

## **ISRAEL'S CHANGING PUBLIC RELATIONS INDUSTRY IN A DYNAMIC MEDIA REALITY: STRUCTURE, TRENDS, TACTICS, AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THEORY**

OSNAT ROTH-COHEN AND TAMAR LAHAV

This research focuses on the effects of new media on Israel's public relations industry. It reports the results of a quantitative content analysis and in-depth interviews carried out during three data collection periods: 2013, 2015, and 2017. The findings demonstrate alterations in local public relations industry practice due to the changing media environment and the increasing popularity of social media, and identify unique work methods in the digital era. The findings also reveal vast use of an undisclosed toolkit of public relations tactics that challenge the classic two-way symmetrical communication model, thus raising ethical issues.

## **"WE ARE FRIENDS ON FACEBOOK": CHARACTERIZING THE ACTIVITIES OF MEDIA FIGURES IN ISRAEL IN THE AGE OF SOCIAL NETWORKS**

TAL LAOR

Most media figures in Israel and the world today operate on two platforms: the traditional media and the Internet, including social networks and apps. While these platforms are sometimes parallel and separate, they have similar characteristics and there is leakage between them.

The research first examined the activities, worldviews, and choices of media figures active on both platforms, on three levels: (a) content transfer, (b) content, and (c) media personality. The study sought to characterize media figures through in-depth semi-structured interviews with sixteen of these personalities who were active in both traditional media and social networks. Half of them had begun in the traditional media and then integrated into social networks, and half had started out on social networks and later integrated into the traditional media.

It was found that the choice of a platform to transfer content is related to the age of the audience exposed to the content and affects the degree of trust in the media person. In addition, authentic activity alongside direct contact on social media increases trust in the media person, influencing their choice of platform.

In addition, content properties vary across platforms; thus, on social networks, content is short and focused, but its effect depends on the amount of mentions, "likes," and "shares." In regard to media personality, it was found that personal exposure is legitimate content due to demand from the target audience, and is therefore inevitable and an integral part of the media figure.

**“WE HAVE A SIGNAL FROM BLOOMFIELD”:  
*SHIRIM USHEARIM* CELEBRATES FIFTY YEARS—THE  
GREAT REVOLUTION OF RADIO SPORTS BROADCASTING  
IN ISRAEL**

YEHIEL LIMOR AND ILAN TAMIR

In 1970, the Israeli state radio station Kol Yisrael began airing live broadcasts from top local football matches held on Saturdays. The broadcasts were part of a program called *Songs and Goals* (*Shirim Ushearim*), which for many years had a significant impact on Israeli leisure culture, on the weekend (Sabbath) habits of tens of thousands of families, on radio listening patterns, and on the culture of sports consumption in the country. This article tells the story of the radio program, which became a kind of tribal ceremony; determines its place and role in Israeli sport and the media; and examines both its impact on the Israeli public and media and its legacy. Over time, the reporting styles of the broadcasts, which were accompanied by linguistic inventions and refinements, even became part of national folklore.

**CONTRIBUTION OF THE MORNING EXERCISE PROGRAM  
TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF ISRAELI BODY CULTURE**

UDI CARMI AND YAIR GALILY

The shaping of an Israeli body culture, as part of the national revival of the Jewish people, was expressed through its integration into Hebrew education and culture. One of the means that contributed most to its assimilation among citizens was the radio. The current article sheds light on Michael Ben Hanan's morning exercise program, which was an integral part of the listening habits of Hebrew speakers for almost four decades and contributed to building national consciousness in the field of body culture and adopting a healthy lifestyle. The article traces the popularity of the program, which began airing in the mid-1940s, and examines its status in the public eye, as well as reactions to it. The study shows that despite the program's high ratings, only a few exercised during the sessions. The program successfully survived the beginning of the television age, which began in Israel in May 1968, but lost its luster in the 1970s. In the third decade of the state's existence, the shared identity that characterized Israeli society loosened, and the program, which began broadcasting on the joint initiative of the Department of Physical Training and the Voice of Jerusalem (later Kol Yisrael), failed to attract listeners.

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## **IMMIGRANT, LANGUAGE, NEWSPAPER: *DAVAR LA-OLEH* AS A PROPONENT OF HEBREW AND THE ZIONIST LABOR MOVEMENT**

MEIR CHAZAN

*Davar la-Oleh* was a “vowelled” supplement for newly-arrived Jewish immigrants to Eretz Israel. It was included with *Davar*, the newspaper of the General Federation of Jewish Labor in Palestine (the Histadrut). Published from 1935 to 1940, in the midst of the Fifth Aliyah and the Arab Uprising, it is portrayed in this article as an engaged player in shaping national consciousness, due to its emphasis on the importance of mastering Hebrew and the functions of the language at a time of existential distress. The main argument is that the linguistic-cultural arena, in which *Davar la-Oleh* enjoyed a respectable place for a limited time, was one of three meaningful sub-settings in the confrontation between Arabs and Jews, the others being the security front and the political stage. During this period, *Davar la-Oleh* served, both consciously and unconsciously, as one of the barricades behind which the Zionist Labor Movement in Eretz Israel aspired to weather the challenges of the time. Under these circumstances, the Hebrew language and its uses were important during a period when *Davar la-Oleh* was a microcosm of sorts in shaping and reflecting the methods used to engage and mobilize the Yishuv public.

*Davar la-Oleh* was one of several manifestations of the vitality, availability, and accessibility of information, dressed in the garb of values that sought to accelerate and intensify the construction of a Hebrew-speaking national culture in Eretz Israel. The patterns of thinking and ways of contemplating the local reality that emerged from its articles and its retelling of events represented the state of mind and priorities of Socialist Zionism. The Hebrew language and its uses, which *Davar la-Oleh* underscored from a multidimensional perspective that purported to embrace all levels of Zionism, were instruments of mobilization and were themselves mobilized for the express goal of advancing the Mapai worldview. The cardinal objective of *Davar la-Oleh* was to reflect the virtue of solidarity that the Yishuv public was urged to display at that time of trial and crisis, with emphasis on recently-arrived immigrants. Advising the newcomers on the forms of identification expected of them and elucidating the nature of the contribution that they were to make toward fulfilling the vision of building the “state in the making” were perceived as stages toward attaining the goals of the national struggle.

immigrants built the Palestinian and Israeli theater and shaped its political messages within Jewish society and without. They held the first theater performances, initially in schools, under French influence and funded by the Baron Rothschild and the Alliance Israélite, and among groups of workers and in settlements, until the National Theater was imported in its entirety from revolutionary Russia in the twentieth century. The Hebrew press, another medium of modernization in Jewish society, reflected the complexities of the Jewish theater and used it, in its coverage and criticism, as a political and social tool for promoting its ideas and perceptions. The press dealt with the theater in general, with the rare Hebrew theater, and, reluctantly, with its rival, the popular and initially more successful “Yiddish” theater, which was usually regarded by “purists” with contempt and even resentment. The new European nationalism of the nineteenth century also found cultural expression in the revival of the theater in national languages. This was not so in Judaism, where its relative flowering took place in the Yiddish language, which writers and critics of the early Hebrew press, but also representatives of popular Jewish culture, regarded as a subculture—useless (“usefulness” being a key term of the Haskala in the spirit of religious scholarship)—and even socially harmful, giving questionable pleasure to questionable types on the fringes of society.

Traditional suspicion of the theater, in general, was also part of the work of the Maskilim toward modernization and acculturation. The great Enlightenment poet and journalist Y. L. Gordon, who opposed the intention of his newspaper *HaMelitz* to become a daily instead of a weekly, considered news from the world of the theater as something the Hebrew reader did not need to know about, alongside that of the church, gambling, and reform in agriculture.

However, only one decade later, the founder of the Zionist movement and visionary of the Jewish state, Theodor Herzl, was actually a journalist and playwright.

The journalist Y. Zak from Warsaw compared the relationship between the Maskilim and Orthodox Jews to the Jewish theater as follows:

The Maskilim who have already seen non-Jewish actors and their skills at enthralling the public ... would consider Jewish actors to be amateurs, and their performance child’s play. The Orthodox would see in theater a source of bribery and corruption of good manners, so they would stay away from it, and curse and swear with strong language.

However, the theater and its criticism were a means of political expression, even for those who opposed it: internally—for political and social criticism of the structures and content of Jewish society, and its current affairs and changes; and outside, for representing—often actually and not just textually—the main themes of external threat, oppression, and anti-Semitism, and sometimes also tolerance and intercultural cooperation.

## **“HEALTH FILMS” AND ATTITUDES TOWARD THEM IN THE US GENERAL AND JEWISH PRESS, 1910–1918**

Yael Ohad-Karny

During the outbreak of pandemics such as tuberculosis about a century ago, and in the absence of vaccines and medicines to treat such diseases, the campaign for instructing the public in better hygiene and social distancing remained among the few tools that public medicine actually developed and utilized. The subject of hygiene awareness and access to information for vulnerable populations, especially non-native speakers, has not been thoroughly researched. Could it be that the right way to deal with epidemics was, and still is, to increase hygiene awareness and wait until the “evil decree” passes, or until the cause of the disease is identified and a vaccine against it developed?

In the early twentieth century, immigrants in the United States were the weakest group in many ways, including an inability to survive economically, a lack of awareness of the need to maintain hygiene, and poor health; furthermore, they were accused of violating social order, both directly and indirectly. “Health films” were part of the health authorities’ efforts to prevent epidemics, but they did not resonate widely among veteran immigrants. Until the Spanish flu outbreak, 1918–19, the general and Jewish press in the United States had dealt with tuberculosis and other pandemics, but discussion of the importance of visual information for immigrants, such as the use of films, was rare and sporadic. Despite the support of prominent Reform rabbi Stephen S. Wise for anti-epidemic advocacy films, newspaper editors and opinion leaders in Jewish and non-Jewish organizations and communities were not convinced of the importance of such means, and did not urge their communities to “go to the show.” I will analyze the possible reasons for this avoidance and in contrast, will present leaders who thought “outside the box.”

## **POLITICS AND CRITICISM OF THE THEATER IN THE EARLY HEBREW PRESS IN EUROPE**

Gideon Kouts

The theater in Jewish society, which in most places in Europe and most of the time was fundamentally oppressed, constituted a political and revolutionary instrument and institution in relation to society as a whole. As early as the sixteenth century, the work of the first Hebrew playwright Yehuda Somo de Portaleone (1527–90) was directed against the rabbinical tradition, which was hostile to the theater. But a significant revolution came about with the appearance of the theater—and with it, writing about the theater and references to it in the Jewish and Hebrew press—in modern late nineteenth century Jewish society in Central and Eastern Europe. Then, there emerged the second Haskala movement, which was more political than the first, and later cultural autonomism, on the one hand, and the Jewish National Movement, or Zionism, on the other. Out of the latter came the *aliyoth* to Eretz Israel, whose

## **JEWISH AND ARAB CHILDREN IN ISRAEL IN TIMES OF COVID-19—CHALLENGES, KNOWLEDGE, AND MEDIA**

YUVAL GOZANSKY AND HAMA ABU-KISHK

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic changed the lives and affected the wellbeing of children in Israel. The current research aims to examine how Jewish and Arab children aged 9–13 experienced the crisis as a result of lockdown, physical distancing, and closed schools during the outbreak of the first wave of COVID-19 in April 2020. The study investigates children's emotions and their perceptions and levels of knowledge, as well as the role of the media in their lives at that time.

This research is part of an international project encompassing children from 42 countries, organized by the International Central Institute for Youth and Educational Television (IZI) in Munich. In Israel, 103 children answered the questionnaire in Hebrew or Arabic. Quantitative and qualitative analysis was applied, and the data was later compared with the international findings. Accordingly, Israeli children developed a range of tactics for overcoming stress. They gathered information from the media, met friends, and tackled fear. While children from the Arab society tended to believe fake news more, Hebrew-speaking children pointed out the lack of information adapted for children in the media. On a theoretical level, the research findings provide additional knowledge about the wellbeing of children in times of crisis, and offer applicable strategies for dealing with that challenge.

## **FEAR AS A HISTORICAL AGENT: MALARIA FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF YESOD HAMAALA RESIDENTS**

MAYA DUANY

In 1924 the British Mandate authority submitted a report to the International Health Board about health conditions in Palestine. Accordingly, the Hula Valley was the unhealthiest region in Eretz Israel and one of the most malaria-infested places in the known world. The report recommended comprehensive drainage of the lake and adjacent swamps to make the valley suitable for human settlement. In 1951, the young State of Israel embarked on an initiative to drain the Hula. Yet by then malaria was no longer claiming lives, as DDT, already in use since 1945, had eradicated the disease by chemical means. In parallel, a nature reserve was established adjacent to the localities that had been hit by malaria. In this article, I examine this topic from the perspective of the fear felt among residents of the agricultural community of Yesod Hamaala who had suffered the effects of malaria and did not understand why a swamp had been left on the borders of the nature reserve. For this purpose, based on newspapers, primary sources, and research literature covering the period 1884–1967, I try to reconstruct the malaria experience of the residents, on the one hand, and their knowledge about the disease and how they dealt with it in the Hula Valley, on the other. Finally, I investigate whether there was a rational basis for their fear; that is, even though malaria had been wiped out, could it not return to the Hula Valley?

In the second part of the article, I study the confrontation between the daily *Haaretz*, representing the Zionist establishment, and *Doar Hayom*, on the issue of fake news. *Haaretz* accused its opponent of deliberately disseminating fake news in order to increase its distribution and pander to political and economic interests. For its part, *Doar Hayom* claimed *Haaretz* was doing the same thing.

As the 1920s came to an end, fake news increased in the Hebrew press, especially in *Doar Hayom*, and became even more politically oriented.

## **“WE OFTEN DIDN’T TELL THE TRUTH”: “FAKE NEWS” IN ISRAELI MILITARY *HASBARA***

RAFI MANN

In recent decades “cognitive warfare” has been a key element in military and political activities around the world, with extensive use made of the new media. Along with its innovative components, cognitive warfare also includes the use of deception, a tactic employed since the dawn of history. From its early years, in Israel, too, senior members of the political and military leadership adopted Winston Churchill’s adage: “In wartime, truth is so precious that she should always be attended by a bodyguard of lies.”

The article presents and examines a series of events in which the media was used in Israel to convey incorrect information for the sake of deception, from the first decade of the state to the last few years. Such activity was intended to serve several purposes: a) deception for operational military purposes, such as was carried out via the press on the eve of the 1956 Sinai War, to create the impression that Israel would attack Jordan and not Egypt; and b) military-related deception intended for *hasbara* and diplomatic purposes.

In most cases, the IDF spokesman issued false statements following retaliatory operations across the borders of Israel, which today may be defined as “fake news.” Although these were planned military operations, they were presented in some cases as incidents in which the other side was the first to open fire or in which Israeli forces inadvertently crossed the border and were attacked.

The article also presents some discussions that dealt with the problematic nature of disseminating false information. Not only did dovish politician Moshe Sharett object to the release of false information but David Ben-Gurion and Moshe Dayan, too, were aware of the damaging effects of fake news. “Today people neither in Israel nor abroad believe our announcements on the incidents,” Dayan said in 1954. “The real reason in my opinion is that we often did not tell the truth.” Two years later, Ben-Gurion, who initiated some of the fake news press releases, said: “Others hear this and know that these are lies. I am ready to be hated or despised, but not to be seen as a liar.”

its production, and especially who it believes and who it does not believe is spreading fake news, and based on what information it makes decisions. The question of trust in the media and their ability to check and verify information is critical for determining its quality. The new media that allow anyone to be a creator and not just a passive consumer add an essential component to information sources. On the one hand, the new media have the power to refute misleading information, but on the other, they are also distributors of false information. Hence, the public's attitude to news coming from the social media networks is critical in deciding whether to adopt the information and act on it.

The findings of a survey conducted for this study indicate that the public considers the mainstream media to be less to blame than other media for disseminating fake news, while the leading distributors of fake news are social media networks; family and friends rank above the legacy media as being the most trustworthy in regard to the spread of fake news. The mainstream media are valued more than others as being able to prevent the spread of fake news. In the last place in terms of credibility for spreading "fake news" are spokespersons, public relations people, politicians, and social media networks. Journalists are considered less responsible for creating fake news. An interesting detail regarding journalists found in the study was the difference in assessing their degree of accountability for creating fake news between those who reported a political tendency to the right and those to the left: the former think journalists are more responsible for creating fake news, a perception that explains the rightists' view of journalists as "leftists."

These findings imply that the mainstream media can and should play an active role in preventing dissemination, checking facts, and neutralizing the influence of fake news, thus fulfilling their essential role in the democratic discourse.

## **FAKE NEWS IN THE HEBREW PRESS IN PALESTINE IN THE LATE OTTOMAN AND EARLY MANDATE PERIOD**

OUZI ELYADA

This article examines the phenomenon of "fake news" in the Hebrew public sphere in Palestine in the late Ottoman and early Mandate period (1908–28). Based on *Ha-Zvi Ha-Or*, edited by Eliezer Ben Yehuda and his son Itamar Ben-Avi, and *Ha-Herut*, edited by Avraham Elmalih and Haim Ben Attar, I argue that fake news was closely related to the birth of the popular press in Palestine following the Young Turk Revolution in 1908. The popular press used fake news to spice up the newspaper and increase distribution; however, fake news also served local political and economic interests. Following the outbreak of World War I, the Hebrew press was flooded with fake news.

Under the British Mandate, most of the former editors of the popular Hebrew press joined forces to found the "yellow" newspaper *Doar Hayom*, which was accused of being the main source of fake news in the 1920s.

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## **ISRAELI ELECTIONS AND THEIR EXTREME SENSITIVITY TO FAKE NEWS**

OFIR BAREL

In recent years, democracies around the world have been dealing—in theory or in practice—with the threat of foreign influence, including the dissemination of fake news as a means of electoral intervention. However, the challenge facing Israel is particularly significant due to an unusual combination of political and social circumstances.

The article demonstrates how three characteristics—the absence of a long-term policy against the spread of fake news, the great impact of small voter numbers on the outcome of elections, and the existence of various disputes in Israeli society—may render public opinion and elections in Israel particularly sensitive to the malicious dissemination of fake news.

It also shows how a hostile state exploited some of these factors in an attempt to influence public opinion in Israel ahead of the April 2019 election. Israeli decision makers and public opinion became aware of this threat earlier that year but, to date, very few measures have been taken in order to deal with such threats in future elections. Accordingly, the article also presents a series of solutions that several countries around the world are currently implementing. These can be classified into two groups: solutions that come from or depend on the governmental level (legislation, cooperation with the private sector, and digital literacy programs), and solutions that are based on activity at the local level (addressing certain communities, mobilizing civil society, and harnessing local media). The implementation of new solutions in Israel may prove to be complex due to the need to tackle several moral, political, and legal dilemmas. However, the experience accumulated worldwide indicates the success of various countries in dealing with this phenomenon, and their solutions are adaptable to the unique characteristics of Israeli society and politics.

## **WHO'S AFRAID OF FAKE NEWS? PUBLIC ATTITUDES TOWARD THE SOURCES, DISTRIBUTION, AND IMPACT OF FAKE NEWS IN ISRAEL**

HILLEL NOSSEK

Despite its history, fake news has come to dominate the media and public agenda around the US elections and the candidacy of President Donald Trump, who often uses it in a variety of ways and especially for describing the deeds of his enemies. Most research on the subject deals with the content and critique of sources and the disseminating media. A minority, however, examines the target audience of the messages: the public, namely, the media audience that is supposed to make decisions based on false information. This article deals with how the audience regards the phenomenon, how it recognizes or fails to recognize fake news, to whom it attributes

its efforts to recruit new immigrants to the cause of the Hebrew language and the Zionist Labor Movement. Yehiel Limor and Ilan Tamir add an installment to their history of sports broadcasting in Israel, this time focusing on the golden jubilee of the mythological *Shirim u-Sha'arim* program. Udi Carmi and Yair Galili investigate a different piece of sports mythology: Michael Ben-Hanan's morning calisthenics show on the Voice of Israel and its contribution to shaping Israeli body culture. Osnat Roth-Cohen and Tamar Lahav present the results of their study on Israel's public-relations industry in the era of new media. Tal Laor discusses the doings of media people, whom he calls "frogmen," also during this era.

The rest of our regular sections appear as always.

Wishing our readers an enjoyable and safe read until we meet again in the spring.

The Editor

## WHAT'S IN *KESHER* 55?

### FAKE NEWS AND THREATENING COMMUNICATION

In *Kesher* 55 we continue our discussion of the topic of “fake news” that we launched in *Kesher* 53. The articles in the opening section are based on lectures given at our workshop on this theme at Tel Aviv University in November 2019.<sup>1</sup> Ofir Barel analyzes and demonstrates the particular sensitivity of elections in Israel to the dissemination of news and fakery. Hillel Nossek presents the outcome of a study on the public's attitudes toward the origins, dissemination, and influence of fake news in Israel. Ouzi Elyada takes us back to the twilight of the Ottoman era and the early British Mandate period in order to recount the proliferation of fake news in the Hebrew press of Eretz Israel of that time. Rafi Mann deals with defense-related and *hasbara* fake news spread by government sources in Israel.

In an initial group of articles we address immediately, but mostly from a sociohistorical point of view, a matter that has riveted us, almost literally, to our seats in the past few months: the pandemic and its ramifications. Further aspects of this topic will be amplified in future editions. The three articles that appear in the current issue touch upon the subject of “threatening communication”<sup>2</sup> and the role of fear as a historical agent. In their pioneering study about the use of media by Jewish and Arab children in Israel in the coronavirus era, Yuval Gozansky and Hama Abu-Kishk find that whereas Arab children were more fearful and attributed greater credence to fake news, Jewish children surmounted fear and alluded to a deficiency in information tailored to their level of understanding. Maya Duany examines the historical fear of malaria and its mythology among the inhabitants of Yesud HaMa'ala in the Hula Valley. Yael Ohad-Karni wonders why the American Jewish community did not encourage the use of “health films” that were disseminated in the U.S. during the country's tuberculosis epidemic in the second decade of the twentieth century.

Gideon Kouts highlights the interrelations of the Jewish theater in Europe and the fledgling Hebrew press's criticism of it within the frame of both institutions' cultural politics. Meir Chazan relates the story of the *Davar la-Oleh* newspaper section and

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1 [http://video.tau.ac.il/events/index.php?option=com\\_k2&view=itemlist&task=category&id=1725:fake-news&Itemid=560](http://video.tau.ac.il/events/index.php?option=com_k2&view=itemlist&task=category&id=1725:fake-news&Itemid=560)

2 Gjalte-Jorn Y. Peters, Robert A. C. Ruiter, and Gerjo Kok, “Threatening communication: A qualitative study of fear appeal effectiveness beliefs among intervention developers, policymakers, politicians, scientists, and advertising professionals,” *International Journal of Psychology* 49, no. 2 (2014), pp. 71–79.

*Kesher*, a scholarly journal devoted to the history of the press and media in the Jewish world and in Israel, is published twice yearly by The Shalom Rosenfeld Institute for Research of Jewish Media and Communication at Tel Aviv University. *Kesher* seeks to publish original research articles and academic reviews on all subjects relating to the history, endeavors, and influence of Jewish media and media people, from a multidisciplinary perspective. All articles are peer reviewed blindly by experts, members of the Journal's Advisory Board and, if necessary, externally. Articles should be submitted in Word to [press@tauex.tau.ac.il](mailto:press@tauex.tau.ac.il). A reply will be given within three months. Articles should not usually exceed 8,000 words. The bibliography and notes should appear at the end of the article. Citations should follow the conventions of your discipline.

The editorial board invites reviews of new books in the journal's areas of interest and proposes such reviews itself. *Kesher* also publishes a list of recently approved doctoral dissertations and master's theses along with abstracts of no more than 250 words in length (for master's theses) and 500 words in length (for doctoral dissertations).

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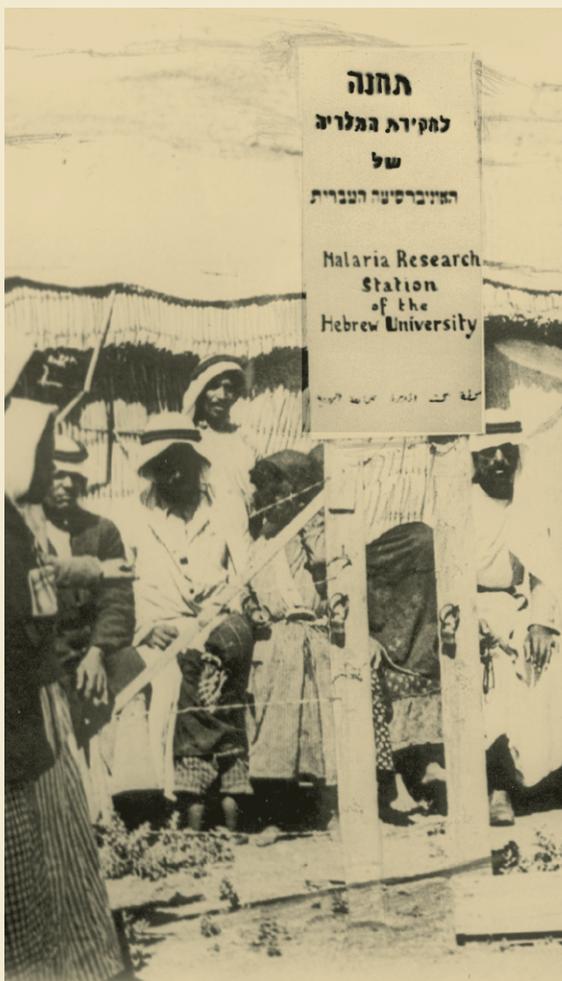
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