On January 24, 1968, Peter Szondi arrived in Israel on a Swiss Air flight from Zurich. Tuvia Shlonsky, very likely together with Gershom Scholem, picked him up at Lod Airport. He had been invited to teach for a trimester of the academic year 1967-68. The visit had been prepared well in advance. We know what he taught and we know where he lived in Jerusalem. He was, as far as it is known, one of the first professors from Post-War Germany officially invited to Israel.

On that day in January 1968, Szondi entered a world that no longer exists except in memoirs, letters, books, oral witnesses: the town district Rechavia. Located in the center of Jerusalem, Rechavia was founded by Richard Kauffmann and Lotte Cohn in the early twenties. It is difficult to find descriptions of that lost world of German and Austrian Jews who emigrated during the thirties and forties. Rechavia was a German-Jewish colony, an academic colony.

It was in this neighborhood that Szondi found a temporary home at Pension Wolff, next door to Gershom and Fania Scholem’s home on Abarbanel Street. It was just the right neighborhood, since it was Scholem himself who had encouraged him to come to Israel. It was Szondi’s first visit; a short one, yet involving a long process of reflection and deliberation. It is difficult to reconstruct his ten weeks in Israel, but it might be possible to show, in outline, a constellation of the times. The main obstacle in reconstructing the visit is Szondi himself. As far as we know, Szondi did not write any letters or other documents during his stay. His days were taken up with trips inside the country, invitations in the evenings, encounters. On his trips—for example, to the Dead Sea—Szondi took a lot of pictures. Hundreds of negatives are kept in the Szondi archive. It is a visual memory, not a written one. While the base of exploration is small, it is necessary to show at least some conditions, prevailing conditions that pertained to his visit to Jerusalem in 1968.

At the time, Rechavia was a “geistige Lebensform,” an intellectual form of life, of behavior, thought and feeling. Most of the German-Austrian-Jewish intellectuals during the twenties and thirties, the time of the Fourth and Fifth Aliyah to Eretz Israel, settled in the same neighborhood. Werner Kraft, Lea Goldberg, Shmuel Hugo Bergman—all
lived around Aza Street, Ben Maimon Avenue, Rechov Ibn Ezra, Ussishkin or Rechov Radaq. Martin Buber lived in Talbieh. Shai Agnon, who had received the Nobel Prize for literature with Nelly Sachs just thirteen months prior to Szondi’s arrival, lived not far from there in Talpiot. Rechavia was a German quarter, with Bauhaus apartments containing libraries full of classical volumes, pianos, and paintings. Aaron Goldfinger evokes these sentiments in his recent film *The Flat* (2011). Szondi entered into a familiar world here. Rechavia was called the “oriental Grunewald” and in Berlin, Szondi lived in the original Grunewald. There are two outstanding literary works about the world of Rechavia: Shai Agnon’s *Schira* and Amos Oz’s *A Tale of Love and Darkness*. In his novel, Agnon shows, with a lot of irony, the so-called Jeckes-Jerusalem of the 1930s, and Amos Oz describes it during the 1940s and early 1950s. Traces of that earlier world gone by were still present, vividly present, in 1968.

Szondi left an agitated, restless West-Berlin in January 1968. Freie Universität was going through a period of student riots, demonstrations, and was discussing controversial concepts for a new, “Freie,” or “free” university. Szondi took part in these conflicts and argued for a reformed, more modern institution.

In Jerusalem he joined Givat Ram, a small department in a—by way of comparison—rather quiet university. The Hebrew University was mainly founded by German-Jewish intellectuals like Gershom Scholem, Werner Senator, Jehuda Magnes, Ernst Simon. It was built on the Anglo-Saxon/American model, offering the Bachelor of Arts (BA), and Master of Arts (MA) degrees, divided into trimesters. The Comparative Literature department was small, limited to the master’s degree, and with a tiny staff. Tuvia Schlonsky was chairman and lectured on literary critique and on literary fiction. Ada Steinberg was also teaching there, as well as the late Heda Stein. Back then, the department at the Hebrew University was called Comparative Literature; today it is known as the Department for General and Comparative Literature, like Szondi’s institute in Berlin, founded in 1965. The students at that time were either born in Eretz Israel in the forties or had emigrated from Poland, Czechoslovakia or other East-European countries, and Germany. Russian literature was a main subject within the department; but the French department also claimed a leading position within it.

Lea Goldberg held the Department Chair. In Israel she was a well-known writer and translator from Russian into Hebrew (i.e. Tolstoy’s *War and Peace*), but in Germany, she was almost unknown. She was born in Königsberg in 1911 and grew up in Kovno. In the 1930s, she