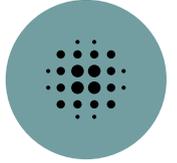


ONE BIOGRAPHY, MULTIPLE PLACES: THE LIFE AND WORK OF SHMUEL HUGO BERGMANN BETWEEN PRAGUE AND JERUSALEM (1883–1975)



PANEL 4

Bergmann in Palestine and Israel



BOAZ HUSS

Shmuel Hugo Bergmann and the Formation of Israeli Esoteric and Alternative Spiritual Culture

From an early age, Hugo Bergmann found much interest in mysticism, esotericism, and eastern religions. In Prague, he was introduced by Berta Fanta (his mother in law) to the Theosophical Society and became acquainted with Rudolph Steiner, the founder of the Anthroposophical Society. After immigrating to Palestine/Israel, Bergmann continued to be interested in Steiner's teaching. Later, he became interested and became affiliated with many other modern religious and spiritual teachings, including Spiritualism and Parapsychology, the traditional school of René Guénon and Frithjof Schoun, the teachings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother (Mirra Alfasa), and the Fourth Way of George Gurdieff and Peter Ouspensky.

Bergmann played a pivotal role in introducing modern esoteric teachings to the Israeli public and in the formation of modern alternative spiritual movements in Israel. Bergmann published articles about modern spiritual teachings in Israeli newspapers and Hebrew scholarly journals, translated and published Hebrew translations of modern esoteric writings and was involved in the formation of Israeli branches of esoteric movements and the early circles of Israeli spiritual seekers.

The proposed lecture will discuss and summarize the central role of Shmuel Hugo Bergmann in the formation of Israeli esoteric and alternative spiritual culture in Israel.



OLAF GLÖCKNER

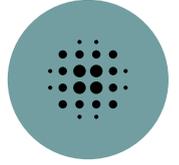
MARCELA MENACHEM ZOUFALÁ

Hugo Bergmann between Philosophy, the Zionist Dream and the Search for Justice

Hugo Bergmann has been one of the most brilliant and successful intellectuals, academics and Zionist visionaries in the Yishuv in Palestine and in the early State of Israel.



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Bergmann in Palestine and Israel

After Aliya from Prague and doing basics and formative work for the Jewish National Library in Jerusalem, he started teaching philosophy at the Hebrew University, got his own chair in 1935 and became the Dean of the University shortly after. Though, at no point in his successful and dynamic life, did Bergman become smug or insensitive to his surroundings. When, for example, he became a co-founder of Brit Shalom – among others together with friends like Martin Buber –, searching for peace, reconciliation with the Arabs and even a binational state, motivation derived from his intellect, spirituality, and political intuition at the same time. But how did Bergmann deal with Zionist idealism and visions of (culturally) changing the world in his early years in Palestine on the one hand, and the persistence of Israeli-Palestinian violence and cultural rifts across Israeli society on the other? Was there a derivative in Bergmann's conceptual ideas for Eretz Israel, and how did close friends react to his resolute commitment? These questions shall be punctually answered by means of Bergmann's diaries, especially the late ones.



ZVI LESHEM

Shmuel Hugo Bergmann: To be a librarian in 1920 – What did that mean?

Shmuel Hugo Bergmann is best known for his work as a philosopher and scholar of philosophy. However, another significant aspect of his professional life was that of a librarian, both in Prague at Charles University and after his Aliyah in 1920, as the director of the Jewish National Library. Bergmann viewed the "Bet HaSeforim" as an important cultural institution for the "New Yishuv" and it figured prominently in his own vision of a secular Zionist cultural revolution in the Land of Israel. As the Director of the Jerusalem National Library (later Jewish National and University Library) between the years of 1920 – 1935. Bergmann modernized the library, significantly expanded its collections, and publicized it among world Jewry. He brought great scholars to work there, including Gershom Scholem (who revamped the classification system for Judaica collections) in 1923, and oversaw its transition from a grandiose but rundown version of a public library, to the main academic research library in Palestine.

In this paper, I survey and analyze Bergmann's work as the head of the nascent Jewish National and University Library. Based upon Bergmann's own writings and lectures regarding his work at the Library as well as archival material from that period, I hope to shed light on this first period of Bergmann's life in Mandate Palestine as it intersects with his other activities and with other contemporary figures. Additionally, I will analyze Bergmann's view of his work at the Library as being part of the fulfilment of his own Zionist vision. Thus, I hope to shed light on this largely overlooked aspect of his life and career.