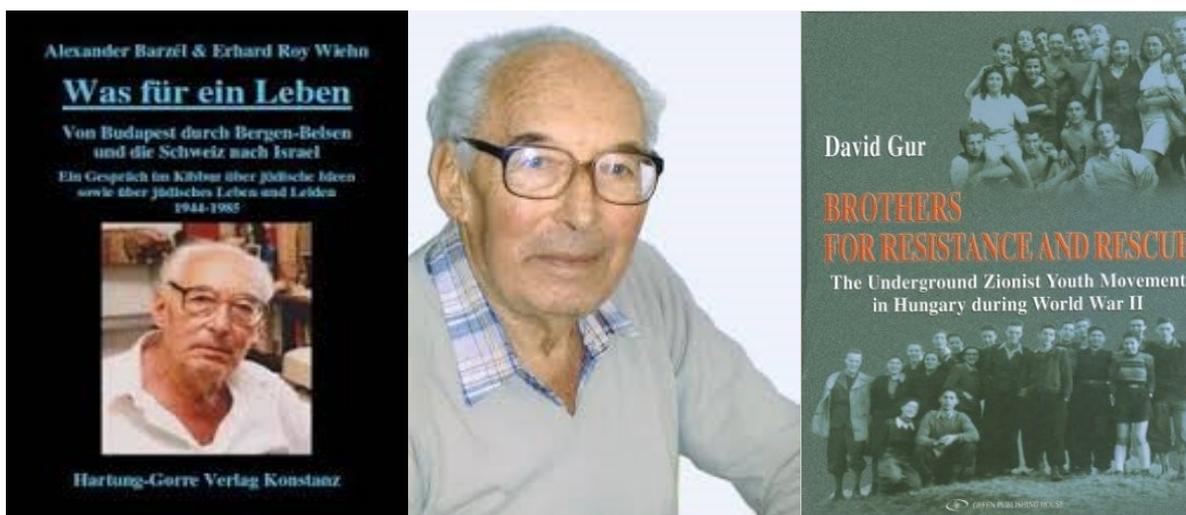


THE AUFBAU-PRINCIPLE of ALEX BARZEL (1921-2005)

---On the Structure of Judaism---

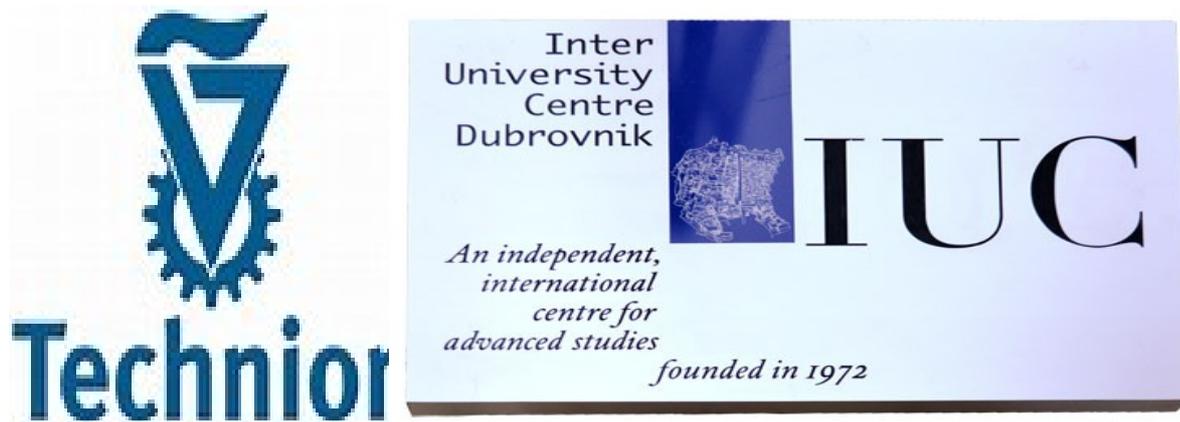
The structure of Judaism is a key publication of former Technion general studies director Alex Barzel and reflects the ethical struggle to integrate secular, religious and scientific principles of being Jewish in the modern technological world. This humanitarian pilgrimage led from Hungary, forced labor camps, Bergen-Belsen over Switzerland to the land of Israel (1945). The essential extraction of core Jewish principles of just social action is more than a historical or empirical analysis, it is a futurization of Judaism at the dawn of a new age or next society; furthermore, it is based on the deep psychological experience of group survival and social inter-action.

Key-words: Jewry, humanity, essential values, social action, group dynamics, survival, rationality, morality.



The **Judaic Aufbau-Principle** of Barzel Alexander (Vas Sandor) differs profoundly from official versions of Jewish life organization as being portrayed in usual textbooks; it is the real life perspective that matters, a perception that was shaped in Hungarian military (forced) labor camps, the Zionist underground, Bergen-Belsen and finally the Israeli Kibbutz world. Alexander Barzel (AB) became internationally well known as the General Studies Director of the **Technion** (Israeli Institute of Technology, Haifa) in the 1970/80s and in this function I came to meet him

personally. He was very skeptical of technical serialization, mass consumerism and media advertising; at the Inter-University/Dubrovnik (last time in 1991), he made it always very clear that technology has to be humanized and that engineering needs to be guided by humanistic goals. He did also not share the dominant enthusiasm (after 1989) that we will gain some instant human progress or a special peace dividend from the opening of borders in Europe, an embodied cognition that we had in common.



His seminal book: **Liheyot Yehudi.1979.Tel Aviv: Kibbutz Meuhad Press**, translated by Rabbi Jacob Chinitz as: **The Structure of Judaism.1980.Cambridge/MA: Harvard UP**, has it all in a nutshell; Judaism has a certain construction principle and it is based on clear-cut core values, namely: Messianity; Prophecy; Communalism; Commitment; Connectedness; Historicity; Unity. We will come back to the **structure of Judaism** very soon, but let me explain the reason for this personal commemoration or review of ethical importance; one has not to share the political, religious or secular agenda of any person, but depth psychology is about ongoing impacts. While almost all speakers in technology studies that I met were praising somehow the advent of a new technological era, AB was painfully pointing to the deficits of the technological potential, i.e. he surely fits into the category of prophecy.



We all know that the **Kibbutz world** has changed and that the Israeli community of AB is no more existent; however, his message will prevail over the economic tides of history and the **Israeli experience** is still in the making. Consequently, studying the structural Judaism of AB is of vital importance for secular and religious people alike, because the insights have been gained in the combat of real life experiences and not by sitting in a study alone, i.e. we should carefully listen to the existential message of a survivor, underground fighter and true researcher.



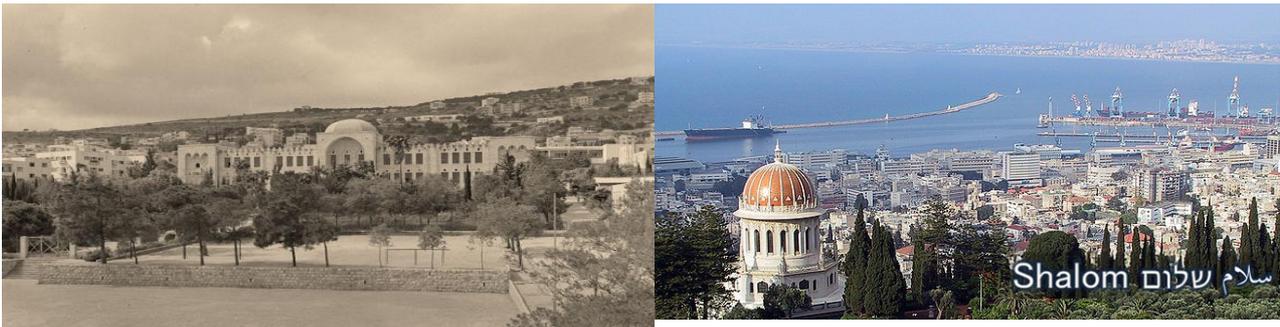
A civil religion has no need to distinguish between hermeneutic or exegetic communities of faith, it is based on the assessment of human cultural and ethical progress in the real world; this is a secular approach to human-centered religion in so far as it wants to balance the 'I' and the 'We'. In such kind of humanistic religion or Jewish Aufbau, the Messianic principle is the creative ability for sustainable change and consequently peace as highest goal; this does not exclude the use of weapon technology to sustain peace although this can only be an inter-mediate stage. Commitment is the constant elaboration of clear-cut rational (reason) and moral (passion) principles, on the basis of the human and Jewish historical experience. Communality, a core of common values, is seen as a prerequisite of mutual living and the golden rule says it all; connectedness, tells us that only deep topical involvement and disciplined detachment at the same time can save us from becoming egotistic

automata of self-defeat. Historicity is defined as the perception and observation of current events via the deep psychology of historical consciousness and unity is the re-research for the one principle that condenses all other rules. Finally, the cognitive power of propection (prophecy) is needed to foresee or anticipate obstacles that block the road to human progress. This may be the real life construct of a professional philosopher, but as we are commanded to choose life, we can understand the structural Judaism of AB as a vital response of a deeply religious, humanistic and secular personality. Furthermore, this concept is not the quantitative outcome of knowledge machinery, but a tribute to human quality, i.e. to try as hard as we can and to become our true self without focusing on our ego alone. Structural Judaism, as outlined by AB, is therefore a very practical application of Jewish life values and can also be seen as an ethical tool of universal human emancipation.



The Aufbau-Principle of structural Judaism may have originated in a Kibbutz environment and its natural rule (law) is surely a creative product/result of small group survival strategies, as functionally very different from large-scale Jewish futures and institutional design, but it refers to the secular religion of a humanistic biblical society in the land of Israel and in the global earthly community. Not the quantity of learned Bible Societies is the intellectual focus, but human life quality in the coming technological society. AB cannot imagine the ongoing technological progress without human, social and eco-logical justice; this is the exact formulation of the essential elements of Judaism for the future, a social association of self-commanded human-beings, freed from economic serfdom, financial debt and mental prisons (tikkun olam). All this does not work against any rabbinic knowledge/wisdom or divine command; it is a humanistic extension of the Hebrew Bible/Literature and a holistic concept of Jewry as a mirror or prism of humankind,

i.e. a technological futurization of Jewish culture by a rational and ethical (moral) selection procedure of humanity as a living organism on this planet. As being mentioned before, this is the technical modernity of classical prophecy; the time-tested wrestling with the ethical question of just human action; secularity and religiosity are melted together in a humane principle (law) of structural action via elementary mitzvot for group formation.



The Aufbau-Principle or structural Judaism of AB, with its core essentials of Jewish activity, detects in the Hebrew Biblical sources a humanitarian concept that explains the ‘maintenance’ of Jewry during the over 4000 year long period of historical and empirical challenges. This is a very different view of human relationships that is based on the possibility of mutual understanding, socio-economic co-operation and spiritual (mental) progress; the creative progression of the technicality and physicality of human being and being Jewish is interpreted (translated) as a historical man-nature interaction which the humanizing potential can shape via an efficient ethical agenda, derived from the classical study of Hebrew thought and action. Thus, socially dividing categories like race, class, gender, age, profession, ethnicity, and religion can be reconciled by a humanitarian Aufbau of social inter-action. This may be too much learned optimism or hope (tikvah), but this humanistic attitude or mood really marks the dividing line between death and life.

AUFBAU PRINCIPLE

Aufbau Principle

- Aufbau Principle: start with the nucleus and empty orbitals, then “build” up the electronic configuration using orbitals of increasing energy

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