Nazism is capable of anything: the murder of Röhm,⁴⁰ who was Hitler's confidant, surpasses the murder of Robespierre, who reigned terror in France during the time of the French Revolution. . . . Hitler put Germany into an atmosphere that is not Prussian at all, but rather the atmosphere of the guillotine in the French Revolution. This is the atmosphere of the purges in the Russian Revolution. . . . There is a similarity between Wilhelm II [Prussia's Caesar, 1888–1918] and Hitler: the nervousness, the 'there is no one like me,' and the external appearance – with the mustache. . . . (13 July 1934)

Ahimeir had felt from the very beginning that his political movement had not done enough for him. This, too, haunted him for the next three decades.

The movement I belong to is weak, and [as a result] I am in custody. I do not regret my path. The outcome of the Arlosoroff murder trial does not testify to my ambition. I have no desire to 'enter into history' like Beilis. If I do want to 'enter history', then it is as the one who continues Jabotinsky's actions or as a historian. Indeed, our dismal history knew not only Beilis and Dreyfus but also Jesus of Nazareth and Uriel da Costa and Spinoza. The latter, before becoming a light unto the nations, was persecuted by Jews. In the end, it is official Judaism that persecutes us. Official Judaism is now Ben-Gurion. Rabbi Kook is in opposition to him. (25 August 1934)

Culture and history

On 5 July 1934, it was learned in prison that the national poet Haim Nahman Bialik had died. Following, Ahimeir describes his opinion of Bialik: 'From the point of view of literature, it is not a great loss.' He adds that Bialik remained neutral on the matter of Stavsky's sentence, even though he was convinced of his innocence.

We know that at first, Bialik was sure of our guilt and then saw our justice and expressed this in private conversations, but he did not voice his opinion publicly . . . when I told Avraham about Bialik's death, he said: 'How good it would have been if he had written in his will: I am convinced that Stavsky is innocent.'

Only once I visited Bialik's house and had the privilege of talking to him privately. To say the truth – he spoke, and I listened . . . the conversation turned to history, and Bialik talked about history . . . Bialik elaborated for half an hour and maybe more on the idea that, in fact, history does not exist, and it is the historian who creates it: we look at the events from the point of view of the historian's subjective interpretation. . . . The last time I saw Bialik was two or three weeks before Stavsky's imprisonment.

It happened while Ahimeir was sitting in a coffee house in Tel Aviv with a friend who resented Bialik for personal reasons. Bialik was sitting far from them with poet Yaacov Fichman. 'I looked at them painfully,' wrote Ahimeir. 'How small are our writers . . . ' (5 July 1934).

Sometime later, he mentions again Bialik's silence during the murder trial, with much disappointment: A few months before his death (at least six months), Bialik was convinced of our innocence but remained silent. Had he not – Mapai would not have dared [blaming them]. Bialik was nearly the only person to whom Mapai would listen. He was even more authoritative than [Haim] Weizmann in their [Mapai's] eyes. And Bialik remained silent . . . (23 August 1934).

A topic he reflects a lot on is history and historians. In one entry, he compares historians who write about contemporary events with historians who concentrate on the past. The former are pessimists who mostly support opposition parties and look at the current events as a disaster. The latter are optimists, analyzing long periods of history and not necessarily emphasizing the tragic side of history. A great historian should master two skills: he should be able to perceive the entire event, and he should be able to identify the events which carry historical importance, out of hundreds and thousands of cases which are not significant and did not affect the sequence of events. Ahimeir denies the expectation that a historian should be 'objective.' 'Objectivity and alleged scientific approach hinder the historian's ability to penetrate the tragic side of the historical event.'

The genius historian is like a man who stands on a mountain and sees wide horizons from its summit. . . . A great historian should be blessed with a lot of diverse skills. He must be a social scientist; he must excel in the art of expression and be a writer; he should be influenced by the environment. The historian is a member of his people and of his time. . . . Historians are the ones who evaluate politicians.

Almost prophetically, he goes on to write about the First World War as a European war and looks ahead.

In the near future, neither tomorrow nor the day after tomorrow, let's say in ten years, there will be a great war again. It will be a two-fold war: in Europe and in the countries beyond the sea . . . while a war will break out in the European continent, a naval war will start in the Pacific Ocean by Japan, with the participation of America and England. . . . Now it is difficult to go into details about these two terrible wars, which are actually one. (8 August 1934)

Looking back to the situation in the country, he mocks the British and their hypocrisy when it comes to their attitude toward the Jews compared to the Arabs: 'The People who based their policy on the Irish bones, the People who destroyed the entire ancient indigenous settlement in Australia and North America – are now afraid that the Jewish "robber" would deprive the Arabs' (22 August 1934).

While waiting impatiently for his next trial, expecting release, Ahimeir is attentive to the news from outside. In early November, he read in the Hebrew paper *HaYarden* about a trial going on in Bern, Switzerland, over the 'Protocols of the Elders of Zion'.⁴¹

These protocols are very interesting, in my opinion. No matter that they are fake. Through them, it is possible to understand what the anti-Semites think of us and what we should have done [in the past] regarding the abuse of the Gentile world against us. We should have united in a secret organization to launch a war of revenge. The anti-Semites really cannot understand why we are silent. . . . The innocent anti-Semites do not suspect that the Jewish betrayal and heresy are much deeper. It is fundamental. The Israeli nation is depicted in anti-Semitic thought as Samson wrapping around the pillars of the Dagon Temple of the Gentile world, while in fact, our people only have one Samsonite trait: **blindness**. (7 November 1934)

'The victory of Hebrew is the greatest wonder of Zionism,' writes Ahimeir, whose Hebrew was certainly highly eloquent. However, he is anxious about its future due to the common use of Yiddish (which he calls jargon) and other European languages. In a lengthy discussion of this matter, he tries to find the reasons. One of them is that 'diaspora resides deep in everyone's heart. This exile is the disease of political masochism. To be persecuted

with the recognition that you are right. Yes, one needs to know how to suffer for one's opinions. But real policy is imperialism, and when it is needed, one should persecute and not only be persecuted'. (6 March 1935)

Every now and then, Ahimeir writes short stories while in prison; he titles them 'Atlantida – Or a Sunken World'.⁴² The stories are mostly memories of longing for the past, love for his parent's home in the Jewish shtetl in Belarus, and its community and people. They are told from the point of view of a Jewish boy in a typical Jewish environment of Eastern Europe. This personal account reflects the broader historical story of the Jews in a space and time far from Eretz Israel. One of these spaces is the mighty Russian Empire, collapsing due to internal and external revolutions, a 'sunken world', as Ahimeir describes it. He writes about ordinary people in his town, for example, a servant in his parents' home who was the first woman he was attracted to at age thirteen. 'Let me commemorate her as much as my meager literary skills allow,' he writes. 'She was twenty ... her body was full and round ... sometimes she would sing ... and I thought that had I had money – I would have sent her to a music school ...' (17 August 1934). Or there is the story about 'the two people I loved', again centered around his mother's help – one in the store and another in the house: 'I loved Shmuel and Hinda because their character was similar to mine. Both were lunatics' (22 August 1934). Among the multitude of stories, there are bursts of love for nature, especially for the forests, lakes, and rivers of Belarus, which were so different from the environment of his new country.⁴³

It seems as if he is looking for models to identify with in the intellectual sphere. Ahimeir was a broad-minded person, not easy to define. In his following entry, one may find some clues:

In recent years, I have been taken by Carlyle.⁴⁴ He is one of my favorite writers now, but I cannot accept his views completely. ... Carlyle preceded Gobineau⁴⁵ in exalting the 'Northern' race ... his books express hate towards France and affection for Prussia. ... It is difficult to define who he is: a historian? philosopher? publicist? ... There are pieces of all these combined ... but not in the ordinary manner. ... In his opinion, there are not only positive heroes in history but also negative ones. ... According to his philosophy, there is only one law in the historical sequence of humanity: **His Majesty the chance**. Everything is incidental in human history. For better or for worse – everything is incidental ... this is a radical thought, hard to accept; in this sense, Carlyle should be seen as a literary man and not as a historian. (15 July 1934)

Summary

Abba Ahimeir's prison diary depicts the despair of a wrongfully accused individual. He languishes in prison, a victim of a fabricated conspiracy, 'blood plot', and political maneuvering, despite not committing any crime. Frustrated by the perceived waste of his time, he yearns for the freedom to pursue the activities that remain elusive within the confines of his cell. Despite the harsh realities of incarceration, he endeavors to preserve his mental faculties through intellectual engagement, contemplation, and spiritual reflection. His confinement with five other prisoners, under the scrutiny of guards, magnifies his feelings of helplessness.

The diary serves as a refuge, allowing him to articulate his thoughts and emotions while oscillating between different subjects. Wrestling with occasional bouts of despair and thoughts of self-harm, he grapples with the accusation that initiated his imprisonment. Drawing parallels to historical figures such as Alfred Dreyfus and Menahem Mendel Beilis, he contextualizes his plight within the broader narrative of Jewish history's tragic injustices. Through his writings, the profound despair of the 'innocent' prisoner becomes evident, highlighting his concern for the well-being of his counterparts, notably Avraham Stavsky, as well as his family, particularly his beloved fiancée Sonia. He ponders over his ability to maintain his physical and mental health amidst the dismal conditions of the prison, acutely aware of his potential contributions to his followers and his movement outside and the limitations imposed on him in his incarcerated state.

In several places in the diary, Ahimeir debates with himself about his future after his release. He ponders two options: returning to politics and even founding a new party or investing himself in research. 'A few years, more than a few, and I am at a crossroads: 1. Research. 2. Public life. 3. Privacy. At the moment, these three [options] do not harmonize inside me' (21 November 1934).

An interesting note on Ahimeir is reflected in the diary of Chaim Lazar, a friend and associate. In his personal diaries, Lazar depicts him as a sharp-minded intellectual and a visionary who was not appreciated enough during his lifetime and was not given the place he deserved among thinkers and intellectuals in the State of Israel or among his political ranks. As a personal friend, Lazar was aware of Ahimeir's bitterness and frustration from this lack of appreciation and from the fact that, in his opinion, the Revisionist movement did not stand by him in his difficult times.⁴⁶

Abba Ahimeir was an extraordinary figure in Israel's history who is remembered mainly in connection with the mysterious Arlosoroff murder and as an uncompromising radical. His children have devoted much time and energy to change this image and to expose and publish his rich works, which deal with a wide range of historical, philosophical, literal, and political issues. The publication of his prison diary almost nine decades after it was written is a valuable contribution to this goal.

Notes

1. Abba Ahimeir, *A Doe between the Walls: Trial and Prison Diary, 1934–1935* (Tel Aviv: Jabotinsky Institute, 2023). Edited and produced by Ahimeir's children, Zeeva, Yaakov, and Yossi.
2. The diary notebooks cover the following dates: Notebook 1: 23 April – 6 August 1934, notebook 2: 7 August – 20 September 1934, notebook 3: 20 September – 6 December 1934, notebook 4: 7 December – 31 December 1934, notebook 5: 1 January – 14 July 1935, and notebook 6: 14 July – 3 August 1935.
3. Abba Ahimeir, *Reportage of a 'Yeshiva' Boy* (Tel Aviv: Hazon, 1946); Abba Ahimeir, *Reportage of a 'Yeshiva' Boy* (Tel Aviv: Ministry of Defense, 1984). 'Yeshiva' has two meanings in Hebrew – sitting in jail and a religious school. Ahimeir plays with this double meaning humorously.
4. Abba Gaissinowitsch, 'Bemerkungen zu Spenglers Auffassung Russlands' (Remarks on Spengler's concept of Russia), PhD dissertation.

5. The 1929 Arab riots in Palestine primarily involved attacks by Arabs on Jews, leading to the destruction of Jewish property. Throughout the week of riots, which occurred from 23 to 29 August, 133 Jews were killed by Arabs, and 339 Jews were injured, the majority of whom were unarmed.
6. Founded by Ahimeir in 1929 as part of the Revisionist movement, Brit Habirionim was a radical group that fiercely attacked the British government rule in Palestine.
7. Eran Kaplan, *The Jewish Radical Right: Revisionist Zionism and Its Ideological Legacy* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005), 11–12.
8. The Yishuv refers to the Jewish community in Eretz Israel during the period before the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948.
9. Nili (in Hebrew: 'Netzah Yisrael Lo Yeshaker,' English: 'the Eternal One of Israel will not lie') was a Jewish pro-British underground organization established with the aim of liberating Palestine from Ottoman rule.
10. Archival collection of Brit Habirionim, *Jabotinsky Institute Archive*, K14.
11. Copies of *Habirion* can be found in the *Jabotinsky Institute Archive*, K14–8; On the front page of the publication, it stated as a motto: 'In blood and fire Judah will rise!'
12. On the journalistic work of Ahimeir, see Uzi Elyada, "Abba Ahimeir and the Hebrew Press in Mandatory Palestine," *Kesher* 59 (2022), 148–163.
13. Details on the demonstration against Drummond Shiels, in *Jabotinsky Institute Archive*, K14–3.
14. See, for example, Daniel Sirkis, 'The Scandal at the Hebrew College,' *Hazit Ha'am*, 1 March 1932.
15. Brian Horowitz, "A Leap over History: Vladimir Jabotinsky's Political Paradigms, 1916–1940," *Israel Studies Review*, 36:1 (Spring 2021), 115–116.
16. Zeev Jabotinsky, 'Al Ha'Aventurism,' *Jabotinsky Institute Archive*, T-1932/35/Heb.
17. For more on Jabotinsky's attitude towards Ahimeir, see Amir Goldstein, "The Roots of the Gallows Myth in the Revisionist Movement during the 1930s," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 48:1 (2020), 127–148.
18. In the twenty-page entry dedicated to Hitler, Ahimeir extensively covers various aspects of the leader's life. This encompasses Hitler's ascent to power, an intricate analysis of his personality, his foreign policy endeavors, his role in the context of the Second World War, and more. Importantly, Ahimeir interweaves his own worldview into this narrative. As the entry reaches its conclusion, he imparts his reflections, exemplified by the following assertion: 'Indeed, the genocide of European Jews presented Zionism not only in the eyes of the majority of Jews, but also in the international arena, not as a utopia, but as a realistic necessity. The decision to establish the State of Israel was the only important positive decision ... and the Holocaust forged the Jewish settlement in Israel for a heroic war for the realization of Zionism, for the establishment of the State of Israel.' *Encyclopaedia Hebraica*, vol. 14 (Jerusalem and Tel Aviv: Encyclopedia Publishing Company Ltd, 1964), 143–163.
19. The website of Beit Abba can be found at www.beitaba.com
20. A recently published academic work on Ahimeir is Peter Bergamin's *The Making of the Israeli Far-Right: Abba Ahimeir and Zionist Ideology* (London, New York: I.B. Tauris, 2020).
21. Daniel Florentin, interview with Yaakov Ahimeir, June 2007. The interview is accessible here: www.beitaba.com
22. Signed on 25 August 1934, the Transfer Agreement was a rescue deal between the Jewish Agency and the Nazi German government. The purpose of the agreement was to allow Jews emigrating from Germany to sell non-movable assets, goods, and other property in order to buy German-manufactured goods for export. Once in Eretz Israel, they could sell these German goods, and the proceeds from their sale would return to the immigrants as part of their capital.
23. *Hazit Ha'am*, 16 June 1933.
24. 'The Scroll of the Sicarii' in Abba Ahimeir, *Brit Habirionim* (Tel Aviv: The Committee for Publishing Achimair's Writings, 1972), 217–223.
25. For extended details of the trial and the impact on Ahimeir, see Bergamin, *The Making of the Israeli Far-Right*, chap. 5.

26. Ha-Rav Abraham Isaac Kook (1865–1935) was the chief rabbi of the Yishuv. He supported the three defendants who were accused of the murder of Arlosoroff.
27. Bergamin, *The Making of the Israeli Far-Right*, 192.
28. The personal archive of Stavsky is located at the Jabotinsky Institute in Tel Aviv, catalogue number P167. Stavsky was tragically killed on 22 June 1948 following the shooting on the *Irgun* weapon ship *Altalena*. In Stavsky's memory, Ahimeir dedicated several essays in the Herut newspaper, titled *Abrasha*. A lot has been written about the 'Altalena' affair, which is still an open wound for many Israelis. See, for example, Shlomo Nakdimon, *Altalena* (Tel Aviv: Idanim, 1978).
29. Florentin, interview with Yaakov Ahimeir, June 2007.
30. Ecclesiastes 6:9.
31. Sergei Vasilyevich Zubatov (1864–1917), head of the Moscow Okhrana Bureau (the secret police force of the Russian Empire) during the reign of Tsar Nicholas II.
32. Thomas Babington Macaulay (1800–1859) was a British poet, historian, and politician.
33. An inmate at the central prison in Jerusalem who was arrested for participating in the 1929 riots.
34. Mapai, an acronym for Mifleget Poalei Eretz Yisrael (Workers' Party of the Land of Israel), was the dominant political party in the Zionist movement since 1930 and in the state of Israel since its creation in 1948 until the political upheaval of 1977. Its leader, David Ben Gurion, was prime minister and defense minister for most of these years. It promoted socialist policies and merged with other socialist Zionist parties to form the Israeli Labor Party in 1968, which still exists today.
35. Simcha Chinkis (1907–1988), a policeman in the British Mandate Police who was convicted and had special status in prison.
36. I assume he refers to Mordechai Avniel (1900–1989), a lawyer, a Revisionist activist, and a friend of Ahimeir, who was also arrested following the murder of Arlosoroff.
37. His brother Meir Gaissinovitch was killed in 1919, as a soldier on the Russian-Polish front. He was 19 years old.
38. Zeev Jabotinsky's letter to Ita Stavsky, 8 June 1934, *Jabotinsky Institute Archive*, 6532.
39. A shiva is a week long mourning period in Judaism for first-degree relatives of the deceased.
40. Ernst Röhm was a prominent figure within the Nazi Party and a key ally of Adolf Hitler during the early years of the regime. He played a crucial role in the formation of the SA (Sturmabteilung), which served as the paramilitary wing of the Nazi Party. However, during the Night of the Long Knives at the end of June 1934, Hitler turned against Röhm, viewing him as a potential threat, leading to Röhm's arrest and execution.
41. The 'Protocols of the Elders of Zion' is a fabricated text claiming a Jewish conspiracy to rule over the world. It was first published in 1903 in Russia, translated into multiple languages, and disseminated internationally in the early part of the twentieth century.
42. The stories were published in Herut's newspaper and later in the collection "Atlantida Stories – or a Sunken World" in 1996 by the "Committee of Publishing Ahimeir's Writings".
43. Moshe Shamir, "Remains Thanks to Its Thorns," *Moznaim* 71 (April 1997): 63–64.
44. Thomas Carlyle (1795–1881) was a British historian.
45. Joseph Arthur Comte de Gobineau (1818–1882) was a French diplomat and writer who believed that the Aryan race was the superior race.
46. Sarah Ozacky Lazar, 'The Only Way that Leads to Independence: Chaim Lazar and Ahimeir,' in Yossi Ahimeir (ed.), *Fathers, Their Children and Abba Ahimeir* (Tel Aviv: Jabotinsky Institute and Beit Abba, 2017), 31–40. Author's note: Chaim Lazar was my grandfather.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Notes on contributor

Daniela Ozacky Stern is a scholar specializing in modern Jewish history, with a focus on Jewish resistance during the Second World War and the Holocaust. Currently serving as a lecturer at Western Galilee College in Israel, Dr. Ozacky Stern's experience includes years spent as an archivist at the Jabotinsky Institute in Tel Aviv, where she immersed herself in the preservation and study of historical documents. Later, she served as the director of the Moreshet Holocaust Archive. With a PhD in Jewish history from the University of Haifa and a master's degree from Tel Aviv University, her academic background is complemented by postdoctoral research at Yad Vashem, and she has been recognized as a USHMM EHRI fellow. She serves as the Book Review Editor of *Jewish Culture and History*, and her published works delve into various aspects of Holocaust history in Eastern Europe, exploring themes such as documentation, diaries, and archival materials. Additionally, she published works in the field of modern Jewish history and right-wing documentation.

ORCID

Daniela Ozacky Stern  <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-6504-1725>