

Article

15 December 1929, “Tying Trees at Robinson’s”; 16 December 1929, “Unemployed” — A Work Diary (1928–1931) of a Jewish Agricultural Laborer in the Establishment of the Citrus Orchards in Eretz Israel

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Abstract: This article presents a detailed analysis of a unique item from the author’s family archive: the work diary of his grandfather, Mordechai Livnat (Libman). In this diary, Livnat meticulously recorded, between 1928 and 1931, the details of his work as an agricultural laborer in Herzliya—at the time, a small village in the central part of Eretz Israel (aka pre-State Israel)—primarily during the establishment of the new colony’s citrus orchards. The diary documents employment details, employer information, working hours, and wages received. Quantitative and qualitative analyses of the information contained in the diary paint a comprehensive picture that allows us to learn about the lives of Jewish agricultural laborers in Eretz Israel at that time. In particular, the hardships faced by these workers stand out, primarily job insecurity, which manifested mainly in their dependence on the weather and the need to work for multiple employers. This article also sheds light on aspects related to agricultural work before the introduction of technological advancements to the agricultural sector, which was mainly manual then, and its impact on the daily routine of the agricultural laborer. The diary is analyzed using an inductive approach—from the text outwards—in a way that emphasizes the complexity and importance of the connections between the macro and micro in historical research. This way, it is demonstrated how items collected during genealogy research can shed important light on historical knowledge, and not just the other way around.



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1. Introduction

In the first half of the 20th century, with the development of the Jewish settlement in the Land of Israel, many of the Jewish settlers began to engage in agricultural work, often as laborers employed by other landowners. This was a result of the establishment of numerous agricultural settlements in the country and the consolidation of the ideology of Jewish labor. This phenomenon laid the groundwork for significant developments in the history of the Jewish settlement in this area. Among the agricultural branches that were established in the Land of Israel during that period, the citrus industry stood out, becoming the important and major export sector of the Jewish settlement and providing employment for tens of thousands of people (Karlinsky 1997). Although the current article deals with Jewish labor in the first half of the 20th century, it seeks to do so from a perspective that refers to the specific, based on a comprehensive analysis of a unique primary source from that time.

This article revolves around the description of the work of Mordechai Livnat (Libman) of blessed memory (1903–1992)—the author’s maternal grandfather—as an agricultural laborer in the new settlement of Herzliya, between the years 1928 and 1931. The article presents a systematic and nuanced analysis, both quantitative and qualitative, of a detailed work diary that Livnat maintained during this period. In the diary, Livnat documented

his work in detail, allowing for a high-resolution analysis of his work routine, based on firsthand information documented in real time. This analysis leads to a clear depiction of Livnat's life as an agricultural laborer. Since this is a rare source, many of the insights presented here help shed new light on what is known about the lives of Jewish workers during that period. Instead of glimpsing through a keyhole into the life of a worker, as is usually done based on sparse historical documents or memories written from a distance of years, we have the opportunity to examine the worker's life through a magnifying glass.

This article opens with some historical and terminological comments that are necessary for the understanding of the narrative presented here. Then, we continue with a background on Jewish labor in the establishment of citrus groves in Eretz Israel in the early 20th century, as well as on the use of work diaries for historical research. This is followed by information about Livnat and the diary. The Analysis Section is divided into three parts—the first examines Livnat's working conditions, referring to the course of the workweek, absence from work, working hours, and wages; the second examines the nature of the work, providing details about the employers, the employment profile, and the nature of the work; the third examines the very existence of the diary and its format, looked at from a broader perspective, and aiming at shedding light on the relationships between Livnat and the socio-political structures to which he belonged. The findings are examined in light of the existing literature on the lives of Jewish workers during that period, while critically referring to the work diary as a historical source. Finally, we discuss the findings and address issues of inductive and deductive approaches in historical research, as well as the connections created between people and land and their implications for the development of a settlement ideology.

2. Some Historical and Terminological Comments

This section touches upon some relevant historical points that we see as necessary to the understanding of the current study. This is done very briefly, while also explaining the choice of some terms that we use in this paper. For those who wish to expand their knowledge on these matters, we recommend some further reading. Anita Shapira's (2012) book *Israel: A history* gives a fascinating review of the Zionism movement and its important role in the organized settlement of Eretz Israel from 1881 and on, as well as of the events that led to the establishment of the State of Israel; also, this book will help in understanding the tensions between Jewish and Arab in this area. Gur Alroey's (2014, 2024) books are recommended for a nuanced understanding of the daily experiences of immigrants to Eretz Israel in the early 20th century, from prior to leaving their homeland through to the hardships of the voyage, and until adjusting to the new land (or leaving it). Finally, regarding the movement towards Jewish Labor, Yosef Vitkin's seminal and influential pamphlet, *A Call to the Jewish Youth Whose Hearts Lie with Their People and with Zion*, published in 1905,¹ is recommended; Vitkin called for the immigration to Eretz Israel of young people who would be trained to work the land and would eventually establish new types of settlements—idealistic, and based on physical labor.

The State of Israel was established in 1948 and is considered the "Jewish State", that is, a country that is aimed at providing a safe place for Jews after centuries of antisemitic campaigns that included numerous riots, persecutions, and pogroms, which awfully heightened in World War II with the Holocaust, during which about six million Jews were brutally and systematically murdered by the Nazi regime and its allies in Germany and on the occupied territories. However, since its very beginning, the State of Israel has been populated by other non-Jewish minorities, the largest group of which is the Israeli Arabs, which are an equally righted sub-population. Over the last decades, the Israeli Arabs have constituted about 20% of the Israeli population.

Furthermore, in the region of today's Israel, there was an organized Jewish settlement for many decades before the establishment of the State. This pre-State region, with its Jewish population, was referred to as Eretz Israel (the Land of Israel), and it is also known as the region of Palestine. After World War I, between 1920 and 1948, this region had the

status of a Mandate of the United Kingdom, under the terms of the League of Nations; previously, it was under the ruling of the Ottoman Empire for a few centuries (since the early 16th century).

Jews have immigrated to this region for many centuries, as it is considered the birthplace of Judaism, as told in the Bible, and hence, is holy. Based on the biblical narrative, Jews were exiled from this region a few times by conquerors and had lived in the diaspora. In Hebrew. There is a special word for immigrating to Eretz Israel: Aliyah [עלייה]. However, the mass migration to this region began in the late 19th century because of the increasing frequency of pogroms against Jews in Eastern Europe and the growing popularity of the Zionist movement. This migration, which was, in many cases, organized by various groups, is divided into five major waves, until the outbreak of World War II: (1) The First Aliyah (1882–1903) consisted of Jews mostly from Eastern Europe, Iraq, and Yemen. During this period, many agriculture-based villages were established, which were called Moshavot [מושבות] (singular Moshava [מושב]), among which are Petach Tikva and Zikhron Ya'akov. These Moshavot have become towns or cities; however, in some of them, agriculture still takes place. Importantly, many of the farmers in these Moshavot employed Arab workers on their farms and in their fields and groves. (2) The Second Aliyah (1904–1914, interrupted by the outbreak of World War I) consisted of Jews mostly from Eastern Europe and Yemen. Many of these immigrants wished to fulfil their Zionist beliefs by doing the actual work needed to develop the agriculture industry and, hence, their fight for Jewish Labor (also Hebrew Labor, see Section 3.1 below), and their establishment of new settlements that strictly followed this approach. It was during this time that Tel Aviv—which was referred to as “the first Hebrew city”—was established, which later became the major urban center of Israel. (3) The Third Aliyah (1918–1923) comprised Jews—mostly from Eastern Europe, and with many who arrived as singles—who immigrated after World War I to the newly established British Mandate. During this time, some important social and political organizations were established which later would take a leading role in the establishment of the State of Israel; it was also during this time that the Jewish settlement expanded towards regions that were not yet populated by Jewish settlers, and new, collaborative forms of villages were formed (e.g., Kibbutz [קיבוץ] and Moshav [מושב]). Although Mordechai Livnat, our story's protagonist, arrived in Israel in 1925, his profile fits this wave of immigration. (4) The Fourth Aliyah (1924–1931) consisted mostly of middle-class families from Eastern Europe, and also of Jews from Asia, specifically Iraq and Yemen. Many of them, being used to city life, settled down in Tel Aviv, and others—who were attracted to the agricultural way of life—either decided to live in the existing villages or established new ones. Herzliya, in which Livnat worked and where the diary presented here was written, was established during this period. (5) The Fifth Aliyah (1932–1939) consisted of many Jews from Europe, mostly from Poland, Germany, Austria, and Czechoslovakia, who ran away from the rising power of Nazi Germany and its allies. Many of them settled in the large cities, specifically, Tel Aviv and Haifa, and some new cities were established. Still, some were also attracted to the agricultural villages and either joined existing ones or established new ones. Waves of immigration to Eretz Israel continued during and after World War II.

The Hebrew word Halutz [חלוץ]—literally translated to pioneer—has been used to describe those first settlers who immigrated to Eretz Israel to build their home in it and to (re-)populate it with vivid Jewish life. In particular, it has been used to describe the First Aliyah immigrants and those of the later immigration waves who conquered the land by manually working it. Hence, we use the term “pioneer” in this paper.

3. Background

3.1. Pre-Emigration Preparation for Manual Labor among Young Jewish Pioneers

The Jewish tradition of working the land stems from the Bible: “And when ye shall come into the land, and shall have planted all manner of trees for food” (Leviticus 19:23). Therefore, it is not surprising that when the Zionist movement was established and the first organized waves of immigration to Eretz Israel had occurred, around the turn of the 19th century, Jewish settlement in that area evolved around agriculture, first, in the forms of Moshavot [מושבות], and later, in the forms of Kibbutzim [קיבוצים] and Moshavim [מושבים], which added communal and collaborative ideologies to the land work. However, the first Jewish settlements—during the First Aliyah—were not solely based on Jewish working hands, and Jewish farmers employed Arab workers—which had worked that very land for decades and centuries prior to the arrival of the Jewish settlers—until the latter constituted the majority of the workers in the Moshavot (Katz 1988; Seltenreich 2004). Only later, mostly during the Second Aliyah, the ideology of keeping land working with Jewish hands became popular; this was called Jewish Labor (also, Hebrew Labor) [עבודה עברית] (Isseroff 2005a), and it was accompanied by the broader term Conquer of Labor [כיבוש העבודה] (Isseroff 2005b).

Jewish settlers were not a priori ready for agricultural labor, as farming and agriculture were not part of the common Jewish life in the diaspora. Therefore, dedicated training programs were established called Hakhshara (preparation) [הכשרה] (cf. Amiur 2016). There, “Jewish young men and women, most of whom had never worked with their hands, were trained for manual labor in the factory and on the farm in anticipation of the kind of work they would be called on to do in Palestine” (Almogi 1982, p. 13). Besides this kind of labor, Hakhshara participants were taught the principles of Zionist and communal ideologies and the history and geography of the Holy Land, and they were taught to use their ancient language, Hebrew, for daily communication. The major movement associated with these training programs was HeHalutz [ההלוץ], which was formed in Eastern Europe in the late 19th century, and its Hakhshara training programs were mostly active from after World War I until the Holocaust, both in Europe and outside of it (Oppenheim 1990; Thor 2022; Yona 2012). Of course, not all Jewish settlers were pre-trained, and some had to be trained—or self-trained—after immigrating, like often happened with the orchard industry, which we will now review.

3.2. Jewish Labor in the Establishment of Citrus Orchards in Early 20th Century Eretz Israel

The citrus industry flourished in the Land of Israel during the 1920s and 1930s, driven by the profitability of citrus exports. This profitability was the result of a sharp rise in the price of fruit, due to the growing demand for Israeli fruits. At the same time, settlement grew in the Sharon region—in the center of the Land—which had been almost unpopulated until then, and many of the immigrants of the “Fourth Aliyah” (the fourth wave of immigration, 1924–1931) chose to settle in this region. During this period, many of the inhabitants of the Land of Israel realized that the Sharon soils were indeed suitable for growing citrus orchards. The combination of these three factors—profitability, settlement, and fertile ground—led to the Sharon region becoming a significant center of settlement based on citrus cultivation (Giladi 1985).

It is important to note that the fruit growing industry implements irrigated agriculture, a practice based on watering crops through artificial means, sending water directly to their roots. This is in contrast to dryland agriculture, which relies solely on natural rainfall. Irrigated agriculture is already mentioned in the Bible: “The waters nourished it, deep springs made it grow tall; their streams flowed all around its base and sent their channels to all the trees of the field” (Ezekiel, chp. 31, verse 4). However, many areas in Israel, including the Sharon region, have always benefited from an ample supply of natural springs and rainfall to sustain dryland agriculture (Porat 1989). Nevertheless, the new crops that were introduced into broad areas in the country—including fruit crops—required much more water than is provided by nature. By the year 1900, many orchards had already

been planted in non-irrigated areas throughout the country, from Ness Ziona in the south to Rosh Pina in the north (Davidzon 2005). Therefore, irrigated agriculture also became established in these areas, which, in turn, has had implications for Israel's water policy (Halperin 1956).

Working in the orchards required specific agricultural knowledge—unique care for trees and their irrigation—which was not necessarily present among the Jewish settlers in Israel, most of whom lacked agricultural experience. As Samuel Dayan testified about the establishment of the first orchards in Degania in 1913, “There were no orchards around, no one to learn from”; as a result, “the development of the orchard was poor, growth was slow, the leaves were narrow and yellow and the colour was dull” (Dayan 1935, p. 79). And just as the settlers lacked experience, “many of the settlement managers lacked experience as well” (Dayan 1935, p. 80). By the 1920s, many orchards were already planted in the central region, including in Jaffa and in the First Aliyah villages (settled between 1882 and 1903) (Davidzon 2005); therefore, the new orchards in the Sharon area did not encounter the same difficulties as Dayan faced. However, there was still difficulty in finding skilled labor to realize the idea of Jewish work.

Most of the Jews who tried their hand at agriculture during the early days of settlement in Eretz Israel, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, left soon thereafter due to the difficulties of the work and the diseases that affected them, and agriculture was predominantly carried out by Arab laborers (Ben Gurion 1932). Even in the decades that followed, until the early 1920s—despite the halo that surrounded the concept of “pioneer”—Jewish farmers were a minority among the immigrants to the country (Ben Avram and Nir 1995; cf. Alroey 2004). Indeed, the orchard owners in the Sharon area employed many Arab laborers, whose wages were lower but whose productivity was higher compared to the Jewish workers (Engel 1964). However, the growth of citrus areas in the Sharon area in the 1920s also served as a lever for the promotion of Jewish labor, due to the fact that the new settlements were established on the basis of exclusive Jewish labor and due to the growing demand for workers; thus, there was a dramatic increase in the number of Jewish agricultural workers, reaching about 7500 in the late 1920s (Giladi 1985). Less than a decade later, there was a turn for the worse in the citrus industry in the Land of Israel. This was due to increased competition between citrus-exporting countries, which led to a drop in prices (Giladi 1985), and to the raising of customs duties on Israeli fruit (Shapira 1974).

Also, in new Herzliya, which was established as an agricultural colony, the citrus industry flourished between the late 1920s and late 1930s (Michaeli 1989, pp. 80, 100). In the early years of the colony—in which the first hut was built in 1924—the settlers cultivated their land for grain and fodder and raised cows and poultry for milk and eggs. When the citrus industry arose, they sought the help of their neighbors from Petach Tikva—among other things, thanks to the friendly relations between Isser Harel from Herzliya and Elisha Soltz from Petach Tikva—and began to plant citrus trees in the colony (Migdal-Klein-Bindiger 2005, p. 149). In 1927, about 120 dunams² of orchards were planted in the colony, and within four years, the area of the orchards reached almost 3000 dunams (Michaeli 1989, p. 100). Citrus trees require five years before bearing fruit, and in the meantime, a lot of work is needed in the orchard. The settlers of Herzliya emphasized the principle of Jewish labor, and many Jewish workers came to the settlement to participate in the processing of the orchards (Michaeli 1989, p. 100). The number of Jewish agricultural workers who joined the settlement stood at 26 in 1927, and by 1935, there were already 68 agricultural workers who had joined the settlement (Migdal-Klein-Bindiger 2005, p. 202).

What did work in the orchards entail during the period in which they were established? Migdal-Klein-Bindiger refers to agricultural work as an investment that was part of the financial investments required: “the investments were many”, she writes, specifying “plowing, digging wells for planting, planting, irrigation, water, accompanying investments such as purchasing seedlings in nurseries, assembling sought-after varieties on poles [...] and paying wages to workers in the orchard environs” (Migdal-Klein-Bindiger 2005, p. 149). Shmuel Dayan, who describes the establishment of the orchard in Degania

about 15 years prior to that time, also mentions some of the agricultural tasks involved in growing an orchard in its early years, and, in particular, he mentions that “a lot of work was invested in the orchard, various fertilisers were used [...] and sometimes we spread chemical fertiliser” (Dayan 1935, p. 80). In other cases where laborers have recounted their memories, their descriptions have been very concise and focused on experiences that characterized their lives in a broader sense. For example, in the book *Second Aliyah People*, there are references to working in the orchards, but they are quite concise. M. Goldstein from Beit HaShita summarizes his time working in the orchard as follows, while focusing more on his living experience:

I started working in Berz’s orchard, and then we moved to an apartment above the well and engine in the same orchard. The house was very abandoned, but we cleaned and arranged it until it became a clean and pleasant apartment. Many friends came to connect with us. I worked in the orchard until the British arrived (Tamir 1974, p. 69).

Yehoshua Golomb from Kfar Malal summed it up even more briefly, saying only, “I worked for a while in the orchards” (Tamir 1974, p. 73). Elisheva Gisin from Petah Tikva only mentions that her brothers, who worked in Rehovot and Rishon LeZion, “trained themselves in all orchard work”, but she opens a window to a slightly broader view when she mentions that “since the orchard needed organic manure, they bought a herd of cows” (Tamir 1974, p. 81). As a result, we do not have comprehensive descriptions from which we can learn about the daily lives of the Jewish workers in Eretz Israel at the beginning of the 20th century. From the distance of years, many memoirists choose to expand on events that seem to them to be essential and to skip on details about the daily routine. Therefore, it is interesting to examine the lives of the workers as documented in real time, and especially in work diaries.

3.3. Work Diaries as a Historical Source

Personal diaries, which document events in real time, are an important primary source for historical research. They do not necessarily provide an objective view or a panoramic picture of history, but rather a bottom-up view that allows us to understand how the writers felt, understood, and internalized what was happening, what their priorities were, or how they behaved in stressful situations (Shapira 2011).

As a result, personal diaries are studied both to shed light on the period they document and on the person who wrote them. The latter approach is taken mainly when dealing with diaries of well-known people or those in positions of authority. Thus, for example, Joseph Trumpeldor’s diary—although it deals with a tumultuous period in the history of Jewish settlement in Eretz Israel and touches on significant historical events—has become “first and foremost a distinctly personal document” (Laskov 1977, p. 208). Similarly, David Ben-Gurion’s war diary, in addition to being an important historical source for the War of Independence, has been used “to illuminate Ben-Gurion’s character and his role in leading the war” (Orren 1987).

Diaries kept by ordinary people often serve as a valuable tool for examining historical events. One such example is the diary of Dov Blumberg, a member of the “Achva” group who immigrated to Eretz Israel during the Third Aliyah. According to an analysis of his diary, it “provides a reliable and vivid picture of the daily lives of both individuals and the group as a whole”, and offers insights into “the food, the hunger, the living conditions, and the realities of life for these pioneers during this turbulent period” (Yaakova and Shai 2004, p. 170); however, the unique aspect of this diary lies in its personal perspective. Another example is the diary of Menachem Golan (Goldstein), who accompanied David Ben-Gurion on his 1951 trip to the United States. This trip was aimed at raising funds and garnering support for Israel from the US Jewish community, and 200 Israeli soldiers were symbolically included, carefully selected for this purpose. Golan’s diary sheds new light on this largely unexplored journey, “describing the soldiers’ encounter with the material cultural wealth they met in the West” and revealing the nature of the “unmediated interac-

tion between the Israeli soldiers and the Jewish masses in the United States". Nevertheless, its uniqueness lies in its ability to "expose the gap between the symbolic reality and the reality as experienced by the ordinary person" (Sherzer 2019, p. 107). Sometimes, personal diaries provide a glimpse into obscure historical chapters, driven by the writer's desire to shed light on a specific subject, as in the case of Henia Peckelman, who wrote about the lives of female laborers in 20th-century Eretz Israel, a topic often overlooked in historical narratives (Pekelman 2007).

Within the genre of personal diaries, this paper examines a unique sub-genre to which we will refer to as a work diary (also called a work log). In a work diary, the focus is on documenting the professional activities of the writer on a regular basis. A prominent example of this subtype is the journal kept by agronomist Aharon Aaronsohn during his research expeditions in the Land of Israel and its vicinities. In his journal, Aaronsohn detailed his daily work, including his scientific observations. For example, during his trip around the Dead Sea in March 1908, he wrote the following on 9 March:

At 6:00 the temperature was 60 degrees, the barometer read 675.0 at 7. I did not see any mistletoe on the olive trees. The major field crops here are wheat, barley, and a little bit of watermelon. Most of the locals are engaged in growing lime. The prickly burnet (*Poterium Spinosum*) dominates the slopes of the hills here (Aaronsohn 1940, p. 77).

Aaronsohn's diary allows us to closely follow his professional work, and it therefore sheds light not only on his scientific findings, but also on the paths he took to reach them. Of course, the diary is not devoid of documentation that is not directly related to his work, which also allows us to learn about the person documenting it. For example, the report from 21 May 1911 opens with the notation "My 32nd birthday!" (Aaronsohn 1940, p. 109). Therefore, work diaries can be used to gain a comprehensive understanding of the daily conduct of the professional.

This way, a work diary provides a rare glimpse into the daily routine of John Sadleir (John Sadleir), a police officer in Victoria State, Australia, in the second half of the 19th century, and the work methods he used (Sadleir 2016); the diaries of farmers from Minnesota, the United States, from the 19th century, allow us to understand the consequences of the introduction of new agricultural tools for the daily work of the late-19th- and early-20th-century farmers (Loehr 1938); and the diary of Mary Haslam, a factory inspector in England in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, provides a glimpse into the functioning of factories, as well as the work of the inspectors who oversaw them (King 2004).

Since work diaries focus primarily on the details of the work itself rather than the worker's personal—i.e., non-work-related—experiences, they are less influenced, compared to traditional personal diaries, by the psychological biases that characterize an individual subjectively documenting their life, or by the need to describe a narrative in a literary way (Langford and West 1999). As such, work diaries provide a broad perspective on the profession being documented, enabling us to learn objectively—to some extent—about the daily routines of those engaged in them and the external influences on these routines. The diary discussed in this article will educate us about the work of Jewish laborers in Eretz Israel in the late 1920s and early 1930s.

Work diaries—despite often documenting the very mechanics and mundane aspects of work—may also educate us about their keepers and the social contexts in which they acted. First, it is the fact that they kept a log of this nature in the first place. Holding a detailed work diary may help workers to reflect on their work habits and patterns and, as a result, to act on improving them, if possible. Furthermore, such diaries can help their keepers to better understand, in retrospect, their relationships with their non-work-related activities, as well as with other people (Symes 1999). Second, it is the way information is logged in a work diary that can help us better understand the person who documented it. As an ego-document (i.e., an account of the person who produced it (cf. Dekker 2002)), the choice of the format (e.g., tabular, or narrative), the language (e.g., Hebrew, Russian, or Yiddish; using jargon or everyday language), the level of logging (e.g., logging work by

hours, parts of days, or single days), and the information logged (e.g., mentioning or not mentioning names of employees or whether the job was manual or mechanical) all have importance in the way the documenting person is reflected in this self-created document. Finally, as work diaries were kept in certain times and places, and within certain social, political contexts—they could help us reflect on the ways in which their keepers referred to these contexts, and on their relationships with certain social groups; while doing so, we could learn about social groups and social constructs (Fulbrook and Rublack 2010). Therefore, a given historical work diary is not necessarily similar to another one, as the person who kept it, the way it was kept, and the context in which it was kept all have complex relationships with other historical, social, and political constructs (Briggs and Bauman 1992) and, as such, have meanings, therefore making a work diary unique evidence.

4. Mordechai Livnat (Libman) and His Work Diary

Very little is known to Mordechai Livnat's family about his life before his immigration to Eretz Israel. When his young daughter, as a child, asked him to tell her about his childhood, he would reply, "I was not a child, I was born an adult". The information presented here is based mostly on what Livnat told his grandson (the author) when the latter interviewed him for a family history school project in 1987; some additional information was obtained during the author's own genealogical research.

Mordechai Livnat was born as Mordechai Libman in 1903, in the town of Volochys'k (geographic coordinates: north 49°32', east 26°10'), on the banks of the Zbruch River; this river, at that time, was the border between the Russian Empire (to the east) and the Austro-Hungarian Empire (to the west). At that time, the town was administratively part of the Starokonstantinov district in the Vohlynia province. Nowadays, the town is in western Ukraine. He was the fourth of five children of his parents, Israel—who was a Hebrew teacher—and Miriam (nee Brumberg). When Mordechai was 10 years old, World War I broke out, and the Jewish residents of the town were instructed to leave. The Libman family wandered eastward, eventually arriving in Krasilov (geographic coordinates: north 49°65', east 26°98'), where Miriam's family lived.

As he recalled years later of the home where he grew up, it was, "religious, traditional, but not fanatical". In 1922, he left his parents' home and began his journey toward immigration to Eretz Israel, joining the He-Halutz [החלוץ] movement. While doing so, he also left the religious life and became secular. On 4 May 1923, he arrived at the port of Haifa aboard the ship *Corinthia*.³ First, he arrived in Nahalal, and he then worked in swamp drying and in agriculture in the area of Zichron Ya'akov (see Figure 1). Later, he arrived in Herzliya, where he lived and worked for about 4 years, and where he also joined the "Haganah" activities and was a trainee in the first commanders' course in 1929, under the command of Israel Amir (then Zvalodovsky). In Herzliya, he also met Zahava (nee Shrayar, born 1906), and married her (see Figure 2).

Mordechai and Zahava later settled in Kfar Vitkin in 1932—a couple of years after the establishment of this Moshav—and had their own farm;⁴ at first, they raised chickens and cows, and they later planted orchards and fields. They raised their four children there: Dalia (born in 1932), Arnon (born in 1937), and twins Yael and Yisrael (born in 1941). Their eldest son, Arnon—who Hebraized his name to Livnat during his military service, prompted by then prime minister David Ben-Gurion's instructions—died in action in the Six-Day War as a pilot. After Arnon's falling, the other family members changed their surname to Livnat. Mordechai died in Kfar Vitkin in 1992, 15 years after the death of his wife (Alyagon 1970).



Figure 1. Mordechai Livnat, guarding a vineyard in Zikhron Yaakov, before arriving in Herzliya.



Figure 2. Mordechai and Zehava (nee Shrayer) Livnat, circa late 1920s.

Mordechai Livnat's work diary was kept in a ledger designed for recording financial transactions,⁵ and it contains distinct rows and columns—its width is 31 cm, and its height is 31 cm. The recording was done in handwriting, in cursive Hebrew, written with a pen.⁶ Each page documents a month's work—the month and year are recorded at the top of the page, and there are recordings in four columns throughout the page: "Date" (day of the month), nature of the work (without title), "Hours", and "In Mils".⁷ At the bottom of each page, Livnat summed up the payments he received, and he wrote down this amount on the top of the next page, under "Transfer". The first page of the diary documents his work in April 1928, and the last page documents his work in December 1931. Throughout this period, the diary documents only income, and there is no documentation of expenses. An image from the diary is presented in Figure 3.

After December 1931, the recording in Livnat's diary became less organized—daily documentation ceases and, in its place, documentation of purchases and related income for establishing the farm in Kfar Vitkin appear in the diary. For example, in February 1932, Livnat recorded the purchase of “440 eggs”, an “oil jug”, and “seeds and kernels”. A few months later, he recorded income “for roosters and hens” and “for eggs”. This part is not included in the analysis presented here.

מחיר	מחיר	מחיר	מחיר	מחיר	מחיר	מחיר	מחיר	מחיר	מחיר
11795	250	8	הקצאה של 2/2	1	5175	200	8	הקצאה של 2/2	1
295	9 1/2		הקצאה של 2/2	2	280	9		הקצאה של 2/2	2
290	9		הקצאה של 2/2	3	250	8		הקצאה של 2/2	3
250	8		הקצאה של 2/2	4	250	8		הקצאה של 2/2	4
			הקצאה של 2/2	5	250	8		הקצאה של 2/2	5
			הקצאה של 2/2	6	250	8		הקצאה של 2/2	6
250	8		הקצאה של 2/2	7	285	9		הקצאה של 2/2	7
250	8		הקצאה של 2/2	8	250	8 1/2		הקצאה של 2/2	8
250	8		הקצאה של 2/2	9				הקצאה של 2/2	9
250	8		הקצאה של 2/2	10	350	11		הקצאה של 2/2	10
250	8		הקצאה של 2/2	11	280	9		הקצאה של 2/2	11
250	8		הקצאה של 2/2	12	250	8		הקצאה של 2/2	12
			הקצאה של 2/2	13	250	8		הקצאה של 2/2	13
250	8		הקצאה של 2/2	14	280	9		הקצאה של 2/2	14
250	8		הקצאה של 2/2	15	250	8		הקצאה של 2/2	15
250	8		הקצאה של 2/2	16				הקצאה של 2/2	16
310	10		הקצאה של 2/2	17	280	9		הקצאה של 2/2	17

Figure 3. An image from Mordechai Livnat's work diary, which was kept in his handwriting, in cursive Hebrew.

The diary entries were copied and transcribed for the period from April 1928 to December 1931 into an Excel sheet, with the following columns added to assist in data analysis:

- **Serial Number:** A unique identifier for each entry;

- **Workday:** This is marked with a “1” for entries referring to a workday (regardless of whether Livnat actually worked that day) or a “0” otherwise (mostly Saturdays and holidays);
- **Worked?** This is marked with a “1” for entries where Livnat did work and a “0” for entries where he did not;
- **Reason for Non-Work:** This is only filled in for days where “Worked?” is “0”. The reason for Livnat not working is encoded based on the work description itself. Details about these codes can be found in Section 5.1.2, Absences from Work;
- **Absent Due to Rain?** This is marked with a “1” if “Worked?” is “0”, and the reason for not working is listed as “Rain”;
- **Rainfall:** The daily precipitation amount recorded in Herzliya on that day, as found in the archive of the Israel Meteorological Service⁸ (see full details in Section 5.1.2, Absences from Work);
- **Rain Today or Yesterday?** This is marked with a “1” if the “Rainfall” value for the current date or the previous day was positive;
- **Hourly Wage:** Calculated by dividing the daily wage by the number of working hours;
- **Employer:** This is encoded based on the work description. See details in Section 5.2.1, Employers (Livnat may have worked for multiple employers on a single day, so this might have multiple entries);
- **Task:** This is encoded based on the work description. See details in Section 5.2.4, Nature of Work (similar to the employer, Livnat may have had multiple tasks on a single day).

This data sheet served as the foundation for all the analyses presented in the Analysis Section.

5. Analysis

5.1. Working Conditions

In this section, we will examine Livnat’s working conditions based on the analysis of data documented in his diary, supplemented by additional sources. We will look at his work patterns, including workdays and hours worked, reasons for absences, and wages.

5.1.1. Workweek

Livnat’s diary documents the details of his work over a continuous period, starting on 10 April 1928, and ending on 18 December 1931, for a total of 1348 days. The workweek lasted six days (from Sunday to Friday), and throughout this documented period, Livnat did not work on Saturdays even once. This also applies to holidays: Rosh Hashanah (two or three days),⁹ Yom Kippur (one day), Sukkot and Simchat Torah (two days), Passover (two days of the holiday or more¹⁰), Purim (one to three days),¹¹ and Shavuot (one or three days).¹² In addition to these holidays, he also did not work on 1 May. In total, during this period, there were 227 days of rest and holidays, leaving 1121 workdays.

5.1.2. Absences from Work

Out of the total number of workdays, 111 days were recorded as non-workdays (slightly less than 10%). The primary reason for non-work was rain; in total, Livnat recorded 75 days in his diary when he did not work due to rain, most of them during the months of December–February. The second most common reason was lack of work (15 days). Additionally, he was absent from work three times for personal reasons (5 May 1929, “receiving citizenship”; 2 August 1931, “mutual aid [to a friend]”; 16 October 1931, “wedding day”), three consecutive days due to a strike (16–18 July 1928), and two consecutive days due to the “events of 1929” (25–26 August 1929) (as for the latter, cf. Winder 2012). Another 13 days during the period were days when he did not work, but he did not specify the reason.

As previously mentioned, rain was the primary reason for Livnat’s absences from work. His meticulous daily records provide an invaluable opportunity to delve into the intricate relationship between his rain-related absences and the actual rainfall events them-

selves. Fortunately, meteorological data are readily available from the Herzliya station, which commenced operations in September 1928¹³ under the auspices of the Meteorological Service.

From the historical meteorological data, it appears that during the period covered by the diary, there were 160 days with some rainfall recorded, ranging from 2.0 to 112 mm (mm) per day. Of these, 136 were workdays. Out of the 75 days Livnat was absent from work due to rain, 59 had some amount of rainfall documented in the historical records of the meteorological service, either on the corresponding day or the day before.¹⁴ Regarding the cases where Livnat did not work but did not specify the reason, rain could have been the cause in at least five of them. Even considering these additional possibilities, we understand that there were rainy days when Livnat did work.

Indeed, Livnat explicitly mentions working in the rain on three occasions: on 4 February and 29 November 1929, he worked on “repairing ditches in the rain”, and on 18 November 1930, he worked on “tending to Pershitz’s orchard (rain)”. On those days, totals of 14, 62, and 14 mm of rain were recorded, respectively. It is possible that there were other rainy days when he worked but did not explicitly mention the rain in his daily work details. Conversely, there are also cases where he recorded not working due to rain, but according to the historical data from the meteorological service, it did not rain on those days. Therefore, it is possible that a rain event left the ground wet, which could have hindered work for a few days afterward.

Triangulating the data documented in the diary with the data archived by the Meteorological Service, it appears that during the period covered by the diary, there were 92 days with some amount of recorded rainfall during which Livnat still managed to work. In some of these cases, the rain may not have significantly disrupted work, either due to the time of day it fell or because it was a relatively small amount. Analysis of the data reveals that on days when Livnat explicitly noted absence due to rain, an average of 15 mm of rainfall was recorded ($SD = 13.8$, $N = 44$). On days when it rained and he did not note absence, an average of 11 mm of rainfall was recorded ($SD = 15.3$, $N = 92$). A *t*-test for independent samples indicates that this difference is not statistically significant ($t = 1.1$, $p = 0.27$). Therefore, there is not necessarily an association between the amount of rainfall and the absence from work due to it.

5.1.3. Work Hours

On average, Livnat worked 8.5 h per day ($SD = 1.3$, $N = 1010$). The majority of his workdays (over half)—631 out of 1127—were 8 h long (about 56%). The second most common workday length was 9 h, which characterized 158 of his workdays (14%). In total, 48 days were recorded in his diary where he worked less than 8 h (about 4% of all his workdays) and 89 days where he worked 11 h or more (about 8% of all his workdays). The two longest workdays during his recording period were 14 h (13 May 1931) and 16 h (26 March 1931).

Since dealing with agricultural work, the working hours of Livnat changed according to the seasons. Indeed, in the months of December–February, the daily average of working hours stood at less than 8 h, while in the months of March and May, the daily averages stood at 8.9 and 9.3 h, respectively. In Figure 4, a graph depicting the multi-year average of monthly working hours is presented, showing that the months of May–October were the busiest; during this period, Livnat worked 219 h per month on average ($SD 11.6$), while in the complementary period (November–April), he worked 161 h per month on average ($SD 35.7$).

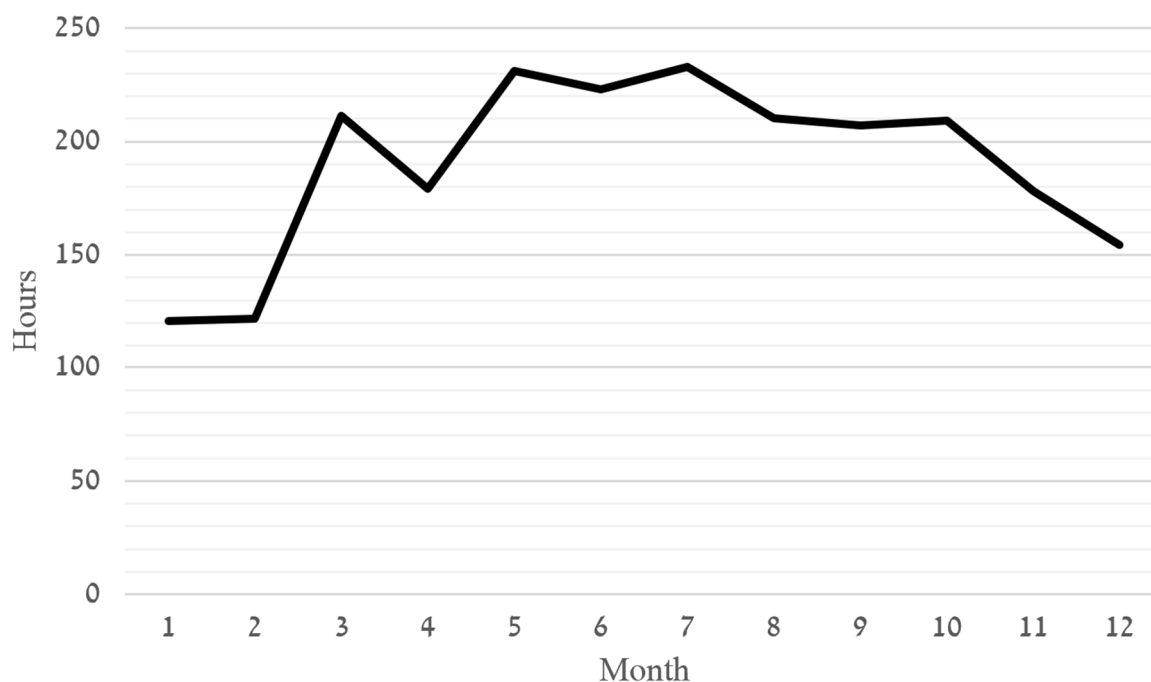


Figure 4. Annual average of monthly work hours of Mordechai Livnat, 1928–1931.¹⁵

5.1.4. Wages

Until 1 March 1929 (inclusive), Livnat received, with rare exceptions, a wage of 25 mils per hour and half that amount for half an hour of work. From 3 March 1929, his wage increased to, with rare exceptions, 31.25 mils per hour and half that amount for half an hour of work. These hourly wages represent, for an 8 h workday, daily wages of 200 mils and 250 mils, respectively. Since he was paid by the hour and since the daily working hours were season-dependent, as we saw in the previous section, Livnat's wage was also season-dependent. Indeed, in the months of May–October, his average monthly wage was 6522 mils, while in the months of November–April, the average wage decreased by approximately 25% and stood at 5029 mils.¹⁶

Comparing the cost of living from such a long historical perspective is very challenging. The societal, cultural, geo-political, financial, and technological conditions have dramatically changed since the time reported in Livnat's diary, and they all have a major impact on the cost of living. A comprehensive comparison of the cost of living between then and now should take into consideration a host of sources and complicated calculations, and we feel that it is beyond the scope of the current paper. For just obtaining an impression of the purchasing power of Livnat's daily wage at the time he earned it, we could look at a few anecdotal examples. A review of past newspaper articles from the time allows us to become familiar with the prices of popular products and services. In 1931 (the last year documented in his diary), it is noted that a loaf of bread made from locally produced flour—which weighed 2 ounces (approximately 480 g)—cost 10 Palestine mils (Ben Zvi 1931; Haaretz 1931); an egg sold for 10 Palestine mils per unit (Davar 1931); and a monthly subscription to a newspaper cost 150 Palestine mils (see front page of Davar 1931). That is, with his daily wage, Livnat could have bought 25 loaves of bread or 25 eggs, or he could have paid for a monthly subscription to a daily newspaper for almost two months.

In comparison to other industries in which professional workers were employed, Livnat's wage was significantly lower. In the construction industry, the daily wages of Jewish painters and plasterers in 1929 were 400 and 425 mils per day, respectively, and the daily wages of Jewish masons and stonecutters rose to 500 and 530 mils per day, respectively. The daily wages of blacksmiths, mechanics, and carpenters were 460–485 mils per day (Gabe 2013). These figures refer to a 9 h workday, and if we normalize them to an

8 h workday, which was the length of Livnat's workday, we arrive at a daily amount of 356–470 mils, which is significantly higher than Livnat's wage.

Another way to calculate the present value of the wage from 1930 is to examine the exchange rate of the Eretz Israel lira to US dollars in 1930, and to examine what its value would be in today's terms. During the second half of the 20th century, the Eretz Israel lira was pegged to the British pound, and the latter was worth about USD 4.86 (Dimsdale 1981). From here, a daily wage of 250 mils (250/1000 lira) was worth USD 1.22. In today's terms, this is about ILS 4,¹⁷ which is barely enough to buy a single loaf of bread (which costs double that) and a few eggs (a package of 12 eggs costs about three times that), and barely suffices for a single daily issue of a newspaper.

5.1.5. Summary of Working Conditions

The working conditions of Livnat reflect the working conditions of Jewish workers who were engaged in agriculture in the settlements in Eretz Israel at that time. For example, it was reported in the Haaretz daily newspaper at the time that “the daily wage for a worker in agriculture [in Herzliya]—200 mils”, and that “for a number of permanent workers the wage was raised to 250 mils” (Davar 1929a). In Petah Tikva, at the same time, the local workers organized and presented their demands to the employers, which included “200 mils daily wage [... and] “8 h of work per day” (Davar 1929b). A wage of 250 mils per day was considered quite high for unskilled workers in those days, and characterized Jewish workers from Europe—a sector to which Livnat belonged—in the central cities, who received a daily wage (Berenstein 2003). Of course, skilled Jewish workers earned significantly higher wages. However, tracking Livnat's diary teaches us about the significant differences in his working conditions in terms of working hours. Since he received a daily wage, this difference also directly affected his income.

While Livnat was employed to a lesser extent outside the agricultural season than during it, he was employed throughout the year. Indeed, in a review of economic developments in the early 1930s, Heshel Promkin wrote about the agricultural sector that the summer planting and the new methods of treating existing plantings had shortened the dead season and had reduced the number of unemployed (Frumkin 1930).

Regarding the work disruption caused by the rain, Hania Peckelman, who immigrated to Eretz Israel in 1922 and published her diary in 1935, wrote that “there was no possibility of working every day in the winter: The rains interfered a lot” (Pekelman 2007, p. 104). However, from an analysis of historical rainfall data, it appears that Livnat was sometimes forced to work even on rainy days. Since his wages were daily, he probably felt required to support himself even outside the agricultural season, and therefore his work on rainy days should be taken into account. Now, we will move on to discuss the nature of his work.

5.2. Nature of Work

The accurate record keeping in Livnat's diary allows us to understand what he worked on every day. From this, we can derive information about his employers, his workplace, and its character. In this section, we will delve into the essence of Livnat's work, as revealed in his diary and with the help of additional sources.

5.2.1. Employers

On the vast majority of workdays—996 out of 1010—Livnat explicitly mentioned the name of the employer with whom he worked. On the remaining 14 workdays, the direct employer is not mentioned: at the end of December 1930, he worked for 11 consecutive workdays in “flattening with a scraper” for “road” and “the new area”; one additional day, in November 1930, was dedicated to plowing for Kehilat Zion;¹⁸ and two additional days were dedicated to agricultural work—“sticking [in the ground] branches” (22 July 1929), “tying grafts”, and “watering” (26 October 1928)—not explicitly mentioning the name of the employer there.

During his documented work in Herzliya, Livnat worked for 19 different employers.¹⁹ By analyzing Livnat's monthly number of employers, his work period in Herzliya can be divided into two parts: April 1928–March 1930; April 1930–December 1931. The reason for the change in his work pattern during the second period was his management of the Pershitz orchard starting on April 1930. Several months after the 1929 Riots (cf. [Winder 2012](#)), at the beginning of 1930, Dov Pershitz traveled to Cyprus and established an orchard there. In Herzliya, Pershitz's wife and two daughters remained, and he appointed Livnat—who had worked for him since January 1928—as responsible for managing the orchard in Herzliya; therefore, Livnat mainly worked for Pershitz during that time.²⁰ In early 1932, Pershitz's wife and youngest daughter joined him in Cyprus, and he offered Livnat to also travel to Cyprus and manage his orchard there; Livnat refused to leave the country ([Naor 1990](#), entry for Mordechai and Zehava Livnat, unnumbered page).

In *Book of the First Settlers in Herzliya: 1924–1934* ([Naor 1990](#)), which documents the city's early residents and overlaps with the period covered in Livnat's diary, we identified 15 out of the 19 names of people mentioned as his employers:

1. Aharonson Zeev (his wife: Sima), born in Russia in 1887, immigrated to Eretz Israel in 1925 and lived in Herzliya between 1927 and 1930, earning his living from agriculture and orchards;
2. Goldberg Nachum (Leah), born in Petach Tikva in 1894, settled in Herzliya in 1926, established an agricultural farm, planted orchards, and managed orchards belonging to others;
3. Gissin Moshe (Susiya), born in Russia in 1861, immigrated to Eretz Israel in 1885, settled in Herzliya in 1925, planted orchards, and assisted in the establishment of the farm of his daughter, Michal Perlin (see below);
4. De-Shalit Moshe (Ada), born in Russia in 1892, was the Israeli director of Kehilat Zion, the society that purchased the land of Herzliya and founded it;
5. Weintal Chaim-Yaakov (widower), born in Poland in 1865, immigrated to Eretz Israel and settled in Herzliya in 1925, where he bought a large orchard;
6. Zablodovsky (Amir) Israel (Rebecca), born in Lithuania in 1903, immigrated to Eretz Israel in 1923, settled in Herzliya in 1928, worked in orchards, was active in Haganah,²¹ and was one of the founders of the organization's branch in Herzliya. Later, he was one of the founders of the Israeli Air Force and its first commander;
7. Lentz Tzvi (Irena), born in Transylvania in 1896, immigrated to Eretz Israel, =settled in Herzliya in 1924, and established, together with other family members who settled in the area, a large agricultural farm that included vegetable patches, an orchard, and banana plantations;
8. Soletz Zeev (Miriam), born in Petach Tikva in 1907, settled in Herzliya in 1925, was a member of the Bnei Binyamin group,²² engaged in agriculture and packaging, and was responsible for the water wells;
9. Poliakov Matityahu (Devorah), born in Poland in 1885, a member of the Hasidic Chabad movement, immigrated to Eretz Israel and settled in Herzliya in 1931, where he bought an orchard;
10. Pressman Charles (Penny), born in Russia in 1888, immigrated to Eretz Israel in 1920, headed Kehilat Zion, and purchased a large orchard in Herzliya;
11. Perlin Mordechai (Michal nee Gissin, see number 3), born in the United States in 1892, immigrated to Eretz Israel in 1896, settled in Herzliya in 1926, was a member of the national board of Bnei Binyamin, supervised orchards in the settlement, and engaged in public activities;
12. Pershitz Dov (Ida), born in Poland in 1896, immigrated to Eretz Israel in 1923, settled in Herzliya in 1925, and was active in Kehilat Zion;
13. Kanterovitz Yechiel (Margalit), born in Russia in 1878, immigrated to Eretz Israel in 1926, settled in Herzliya in 1927, and established a large orchard in Herzliya;
14. Robinzon Shmuel (Ahuva), born in Petach Tikva in 1907, arrived in Herzliya in 1925 with Bnei Binyamin and owned an orchard and a small farm;

15. Steinfeld Yaakov (Yaffa), born in Poland in 1882, immigrated to Eretz Israel in 1923, settled in Herzliya in 1930, and established an orchard there.

The four additional names mentioned in the diary as employers of Livnat—Lazer, Friedman, Kadrinsky, and Rivkin—do not appear in Naor's (1990) book, which in its three volumes brings together information about approximately 550 families who lived in the settlement in its first decade, and which constitutes the most comprehensive source about the early settlers in Herzliya. Kadrinsky appears on the list of owners of the large orchards at Migdal-Klein-Bindiger (2005, p. 104) without further information; the same list also includes Shalom Friedman, and elsewhere it is written that Friedman immigrated from the United States and participated in the land lottery in 1925, with no further information about him except for his appearance in this context (Migdal-Klein-Bindiger 2005, pp. 40–41). Among the participants in the land lottery were also Michael Friedman, Mr. Friedman, Hadassah Friedman, and Shimon Friedman (Michaeli 1989, p. 58).

5.2.2. Network of Employers

An examination of the identified employers reveals a network of connections that linked them together: Soltz, Perlin, and Robinson were members of Bnei Binyamin; De-Shalit, Pasman, and Pershitz were active in Kehilat Zion; Gissin and Perlin were related by marriage; Goldberg, Soltz, and Robinson were born in Petach Tikva. Therefore, it can be assumed that this network helped Livnat expand his employment opportunities and find work with various settlers. Indeed, mapping Livnat's employers over the period documented in his diary illustrates this expansion and shows how he began working for additional employers almost every month. This pattern is illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1. Mapping Livnat's employers throughout the period documented in his diary.

Month	Aaronson	Kadrinsky	Perlin	Pershitz	Rivkin	Weintel	Bobetelsky	Steinfeld	Kantarovitz	Pesman	De-Shalit	Friedman	Goldberg	Gissin	Soltz	Robinson	Zvaldovsky	Leizer	Poliakov
April 1928																			
May 1928																			
June 1928																			
July 1928																			
August 1928																			
September 1928																			
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At least three of Livnat's employers were among the owners of large orchards: De-Shalit, Wintel, and Pesman; as mentioned above, it is possible that two more were also

included: Kadrinsky and Friedman (Michaeli 1989, p. 146). As can be seen from Table 1, Livnat's integration into work with the owners of large orchards was gradual and slow; this reinforces the assumption about the contribution of the network of connections between his employers to his employment development.

5.2.3. Employment Distribution

During the period documented in the diary, Livnat had the most workdays with Pershitz (605 days out of 996, 61%), primarily due to his management of the Pershitz orchard for about a year and a half, as mentioned earlier. He worked for Kadrinsky for 151 days (15%), Wintel for 63 days (6%), Friedman for 53 days (5%), Perlin for 46 days (5%), Aaronson for 44 days (4%), and De-Shalit for 30 days (3%). He worked for the remaining employers for 15 days or less throughout the entire period.

Figure 5 illustrates the number of employers Livnat worked for each month during the period documented in his diary. There is a noticeable increase in the number of employers from the beginning of the diary period (April 1928) to a peak in July 1929 (and again in March 1930).

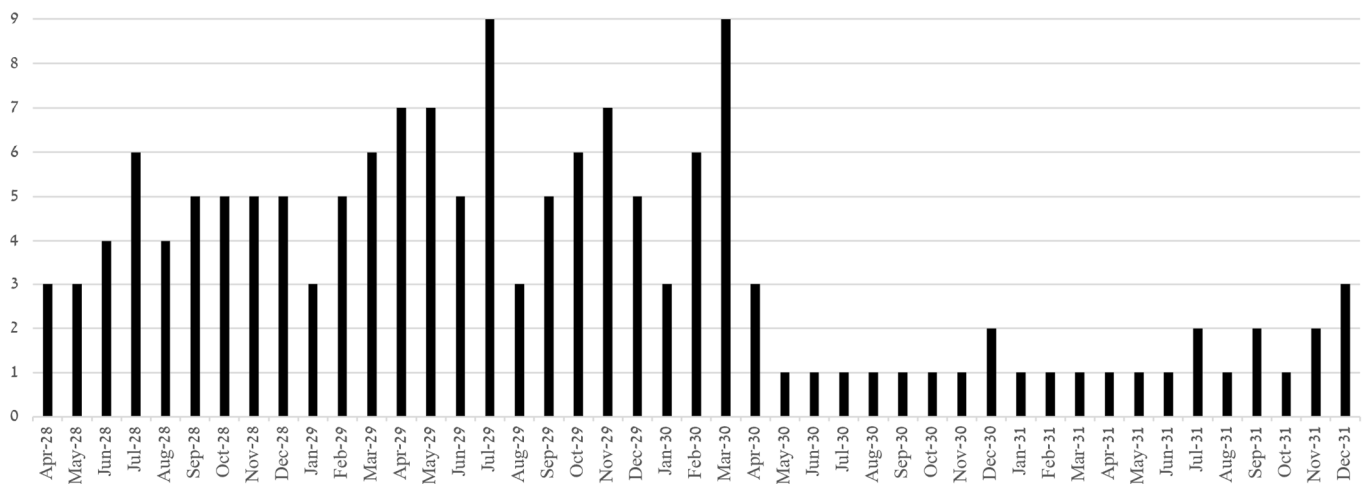


Figure 5. Number of employers Livnat worked for per month.

5.2.4. Nature of Work

Livnat documents in his diary many tasks he was engaged in. A thorough analysis of the task list allowed us to group them into a limited number of categories: irrigation and fertilization, soil treatment, tree and plant care, nursery and plants, plot arrangement, and miscellaneous. Examining these categories allows for an understanding of the essence of the work of a laborer in an early agricultural colony. This analysis is performed in relation to the period between the months of April 1928 and March 1930, that is, before focusing his work on the Pershitz orchard; during this period, Livnat worked 523 workdays. (Since, on some days, Livnat documented more than one task, the total number of days classified into the different categories is greater than the total number of workdays.)

Irrigation and Fertilization. The most prominent category in Livnat's work is irrigation and fertilization. Tasks included in this category involve providing water and fertilizer to trees, with Livnat working on this for 231 workdays (44% of total workdays). Tasks related to irrigation under this category include digging trenches, repairing trenches—especially expanding them, and fixing slopes—opening basins, covering basins, transporting water, irrigation, and head sprinkling. These tasks are typical of agricultural irrigation, demonstrating how irrigation was actually carried out: water flowed to the trees through a dug trench system, utilizing gravity; around the trees, basins were dug, where water was collected and slowly percolated towards the tree roots. Head sprinkling is related to grafting fruit trees, multiplying and improving by connecting parts of two different plants

so they merge and grow as one plant—a sophisticated method that has been used in agriculture for thousands of years (Avital 2015). One of the common methods for grafting is Head Grafting, where the scion (the part that will form the tree’s canopy) is grafted onto the head of a rootstock (the branch onto which it is grafted). Of course, the grafting location above the ground cannot be irrigated with water flowing at ground level, so water is sprayed onto it.

Tasks related to fertilization include digging fertilization pits, measuring manure, transferring manure, putting manure into pits, and covering manure. In agricultural jargon, a distinction is made between using organic and chemical fertilizers, and these two methods are distinguished by their Hebrew terms: “Zibul” and “Dishun”, accordingly. Both of these methods were accepted in the Eretz Israeli agriculture for decades before Livnat’s work period (cf. Telman 1995). However, while Livnat only mentioned words of the Hebrew root of “Zibul”, i.e., seemingly related to organic fertilizers, it is not certain that he indeed refers only to organic ones. In newspapers from the 1920s, both the phrases “chemical manure” and “organic manure” can be found.²³

Soil Treatment. The second most common category in Livnat’s work is soil treatment, which deals with preparing the soil for planting and caring for it afterward. Livnat worked on these tasks for 138 days of work (26%). These tasks included routing, plowing, cultivating, hoeing, and furrowing. The routing work included deep processing of the soil to eradicate weeds that had taken hold in the soil, before planting the orchard. In particular, Livnat mentions the uprooting of perennial plants whose roots penetrate deep into the soil. This was often done using hoes, as can be seen in Figure 6. Wilkensky described this in a humorous way: “Some said that the right [hand] holds the end of the plow and the left moves, and some said that the left holds and the right moves” (Wilkensky 1982, p. 54). Sometimes, workers had to dig out roots with their bare hands, “digging deep pits, pulling out, using crooked fingers, the white roots of couch grass and Bermuda grass” (Markam n.d., p. 12).



Figure 6. Workers from the Second Aliyah, performing the task of uprooting perennial plants in the orchards during the process of tilling.²⁴

After, the routing, plowing, and cultivating were carried out to prepare the soil for planting. This involved turning over the top layer of soil (plowing) and processing it (cultivating). The plow was usually harnessed to an animal, while the cultivator could be

pulled by an animal or by hand. In several instances, Livnat explicitly mentioned “cultivating with a horse and by hand” (15–16 October 1928; 6–8 November 1928), and in other places, “hand cultivating” (25–28 June 1928; 12 November 1928; 9–10 August 1928). See Figure 7 for agricultural equipment that was used in those times.



Figure 7. Agricultural tools from the early days of settlement in Herzliya: manual plow and scraper (top), and harrow (bottom).²⁵

Livnat’s weeding activities were not limited to orchards. For example, he explicitly mentioned in his diary “weeding in the garden” (12–13 April 1928), “weeding cypress trees” (5 October 1928), “weeding in Perlin’s garden” (4 December 1928), “weeding around

the canals" (28 February 1929), "weeding in Pershitz's field" (6 June 1929), and "weeding banana trees" (23 August 1929).

Tree and Plant Care. The third most common category is tree and plant care, which refers to work related to the trees themselves, from planting onwards. This category characterizes Livnat's work for 126 days (24%). Tasks under this category include planting or sowing trees, supporting trees, cleaning, pruning, and trimming trees, grafting,²⁶ as well as caring for lupins. In many cases, Livnat simply mentions "tree care" without specifying further details.

Among these, it is interesting to dwell, first, on the support for young trees. In the diary of Livnat, various actions appear that may hint at the type of support given to young trees at that time: "tying trees" (for example, 12 November 1929), "setting props [wooden stakes] (for example, 6–10 April 1930), "tying props" (for example, 31 March 1930), and "tying iron wires" (for example, 9 November 1928); in particular, there are several instances of a combination of the use of props and iron wires: "setting props and iron wires" (16–17 August 1928, 19–21 August 1928). Tying branches in young trees is done, at times, for the purpose of guiding their growth. In his memories, Yitzhak Shander, one of the pioneers of Even Yehuda, where many orchards were planted in the early 1930s, talks about working in the orchards and mentions the use of iron wires and props in two different actions: "The work increased and our hands filled it: [...] tying the new branches and guiding their growth, after some time of setting the props and giving the trees a desired shape".²⁷ In a booklet of memories about the early days of Kibbutz Beit Govrin, one of the veteran members of the kibbutz recounts, "When I first entered, the trees were young and the work was tying their branches to iron wires [...] so that the light would reach all the branches and thus increase the yield of fruit" (Goffer n.d., p. 99). However, the connection between the two operations described by Livnat explains that it is the binding of the tree trunk, using irons, to supports intended to support it after planting, a method that is still accepted today (see Figure 8). Thus, for example, in the Kodrinsky orchard, he deals with the setting of supports and the binding of the supports between 29 and 16 August 1928, and on some of the days in that period, the "setting of supports and irons" is also mentioned. This explanation is reinforced by the fact that the diary documents the work in the early days of planting the orchards in Herzliya. It is not possible to know from Livnat's account where the supports were taken from. There are places where trees were grown to take branches from to produce supports; for example, writes Eliezer Shalem, who arrived as a child with his family to Kibbutz Ramat Yohanan in 1940, "We also planted *Ailanthus* trees. These are trees intended for cutting for use as supports for banana trees".²⁸ There are also those who sold ready-made props, and it is reasonable, therefore, that there are those who bought them. For example, advertisements published in newspapers in the 1930s, under the title "Important for orchardists", offered "the finest imported props at cheap prices and convenient terms" (Pozis 1930). Other advertisements offered "to all owners of orchards in the country [...] sand (fertilizer) of all types and sizes as well as composite trees and supports for tree branches" (Bolitan 1934).



Figure 8. Securing a young tree to a wooden stake using iron wire.²⁹

Secondly, it is worth expanding a bit on the cultivation of the *Lupinus*. In the 1920s, various types of grain crops were grown in the Land of Israel. Thus, for example, it is reported from Kfar Saba, in 1926, under the heading “Cereals”, “This year, about 1500 dunams of barley, 200 dunams of wheat, 250 dunams of vetch,³⁰ 700 dunams of *Lupinus*, and 250 dunams of peas were sown” (Doar HaYom 1926). These grains were exported abroad, and during this period, there was an increase in their export; in 1926, there was an increase in the export of sorghum, wheat, vetch, lentils, and legumes, compared to 1925 (Ravelsky 1927). Also, in Herzliya, in 1927, there was a further increase in the export of wheat, sorghum, and barley (Davar 1927). In the early days of settlement in the place, field agriculture was practiced, and the settlers grew *Lupinus*, barley, and clover (Michaeli 1989, p. 100). However, legume crops were not always successful, as Shlomo Rozenfeld testified about his attempts to grow legumes in Herzliya: “I grew lupinus, and when it grew, the Arabs came with their herds. Nothing was left of it. I sowed wheat and a pest came and made holes in it” (D. Goldstein 1998, p. 58). From the record in Livnat’s diary, it appears that at least five other settlers tried growing vetch: Aharonson, Weintal, Pershitz, Kodrinsky, and Rabinzon.

Thirdly, it is worth noting the mention of additional branches of cultivation besides citrus growing. In particular, Livnat mentions in his diary the cultivation of bananas and nurseries. During the spring and May of 1929, Livnat worked on the establishment of

banana plantations for Pershitz and Friedman—planting, opening basins, fertilizing, and weeding. Banana cultivation in Herzliya at that time was based on seedlings brought from Jericho; the orchards yielded crops, but it was difficult to market the fruit, mainly due to competition with the Templars in Sarona (cf. [Glenk 2005](#)), who employed Arab workers at lower wages than those of the Jewish workers employed in Herzliya, and therefore sold the fruit at a lower price ([Migdal-Klein-Bindiger 2005](#), p. 152).

Difficulties were also encountered in the nursery sector. A number of settlers tried their hand at growing citrus seedlings in nurseries, in order to prepare the young seedlings for planting in the orchard, and thus helped in the establishment of orchards where mature trees would be planted. However, by the time the seedlings in the nursery were ready for planting, there was a significant slowdown in the planting of new orchards, and there was no demand for these seedlings. Between the spring and autumn of 1928, Livnat explicitly mentions his work in the Pershitz and Kodrinsky nursery—arranging, planting, cultivating, and watering; from the manner of the registration, it appears that this was one nursery that was shared by the two settlers, as he explicitly mentions, in some cases, “the Pershitz-Kadrinsky nursery” (for example, 8 August 1928). In April 1929, Livnat mentioned planting in Weintal’s nursery twice.

Organization of the Plot. The fourth category in frequency is the organization of the plot, which included tasks related to the management of the plot and its trees. Livnat worked on these tasks for 50 days (10%), which primarily included marking, establishing and fixing fences, and constructing gates. These tasks help us understand that each farmer took care of their own well-marked plot. It is possible that the establishment of fences and gates was intended to protect the crops from thieves and raiders from nearby Arab villages. Arab villages such as Jalil, Sidna-Ali, Arab al-Sawalmeh, and Shubeiki were close to Herzliya, and villages such as Shuqba, Abu-Qishq, Arab al-Qur’an, and Arab Abu-Ghundil were located not far away ([Migdal-Klein-Bindiger 2005](#), p. 9).

Miscellaneous. Finally, Livnat also engaged in tasks that did not fall under any of these categories, in particular the construction of sheds, laying roads, and various arrangements. These works account for a total of 18 days of his work (3%).

It is important to note that none of Livnat’s work is related to fruit care—and it is known that even untrained workers were involved in picking or carrying the fruits ([Migdal-Klein-Bindiger 2005](#), p. 202); the reason for this is that he was involved in establishing the orchards of the settlers, and it took several years for the trees to bear fruit. Indeed, it is interesting to mention that for several days of work in April and May 1929, Livnat explicitly mentioned that he worked on opening canals and marking in “Bassa”, the short name for Bassat al-Qattarah, the large swamp that was drained by the early settlers of Herzliya, which they prepared as agricultural land ([Michaeli 1989](#), pp. 27–28).

5.2.5. Summary of the Nature of the Work

Livnat’s work focused on the establishment of orchards, which reflects the great growth in orchard areas in Herzliya at that time. In 1928, about 1200 dunams of new orchards were planted in the young settlement, an area almost 10 times greater than the area planted in 1927. In 1929, the total area of orchards in the settlement grew by an additional 75% ([Michaeli 1989](#), p. 100). In these young orchards, most of Livnat’s time—almost half of his working days—was spent on irrigation and fertilization. Land preparation and care also required significant attention, as did the care of trees and plants; together, these also filled almost half of his working days.

Analysis of the diary entries allows us to understand how Livnat, a young and unknown worker in Herzliya, found employment with different settlers. By connecting to settlers who belonged to different circles—the owners of large orchards; the people of Bnei Binyamin (cf. [Karniel 2017](#)); the people of Kehilat Zion (cf. [Sandler 1978](#), pp. 187–216); the natives of Petach Tikva—Livnat was able to expand his network of contacts and find employment with settlers other than those who already employed him. Expanding the employment circle was especially important in light of the fact that during this period (1928–

1929), almost 50 new agricultural workers settled in Herzliya ([Migdal-Klein-Bindiger 2005](#), p. 202). In total, over a period of two years, Livnat worked for 19 different settlers, until he was hired by one of them (Persnitz) full time in his orchard.

He later applied the agricultural knowledge he gained during his years of work as an agricultural worker for the settlers of Herzliya on the farm he established with his own hands in Kfar Vitkin, and at the heart of its agricultural lands stood a large orchard. Moreover, just as Livnat embodied the value of Jewish labor in his youth as a Hebrew worker for the settlers of young Herzliya—he maintained this value until the end of his days, and on his agricultural land, he employed only Jewish workers.

5.3. Socio-Political Contexts

After analyzing the content of Livnat's diary, it is time to refer to its very existence and to the way it was kept, which may tell us a lot about him and the contexts in which he operated. Eventually, it will help us to evaluate the value of this historical resource.

5.3.1. Religious–Secular Tension

Referring to the mechanics of Livnat's documentation, it is important to note that he kept logging a row for each Saturday during the long period documented in his diary; however, he never worked on a Saturday. Saturday is a resting day for Jews, anchored in the biblical command, "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy; Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work; but the seventh day is a sabbath unto the LORD thy God, in it thou shalt not do any manner of work" (Exodus 20:7–9). Growing up in a religious family, Livnat practiced a religious life until he left his parents' home at the age of 19. When he left, in order to immigrate to Eretz Israel, he also left the religious life behind him, and for the rest of his life, he lived a secular life. Therefore, it may be assumed that explicitly writing down every Saturday that he did not work was somehow connected to the way he had thought about working days in the new land to which he immigrated, and maybe even helped him keep in touch with his prior life.

5.3.2. Self-Identity as a Laborer

Also, the very fact that Livnat kept a detailed diary may teach us that being a worker was a major component of his self-identity. In that sense, it is important that his personal manners—like his wedding day, the day he was naturalized, and even the day he helped a friend—were kept as part of his working agenda, in the same tabular format, as if he needed to explain (to himself) why he did not work on these days. This interpretation is supported by the fact that during the period documented in Livnat's work diary, the 1929 Riots were provoked ([Winder 2012](#)); however, they are only mentioned briefly in Livnat's diary. Therefore, although being a young man (26 years old at that time), Livnat did not join the fighting forces and kept working as long as he could; hence, he probably saw himself first and foremost as one who must support the fight for conquering the land by working it and not by fighting for it.

Interestingly, later, when he was building his own farm while settling in Kfar Vitkin, his documentation becomes sparse and anecdotal in his diary keeping. So, we distinguish between the importance he attached to being a Halutz, a pioneer who takes part in conquering the land by working it, and his self-image as a landowner. Putting a meaning on Livnat's documentation helps us understand his personality and the way he perceived his role in the social complex in which he lived, which resonates with [Fulbrook and Rublack's \(2010\)](#) ideas.

These observations lead us to discuss two further topics: the depiction of the riots in Livnat's diary, which will help us evaluate this document as a historical resource; and the use of the term Halutz (pioneer) when referring to Jewish agricultural laborers at that time. We will discuss these now.

5.3.3. Misrepresentation of Riots

The brief mention of the riots in Livnat's diary should be looked at from a broader perspective, which would also help us evaluate it—and, maybe, work diaries at large—as a historical source. As can be understood from Section 2 above, which laid the historical and terminological grounds for our analysis, the history of Jewish settlement in Eretz Israel at the turn of the 19th century and during the first half of the 20th century (and until the present) has been strongly associated with violence, either as a motivation for it or as a result of it. Pogroms aimed at Jewish people were the reason for many of them to emigrate from Eastern Europe in the first place, and riots targeting Jewish settlers in Eretz Israel were not a rare event, as core issues of ownership of the land have not been resolved. In a way, the Jewish agricultural settlement in Eretz Israel in the pre-State era was a way of resolving this issue *de facto* before resolving it *de jure*. The very term “Conquer of Labor” uses in Hebrew the word “Kibush” [כיבוש], which also translates to “occupation”; that is, conquering the labor is a form of occupying the land, and hence, settling may be seen as a form of occupation, a practice that is still used today by Jewish people in this region (Galchinsky 2004; Lacalle 2019).

Therefore, these two large phenomena—conquering the labor of the land and occupying it—are intertwined. However, Livnat's diary only represents the former and almost ignores the latter. One can argue that Livnat simply logged in his work diary whatever he was doing at the time, not what he felt. Even so, it teaches us a lesson about the role of work diaries as a historical source. Setting aside all that is not relevant to the mere work—even if the mere action of working is strongly tied to other aspects of life—is a limitation of this type of source. This is not to say that work diaries are somehow biased, but rather to emphasize that history should be looked at from various perspectives and should rely upon various types of sources (Liu et al. 2023).

5.3.4. Re-Examining the Term Halutz (Pioneer)

Jewish settlers to Eretz Israel—like Livnat—were seen as Halutzim (pioneers) [חלוצים], as is mentioned in Section 2. The Hebrew term appears in the Bible a few times, and although it is often used to simply describe armed men, it is also mentioned in at least one biblical story in the sense of being a first; it is used this way in the Book of Joshua, Chapter 6, where the Battle of Jericho is described. For the walls of Jericho to fall—and hence, enable the Israelites to enter the city—God commanded Joshua to encircle the city walls; following God's command, seven priests led the Israelites, with the Ark of the Covenant in front of them and all the people behind them; however it is written that the Halutz went “before the ark of the Lord” (Joshua 6:7) and “before the priests” (Joshua 6:9).

It is following this story and in this sense that the Hebrew term Halutz has been constantly used to describe the pioneers who immigrated to Eretz Israel in the late 19th century and early 20th century. However, there is an internal contradiction in using this term over and over, as a term that refers to the first people to do something cannot refer to other people who did the same thing later. In the context of the agricultural settlements analyzed here, it is clear from Livnat's diary that he worked in lands that were already cultivated by Jewish settlers who did it before him.

Importantly, the term Halutzim was originally used retroactively to describe the Second Aliyah immigrants, and today, it is more broadly used to refer to those who immigrated during the pre-State waves. An even broader definition was mentioned by Baruch Azaniya, a former Israeli Knesset member, who said that “Anyone who does anything good and useful in this country is a pioneer, all the more so one who undertakes difficult duties and assignments” (quoted in (Kabalo 2009, p. 93), as part of a broader discussion of the term “pioneering” in the Israeli context).

That is, Livnat, as a laborer in Herzliya's orchards, and as is clearly evident by his own documentation, was not a pioneer in the very basic meaning of this term. We therefore learn from his diary about the misleading use of this term, maybe as a way of normalizing the practice of settlement through agriculture.

6. Discussion

In this article, we present a fine-grained analysis of a detailed work diary of Mordechai Livnat (Libman), who worked as a laborer in the establishment of orchards in the young settlement of Herzliya—in Eretz Israel—between 1928 and 1931. This unique source allowed us to glimpse into Livnat's working life during these years, and through it, we were exposed to the lives of Jewish workers at that time. Through the insights gained from the diary, we were able to break down the daily routine of these workers, and to expose the difficulties they encountered, at the head of which was job insecurity, which was mainly manifested in their dependence on the weather and the need to work for many employers. In addition, we learned about the agricultural work methods that were in use at that time—before the penetration of technological developments into the industry—which were mostly manual, and about their impact on the daily routine of the agricultural worker. Lastly, we put Livnat's diary in the limelight and wondered about its very existence and about the meaning of keeping it the way it was kept, considering broader socio-political structures.

The source presented here, along with its detailed analysis, serves as an example of what can be learned from the historical treasures held by many families. Carefully examining such gems, while triangulating information they reveal with other relevant sources, may shed new light on our relatives; this could be done by referring to, e.g., old photographs (e.g., [Taylor 2013](#)), historical documents, old letters, diary entries, or book dedications (e.g., [Dix 2009](#)), just to name a few; it is possible to learn from them much more than the eye sees and the heart feels. By doing so, genealogists can improve their familiarity with their relatives, particularly with those whom they never knew personally, thereby maintaining intergenerational continuity; this continuity is also one of the unique motivations for engaging in genealogical research in the first place ([HersHKovitz and Hardof-Jaffe 2017](#)).

In a sense, the analysis presented here demonstrates a process inverse to that of writing life stories in genealogical research using historical documents. While the process proposed in this article is inductive, as it tells the story of a certain sector during a certain time using an individual's perspective, the one commonly used in life stories is deductive, as it takes the relevant historical events and weaves them into the personal story. The deductive approach is also evident in large-scale projects; for example, the Israel Revealed project,³¹ which archives images from family albums in a dedicated online database, offers—as [He-myan and Yogev \(2018\)](#) put it—a solid virtual space for national symbols and visual representations represented in local and personal memory. That is, first there were national symbols, and only then was their representation in personal memory chosen. The inductive approach presented here demonstrates a reverse movement, and therefore emphasizes the complexity and importance of the connections between the macro and the micro in historical research ([Cohen 2015](#)), and how genealogy can help bridge over these seemingly separated levels.

Looking back on our protagonist's story, we can identify the place and time at which his agricultural knowledge and work values—which might have been sowed during his time with HeHalutz, pre-immigration to Eretz Israel—were cultivated, during his years as a young agricultural laborer. Most likely, this significant experience helped him when he applied to be accepted into the young settlement of Kfar Vitkin, which was founded in 1930. The founding group of Kfar Vitkin engaged in agricultural training in the years before settling the land, and after settling it, they added additional members who had experience in work, particularly in agricultural work. Most of the new members were pioneers who worked in draining swamps and laying roads, as well as in agricultural work in settlements throughout the country ([Meltzer 2000](#)).

But beyond acquiring knowledge, it can also be assumed that the establishment of the young orchards in young Herzliya contributed to the formation of Livnat's self-identity as a farmer. The famous Jewish poet Shaul Tchernichovsky (1875–1943) made a clear connection between the land and the essence of the person living on it, between nature and

the man surrounded by it, writing, “Man is nothing but a little plot of land/Man is nothing but the image of his native landscape”.³² Emerging scientific research suggests that Tchernichovsky’s words are not just a metaphor but have empirical truth to them. Strand et al. (2014) summarized their research on self-identity formation in relation to agricultural practices as follows: “The agricultural landscape encompasses physical fields but, as with landscapes generally [...] goes beyond these physical settings to include the ‘conventional and normative meanings’ created as a result of day-to-day activities on the land” (p. 370).

In the context of the Israeli story, the importance of this identity, which connects a person to a place, is heightened, as through the lens of agricultural work it is possible to identify the migration paths and settlement patterns of communities, and hence, it is also possible to characterize identities based on these patterns. Thus, for example, several settlement groups emerged from among the workers of Herzliya, which later established other settlements (e.g., Avuka, Alonei Abba, Kfar Glikson, Kfar Ruppim, Mishmar HaSharon, Nitzanim, Sa’ad, Rishpon, and Shefayim) (Michaeli 1989). We also recall that one of the prominent groups among the founders of Herzliya was composed of members of Bnei Binyamin—an organization led by the second generation of the founders of the settlements of the First Aliyah and leaders of the Jewish Egyptian elite—which operated, among other things, out of a desire to promote political and social ideologies, such as non-socialist Zionism (E. Goldstein 2020) and women’s status (Karniel 2017).

That is, by constructing a genealogy of settlement in the Land of Israel—and later in the State of Israel—it is possible to examine an ideological flow to locate their sources on the one hand, and the changes that have occurred in them over the years on the other. For example, analyzing the development of the northern suburbs of Haifa (HaKrayot), it is possible to understand the impact of the founders and their ideologies on the growth rate of the settlements, their population composition, and the commercial services within them, even decades after the establishment of the settlements in this region (Hayut 1979). The story of Kfar Vitkin, the settlement where Mordechai Livnat settled after leaving Herzliya, was greatly influenced by the ideology of its founders, so that over the decades of the village’s existence, one can see the interaction between three forces: principles, ways to implement them in practice, and reality (Meltzer 2000). This shift from researching individuals to researching communities still lies under the broad umbrella of genealogy research (Herskovitz 2012), and it demonstrates how a genealogy exploration that begins with a single source can extend to surprising directions.

Doing so, it is important to recall that, similar to any historical source, the one presented here bears some challenges when it comes to analyzing and interpreting the data that it carries (cf. Briggs and Bauman 1992). Intertextually connecting Livnat’s register, his biography, and the ancient biblical scripts is a way of making sense of Livnat’s choice to keep a work diary and of what he kept in it. However, it is also a means for critically examining this item as a historical source and for understanding broader historical issues.

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Notes

- ¹ An English translation has been made available by the Posen Library of Jewish Culture and Civilization, <https://www.posenlibrary.com/entry/call-jewish-youth-whose-hearts-lie-their-people-and-zion> [retrieved 28 July 2024].
- ² One dunam today equals 1000 square meters, about a quarter acre; during the ruling of the Ottoman Empire and the British Mandate in Eretz Israel—until around 1928—one dunam equaled about 919 square meters.
- ³ List of immigrants on the ship “Corinthia”, within “List of Immigrants 1923—Jaffa, Haifa”, Central Zionist Archives, File 555/S104.
- ⁴ Personal questionnaire—Mordechai Livnat, Kfar Vitkin Archive.
- ⁵ A digital copy is deposited in the Herzliya City Archive.
- ⁶ As mentioned in the above short biography, Livnat’s father was a Hebrew teacher, and Livnat probably acquired the Hebrew language in his childhood home, before immigrating to Eretz Israel.
- ⁷ Starting in 1927, the Palestine pound served as the official currency of the Mandate Government in the Land of Israel, with 1 mil being 1/1000 part of the pound.
- ⁸ <https://ims.data.gov.il/> (accessed on 28 July 2024).
- ⁹ During the documented period, it only occurred once (in 1930) that the holidays of Sukkot and Simchat Torah did not fall on Shabbat, and only then did Yavne enjoy 47 days of freedom.
- ¹⁰ In the years 1929 and 1931, Livnat only worked for two days of the holiday, while, in 1930, he did not work for an entire week (including the intermediate Shabbat).
- ¹¹ In 1929, Livnat did not work for two days during Purim; in 1930, he did not work on Purim itself; and, in 1931, he did not work for three days during Purim.
- ¹² Additionally, in 1929 and 1930, Livnat only worked for one day of the holiday, while, in 1928, he traveled to celebrate the holiday in Nahalal (as noted in the journal), and therefore did not work for three days.
- ¹³ Station No. 134351, Herzliya, School, geographic longitude coordinates: north 32.1644°, east 34.8360°; height: 60 m above sea level, as appears in the metadata file for the meteorological data archive, <https://ims.data.gov.il> (accessed on 28 July 2024).
- ¹⁴ We also checked rainfall records for the day before the workday to address situations when rain fell during the night hours, before midnight, and possibly influenced the work the next morning.
- ¹⁵ Since the months of April 1928 (the first month in the journal) and December 1931 (the last month in the journal) were not fully documented in the journal, they were excluded from this calculation.
- ¹⁶ The average calculation for the months May–October referred to four seasons (1928–1931), and the calculation for the months November–April referred to three seasons (1930/31, 1929/30, 1928/29) only.
- ¹⁷ The exchange rate of the dollar on 16 February 2021 stood at USD 1 equal to ILS 24.3. Source: [Bank of Israel Exchange Rates], <https://www.boi.org.il/he/Markets/ExchangeRates/Pages/Default.aspx> (accessed on 30 June 2024).
- ¹⁸ American Zion Commonwealth, a Zionist settlement corporation founded in 1914 by American Zionists for acquiring lands for Jewish settlement in Eretz Israel (cf. Sandler 1978, pp. 187–216).
- ¹⁹ The name of another employer appears only once alongside the name of another: on 24 December 29, he worked for “Rabinowitz-Krakovski”; while Rabinowitz is mentioned a few more times, Krakovski is mentioned only in this context, so we do not refer to him in the analysis.
- ²⁰ According to the testimony of Boris Dev Semitt, grandson of Dov Pershitz, in a conversation with the author, March 2021.
- ²¹ The main Zionist paramilitary organization that operated for the Jewish settlers during the British Mandate.
- ²² An organization that was established in 1921 by farmers of the First Aliyah villages—named after Binyamin Ze’ev Hertzl—aimed at helping farmers; later, the organization turned into a company that purchased land and built up new settlements (cf. Karniel 2017).
- ²³ Advertisement of the business “A. Hirschberg”, appearing in the newspaper “Haaretz” on 26 November 1925, indicating that agricultural supplies, especially “Chemical Fertilizer”, can be found there (p. 4); in contrast, in the article “The Levant Livestock Professions” by Dr. M. Zagorodsky, published in the newspaper “Haaretz” on 9 May 1929, the writer mentions that the suitable conditions for vegetable cultivation are “light soil, plenty of good water for irrigation, organic fertilizer” (p. 3).
- ²⁴ The photo was taken between 1910 and 1920. Archives for the History of Rehovot, Kafra Collection, from the Pikiwiki website. [Retrieved 4 June 2024] [Link] (<https://www.pikiwiki.org.il/image/view/1491>).
- ²⁵ Photographed by the author at the Herzliya History Museum, March 2021.
- ²⁶ Regarding trains—see above, in detail, about the first category: irrigation and compost.
- ²⁷ As stated on the website of “Beit Yechiel”, the First Homes Stone of Judah, <http://rishonim-e-y.org.il/> [Retrieved 4 June 2024].
- ²⁸ As stated on the website of Kibbutz Ramat Yohanan, at <http://www.ramat-yohanan.com/siteb/subpages/haklaut/pardes-mata.htm> (retrieved on 7 May 2021 from yohanan.com).
- ²⁹ Photographed by the author in a field in Sde Varburg, May 2021.

- ³⁰ Referring to a pulse, which is a type of garden crop.
- ³¹ <https://israelalbum.org.il> [in Hebrew] (retrieved 17 June 2024).
- ³² The author's translation to part of the poem "Man is nothing but..."

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