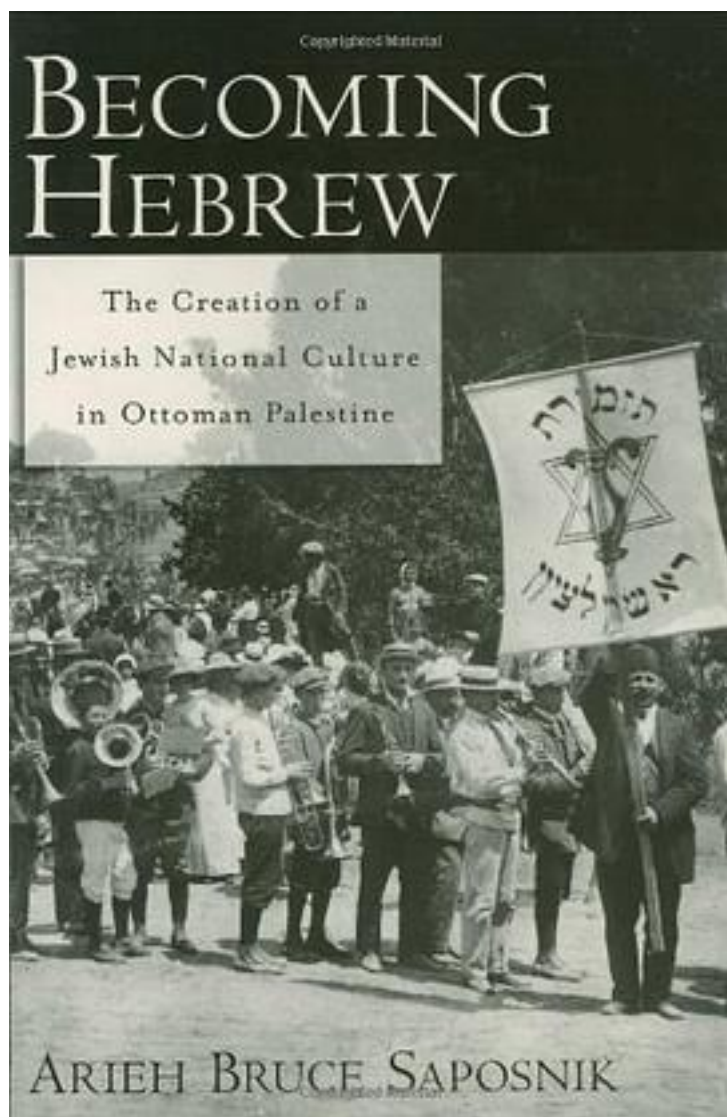


Becoming Hebrew



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'If the Jews wish to become a nation of Jewish Culture,' Eliezer Ben-Yehuda wrote in 1904, 'they must first become truly a nation.' Throughout the subsequent decade, he and other Zionist activists in Palestine--with the help of others elsewhere--attempted to transform what they perceived to be a dispersed and divided mass into the seeds of a modern nation. In this book, Arie Bruce Saposnik tells the story of how they did it. While there has been a great deal of study of Zionist ideas of this period, Saposnik turns his focus elsewhere, showing how these ideas were put into practice by Zionist activists in Palestine. The period from 1903-1914, he argues, was critical to the building of the infrastructure of national culture. Moreover, he shows, these activists did not attempt to build a traditional Jewish culture in a new place, but sought to effect a dramatic revolution in all aspects of Jewish life--a revolution with a complex relationship to traditional Jewish discourses, practices, and liturgy. Their view of 'culture' was expansive, involving all aspects of life, and both high culture and popular culture. Their revolution changed everything from the way they dressed to the art they created, from the holidays they celebrated to the language they spoke and the accent with which they spoke it. It also included politics, economics, medicine, and much more. Saposnik attempts to recapture this comprehensive view of culture and to show how images and ideas were translated into concrete cultural institutions, new art, rituals, language, and more.

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