

The Zionist Bible

Biblical Precedent, Colonialism
and the Erasure of Memory

Nur Masalha



ROUTLEDGE



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INTRODUCTION

The secular founding fathers of Jewish Zionism sought to underpin the legitimacy of their European movement in the biblical text. Testifying before the British Royal (Peel) Commission in 1936, David Ben-Gurion, then head of the Jewish Agency, declared “The Bible is our mandate”. For Ben-Gurion, the Tanakh,¹ the “Hebrew Bible” was the master text of Zionism and the foundational text of the State of Israel. Like Ben-Gurion, the founding fathers of the Israeli state also viewed the Tanakh not only as a reliable historical source but also as a guide for Zionist and Israeli state policies towards the indigenous inhabitants of Palestine, the Palestinians. As we shall see in [Chapter 2](#), the land traditions and narratives of the Hebrew Bible, reconfigured and reinvented in the last century as a “foundational” metanarrative of Zionism and the State of Israel, have been instrumental in the ethnic cleansing of Palestine. Today the same land traditions continue to be at the heart of the displacement and dispossession of Palestinians (both Muslims and Christians) from Jerusalem.

The Bible as a whole (both Old and New Testaments) is also the “first” text of the West and central to the “Judeo-Christian tradition” and, as such, it has been (and remains) central to Western support for the State of Israel. Since the late nineteenth century political Zionism (and today’s “Israel lobby”) has continued to enjoy an extraordinary influence in the corridors of power of the West. For a variety of reasons (which include epistemology and politics of the biblical text), the Israeli state has been central to Western policies in the oil-rich Middle East. In addition to its geopolitical-strategic value and its immense military and nuclear capabilities, the Israeli state has had enormous significance for post-Second World War Western politics. In the post-Holocaust period the massive financial, military and political support for the “Jewish State” in Palestine has also been seen as an opportunity to “redeem” Europe (and the West) from the genocidal crimes of Nazism.

In her book *Bible and Sword: How the British came to Palestine* (1956, 1982) Barbara Tuchman shows how the two magnets, the Bible and the sword, have drawn countless British pilgrims, crusaders, missionaries, archaeologists and conquerors and ultimately led to the British conquest of Palestine in 1918. Central to this book is the idea that the land conquest narrative of the Bible has been the key text that redeems the European settler-colonization of Palestine. Outside the Middle East the Bible has redeemed European empires and European settler-colonialism, the conquest of the earth, and even current American imperialism. As a fact of power, the authority of the biblical narrative has also been central to organized religion and collective memory. As organized memory, the authority of the Bible became critical to the political theologies of the medieval Latin crusaders, Spanish *conquistadors* – in the struggle for colonial power in Latin America from 1492 until the twentieth century – and a whole variety of settler-colonialist projects.

Indeed in modern times a range of Western settler-colonial enterprises have deployed the power politics of the biblical text and its “famous” land conquest narrative very effectively and

with devastating consequences for indigenous peoples. The narrative of Exodus has been widely deployed as a framing narrative for European settler-colonialism and the European *mission civilisatrice*, while other biblical texts have been appropriated and used to provide moral authority for European “exploration” in, and settler-colonial conquests of, Africa, Asia, Australia and the Americas (Prior, 1997, 1999).

The chapters that follow explore the politics of the biblical text – language, narrative, epics, genres, theologies, paradigms and organized memory – and its utilization in the service of a settler-colonialist project and Israeli secular state policies. The book also examines the politics of collective identity-fashioning and the retrospective colonization of the ancient past. It argues that the continuing mobilization of the allegorical narratives of the Hebrew Bible in the service of settler-colonization is central to ongoing collective identity-fashioning in Israel.

Framing and morally examining the authority of biblical text and its misappropriation in Israeli state policies are at the heart to this work. Central to the politics of the Hebrew Bible in Israel is the struggle for the land of Palestine, as well as the use and abuse of the biblical text in underpinning Israeli settler-colonial policies. Today, while post-colonial academic discourses in the West have opted for a wide range of critical approaches to the biblical text and language, in Israel the ethnocratic, mono-culturalist discourses of Zionism focus exclusively on the Hebrew Bible, with almost complete disregard for the New Testament. Being “Christian” the latter is outside the biblical discourse of Israel. The New Testament is effectively a taboo subject in Israeli Jewish schools, neither taught nor mentioned. Occasionally the New Testament makes headlines in the Israeli press for the wrong reasons: as we shall see in [Chapter 5](#), from time to time fundamentalist Jewish rabbis (including some serving in the Israeli army) publicly and ritualistically burn copies of the New Testament. These incidents are conveniently ignored by the Western media – a media often obsessed with Islamic *jihadis* and the wide reporting of the burning by Muslim fundamentalists of Salman Rushdie’s magical realism novel, *The Satanic Verses* (1988).

As we shall see in the concluding chapter, modern Palestinians are more likely to be the direct descendants of the ancient Israelites, Canaanites and Philistines than the European (Ashkenazi) founding fathers of the Israeli state. Yet the Bible provided nineteenth-century European nationalists, including Zionists, with an imagined “original model” of nation-building (Hastings, 1997: 4). The Hebrew Bible provided a central and east European *völkisch* movement of Zionism with an imagined narrative of land conquest and a modern model of ethno-nationalism.

One of the outcomes of this type of European *völkisch* nationalism is the fact that many founding fathers and military commanders of the Israeli state were also self-styled biblical scholars (see below). Typical examples were David Ben-Gurion, Yitzhak Ben-Tzvi, Zalman Shazar, Ben-Tzion Dinur and Moshe Dayan. The work of General Moshe Dayan (1915–81) was a case in point. One of Israel’s heroic military conquerors and national leaders, Dayan became widely known as an amateur biblical archaeologist. His book, *Living with the Hebrew Bible* (*Lehyot ‘Im Ha-Tanakh*) was translated into English and published in London in 1978, under the title *Living with the Bible*. Since then the British (pro-Israeli) Jewish publishing house, Weidenfeld & Nicholson, has reprinted this work several times under its misleading English title. Like General Dayan and the Vienna-born Lord Weidenfeld – who had in 1949 served as political adviser and *chef de cabinet* to Israeli President Chaim Weizmann – the Israeli biblical archaeologists are almost all exclusively *secular* Ashkenazi Jews. As we shall see in [Chapter 3](#), they are engaged in constructing a secular biblical enterprise embedded in secular-nationalist identity-construction, state power politics and, for the most part, an artificially constructed

biblical memory.

Dayan also systematically looted and plundered Palestinian antiquities and created a private archaeological theme park “ingathered” in the garden of his Tel Aviv house. Looking for their “Jewish ancestors” Dayan and other Israeli biblical archaeologists – as [Chapter 3](#) will show – discovered the “roots of their ancestors” by using the allegorical and symbolic biblical language as history and by constructing and articulating a folk (*völk*) collective memory, an imagined romantic memory supposedly “rooted” in positivist “historical facts on the ground” “authentic historical roots” and “historical inheritance”. As we shall see in [Chapters 3](#) and [4](#), the Israeli archaeological theme parks, the European “pine forests” and “pine deserts” (Tal, 2002: 94–5) of the Jewish National Fund and the European artists’ colonies were all designed to cover the traces of the hundreds of Palestinian villages and towns destroyed in the 1948 Palestine *nakba*² (“catastrophe”).

Early Islamic and Quranic traditions established deep links between Arabia and Palestine, the most famous symbols of which traditions are the Dome of the Rock and the al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem. Also on the Palestinian side the language of the New Testament has inspired recent Palestinian Christian liberation theology. The Bible has always been widely known to, and studied by, medieval Arab historians, philosophers and theologians. Both Moses and Jesus are highly revered figures in the Quran and Jesus is described as the last prophet of the Israelites (“*Bani Israeel*”). In the Middle Ages, translations of the Bible into Arabic – then the *lingua franca* of classical Islam and of a vast region extending from Spain to central Asia and China – by Christians and Jews were known from the Christian churches in Umayyad Syria and in Egypt and Al-Andalus (Muslim Spain). Some of these translations were from Syriac, Coptic and Latin; others by Jews came directly from the Hebrew Bible; and the earliest fragment of the Hebrew Bible in Arabic was a text of a psalm, dating from the eight century, which was found in the Great Umayyad Mosque in Damascus. Moreover, one of most interesting discoveries of modern times has been the oldest “Arabic Bible” discovered in the nineteenth century at Saint Catherine’s Monastery in Sinai. This Arabic manuscript is dated from the mid-ninth century CE.

Clearly the Abrahamic traditions of Arabia and Palestine are closely linked and central to Islamic tradition. According to both the Hebrew Bible and the Quran, Abraham (Arabic: Ibrahim), through his sons Ishmael (Arabic: Ismae’el) and Isaac, is the forefather of many groups, including the Ishmaelites, Israelites, Edomites and Midianites. The Quran shows that the Abrahamic traditions, produced by the “People of the Book” (in the Quran, *Ahl al-Kitab*), were central to the religious beliefs, traditions and cultural heritage of Islam and Palestine. Clearly the influence of the Abrahamic traditions of Palestine and Arabia on Islam cannot be overstated, although both theologically speaking and in matters of religious law, Islam has much in common with both Judaism and Christianity, a fact conveniently ignored by Western supporters of Zionism and the current proponents of the “Judeo-Christian tradition” a tradition which is part of the much wider “Abrahamic traditions” of the ancient Near East. The Quran consistently refers to Islam as the “religion of Abraham” (Ibrahim), a religious reformer, who, together with his son Ishmael, set up the Ka’aba in Mecca as a centre of pilgrimage for monotheism. These Abrahamic traditions were central to the Quran and Islam.

ON “HISTORICAL ROOTS” AND “BIBLICAL RIGHTS”

The biblical stories of “Samson the hero” and Delilah the treacherous woman (Judg. 16), and the circumcised David versus the uncircumcised Goliath, have been repeatedly referenced in popular

culture, folklore, religious traditions and myth narratives, as well as in modern social realism of painting, literature, music and the twentieth-century film industry. The biblical text has also led to the modern European preoccupation with “biblical Israel” especially since the rise of European romantic nationalism in the nineteenth century. The outcome was an obsession with “biblical Israel” in modern European nationalist conceptions of the European nation-state. In the nineteenth century this was allied to a strong notion of evolutionism, projected onto the ancient history of Palestine, and this focus has continued to influence Western literature, biblical scholarship and archaeology and philology (Whitelam, 1996a). As a consequence the ancient inhabitants of Greater Canaan, which consisted of the (originally Mycenaean) Philistines, Canaanites, Ishmaelites (“Arabs” “Orientals”), Moabites, Amalekites, Samaritans, Edomites, Jebusites and Ammonites – east of the River Jordan, with their capital Rabbath Ammon, which survives today in the name of the Jordanian capital, Amman – were all constructed by the authors of the Hebrew Bible as the *Other* : the Heathen, the Uncircumcised, the Inferior, the Outsider, the Subaltern, the Scapegoated, the Foreigner, the Disinherited, Disenfranchised.

The myth narrative of the Other, the Amalekites versus the Israelites and the legend of the circumcised/pure David versus uncircumcised/impure/sinful Goliath, firmly established the evil Other, the Amalekites, Philistines, Jebusites, Ishmaelites, as the archetypal dangerous Outsider, the Barbarian, who must be confronted, defeated, wiped out (see also Douglas 1966). In the Hebrew Bible, Delilah, the treacherous Philistine woman, is the epitome of the inferior Other. Ruth, the inferior Moabite (“companion”) and a female convert to the Israelite religion, became the “Doubly Other”; the Ishmaelite Hagar (literally “the Stranger”), as an disenfranchised, subaltern Egyptian slave and the second wife of Abraham (Gen. 16:3) and the mother of the “Ishmaelite Arabs” – the name indicates a woman of high rank and is translated as “princess” – became another “Doubly Other”; even the good Moabite Ruth was constructed as the “Doubly Other”. Hagar – in contrast with Abraham’s first wife Sarah and mother of Isaac, who represents the “master” and freedom – is a slave and a foreigner; she is never fully accepted into the tribal group and her sons can be disinherited. Indeed Otherness is a major theme in the Bible, whose “centrality and potency” inform all Western literature (Saïd, 1983: 46). As we shall see in [Chapter 5](#) , today Jewish fundamentalist rabbis constantly refer to the Palestinians as the *Sitra Ahra* , the “evil Other”: the “new” Philistines, Canaanites and Amalekites, whose mystical force embodies impurities, defilement, corruption and the devil’s camp. Like the construction of the (Mycenaean) “Philistines” in the Hebrew Bible, so the modern Palestinians were constructed in contemporary Western quarters as the infamous enemies of the Israelis.

Interestingly – as we shall see below – modern Palestinian secular nationalists, whose approach will be discussed further in the Conclusion chapter, also used the biblical story to construct an indigenous nationalist discourse connected with the Canaanites rather than the Philistines or Ishmaelites. In the Bible the Mediterranean Sea was also known as the “Sea of the Philistines” (Exod. 23:31), named after the people occupying a large portion of its shores. The Philistines, who occupied the southern coastal regions of Canaan at the beginning of the Iron Age (c .1175 BCE onwards), are a group associated with the “Sea People” with connections to the Mycenaean-Greco-Aegean civilization, Crete and eastern Mediterranean and traces of their origin is also found in their Greek sounding name.

Ironically, in modern European thinking the ancient Greeks have become a byword for sophistication, excellence and wisdom; the Greek-sounding “Philistines” (under the impact of the biblical narrative) has been a derogatory term and a byword for a bloodthirsty people and anti-culture. However, archaeology has shown that the Philistines (like the Iron Age Mycenaean

civilization which was the historical setting of much ancient Greek literature and the epics of Homer) were a highly advanced culture; far more advanced in urban sophistication, commercial activities and technological development (from iron to pottery) than their contemporary Canaanites. However, religiously and culturally the Philistines were integrated into the land and culture of the Canaanites, and their deities, including Dagon, Baal and Astarte, were all part of the Canaanite pantheon. The Philistines were known in the Hebrew Bible as *Plishtim* and their coastal territory as *Pleshet* : *Philistia* (1 Sam. 17:36; 2 Sam. 1:20; Judg. 14:3; Amos 1:8). They also became famous for the “Philistine Pentapolis” the five city-states (*polis* ; plural *poleis*) of Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Ekron and Gath. The origins of much of Greek mythology can be traced to the eastern Mediterranean and Aegean (Minoan and Mycenaean) culture (Nilsson, 1932, 1972) and it is reasonable to assume that many of these war epics may have been imported by the Philistines into Canaan.

Modern European settler-colonial practices have been significantly influenced by these newly invented nationalist conceptions of “biblical Israel” and also the biblical narrative of the Other. The Enlightenment term “noble savage” derived from the French *bon sauvage* (“good savage”), embodied the French conception of a romanticized but inferior *indigène* : the Outsider, the non-European, and the non-white. Colonizing, civilizing and converting the indigenous Other, the “modern” Canaanites, Ishmaelites, Philistines and Orientals, the heathens of the earth – and the savages of Africa, Asia, Australia, New Zealand, Oceania and the Americas – were at the centre of the “white man’s burden”. In some cases, as in the experience the Aboriginal people in Tasmania, this civilizing process led to the almost total wiping out of the indigenous people. In modern colonized and disenfranchised Palestine this “white man’s burden” with its focus on both “biblical Israel” and modern Israel, has also lead to the retrospective colonization and disenfranchisement of ancient Palestine.

Following the Napoleonic invasion and the opening up of Palestine in the nineteenth century, the scramble of the European power for the Holy Land, the establishment of powerful European consulates in Ottoman Jerusalem, the proliferation of European settler colonies and missions in Palestine, the mapping, excavating, resurrecting and repetitive painting of an imagined “biblical landscape” the archaeological expeditions and the visual heritage industry all went hand in hand with the creation of “facts on the ground” (Abu El-Haj, 2001). In the nineteenth century the “sacred landscape” in paintings and traveller accounts, the archaeological excavations in and new historical and scientific knowledge of the Holy Land became facts of asymmetrical power (Saïd, 1983). Examining the space of the colonialists’ biblical imagination, Naomi Shepherd shows, in *The Zealous Intruders: The Western Rediscovery of Palestine* , how the “authenticity” of the nineteenth century’s “biblical landscape” grew not from the “encounter with Palestine but in Europe, as part of the rejection of academic painting and the desire to return to early Renaissance models” (Shepherd, 1987: 100). W. J. T. Mitchell, in *Landscape and Power* , goes further by examining the ways in which the concept of landscape functions in the discourse of imperialism, from Chinese imperial landscapes to British views of territory in New Zealand and Zionist and Western conceptions of the holy “biblical landscape” (Mitchell, 1994: 5–34). Works such as Fergus Fergusson’s *Sacred Scenes, Or, Notes of Travel in Egypt and the Holy Land* (Ferguson, 1864) were typical of nineteenth-century travel writing. Mitchell shows how “sacred landscape” functioned as an agent of European cultural power and legitimation and as a site of visual appropriation and a focus for the formation of Israeli national identity as well as a process of political silencing of the Palestinians (Mitchell, 2000: 193–223). The face of the “holy landscape” is so scarred by modern archeological excavations, ethnic displacement and wars of

conquest that no illusion of innocent disinterested scholarship on Palestine-Israel can be sustained (Mitchell, 1994: 5–34; 2000: 193–223).

PARADIGMS AND REVOLUTIONS IN BIBLICAL STUDIES

Choosing a neutral position on Palestine – which often takes the form of silence or selective amnesia – Edward Saïd argued, is as much a choice as becoming engagé:

there can be no neutrality or objectivity about Palestine. This is not to say, on the other hand, that all positions are equal, or that all perspectives areas heavily or as lightly invested. But it is to say that so ideologically saturated is the question of Palestine ... even a superficial or cursory apprehension of it involves a position taken, an interest defended, a claim or a right asserted. There is no indifference, no objectivity, no neutrality because there is simply no room for them in a space that is as crowded and overdetermined as this one.

(Saïd, 1986a: 30)

In *Orientalism* (1978, 1980) Saïd examines a highly influential Western tradition and a range of essentializing discourses – scholarly, philological, journalistic, artistic, policy-oriented – of prejudicial attitudes, outsider interpretations and reinvention of the romanticized Oriental Other (both the “Noble Savage” and the “Sinister Other”): this “Orient”/East was shaped by European positivist-corroborationist theories, and the attitudes of European settler-colonialism and imperialism of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Saïd argues that the dominant schools of Orientalism were closely associated with traditional scholarship: classics, biblical studies, verificationist biblical archaeology reinforced by biblical prophecies, Semitic philology and linguistic history (Saïd, 1980: 135–6, 202). Of course, neither Western Orientalism nor Western biblical studies were homogeneous discourses and there was a multiplicity of forms, currents and traditions in Orientalism and biblical scholarship.

Julius Wellhausen (1844–1918), a positivist German biblical scholar and orientalist – much admired for his contribution to scholarly understanding of the origin of the Pentateuch/Torah (“divine instructions”) – was closely associated with a critical-sceptical biblical scholarship. Wellhausen explored the emergence of Israelite monolatry and subsequent monotheism and Yahweh-worship, and subjected the Hebrew Bible to “scientific” treatment. He was particularly noted for his work *Prolegomena to the History of Israel* (1885) and his contribution to scholarly understanding of the origins of the Torah. His “documentary hypothesis” on the formation of the Torah became an influential paradigm in the twentieth century, and remained influential among biblical scholars until the early 1970s (Blenkinsopp, 2000; Bechmann, 2011: 62–3), when it was challenged by John Van Seters, Thomas Thompson and other minimalist scholars (see below).

However, in the first half of the twentieth century Wellhausen’s work was often compared for its impact on biblical studies with the Darwinian revolution in evolutionary biology. Wellhausen’s contribution was to place the development of Torah books into a Canaanite and Near Eastern historical and social context. In his “documentary hypothesis” he argued that the five books of the Torah were derived from originally independent, parallel and complete narratives, which were subsequently combined, edited and readapted – under the influence of Babylonian monotheistic Zoroastrianism³ and during the Persian period (538–332 BCE) – by a series of authors and editors during and in the aftermath of the Babylonian exile. He showed that

the Israelites did not practise a religion recognizable as Judaism: the earliest religion of the Israelites, as depicted in the Yahwist and Elohist sources, was polytheistic and family-based (Nicholson, 1998; Van Seters, 1999).

Most scholars today recognize that the Romans did not exile whole nations and that most of the Jews were allowed to remain in Palestine after 70 CE . However, the theoretical base of a dominant strand in “biblical archaeology” was rooted in the ideology of prophetic politics, including Protestant “Second Coming” theology, myths of “exile and return” and American mainstream evangelicalism. This “biblical archaeology” resisted the inroads of the Wellhausen historical-critical school and European biblical criticism. “Biblical archaeology” sought support for its conservative theological views in archaeological research in Palestine (Davis, 2004). The reaction to European historical-critical criticism was swift. The biblical archeology of Protestant evangelicals was embodied in the work of William Foxwell Albright (1891–1971), an American biblical scholar of Johns Hopkins University, who then epitomized “Oriental Studies” in the West (Long, 2003: 141). An archetypical biblical archaeologist, American literalist Evangelical, philologist and expert in ceramics, Albright had (and still has) many powerful followers in the West and in the State of Israel. Albright represented the scholarly dimension of a Protestant evangelical fundamentalist myth narrative of “exile and return” “Jewish ingathering” and “Jewish restorationism”: a post-Reformation (“Second Coming”) millennialist movement based on the conviction that the Bible and Second Coming of Jesus literally predicts and mandates the “restoration” of the Jews to Palestine in preparation for their ultimate conversion to Christianity (Merkley, 1998). Inspired by the prototypical biblical archeologist, Edward Robinson (1794–1863) and his nineteenth-century work *Biblical Researches in Palestine, Mount Sinai and Arabia Petraea* – which is also discussed in [Chapter 3](#) – Albright’s twentieth work combined the positivist-corroborationist methodology of biblical archaeology with modern American evangelical fundamentalism. The “Albright school” (currently part of the influential “Israel lobby” in the US) became the epitome of the historicist-corroborationist archaeology-cum-Orientalism. Albright and his followers advocated historicist maximalism: they argued for the historicity of the biblical story and that the Genesis stories originated into second millennium BCE ; see, for instance, Bright (1959, 1960, 1981). They also emphasized the imagined Otherness of the Canaanites and Philistines. In *From Stone Age to Christianity: Monotheism and the Historical Process* , this is what Albright – echoing American white racism against African Americans – had to say about the superior “Hebraic roots” of “Western civilization”:

From the impartial standpoint of a philosopher of history, it often seems necessary that a people of markedly inferior type should vanish before a people of superior potentialities, since there is a point beyond which racial mixture cannot go without disaster ... Thus the Canaanites, with their orgiastic nature worship, their cult of fertility in the form of serpent symbols and sensuous nudity, and their gross mythology, were replaced by Israel with its pastoral simplicity and purity of life, its lofty monotheism and its severe code of ethics.

(Albright, 1957: 280–81)

The construction and representation of the Other are central to Saïd’s critique of Orientalism (1978, 1980). Saïd concentrated on the dominant school in Orientalism and argued that a powerful school in biblical scholarship-cum-verificationist archaeology was closely associated with philological Orientalist paradigms, positivist–historicist doctrines on the “historical

roots”/“historical origins” of the West and “historical rights” of the Jews in Palestine (Saïd, 1980a). A combination of late-Victorian “back-to-the-Bible” revivalism with the corroborationist–empiricist–historicist approaches and imperialist designs on the region drove the search for the “historical roots of the ancestors” “historical rights” and the “mapping” of the Holy Land by officers of the British Royal Engineering Corp on behalf of Palestine Exploration Fund which – like the Near Eastern archaeological excavations of T. E. Lawrence and David George Hogarth, the keeper of the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford (see below) – was combined with military strategic intelligence gathering, surveillance and reconnaissance (Goren, 2002: 87–110). A typical example of late-Victorian “back-to-the-Bible” scholarship is found in publications such as *Our Bible and the Ancient Manuscripts* by Sir Frederic George Kenyon. Kenyon’s work had a great deal in common with the subsequent publications of the Albrightian school. For Kenyon – director of the great British Museum (1909–31), a national museum whose rise coincided with the age of empire and national expansion, and president of the British Academy (1917–21), and fully aware of the powerful myths of organized national memory – the “Galilean Jesus” is rediscovered and reinvented as an ideal nationalist leader. Viewing the Bible as reliable history rather than a narrative of facts and fiction, Frederic Kenyon wrote: “The Christian can take the whole Bible in his hand and say without fear or hesitation that he holds in it the true Word of God, handed down without essential loss from generation to generation throughout the centuries” (Kenyon, 1958: 55). Like the Albrightian literalist–fundamentalists of the twentieth century, in his 1895 work Kenyon sets out to show the way that Egyptian papyri and other evidence from biblical archaeology can corroborate the “reality” of the “historical Jesus” and the events described in the New Testament.

BIBLICAL LANDSCAPES AND COLONIALIST IMAGINATION

One of the narratives that shaped modern biblical historiography was the story of how the land was conquered from the Canaanites by the Israelite tribes led by Joshua. Under the British Palestine mandate this biblical landscape and the land conquest narrative dominated Western biblical archaeology, which itself gathered momentum with the activity of William Albright. The son of a Christian priest, Albright arrived in Palestine in December 1919, at the age of 28, to begin his postgraduate research as the Thayer Fellow of the American School of Oriental Research in Jerusalem, today known as the W. F. Albright Institute of Archaeological Research; the following year he became director of the school, a position he held between 1920 and 1929 and again from 1933 to 1936.

Albright began mapping, surveying and excavating the biblical landscape of Palestine in the 1920s. His declared position was that biblical archaeology was the scientific means by which the veracity of the Bible could be established and the critical claims against the historicity of the biblical stories refuted (Long, 1997), particularly those of the Julian Wellhausen school in Germany.⁴ For several decades Albright and his students would deploy linguistics and biblical archaeology to authenticate the historicity of the Hebrew Bible. The Wellhausen school of biblical criticism, which had developed in Germany in the second half of the nineteenth century, challenged the historicity of the biblical stories and claimed that the biblical narrative was articulated during and after the Babylonian exile – the later reconstruction of events being made with a theological purpose. Albright believed that the Bible is a historiography that mirrored the ancient reality. As a pro-Zionist restorationist, he was convinced that the ancient remains of Palestine would provide proof of the historical truth of the events relating to the Jewish people:

their “rights” to the land; the period of the patriarchs; the Canaanite cities that were “destroyed” by the Israelites as Joshua conquered the land; the boundaries of the 12 tribes and so forth (Herzog, 1999: 6–8).

As we shall see in [Chapter 4](#), the modern Israeli biblical landscape, newly created through colonialist imagining and biblical renaming, became a key site of amnesia and erasure. This process began before the establishment of Israel in 1948. During the mandatory period large-scale biblical excavations were conducted by William Albright and his students, with the support of the British colonial authorities, designed to uncover the biblical landscape of Palestine. Albright and his fellow archaeologists brushed aside the historical and contemporary social realities of Arab and Muslim Palestine in favour of the biblical paradigm; for them Palestinian uprisings raging in the late 1920s and 1930s meant little “in comparison to the eternal verities” of the Bible (Long, 2003: 143). Their efforts to rewrite the history of Palestine and to exclude the indigenous inhabitants of the land contributed to the overall Zionist project, with disastrous consequences for the Palestinian quest for self-determination during the mandatory period. In the Albrightian myth narrative Palestine was simply a “biblical landscape” and the cradle of the “Judeo-Christian tradition”: a landscape created by Old Testament declarations of God’s purposes and promises, a landscape to be excavated and recovered through archaeology and relived through Jewish political restoration to Palestine (Long, 2003: 140, 143–6). Biblical archaeology laid bare the birthplace of the Bible, Albright wrote in 1922, “the land where the sacredst of human possessions came into being, and [where] hardly a mile of its surface is not hallowed by Biblical associations. In the illustration, elucidation, and, if need be, confirmation of this masterpiece of world literature archaeology justifies itself finely” (Albright, 1922; cited in Long, 2003: 143, 229).

In the same year Albright wrote in the *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* :

These unassuming mounds among the hills of Ephraim and Benjamin are of greatest interest to us ... They represent authentic monuments of the Israelite past. Every stone and potsherd they conceal is hallowed to us by association with the great names of the Bible. Who can think of the tells which mark ancient Mizpah and Gibeah without a thrill as memory calls up the shade of Samuel, and the heroic figure of Saul.

(Albright, 1922a; cited in Long, 2003: 139, 228)

Adopting an essentialist–verificationist approach to archaeology and history, the sites of excavation carried out by Albright and his pupils were based on biblical names: Megiddo (the site of the biblical Armageddon), Lachish, Gezer, Shechem (Nablus), Jericho, Jerusalem, Ai, Gibeon, Beit Shean (Baysan), Beit Shemesh, Taanach and Hazor (Herzog, 1999: 6–8), the latter the site of the ancient Canaanite city-state mentioned in the book of Joshua, the same site whose subsequent excavation became a major landmark in the history of mobilized Israeli archaeology (Silberman & Small, 1997: 21).

In 1949 Albright wrote that only “a few diehards among older scholars” had not accepted the essential historicity of the patriarchal traditions in the light of archaeological data, and that it was no longer fashionable to view those traditions as artificial creations by the scribes of the monarchic period (Albright 1949a: 3). He repeated this statement 14 years later (1963: 1–2). Until the early 1970s biblical archaeology was convinced that the Bible accurately reflected the material world where it developed. Studies such as *The Archaeology of Palestine* and *The Biblical Period from Abraham to Ezra* by Albright (1949, 1949a), *A History of Israel* by John

Bright (1959), *The Land of the Bible* by Aharoni (1967) and *Archeology in the Holy Land* by Kathleen Mary Kenyon (1960) used archaeology to demonstrate the historical accuracy of the Bible. These political histories uncritically accepted the biblical traditions as reliable reflections of past events.

The Western archaeologists involved were not on the margins of archaeology, but rather prominent figures in their field; for instance, Dame Kathleen Kenyon (1906–78) was the eldest daughter of the above-mentioned Sir Frederic Kenyon. She was the first female president of the Oxford Archaeological Society and contributed to the foundation of the Institute of Archaeology of University College London. In 1962 Kenyon was appointed principal of St Hugh's College, University of Oxford. However, even in the post-colonial 1950s, Kathleen Kenyon, who conducted extensive excavations at Jericho from 1952 until 1958, was beginning to break away from the Victorian literalist–reificationist biblical approach of her father.

During the same Albrightian period similar arguments were formulated by the Hebrew archaeology of the Jewish *yishuv* – literally “settlement” the collective term used by Zionists to refer to the European Jewish settler community in Palestine from the late nineteenth century until 1948 – whose links to the archaeology of the State of Israel and Jewish nation-building have been discussed elsewhere (Abu El-Haj, 2001; Elon, 1997: 35–47; Silberman, 1989). After 1948 a romantic nationalist Hebrew archaeology became a cornerstone of an Israeli civic religion, testifying to Jewish roots in, and claims to, the soil (Rose, 2004). But, of course, the new state-driven Israeli romantic folk archaeology did not emerge in a historical vacuum.

By the 1960s, against the background of the social and cultural revolutions of the period, serious attempts had already begun to separate radically the archaeology of ancient Palestine from biblical narrative and theological studies. As we shall see in the conclusion, broadly speaking the real revolution in biblical studies and Holy Land archaeology began in the 1970s. This revolution led to the collapse of the historicity of the narrative described in the Hebrew Bible, Iron Age I. Over the last four decades, this revolution has been the result of several factors, including the emergence of new archaeological evidence, literary criticism and a post-colonial critique of biblical studies: a critique which has been influenced by Edward Saïd's seminal work in the 1970s.

THE DISPLACING POWER OF THE BIBLICAL TEXT

The Canaanites bequeathed a version of the Phoenician alphabet and one of their minor deities, Yahweh (YHWH, Jehovah), to the Hebrews. At least some Canaanites worshipped Yahweh, and, as John L. McKenzie, a Roman Catholic biblical scholar, points out: “The influence of the Canaanites upon the ‘biblical Israelites’ in religion, culture, and other human activities was incalculable” (McKenzie, 1965: 118); ancient Hebrew, for instance, was a dialect of the Canaanite language. As biblical scholar Robert Carroll argues, so much of the religion and festivals of the Hebrew Bible can be traced to Canaanite beliefs and cultural practices (Carroll, 1988, 1989); biblical prejudices and strong antagonism towards the Canaanites and Philistines (McDonagh, 2004: 93–111) were partly a way of displacing the Canaanite religion and distancing the “new” Hebrew religion from its Canaanite antecedents (cited in Docker, 2008: 103; also Lemche, 1995). Contrary to the vitriolic anti-Canaanite rhetoric of the Bible authors, the new biblical scholarship has shown that the biblical portrayal of the biblical Israelites' origins in terms of a conflict between them and the Canaanites or the Philistines is not justification for assuming that such a conflict ever took place in history, in either the twelfth century BCE or any

other period. Canaanites and biblical Israelites never existed as opposing peoples fighting over Palestine (Thompson, 2004: 23; Lemche, 1991). Biblical scholar Niels Peter Lemche comments on the invention of an ethno-religious divide between the new Canaanites (the Hebrews) and old Canaanites during the post-exilic period when many of the Canaanite elite were taken to Babylon. In exile they embraced and developed a monotheism that was no longer tied to the land:

The “Canaanites” embraced that part of the Palestinian population which did not convert to the Jewish religion of the exiles, the reason being that it had no part in the experience of exile and living in a foreign world which had been the fate of the Judaeans who were carried off to Babylonia in 587 BCE . The Palestinian – or rather old Israelite – population was not considered to be Jews because they were not ready to acknowledge the religious innovations of the exilic community that Yahweh was the only god to be worshipped. Thus the real difference between the Canaanites and the Israelites would be a religious one and not the difference between two distinct nationals.

(Lemche, 1991: 162, n.12)

In the “David versus Goliath” epic and the “Samson and Delilah” legend the biblical text constructed a social realism narrative of a “few” Israelites versus the powerful well-armed “many” Philistines. The legendary Samson (Shimshon, literally “Man of the Sun”), kills many Philistines. This legend also belongs to the Near Eastern Heracles tradition. It is about a heroic figure granted supernatural strength by the gods in order to combat and defeat his enemies. A similar tradition in the Quran – which identifies with the monotheistic traditions of the Israelites against the polytheistic traditions of both the Philistines and Canaanites – which echoes the heroic warrior’s epic of (little) David (the Israelite “Prophet Dawud” in the Quran ⁵) and (giant) Goliath (“Jalut”) is found in the Quran 2:251: “And Dawud slew Jalut, and Allah gave him his kingdom and wisdom, and taught him of what He pleased”. This Quranic narrative of God delivering the (weaker) good and circumcised Israelites from the (more powerful) wicked, uncircumcised (impure) polytheistic Philistines, and then, according to the Bible, destroying the temple of Dagon ⁶ in Gaza, has even survived in modern Palestinian Arab oral traditions: *Shamshum al-Jabbar* (“Samson the Strong Man”). Ironically, however, the same Canaanite/Philistine deity “Dagon” has survived in the name of the Palestinian village Bayt Dajan (“House of Dagon” or “Temple of Dagon”). Beit Dajan was a large village, southeast of Jaffa, which was occupied and destroyed in the Jewish Haganah’s military operation, named *Mivtza Bi’ur Hametz* (“Operation Passover Cleaning”) in April 1948 (see also below). A hint to the Greco-Mycenaean origin of the Goliath legend is found in Augustine’ s *City of God* which combines New Testament ideas with classical literature. Apparently early Christians of late antiquity associated Goliath with Hercules (Nilsson, 1932, 1972: 187–220), the Greek “half-god” son of Zeus hero who is also found in Near Eastern mythology. While in reality producing a highly sophisticated culture, in the European mind and English language the “biblical Philistine” has always been (and continues to be) a byword for impurity, wickedness, stupidity, anti-culture, brutality, monstrosity, barbarism and terrorism; the modern barbarian “philistines” (the predominantly Muslim Palestinians) are also at the heart of the essentializing discourse and oppositional binaries of “Islam versus the West” and “the clash of civilizations”. Edward Saïd, who has written extensively on the binary discourses of the Other, has viewed biblical discourses

of the eighteenth, nineteenth and even twentieth centuries as an integral part of a Western Orientalist tradition.

Following Nietzsche's (1994) "genealogy of morality" and Michel Foucault's ([1969] 2002; 1980) discourses on the "archaeology of knowledge" power structures and language, Edward Saïd comments on the extraordinary power of the biblical text and notes that all "texts are essentially facts of power, not of democratic exchange" (Saïd, 1983: 45). The "promised land" narrative and conquest text of the Hebrew Bible have powerfully inspired the displacing, civilizing and dislodging of the inferior Other and conquering, settling and developing unoccupied "virgin territories" (Bateman & Pilkington, 2011: 1). The inferior Other included the so-called modern Canaanites, Philistines, Ishmaelites; the Catholic Irish, Palestinians, Maoris and other indigenous peoples across the planet. In *The World, the Text, and the Critics*, Edward Saïd writes:

all texts essentially dislodge other texts or, more frequently, take the place of something else ... They compel attention away from the world ... coupled with the inherent authoritarianism of the authorial authority ...

Yet in the genealogy of the texts there is a first text, a sacred prototype, a scripture, which readers always approach through the text before them, either as petitioning suppliants or as initiates amongst many in a sacred chorus supporting the central patriarchal text. Northrop Frye's theory of literature [in *Anatomy of Criticism*] makes it apparent that the displacing power in all texts finally derived from the displacing power of the Bible, where centrality, potency, inform all Western literature. The same is no less true ... of the Kuran [*sic*]. Both in the Judeo-Christian and in Islamic traditions those hierarchies repose upon a solid divine, or quasi-divine, language, a language whose uniqueness, however, is that it is theologically and humanly circumstantial. (Saïd, 1983: 45–6)

Historically the displacing and silencing power of the biblical language and biblical epics have had an enormous impact on modern European thinking and practices. In the seventeenth century the Book of Joshua and other "divinely" prescribed, authoritarian texts, emanating from the autocratic world of ancient monarchic societies, were deployed to justify English settler-colonialism in and brutal suppression of Ireland – a country inhabited by "heathen" Catholic (the "new Philistines and Canaanites") Others, a country which the Anglican puritans treated as the "new Canaan". English puritans and settlers used the Book of Joshua to equate Irish Catholics with the inferior heathen Canaanites and justify English policies in Ireland (Docker, 2008: 126). When, in 1649, Oliver Cromwell, a Puritan who saw himself as a modern Joshua, invaded Ireland and used the conquest of Canaan narrative in Joshua as the prototype of his colonialist war against the Irish, he told his troops embarking at Bristol that they were new Israelites about to exterminate the idolatrous Canaanites. The Jews, who had been expelled in 1290 in the reign of King Edward I, were officially readmitted into England in 1656 under the Cromwellian Protectorate. Cromwell, who took a particular interest in the Hebrew Bible, saw himself as a modern Joshua and saw England as the "New Israel" viewing the Catholic Irish as the modern heathen Canaanites. He was also an early advocate of English Christian Zionism and the "restoration" of the Jews to Palestine (Merkley, 1998: 37). In practice, Cromwell's Englishmen and Puritan supporters slaughtered those Irish Catholics who refused to surrender their cities, as in the massacres of Drogheda and Wexford (Docker, 2008: 126; citing Rawson, 2001: 269, 301–2).

The land traditions, narratives, legends, prejudices and displacement rhetoric of the Hebrew Bible were responsible for the creation of the myth that the culture of the Philistines – who have given their name to the land of Palestine and indigenous Palestinian Arabs – and Canaanites was an inferior “civilization” to that of the Israelites/Hebrews – an inferiority that justified their subjugation, replacement or even extermination. Of course, in reality, in sharp contrast with the fictional narratives and stories created by the Hebrew Bible, the Canaanites and Philistines remained in Palestine for many centuries after their alleged collapse, suppression and extermination (Bright, 1981: 129–33; Romer, 1988: 69–76).

The displacing narrative embedded in the land conquest traditions of the Hebrew Bible became central to the theological traditions and the supersessionist claims of all three monotheistic Abrahamic traditions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam); supersessionist traditions that historically evolved in the struggle between monotheism and polytheism, and whose holy books (the Bible and Quran) set out to demonstrate the triumph of the former over the latter. The superior “loving” God of the New Testament supersedes the primitive, vindictive and tribalist God of the Old Testament in the same way that the “superior” monotheistic God of the Hebrew Bible supersedes the polytheistic and inferior Gods of the Canaanites and Philistines. A key argument presented here is that the political discourses of the Bible were central to displacing biblical archeology. The secular-nationalist and displacing discourse of biblical archaeology of the State of Israel has appropriated and radically reinterpreted the outward symbols of Judaism and the positivistically verifiable knowledge of Western archaeology: of course, minus God, Jewish ethics or Christian replacement theology. But the displacing biblical archaeology and biblical industry of the Israeli state was also conceived as a “scientifically oriented” “knowledge of the country” (*Yedi’at Ha-Aretz*, as we see below, is a national obsession in Israel and central to the Israeli ethnocentric educational system) designed to tower above traditional Talmudic sources and rabbinical literature, to supersede, correct and cleanse two millennia of oral Jewish traditions and “emasculated” diasporic exilic thinking.

The biblical text has inspired and informed the construction of Zionist collective consciousness. More recently, elite combat units of the Israeli army have been named “Samson” and the term “Samson Option” has been used by commentators in reference to the potential last-resort use of the Israel nuclear weapons system (e.g. Hersh, 1993). However, as we shall see in the Conclusion, “biblical Israel” was an ideo-theological construct: a faith, folk tales, poetic imagination as well as organized memory, rather than *völk*, ethnicity, race or nation. The Israelites, Canaanites and Ishmaelites were not distinct ethnic entities. In fact culturally and religiously they had a great deal in common: biblical Hebrew, the language in which the Hebrew Bible was written, was in fact a dialect of the Canaanite language; early Israelites were themselves originally Canaanites; the early chiefdoms and “kingdoms” of the Israelites reflect continuity (rather than rupture) with Canaanite life, gods, culture, traditions and beliefs; the invention of the ethnic and racial divide between the Hebrews and Canaanites is a largely modern construction; the imagined differences were originally invented by the Bible writers during the exile in Babylon (post 587 BCE) and exilic period; the “Canaanites” embraced that part of the Palestinian population that did not convert to the new Jewish religion of the exiles. The old “Canaanite-Israelite” (Palestinian) population were not considered to be “Jews” because they did not acknowledge the theological monotheistic innovations of the exilic community that Yahweh was the *only* god to be worshipped. In reality the real differences in subsequent developments between the Canaanites and “old Israelites” on the one hand, and the “new Israelites” on the other, were religious ones and not the difference between two distinct

ethnicities. “Biblical Israel” was a faith and religious culture not a *völk* or ethnicity and the Israelites and Canaanites were not two distinct ethnicities. Niels Lemche’s important work on Canaan, *The Canaanites and Their Land*, powerfully demonstrated the fictional dichotomous figures of “Canaanites” and “Israelites” in the Bible. The historical continuities between the Bronze and Iron Ages is today accepted by almost all critical historians and archaeologists – as is the historical separateness of the Iron Age kingdoms of Judaea and Bit Humri/Israel.⁷

The power of the mobilized land narrative of the Bible became central to the European expansion and eventual conquest of the earth. In the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as European “civilization” began to expand in the “wilderness” of North America, many English puritan settler-preachers in the colonies of the New World, many of whom also actively participated in the transatlantic slave trade, called North America the “New Canaan” and gave their colonies and settlements biblical place names: “New Canaan” (established in Connecticut in 1731), Jericho, Salem, Carmel, Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Bethel, Hebron, Sion, Judaea (Armstrong, 2007: 177; Kling, 2004: 205–7; Morton, 1985). Drawing on the stories of Exodus and Joshua, the settler-colonial puritan preachers (now with “their Egypt”/England behind them) referred to the Native Americans as Philistines, Canaanites and Amalekites who should be either converted, or, if they refused, annihilated (Armstrong, 2007: 177). Cotton Mather (1663–1728) was a prolific author, New England minister, a slave-owner and one of the most influential religious leaders in the America colonies. His books and pamphlets included *The Biblia Americana* (1693–1728), *Theopolis Americana: An Essay on the Golden Street of the Holy City* (1710), *The Christian Philosopher* (1721), *Magnalia Christi Americana* (1702), *The Negro Christianized* (1706) and *Ornaments for the Daughters of Zion* (1692). He is also remembered for his role in the Salem witch trials. In September 1689 he delivered a sermon in Boston, calling on members of the militias in New England to consider themselves to be the new Israelites in the wilderness, out of which had erupted the civilizing law of God, confronted by the “new Amalek”: “pure Israel” was obliged to “cast out [the ‘Indian savages’] as dirt in the street” and ethnically cleanse them (Niditch, 1993: 3; Prior, 2001: 17; also Long, 2003: 180–83). Similarly, Robert Gibbs, an eighteenth-century American preacher, thanked the mercies of God for the annihilation of the enemies of the new Israelites (that is, the Native Americans) (Bainton, 1960: 112–13; Prior, 2001: 17).

Europe was the home of the Latin Crusades and the struggle for Jerusalem and the Holy Land, a bitter holy war that went on for several centuries well into the early modern period and whose collective memory was revived in Europe at the height of empires in the nineteenth century. Europe was also the home of (Christian and Jewish) Zionism and the Holocaust, the former preceding the latter by more than half a century. Like the Latin Crusades, pan-Jewish Zionism was the product of both the religious and racial intolerance of Europe and of European empire building. While Jewish Zionism was a late nineteenth century east and central European movement, British “restorationism” was a Protestant movement deeply rooted in post-Reformation English history (Matar, 1989: 52–70; 1999: 139–51), although it became politically significant only in the nineteenth century, at the height of the British Empire. In 1845 the British government set up a high-level commission to look into the feasibility of establishing “Jewish colonies in Palestine”. America’s “special relations” with Zionism is a relatively recent development. But the massive American support for Israel today, like British imperial backing for the Zionist movement and Zionist colonization of Palestine previously, has always successfully combined geopolitical strategic interests as well as Christian Zionist (Protestant) religion, the Bible, covenantal rights and prophetic politics (Halsell, 1986; Masalha, 2007). Like

the medieval Latin Crusades, the Jewish Zionist appeal to the land traditions of the Bible was critical to the success of the European Zionist settler-colonial movement in Palestine.

Political Zionism originated in Europe in the late nineteenth century. Emerging at the height of European imperialism and directly influenced by the European romantic nationalist *völkisch* ideologies, pan-Jewish Zionism successfully combined east and central European nationalisms with European settle-colonization. The European Zionist (Jewish) nationalism and settler-colonialism in Palestine imagined itself closely linked with the biblical “covenant” and the State of Israel – established in 1948 in the name of the Hebrew Bible – was built on old biblical symbols and modern Zionist nationalist myths. The biblical story (in Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy) narrates God’s “covenant” with and “promise” of the “Land of Canaan” to Abraham and his posterity. The descriptions in the narrative of Joshua and Judges narrate the conquest, possession and resettlement of the land by the Israelites and their “holy wars” against the “indigenous” Canaanites and Philistines.

In *Studies in Settler Colonialism: Politics, Identity and Culture* , Fiona Bateman and Lionel Pilkington explain how settler-colonization is rooted in:

a policy of expansion based on the notion of ‘unoccupied’ or ‘virgin’ territories ... In focusing on the territory in settler colonial contexts, the confrontation and extreme violence necessary to create these empty spaces of the colonialists’ imagination is frequently obscured. This discourse of settler colonialism describes how, fortified by modernizing narratives and ideology, a population from the [European] metropole moves to occupy a territory and fashion a new society in a space conceptualized as vacant and free: as available for the taking. Typically, such colonial settlements mask their annihilating drive ... As ‘natives’ were considered inferior, scarcely human – closer to animals than to civilized people – their presence was ignored, treated as a minor inconvenience, walled off from the view or physical intrusion, or made the subject of genocidal projects. In Palestine, Hawai’i, Canada, southern Africa, Ireland, and Australasia, ‘indigenous peoples’ were seen, and in some cases still are seen, as dispensable. They are portrayed as roaming the land, flitting nomadically among impermanent settlements, ignorant or wasteful of a colony’s natural resources, or – as in Gaza – as potential terrorists and outsiders.

(Bateman & Pilkington, 2011: 1)

The European settler-colonization of Palestine, which began with the European penetration of the region in the nineteenth century, culminated in establishment of the Israeli state in 1948 and the Palestine Nakba – the most traumatic catastrophe that ever befell the Palestinians, a catastrophe which is erased from both Israeli and Western memory. Zionism has both distorted Palestinian history and successfully detached Palestine from much of its history. As we shall see in [Chapters 2 and 3](#) , Zionism has instrumentalized the conquest narrative of the Bible not only as a tool of “exiling” millions of Palestinians from their ancestral homeland but also as way of erasing Palestinian history and suppressing Palestinian memory. As Keith Whitlam observes:

It was as though Palestine only came into being with the British Mandate, as though the growth of towns, the shift in villages, or the population movements of three millennia before had nothing to do with this “modern” Palestine. It was as if many earlier periods had been cut adrift from the history of Palestine. This truncating of

Palestine's history was brought to a head by the social and political upheavals that followed the Zionist immigrations into Palestine from the nineteenth century onward, was secured with the establishment of the modern state of Israel in 1948, and has become firmly entrenched in popular, political, and scholarly perceptions of the region ever since.

(Whitelam, 2011: 94)

Central to the debate on Palestine–Israel are the questions of power asymmetry, the European colonizing narrative, indigenous memory and counter-hegemony and how to conceptualize and frame the politics of the Bible against the ongoing conflict between the immigrant-settler and indigenous. This work contextualizes the politics of the Bible against the backdrop of the enduring themes of Zionist colonization of Palestine from the late 1880s to the present. It argues that both the 1948 Nakba and the current Palestinian struggle to resist the continuing Nakba are at the heart of the struggle between the settle State of Israel and the indigenous inhabitants of Palestine.

I also argue that Zionist “resettlement” of Palestine, the establishment of a settler state in historic Palestine, and Zionist Israel as an intensely racialized society, both in relation to the indigenous inhabitants of Palestine and also in relation to the Arab Jews (the Mizrahim), have to be challenged and deconstructed: first and foremost, by rewriting history through the experience of indigenous inhabitants of Palestine and the continuing Nakba as a story telling of huge devastation, trauma, painful struggle, survival and resistance. The tragedy of the Israel–Palestine conflict lies in the fact that the state established by Jews in the aftermath of the Jewish Holocaust, a key event in Jewish history, has been a settler state where ethno-religious discrimination, militarism and injustice prevail. But while the Holocaust is an event in the past, the colonization of Palestine and the ethno-religious cleansing of Palestinians are continuing.

Not only is it that the Palestinians are still subject to ongoing displacement policies in the twenty-first century; in fact for the past six decades since the 1948 Nakba any Palestinian attempts to constitute a coherent narrative of their own past have been challenged and silenced by Israelis and pro-Zionist (Christian and Jewish) lobbies in the West. Until recently the 1948 Nakba has been completely excluded from Western discourses on Israel–Palestine. Even now Israel still enjoys extraordinary support in the corridors of power in Europe and the US; in Britain today, for instance, as many as 80 per cent of the MPs of the ruling Tory party are members of “Conservative Friends of Israel” (Fowke, 2010).

Feverish political messianism is a key feature of modern Christian and Jewish fundamentalisms (Rapoport, 1988: 197; Juergensmeyer, 2000) and, as we shall see in chapter five, since 1967 the alliance of political messianics with Jewish fundamentalists and secular territorial expansionists has created a powerful political force of messianic fundamentalism in Israel (Sprinzak, 1977, 1991, 1999). As Eric Hobsbawm has pointed out, the religious dimension of modern messianic fundamentalism is partly a product of the doctrines of impurities of the “Judeo-Christian tradition” (Hobsbawm, 1959: 57). As we shall see in chapter five, several Israeli scholars have recognized and written extensively about the totalitarian and messianic characteristics of the Gush Emunim movement whose settlers in the West Bank, including key Israeli Ashkenazi rabbis and spiritual leaders, have appropriated the land narrative of the Hebrew Bible to compare modern Palestinian Muslims and Christians to the Canaanites, Philistines, Amalekites and Ishmaelites whose extermination or expulsion is predestined by a “divine design” (Raanan, 1980; Tal, 1985; Shahak & Mezvinsky, 1999: 73). Leading Messianic rabbis

have frequently referred to the Palestinians as the “Canaanites, Philistines and Amalekites of today”. Many of the Gush Emunim rabbis talk about the “new Canaanite era” and insist on giving the divine commandment (“*mitzva*”) to “blot out the memory of Amalek” a contemporary relevance in the conflict between the Israelis and the Palestinians. As we shall see in chapters three and four, the power organized memory, of “blotting out” the Other, is deployed in the services of secular Israeli policies of erasing the history and culture of the indigenous people of Palestine.

Using the authority and commandments of the biblical text, Israeli Jewish fundamentalists have constructed an “Ishmaelite history”: they refer to the Palestinian Arabs as modern “Ishmaelites” to invoke the circumstances under which biblical Abraham “expelled” Ishmael. As we shall see in chapter five, some fundamentalist rabbis, however, prefer to use the biblical narrative of the Israelites “destruction” of the Amalekites, Canaanites and Philistines as a “model” for the determination of Israeli policy towards the Palestinians.

THE BIBLE AND COLLECTIVE IDENTITY-FASHIONING

The Bible is not a single primary text. “The Bible is not only a library of books, it is a library of different *kinds* of book” (Barton, 2010: 48) – a large collection of different books and texts which are the distillation of oral traditions put together across many centuries by many authors in different languages and derive from multiple cultural and religious traditions: Near Eastern, Canaanite, Hebrew, Aramaic and Hellenistic Greek. Compiled across many centuries, and reflecting multiple traditions, these books were translated into Latin, English and virtually every modern language. Much of the Bible should be read as epic stories, literature and fiction – not history or historiography. Many of its books should be read like novels which may or may not contain history. More than half of the Hebrew Bible consists of narrative, of stories and epics – stories which also reflect the allegorical and figurative language of the Hebrew Bible, stories which are the distillation of oral traditions and were created and recreated across several centuries. Following two and a half millennia of creation and recreation, of sacralization, canonization and codification, of invention and reinvention and interpretation by multiple authors and translators, inevitably the Hebrew Bible often tells about the identity (and identity politics and ideology) of its authors, translators and interpreters.

Organized memory and identity politics have always been central to the historical evolution of the Bible and to the interpretation, adaption and readaption of the text. This identity politics legacy, which has left its mark on the long and continuous evolution of the Bible, partly explains the fact that the Bible is full of contradictory narratives and discourses -narratives and counter-narratives, discourses and counter-discourses, all of which have led to contradictory interpretations and contrasting applications of the Bible. For instance, the land tradition and narrative of the Hebrew Bible has been used in the modern era to justify and redeem settler-colonialism; the narrative of the Torah books – including Exodus, Deuteronomy and Leviticus – which justify and condone slavery, has been misappropriated to institutionalize and even industrialize modern slavery – the transatlantic slave trade and the shipping of millions of Africans to the sugar plantations in the Americas – while, at the same time, Christian abolitionists such as William Wilberforce (1759–1833) have used the narrative of the New Testament to argue for freeing of slaves, and their work contributed to making slavery illegal within the British Empire. From the burning of witches to the empowerment of the poor, from the Afrikaner Dutch Reformed Church using the Bible to support to South Africa’s apartheid

laws to Martin Luther King's "promised land" speech and US civil rights movement, from gay-bashing to the defense of homosexuality and gay rights, from messianic Jewish fundamentalism and Crusading Christian Zionism to anti-Zionist Palestinian Christian liberation theology, the Bible has been adapted and readapted by people with different causes and contradictory political agendas. In view of this long history of adapting, readapting, appropriating and misappropriating history and the Bible, an ethical engagement with the biblical text is central to any interpretative biblical studies.

THE CONVERSION OF THE TURKIC KHAZARS AND THE "YIDDISH PEOPLE"

The role of the Turkic Khazar tribes in the shaping of east European Ashkenazi Jews, "Yiddish People" has been widely discussed, including in Arthur Koestler's *The Thirteenth Tribe* and Shlomo Sand's *The Invention of the Jewish People*. The Khazars, linguistically "Turko-Finnic" speakers (in Turkish *Hazarlar*) were originally semi-nomadic pagan Turkic tribes who established the Khazar Khanate between the Black Sea and Caspian Sea, one of the largest states of medieval Eurasia, between the second half of the sixth century until the early eleventh century.⁸ Their conversion from traditional Turkic Shamanism into rabbinical Judaism has been widely documented by medieval historians. Most medieval sources (mostly Muslim and Arabic) show that the Khazar kingdom became a "Jewish kingdom" during the eighth century (Halevi, 1987: 95–8). In modern times the most important work on the Khazar Jewish kingdom has been produced by Douglas Morton Dunlop (1909–87), a renowned British historian and scholar of Islamic and Eurasian history, who has been described by Israeli historian Anita Shapira and the "most esteemed scholar of the Khazar monarchy" (Shapira, 2009: 63–72). Dunlop's *The History of the Jewish Khazars* was republished by the Israeli Zionist publisher, Schocken Books. First Khazar King Bulan and the aristocracy converted to Judaism (around 740) and then part of the general population followed and Judaism seems to have been the established "state religion" by 830. Following their conversion to Judaism, the descendants of the Khazars began to claim origins in Kozar, a son of Togarmah. Togarmah is mentioned in Genesis (10:2–3) as a grandson of Japheth. King Bulan and his followers seem to have embraced a rudimentary form of Judaism based on biblical stories and myths and the Bible alone, while excluding the Talmud and rabbinical literature (Halevi, 1987: 98).

Several hundred years later, medieval Jewish figures of al-Andalus (Muslim Spain) such as Sa'adia Gaon made positive references to the Khazars and Yehuda Hallevi's medieval essays (Hallevi, 1905), originally written in Arabic (Arabic being the literary language of Andalusian Jews) as *Kitab al-Khazari* (*The Book of the Khazari*, c.1120 to 1140), which is framed as a purported "factual" dialogue between King Bulan and Jewish rabbis, and details moral and liturgical reasons for the Khazars' conversion to Judaism (Halevi, 1987: 98–9). Perhaps because Judaism ultimately became the "state religion" of the Khazar kingdom, this political symbolism was not lost on those responsible for the Israeli state "secular" educational curriculum: today the Hebrew version of *Kitab al-Khazari*, entitled *Kuzari*, is taught in Israeli state schools as a key text of the Jewish secular-"nationalist" literature and as a piece of anti-Arab and anti-Muslim polemic.

The thesis that the Ashkenazi Jews, "the Yiddish people" are descendants of the European Khazars was advanced by three modern east European Jewish authors and historians: first by Russian-Palestinian-Israeli historian Abraham Poliak in his 1944 Hebrew book: *Khazaria: The*

History of a Jewish Kingdom in Europe and later the *History of the Jewish Khazars* (1954); and subsequently by two Hungarian Jewish authors, Raphael Patai in *The Myth of a Jewish Race* (1975); and Arthur Koestler, in *The Thirteenth Tribe* (1976). Koestler, who relied extensively on the works of Douglas Morton Dunlop and previous Jewish historians, famously argued that the bulk of east European Jewry (Ashkenazi Jews) were not descended from the “biblical Israelites” but from the converted Khazars and had migrated westwards into eastern and central Europe (primarily into Ukraine, Hungary, Poland, Belarus, Lithuania and Germany) in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries when the Khazar empire was collapsing. More recently, in *The Invention of the Jewish People*, Israeli historian Shlomo Sand (2009), who rejects most of the stories of national-identity formation in the Hebrew Bible, writes “while the Khazars scared off the Israeli historians, not one of whom has published a single paper on the subject, Koestler’s *Thirteenth Tribe* annoyed and provoked angry responses. Hebrew readers had no access to the book itself for many years, learning about it only through the venomous denunciations” (Sand, 2009: 238). In fact Yehuda Halevi’s *Kuzari* is a key reference text taught by nearly every Israeli high school. Evidently Judaized Khazars have been one of the components of what became the largest Jewish community in modern Europe. The historical circumstances seem to connect to them to Ukrainian, Russian, Bulgarian, Polish and Hungarian Jews. Also, widespread conversions to Judaism throughout the ancient period and the early Middle Ages had a major impact on the history of European and non-European Jews. And as critical Jewish and Israeli historians have shown, the idea of a Jewish ethnicity/race is an invented modern European myth (Abu El-Haj, 2012). As we shall see below, Zionism borrowed the race terminology of various romantic nationalist movements in the nineteenth century.

INVENTING JEWISH “ETHNICITY”, BIOLOGIZING THE EUROPEAN JEWS: NINETEENTH-CENTURY NATIONALIST MYTHS OF COMMON DESCENT

The utilization of the Hebrew Bible in the biologization and ethnocization of Jews links dominant strands of European Zionism with European anti-Semitism. Narratives of the Hebrew Bible are often confused with an ahistorical and highly toxic discourse – a discourse created in the nineteenth century – of the Jewish “race” and monolithic Jewish “cultural identity”. This work argues against the biologization of Jews and the essentialization of Jewish identity and the demonization of Jews – essentialization and demonization typically found in anti-Semitism and anti-Jewish racist polemics: historically and for over 2,000 years Jews spoke many languages and there were multiple Jewish ethnicities and Jewish cultural identities; there were diverse Jewish religious and cultural narratives, and today there are strongly anti-racist components within “Jewish cultures”.

For over two millennia Judaism (like Islam and Christianity) was self-defined in terms of faith – not race or ethnicity. Today Jews (like Muslims and Christians) belong to many ethnicities and nationalities and the vast majority of Jews do not live in Israel. The celebrated Arab-Jewish medieval theologian and rational philosopher Rabbi Moses Maimonides (1135–1204), an exponent of the Oral Torah, was widely recognized as Judaism’s greatest theologian and the most illustrious example of the Islamic renaissance and the Golden Age of the Arabo-Islamic–Judaic symbiosis of the Middle Ages. Maimonides lived most of his life and died in Egypt.⁹ Born in Cordoba (Muslim Spain) his Arab-Jewish identity (deeply rooted in the social, cultural

and rational heritage of Al-Andalus (Andalusia), is found in his long Arabic name: “Abu Imran Musa bin Maimun bin Ubaidallah al-Qortubi” (of Cordoba). In the Quran “Imran” is the name of the father of the prophet Moses and there is a whole Quranic chapter called “House of Imran” (*Al Imran*) and his adoption of Abu “Imran” which is a common Arabo-Islamic name, must have been designed to emphasize his multilayered Arabo-Islamic-Jewish identity.

Maimonides’s name in rabbinical Hebrew, however, is slightly shorter: “Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon” whose acronym is “Rambam”. In Latin, in which language he became famous as one of the leading Arabo-Islamic rational philosophers, the Arabic “ibn” (son of) becomes the Greek-style suffix “ides” to form “Moses Maimonides”. Maimonides’s most celebrated philosophical book, *The Guide for the Perplexed (Dalalatul Hairin)* , was written in Arabic and combined Islamic thought with an Aristotelian worldview. For him, since truth was one, there was no conflict between the Hebrew Bible and Aristotle; the Hebrew Bible cannot be interpreted literally; Scripture must be in harmony with reason (Armstrong, 2007: 142). *The Guide* was subsequently translated into Hebrew (under the title *Moreh Nevukhim*) and Latin (*Rabbi Mossei Aegyptii Dux seu Director dubitan-tium aut perplexorum*). Its first complete English translation, *The Guide for the Perplexed* , was by Michael Friedlander (in 1881), a German Jewish Orientalist and later principal of a rabbinical seminary, “Jews College” London (now called the London School of Jewish Studies. Friedlander, who had command of Arabic, remained faithful to the original Arabic version.

Although Maimonides did include the right of individual Jews to settle in the “Land of Israel” as a Judaic commandment (*mitzvah*), he himself lived in Egypt and remained wedded to the application of the three Talmudic oaths, especially to the religious doctrine of not to return en masse or in any organized fashion to the “Land of Israel”. He also played down the special character of the Jewish people and affirmed that the difference between Jew and non-Jew was theological rather than essentialist. He denied that Jews benefitted from superior “divine” providence and prophecy. He extended an unusually welcoming hand to proselytes and converts to Judaism. He defined “who is a Jew” in terms, first and foremost, of faith commitment, as opposed to modern Zionist ethnocentric and racial construction (Masalha, 2002: 85–117). Since the nineteenth century, however, there has been a radical break from this deeply rooted, faith-based, tradition of rabbinic Judaism (Midrash, Mishna, Talmud and Responsa, which evolved after the second century ad), first, in the nineteenth century, with the new European tradition of essentialization and “racialization” of the “Jewish people” and secondly with the reinvention of the “Jewish people” in the post-Holocaust period as a distinct “ethnicity”. However, the replacement of the discredited applied science of Eugenics and the “Jewish race” after the Nazi atrocities by the more euphemistic, yet no less fictional “Jewish ethnicity” is a figment of European intellectual and scholarly imagination – an invention completely detached from Jewish history and reality.

The term “Zionism” was first coined in the late nineteenth century and this partly reflected the fact that European political Zionism was a product of east and central European nationalist ideas and colonial movements of the age. The inventing and reinventing of the allegorical narratives of the Hebrew Bible as an ethno-national epic of the “Jewish People” in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries allowed European Zionism to deploy the biblical text effectively as an “ethnic document” and to historicize and “nationalize” the biblical stories and epics, especially those of Joshua, David, Solomon and Samson. But as both Keith Whitelam and Shlomo Sand demonstrate in their works, *The Invention of Ancient Israel: The Silencing of Palestinian History* and *The Invention of the Jewish People* respectively, both “ancient Israel” and the “ancient roots”

of the “Jewish people” were ideological constructs created in the nineteenth century by European scholars and intellectuals who borrowed from European nationalist romantic conceptions as inspirational models. Modern European Zionist efforts to create a new Hebraic consciousness went hand in hand with the construction of “common descent” (*völk*): a “common past” with a common vernacular from the culturally, linguistically and ethnically diverse Jewish settlers arriving from different European countries. The political project of constructing Palestine’s heritage as centred in a mythologized ethno-linguistic understanding of Judaism has played a central role in efforts to suppress Palestinian history, de-Arabize modern Palestine and disinherit and displace the indigenous Palestinian Arab population (Thompson, 2011: 97–108; 2008: 1–15; 2009: 133–42).

Secular nation-building and the invention of religious tradition was a typical European practice of articulating collective memory selectively by manipulating certain bits of the national and religious past, suppressing others and elevating and mobilizing others in an entirely functional way and for political purposes; thus mobilized memory is not necessarily authentic but rather useful and powerful politically (Saïd, 1999: 6–7). Competing modes of modern nation-building and nationalist myth-making have received extensive critical reappraisal in the works of Benedict Anderson (1991: 6, 11–12), Eric Hobsbawm (1990), Anthony Smith (1986; 1989: 340–67), Ernest Gellner (1983) and Elie Kedourie ([1960] 1974). Hobsbawm’s most comprehensive analysis of nation-building and myth-making in Europe is found in *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*. Published in 1990 under the subtitle “Programme, Myth, Reality” his work is about the “invention of tradition” the creation of national culture, and the construction national of identities from a mixture of folk history and historical myths. In *The Invention of Tradition* (1983, 1996) Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger explore the way social and political authorities in the Europe of the mid-nineteenth century set about creating supposedly age-old traditions by providing invented memories of the past as a way of creating a new sense of identity for the ruler and ruled (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1996: 1–14, 263–83).

The reinvention of the Jewish religious tradition and the synthesizing of a new secularized Jewish national tradition were late-comers among the national movements of eastern and central Europe and were born out of the historical and ideological conditions of those European countries. Like other nationalist movements, political Zionism looked for “historical roots” and sought to reinterpret distant pasts in the light of newly invented nationalist ideologies. Central to the debate in this book about the “Hebrew Bible and Zionism” is the idea of the concoction of a new Jewish national tradition by political Zionism – an invented European discourse which included the secularization and nationalization of the Hebrew Bible and its deployment in support of the ethnic cleansing of Palestine (Masalha, 2007). Furthermore Zionist nation-building, ever expanding settlements, territorial ambitions and the effective use of the conquest legends of the Hebrew Bible went hand in hand. Zionists claim that events described in the Hebrew Bible establish the right of twentieth century Jews to found an ethnocratic state in Palestine. Contrary to the archaeological and historical evidence, the view that the Bible provides Jews with a title-deed to the land of Palestine and morally legitimizes the creation of the state of Israel and its “ethnic cleansing” policies towards the indigenous Palestinians is still pervasive in Jewish Zionist circles. The allegorical biblical language, its theological theme of “exile and return” and the blossoming of the desert and the “promise of the land” have been secularized and transformed to support Zionist nationalist policies of colonization and the ethnic cleansing of Palestine (Thompson, 2008: 1–15). The Zionist myth of “exile and return” American Jewish theologian Marc Ellis observes, has been instrumental in the “exiling” of millions of Palestinians

from their ancestral homeland (Ellis, 2000).

The German-speaking, secular visionary of modern Zionism and the founding father of the pan-Jewish international Zionist movement, Theodor Herzl (1860–1904), was an assimilated and secular Viennese Jewish journalist who spoke neither Yiddish nor Hebrew and who in 1894 had covered the infamous Paris treason trial of Captain Alfred Dreyfus. Herzl wrote in a June 1895 entry of his diary: “In Paris, as I have said, I achieved a freer attitude toward anti-Semitism, which I now began to understand historically and to pardon. Above all, I recognized the emptiness and futility of trying to ‘combat’ anti-Semitism” (cited in Lowenthal, 1956: 6). Herzl set out to reconfigure and construct “Jewishness” as an ethnicity and culture rather than a religion or theology. He also famously set out the political Zionist programme in a 1896 book called *Der Judenstaat: Versuch einer modernen Lösung der Judenfrage* (“The State of the Jews: Proposal of a Modern Solution for the Jewish Question”), one of the most important texts of Zionism. The original pamphlet was called *Address to the Rothschilds*, the famous Jewish banking dynasty (Bein, 1988: 40). Frankly and typically colonial, Herzl’s secular vision called for the establishment of a secular “State of the Jews” in an “undeveloped” (“backward”) territory outside Europe. But the *Judenstaat*, as conceived by Herzl, would “form part of a defensive wall for Europe in Asia, an outpost of civilization against barbarism” (Mayer, 2008: 103). Clearly from the outset Herzl conceived the *Judenstaat* as a European colony on “a piece of Asia Minor” and as part of the system of Western colonial expansion in Asia, Africa and Latin America. His 1900 draft charter for a proposed Jewish-Ottoman Land Company as a tool of colonizing Palestine was modelled on the British and Dutch East India Companies (Kattan, 2009: 24–5). In *Der Judenstaat*, Herzl noted the possibility of a Jewish state in Argentina. Other potential territories for Zionist settlement were considered, including Uganda, north Sinai and Madagascar. But with the decisive influence of Russian Zionists, Palestine was chosen by secular and atheist Zionist leaders because of its connection with the religious and outwards symbols of Judaism and Christianity.

In reality pan-Jewish Zionism was hugely inspired by pan-German romantic nationalism. In fact Herzl’s pan-Jewish Zionism of secularization and racialization had much in common with pan-Germanism, with its emphasis on *das völk*; that all people of German “race” blood and descent owed their primary allegiance to Germany, the *Heimat*; that the European Jews constituted a distinct *völk*/ “race” whose prosperity depended on the establishment of a “nation state” for the multi-ethnic Jews (Prior, 2001: 33, n.41). Herzl also hinted at the fate of the indigenous population (without mentioning the Palestinians by names) in the entry of his diary dated 12 June 1905, noting that, as the Zionists pursued their colonization project and the acquisition of the land from local landlords, they would have to “try to spirit the penniless population across the border by procuring employment for it in the transit countries, while denying it employment in our own country... both the process of expropriation and the removal of the poor [would have to] be carried out discreetly and circumspectly” (Masalha, 1992: 8–9; Mayer, 2008: 103).

In *Der Judenstaat*, Herzl argued that his motivation was entirely secular-nationalist and not dictated by spiritual yearnings for the Holy Land or an appeal to the biblical doctrine of Promise Land, in which the *halacha* (the Jewish religious law) would be applied or Torah would be observed. Yet, his secular settler-colonial enterprise was replete with religious overtones. Debating whether *Der Judenstaat* should be established in Palestine or Argentina, he wrote: “Palestine is our ever-memorable historic home. The very name Palestine would attract our people with a force of marvellous potency”. He also explained that “The Temple will be visible

from long distances, for it is only our ancient faith that has kept us together”. He also appealed for the support of the highly sceptical Jewish rabbis in Europe and added: “our community of race is peculiar and unique, for we are bound together only by the faith of our fathers” (Prior, 2001: 19).

ETHNO-RACIAL NATIONALISM *BLUT UND BODEN* : SACRED SOIL AND *NAHALAT AVOT*

The most important centre of the European Enlightenment was France. But Germany was also a major centre. The German Enlightenment movement inspired the Jewish *Haskalah* in the eighteenth century. But Germany in the nineteenth century was also a major centre of modern European philological and biological racism and Eugenics, and was to be the site of the Holocaust. The linguistic theories of German romantic nationalists such as Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803) and Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762–1814) were predicated on the idea that the “German language” embodied a *völkgeist*, or “spirit of the people” of the German folk and original “Germanic tribes” that had to be “ingathered” and unified and had to create a “nation state”. Inspired by Herder and Fichte, the pan-German discourse of *Blut und Boden* was preoccupied with secular, patriarchal and muscular nationalism: of *völk*, ethnicity and race, of the myth of “common descent” of Fatherland/*heimat* /homeland (soil). This deeply intolerant type of nationalism glorified rural “historical roots” the “organic” relationship of a folk/ethnicity to the (“female”) “sacred” soil it occupied, impregnated and cultivated, and placed a high value on the virtues of rural living, physical environment cultivating a (sacralized) national soil. In *Landscape and Memory*, Simon Schama examines the relationship between the physical environment and (*völk*) memory, and traces the forest worship in pan-German nationalism through the myths of the German Reich in the 1870s into the Nazi era. The preservation of the mythical German tribes, folk and forest was an “invented” collective memory (Schama, 1995: 114–19), an invented illiberal tradition created in the nineteenth century by pan-German secular romantic nationalism. As we shall see in [Chapter 4](#), in Israel the worship of the Jewish National Fund’s forest became central to secular nationalist collective memory derived from *völkisch* myths of “ingathering” the “ancient Israelite tribes” in modern Palestine and restoring the fatherland.

In the most extremist anti-Semitic, racist German myths of *Blut und Boden* of the early twentieth century, the propagators of ethno-racial purities argued that only those of “German tribes” (blood) have the right to live on German soil and preserve German forests, and that the Jews were “wandering tribes” with no “historical roots” in Europe, that they did not belong on German soil. In the inter-war period and during the Holocaust this catastrophic doctrine gave justifications for the removal and even extermination of Jews.

Inspired by romantic German secular nationalist conceptions and ethnocentric mythologies, Herzl and the Zionist elite of central and eastern Europe sought to create and transmit the new *völkisch* nationalist ideology to the fragmented and scattered European Jews. The aim was to create a literature in the national idiom, in order to fashion a “common descent” and a “national spirit” indispensable for the nation-state to come into being (Rabkin, 2010: 131). Inspired by pan-Germanism and post-Herder German *völkisch* nationalism of the nineteenth century, political Zionism was an anachronistic form of European romantic nationalism and a project of myth-making; it adopted a German version of Enlightenment thought (Massad, 2004: 61). German nationalist principles such as biology, ethnic and racial purities, “blood and soil”

“historical roots in the soil” and a mystical attachment to the biblical landscape all became key features of, and guided, Zionist secular nationalism and its invention of the Jews as a nation with its own land, the soil/inheritance/patrimony of the forefathers (Patriarchs), or “*nahalat avot*”, according to the Zionist settlers (*ibid.* : 61). As we shall see below, the main tasks of excavating Jewish “roots” and Jewish “bones” in “holy soil of the Land of the Bible” and constructing a collective biblical memory rooted in the physical landscape were undertaken by Western Christian archaeologists and Ashkenazi secular Jewish nationalists.

Articulated by modern nationalist scholars and intellectuals, collective memory is critical in the way people view the “historical roots” of the “ancient past” and connect them to the present (Halbwachs, 1980). This modern invented tradition was typical of the way European Jewish nationalist historians and authors of the nineteenth century helped create and shape a new Zionist collective memory of the ancient past (Zerubavel, 1995: 5; Whitelam, 2003: 276–7). According to Israeli sociologist Baruch Kimmerling (1939–2007), the invention of the Zionist nationalist project should be credited to two outstanding Jewish historians: German Jewish biblical critic Heinrich Graetz (1817–91) and Russian Simon Dubnow (1860–1941), both of whom used Jewish (especially religious) and non-Jewish sources and texts to reconstruct a collective national consciousness of Judaism as an “ancient nationality” existing from time immemorial. Dubnow thought that the Jews had been transformed into a “European nation” and that it was upon them to demand the status of a national minority within the European or American nation-states. Other writers such Lithuanian Jewish novelist Abraham Mapu, the first modern Hebrew novelist, chose the “historical novel” *Love of Zion (Ahavat Tzion)* (1845) – in the French romantic tradition – to create a sense of Jewish collectivity framed in a biblical language and set in “biblical Israel” (Kimmerling, 1999: 339–63). Translated into Yiddish in 1874, this was the first novel to be published in Hebrew and the first novel to be translated (in 1899) from Hebrew into Arabic. Although Zionism was a late-comer to the European Romantic national tradition, the recovering of “historical roots” – in the European nationalist tradition of the nineteenth century – and invention of the Jewish people and construction of a new collective consciousness – a tradition recast with “historical origins” and “historical depth” and ancient roots – was in line with other east and central European national projects of the age. These Zionist historians reinvented a new Jewish historiography which was not only divorced from Jewish collective memory, but also at odds with it.

MYTH NARRATIVES AND COLONIAL REALITY: REDEMPTIVE SECULAR ZIONISM, JEWISH RESTORATIONISM AND “LAND CONQUEST”

The messianic, mystical Hebrew word *goel* means “redeemer” and many secular Zionist settlers changed their east and central European first names to Yigal, “He will redeem” or gave this name to their sons and daughters (the female version, Geula). Examples include famous Israeli leaders and public figures such Yigal Allon (born Yigal Paicovitch), Yigael Yadin (Yigael Sukenik) and Yigal Tumarkin (Peter Martin Gregor Heinrich Hellberg) (see also below). The secular Zionist settlers created a new secular-mystical vernacular, of uncovering the past, “recovering” the land, soil “redemption” (“*geulat adama*” and “*geulat karka’a*”), “land conquest” (*kibbush adama*),¹⁰ immigrant settler-colonization and demographic transformation of the land and the “re-establishment” of an exclusivist Jewish statehood in Palestine.

The obsessive search for ancient Hebrew roots, the historicization of the Hebrew Bible as a nationalist collective memory and the creation of a new militarized Jewish consciousness, the Hebrewization/biblicization/ de-Arabization of the landscape and toponymy (place names) of Palestine have all been permanent themes of modern, dynamic and redemptionist Zionism.

The reinvention of both the Jewish past and modern Jewish nationhood in Zionist historiography and the creation of a modern Hebrew consciousness have received some scholarly attention (Myers, 1995; Ram, 1995: 91–124; Piterberg, 2001; Raz-Krakotzkin, 1993, 1994). Commenting on the invention of a nationalist Jewish tradition and the transformation of Jewish religion into nationalist ideology, Elie Kedourie observes:

When the peculiar anthropology and metaphysics of nationalism are used in the interpretation of the past, history takes on quite another complexion ... Moses was not a man inspired by God in order to fulfil and reaffirm His covenant with Israel, he was really a national leader rising against colonial oppression ... Nationalist historiography operates, in fact, a subtle but unmistakable change in traditional conceptions. In Zionism, Judaism ceases to be the *raison d'être* of the Jew, and becomes, instead, a product of Jewish national consciousness.

(Kedourie, 1974: 75–6)

Edward Saïd has powerfully critiqued the writings and Exodus politics of Michael Walzer and other Zionist authors, and their reading of the theme of the book of Exodus as a supposed “national” liberation from slavery in Egypt. This type of “nationalist historiography” is a sophisticated obfuscation of history and a thinly veiled apology for the settler-colonial policies of the Israeli state (Saïd, 1986: 289–303; Hussein, 2004: 293).

The founding fathers of Jewish Zionism were almost all atheists or religiously indifferent. They used religious symbols of Judaism politically and cynically and as a highly effective propaganda tool – to secure support from Christians and mobilize Jews. Their political Zionism was a radical break from 2,000 years of Jewish tradition and rabbinical Judaism; a rebellion against and a conscious repudiation of classical, faith-centred Judaism and its theological tenets and fundamentals. In the interests of gaining Christian and Western support, political Zionism mobilized the “sacred narrative” to underpin the Zionist colonial enterprise, but until the creation of Israel in 1948, political Zionism remained largely a secular, settler-colonialist movement, with frequently anti-religious dispositions. Historically the term *Eretz Yisrael* (Hebrew for the “Land of Israel”) was a religious term embedded in the Jewish tradition. The “Land of Israel” was revered by generations of Jews as a place of holy pilgrimage and ecclesiastical territory, but never as a future secular state. For two millennia, the Jewish tradition and religion strictly ordered Jews to await the coming of the Messiah and the “end of time” before returning to the land. This is also illustrated by the fact that several currents of traditional and orthodox Judaism are still deeply anti-Zionist. More crucially, Palestine (or the Holy Land) was never a major centre for Judaism during the last 2,000 years. Although the Holy Land was central in the religious imagination of Jews, this was not translated into political, social, economical, demographic, cultural and intellectual realities (Masalha, 2007).

This European Jewish nationalism was also a late-comer among the national movements of eastern and central Europe. It sought to reinterpret distant pasts in the light of newly invented European nationalist and racial ideologies. According to American Jewish historian and theoretician of nationalism Hans Kohn, Zionist nationalism “had nothing to do with Jewish traditions; it was in many ways opposed to them” (Kohn quoted in W. Khalidi, 2005: 813).

Zionist nationalism adopted pan-Germanic theories, with their emphasis on *das völk* : people of common descent should seek separation and form one common state. But such ideas of racial nationalism ran counter to those held by liberal nationalism in western Europe, whereby it was equal citizenship regardless of religion or ethnicity – not “common descent” – that determined the national character of the state (*ibid.*).

Secular Zionist nationalism was a classical case of the invention of a people in late-nineteenth-century Europe and a synthesizing of a national project. This invented tradition considered the Jews as a race and a biological group, and borrowed heavily from romantic nationalisms in central and eastern Europe. Secular political Zionism mobilized effectively and successfully biblical stories which were reworked in the late nineteenth century for the political purposes of a modern European movement intent on colonizing the land of Palestine. As an invented late-modern (European) tradition, Zionism was bound to be a synthesizing project. As Israeli social scientist Ronit Lentin (2000) has powerfully argued in *Israel and the Daughters of the Shoah: Reoccupying the Territories of Silence* , Israeli masculinized and militarized national identity has been constructed in opposition to a “feminized” diaspora. The founding fathers of Zionism reimagined the New Hebrew modern-secular collectivity in total opposition to the despised Jewish (feminized) diaspora which was unable to resist European anti-Semitism and which would eventually lead to the Holocaust. Zionism’s (and Israeli) utter contempt for diaspora and non-Zionist Jews and rejection of a peaceful “feminized” diaspora, and its obsession with synthesizing a nation, is reflected in the fact that its militarized symbols were an amalgam, chosen not only from the external symbols of the Jewish religion but also from the militant narratives of the Hebrew Bible and also from diverse modern traditions and sources, symbols subsequently appropriated as “Jewish nationalist”, Zionist or “Israeli”. The music of Israel’s national anthem, *ha-Tikva* (“the hope”), came from the Czech national musician, Smetana; much of the music used in nationalist Israeli songs originated in Russian folk-songs; even the term for an Israeli-born Jew free of all the “maladies and abnormalities of exile” is in fact the indigenous Palestinian Arabic word for *sabar* , Hebrewized as (muscular and tough) *tzabar* or *sabra* (Bresheeth, 1989: 131), the prickly pears (cactus fruit) grown in and around villages in Palestine, including the hundreds of villages destroyed by Israel in 1948. The myth of the European Zionist *sabra* settler emerged in the pre-state British mandatory period. The myth narrative was designed to narrativize and nativize the European Zionist settler, the *Sabra* , who was compared to the native Palestinian, prickly cactus, *sabre* , rough and masculine on the outside, and sweet and sensitive on the inside. Even the “national anthem of the Six Day War”, Naomi Shemer’s “Jerusalem of Gold”, was a plagiarized copy of a Basque lullaby song (Masalha, 2007: 20, 39).

FROM THE SACRED TO THE SECULAR: ETHNO-LINGUISTIC NATIONALISM AND THE CREATION OF A ZIONIST LANGUAGE

Zionist ideology emerged in late nineteenth century Europe in tandem with the popularization of ethno-linguistic theories associated with empires and with the rise of European philological positivist doctrines. The French Orientalist scholar and archaeologist Ernest Renan, the chair of Hebrew, Chaldean and Syrian languages at the Collège de France in the 1860s, became famous for “excavating” Hebrew and promoting a Semitic philology and “Semitic civilizations” linked to racial doctrines (Saïd, 1980: 130–48). Renan’s extraordinary work encompassed political

theories of nationalism, national and racial identities, ethnology, Semitic languages and civilizations, Hebrew Arabic and Phoenician, Islamic philosophy, the Hebrew Bible and New Testament studies. His highly influential work also contributed to the Semitization, racialization and ethnocization of the European Jews. As a work of positivist historicization, Renan's 1863 book *Vie de Jésus* became in France the second most widely read book after the Bible. Influenced by Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* and the rise of secular naturalist European thinking, it was widely regarded, together with Darwin's work, as among the most influential and revolutionary books of the nineteenth century. This work had a huge impact on the rise of biblical historical criticism in Germany and France in the nineteenth century. Renan said he had written this book "with the absolute detachment of an historian" following a two month visit to, and landscape observations in, Palestine in the spring of 1861 (Shepherd, 1987: 97). The book is hostile to the religious environment of Jerusalem and contrasts this with the physical environment and the mountainous physical "landscape" of the Galilee. It also focuses on the Galilean social milieu in which Jesus grew up and started his ministry. It describes the "authentic Jesus" as a peasant leader described in secular social terms as the "highest summit of human greatness" It asserts that the "historical Jesus" was born in Nazareth, not in Bethlehem, and depicts him as a secular Galilean Jewish peasant revolutionary leader and moralist (*ibid.* : 97–8).

Influenced by the rise of social Darwinism and the influence of naturalist and physical environment thinking, Renan's historicizing ethnologist project, of transforming the language of the Bible from the sacred and figurative to the secular and political, included a secular critique of the gospels' authors and the application of nineteenth-century pseudo social-scientific racial and nationalist conceptions. It was roundly denounced by both Catholic and Anglican churches; Pope Pius IX called Renan the "European blasphemer" while other Christian critics compared *Vie de Jésus* to Charles Darwin's *Origin of the Species*.¹¹ The *Vie de Jésus* was followed by an eight-volume study known collectively as *Histoire des origines du Christianisme* (1863–83). Renan's secular political theories on nationalism and national and racial identities continued in his five historicizing volumes on the Hebrew Bible, entitled *Histoire du peuple d'Israël* (1887–93).

Renan's travels in Palestine were an offshoot of a French archaeological expedition to Syria in 1860–61, headed by Renan himself, which had the aim of inspecting and translating ancient Phoenician inscriptions. His racial theories and comments on the scientific superiority of the Aryans and inferiority of the Semitic character and mentality and the limiting religion and dogmatism of the Semitic mind (Almog, 1988: 255–78) and the claims that the Semites were "an incomplete race"¹² are widely known. Following this expedition, Renan wrote: "The races here [in Syria] have changed immensely [since the time of Jesus] ... there is, however, such a thing as a Syrian mentality ... whose dominant characteristic is duplicity" (in Shepherd, 1987: 98).

Combining positivist linguistic doctrines with archaeological excavations and social Darwinist groupings of humanity and pseudo-social scientific naturalist theories of ethnology, "race" "ethnicity" "national soil" and "language" were very popular in France, Victorian Britain, Germany and many parts of central and eastern Europe. In addition, ethno-linguistic construction (and the construction of "Aryan languages"), the paradigm (myth) of the separate *ethnos* or common descent, the search for historical roots, ethno-linguistic "organic" nationalism and superior versus inferior "civilizations" were all central to the European reinvention of "race" and "ethnicity" during this period. The notion of "race" and new racial categories based upon skin colour gained huge popularity in Victorian Britain and led to the hardening of polygenetic pseudo-sciences, scientific theories surrounding "race" and "ethnicity" giving birth to modern

racism and European ethnocentrism. The new “races” and “ethnicities” imposed upon humanity were invented and elaborated after the decline of faith in biblical monogenesis in the early nineteenth century, and before the rise of modern genetics in the middle of the twentieth (Beasley, 2010).

In the identity-fashioning of the European positivist “human sciences” and philological doctrines of the pre-Second World War period, “language” became a property of the *race/ethnos* residing on its natural soil and physical environment, and the speakers of the Indo-European languages (“Aryan languages”) were racialized and reinvented as the “Aryan races” as contradistinguished from the “Semitic races”. Orientalism, philological biblical studies, empirically and physically “verifiable, excavated evidence” of Near Eastern archaeology, pseudo-scientific language and the excavation and resurrection of dead languages became one of the key ingredients of newly imagined “ethno-nationalisms” – located mainly but not exclusively in central and eastern Europe – of which Zionism is but one example (Rabkin, 2006: 54–7; 2010: 129). However many leading Zionists, including Arthur Ruppin (1876–1943), a German Jew and the architect of the practical Zionist settlements in Palestine,¹³ continued to believe that “the Ashkenazi Jew was closer to the Indo-Germanic races than the Semitic ones” (Piterberg, 2008: 84). However, the Aryanization/racialization of the New German Man, for instance, and Semitization of the New Hebrew Man (and Ashkenazi European Jewry in general) were an integral part of the same ethno-linguistic racist projects. The language of this ethno-linguistic Romantic nationalism embodied the *Zeitgeist* (to use Herder’s term), the spirit of the age and the genius of the Aryan nation. The construction of Aryanism and Semiticism in Europe and the rise of ethno-linguistic racist theories in Germany spread not only to eastern and central Europe, but to other parts of Asia, to countries like India and Iran, and led to the emergence of ethno-linguistic nationalist racist theories in these countries whose Indo-European languages (“Indo-Germanic languages” or “Indo-Aryan languages”: Persian and Hindi) were supposed to embody the spirit and genius of Aryan races. Unlike the “Aryanization of Iran and India” projects by Iranian and Hindu nationalists, Zionist thinkers and historians embraced these ethno-linguistic racist theories minus Aryanism.

The Ashkanazi “New Hebrew Man” the Hebrew-speaking *Sabra* (to borrow from Yitzhak Laor’s *Narratives with No Natives*), were driven to invent narratives aimed at nativizing the Zionist settlers (Laor, 1995, 2009). He sought to draw on the rise of European youth naturist movements and a newly coined European terminology of *races/ethnos* of the revolutionary nineteenth century similar to those of Ernest Renan. The New Hebrew Man was supposed to have a “common descent” which almost invariably focused on a common language, a common culture (often including a shared religion) and a nationalist ideology that emphasizes common, ethno-biological ancestry and even endogamy, the practice of marrying within a specific “ethnic group”. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that political Zionism, shortly after its appearance, accorded paramount importance and top priority to the resurrection of a seemingly dead language. Yet, as a Zionist language, modern secular Hebrew, which took hold in the decade before the First World War, is about as distant from the Bible’s idiom as new the Israeli *Sabra* is from the “biblical Israelites” (Balint, 2008).

Modern political Zionism has appropriated and reinvented the religious and outwards symbols of Judaism and these were couched in European secular nationalist and ethno-centric terms. The theological notions of “a chosen people” and the “promised land” were incorporated in Zionist pan-Jewish and Israeli ethnocratic discourses. With the invention and rise of European secular-nationalist Jewish Zionism in the late nineteenth century, the Hebrew Bible was mined and

deployed to create the modern secular vernacular of Hebrew. Modern secular Hebrew was designed and destined to play a crucial role in the cultural, educational, political and territorial project of creating an androcentric New Hebrew Man. A secularized notion of the “chosenness” language is also found in the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900). This finds its expression in the philosophical novel *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, composed in 1883–85 and clearly inspired by the Hebrew Bible story of Moses descending from the “summit” of the mountain, and features a fictionalized prophet descending from a mountain top to mankind, Zarathustra, the founder of Zoroastrianism. Nietzsche’s novel also contains the secularizing parable of the “death of god” the enigmatic doctrine of the “will to power” and the *übermensch*, or “higher man” as a goal for a humanity to set for itself. Together with a growing social Darwinism and theories of races and *ethnos*, all these secularizing doctrines of Nietzsche became widely disseminated in Europe and beyond and had a particular appeal for many central European Zionist secular leaders and writers, including essayist Ahad Ha’am (1856–1927), journalist and author Micah Josef Berdyczewski (1865–1921)¹⁴ and, to lesser extent, Theodor Herzl (Golomb, 1997: 234–5; 2004: 25–7; Nicosia, 2008: 36; Ohana, 1995: 38–60; Duffy & Mittleman, 1988: 301–17), as they sought to create a modern Hebrew Zionist culture inspired by the stories of the Hebrew Bible.

Nietzsche’s admiration for the language and muscular traditions of the Hebrew Bible and his visualization the Jews as *übertölk* (superpeople) have been widely documented in recent scholarship, while his also well-known hostility towards Christianity, the Christian priesthood and even the New Testament, and his contempt for priestly and rabbinic Judaism, stemmed from his perception that all these were the basis for an emasculated, meekness-preaching priestly Christianity, which he intensely despised (Ohana, 1995: 38–60; Duffy & Mittleman, 1988: 301–17). From the turn of the nineteenth century onwards, Nietzschean doctrines permeated mainstream Zionist political ideas and cultural discourses in modern Hebrew literature and poetry (Ohana, 1995: 38–60). In the introduction to his *Nietzsche and Zion*, Jacob Golomb, professor of philosophy at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, writes:

Nietzsche’s ideas were widely disseminated among and appropriated by the first Hebrew Zionist writers and leaders. It seems quite appropriate, then, that the first Zionist Congress was held in Basle, where Nietzsche spent several years as a professor of classical philology. This coincidence gains profound significance when we see Nietzsche’s impact on the first Zionist leaders and writers in Europe as well as his presence in [the Zionist Yishuv] Palestine and, later, in the State of Israel.

(Golomb, 2004:1)

There were, of course, diverse ideological currents in Zionism and some of which, under the influence of Marxism, emphasized the “Jewish working classes” rather than the Jewish *völk*. However the movement of central and east European Zionism was largely dominated by nineteenth-century romantic *völkisch* conceptions of the “Jewish people”. These romantic conceptions of organic nationalism were also central to the futuristic novel of Theodor Herzl – who organized and personally chaired the first Zionist Congress in Basle (29–31 August 1897) – *Altneuland* (“Old-New Land”) written in German in 1902, which gave the Zionist movement a motto that smacks of Nietzsche’s celebration of the will: “If you will it, it is no dream” (Golomb, 2004), is the cultivation of a new Jewish identity, the creation of a New Hebrew Man as the driving force behind future settler-colonization of Palestine. During the Jewish Yishuv in the mandatory period and after the establishment of the Israeli state in 1948, the New Hebrew Man

(the secular *Sabra*)¹⁵ became the ideal type of the “indigenized” Israeli (Ohana, 1995: 38–60). Earlier, Nietzsche’s *übermensch* was rendered in modern Hebrew by European Zionist writers, novelist and poets into *adam ‘elyon* (“higher man”). Even the liberal Russian Zionist Asher Zvi Hirsch Ginsberg, primarily known by his adopted (an ostensibly biblically based: Gen. 26:10) pen name, Ahad Ha’am, literally “one of the people”, with emphasis on the organic *völk* /people sounded unmistakably *völkisch*. As the founder of cultural and “spiritual” Zionism, Ahad Ha’am believed that pan-Jewish Zionism should be based on the ethical ideals of Judaism. Although Zionist historians emphasize his biblical scholarship, Ahad Ha’am adopted a distinctly Nietzschean culturalist vision of the *übermensch* (superman) (Golomb, 2004). As a secular man, he also thought (partly under the influence of pan-Germanism and the secularizing German nationalist culturalist theories of Herder and Fichte) of the Jews as an *übevölk*; that ‘*Am Yisrael* (the “people of Israel”) is a super-people with a super-culture. Ahad Ha’am sought to reinvent Jewishness and the Hebrew Bible as culture rather than religion or theology. He even criticized Theodor Herzl’s legalistic approach to Zionism and wanted an organic “cultural Jewish state” embedded in the narratives and prophetic traditions of the Hebrew Bible and not merely technically “a state of the Jews” (Ahad Ha’am, 1897).

The *übermensch*, *adam ‘elyon* and *übevölk* (elite people) subsequently became closely associated with the muscular *Sabra*, a New Hebrew Man who was constructed as the epitome of the secular Zionist androcentric settler ethos, a superior man attached to and rooted in the soil (*adama*). The New Hebrew Man was someone who had opted for Jewish *Aliya* (literally “ascent” or going higher) immigration to Palestine, substituting Zionist national ‘*Aliya* for the traditional Jewish religious ‘*Aliya la-Regel* pilgrimage to Jerusalem. The New Hebrew Man was an antithesis of the inferior-“slave” diaspora Jews; he was secular and scientifically minded, superior to the superstitious, Orthodox, God-fearing Jews. In Zionist history, the first wave of ‘*Aliya* was in 1882–1903, and it began with the arrival of the Jewish settlers from Russia in 1882. The New Hebrew Man rose through immigration to the “Land of Israel” and redemptive ‘*Aliya*, a fundamental tenet of Zionist ideology and a concept enshrined in Israel’s Law of Return, leaving “his Egypt/Europe” behind; such men were now living free in their own land (Rabkin, 2006: 54–7; 2010: 129–45). Today, going in the opposite direction, emigration from Israel is referred to as *yerida* (“descent”), and the *yordim* were denounced by Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Rabin in 1976 as *nefolet shel nemoshot*, “fallout of the weaklings”.

This permeation of the anti-Christian language of Nietzsche and his *übermensch* doctrine first in European Zionist writing and later the language and culture of the *Sabra* colonists perhaps could also partly explain why, in today’s Israeli Hebrew dialect, the word *friar* (the name for those Christian priests, brothers and monks who vow to live in poverty, chastity and obedience) is a term of abuse in Israel; a “*friar*” is Hebrew slang for effeminate, a sucker or even homosexual. This popular term partly reflects anti-New Testament prejudices in Israel and partly encapsulates masculinized *Sabra* discourses inculcated by the Israeli military and a deeply militarized settler-colonial society. This secular-nationalist Zionist “revolution” was in fact a radical departure from two-thousand years of Judaism and a revolt against rabbinic Judaism. Its lexicographical revolution and the creation of modern Hebrew and new Hebraic consciousness was the result of the literary work of European Zionist Jewish intellectuals in the nineteenth century. New Hebrew words and expressions were coined or adapted as neologisms from a large number of languages as well as from the Hebrew Bible. Only partly based on biblical Hebrew, it was in particular influenced by, borrowed from or coined after, Slavic languages, German, Yiddish, Russian, English, French, Italian, modern Arabic, Aramaic and ancient Greek – often

with a Greek origin or Greek-style suffix.¹⁶ Yiddish (*idish* , literally “Jewish”) itself was a middle-high German language of Ashkenazi Jewish origin which developed around the tenth century as a fusion of German dialects with Slavonic languages and biblical Hebrew. It was called *mame-loshn* (literally “mother tongue”) to distinguish it from biblical Hebrew which was collectively termed “*loshn-koydesh*” (“holy tongue”).

Eliezer Ben-Yehuda (1858–1922) was hugely influential in the fashioning of a new Hebrew collective identity rooted in “ancient consciousness”. He is universally considered to be the instigator of the Hebrew language resurrection and revival and the creator of a modern Zionist vernacular. He was born “Lazar Perleman” in the Lithuanian village of Luzhky, and attended a Talmudic school in Belarus in the Russian Empire. A linguistic Utopian and a secular “organic-linguistic nationalist” the most influential lexicographer of the Zionist vernacular also borrowed many words from colloquial Arabic, Greek, Aramaic and other languages. A newspaper editor, Ben-Yehuda immigrated to Palestine in 1881 and became the driving spirit behind this Zionist vernacular revolution (Stavans, 2008; Rabkin, 2006: 54–7; 2010: 132). He set out to resurrect and develop a new language that could replace Yiddish and other languages spoken by the European Zionist colonists in Palestine. As a child he was schooled in traditional subjects such as the Torah, Mishnah and Talmud; later he learned French, German and Russian. He also studied history and politics of the Middle East at the Sorbonne University in Paris and learned Palestinian colloquial Arabic. In the four years he spent at the Sorbonne he took Hebrew classes. It was this experience in Paris, and his exposure to the rise of French linguistic nationalism at the end of the nineteenth century, that inspired Ben-Yehuda to attempt the “resurrection” of Hebrew as a practical and cultural nationalist project.

After arriving in Palestine in 1881, Ben-Yehuda became the first to use “modern Hebrew” as a vernacular and transform it from a biblical language and a language of liturgy (*lashon hakodesh*) into a “secular-nationalist” modern language. Ben-Yehuda subsequently raised his son, Ben-Zion Ben-Yehuda (the first name meaning “son of Zion”), entirely through speaking only modern Hebrew. Ben-Yehuda served as editor of a number of Hebrew-language newspapers, including *Ha-Tzvi* . The latter was closed down by the Ottoman authorities for a year following fierce opposition from the Orthodox Jewish community of Jerusalem – a predominantly Arabic-speaking city since the Middle Ages – whose members spoke both Arabic and Yiddish and who objected to the use of the “holy tongue” (*lashon hakodesh*), Hebrew, for everyday conversation. In Jerusalem Ben-Yehuda became a central figure in the establishment of the Committee of the Hebrew Language (*Va’ad HaLashon*), later named the Israeli Academy of the Hebrew Language; he also compiled the first modern Hebrew dictionary. Many of the new words coined by him became part of the Hebrew language of today, but some never caught on. For instance, Ben-Yehuda’s word for “tomato” was *badora* , the Hebrew version of the Palestinian colloquial Arabic *bandora* ; Ben-Yehuda failed to win this logistic battle and today Israeli Hebrew speakers use the word ‘*agvania* (Balint, 2008) – from the Hebrew root ‘*agav* which means “to love, to desire” This also reflects the European (and vulgar) “love apple” (Italian: *porro d’oro* ; French: *pommes d’amour*) for the Aztec fruit which was first brought to Italy from South America in the sixteenth century and to which the Europeans attributed aphrodisiac powers.

The secular nationalist Zionists reinvented Judaism from religion into “nationality”. For them, modern Hebrew, in the words of secular Israeli writer Yoram Kaniuk, became “even more than the Temple Mount” – “the homeland” (Kaniuk, 2010). These Zionist linguistic efforts were crowned with success when the British colonial authorities in Palestine decided, after World War One, to recognize modern Hebrew as one of the three official languages of British mandatory

Palestine, alongside Arabic and English. The scriptural geography and archaeology of the British colonial period (1918–48) contributed to the Hebrewization/biblicization (and to a lesser extent, Anglicization) of the toponymy, landscape and terrains of Palestine. But the Zionist achievement of official recognition for modern Hebrew came in the wake of a series of important victories for the new language such as the adoption of Hebrew as the medium in Zionist schools and Jewish settlements and the publication of several Hebrew-language periodicals and newspapers (Rabkin, 2010: 132).

The first European Zionist novel written in modern Hebrew retraced the biblical story in a format which was inspired by, and modelled on, other east European romantic nationalist literatures (Rabkin, 2010: 132, citing Aberbach, 1998). It was written within the confines of the Russian Empire, in Lithuania, where two “ethnonationalisms” – Polish and Lithuanian – were locked in conflict, each claiming common descent and each glorifying its mythical past in modern literary forms, and in its own national language and literature. Sometimes, they had to share the same romantic literary heroes, nationalist publicists and political writers, for example Adam Mickiewicz (1798–1855) for the Poles, who became Adomas Mickevicius for the Lithuanians (Rabkin, 2010: 132).

THE NEW SAMSON AND THE “IRON WALL” OF THE YISHUV

Zionism, as a European romantic nationalist project of collective rebirth, regeneration and restorationism, invented modern secular Hebrew and constructed the themes of Zionist militarized colonization of Palestine by incorporating many of the epics and myths of the Hebrew Bible, especially the militarist land and conquest traditions. These were singled out by the founding fathers of Zionism as the origins of the birth of the nation. The same invented masculinized traditions provided nineteenth-century Zionism with a romanticized form of ethno-racial nationalism. In *The Founding Myths of Israel* the Israeli historian Zeev Sternhell, of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, argues that what was presented to the world as an Israeli “social democracy” was in fact a “nationalist socialist” ideology designed to create a new community of blood and common descent, to redeem the biblical “soil” by conquest and to submit the individual Jew to the “iron will” of an imagined collective race/*ethnos* driven by messianic fervour. Focusing on the “nationalist socialist” ideology of Labour Zionism, which dominated the heavily militarized European Jewish “Yishuv” and then the State of Israel from the 1930s into the late 1970s, Sternhell illustrates ideological parallels between it and early twentieth century tribal and *völkisch* nationalism of eastern and central Europe, which condemned liberalism – along with individual and civic rights – and universalism on moral, intellectual and political grounds (Sternhell, 1998: 10–11, 16, 27). Instead Labour Zionists gave precedence to the realization of their nationalist project: the establishment in Palestine of a sovereign Jewish state. In this project collectivism was deployed as an effective mobilizing narrative. Sternhell argues that Zionism as a whole was an organic form of nationalism of “blood and soil” emphasizing religion and race/*ethnos*, promoting the cult of martyrdom, the stories and legends of ancient roots and ancient history, revival of a dead language, the advocacy of the supremacy of the Hebrew language over Yiddish in Zionist colonies in Palestine, a drive for cultural renewal and a bitter struggle for political independence and territorial expansionism throughout the land.

The analogies between central and east European populist ethnocentric nationalisms and

Labour Zionism goes further; Labour Zionists repudiated liberal individualism and were suspicious of bourgeois liberal democracy. In this illiberal legacy of Labour Zionism, Sternhell finds the seeds of current Israeli problems: the lack of a constitution, an inadequate concept of universal human rights, the failure to separate religion and state, and so on. Deflating the socialist pretensions of Labour Zionism, Sternhell implies that both Labour Zionists and the militarist Revisionist movement of Betar – named after the Betar fortress which was the last standing Jewish fortress in the Bar-Kochba revolt against Roman empire in the second century ad – founded in Latvia in 1923 by a Russian Jew, Vladimir Yevgenyevich Zhabotinsky, later Hebrewized to “Zeev (‘wolf’) Jabotinsky” (1880–1940) through Menahem Begin (1913–92) (born in Poland “Mieczysław Biegun”) and Yitzhak Shamir (1915–2012) (born in Poland “Icchak Jeziernicky”) to Binyamin Netanyahu, were all integral nationalists. This legacy of Labour Zionism, with its obsession with land settlement, ethno-racial demographic “separation” (*hafrada* in Hebrew and *apartheid* in the Afrikaner language), continued after the founding of the Israeli state in 1948. With no socio-economic perspectives or democratic directions beyond an ethnocentric nationalism and messianic attitudes towards the land, based on imagined “historical roots” and abstract “historical rights to the whole land of Israel” Sternhell argued, the mould set in the pre-state period did not change. After 1967, unable to come to terms with Palestinian nationalism, Labour Zionism inevitably pursued its settler-colonial expansionism in the occupied territories and continued to press ahead with its decades-long methods of “creating facts on the ground” (Sternhell, 1998). Over six decades after the 1948 Nakba, the Israeli settler expansion in Palestine is persistent, blatant and relentless.

The biblical figure of “Samson the hero” played an important role in the fashioning of Zionist identity and collective memory and the Zionist war against the Palestinians in 1948 (see below). In Vladimir Jabotinsky’s biblical novel *Samson* (1926 in Russian; English translation in 1930) the author constructs a Samson, a Jew assimilated into European cultures who is attracted by the more sophisticated Western (“Philistine”) surrounding. A Jewish critic has described the novel as typical of European “totalitarian” thinking (Brenner, 1983). Jabotinsky’s *Samson* and his “Iron Wall” essay of 1923 (Shlaim, 2000; Masalha, 2000) became key texts of right-wing revisionist Zionism. In Jabotinsky’s novel, *meridor*, in Hebrew literally “generation of revolt” is the name given by Samson to a child in the book, a child who rebels against his father. Both the novel and “Iron Wall” doctrine inspired Menahem Begin’s post-1948 war book, *The Revolt*. In Jabotinsky’s article “The Iron Wall: We and the Arabs” (Masalha, 2000) the New Hebrew Man, the *Sabra*, was invented as a “Man of Iron” a man who is the opposite of both the pacifist European Christian priest (*friar*) and the feminized diaspora Jew, as Jabotinsky and other Zionist leaders dreamt of converting the diaspora Jews, whom they imagined as effeminate, meek and pliable, into a fighting nation of iron, surrounded by an “Iron Wall”:

Iron, from which everything that the national machine requires should be made. Does it require a wheel? Here I am. A nail, a screw, a girder? Here I am. Police? Doctors? Actors? Water carriers? Here I am. I have no features, no feelings, no psychology, no name of my own. I am a servant of Zion, prepared for everything, bound to nothing, having one imperative: Build!

(Schechtman, 1961: 410; see also Rabkin, 2010: 133–4)

In its drive for “land and power” (Shapira, 1992) in the 1930s and 1940s the Zionist leadership, determined to bring about a demographic transformation of Palestine, began using and popularizing in internal discussions the euphemistic term “transfer” or “*ha’avara*” — the

Hebrew euphemism for the ethnic cleansing and purging of the “land of Israel” of the “foreigners” and “aliens” who had defiled it – one of most enduring themes of Zionist colonization. Other themes included demographic transformation of the land and physical separation between the immigrant-settlers and the indigenous inhabitants of Palestine. All these colonizing themes were central to Zionist muscular nationalism, with its rejection of both liberal forms of universalism and Marxism, along with individual rights and class struggle. Instead, Zionism gave precedence to the realization of its *völkisch* project: the establishment of a biblically sanctioned, “ethnocratic Jewish state” in Palestine.

The construction and articulation of a new masculinized collective memory “rooted” in the soil and the old militarist traditions and the land conquest narrative of the Hebrew Bible and the Israelites’ absolute monarchies was based on: (a) the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine and hegemonic state power; (b) “New Hebrew” language; (c) “New Hebrew Man”; (d) new and militarized society; (e) exclusively Jewish “Hebrew City” (Tel Aviv)/“purely Jewish Yishuv”; and (f) the armed Hebrew workers of the “Histadrut” the General Federation of Hebrew Workers in the Land of Israel. Two principal features were central to mainstream Zionist thinking and the political programme of the Histadrut: the belief that Jewish acquisition of land took precedence over moral considerations, and the advocacy of a physically separate, exclusionist and literally “pure” Jewish Yishuv. “If we want Hebrew redemption 100 per cent, then we must have a 100 per cent Hebrew settlement, a 100 per cent Hebrew farm, and a 100 per cent Hebrew port” declared Ben-Gurion at a meeting of the Va’ad Leumi, the Yishuv’s National Council, on 5 May 1936 (Ben-Gurion, 1971–2:163).

Established in 1920 the militarized Histadrut and military service were central to the Zionist land conquest narrative, the creation of the Haganah and subsequently the Israeli army in 1948. The Histadrut, Haganah and Israeli army all embodied that newly constructed muscular and militarist national identity. The militarized Histadrut, in particular, dominated both the economic military-security infrastructure of the Zionist Yishuv and played a major role in immigration, land settlement and colonization, economic activities, labour employment, military organization and defence (the “Haganah”) – with trade union activity as only one part of its activities (Davis, 2000). Palestinian citizens of Israel were not admitted as members until 1959. The Histadrut became central to this drive designed to create a “New Settlement” of blood and common descent and redeem the “biblical soil” by conquest. Thus from the late 1920s onwards David Ben-Gurion (1886–1973), a Russian Jew, later to become the first prime minister and chief architect of the State of Israel, began calling for the building up of a powerful Jewish army and for the need for an “Iron Wall of [Zionist] workers’ settlements surrounding every Hebrew city and town, land and human bridge that would link isolated points” which would be capable of enforcing the doctrine of exclusive “Hebrew labour” (*‘avoda ‘ivrit*) and “Hebrew soil” (*adama ‘ivrit*) (Masalha, 1992: 24–5).

THEMES AND STRUCTURE

The enduring themes of Zionist colonization of Palestine incorporated some of the land and conquest traditions of the Hebrew Bible. This work is constructed around several distinct themes: (a) the politics of reading the Bible in Israel; (b) the deployment of the Bible as an agent of oppression in Palestine and in the struggle with the indigenous people of Palestine; (c) the ways in which heritage-style attitudes of an exclusively Western biblical and Zionist nationalist archaeologies are being challenged by recent critical archaeology and revisionist historiography.

This work argues, firstly, against a positivist-verificationist approach to the Bible: the Bible is not a simple record of events in the past. Secondly, the work is also against the misappropriation, historicization and ethnocization of the biblical narrative. Thirdly, it asserts that the biblical text is meaningless outside its multiple and changing historical contexts. Fourthly, it argues that the question of Palestine forces us to recognize and reconfigure the key role of the biblical text within the overall project of settler-colonialism and European imperialist penetration of the Middle East. Already by 1918 some 85 per cent of the earth was in the hands of European colonizing powers, with devastating effects on the indigenous populations of Africa, Asia and Latin America. Invariably the colonizers sought out some ideological principle to justify their deeds, and the Bible has often been, and still is for some (especially the Zionists), a text that redeems territorial conquests (Prior, 1999: 130–33).

Structurally the book is organized around five chapters. [Chapters 1 and 2](#) explore the invention and mobilization of the ethnocentric paradigm of “promised land-chosen people” especially the myth that the Hebrew Bible provides for the Jews’ sacrosanct “title-deed” to the land of Palestine and beyond signed by God, for the alleged moral legitimacy of the establishment of the State of Israel, and for its policies towards the indigenous inhabitants of Palestine. Modern scholarship on imperialism has focused on common discursive strategies deployed in the service of settler-colonialism such as depictions of the colonized territory as “virgin wasteland” appeals to the *mission civilizatrice*, and images of the indigenous people as an alien and inferior Other. Central European Zionism sought to fuse European nationalism with European settler-colonization (Hillman, 2009: 1–29). Zionist myths include that of a ubiquitous and perennial longing on the part of the Jewish diaspora to “return” the myth of “a land without a people for a people without a land”— a slogan common among Zionists at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century (Shapira, 1992, 1999: 42) – and the myth of “exile and return” of “people with space” to an “empty space” semi-deserted hills or “virginal territory” (Masalha, 1992, 1997).

Interestingly, however, the earliest propagandistic uses of this myth were made in the nineteenth century by British Christian Zionists and supporters of biblical prophecies; for instance by a Church of Scotland clergyman Alexander Keith in his 1843 monograph *The Land of Israel According to the Covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob* (Muir, 2008: 55–62). By the late nineteenth century the expression was frequently used by Christian Zionists in both Britain and the United States. In her 1902 novel, *The Zionist*, Matilda Winifred Muriel Graham (1873–1950) has her Jewish hero stand before the World Zionist Congress and advocate the return of “the people without a country to the country without a people”. In 1901 British Jewish writer, Israel Zangwill, echoing British Christian writings, wrote in the *New Liberal Review* (London) that “Palestine is a country without a people; the Jews are a people without a country” (Muir, 2008: 55–62). Now the “phrase appears as a grim prophecy in view of the fate allotted to non-Jews in Palestine” (Rabkin, 2009: 21–36).

With its roots in the pseudo-scientific conceptions of the nineteenth century, and with its biblical theme of “elect people-promised land” biblical archaeology always privileged the narrative associated with European Zionist (Hebrew) settlers in Palestine and Israelis over those of the indigenous (predominantly Muslim, “Arab” “Ishmaelite”, “Oriental”) inhabitants of Palestine. This is one of the key themes of this work. From its beginning in the nineteenth century the Western restorationist discipline of biblical archaeology, with its complete disregard for the historical, demographic and political realities of Palestine, was at the heart of the colonial tradition. It was established to validate Western roots in the Holy Land and authenticate the historicity of the Hebrew Bible. Virtually all biblical archaeologists were Western Christians or

Jews with a strong commitment to the historicity of the Bible, and interpreted their finds in light of the scriptures. No wonder, therefore, that archaeological findings confirmed the Bible when researchers used the Hebrew Bible to identify, date and interpret the significance of the towns, buildings, pottery and other artefacts they unearthed. The same historicizing positivist discourse of biblical archaeology became central to the foundational narratives of Zionism and to its creation of a new Hebrew collective identity and collective consciousness. Inevitably, driven by an invented tradition and the need to establish the veracity of the Hebrew Bible, the corroboratorist archaeology of Israel was passionately Zionist. Moreover, while the attitudes of British archaeologists towards the Third World began to change in the post-Second World War period, Israelis, by contrast, chose to consolidate the colonial tradition of the West. After the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 biblical archaeology became a state enterprise and an academic obsession, firmly institutionalized as a cornerstone of Israel's civic religion, testifying to exclusive Jewish claims to the land of Palestine. The discipline of biblical archaeology has since been employed by Israeli academic institutions and the state to de-emphasize the Arab and Muslim connection to the land, to foster Jewish nationalism and state-building and to legitimize the displacement and dispossession of the indigenous inhabitants of Palestine.

Chapters 3 and 4 focus on the positivist-verificationist methodology of biblical archaeology and the deployment in the service of settler-colonial policies. The chapters also look at the silencing and suppression of the history of the indigenous people of Palestine and the efforts of Israeli biblical archaeologists. Indeed, since the nineteenth century in the West (and especially in America), the memorial enterprise of biblical scholarship, pseudo-scientific biblical archaeology and scriptural geography, as a project of organized memory and positivist doctrine, has always been dominated by interest in the Hebrew Bible, the origins of the “biblical Israelites” and the search for the historical roots of Christianity. Until recently the history of Palestine during the Bronze Age (3000–1200 BCE) and Iron Age (1200–600 BCE) was written largely in terms of the Hebrews’ beginnings and as a prelude not only to the history of the “biblical Israelites” (Thompson, 2003:1) but also to that of the modern State of Israel. In Israel the academic study of Jewish antiquities and archaeologies was (and still is, in the main) a tool for validating Zionist Jewish colonization of, and continuous territorial expansion in, Palestine, rather than for prompting genuine interest in ancient histories and ancient antiquities (Abu El-Haj, 2001; Yiftachel, 2006: 54; Zerubavel, 1995). This drive began with the rise of biblical scholarship and biblical archaeology, which have themselves contributed to the de-Arabization of Palestinian place names, the understanding of the Bible’s allegorical narratives as a nationalist epic and an ethno-centric understanding of Palestine’s ancient history (Thompson, 2008: 1–15). Biblical archaeology emerged in the nineteenth century as a pseudo-scientific methodology wrapped up in the linguistic theories of the period. It was complicit in colonial expansion in the Middle East during the nineteenth century and became a key tool in transforming Palestine into Israel in the twentieth century. From their beginning in the nineteenth century the Western disciplines of biblical studies and biblical archaeology, with their disregard for the historical, demographic and political realities of modern Palestine, were at the heart of the colonial tradition. Biblical terminology dominates the Western discourse on Palestine-Israel: “Judaea and Samaria” “Jerusalem” as opposed to the Arabic “al-Quds”; Hebrew “Hebron” as opposed to Arabic “al-Khalil” (the Palestinian name is based on an Islamic Abrahamic tradition, “friend of God”); “Temple Mount” from the Hebrew “Har Habayet” as opposed to “al-Haram al-Sharif”; the “Western Wall” as opposed to “Al-Buraq”; the Hebrew “Negev” as opposed to the Arabic “Naqab”. That biblical terminology tends to privilege the narratives and stories associated with

European Zionist settlers and Israelis over those of the indigenous (predominantly Muslim) inhabitants of Palestine is a major theme of this work. [Chapter 4](#) in particular focuses on the Israeli renaming project which has included: (a) the “exposure” of the “Hebraic origins” of Palestinian Arab villages and towns; (b) the literally physical erasure of these villages and towns; and (c) deletion of the reality of historic Palestine. This is carried out through the use of Zionist-Hebrew toponymy, the invention of a new Hebrew identity and consciousness, and the Hebrewization of Palestine’s landscape and geographical sites.

While the deployment of the organized public memory of the Hebrew Bible and biblical scholarship as agents of displacement, forgetfulness and outright oppression and the evocation of the exploits of biblical heroes in support of European settler colonialism are deeply rooted in secular Zionism, with the rise of radical messianic Zionism since 1967 the land traditions of the Bible have found an explicit relevance in contemporary Palestine-Israel. [Chapter 5](#) looks at the rise of neo-Zionism and radical religious fundamentalism in Israel since 1967 and the politics of the land traditions of the Bible. The grand narratives of the Bible, however, appeared to mandate the ethnic cleansing and even genocide of the indigenous population of Canaan. The chapter argues that, with the rise of messianic Zionism since 1967, a messianic Jewish theology of zealotocracy, based on the land traditions of the Hebrew Bible, has emerged in Israel – a political theology that demanded the destruction of the so-called modern Canaanites; since 1967 fundamentalist rabbis have routinely compared the Palestinian people to the ancient Canaanites, Philistines and Amalekites, whose annihilation or expulsion by the “biblical Israelites” was predestined by a divine design. This chapter focuses on the politics of reading the Bible by neo-Zionists and examines the theology of the messianic current which embraces the paradigm of Jews as a superior “chosen people” and sees the indigenous Palestinians as no more than illegitimate squatters, and a threat to the process of land redemption; their human and indigenous rights are no match for the divinely ordained “holy war” of conquering and settling the “promised land”. Fundamentalist rabbis, some increasingly occupying commanding positions among the senior echelons of the Israeli army, have argued that Palestinians (Muslims and Christians) face the choice of the Philistines: between destruction, emigration or conversion to Judaism.

The Conclusion chapter to the book explores the revolution in Holy Land archaeology since the 1970s. It focuses on the challenges of both the new archaeology of Israel-Palestine and the critical biblical scholarship for both the biblical academy and nationalist historiography. It demonstrates how recent findings of Israeli archaeologists and biblical scholars undermine the hegemonic Zionist discourse: “the Bible is our mandate”. The chapter argues that on the basis of recent archaeological and scientific evidence, the historicity of the Hebrew Bible is completely demolished. This chapter shows that the confidence that the Bible is a reliable witness to the historicity of the events it describes has collapsed over the last quarter of a century. The conclusion examines the findings of the critical archaeology which challenges both biblical literalist and fundamentalist readings of the Hebrew Bible. The concluding chapter also looks at Palestinian strategies of resisting memoricide, strategies which also seek to challenge Zionist settler discourses, while articulating indigenous narratives that are rooted in multilayered identity construction and the struggle to preserve the cultural heritage of the land.

Chapter 1

FRAMING THE CONFLICT

Instrumentalizing the Hebrew Bible and settler-colonialism in Palestine

HERZL'S MISSION CIVILISATRICE

Zionism would not have been able to achieve its goals without the overall support of the Western imperialist powers. The Israeli state was and still is central to Western projects in the “East”. In fact the Israeli state owes its very existence to the British colonial power in Palestine, despite the military tensions that existed in the last decade of the British mandatory period between the colonial power and the leadership of the militarized Jewish “Yishuv”. Under the Ottomans the European Zionist settlers were not given a free hand in Palestine; had the Ottomans been left in control of Palestine after the First World War, it is very unlikely that a Jewish state would have come into being. The situation changed radically with the occupation of Palestine by the British in 1918; already on 2 November 1917 Zionism had been granted title to Palestine in the well-known Balfour Declaration, a letter sent by foreign secretary Arthur James Balfour to the Zionist Federation, via Baron Walter Rothschild, in which the British government declared its commitment to Zionism: “His Majesty’s Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object.”

Both the British prime minister Lloyd George and Arthur Balfour were members of Protestant churches which shared the Christian Zionist belief that Jews should be “restored” in Palestine before the Second Coming. Over the next 30 years, the British colonial power in Palestine allowed the Zionist movement to settle hundreds of thousands of European Jews in Palestine, establish hundreds of settlements, including several cities and to lay the political, military-security, economic, industrial, demographic, cultural and academic foundations of the Israeli state (Segev, 2010).

The mega-myth narratives of Zionism and the state of Israel conflate Judaism with political Zionism and frames the conflict with the Palestinians within its Zionist ideological moorings: Zionism is a product of a “national liberation movement” of the Jewish people; the “biblical Israelites” returning (from the late nineteenth century onwards) to “redeem the ancient homeland” and “restore Jewish statehood” after two millennia of absence and “exile”. In fact the State of Israel owes its very existence to the British colonial power in Palestine, despite the tensions that existed between the colonial power and the leadership of the European Zionist Yishuv in the last decade of the British mandate.

The ideas of the father of modern political Zionism, Theodor Herzl, were taken from pan-German nationalist sources (Hans Kohn, quoted in W. Khalidi, 2005: 813). Herzl was a deeply

secular man. He set out the Zionist programme in his 1896 book, *The State of the Jews: Proposal of a Modern Solution for the Jewish Question (Der Judenstaat: Versuch einer modernen Lösung der Judenfrage)*. He called for a Jewish state to be set up in an “undeveloped” country outside Europe. From the outset it was clear to Herzl that the Jewish state would be part of the system of Western colonial domination of Asia, Africa and Latin America. In *Der Judenstaat* Herzl mooted the possibility of a Jewish state in Argentina. Other potential territories for Zionist colonisation were considered, including Uganda, North Sinai and Madagascar. But with the decisive influence of Russian Zionists, Palestine was chosen by the Zionist movement as the “biblical land”.

Inspired by the notion of “benevolent imperialism” and the myth that “enlightened imperialism” was the greatest force for good in the world, the Jewish benevolent settlement/colonization of Palestine has been (and remains) one of the most enduring themes of the Zionist project in Palestine. It was the notion of European Jews as carriers and transmitters of European enlightenment to the backward Orient, spreading Western modernity, enlightenment, reason, modern sciences and “scientific” methodologies and technology to an underdeveloped, backward and semi-deserted Asiatic geography (Massad, 2004: 61). Hanna Arendt has shown that the founder of political Zionism, Theodor Herzl, “thought in terms of nationalism inspired from German sources” (quoted by Kohn in W Khalidi, 2005:813). The “New Society”/New Jew theme was at the centre of *Altneuland (Old New Land ; Herzl 2000)*, a futuristic novel devoted to the love of the “Old New Land” and developmental settler-colonization of Palestine.

The reality of Zionist settler-colonization has not always been camouflaged or dressed up in biblical pieties. The World Zionist Organization (WZO) was founded in 1897 and its first congress took place in the same year in Basel, Switzerland. Its first president was Theodor Herzl. The “Jewish Colonial Trust” (“*Die Jüdische Colonialbank*”, later becoming the Anglo-Palestine Bank) was the first financial instrument of the WZO set up at Herzl’s initiative. Jewish Colonial Trust was approved by the Second Zionist Congress in 1898 and established a year later, and registered as a limited colonial company in London. Its objectives were to encourage Jewish migration from Europe and the establishment and economic development of industry and agriculture in Jewish colonies in Palestine. A subsidiary corporation of the Jewish Colonial Trust, the Anglo-Palestine Company/Bank – predecessor to present-day Israeli Bank Leumi (“National Bank”) – was also established in 1902 and a branch opened in Jaffa.¹ Earlier in 1880s B’nai B’rith (“Sons of the Covenant”) became one of the earliest modern Zionist organizations operating in the West. It was created by German Zionist Jews² to foster European Jewish colonization in Palestine. B’nai B’rith provided financial support to early Zionist colonies in Palestine and published a weekly newspaper proudly named *Der Kolonist*.

Following Herzl, political Zionism went on to construct a whole discourse of European (Jewish) settlement-cum-modernization versus Oriental (Arab) backwardness, based on the “New Society”/“New Yishuv” versus the “Old Yishuv” – a pre-1882 backward space inhabited by non-Zionist religious Jews living until 1948 in the mixed Arab–Jewish cities of Jerusalem, Tiberias, Safad and al-Khalil (Hebron). The European colony of the New Yishuv, by contrast, was made of secular, modern, scientifically minded, urbane, rational and civilized people. One of the main characters in *Altneuland* is a Palestinian Arab called “Reschid Bey” an engineer who welcomes with open arms the Zionist *mission civilisatrice* in Palestine; the indigenous Palestinian is extremely grateful to his European Zionist-Jewish neighbours for “making the Asiatic desert boom” and transforming the economic conditions of the country through “the scientific measures of the ‘New Hebrew Man’“ (Herzl, 2000:121–3). As Israeli Mizrahi scholar

Ella Shohat puts it:

Herzl's 1902 futuristic novel *Altneuland*, which deals with the two-decades metamorphosis of a miserable turn of the century Palestine into a wonderfully civilized oasis of scientific progress and humanist tolerance, already relied on the "good Arab" (Raschid bey and his wife Fatma) to witness the advantages of Zionism's Manifest destiny. The fragile project of occupying an Eastern site to implant Zionism's Western utopia perhaps even required the expressed approval of the vanishing Arab.

(Shohat, 2010: 264)

In Palestine the highly educated and organized Zionist settlers quickly developed the usual kind of colonial relations found in the European colonies of Africa, Asia and the Americas, with contempt for the poorer, less organized and (predominantly peasant and Muslim) indigenous population (Thomas, 2009: 12). Consequently, almost from the beginning, the Herzlian utopia had its own Jewish critics and opponents. Asher Ginsberg (1856–1927) – better known by his pen name Ahad Ha'am, the Russian founder of cultural Zionism and promoter of the vision of a Jewish "spiritual centre" in Palestine – criticized Herzl's political Zionism. In his critique of Old New Land, Ahad Ha'am pointed that there was no sign of new Jewish cultural activity or creativity in Herzl's New Society. Its culture was European and German; the language of the educated classes was German, not Hebrew. Jews were not depicted as producers or creators of culture, but simply transmitters, carrying the (imperialist) culture and civilization of the West to the Orient (Ahad Ha'am, 1897, 1912: cited in Herzl, 2000: xxviii).

Also from the start it became clear that the Jewish "restorationist" project could only be achieved with the backing and active support of the European powers. From Herzl to Chaim Weizmann and David Ben-Gurion, the Zionist leadership was fully aware that its programme cannot be secured without the support of imperialist powers. When Herzl published *Der Judenstaat* in 1896, he was explicit that the "state of the Jews" could only be established with the support of one or more major European powers, at a time when the imperial powers were carving up the non-European world between them. The establishment of a Jewish state would have to be secured and guaranteed in public law – "völkkerrechtig" – with the backing of the great powers. Once such official backing had been secured, the Zionist movement would conduct itself like other colonizing ventures. Thus the history of the early Zionist movement in the years between 1896 and the British Balfour Declaration of 1917 is characterized by relentless Zionist efforts to secure imperialist backing. Aware of the growing German influences on the Ottoman state, Herzl initially strove in favour of German imperialist backing. In *Der Judenstaat*, Herzl wrote frankly about the (non-European) Asiatic land "reclaimed" by Zionism and the setting up of a quasi-European state in Palestine: "If His Majesty the Sultan were to give us Palestine, we could in return undertake to regulate the whole finances of Turkey. We should form there part of a wall of defence for Europe in Asia, an outpost of civilisation against Barbarism" (Herzl, 1914: 30, cited in Polkehn, 1975: 76; Herzl, 1972: 30, cited in Rodinson, 1973:14).

In October 1898 Herzl travelled to Ottoman Palestine to meet with Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany. However, the meeting with the Kaiser turned out to be only ceremonial, and the Kaiser refused to commit himself. When these efforts became unsuccessful, Herzl and his successors turned to the British Empire (Polkehn, 1975: 76–90). In his diaries, Herzl also explicitly drew parallels between himself and Cecil Rhodes (1853–1902), an English-born businessman, the founder of the diamond company De Beers, ardent believer in colonialism and British imperialism in South Africa, and the founder of Rhodesia: "Naturally there are big differences

between Cecil Rhodes and my humble self, the personal ones very much in my disfavor, but the objective ones greatly in favor of our [Zionist] movement” (cited in U. Davis, 1987: 3–4).

Zionist colonization of Palestine has taken place in four distinct phases: the first, 1882–1918, began on a small scale under Ottoman rule; the second (important) phase, 1918–48, under British imperial protection; the third, 1948–67, was characterized by “internal colonization” and the “Judaization of the Galilee and Negev projects” within the Green Line; the fourth began in 1967 and is still going on today. At the time of the first Zionist congress at Basle, Switzerland, in 1897, 95 per cent of the population of Palestine was Arab and 99 per cent of the land was Arab-owned (W. Khalidi, 1992a: 17). Today over 90 per cent of the land in historic Palestine is controlled by Israel and designated for Jewish-use only. From the late nineteenth century and throughout the mandatory period the demographic and land policies of the Zionist Yishuv in Palestine continued to evolve. But its demographic and land battles with the indigenous inhabitants of Palestine was always a battle for “maximum land and minimum Arabs” (Masalha, 1992, 1997, 2000).

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Throughout much of the late nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century terms such as Zionist “colonization” “Jewish colonies” and “Jewish colonists” in Palestine were universally used and proudly proclaimed by European Zionist leaders, authors and settlers. Benjamin Lee Gordon’s *New Judea: Jewish Life in Modern Palestine and Egypt*, published in Philadelphia in 1919, a typical Zionist publication of the period, uses terms such as “Jewish colonies” and “Jewish colonists” in Palestine literally and systematically dozens of times throughout the book and as a term of endearment. The same self-described and accurate colonialist methodology and terminology is found well into the 1950s, for instance in the publications of Israeli diplomat Yaakov Morris – the father of Israeli historian Benny Morris. His 1953 book, *Pioneers from the West: History of Colonization in Israel by Settlers from the English-speaking Countries*, published by the Youth and ha-Halutz Department of the World Zionist Organization, is just one example of this proudly colonialist Zionist tradition. In Zionist writings the Hebrew words for *moshava* and (plural) *noshavot* were synonymous with Jewish “colony”/“colonies”. In fact words for *moshava* and *noshavot* were coined as a literal translation of the English terms for “colony” and “colonies”. This proudly trumpeted colonial legacy and collective memory of early Zionist settlers and pioneers has been suppressed or deleted from memory in recent Zionist historiography.

In the Zionist colony/*moshava*, as opposed to the subsequent communal settlements like the *kibbutz* (literally “gathering”), all the land and property are privately owned. The first Zionist colonies/*noshavot* such as Rishon LeZion (“First in Zion”), Rosh Pinna (“Cornerstone”), Zichron

Ya'akov ("Memory of Jacob"), Yesud Hama'alei and Petah Tikva ("Opening of Hope") were universally described as "colonies" in both Zionist and professional literature of the time. Their economy was based on agriculture and, like all European colonies, they exploited cheap indigenous labour. Illustrative of the extent of their dependence on cheap Arab labour was Zichron Yaakov, founded in 1882 by French colonizer, financier and patron of early Zionist colonies Baron Edmond-James de Rothschild (in "memory" of his father Jacob) and 200 Jewish colonists from Romania employing 1,200 Arab labourers; similarly Rishon LeZion, with 41 Jewish families and 300 families of Arab labourers (Lehn & Davis, 1988: 39).

THE GERMAN TEMPLERS AS PROTO-ZIONIST COLONISTS: TEMPLERS COLONIES IN PALESTINE, 1868–1948

Crucially these early Jewish colonies in Palestine were preceded by and modelled on the German Christian Templar colonies established in Palestine in mid/late nineteenth century in advance of rebuilding the temple – with farmhouses of one or two stories and with slanting tiled roofs and shuttered windows. Interestingly, even today the "German Colony" southwest of the Old City of Jerusalem, established in 1878 by members of the German "Templar Society" (*Tempelgesellschaft*), is known in Hebrew as "*Hamoshava Hagermanit*" (the "German Colony"). The Templar colonists were a nineteenth-century German Protestant millennialist sect with roots in the messianic movement of the Lutheran Church. They should not be confused with the famous French-led medieval Knights Templar (*Ordre du Temple* or *Templiers*), the Crusading military order -officially recognized by the Catholic Church in 1129 but disbanded by Pope Clement V in 1312 – which used the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem as its headquarters. Although the memory of the Latin Crusaders and Knights Templar had been largely forgotten in Europe by the end of the eighteenth century, it was revived in the nineteenth century in European Romantic nationalist as well as religious-millennialist writings, especially in France, Germany and England. During the same time the memory and legends of the monastic martial Knights Templar were revived, keeping the "Templar" name alive into the late modern period. Therefore choice of the German name, *Tempelgesellschaft*, was not coincidental. Members of the *Tempelgesellschaft* were expelled from the Lutheran Church in 1858 because of their sectarianism, their fundamentalist beliefs in imminent second coming of Christ and their apocalyptic biblical visions. The Templers were an important aid and a hugely inspirational model (especially in modern agricultural methods, crafts, architecture) for the early formative years of the European Zionist Yishuv in Palestine.

The Zionist Jewish settlers and Israel were also influenced by the politics of memory, naming and renaming of the messianic German Templers. In 1868, the first German colony in the Holy Land, the "German Colony" in Haifa, was set up by the German Templers. At the time Haifa had a population of 4,000 Palestinian Arabs. This Haifa colony was followed by another six German colonies: Jaffa (1869); Saron (1878), named after the "Plain of Sharon" in the Hebrew Bible (1 Chron. 5:16; 27:29; Isa. 33:9; 35:2; 65:10), the first Templar agricultural colony, with 60 hectares of land purchased in 1871 from a Greek monastery north of Palestinian city of Jaffa, and now located next to the Israeli army Kirya military complex site in Tel Aviv); Jerusalem (1881); Wilhelma, located near Lydda (1902), named after Kaiser Wilhelm II who had visited Palestine in 1899 and had secured land purchases for the Templers; Galilean Bethlehem (1906); and Waldheim (1907). What is now called Israel's Ben-Gurion International Airport was originally built on the outskirts of the Palestinian town of Lidd (English and Greco-Latin, Lydda) and near

the German colony of Wilhelma by the British mandatory authorities in 1936. It was originally named by the British “Wilhelma Airport” after the Templer colony. In 1943, during the Second World War, the site was renamed “RAF Lydda” and many of the German Templers were arrested and deported from Palestine to Australia. After the Palestinian twin cities of Lidd and Ramie were occupied and its 70,000 inhabitants expelled in July 1948, at the orders of prime minister and defence minister David Ben-Gurion (Masalha, 1992; B. Morris, 1986a: 86–7; 2004: 414–61), the airport was renamed “Lod Airport” – Hebrewizing the Arabic name Lidd. However in 1973 the name was changed again to Ben-Gurion International Airport in memory of Israel’s first prime minister. As we shall see in [Chapter 4](#) , in search for “authenticity” Ben-Gurion himself changed his name twice, first from its original Russian (Grüen) to English-sounding name (Green) and eventually to a biblically sounding Hebrew name, Ben-Gurion. Also the Palestinian Arabic name of the city, Lidd, became the Hebrew-sounding Israeli city of Lod – after a name-place in the Hebrew Bible (Ezra 2:33). Other Templer colonies, which were taken over by Jewish settlers, were given Hebrew-sounding names: the Christian-sounding “Galilean Bethlehem” was renamed “Bnei Atarot”; the German name of “Waldheim” was replaced by the Hebrew-sounding “Alonie Abba”.

For the German Templers, colonist activity in Palestine was part of their faith: the Holy Land had to be prepared for the Second Coming of Christ. Secular Zionist historiography depicts the Templer colonists as inspirational forerunners of the Zionist movement and early Zionists themselves adopted them as an inspirational role “model to be emulated” (Yazbak, 1999: 40–54). In Zionist writings the Templers were considered to be responsible for bringing technology to Palestine, in architecture, agriculture and industry, and a symbol of progress and modernity. In *Yehuda ve-Yerushalayim* , the newspaper of Yoel Moshe Salomon, he himself wrote about the Templer colonies:

We have also noticed the colonies established over the past few years by the Germans from Wittenburg (not of our people) and their homes are built in good order, as in all the cities of Europe, with wide streets and magnificent buildings, so that anyone who walks along their streets will forget that he is walking in the country of the soul, and will feel as though he is in one of the populated cities of Europe.

(Quoted in Schwartz, 2009)

The German Templer community in Palestine remained relatively small and at its height numbered 2,200. After the creation of Israel in 1948 the remaining German Templer settlers were detained, accused of being Nazi collaborators (see Wurgaft & Shapira, 2009) ³ and deported from the country. Their colonies were renamed and their lands were taken over by Jewish settlers. But since the 1950s and the Israeli-German rapprochement, the Templer colonists were rehabilitated in Israeli commemorative writing and public museum exhibitions. In 1962 the Israeli state paid 54 million Deutsche marks in compensation to a relatively small number of German Templers whose land was taken over by Jewish settlers (Schwartz, 2009). In sharp contrast Israel has always refused to compensate the victims of the 1948 Palestine Nakba: the millions of Palestinian refugees and their descendants (Masalha, 2003). Today German Templer buildings are found in Haifa and Sarona (Ha-Kiryat, Tel Aviv) and some are used as historic public buildings and museums. In 1868, when the Templer colony was set up in Haifa, the Arab town had an indigenous population of 4,000 predominantly Palestinian Muslims. By 1947 the Arab population had grown to about 71,000 (41,000 Muslims, 30,000 Christians). Today the Israeli official Haifa City Museum is located in a historic Templers’ Colony building

in a part of the city – which is the third-largest city in Israel – that today is home to most of the indigenous Palestinian Arab population of Haifa, a community which has survived the 1948 Nakba:

In its endeavor to obscure the Palestinian past, the discourse surrounding the museum has employed the unique approach of highlighting the physical presence of the remains of the German Colony within the urban landscape [of Haifa], emphasizing the Templers' contribution to Zionist history while simultaneously downplaying the manifestations of German nationalist sentiment expressed [by the Templers' settlers] before and during World War II. Moreover the German Colony is portrayed as the city's oldest historical layer. As a result, the Palestinian and Ottoman contribution to the physical, social, economic and cultural development of Haifa has gone relatively unexplored.

(Natour & Giladi, 2011:158–9)

THE REPRESENTATION OF THE GERMAN TEMPLERS AND LATIN CRUSADERS IN ISRAEL

Today the national and municipal museums of Australia and New Zealand are expected to play an important role in community relations, and in contributing new critical perspectives on indigenous peoples and indigenous cultures. In the romantic nationalist context of Israel today it is preferable to preserve, restore, immortalize and market the heritage and buildings of the German Templers colonists and those German Templers who had been suspected of collaborating with the Nazis in the 1930s and 1940s. In a similar vein, as we shall see in [Chapter 4](#), the flourishing Crusader studies and Crusader archaeology at Israeli universities, the memorialization and immortalization of the medieval Latin Crusaders in Israeli archaeological parks and museums, is much more vital than the preservation of the historical buildings, holy places, cemeteries and structures of the hundreds of indigenous Palestinian communities driven out in 1948. In the 1950s and 1960s the historical buildings of these communities were systematically bulldozed, whereas Crusader buildings, sites and fortresses such as the Belvoir Fortress of the Hospitallers, the buildings of the Knights Templars and Hospitallers in Acre, the Crusader fortress in Caesarea (on the land of the Palestinian village of Qisarya, destroyed in 1948), and the remains of the Montfort Crusader castle in Galilee (whose occupants had murdered Jewish communities of Europe in the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries and had massacred the Jews – and Muslims – of Jerusalem in 1099), are restored and meticulously preserved.

In present-day Israel, museum curators, national theme park creators and romantic nationalist memory producers promote the message that the indigenous inhabitants of Palestine are not a people with a past worth learning about or a future worth caring about. Instead of working closely with Palestinian citizens of Israel on co-existence projects – there are one and a half million Palestinian citizens of Israel – they look towards the German Templar settler-colonists and Latin Crusaders for inspirational models and for lessons from the past, as a mean of marketing the Israeli “national heritage industry” to Western and Christian tourists. These museum curators and memory producers also follow a long Zionist tradition: Zionist writer Zev Smilansky, the father of Israeli writer S. Yizhar, writing in 1905, urged the Zionist settlers to imitate the Templar Valhalla Colony, which he compared very favourably to the Jewish

neighbourhoods in Jaffa: “When we passed the small neighborhood of Germans built opposite Neve Tzedek, we enjoyed seeing pretty houses built in good taste ... as compared to our arrival in the Jewish neighborhoods in Jaffa, we felt sorrow. How poor are your tents, O Jacob, and how goodly are the dwellings of the Germans” (quoted in Schwartz, 2009).

Bordering the “German Colony” in Jerusalem is the “Greek Colony” known in Hebrew as “*Hamoshava Hayevanitl*”.. Following in the footsteps of the German Templar colonists, the “American Colony” was established in Jerusalem in 1881 by members of a Christian evangelical society, an American-Swedish (“utopian”) colony. Now the American Colony Hotel – the building originally owned by the Palestinian al-Husseini family and the sold to the American and Swedish settlers – is a luxury hotel on the “seamline” between east and west Jerusalem, and run (since 1980) by a Swiss company, and is the preferred hotel of foreign Western correspondents and diplomats, including former British premier Tony Blair. Today the side streets of the former “German Colony” are named by Israel after Christian Zionists and European imperialists, including South African prime minister Jan Smuts, British prime minister David Lloyd George, British Labour Party leader Josiah Wedgewood and Sir Wyndham Henry Deedes, a Christian Zionist British General who was also the chief secretary to British high commissioner of Palestine Sir Herbert Samuel from 1920 to 1922. Deedes represented a British Christian Zionism that was deeply entwined with Western Christian imperialism in the Middle East. This Christian Zionism, represented then by powerful figures in the British Empire and now by the American empire, is deeply rooted in the political theology of “God’s Chosen People” and nations that are supposedly heirs of God’s election of the “biblical Israelites”. This Christian Zionist mission was seen as including a duty to patronize the “Jewish people” by “restoring” them to their “ancestral homeland” in Palestine, backed by a global empire, then British or and now American (Masalha, 2007; Sizer, 2007).

In Zionist settler and Christian restorationist writing, the construction of a “backward” “primitive” indigenous population of Palestine, inhabiting effectively “a land without a people” was designed to justify European colonization and the displacement of the Palestinians (R. Sayigh, 1979: 188). In *T. E. Lawrence*, Desmond Stewart cites the typically racist comments made by the future lieutenant colonel “Lawrence of Arabia” in 1909. Lawrence – later to be become a famous British intelligence officer and the author of a 1922 sensationalized autobiographical novel, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, whose title derived from Proverbs 9:1 – was then a student at Oxford University on a three-month walking tour through Galilee and Syria studying Crusader castles. With keen interest in both modern Zionism and the influence of the Latin Crusades on European military thinking, Lawrence was also contemplating the idea of writing a “monumental” history of the Crusades. In 1910–14 Lawrence took part in British archaeological expeditions to Syria, Egypt and Palestine and combined his practice of archaeology with surveillance, reconnaissance and gathering intelligence for the British military, including being recruited by the British intelligence, together with David George Hogarth, to carry out a military survey of the Negev/Naqab desert. A devout Christian, Lawrence rehashed the protestant myth narrative of Jewish restorationism and had this to say about Zionist Jewish colonists in Galilee “making the desert bloom”: “The sooner the Jews farm it all, the better; their colonies are bright spots in the desert” (quoted in Stewart, 1977: 48). For Lawrence, as for many Zionist Jewish writers, the terms “Arabs and desert” were synonymous. What the fictional account of Lawrence neglected to mention, however, was that there were no deserts in Galilee and no Zionist colonies in the Negev desert.

The officially named “Palestine Jewish Colonization Association” was established in 1924 and

played a major role in supporting the European “Yishuv” in Palestine. It was only disbanded in 1957. Earlier, the “Jewish Colonization Association” was founded as an English company by the German Jewish banker Baron Maurice de Hirsch in 1891 to support Jews from Russia and Romania to migrate and settle in agricultural colonies in Argentina and Palestine. After de Hirsch died in 1896 the Jewish Colonization Association began to support Jewish “colonies” in Palestine. In 1899 Edmond-James de Rothschild (1845–1934), a French member of the Rothschild banking family, a strong supporter of Zionism and a major donor to the Yishuv, transferred title to his colonies in Palestine plus fifteen million francs to the Jewish Colonization Association, which was reorganized as the Palestine Jewish Colonization Association in 1924, under the direction of Edmond-James’s son James Armand de Rothschild. After 1948 James de Rothschild instructed the Palestine Jewish Colonization Association to transfer most of its land in Israel to the Jewish National Fund (Fischbach, 2003:162–4).

Edmond-James de Rothschild also supported the removal of Palestinians to Iraq. Following a meeting with de Rothschild in Paris, Vladimir Jabotinsky wrote in a letter to a friend that the Baron “is willing to give money to the Arabs in order to enable them to purchase others lands, but on condition that they leave Palestine”. Referring to de Rothschild’s plan, Mapai leader Shabtai Levi, of Haifa, who had been a land purchasing agent of Palestine Jewish Colonization Association, wrote in his memoirs:

He advised me to carry on in similar activities, but it is better, he said, not to transfer the Arabs to Syria and Transjordan, as these are part of the Land of Israel, but to Mesopotamia (Iraq). He added that in these cases, he would be ready to send the Arabs, at his expense, new agricultural machines, and agricultural advisors.

(Quoted in Masalha, 1992: 22)

In the 1930s and 1940s the Zionist leadership found it expedient to euphemize, using the term “transfer” or “*ha’avara*” – the Hebrew euphemism for ethnic cleansing – one of most enduring themes of Zionist settler-colonization (see below). Other themes included demographic transformation of the land and physical separation between the immigrant-settlers and the indigenous inhabitants of Palestine. All these colonizing themes were central to Zionist muscular nationalism, with its rejection of both liberal forms of universalism and Marxism, along with individual rights and class struggle. Instead, Zionism gave precedence to the realization of its ethnocratic *völkisch* project: the establishment of a biblically ordained state.

The invention of a new collective memory was based on a masculine patriarchal tradition and the absolutist monarchies of the “ancient forefathers” “New Hebrew” language, “New Hebrew Man” new and militarized society and purely Jewish “Hebrew City” (Tel Aviv), “New Yishuv” the new and armed Hebrew workers of the “Histadrut” the General Federation of Hebrew Workers in the Land of Israel. Established in 1920, the militarized Histadrut and military service were all central to the Zionist conquest project. They all represented that newly constructed muscular and Spartan national identity. The militarized Histadrut, in particular, dominated both the economic military-security infrastructure of the Zionist Yishuv and played a major role in immigration, land settlement and colonization, economic activities, labour employment and military organization and defence (the “Haganah”) – with trade union activity as only one part of its activities (Davis, 2000). Palestinian citizens of Israel were not admitted as members until 1959. The Histadrut became central to this drive designed to create a “New Settlement” of blood and common descent and redeem the biblical “soil”/land (*karka’a/adama*) by conquest (*kibbush*). Thus in 1929, Ben-Gurion wrote of the need for “Iron Wall of [Zionist] workers’ settlements

surrounding every Hebrew city and town, land and human bridge that would link isolated points” and which would be capable of enforcing the doctrine of exclusive “Hebrew labour” (*‘avoda ‘ivrit*) and “Hebrew soil” (*adama ‘ivrit*) (Masalha, 1992: 24–5).

In 1919, when the indigenous Palestinian Arabs constituted nine-tenths of the population of the country, Chaim Weizmann (1874–1952), president of the Zionist Organization and later first president of Israel, viewed the Palestinian Arabs as a “backwards race” (Flapan, 1979: 71) and declared, in an address to the English Zionist Federation on 21 September 1919:

By a Jewish National Home I mean the creation of such conditions that as the country is developed we can pour in a considerable number of immigrants, and finally establish such a society in Palestine that Palestine shall be as Jewish as England is English, or America American.

(Cited in Masalha, 1992: 41, n,24; also Weizmann, 1949; 1952)

Born in Belarus and educated in Germany, Weizmann had become a British citizen in 1910 and taught chemistry at Manchester University. During the First World War he was director of the British Admiralty laboratories (from 1916 until 1919) and in 1917 he worked very closely with the Christian Zionist foreign secretary Arthur Balfour to obtain the British Balfour Declaration. For Weizmann the natives of Palestine were akin to “the rocks of Judea, as obstacles that had to be cleared on a difficult path” (cited in Masalha, 1992:17). As the British mandate progressed and the Palestinians began to resist settler-colonization, the Zionists resolved (from the 1930s onwards) to crush Palestinian resistance, dismantle much of Palestinian society and “transfer”/expel the majority of the indigenous population (Masalha, 1992; Massad, 2004: 57–70). In *All That Remains: The Palestinian Villages Occupied and Depopulated by Israel in 1948*, Palestinian historian Walid Khalidi observed: “There is no denying that the Zionist colonisation of Palestine which began in the early 1880s and continues to this day, represents one of the most remarkable colonizing ventures of all time” (W. Khalidi, 1992).

MANIFESTATIONS OF ZIONIST SETTLER-COLONIZATION AND ISRAELI ETHNOCRACY

For nearly half a century, in the period between 1882 and 1948, terms such as Zionist “colonies” and Zionist “colonization” were universally and unashamedly used by senior Zionist leaders. In June 1932 Vitaly (Haim) Arlozoroff (1899–1933), a Russian-born influential leader of Mapai, the most important Zionist party in the Yishuv, writing to Chaim Weizmann, observed: “I am forced to the conclusion that with present day methods and under the present regimes there exists virtually no opportunity for solving the problem of large-scale immigration and colonization” (quoted in W. Khalidi, 2005: 246). Arlozoroff’s pessimistic outlook came in the aftermath of the Sir John Hope Simpson report of 1 October 1930, a British official report which was commissioned to look into the roots of Palestinian unrest and grievances under the British mandate and following the widespread Arab–Jewish clashes of 1929.

The report concluded that Palestinian fears of the devastating impact of the Zionist Yishuv and its land purchases policies were well-founded. It also recommended limiting Jewish immigration to Palestine due to the lack of agricultural land to support it:

Actually the result of the purchase of land in Palestine by the Jewish National Fund has

been that land became extra territorial. It ceases to be land from which the Arab can gain any advantage either now or at any time in the future. Not only can he never hope to lease or cultivate it, but, by the stringent provisions of the lease of the Jewish National Fund, he is deprived forever from employment on the land. (Hope Simpson, 1930: 56)

It is impossible to view with equanimity the extension of an enclave in Palestine from which the Arabs are excluded. The Arab population already regards the transfer of lands to Zionist hands with dismay and alarm.

(Hope Simpson, 1930:135)

THE HISTADRUT AND BOYCOTT OF ARAB LABOUR DURING THE MANDATORY PERIOD

Throughout, the report refers to the destructive impact of the “colonization policies” of the Yishuv: “Zionist policy in regards to Arabs in their colonies”; “the effect of the Zionist colonization policy on the Arab”; “Reasons for the exclusion of the Arab” in Zionist colonies; “The principle of the persistent and deliberate boycott of Arab labour in the Zionist colonies”;

the General Federation of Jewish Labour [Histadrut] ... is using every effort to ensure that it [boycott of Arab labour] shall be extended to the colonies of P.I.C.A. [Palestine Jewish Colonisation Association] ... Great pressure is being brought to bear on the old P.I.C.A. colonies in the Maritime Plain ... that pressure may be cited the construction of a Labour Kvutzoth (communal colony) ... It is certain that the employers of that village will not be able to resist the arguments of the General Federation [Histadrut], reinforced by the appeals of the vigorous labour colony at its gate.

(Cited in W. Khalidi, 2005: 303–7)

The report showed that Palestinian Arab “unemployment is serious and general” partly due to the Histadrut labour policy extending to all Zionist enterprises; the displaced Palestinian Arab farmer could not find non-agricultural employment: “There can be no doubt that there is at present time serious unemployment among Arab craftsmen and among Arab laborers”. The Histadrut claim that the Palestinian Arab worker benefited from Zionist colonization was rejected by the report:

The policy of the Jewish Labour Federation is successful in impeding the employment of Arabs in Jewish colonies and in Jewish enterprises of every kind. There is therefore no relief to be anticipated from an extension of Jewish enterprise unless some departure from existing practice is effected.

(Hope Simpson, 1930:133)

ISRAELI ETHNIC DEMOCRACY OR ETHNOCRACY?

Zionist *mission civilisatrice* cultivated the myth of Israel as a “democratic outpost” of European enlightenment in the Middle East, surrounded by a backward Islamic “Orient”. The foundational narratives of Zionism, often repeated *ad nauseam* in the Western media, describe Israel as an “exceptional state”: a state born miraculously shortly after the horrific Nazi Holocaust and

against all odds; an enlightened “liberal democracy” in fact the “only democracy in the Middle East” in a backward region, surrounded by a “tough neighbourhood”. With the rise of Israeli critical scholarship in the 1980s, this concept of “liberal democracy” however, was critiqued by a “new generation” of Israeli social scientists, including Sammy Smooha, Yoav Peled (1992: 432–43) and Gershon Shafir (Peled & Shafir, 1996: 391–413; 2002), who introduced the paradigm of Israel as an “ethnic democracy” – a kind of “second-class democracy” – but without bothering to explain how this ethnic democracy had been engineered and constructed through the ethnic cleansing of Palestine in 1948. Haifa University sociologist Smooha who led this public discourse, highlighting the second-class nature of Palestinian citizenship in Israel, the tight control of the dominant Jewish group over the apparatus of state, and the systemic discrimination against the Palestinian citizens (Smooha, 1997: 198–224; Sa’di, 2000: 25–37). This conception, however, still views Zionism as an exceptional “national liberation movement” of the Jewish people but bemoans its moral degeneration and its “recent” practices inside the 1967 occupied territories.

The “ethnic democracy” paradigm/discourse was enthusiastically embraced by many Israeli social scientists, including some Palestinian academics inside Israel, who failed to understand the connection between Israeli “ethnic democracy” and the ethnic cleansing of Palestine in 1948 (Rouhana & Ghanem, 1993:163–88; 1999; Yiftachel, 1992:125–36; 1993: 51–9).

However, in effect Israeli social scientists have conveniently substituted a fictitious (post-Holocaust) narrative of “Jewish ethnicity” for the mythical and racist (and pre-Holocaust) “Jewish race” narrative – a concept that became politically unacceptable, especially after the horrors of the Nazi atrocities. However, as Philip Spencer and Howard Wollman have powerfully argued, in the twentieth century “ethnicity” (as common descent) was a convenient replacement for “race” (biology and blood), as the key ingredient of European pseudo-scientific racism and organic-nationalist ideologies in the nineteenth century: race, “racial categorization discourses” were central “to the development of nationalism, particularly in the European context” of the nineteenth century (Spencer & Wollman, 2002: 64).

By contrast with race, the concept of ethnicity is relatively new, emerging in social science discourse only in the twentieth century ... the concept itself, even or particularly in its culturalist form, was only developed when overt racist ideology became first theoretically untenable (since scientific evidence of the existence of races was impossible to produce) and politically unacceptable (certainly after the experience of Nazism).

(*Ibid.* : 65)

More recently political theorists have referred to Israel as “*herrenvölk* democracy”. Whether or not this term echoes Ahad Ha’am’s *übevölk* term (discussed above) is unclear. However the myth of “ethnic democracy” has been challenged by As’ad Ghanem, Nadim Rouhana and Oren Yiftachel (1998: 253–67). The three Israeli-based scholars have highlighted the inherent contradiction between the inclusive nature of democracy and the overt exclusivity of ethnicity and the fact that the Jewish identity was central to the self-definition of Israeli state (Rouhana, 2006: 64–74; see also Sa’di, 2000: 25–37).

The overtly settler-colonialist manifestations of “Israeli ethnocracy” are widely documented. The “democratic” aspects of the Israeli regime are skin deep; the primary objective of the Israeli ethnocracy is to maintain Jewish ethnic domination over the indigenous Palestinians. Although over the years Israeli Jews became more realistic in their attitudes towards the existence of a

Palestinian minority in Israel, the creation of Israel did not alter Zionism's premises with regard to the Palestinian minority remaining under Israeli control. After 1948 European Zionist *völkisch* nationalism created in Israel what Meron Benvenisti, the former deputy mayor of Jerusalem, described (in the 1980s) as a "*herrenvölk* democracy" (Benvenisti, 1987), with first-class citizenship for Jews and second-class citizenship for the Palestinian citizens inside Israel and completely disenfranchised Palestinians in the occupied territories.

The term *herrenvölk* democracy was coined by Belgian sociologist Pierre L. van den Berghe in *The Ethnic Phenomenon* (1981) and *Race and Racism: A Comparative Perspective* (1967; also 1978:401–11) to describe ethnocentrism and a political system based on an imagined biological ethnic-racial nationalism, in which full citizen rights are only granted to the dominant ethnic-racial group in society; both apartheid South Africa and Zionist Israel were the most illustrative cases. The pre-1948 obsession with "Arab transfer" by the founding fathers of Zionism was replaced, in the post-1948 period, by a process of ethnocization of Israeli politics and by the European Zionist ethno-nationalist concept of the *völkisch* state and the construction of the Israeli state as an "ethnocracy" (Yiftachel, 2006), a imagined form of a "*herrenvölk* Jewish republic".

Systematic discrimination and Jewish control and privileges are legislated into the structure of citizenship and in all basic aspects of life: access to land and water, the economy, education, civil service and political institutions (see also Cook, 2010). Adalah ("Justice") – the Legal Centre for Arab Minority Rights in Israel – has documented Israel's institutionalized ethnoreligious discrimination against its approximately 1.5 million Palestinian citizens, counting more than 35 Israeli laws which explicitly privilege Jews over non-Jews (cited in Bisharat & Sultany, 2010). In fact Israel is a heavily militarized "democracy for Jews" and an apartheid state for the indigenous inhabitants of Palestine. The Israeli state operates a subtle form of apartheid within the Green Line, but a fully fledged Bantustan system in the 1967 occupied territories.

Palestinian authors, in contrast with Israeli or pro-Zionist western rewriters, have tended to highlight the "facts on the ground" and the practical settler-colonization and ethnic cleansing dimensions of Zionism (W. Khalidi, 1991: 5–6; R. Khalidi, 2006: xxxiv; Zureik, 1979). In a similar vein, Palestinian scholar Nadim Rouhana points out that whatever its ethno-national, religious, or even humanitarian justifications, the European Zionist movement sought, openly and proudly, the establishment of a (European) Jewish state in Palestine. Its explicit goals necessitated bringing European Jewish immigrants to Palestine to create a "Jewish state" in a country already inhabited by another people, the Palestinians. Inevitably the success of such a settler project "would necessarily mean expropriating the country from its indigenous inhabitants" and the "violent displacement and forceful control of the indigenous inhabitants" (Rouhana, 2011).

In the late 1970s to early 1990s the great Palestinian secular-humanist narrator Edward Said attempted to frame the Palestine struggle in terms of "post-colonial theory". However as Mizrahi scholar Ella Shohat points out, in contrast to the post-colonial discourses in the West, Israeli liberal intellectuals did not engage key post-colonial and anti-colonial writings of Césaire, Memmi and Frantz Fanon (Shohat 2010: 321–2). Furthermore, the Israeli state, like all other European settler-colonialist projects, continues to displace, dislodge, "transfer" subjugate and dehumanize the indigenous people of Palestine. As Dr Nurit Peled-Elhanan has recently shown, the Palestinians are still being depicted in Israeli textbooks as "conniving" "dishonest" "lazy" "treacherous" "liars" "vile" "deviant" "criminal" "murderous" "primitive farmers" "refugees" and "terrorists" (Peled-Elhanan, 2012). Zionist historiography provides ample evidence

suggesting that from the very beginning of the Yishuv in Palestine the attitude of most Zionist groups towards the native Arab population ranged from a mixture of indifference and patronizing racial superiority to outright denial of its national rights, the goal being to uproot and “transfer” it to neighbouring countries. Leading figures such as Israel Zangwill, a prominent Anglo-Jewish writer, close lieutenant of Theodor Herzl and advocate of the “transfer” solution, worked relentlessly to propagate the slogan that Palestine was “a land without a people for a people without a land”.

In recent years, however, Memmi has declared his disillusionment with left-wing anti-colonial struggles and has moved closer to a right-wing position which on cultural matters can be viewed as deeply anti-Arab and anti-Muslim neo-conservative (Galbo, 2007: 1–7). Memmi’s *Decolonization and the Decolonized* (2006), which reflects this neo-conservative orientation, became closely associated with a resurgent neo-colonial lobby in France. Memmi’s recent historical revisionism also struck a chord among a section of the French public, and especially a group of thinkers known as “French-Jewish intellectuals” which includes Bernard Kouchner, Bernard Henri Lévi, Alain Finkielkraut and André Gluckmann, all of whom at one point or another have either supported the 2003 invasion of Iraq or expressed anti-Muslim sentiments (Galbo, 2007: 1–7). This resurgence of new “Orientalism” would not have surprised Edward Said, who had systematically challenged the linguistic imagery in Orientalist literature and Western media – imagery embedded in anti-Arab and anti-Muslim racist representation (Galbo, 2007:1–7).

Conceived and constructed as a settler state, Zionist colonization of Palestine was both in theory and practice, intrinsically ethnic cleansing and politicidal (Kimmerling, 2003: 214–15). In *Israel: A Colonial-Settler State?* – originally based on an article in French in June 1967, under the title “Israel, fait colonial” (“Israel, a Colonial Fact”) published in Jean-Paul Sartre’s *Les Temps Modernes* – the great French Jewish scholar of the Middle East Maxime Rodinson (1915–2004) explored the question of why Israel should be considered a settler-colonial society. In France the book was considered scandalous at the time; indeed Jean-Paul Sartre -who had written the “Introduction” to Albert Memmi’s *The Colonizer and the Colonized* – suggested that Rodinson – as Rodinson reports in the introduction to *Cult, Ghetto, and State: The Persistence of the Jewish Question* (2001) – should be psychoanalysed in order to cure his mind of such odd notions about Zionism and the State of Israel. Rodinson’s critique of settler-colonization in Palestine was based on two main reproaches: attempting to impose upon world Jewry an extraterritorial nationalist ideology, and judaizing Palestine at the cost of expulsion and domination of the Palestinians. He wrote:

the creation of the State of Israel on Palestinian soil is the culmination of a process that fits perfectly into the great European-American movement of expansion in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries whose aim was to settle new inhabitants among other peoples or to dominate them economically and politically.

(Rodinson, 1973: 91)

Rodinson’s seminal work documented the colonialist attitudes towards the indigenous Palestinian that permeated the Zionist movement, especially including its Labour groupings. He showed how early Zionist leaders constantly appealed to European powers, emphasizing the advantages of having a modern outpost of Europe in the Middle East and highlighting the advantages of the “white man’s” colonization of the Holy Land.

Zionist leader Chaim Weizmann – a close friend of General Jan Smuts, an advocate of racial

separation and Prime Minister of South Africa (1919–24 and again 1939–48) – argued: “A Jewish Palestine would be a safeguard to England, in particular in respect to the Suez Canal” (cited in Weinstock, 1989: 96). When east European Jewish settlers moved to Palestine, their attitudes to the indigenous population were typical of colonial attitudes towards “inferior” and “uncivilized” peoples. But the Zionist settlements remained very small until the British occupied Palestine in 1918. After that the colonization processes accelerated immensely under the protection of the colonial power. The settlers made no effort to integrate their struggles with those of the Palestinians fighting against British colonialism. On the contrary, the settlers proceeded from the conviction that the indigenous population would have to be subjugated or removed, with the help of the British. Rodinson also challenged several Zionist myths, including the myth of “exile and return” and the claim that the Jewish people had lived there some two thousand years earlier. Using such reasoning, Rodinson points out, the Muslims should lay claim to Spain. Nor was Palestine under-populated, semi-deserted or “empty” and waiting for European Jewish settlers to develop it (Rodinson, 1973).

Zionist settler-colonization is particular but it is not unique. In line with common colonial practices the Israeli state was founded on the ruin, displacement and dispossession of the indigenous people of Palestine. Nearly every single European settler-colonization project has used the Bible to redeem colonialism and the dispossession of indigenous peoples. European immigrant settler-colonial societies developed different strategies towards indigenous peoples. In North America, Australia and New Zealand, the local peoples were treated as a part of the hostile natural environment, an “attitude that ended with their genocide” (Kimmerling, 2003: 21). In Afrikaner and apartheid South Africa and Rhodesia, the indigenous peoples were used as cheap labour and segregated from the white “race”. In Catholic Latin America, the Spanish and Portuguese conquerors pursued annihilationist strategies towards the local culture and indigenous civilizations (the Aztec and Inca) combined with mass conversion of the bulk of the surviving indigenous populations. In Palestine, the European Zionist Yishuv was “partially dependent on [cheap] Arab labour and completely dependent on [mostly absentee] Arab land owners from whom they purchased property”. But the European Yishuv envisaged and built a “pure Zionist Jewish colony” (Yiftachel, 2006: 54; Shafir, 1989, 1996). The Zionist Yishuv

institutionally, cognitively, and emotionally built within an exclusionary Jewish ‘bubble’. The plans for the new Jewish state were similarly exclusive. The Jewish state was supposed to be purely Jewish and no political and bureaucratic tools were prepared for the possibility, mentioned in all partition proposals, that large Arab minorities would remain within the boundaries of the Jewish state.

(Kimmerling, 2003: 22)

In the late 1980s and 1990s, three Israeli sociologists, Baruch Kimmerling (2003), Uri Ram (1993: 327–50; 1999: 55–80) and Gershon Shafir (1996; 1999: 81–96), attempted to reconcile a Zionist liberal conception of Israel as an “ethnic democracy” with a more critical approach to historical writing on the Israel-Palestine question, by highlighting certain “colonial” features of the Zionist (“Jewish National”) Yishuv in Palestine before 1948. More recently a more radical approach to Zionism was attempted by Israeli revisionist historian Ilan Pappé, in an article entitled “Zionism as Colonialism”. Pappé argued that the “comparative approach validates the need to further examine Zionism as a settler-colonialist phenomenon, despite its unique origins and chronological timing” (Pappé, 2008: 611–33; also Ram, 1999: 55–80).

As Joel Beinin argues, the preoccupation with what the Zionist Jews intended to do rather than

the actual consequences of Zionist project and actions for the indigenous Palestinians is the hall mark of mainstream Israeli historical writing on the history of Zionism and the Arab-Zionist conflict (Beinin, 2004; see also Beinin, 1988: 433–56; 1992: 80–86; 2005: 6–23). As Israeli revisionist historian Benny Morris pointed out:

large sections of Israeli [Yishuv] society – including the Ahdut Ha'avoda party, Herut, and Mapai leaders such as Ben-Gurion – were opposed to or extremely unhappy with partition and from early on viewed the war as an ideal opportunity to expand the new state's borders beyond the UN-earmarked partition boundaries and at the expense of the Palestinians. Like Jordan's King Abdullah, they too were opposed to the emergence of a Palestinian Arab state and moved to prevent it.

(Morris, 1998)

The Yishuv's leadership was fully aware of the South African model of colonization with its exploitation of cheap indigenous black labour by the European white settlers. Evidently its determination not to replicate the South African model of a small white minority ruling black majority, and its policy of employing exclusively Jewish "labour" and excluding the indigenous inhabitants from the Jewish economy and land purchased by the Jewish National Fund (JNF) was linked in the minds of David Ben-Gurion and other Mapai leaders with the concept of "transfer/ethnic cleansing" as a key component of Zionist ideology and strategy (Masalha, 1992: 22–3). As we shall see in [Chapter 4](#), the JNF played a key role in the mass expulsions of 1948 and state-organized memoricide of the 1948 Nakba. After 1948 it systematically planted forests in the depopulated villages to "conceal" Palestinian existence (Boqa'i, 2005: 73). Designed to cover up the truth, the JNF website tells us that the organization is "the caretaker of the land of Israel" on behalf of its "owners" – Jewish people everywhere.

In the post-1948 period the minority of Palestinians – who remained behind, many of them internally displaced – became second-class citizens, subject to a system of military administration by a government that confiscated the bulk of their lands. Today almost a quarter of the 1.3 million Palestinian citizens of Israel (known as "Israeli Arabs" in Israeli-Zionist discourse, but "Palestinians of 1948" in Palestinian parlance) are "internal refugees". Therefore it is precisely the above unique and distinct features of the Zionist colonization of Palestine, the "exclusive" nature of the European Yishuv and creation of a pure Zionist colony, which led to the destruction of Palestine. As shall we see in the following chapter, the Zionist "ethnic cleansing" premises and fundamentals ("maximum land and minimum Arab" Arab "transfer") all led to the massive Zionist "territorial expansion" in and conquest of Palestine (from 6.6 per cent in 1947 to 78 per cent by early 1949) and the ethnic cleansing of Palestine.

Chapter 2

PROMISED LAND AND CONQUEST NARRATIVES

Zionism and the 1948 Palestine Nakba

Appeal to the Bible to justify inhumane behaviour is not uncommon in the history of imperialist colonisation emanating from Europe ... the Bible frequently has been used as *the idea that redeems the conquest of the earth*. It is also the potentially most convincing *apologia* legitimizing the Zionist enterprise of establishing a state for Jews at the expense of an indigenous population.

(Prior, 2001: 9)

Israeli historian Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin (1993, 1994), of Ben-Gurion University, described the Zionists' secularizing of the sacred agenda as follows: "God does not exist, but he promised us this land". In modern secular Zionist nationalism the religious language, theology, myths and fairy tales of the Hebrew Bible are transformed not only into ethnocentric nationalist myths, but also into positively corroborated legal rights and a "title deed" to the land underpinned by sacred documents and a "divine mandate" – a supremacist mandate towering above both indigenous rights and international law. For David Ben-Gurion, the first prime minister of Israel – who was posthumously named one of *Time* magazine's list of 100 most influential people of the twentieth century – international law and UN resolutions were only meant to underpin superior "biblical rights"; if not, the UN was infamously dismissed by Ben-Gurion as *Um Shmum*, where *um* is the Hebrew acronymic for the UN, and *Shmum*, like *Klum* ("nothing" in Hebrew), is a scolding phrase coined by Ben-Gurion, at an Israeli cabinet meeting on 29 March 1955, as utter contempt towards the UN and international law. For Ben-Gurion, while the "gentiles" have international law, the Jews have "divine law" and "biblical rights"; what ultimately matters is what "the Jews do"; not what the "gentiles, with international law, say" about the question of Palestine-Israel. This biblically sanctioned arrogant attitude towards the UN and international law and human rights, combined with the belief in the existence of the Jews as an "elite people" with a "superior mission" was famously exposed and ridiculed in the 1950s by Ben-Gurion's own foreign minister, Moshe Sharett (Masalha, 1997).

DIVINE LICENCE TO EXPEL? ZIONIST SECULAR NATIONALISM AND THE CONQUEST NARRATIVE OF THE HEBREW BIBLE

The conquest narrative of the Hebrew Bible is historically problematic, theologically dubious and morally abhorrent (Prior, 1998: 41–81). Displacement and wars of extermination are embedded in the Written Torah and key books of the Tanakh (Exodus, Joshua, Deuteronomy and

Judges) are full of violent images. In the conquest narratives and land traditions of the Tanakh, the prescriptive commandments of Yahweh – who ironically had originated from minor Canaanite war deities – require the “Israelites” to exterminate “seven Canaanite nations” (Deut. 20:16–17; 25:17–18). In the narrative of the book of Exodus, there is an inextricable link between the imaginary liberation of the “biblical Israelites” from slavery in Egypt and the “divine mandate” to plunder ancient Palestine and even commit genocide; the invading Israelites are commanded to annihilate the indigenous inhabitants of “the land of Canaan” (as Palestine was then called).¹ In the book of Deuteronomy (often described as the focal point of the religious history and theology of the Old Testament) there is an explicit requirement to “ethnically cleanse the land” of the indigenous people of Canaan (Deut. 7.1–11; see also 9.1–5, 23, 31–32; 20.11–14, 16–18; Exod. 23.27–33) (Prior, 1997a: 16–33, 278–84).

The “ethnic cleansing” language of the land and conquest narrative of the Hebrew Bible, which has massively influenced Zionist settler-colonization in Palestine, appeared to mandate the genocide of the *indigenes* of Canaan. Of course it is possible to develop a Jewish theology of social justice, liberation and non-violent struggle with strong dependence on the Hebrew prophets – especially with reference to the counter-traditions of the Bible found in the Books of Isaiah, Amos and Ruth. Feminist approaches to religious studies, in particular, have explored counter-traditions in the Bible focusing on the tension between the dominant patriarchal and masculine discourses of the Bible and counter female voices found in the Book of Ruth – Ruth “the doubly Other” – both a Moabite woman and a foreigner (Pardes, 1992). But it would be no more difficult to construct a political theology of ethnic cleansing on the basis of other Hebrew Bible traditions, especially those fictitious narratives dealing with Israelite origins that demanded the destruction of other peoples. Clearly interpretations of scripture whether by settler colonial movements or indigenous peoples resisting settler-colonization has always had theological and ideological dimensions. Inevitably, post-modern feminist interpretations of the Bible can be as ideological as traditional patriarchal and masculine interpretations. But all interpretations of ancient holy texts should be subject to a moral critique in line with modern standards of ethical obligations.

As we shall see in [Chapter 5](#), a political theology of ethno-religious cleansing can easily be constructed on the basis of the Hebrew Bible – a theology similar to those current ones espoused by Israeli Jewish fundamentalists, American Christian Zionists and the Muslim followers of Osama bin Laden. In the Hebrew Bible there is a dominant strand which sees Yahweh/Elohim, the Israelite God, as autocratic, militarist, xenophobic, colonizing, genocider and ethnic-cleanser. Particularly in the conquest narrative of the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites, the Israelites are commanded by Yahweh to kill, destroy and annihilate mercilessly the indigenous population. Later in the days of the Israelite absolutist monarchy, they are urged to show no pity, but to massacre their enemies. Ironically Yahweh himself – we have already seen – had originated in Canaanite religion and was a minor deity within the pantheon of the Canaanite deities. In the autocratic world of the Israelite monarchies Yahweh evolved as an autocratic monolatrist divinity. However the memoricide of Canaanite religion and history in the Hebrew is reflected by the fact that the Canaanite origins of Yahweh are silenced by the supersessionist narrative of the Hebrew Bible.

The Hebrew Bible tells a story in which the Israelites escaped from slavery in Photonic Egypt with the help of Yahweh – originally a minor Canaanite war deity – although the books of the Torah, including Exodus, Deuteronomy and Leviticus, all justify or condone slavery. Meeting him on a mountain-top in the wilderness, they were given the commandments, agreed to become

his “chosen people” and conquered Canaan with his active assistance. Post-Exilic Hebrew Yahwehism, or the worship of Yahweh, evolved into a central idea of historical Judaism. Although some Christians views Jesus of the New Testament as the human incarnation of Yahweh of the Tanakh, in fact Jesus’s “Sermon on the Mount” (in the gospel of Matthew 5:5) manifests the counter-narrative and anti-thesis of Yehweh. In the conquest narratives and land traditions of the Hebrew Bible, Yahweh manifests characteristics that have a great deal in common with those of Daleks in the British science fiction television series *Doctor Who* : these are cyborgs and powerful creatures bent on universal conquest and domination, utterly without pity, compassion or remorse.

This right to conquer and expel the indigenous inhabitants of the land is embedded in the language of the conquest traditions of the Hebrew Bible. To begin with, the Exodus narrative and the land traditions of Bible portray Yahweh as a tribal, genocidal God, with compassion *only* for the misery of his “own people” (Exod. 3.7–8). In the narrative of the book of Deuteronomy the divine command to commit “genocide” was explicit; genocide and mass slaughter followed in the book of Joshua. These highly dubious traditions of the Bible were kept before subsequent generations of Jews and Christians in their prayers. Christians still pray in Psalm 80 (7–9) on Thursday morning: “Restore us, O God of hosts; let your face shine, that we may be saved. You brought a vine out of Egypt; you drove out the nations and planted it [in the land of Canaan]. You cleared the ground for it.”

To illustrate his moral critique of the Bible the late Michael Prior (2003: 27–9) cited the following mega-narratives:

- ◆ Although the reading of Exodus 3, both in the Christian liturgy and in the classical texts of liberation theologies, halts abruptly in the middle of verse 8 at the description of the land as one “flowing with milk and honey” the biblical text itself continues, “to the country of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites”. Manifestly, the promised land, flowing with milk and honey, had no lack of indigenous peoples, and, according to the narrative, would soon flow with blood. As the Israelites were fleeing Egypt, Yahweh promises Moses and the people: “When my angel goes in front of you, and brings you to the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Canaanites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, and I blot them out, you shall not bow down to their gods, or worship them, or follow their practices, but you shall utterly demolish them and break their pillars in pieces” (Exod. 23.23–24).
- ◆ Matters got worse in the narrative of the book of Deuteronomy, which is canonized as Sacred Scripture. In fact it contains menacing ideologies and racist, xenophobic and militaristic tendencies: after the King of Heshbon refused passage to the Israelites, Yahweh gave him over to the Israelites who captured and utterly destroyed all the cities, killing all the men, women, and children (Deut. 2.33–34). The fate of the King of Bashan was no better (3.3). Yahweh’s role was central to the destruction of other peoples:

When Yahweh your God brings you into the land that you are about to enter and occupy, and he clears away many nations before you – the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites ... and when Yahweh your God gives them over to you ... you must utterly destroy them ... Show them no mercy... For you are a people holy to Yahweh your God; Yahweh your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on earth to be his people, his treasured possession (Deut. 7.1–11; see also 9.1–5; 11.8–9, 23, 31–32).

(Prior, 2003: 27–9)

- ◆ The book of Deuteronomy tells the Israelites that when they approach towns along the way, they are to offer terms of peace to the inhabitants. If the people accept the peace terms, they are to be reduced to serving Israelites at forced labour; if they refuse, all the adult males are to be killed and the women, children, and animals are to be taken as spoils of war (Deut. 20:10–15). When, however, the Israelites reach the lands where they are to dwell, they are to annihilate the inhabitants entirely so that they cannot tempt the Israelites to worship their gods (Deut. 20:16–18):

But as for the towns of these peoples that Yahweh your God is giving you as an inheritance, you must not let anything that breathes remain alive. You shall annihilate them – the Hittites and the Amorites, the Canaanites and the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites – just as Yahweh your God has commanded, so that they may not teach you to do all the abhorrent things that they do for their gods, and you thus sin against Yahweh your God. (Deut. 20.16–18)

- ◆ The first part of the book of Joshua (chapters 2–12) describes the conquest of key cities, and their fate in accordance with the laws of holy wars (Josh. 3:10): “And Joshua said, Hereby ye shall know that the living God is among you, and that he will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Hivites, and the Perizzites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Jebusites”. Even when the Gibeonites were to be spared, the Israelite elders complained at the lapse in fidelity to the mandate to destroy all the inhabitants of the land (9.21–27). Joshua took Makkedah, utterly destroying every person in it (10.28). A similar fate befell other cities (10.29–39): everything that breathed was destroyed, as Yahweh commanded (10.40–43). Joshua utterly destroyed the inhabitants of the cities of the north as well (11.1–23). Yahweh gave to Israel all the land that he swore to their ancestors he would give them (21.43–45). The legendary achievements of Yahweh through the agencies of Moses, Aaron, and Joshua are kept before the Israelites even in their prayers: “You brought a vine out of Egypt; you drove out the nations and planted it” (Ps. 80.8; see also Ps. 78.54–55; 105.44).
- ◆ This is sometimes justified because the other peoples worship alien gods and thus do not deserve to live. There are similar commands in the Book of Numbers (chapter 31). Later in the biblical narrative, when the Israelites reach Jericho, Joshua orders that the entire city be devoted to the Lord for destruction, except for Rahab the prostitute and those in her house. All other inhabitants, as well as the oxen, sheep and donkeys are to be killed in the name of God (Josh. 6:21):

So the people shouted when the priests blew with the trumpets: and it came to pass, when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, and the people shouted with a great shout, that the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city [of Jericho], every man straight before him, and they took the city. And they utterly destroyed all that was in the city [of Jericho], both man and woman, young and old, and ox, and sheep, and ass, with the edge of the sword.

(Josh. 6:20–21)

- ◆ In the First Book of Samuel, Samuel prophesies in the name of the Lord to Saul:

Thus says the Lord of hosts, “I will punish the Amalekites for what they did in opposing the Israelites when they came up out of Egypt. Now go and attack Amalek and utterly destroy all that they have, do not spare them, but kill both man and woman, child and infant, ox and sheep, camel and donkey.”

(1 Sam. 15:2–3)

The historical and archaeological evidence, however, strongly suggests that such genocidal massacres in the Written Torah never actually took place (Masalha, 2007), although these racist, xenophobic and militaristic narratives remained for later generations as powerful examples of divine aid in battle and of a divine commandment for widespread slaughter of an enemy. Regarding the divine demand in the Written Torah to kill entire tribes, the later rabbinical tradition of “post-biblical” Judaism (especially rabbinic Judaism, which was largely based on the Oral Torah, usually considered to consist of Midrash, Mishna, Talmud and Responsa, redacted since the second century CE) would view the wars of conquest of Canaan in the Written Torah as a unique situation that offered no precedent for later wars. Some later Jewish commentators would interpret the struggle against the Philistines, Canaanites and Amalekites as a symbolic metaphor for fighting genocidal evil (Lefebure, 2002).

Throughout the British mandatory period (1918–1948) and during the 1948 war the Hebrew Bible was deployed by secular Zionist leaders as a highly effective weapon against the indigenous people of Palestine – and a weapon of ethnic cleansing of Palestinians. In 1930 Menahem Ussishkin, one of the leading figures of the Yishuv, long chairman of the Jewish National Fund and member of the Jewish Agency Executive, publicly called for the “transfer”/ethnic cleansing of Palestinian peasants to other parts of the Middle East. In an address to journalists in Jerusalem in late April (and published in the Hebrew organ *Doar Hayom* of 28 April 1930) he stated:

We must continually raise the demand that our [biblical] land be returned to our possession ... If there are other inhabitants, they must be transferred to some other place. We must take over the land. We have a greater and nobler idea than the preserving several hundred thousands of Arab fellaheen [peasants].

(Masalha, 1992: 37)

The late Israel Shahak (1933–2001), a Hebrew University scientist and a human rights activist, argued that redemptionist secular Zionism was a secularized form of Jewish messianism and the doctrines of “chosen people” and “Jewish exceptionalism” (Shahak, 1994; also Shahak & Mezvinsky, 1999). Yet, as has been discussed above, the massive impact of secular romantic (messianic) central and east European nationalisms on secular Zionism can hardly be overstated. Furthermore, the theological language of the Hebrew Bible has always been misappropriated by modern secular Zionist nationalism as “history” rather than theology or a source of belief (Shindler, 2002: 101). Paradoxically, however, the redemptionist (secular-atheist) Zionist-invented claim to Palestine is based on the religious paradigms of the Tanakh and the theological notion that God had given the land to the Jews. The biblical doctrine of “chosen people-promised land” and the politics of biblical exceptionalism have been deployed highly effectively in support of secular political Zionism, land redemption and settler-colonization in Palestine, with devastating consequences for the indigenous people of Palestine (Masalha, 2007; Prior, 1999:138).

In some aspects European Jewish Zionism was conceived as a secularized form of the politics of “Jewish exceptionalism” elitist thinking, “divine chosenness” and covenantal rights. In *God’s Peoples: Covenant and Land in South Africa, Israel, and Ulster*, Donald Akenson shows how the Hebrew Bible played a fundamental role in three distinct settler-colonial societies: apartheid South Africa, Zionist Israel and Ulster (Scottish-Presbyterian) Northern Ireland. In all three societies – formed through a violent process of settler-colonization, ethno-racial separation and inequalities – the doctrine of chosenness and “chosen people” formed a fundamental pattern of mind. In apartheid South Africa the white-dominated Dutch Reformed Church misappropriated the language of the Bible effectively to argue for racial segregation and inequalities and to support apartheid laws as God’s will; that God is the “great divider”: white (light) is divided and separated from black (darkness) (Gen. 1); that God divided everything into separate categories and “deliberately divided people into different races” – that the light/whites were superior to dark/blacks and that New Testament asserted that Christians were *spiritually* equal, but not physically or intellectually; that indigenous Africans were inferior Canaanites destined to be the servants of the Afrikaners (Akenson, 1992: 74; Moodie, 1975:1–5; G. Mitchell, 1993).

Misappropriating the land traditions of the Hebrew Bible, and in particular those in the book of Joshua, the political elites of the three societies have based their religio-cultural identity on uniqueness and a belief in a unique “covenant” with an all-powerful conquering God. To these three societies one should add the United States as an archetypical settler-colonial “God blessed” society endowed with superior and preferential “divine’ treatment” a self-perception as being “God’s People” and a universalist-imperialist mission. By going back to the militant and supremacist parts of the biblical text that defined the “promised land-chosen people” and told the people to possess, conquer and purify the land, the religious purpose of the Bible was declared to be the same as the purpose of the secular Israeli state. But does the Bible justify political Zionism, the military conquest and destruction of historic Palestine by the Israelis in 1948, and the current Israeli building of the separation/apartheid wall in occupied Palestine? The politics of reading the Bible in Israel and Zionism, a European settler-colonial movement, is a subject which is often dealt with in biblical studies in the West in abstract, with little attention to Zionism’s catastrophic consequences for the indigenous inhabitants of Palestine.

Read at face value, in a literalist-empiricist-historicist fashion, and without recourse to notions of universal human rights and international law, the Hebrew Bible indeed appears to propose the taking possession of ancient Palestine and the forcible expulsion of the indigenous population (the Canaanites) as the fulfillment of a “divine commandment”. From a scrutiny of the misappropriated language of the Hebrew Bible to the emergence of political Zionism (and secular Zionist language) from the late nineteenth century onwards it is possible to see the way in which a secular European conquering ideology and movement mobilized the figurative and outward language of the Jewish religion into a sacrosanct “title deed” to the land of Palestine signed by an ethnocentric xenophobic God (Prior, 1997; 1999; Wetherell, 2005: 69–70). Very little is said about the actual genealogy and provenance of Zionism, especially its European settler-colonial context of the late nineteenth century from which Zionism drew its force and great powers’ backing; and almost nothing is said about what the creation of the State of Israel entailed for the indigenous inhabitants of the land (Said, 1980a: 57). Despite its distinct features and its nationalist ideology (exile from and “return” to the land of the Bible) political Zionism followed the general trajectory of colonialist projects in Africa, Asia and Latin America: European colonizing of another people’s land while seeking to remove or subjugate the indigenous inhabitants of the land (Ruether, 1998: 113). Established in the name of the Bible, the

creation of the State of Israel in 1948 entailed a mini-holocaust for the indigenous people of Palestine; today there are over six million Palestinian refugees in the Middle East and nearly 70 per cent of all Palestinians are refugees.

Secularizing, nationalizing and mobilizing politically the biblical text, through creative nationalist reinventions and myth-creation, David Ben-Gurion invoked elitist, “divine” and covenantal rights repeatedly and obsessively: in 1937 he told the British Royal Commission (the Peel Commission) sent to investigate the escalating conflict in mandatory Palestine in 1937 that the “Bible is our mandate” (Ben-Gurion, 1970:107; also J. Rose, 2004: 7). Ben-Gurion, who is revered in Israel as the “Father of the Nation” was a non-believer and deeply secular Zionist who knew his Bible in detail. In his writings and speeches he invoked Isaiah, that the Jews serve as “a Light unto the nations” while being hostile to the New Testament and contemptuous of Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount: “Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth” (Mt. 5:5) – a theme which also appears in the Hebrew Bible: “But the meek will inherit the land and enjoy peace and prosperity” (Ps. 37:11). For Ben-Gurion, who used the Hebrew Bible highly selectively and instrumentally, the “meek” were closely associated with Diaspora Jews. Also, unlike the authors of Psalms, Isaiah or the gospels, Ben-Gurion “did not believe in God” or the Jewish theology of the Bible; but he did believe that the Jews (or more precisely Ashkenazi Jews) were an elite group. In his hierarchical world of elites and masses the European Zionist settlers were the elite of the “Jewish people”. Ashkenazi Ben-Gurion (as well as General Moshe Dayan) was highly sceptical about the “military capability” of the Mizrahi-Arabic speaking Jews and completely dismissive of Arab and Islamic culture. He had emigrated from Russia to Palestine in 1906, studied in Istanbul, lived for three decades in mandatory Palestine and spoke Russian, Turkish, English and Hebrew – but he never bothered to learn Arabic.

In sociological and cultural theories, as well as in the work of Antonio Gramsci, a hegemonic elite is a small group of people who control a disproportionate amount of power and/or economic resources or cultural dominant. Ben-Gurion’s doctrine of the Jews as a dominant “cultural elite” was a secularized version of “God’s chosen people” and “God gave the land to the Jews”. For Ben-Gurion it was not the League of Nations or the United Nations or the British Empire that legitimized Zionism and Zionist colonization of Palestine – it was the “biblical covenant” between the Jewish people and the Almighty himself that had bestowed superior “Jewish rights” to Palestine. The Hebrew Bible, for Ben-Gurion, served as a divine legal document, a land registry “title-deed” for Jewish property. From its earliest days towards the end of the nineteenth century secular Jewish Zionism embraced a secularizing version of Christian (post-Reformation) Protestant fundamentalist doctrine of the “promised land” traditions of the Bible and exclusive, superior Jewish ownership. This doctrine was premised on the notion that the Hebrew Bible provides for the Jews’ divine sacrosanct “title-deed to resettle” Palestine and dislodge its indigenous inhabitants, and gives moral legitimacy to the establishment of the State of Israel and its current policies towards the indigenous Palestinians. The nationalized and racialized European doctrine, which viewed the Jews in racial terms, was not only central to Zionist politics in the late nineteenth century but was ever pervasive within mainstream Christian theology and biblical scholarship (Prior, 1999: 70). The link between Zionist myth-making, actual Zionist settler-colonization and the effective deployment of the Bible is reflected in the claim of Ben-Gurion that the Bible was the Jewish race’s sacrosanct title-deed to Palestine, “with a genealogy of 3,500 years” (Ben-Gurion 1954: 100). A leading advocate of the historicization of the Bible, Ben-Gurion wrote: “The message of the Chosen People makes sense in secular, nationalist and historical terms ... The Jews can be considered a self-chosen people ... Though I reject theology,

the single most important book in my life is the Bible” (Ben-Gurion, 1970:120–25).

Furthermore, eminently a realist, Ben-Gurion in the 1930s repeatedly argued that the new Jewish state can only be created and secured not by the Sermon on the Mount (which is a collection of moral sayings and teachings of Jesus, including “love your neighbour” found in the Gospel of Matthew) but by sub-machine guns.

The colonial functionality and instrumentality of the biblical text in both Christian and Jewish Zionist writings was illustrated by Israel’s leading novelist Amos Oz in an article in the Hebrew daily *Davar* in 1967:

Some of our first arrivals thought that, by right, the Arabs should return to the desert and give the land back to its owners, and, if not, that they (the Zionists) should “arise and inherit” like those who conquered Canaan in storm: “A melody of blood and fire ... Climb the mountain, crush the plain. All you see – inherit... and conquer the land by the strength of your arm ...”

(Oz, 1988: 21, quoting Tchernichovsky, “I Have a Tune”)

Born in mandatory Palestine in 1939 as Amos Klausner, to a family of Zionist immigrants from eastern Europe, Oz himself grew up in mandatory Palestine in Kerem Avraham (“Abraham’s Vineyard”), a neighbourhood outside the walls of the Old City of Jerusalem.

Kerem Avraham began as a small British colony founded in 1855 by the highly influential British Consul in Jerusalem, James Finn, and his wife, Elizabeth Anne Finn, was the daughter of a noted English Hebrew scholar and herself spoke Hebrew. As we shall see below, James Finn, who served in Ottoman Jerusalem from 1846 to 1863, reigned supreme in the city and he became a central figure in the mid-nineteenth century European penetration of Palestine. He also combined his British diplomatic job with Christian missionary activities. His activities paved the way to the biblical explorations and military mapping of Palestine by officers of the British Royal Engineering Corp on behalf of the London-based Palestine Exploration Fund. These systematic mapping and surveying projects, which reached their peak with the British Ordnance Survey of Western Palestine between 1871 and 1877, were largely strategic. The sacredness of Palestine was not a sufficiently convincing motive for the British to organize and finance such surveys. The main motive for mapping the country as a whole was its strategic and geopolitical importance for the British Empire which was then engaged in the international struggles over the Middle East (Goren, 2002: 87–110). However, the surveys and mapping of the British Royal Engineering Corp in the 1870s (see below) led subsequently to the growth of proto-Jewish Zionism.

James Finn combined biblical “restorationist” Christian thinking and missionary activities with official British civil service. He and his wife Elizabeth were originally members of the London Society for Promoting Christianity Amongst the Jews. Also crucially, he was also a close associate of Anthony Ashley Cooper, 7th Earl of Shaftesbury, a prominent Tory MP, a social reformer, a mellinialist Christian and a key contributor to Victorian Christian Zionism and back-to-the-Bible revivalism. Shaftesbury was driven by Victorian imperialism and Christian messianic prophecy. He argued that “Jewish restorationism” to Palestine would bring political and economic advantages to the British Empire and as a biblical prophecy would expedite the second coming of Jesus. In an article in the *Quarterly Review* (January 1839) Shaftesbury, who invented the myth “A land without people, for a people without a land” wrote:

The soil and climate of Palestine are singularly adapted to the growth of produce

required for the exigencies of Great Britain; the finest cotton may be obtained in almost unlimited abundance; silk and madder are the staple of the country, and olive oil is now, as it ever was, the very fatness of the land. Capital and skill are alone required: the presence of a British officer, and the increased security of property which his presence will confer, may invite them from these islands to the cultivation of Palestine; and the Jews, who will betake themselves to agriculture in no other land, having found, in the English consul (James Finn), a mediator between their people and the [Ottoman] Pacha, will probably return in yet greater numbers, and become once more the husbandmen of Judaea and Galilee.

(Cooper, 1839; see also Sokolow, 1919:124; Masalha, 2007: 95; Hyamson, 1918:127–64; 1939)²

With the support of foreign secretary Lord Palmerston, Shaftesbury began promoting Jewish restorationism in Victorian England in the 1830s. Shaftesbury was also instrumental in the setting up of the British Consulate in Jerusalem in 1839. The public activities of Shaftesbury, James Finn and their English “restorationist” followers – which preceded the founding of the European political Zionist movement by Theodor Herzl by nearly half a century – demonstrate clearly that “Zionism” began as a distinctly Christian Protestant movement, not a Jewish one.

In the early 1850s Finn had purchased from local Palestinians for £250 “Karm al-Khalil” Arabic for “al-Khalil Vineyard”. In the Arabo-Islamic tradition, *Ibrahim al-Khalil* means Abraham the friend’ and this signifies God’s close friendship with Abraham, hence renaming/Hebrewization/”exposure” of the “Hebraic origin” of the Arabic name to “Kerem Avraham” “Abraham Vineyard”. As we shall see in [chapter four](#), the Israeli biblical renaming (toponymy) project has its foundations in the de-Arabization activities of James Finn, the biblical mapping and explorations of the 1870s by members of the Palestine Exploration Fund in the 1870s and generally in the colonial renaming project of the nineteenth and early twentieth century.

Finn himself bought another piece of land in the Palestinian village of Artas, four kilometres southwest of Bethlehem, to establish a European farming colony which employed Jews (some converted to Anglican Christianity) on it. In search of the “roots” and “ancestors of the Scripture” since the late nineteenth century Artas has become the best documented and most photographed of all Palestinian village, studied and photographed by Western missionaries and Scripturalist scholars and anthropologists. The most famous of these was Swedish-speaking Finnish anthropologist Hilma Granqvist who lived in the Arab village in the 1920s as part of her research on the “women of the Hebrew Bible”.³ At the Jerusalem farming colony of Kerem Avraham Finn employed Jewish labourers to build houses and used the site as a training farm for Jews in modern agriculture. He also built a soap factory which produced soap sold to European tourists. The Artas colony was led by John Meshullam (1799–1878), a British-born Jew and a convert to Anglican Christianity, while the Kerem Avraham colony was managed by a Christian named Dunn – a Scottish and Irish name, and one of the most common names in Ireland, derived from the Gaelic Donn, or Dunne, meaning black or brown – who believed that he was descendant from the biblical tribe of Dan, hence the name Dunn.⁴ Prior to the establishment of Israel in 1948 and throughout the British mandatory period Palestine was overwhelmingly inhabited by indigenous Palestinian Arabs, who owned and cultivated much of the land. Until 1948 the actual Jewish legal “title deeds” to lands was around 6.6 per cent – both collective ownership by the Jewish National Fund and private Jewish ownership. This partly explains the

rhetoric of David Ben-Gurion and his insistence in his public message to European Christian and Jewish audiences that the Bible, not International Law or arrangements by the League of Nations, functions as a sacred land registry document, a divine legal “title-deed” for Jewish property in Palestine.

The creation of the Israeli state entailed turning the majority of Palestinians into refugees and exiles. However since 1948 Israel has denied any responsibility for the 1948 Palestine Nakba. The official Zionist narrative has been a classic case of mendacity and denial: denial of any wrongdoing, denial of the ethnic cleansing of Palestine, denial of the refugees’ right to return (in accordance with UN Resolution 194), denial of any moral responsibility or culpability for the creation of the Palestine refugees, and denial of restitution of property or reparations (Masalha, 2003). In 1969 Prime Minister Golda Meir denied the very existence of the Palestinian people: “There was no such thing as a Palestinian people ... It was not as though there was a Palestinian people considering itself as a Palestinian people and we came and threw them out and took their country away from them. They did not exist” (*Sunday Times* , 15 June 1969; *The Washington Post* , 16 June 1969; also Khalidi, 1992:17). Meir’s statement reflected decades of Zionist and Israeli land colonization policies and demographic discourses which were designed to foster a new collective and public memory based on the mega-narratives of Zionism: of “making the desert bloom”; of establishing settlements on unoccupied or virgin territories, “swamp lands” or “empty hills”; of “exile and return” to *Terra Nullius*: an empty, semi-desolate no-man’s land (Masalha, 1992, 1997), and a colonial legal concept that perceives the land as either unoccupied or semi-inhabited by backward indigenous peoples before the arrival of the European colonizers (Svirsky, 2012: 44–6) ... and of the “triumph of the few against the many”.

This book builds on my previous works: *Expulsion of the Palestinians: The Concept of “Transfer” in Zionist Political Thought 1882–1992* (1992), *A Land Without a People* (1997), *The Politics of Denial: Israel and the Palestinian Refugee Problem* (2003), *The Bible and Zionism: Invented Traditions, Archaeology and Post-Colonialism in Palestine-Israel* (2007) – works which have sought to situate the recent history of the indigenous people of Palestine at the centre of scholarly discourses on settler-colonization and ethnic cleansing studies. In particular, my work *The Bible and Zionism* has shown how archaeology and politics in Palestine-Israel are inextricably linked.

The deployment of the biblical story politically and academically and the evocation of the exploits of biblical heroes in support of European settler colonization is critical to secular Zionism (Masalha, 2007). Although liberal Israelis deny that the xenophobic land traditions of Exodus and Deuteronomy have any contemporary relevance to the fate of the Palestinian people, with the rise of messianic Jewish fundamentalism since 1967 the militant texts of the Hebrew Bible and the stories of Exodus and Joshua have found an explicit relevance in contemporary Israel. The dangers of the simplistic application of the Bible to the largely political conflict in the Holy Land can hardly be overstated. This book will explore this and other dangers involved in the task of interpreting the text in the xenophobic political context of Palestine-Israel.

The book of Joshua and other militant texts, which evoke the exploits of “biblical Israelites” has been deployed in support of secular Zionist settler colonization in Palestine. Shaul Tchernichovsky (1875–1943), a Russian Jew and one of the most influential Hebrew poets, was greatly influenced by the muscular culture of both the Hebrew Bible and ancient Greece. In his Hebrew nationalist poems he contributed to the development of muscular Zionism by calling upon the Jewish youth to revive and remember the heroic battles of the “biblical zealots”. Tchernichovsky, celebrating the taking of Canaan by storm, as described in the book of Joshua,

glorified “blood and soil” and the imagined virility and primitive heroism of the Israelites, emerging (according to the Bible) from the desert under Joshua’s leadership, overrunning and conquering Canaan. Not surprisingly Tchernichovsky also had a major influence on Vladimir Jabotinsky’s “Iron Wall” doctrine of military might which would secure and protect Greater Israel (W. Khalidi, 2005: 813; see also Masalha, 2000; Shlaim, 2000).

Inspired by the biblical text and the legends of Israelites versus Philistines, including the story of Samson, Vladimir Jabotinsky was the leader of the Revisionist Betar movement, the forerunner of the present-day Likud, who developed his concept of muscular armed-to-teeth Zionism in his historical novel *Samson* (1930) – named after the legendary biblical hero who is said to have lived during the period when the “biblical Israelites” were oppressed by the power of the ancient Philistines. In the novel the final message masculine Samson sends to the Israelites consists of two words: “Iron” and “King” the two themes the Israelites were told to strive for so that they would become the lords of Canaan (cited in Bresheeth, 1989:123).

In the struggle with the indigenous Palestinians for land and territory the founding fathers of the Israeli state studied, revived and celebrated the heroic battles of the ancient zealots, and (real or imagined) fortified positions such as Massada and Betar. However despite its imagined biblical narratives and distinctly European nationalist rhetoric (“exile and return”), political Zionism followed the general objective of the great colonialist projects. However almost from the beginning of the “New Yishuv” (“ha-Yishuv ha-Hadash” literally “New Settlement” – a term which came into use in the 1880s) in Palestine, European Jewish settlers had to confront the reality that their project immediately clashed with the ethnic, religious and demographic realities of Palestine and precipitated conflict with the indigenous inhabitants of Palestine. In particular, Palestinian demography and the land issue were at the heart of the struggle between the Zionist settlers and indigenous Palestinians. Even in 1947, the indigenous Palestinians were the overwhelming majority in the country and owned much of the land.

Earlier in the early 1920s, shortly after the British arrival in Palestine, Palestinians began attacking Zionist colonies and Jewish communities in Jaffa, al-Khalil (Hebron) Jaffa and elsewhere. Vladimir Jabotinsky’s response was to develop his now-famous Iron Wall concept, which emphasized the ethno-racial purity, separateness and militarism of the Zionist Yishuv. Jabotinsky explains that the Zionist colonization of Palestine can only be carried out against the wishes of the indigenous Arab majority. In an article, originally in Russian, entitled: “The Iron Wall: We and the Arabs” (1923), Jabotinsky, conceiving of Zionism as a colonial enterprise, along the lines of the colonization of the Americas and Australia, cited the Book of Joshua and the conquest methods of the Spaniard colonists in Mexico and Peru to justify Zionist policies towards the indigenous Palestinians and the transformation of Palestine into the “Land of Israel”:

Every reader has some idea of the early history of other countries which have been settled [by Europeans] ... The inhabitants (no matter whether they are civilized or savages) have always put up a stubborn fight... The Spaniards who conquered Mexico and Peru, or our own ancestors in the days of Joshua ben Nun behaved, one might say, like plunderers ... Zionist colonization, even the most restricted, must either be terminated or carried out in defiance of the will of the native population. This colonization can, therefore, continue and develop only under the protection of a force independent of the local population – an iron wall which the native population cannot break through. This is, in toto, our policy towards the Arabs. To formulate it any other way would only be hypocrisy.

(Jabotinsky, 1923; also quoted in Brenner, 1983: 74–5;

During the British mandate the Zionists insisted on Palestine being referred to officially as the “biblical Land of Israel” but the most that the mandatory authorities were willing to concede was the use of the Hebrew acronym for *Eretz Yisrael* after the name Palestine on all official documents, currency, stamps and such (Rolef, 1993: 101). Throughout the mandatory period, the pragmatic and gradualist Zionist state-builders, led by David Ben-Gurion and his Mapai party (*Mifletet Po’alei Eretz Yisrael*, or the Land of Israel Workers Party) dominated the Yishuv’s politics, with right-wing territorial maximalists of Zionist Revisionism (who sought Jewish sovereignty over all of mandatory Palestine and Transjordan and whose traditional slogan, still officially valid, was, “Both banks of the Jordan – this is ours and that one is also”) winning only a minority of Jewish votes. In 1937, Ben-Gurion, an eminent realist and an archetypal pragmatic expansionist was willing to accept the British Royal (Peel) Commission partition proposal and the establishment of a Jewish state in part of the country, although throughout he remained strongly committed to a vision of Jewish sovereignty over all of Palestine as the ultimate goal of Zionism (B. Morris, 1987: 5). Ben-Gurion’s objective was of a Jewish state expanding into the whole of Palestine.

For David Ben-Gurion and other founding fathers of Zionism the invention of a tradition and the synthesizing of a nation meant that the Hebrew Bible, rather than being a religious document or repository of a theological claim to Palestine, was reinvented as a nationalized and racialized sacred text central to the modern foundational narratives of secular Zionism. As a leader of a movement of European secular nationalism, asserting mythical primordialist claims and the antiquity of Jewish nationalism (A. Smith, 1986, 1989: 340–67), Ben-Gurion – inspired by Eurocentric *völkisch* ideologies of the *übertölk* – viewed the Hebrew Bible as reliable historical sources. His view of the Hebrew Bible was functional: the biblical stories functioned as a mobilizing tool and as an “historical account” of Jews’ “title to the land” – a claim not necessarily borne out by archaeological findings. For Ben-Gurion it was not important whether the biblical stories were a positivist (objectivist), true record of actual historical events. It is not entirely clear whether Ben-Gurion assumed that the ancient events Israel was re-enacting had actually occurred. But as he explains: “It is not important whether the [biblical] story is a true record of an event or not. What is of importance is that this is what the Jews believed as far back as the period of the First Temple” (Pearlman, 1965: 227; also J. Rose, 2004: 9).

Ben-Gurion represented a radical secular Zionist revolution against Jewish traditionalism. His ambivalence towards both Jewish traditionalism and the religious city of Jerusalem in particular was expressed by the fact that having immigrated to Palestine in 1906, at age 20, he did not bother to visit the city until three years later (Wasserstein, 2002: 5). His nationalism was a form of secular (east European) nationalism and he sought to redefine the Hebrew Bible and traditional Judaism along similar lines. For him the Hebrew Bible was central to Jewish myth-making and Israel’s civic religion. Ben-Gurion tried to give political Zionism – and all Zionist politics and policies – a “historical character” linked to the Hebrew Bible. Ben-Gurion used the Bible literalistically and instrumentally as a nationalist tool to further Zionist objectives.

Like Ben-Gurion, many secular labour Zionists displayed from the outset a deeply ambivalent attitude towards Jerusalem. Although the movement’s name is derived from the word Zion – which was originally the name of a fortress in Jerusalem – Zionism reinvented the spiritual yearnings of generations of religious Jews for Jerusalem – which were expressed in the prayers and customs mourning Jerusalem’s destruction – and translated them into political action. Furthermore Zionism had ambitions to create a new Jewish society that would be different from

Jewish life in the Diaspora and did not see multi-religious and pluralistic Jerusalem as the appropriate place for the founding of such a new society. Not only was it full of aliens (native Arabs), but it was also inhabited by the peaceful “old Jewish Yishuv” whose members were part of the anti-Zionist ultra-orthodox community. It is no wonder, therefore, that the Zionists preferred to build the new (and pure) Jewish city of Tel Aviv on the Mediterranean coast, just outside the Palestinian city of Jaffa. Tel Aviv was founded in 1910 in a region which, according to the Bible, was ruled by the Philistines (not the “biblical Israelites”) from the twelfth century BCE onwards. It was named after a Babylonian city mentioned in Ezekiel (3:15) and chosen by Zionist leader Nahum Sokolow as the title of his Hebrew translation of Theodor Herzl’s futuristic Utopian novel, *Altneuland* (“*Old New Land*”) (1902; see also below). But the ethno-religious “purity” of the European Jewish Yishuv was best illustrated by the fact that during the mandatory period its Zionist leaders preferred to live in the ethnically exclusive (European-white) Tel Aviv rather than in multi-religious (“Oriental”) Jerusalem.

Those Zionist immigrants who chose to live in Jerusalem settled outside the historic city and built new Jewish neighbourhoods and the first Jewish university – the Hebrew University. Tel Aviv remained home to the Histadrut and all the Hebrew daily papers and while Zionist leaders of the Yishuv continued to swear by the name of Jerusalem, they did not live there and most of the Jewish immigrants to Palestine, about 80 per cent, settled along the Mediterranean coast, a region that (according to Avishai Margalit of the Hebrew University) had never been the historic homeland of the Jewish people (A. Margalit, 1991).

The key themes of the Zionist “revolution” followed closely the European ideologies of mid-late nineteenth century: the construction of grand historical narratives, the invention of new historical traditions and the construction of new cultural and national identities – new identities which sought to challenge the deeply ingrained religious values of society. Here the notion of the superman (*übermensch*) in Nietzsche’s doctrine was a crucial element in the way he constructs it as a foundation from which to attempt to undermine the deeply seated religious traditions of society - values which, Nietzsche thought, serve only to hamper human potential and the fulfilment of his (newly discovered) destiny. Political Zionism followed in the footsteps of its Nietzschean trajectories, by producing a new historical narrative with a sweeping reinterpretation of Jewish history from Antiquity to the present; by the invention of the new Hebrew superman, the *Sabra* (Zerubavel, 2002:115–44); and by obsessively focusing the invention of a new Jewish collective memory and identity.

Yet the notion that political Zionism expressed 2,000 years of yearning for Jewish political and religious self-determination is an invented tradition - invented in Europe in the nineteenth century following the rise of romantic nationalism and at the height of European colonization. Yet the “land of the Bible” or Palestine, was never a major centre for Judaism during the last 2,000 years. Although the Holy Land was central in the religious imagination of Jews, this was not translated into political, social, economical, demographic, cultural and intellectual realities. The first small-scale Zionist immigration to Palestine (*‘Aliya*) was in 1881–2, with most of the immigrants coming from eastern Europe. In all, nearly 35,000 Jewish immigrants came from eastern Europe to Palestine during the *First Aliyah*; almost half of them left the country within several years of their arrival, but some 15,000 established new rural settlements, and the rest moved to the towns. In comparison, from the early 1880s to the First World War nearly two million Jews immigrated from eastern Europe to United States. Prior to the *First Aliya*, however, the number of Jews living in the whole of Palestine was approximately 24,000 – most of them non-Zionist orthodox Jews living in Jerusalem – which amounted to less than 5 per cent of the

total population of Palestine (Chapman, 2002: 37).

Nevertheless, Zionists continue to talk about the “unbroken chain of Jewish presence” in Palestine, from the earliest times to the rise of Zionism in the late nineteenth century. Of course it is important politically for Zionist Israelis to predicate a constant and enduring Jewish presence in Palestine, and the city of Jerusalem in particular for two thousand years (Wasserstein, 2002: 2). Moreover in modern times the “land of the Bible” and other phrases related to both biblical and modern terminology have been invested with far-reaching historical, geo-political and ideological connotations in both Israeli rhetoric and western biblical scholarship (Whitelam, 1996: 40). The reconstruction of the past by Zionist authors has often reflected their own political and religious ideologies. Both Zionist authors and biblical scholars in the West have based the “historical claims” of modern Zionism to the “land of the Bible”/ *Eretz Yisrael* on the “religious narrative” of the twelve tribes that conquered and lived on the land during the (fictitious) Israelites’ pre-monarchical era; other Zionist claims have been based on the “biblical Davidic or Solomonic kingdoms” – whose historicity are highly questionable, see conclusion – and the subsequent southern and northern kingdoms of Judea and Israel, the early Second Temple period, the Hasmonean era, or the kingdom of Herod.⁵

Different Zionist leaders and intellectuals took different ingredients from the various books of the Hebrew Bible. The book of Joshua provided Ben-Gurion, Jabotinsky and muscular Zionism with the militaristic tradition of the Bible: of military conquest of the land and subjugation of the Canaanites and other ancient people that populated the “promised land” Both Ben-Gurion and Jabotinsky – each directly responsible for many of the founding myths of Zionism – were, in particular, highly suspicious of liberal democracy. Both embraced a form of militarist Jewish “nationalism” and both repeatedly invoked Joshua to justify Zionist attitudes towards the indigenous inhabitants of Palestine (Masalha, 1992: 24–5, 28–9). Ben-Gurion in addition (unlike Jabotinsky) embraced “state socialism” – which from the 1930s into the 1950s dominated first the Yishuv (the pre-1948 Jewish settlement in Palestine) and then the State of Israel. The doctrine of the “Iron Wall” (see below) was to form a central plank in the attitudes of the Yishuv settlers towards the Palestinian Arabs. Furthermore from 1929 onwards Ben-Gurion began using – albeit with a modified meaning – the Iron Wall approach Jabotinsky had coined in articles in the early 1920s. Thus in 1929, Ben-Gurion wrote of the need for “Iron Wall of [Zionist] workers’ settlements surrounding every Hebrew city and town, land and human bridge that would link isolated points” and which would be capable of enforcing the doctrine of exclusive “Hebrew labour” (*avoda ivrit*) and “Hebrew land” (*adama ivrit*) (*ibid.* : 24–5). The secular Zionist settlers’ emphasis was not on an imagined biblical identity but rather an invented, masculinized and militarized “New Hebrew Man” as the antithesis of the “despised” “effeminate” Diaspora Jew.

State power, “New Hebrew” language, “New Hebrew Man” new and exclusively Jewish “Hebrew City” (Tel Aviv), “New Yishuv” and military service all represented that muscular national identity. Although Ben-Gurion’s “state socialism” was denounced by Jabotinsky – who believed that the Bible was a superior text to the *Das Kapital* since it was based on capitalism and private enterprise (Shindler, 2002: 99) – Labour Zionism was in fact an amalgam form of ethno-*völkisch* nationalism. This invented tradition considered the Jews as a race and a biological group, and borrowed heavily from illiberal nationalisms in central and eastern Europe (Sternhell, 1998). Ben-Gurion’s obsessive advocacy of the ethnic cleansing of Palestine in the 1930s and 1940s (see below) was related to this nationalist rejection of both liberal forms of universalism and Marxism, along with individual rights and class struggle. Instead, it gave precedence to the

realization of a settler-colonial project: the establishment in Palestine of a mono-religious, settler colonial state. In this project, state socialism was deployed both as a useful mobilizing myth and an essential tool for collective (Jewish) control of the land. Although largely secular, Labour Zionism instrumentally emphasized Jewish religion and Jewish ethnicity, promoted the cult and mythologies of ancient history and “biblical battles” built up a powerful army, surrounded its ethnically exclusive Yishuv with an “Iron Wall” (Shlaim, 2000; Masalha, 2000) and waged a bitter struggle for political independence and territorial expansion throughout the land. Muscular “nationalist socialists” Zionism repudiated liberal individualism and was suspicious of bourgeois liberal democracy (Sternhell, 1998).

However, like other founding fathers of the State of Israel, who were secular or atheist Jews, Ben-Gurion made extensive use of “elect people-promised land” ideas and kept stressing the elitism and “uniqueness” of the Jewish people. He liked to invoke the biblical prophet Isaiah who enjoined the Jews to be “a light unto the nations”. But in contrast to Isaiah’s vision, Ben-Gurion’s Zionism was muscular, turning “ploughshares into swords” and, as prime minister in the 1950s and early 1960s, he presided over turning Israel into a nuclear state, armed to teeth with weapons of mass destruction. Ben-Gurion was also quick to put the ethnocentric concepts of “promised land-chosen people” to use for their political value, both as a means of attracting believing Jews to the Zionist cause and as a way of justifying the Zionist enterprise in Western eyes and the eyes of world Jewry (Gillespie, 2002). The relatively moderate Israeli leader Moshe Sharret, who had served as foreign minister and (for a short period) prime minister in the 1950s, had this to say about Ben-Gurion’s ethnocentric Zionism and messianic tendency: “[Ben-Gurion’s] constant stress on the uniqueness of the Jewish people is another aspect of his egocentrism – cultural egocentrism. The third aspect of a messianic mission *vis-à-vis* Israel and Jewry” (quoted in Shindler, 2002: 64).

Ben-Gurion also, and crucially, argued that he was fighting all Zionist battles with the help of the Hebrew Bible (Zameret, undated). Already in his first published work, in Yiddish, entitled: *Eretz-Yisrael: Past and Present* ([1918] 1980), that he co-authored with historian Yitzhak Ben-Tzvi – later to become the second president of Israel – he argues that the Jewish “return” to Palestine is actually a “repeat” of Joshua’s conquest of ancient Palestine (Zameret, undated). Ben-Gurion and Ben-Tzvi initially contemplated the idea of converting the Palestinian peasants into Judaism before settling (by the mid-1930s) on the concept of “transfer”: the displacement and exiling of the Palestinians. The 1948 war for Palestine drew Ben-Gurion and other commanders of the Haganah ever nearer to the biblical stories, as seen from the frequent references to biblical figures and biblical wars of conquest. Clearly the Book of Joshua was the book to which Ben-Gurion was most drawn. On more than one occasion Ben-Gurion pointed to an “unbroken line of continuity from the days of *Yehoshua bin Nun* [Joshua son of Nun] to the IDF” [Israel Defence Force] in and after 1948 (Zameret, undated). When he spoke of sweeping Jewish offensives in the 1948 war, he apparently did so in language evocative of the Book of Joshua. The Israeli army, he declared, had “struck the kings of Lod and Ramleh, the kings of Belt Naballa and Deir Tarif, the kings of Kola and Migdal Zedek” (cited by Lazare, 2002).

After Jabotinsky’s death in the United States in 1940, a Revisionist group around Abraham Stern broke with Betar Revisionism and created the Stern Gang, or Lehi (Fighters for the Freedom of Israel) whose political programme called for the setting up of a Jewish state from the Nile to the Euphrates and for the “transfer” (the Hebrew euphemism for ethnic cleansing) of the Palestinians to other countries in the Middle East (Masalha, 2000: 44; Shindler, 2002: 100). Stern, who constantly spoke of rebuilding of the “Third Temple” – and whose “Greater Israel”

and “Third Temple” thinking has inspired current Israeli extreme militant and messianic groups – and sought to synthesize a mixture of biblical militarism and messianic religiosity with an admiration for contemporary Italian fascism and with an anti-British military struggle in Palestine, adopted “Yair” as a *nom de guerre* after Elaazar Ben-Yair, who (according to one biblical tradition) had committed suicide at Massada rather than fall into the hands of the Romans or accept Roman hegemony (Shindler, 1995: 22–4; 2002:100).

In the struggle with the indigenous inhabitants of Palestine for land and territory, Ben-Gurion (Labour Zionism), Jabotinsky (Betar Zionism) and Stern (Stern Gang) studied, revived and celebrated the heroic (but rather mythological) battles of the ancient zealots, and biblical names such as Betar and Massada, those legendary small fortified positions which held out in desperate struggles against the Romans (Hans Kohn, quoted in W. Khalidi, 2005: 819); Jabotinsky’s “Iron Wall” doctrine, in particular, with its revival of militarist biblical traditions from Joshua to David and Samson, and its celebration of modern militarism, has formed a central plank in Zionist attitudes towards the indigenous inhabitants of Palestine, through the early mandatory period to the 1948 Palestinian catastrophe to the “Separation (apartheid) Wall” in the occupied West Bank.

Interestingly, however, the initial mobilization of biblical stories in favour of Zionism – and in particular the notion that the Hebrew Bible provides the Jews with a “title-deed to the land” – did not originate with Jewish Zionism; historically it was deeply rooted in the post-Reformation Protestant doctrine that Jewish Restoration to Palestine would lead to the fulfilment of biblical prophecies and the second coming of Christ. As this chapter shows, from the sixteenth century onwards Christian Zionism and the establishment of European settler colonies in Asia, Africa and the Americas were joined. However, Christian and Jewish Zionisms, originating in different ideological contexts, were also drawn to different ingredients in the Hebrew Bible to justify Zionism, the military conquest of Palestine and the imposition of the Zionist political agenda as expressed in the State of Israel.

Early British imperialist involvement in the affairs of Palestine was substantially influenced by the rise of Christian Zionism in Britain from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. This rise of Christian Zionism prepared the ground for the emergence of European Jewish Zionism in the late nineteenth century. Clearly Political (Jewish) Zionism, which was founded by Theodor Herzl in the 1890s, was inspired and directly influenced by its contemporary, Christian Zionism (Merkley, 1998:15–21). Ironically, however, Herzl’s Zionism was a basically secular movement, with non-religious and frequently anti-religious dispositions. Although the Bible was always in the background as a support, the Jewish state would not be a theocracy. In the late nineteenth century the Zionist programme was generally opposed by both wings of Judaism, Orthodox and Reform, as being anti-religious (by the Orthodox) and contrary to the universality of Judaism (by Reform Jewry). Moses Hess (1812–75), a leading precursor of Zionism, was typical: a secular German Jew and a socialist, he contributed to Marx’s “Communist Manifesto” (written in 1848) and was even credited with the term “religion as the opium of the masses”. Following the rise of romantic nationalism in Germany and Italy Hess, born in Bonn, became a Zionist. His booklet *Rome and Jerusalem: The Last National Question*, written in German and published in 1862, called for a Jewish national movement similar to the Italian *risorgimento*. Hess died in Paris although at his request was buried in the Jewish cemetery in Cologne. However, in 1961 his remains were transferred to Israel where they were buried in the Kinneret cemetery alongside other secular founding fathers of Labour Zionism such as Nahum Syrkin, Ber Borochov and Berl Katznelson.

Although many early Jewish Zionists were secular, socialists and atheists, they were quick to

put the “promised land-chosen people” ideology to use for its political value, both as a means of attracting believing Jews to their cause and as a way of justifying their colonial project in European Christian eyes. In the interests of gaining international support, the biblical stories were an attractive way of legitimizing the Zionist movement. This alliance between secular Jewish nationalists and Christian Zionists was mutually beneficial. Herzl himself was introduced to William Henry Hechler (1845–1931),⁶ the chaplain of the British embassy in Vienna, half German and a close associate of the Earl of Shaftesbury (Anthony Ashley Cooper) (1801–85). A dispensationalist millennialist and a leading British Christian Zionist, Shaftesbury had a remarkable influence on the Middle Eastern strategy of foreign minister (and later prime minister) Lord Palmerston (Merkley, 1998: 39–40), and who succeeded in persuading Palmerston to establish a British consulate in Jerusalem in 1838 as part of “an overall plan to facilitate the return”/“restoration” of Jews to Palestine (I. H. Anderson, 2005: 27). Shaftesbury also was one of the early leading British propagators of the myth of “a land without a people for a people without a land” of Palestine as *terra nullius*, “empty land”. Both Shaftesbury and Hechler were key figures in the British Christian Zionist lobby, a group that campaigned for the “restoration” of the Jews to Palestine and “rebuilding” the Jewish temple – all designed to expedite the Second Coming of the Messiah (Masalha, 2007). Shaftesbury had founded the Turkish Missions Aid Society (later it changed its name to the Bible Lands Missionary Aid Society) in 1854 and Hechler had also been tutor to Prince Ludwig, the heir to the Grand Duke Frederick of Baden and was happy to introduce Herzl to his former master and other diplomatic figures on the European scene (Vital, 1988: 75; Merkley, 1998:16–17).⁷

Although the term *Eretz Yisrael* is used occasionally in the Hebrew Bible (1 Sam. 13:19), it has carried only religious and spiritual connotations in diaspora Judaism. In fact the term was used widely only in the nineteenth century with the rise of secular Zionism in Europe and with the secularization and nationalization of this term by different Zionist groups (Shindler, 2002: 93). As a result different European Zionist camps drew on completely different sources to support their different scope and boundaries of the “biblical Land of Israel” (Shindler, 2002: 92–3). Furthermore, modern secular European Zionist definitions of the term *Eretz Yisrael* were largely based on economic and settler colonial factors such as good agriculture, access to water from the Litani and Jordan rivers and efficient transportation facilities rather than any imagined biblical boundaries of the “promised land” (Shindler, 2002: 96–7).

Furthermore, the concept of exclusive Jewish “rights” in the “land of the Bible” was never confined only to the territorial maximalists of Zionist Revisionism or Israel’s extreme right. Ben-Gurion’s chief aide during the mandatory period and Israel’s first foreign minister, the Ukraine-born Moshe Shertok, had this to say in 1914:

We have forgotten that we have not come to an empty land to inherit it, but we have come to conquer a country from people inhabiting it, that governs it by the virtue of its language and savage culture ... Recently, there has been appearing in our newspapers the clarification about ‘the mutual misunderstanding’ between us and the Arabs, about ‘common interests’ [and] about ‘the possibility of unity and peace between two fraternal peoples’ ... [But] we must not allow ourselves to be deluded by such illusive hopes ... for if we cease to look upon our land, the Land of Israel, as ours alone and we allow a partner into our estate – all content and meaning will be lost to our enterprise.

(Cited in B. Morris, 2000: 91)

Five years later, at the Paris Peace Conference, which opened in January 1919 to dispose of the territories captured from the defeated powers, Germany, Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire, Dr Chaim Weizmann (1874–1952), a Russian émigré chemist in Britain who led the Zionist Commission to Palestine that was to put forward Zionist political and territorial claims, called for the imposition of a British mandate over an enlarged Palestine extending north to the Litani River in what is now Lebanon and east to the Hijaz railway line, which is well east of the Jordan River. It was at that conference, too, that Weizmann called for a Palestine “as Jewish as England is English” (Litvinoff, 1983: 256–7).

FROM ASSIMILATION TO DISPOSSESSION AND ETHNIC CLEANSING

Several Zionist intellectuals and founding fathers – including Ber Borokhov (in 1905) Yitzhak Ben-Tzvi (in 1918) David Ben-Gurion (in 1917–18, and 1928) and Yisrael Belkind (in 1928) – initially advanced the idea of assimilation of the Palestinian peasants into the secular society of the Yishuv. This naive suggestion (of assimilating the Palestinian peasantry into a secular form of Judaism) was based on the notion that the Palestinian peasants might be the descendants of the “biblical Israelites” who had lived during the period of the Second Temple, beginning around the fifth century BCE, and who (according to Ben-Tzvi and Ben-Gurion) had survived the Romans’ “destruction” of the temple and had remained in Palestine. Those Jewish inhabitants had accepted Islam many generations later (A. Margalit, 1991). Both Ben-Gurion and Ben-Tzvi argued that if the rural Palestinian Arabs, in particular, were originally Jewish, this should facilitate the job of their re-Hebrewization (Belkind, 1928, 1969: 8; Ben-Gurion, 1917; Wiemer, 1983: 36; Misinai, 2007; Sand, 2009). In his 1917 Hebrew article “Clarifying the Origin of the [Palestinian] Peasants” Ben-Gurion wrote:

In the area of the Carmel and the Sharon Valley we encounter in many Fallahin villages, blonde hair and blue eyes and the outward appearance of their faces attest to their forefathers having come here many hundreds of years ago from northern Europe... but despite many mixed marriages, the vast majority of Fallahin and Moslems in the western Land of Israel, presents us with another race type and a complete ethnic unit and there is no doubt that in their veins flows much Jewish blood, the blood of those Jewish farmers, the masses who, in troubled times, chose to deny their faith as long as they would not be uprooted from their lands.

(Quoted in Misinai, 2007)

Subsequently Ben-Gurion’s close colleague, Ben-Tzvi, devoted much of his research activities to “exposing” the “Hebraic roots” of the names of Palestinian Arab villages and towns (Teveth, 1985).

However, in the 1930s, with the intensification of the Palestinian resistance to Zionism, the general endorsement of “transfer” by Ben-Gurion and other leaders of the Jewish Agency (in different forms: voluntary, agreed and compulsory) was designed to achieve two crucial objectives: (1) to clear the land for Jewish settlers and would-be immigrants, and (2) to establish an ethnocratic, mono-religious and fairly homogeneous Jewish state. During the same period key leaders of Labour Zionism, such as Ben-Gurion, then chairman of the Jewish Agency, strongly believed that Zionism would not succeed in setting up a homogenous Jewish state and fulfilling

its imperative of absorbing the expected influx of Jewish immigrants from Europe if the indigenous inhabitants were allowed to remain.

The term “ethnic cleansing” is a relatively recent addition to the English language. In the early 1990s Serbian war atrocities and Serbian efforts to force Bosnian Muslims from cities and villages throughout the Balkans lodged ethnic cleansing in the public mind and public discourses on the Balkan conflicts (White, 2009: 23; Bell-Flialkoff, 1993, 1999; Pappé, 2006; also McCarthy, 1996). In 1994, the *European Journal of International Law* published an article by Drazen Petrovic which attempted to construct a “methodology of ethnic cleaning” (Petrovic, 1994: 342–59).

The application of the methodology of ethnic cleansing was crucial for the establishment and consolidation of a relatively homogeneous ethnocratic state in Palestine. This has to do with the massive Palestinian demography and the land ownership which were always at the heart of the struggle between the European Zionist settlers, who sought to create an exclusive Jewish state in Palestine, and the indigenous inhabitants of the land who resisted the Zionist design to dispossess and disinherit them. From the beginning of the Zionist settlement in Palestine, the east European Jewish settlers had to confront the reality that their project immediately clashed with the ethnic, religious and demographic realities of Palestine and precipitated conflict with the indigenous inhabitants. The application of the methodology of ethnic cleansing was central for the establishment of an ethnocratic Jewish state in Palestine.

In the modern period mapping and cartography has been a major tool of power, colonization and enforcement of European imperial domains. In the course of the 1948 Palestine war and immediate post-1948 period the very name “Palestine” was wiped off the map and official world cartography. Its replacement by “Israel” through rhetorical politicide and scholarly silence, was internationally acclaimed. Only recently have the terms “Israel and the Palestinian territories” and “Israel-Palestine” been resurrected in the West. In his book *Politicide: Ariel Sharon’s War Against the Palestinians*, Israeli sociologist Baruch Kimmerling defined the “politicide” of the Palestinian people as the gradual but systematic attempt to cause their annihilation as an independent political and social entity: “the dissolution of the Palestinian people’s existence as a legitimate social, political and economic entity”. Politicide, Kimmerling asserted, has been present throughout Zionism’s struggle with the Palestinians before, during and after the 1948 Nakba. Politicide also epitomized the settler-colonial policies and actions of General Ariel Sharon against the Palestinians. Kimmerling writes:

The Israeli state, like many other immigrant-settler societies, was born in sin, on the ruins of another culture, one which suffered politicide and a partial ethnic cleansing, even though the new state did not succeed in annihilating the rival aboriginal culture as many other immigrant-settler societies have done.

(Kimmerling, 2003: 214–15)

As [Chapter 1](#) shows, for decades Zionists themselves used terms such as “colonization” (*hityashvut*) to describe their project in Palestine – a project that resulted in the creation of a state in 1948 by the destruction of a country. 1948 saw not only the establishment of a settler state on 78 per cent of mandatory Palestine, but also the destruction of historic Palestine and the ethnic cleansing of the Palestinians. The dismantling of Palestinian society was carried out as an integral part of the infamous Plan Dalet, one of whose prime objectives was the destruction of Palestinian towns and villages (Masalha, 1992; Pappé, 2006: 128; see also W. Khalidi, 1988: 3–37). This plan was accompanied by a series of atrocities, of which the massacre of Dayr Yasin in

April 1948 was the most notorious. From the territory occupied by Israel in 1948–9, about 90 per cent of the Palestinians were driven out – many by psychological warfare and/or military pressure and a large number at gunpoint. The 1948 war provided the opportunity for the creation of an enlarged Jewish state on most of historic Palestine. It concentrated Zionist minds and provided the security, military-strategic and immigrant-settler demographic explanations and justifications for “purging” the Jewish state. The standard Zionist solution for the indigenous inhabitants of the land was predicated on the claim for monopolized Jewish ownership and Zionist sovereignty of the “land of the Bible” (Masalha, 1997). As [chapters one](#) , [two](#) and [three](#) show, much of the Palestinian material culture, landscape, toponymy and geography, which had survived the Latin Crusades, were obliterated (blown up, bombed and bulldozed) by the Israeli state – a state created in the name of the Hebrew Bible by a New Hebrew Man and his European settler-colonial community (the Yishuv) that immigrated into Palestine in the period between 1882 and 1948. The Israeli state first took over the land of the 750,000 refugees, who were barred from returning; Jewish immigrants were settled in homes and neighbourhoods belonging to Palestinian refugees. In order to present European settler-colonization as a continuation of an ancient Jewish ownership of the land, the historic Arabic names of geographical locations were replaced by newly coined modern Hebrew names whose Ashkenazi pronunciation was influenced by varieties of East European languages as well as by the indigenous Palestinian Arabic names. Some of these Ashkenazi sounding names resembled names mentioned in the Hebrew Bible. ⁸

During the mandatory period Ben-Gurion was fixated by the book of Joshua and its conquest narrative. As we shall see in the conclusion, the archaeological evidence shows the conquest narrative of Joshua to be completely mythical. By 1948 Ben-Gurion was arguing for an “unbroken line of continuity” from the (mythical) days of Joshua to the recently formed Israeli army. This mythical continuum between the days of Joshua and modern Israel was meant to convey the idea that the land can only yield up its produce by the extraordinary effort of the “returning” Jewish settlers, Zionist pioneers, Israel’s genius and the rise of the masculine New Hebrew Man (the mythical *Sabra*) as a Man of Iron and science. The European supremacist claims that only under Jewish settler cultivation (and the “impregnation” of a “virgin” territory or a “land without people”) did Palestine become a productive country, that only Israel can make the land (and desert) bloom, and that most Palestinians arrived in the area only within the past century have long been part of the Zionist justification for Jewish immigration to Palestine, the founding of the state of Israel, its territorial expansion and the dispossession of the Palestinians (Masalha, 2007; Whitlam, 1996:40–46).

The invention and mobilization of the biblical conquest stories – and the myth that the Hebrew Bible provides for the Zionists’ sacrosanct “title-deed” to the land of Palestine signed by God – became a key tool in Zionist settler-colonial and ethnic cleansing policies Palestine. The myth of Jewish “return” after two thousand years of exile and the deep-seated inclination among Zionists to see Palestine as a country without its indigenous inhabitants (the infamous Zionist slogan “a land without a people for a people without a land”) were always potent rallying calls for Zionist colonization of Palestine (Masalha, 2007).

THE 1948 PALESTINE NAKBA AND DISINHERITING THE PALESTINIANS

The 1948 Palestine Nakba is the turning point in the modern history of Palestine: that year over

500 villages (W. Khalidi, 1992: xvii–xx; Abu-Sitta, 1998: 71; see also Pappé, 2006: xiii)⁹ and towns and a whole country and its people disappeared from international maps and dictionaries. This sudden shattering of Palestinian society (Kamen, 1987: 453–95; Masalha 1992, 2003, 2005, 2012) is what made the Nakba a key date in the history of the Palestinian people – a year of traumatic rupture in the continuity of historical space and time in Palestinian history (Masalha, 2005; Sa’di and Abu-Lughod, 2007; Matar, 2011: 12):

A society that had existed as far as human memory can go back disappeared during a few months; the homeland, the place of residence, the land – a major source of wealth, dignity and influence – and the physical and cultural environment, the validity and endurance of which Palestinians had never questioned, turned out to be most insecure.

(Sa’di, 2005: 7–26)

Subsequently much of the Arab material culture, landscape, toponymy and geography, which had survived the Latin Crusades, were obliterated by the Israeli state – a state created in the name of the Hebrew Bible by a European settler-colonial community that immigrated into Palestine in the period between 1882 and 1948. The Israeli state first took over the land of the 750,000 refugees, who were barred from returning; Jewish immigrants were settled in homes and neighbourhoods belonging to Palestinian refugees. In an effort to present European settler-colonization as a continuation of an ancient Jewish ownership of the “land of the Bible” the historic Arabic names of geographical sites were deleted from the Israeli map.

Territorial expansion was always a driving force behind these European settler-colonial societies. In Palestine land, demography and water were (and still are) at the heart of the struggle between the Zionist settlers and the indigenous Palestinians. For the Zionist settlers, who is “returning” after 2000 years “to redeem the land of the Bible” the indigenous inhabitants of Palestine earmarked for dispossession were usually invisible. They are simultaneously divested of their human reality and national existence and classed as a non-people. As demonstrated in two of my books (*Expulsion of the Palestinians: The Concept of “Transfer” in Zionist Political Thought 1882–1948* and *A Land Without a People*), which in part were based on Hebrew and Israeli archival sources, the Zionist quest for land and demography underpinned the Zionist concept of “transfer” in the pre-1948 period. In a sense, Zionism’s long-lasting battle against the native Palestinians was a battle for “more land and less Arabs”. This battle essentially was dictated by Zionism’s fundamentals: the “ingathering” of the world’s Jews in Palestine, the acquisition and conquest of land, and the establishment of a “state for the Jews” – who mostly had yet to arrive in Palestine – at the expense of the would-be displaced and “transferred” Palestinians.

From the early 1930s onwards a series of specific plans, generally involving Transjordan, Syria and Iraq, were produced by the Yishuv’s “transfer committees” and senior officials. In 1930, against the background of the 1929 disturbances in Palestine, Weizmann, then president of both the World Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency Executive, actively began promoting ideas of Arab “transfer” in private discussions with British officials and ministers. He presented the colonial secretary, Lord Passfield, with an official, albeit secret, proposal for the transfer of Palestinian peasants to Transjordan whereby a loan of one million Palestinian pounds would be raised from Jewish financial sources for the resettlement operation. Lord Passfield rejected the proposal. However, the justification Weizmann used in its defence formed the basis of subsequent Zionist transfer arguments. Weizmann asserted that there was nothing immoral about the ethnic cleansing of the land; that the expulsion of Greek Orthodox and Muslim

(“Turkish”) populations (“population exchange”) in the early 1920s provided a precedent for a similar measure regarding the Palestinians (Masalha, 1992).

From the mid-1930s the Yishuv leadership became obsessed with the “transfer solution”. Advocates of “transfer” in the pre-1948 period asserted, often privately, that there was nothing immoral about these proposals; that the twentieth century’s ethnic cleansing of population (of Greeks and Turks, Indians and Pakistanis, Germans) and other Europeans provided a precedent for similar measures *vis-à-vis* the Palestinian Arabs; that the uprooting and removal of the Palestinians to Arab countries would constitute a mere relocation from one district to another; that the Palestinians would have no difficulties in accepting Jordan, Syria or Iraq as their homeland; that the Palestinian Arabs had little emotional attachment and few real ties to the particular soil in Palestine and would be just as content outside the “Land of Israel”; that the Palestinian Arabs were marginal to the Arab nation and their problems might be facilitated by a “benevolent” and “humanitarian” policy of “helping people to leave” Such assertions were crucial to legitimize Zionism’s denial of the Palestinian Arabs’ right to self-determination in Palestine before 1948. Supporters of removal asserted that the Palestinians were not a distinct people but merely “Arabs” an “Arab population” that happened to reside in the land of Israel. Closely linked to this idea of the non-existence of the Palestinians as a nation and their alienness and non-attachment to the particular soil of Palestine was the idea of their belonging to an Arab nation with vast territories and many countries. As Ben-Gurion put it in 1929, “Jerusalem is not the same thing to the Arabs as it is to the Jews. The Arab people inhabit many great lands” (Teveth, 1985: 39). After all, if the Palestinians did not constitute a distinct separate nation and were not an integral part of the country and were without historical ties to it, then they could be transferred to other Arab countries without undue prejudice (Masalha, 1992).

Abundant references to the Palestinian population in early Zionist texts show clearly that from the beginning of the Zionist settlement in Palestine, the Palestinian Arabs were far from being an unseen or hidden presence. Despite their propaganda of a backward, underpopulated land; of Palestine’s cultural and civilizational “barrenness”; and of the making of “the desert bloom” – slogans designed for external consumption – the Zionists from the outset were well aware that not only were there people on the land, but that they were there in large numbers. Zangwill, who had visited Palestine in 1897 and come face-to-face with the demographic reality of the country, himself acknowledged in a 1905 speech to a Zionist group in Manchester that “Palestine proper had already its inhabitants. The pashalik [district] of Jerusalem is already twice as thickly populated as the United States, having fifty-two souls to the square mile, and not 25 percent of them Jews” (Zangwill, 1937: 210).

The archival and documentary evidence shows that in the pre-1948 period, “transfer”/ethnic cleansing was embraced by the highest levels of Zionist leadership, representing almost the entire political spectrum. Nearly all the founding fathers of the Israeli state advocated transfer in one form or another, including Theodor Herzl, Leon Motzkin, Nahman Syrkin, Menahem Ussishkin, Chaim Weizmann, David Ben-Gurion, Yitzhak Tabenkin, Avraham Granovsky, Israel Zangwill, Yitzhak Ben-Tzvi, Pinhas Rutenberg, Aaron Aaronson, Vladimir Jabotinsky and Berl Katznelson (Masalha, 1992). Supporters of “voluntary” removal included Arthur Ruppin, a co-founder of Brit Shalom, a movement advocating bi-nationalism and equal rights for Arabs and Jews; moderate leaders of Mapai (later the Labour party) such as Moshe Shertok and Eli’ezer Kaplan, Israel’s first finance minister; and leaders of the Histadrut (Hebrew Labour Federation) such as Golda Meyerson (later Meir) and David Remez (Masalha, 1992).

During the British mandatory period the leaders and senior executives of the Jewish National

Fund, including Russian-born Menahem Ussishkin (1863–1941) and Ukrainian-born Yosef Weitz (1890–1972), Director of its Land Settlement Department and Afforestation Department, were among the most consistent and obsessive advocates of the ethnic cleansing of the Palestinians. Weitz played a key role not only in the mass expulsion of the 1948 Nakba. He – who in the 1950s was terrified by the spectre of Palestinian refugee return to their villages and towns – presided over the Jewish National Fund (JNF)-orchestrated memocide of the Nakba and the JNF forestation policies designed to cover the traces of the hundreds of Palestinian villages destroyed in 1948.

For the deeply secular leaders of the JNF (in Hebrew: *Keren Kayemet L'Yisrael*, literally, the “Perpetual Fund for Israel”) the Bible provided Zionism with the moral to dislocate and displace the indigenous Palestinian Arabs. For instance, Menahem Ussishkin, an atheist Zionist leader, constantly invoked the Hebrew Bible in support of Jewish “resettlement” in Palestine. Ussishkin, a Russian Jew and one of the leading figures of the Yishuv, long the chairman of the JNF and a member of the Jewish Agency Executive, openly called for the “transfer” of the Palestinians to other parts of the Middle East.

Eleven years earlier, in an address to the representatives of the Western powers at the Versailles Peace conference in February 1919, Ussishkin had this to say:

I stand here before you ... in order to put forward the historic demand of the Jewish people: for our return to our own borders; for the restoration to the Jews of the land that was promised to them four thousand years ago by the Power Above ... That country was forcibly taken from the Jewish people 1800 years ago by the Romans ... And now I ... come ... to you who serve both politically and culturally as the heirs to the Romans and make my demand to you. Restore that historic robbery to us.

(Quoted in Shindler, 2002: 97)

Ussishkin’s colleague, Yosef Weitz, later became head of the Israeli government’s official Transfer Committee of 1948 (B. Morris, 1986: 549–50). The first director of the JNF’s Land Settlement Department, Weitz, a quintessential labour Zionist functionary (and a prolific diarist), who was at the centre of Zionist land-purchasing activities for decades, helped conceive and orchestrate the ethnic cleansing of the Palestinians in 1948. His youngest son, Yehiam, was killed in a Palmah attack on 16 June 1946 (A. Tal, 2002: 82). Weitz’s practical settlement activities and intimate knowledge of and involvement in land purchase made him sharply aware of its limitations. As late as 1947, after half a century of tireless efforts, the collective holdings of the JNF – which constituted about half of the Yishuv total – amounted to a mere 3.5 per cent of the land area of Palestine. A summary of Weitz’s political beliefs is provided by his diary entry for 20 December 1940:

Amongst ourselves it must be clear that there is no room for both peoples in this country ... After the Arabs are transferred, the country will be wide open for us; with the Arabs staying the country will remain narrow and restricted ... There is no room for compromise on this point ... land purchasing ... will not bring about the state ... The only way is to transfer the Arabs from here to neighbouring countries, all of them, except perhaps Bethlehem, Nazareth, and Old Jerusalem. Not a single village or a single tribe must be left. And the transfer must be done through their absorption in Iraq and Syria and even in Transjordan. For that goal, money will be found – even a lot of money. And only then will the country be able to absorb millions of Jews ... there is

no other solution. (Weitz, 1940: 1090–91)

A countryside tour in the summer of 1941 took Weitz to a region in central Palestine. He recorded in his diary seeing the beautifully tilled Palestinian gardens of fruit trees, such as olives, grapes and figs and the cultivated fields of maize and sesame:

large [Arab] villages crowded in population and surrounded by cultivated land growing olives, grapes, figs, sesame, and maize fields ... Would we be able to maintain scattered [Jewish] settlements among these existing [Arab] villages that will always be larger than ours? And is there any possibility of buying their [land]? ... and once again I hear that voice inside me called: *evacuate this country* .

(Weitz, 1941: 1204; emphasis in the original)

Earlier, in March 1941 Weitz wrote in his diary after, touring Jewish settlements in the Esdraelon Valley (Marj Ibn ‘Amer): “The complete evacuation of the country from its [Arab] inhabitants and handing it to the Jewish people is the answer” (*ibid* .: 1127).

Jewish settlement activity on its own would bring about a Jewish state in Palestine. A moral radical solution to Arab demographic reality, based on mass “transfer”/ethnic cleansing was needed. While the desire among the Zionist leadership to be rid of the “Arab demographic problem” remained constant until 1948, the extent of the preoccupation with, and the envisaged modalities of, transfer changed over the years according to circumstances. Thus, the wishful and rather naive belief in Zionism’s early years that the Palestinians could be “spirited across the border”, in Herzl’s words, or that they would simply “fold their tents and slip away”, to use Zangwill’s formulation, soon gave way to more realistic assessments. Between 1937 and 1948 extensive secret discussions of transfer were held in the Zionist movement’s highest bodies, including the Zionist Agency Executive, the Twentieth Zionist Congress, the World Convention of Ihud Po‘alei Tzion (the top forum of the dominant Zionist world labour movement), and various official and semi-official transfer committees. Many leading figures justified Arab removal politically and morally as the natural and logical continuation of Zionist colonization in Palestine. There was a general endorsement of the ethical legitimacy of transfer; the differences centred on the question of compulsory transfer and whether such a course would be practicable (in the late 1930s/early 1940s) without the support of the colonial power, Britain. From the mid-1930s onwards the transfer solution became central to the assessments of the Jewish Agency (then effectively the government of the Yishuv). The Jewish Agency produced a series of specific plans, generally involving Transjordan, Syria or Iraq. Some of these plans were drafted by three Transfer Committees. The first two committees, set up by the Yishuv leadership, operated between 1937 and 1944; the third was officially appointed by the Israeli cabinet in August 1948 (Masalha, 1992).

JEWISH DAVID VERSUS PALESTINIAN GOLIATH?

In the 1948 war the biblical conquest narrative of Joshua was also deployed politically by the Zionist leadership. Central to the official narrative of Israel the land was the “miraculously cleared” in 1948. In the post-Nakba period Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion and other Israeli leaders harnessed the biblical narrative effectively and invented several foundational myths, including the myth of “no expulsions”, the myth of “self defence” and the Haganah slogan of “purity of arms” (see below). The myth of “no expulsion” was echoed by the first United States

ambassador to Israel, James McDonald, who told of a conversation he had with the president of Israel, Chaim Weizmann, during which Weizmann spoke in “messianic” terms about the 1948 Palestinian exodus as a “miraculous simplification of Israel’s tasks”. McDonald said that not one of Israel’s “big three” – Weizmann, Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion and Foreign Minister Moshe Sharett – and no responsible Zionist leader had anticipated such a “miraculous clearing of the land (MacDonald, 1951: 160–61). The available evidence (based on mountains of Israeli archival documents), however, shows that the big three had all enthusiastically endorsed the concept of “transferring” the Palestinians in the 1937–48 period and had anticipated the mass exodus of Palestinians in 1948 and the Nakba.

If the books of Joshua, Deuteronomy and Samuel have provided Zionism with the muscular, militaristic and violent dimensions of the conquest of the land and elimination of its indigenous people, the Book of Judges has given Zionism another militarist tradition, the “holy war” stories associated with the (real or imagined) struggle against the Philistines, and with the story of Samson and Delilah (Judg. 16). The Zionist tactics in the 1948 war against the Palestinians were evidently inspired by the narrative of Judge Samson’s “sacred war” against the Philistines, who occupied the southern coastal cities of Canaan, including Gaza. The Philistines – a highly sophisticated people who occupied the southern coast of Canaan at the beginning of the Iron Age (c .1175 BCE), and who, according to the Bible, ruled five powerful city-states (the “Philistine Pentapolis”): Gaza, Askelon, Ashdod, Ekron and Gath (Niesiolowski-Spanò, 2011: 38) – have, for centuries suffered under the weight of their relentlessly negative portrayal in the books and narratives of the Hebrew Bible. From Goliath to Delilah, they have personified the intrinsically evil Other in the burgeoning narrative myth of the nation of Israel (McDonagh, 2004: 93–111). In the Hebrew Bible the Philistines were constructed as a typical ideological scapegoat (*ibid* .: 93–111). Biblical prejudices towards and even hatred of them survived in the derogatory meaning of the modern term: “a *philistine* is a person ignorant of, or smugly hostile to, culture” (Eban, 1984: 45; Rose, 2004: 17).

Inspired by the biblical stories, in the 1948 war for Palestine the Israeli army created “Samson’s Foxes” (*Shu’alei Shimshon*) as a Jewish special battalion. The battalion’s name is derived from the biblical legend which describes Samson’s war against the Philistines; Samson caught three hundred foxes and attached torches to their tails, leaving the animals to run through the fields of the Philistine, burning all in their wake. Also revealing is the fact that the fox logo of the Israeli Army’s Southern Command is also derived from the same Israelites *versus* Philistines legend; Israel has also erected a giant statue of Samson in the centre of coastal Jewish city of Jewish Ashdon (of the five cities of the Philistines), 23 miles from Gaza. The symbolism and the political use of the Old Testament by a very powerful secular-nationalist army are unmistakable: they are designed to instill the conviction that Israel’s wars against the Palestinians are a continuation of the Israelites’ (real or imagined) victorious wars against the ancient Philistines.

Commanded by Tzvi Tzur, the Jeep-mounted assault battalion of Samson’s Foxes was part of the 54th Battalion of Givati Brigade and took part in various battles in the coastal region and the Naqab/Negev. Givati operations included “Operation Pleshet” (“Operation Philistia”), “Operation Barak”, named after the biblical story of the defeat of the Canaanites under the prophetic leadership of Deborah and the military leadership of Barak, and *Mivtza Bi’ur Hametz* (“Operation Passover Cleaning”). Members of the Samson’s Foxes battalion, often dressed as Arabs, took part in poisoning the water wells of Palestinian Bedouins in the Negev and the burning of their fields, all of which action was designed to clear Palestinians out. A

reconnaissance battalion of the same name was established by the Israeli army during the second Palestinian uprising (Intifada) in 2002. Most of its activities have remained strictly confidential, though it is known to operate under the Israeli army Gaza command.

The biblical story of the despised “little David” (Israelite) versus the heavily armed monstrous giant Goliath (Philistine) (1 Sam. 17:1–18:5) has been explored by many authors (e.g. Esler, 2011: 180–215; McDonagh, 2004: 93–111). Utilizing the biblical story, in the official Zionist rendition of the 1948 war the events are also presented as a battle between a “weak Jewish David” and a “powerful Arab Goliath”. As we shall see below, the Israeli “new historians”, including Avi Shlaim, Ilan Pappé and Simha Flapan, rejected the 1948 myth of David and Goliath. Benny Morris concluded in 1988: “The stronger side won” (B. Morris, 1988: 21, 1987: 20–21). Central to key Zionist narratives in Israeli culture is the idea that depicts the Israel–Palestine conflict as a “war of the few against the many”. Since the early twentieth century Zionist historiography has based this narrative of the “few against the many” on the biblical story of Joshua’s conquest of Canaan, while mainstream Israeli historians continue to portray the 1948 war as an unequal struggle between a “Jewish David” and an “Arab Goliath”, and as a desperate, heroic and ultimately successful Jewish struggle against overwhelming odds (e.g. Shlaim, 2004). The European Zionist settlers brought with them in Palestine the “few against the many” narrative – a widespread European cultural myth, which appeared in many variations, including the American western cowboy variation of the early twentieth century (Gertz, 2000: 5). Turning the Jewish faith into secular ideology, Israeli historians and authors have adopted reinterpreted biblical sources and myths and have mobilized them in support of post-1948 Israeli objectives (*ibid.* : 5). The few, who overcame the many by virtue of their courage and absolute conviction, were those European Zionist settlers who emulated the fighters of ancient Israel, while the many were those Palestinians and Arabs who were the embodiment of various ancient oppressors. The Zionist struggle against the indigenous Palestinians was thus portrayed as a modern re-enactment of ancient biblical battles, including David’s slaying of Goliath, the Hasmonean (Maccabean) uprising against ancient Greece, and the Jewish wars against the Romans, with the zealots’ last stand at Masada in 73 ce and the revolt of Bar-Kokhba (Aramaic for “son of the star”) 67 years later against the Roman Empire (*ibid.* : 5).

While the “Jewish David” and “Palestinian Goliath” version of the Israel-Palestine conflict continues to gain hegemony in the Western media, since the late 1980s, however, many of the myths that have come to surround the birth of Israel have been challenged by revisionist Israeli historians including Flapan (1987), B. Morris (1987), Pappé (1992), Shlaim (1988, 2000) and Rogan and Shlaim (2001). Furthermore the new and recent historiography of Palestine–Israel has shown that the 1948 Palestinian catastrophe was the culmination of over half a century of often secret Zionist plans and, ultimately, brute force. The extensive evidence shows a strong correlation between “transfer” discussions, their practical application in 1948 and the Palestinian Nakba. The primary responsibility for the ethnic cleansing of three-quarters of a million Palestinian refugees in 1948 lies with the Zionist-Jewish leadership, not least David Ben-Gurion. The work of revisionist Israeli historians contributed to demolishing some of the long-held Israeli and Western misconceptions surrounding Israel’s birth. Containing remarkable revelations based on Hebrew archival material, their studies throw new light on the conduct of the Labour Zionist founding fathers of the Israeli state.

The Israeli revisionist historiography shows that in reality throughout the 1948 war, the Israeli army outnumbered all the Arab forces, regular and irregular, operating in the Palestine theatre. Estimates vary, but the best estimates suggest that on 15 May 1948 Israel fielded 35,000 troops

whereas the Arabs fielded 20,000–25,000 (Shlaim, 2004). Moreover during the war imported arms from the Eastern bloc: artillery, tanks, aircraft, decisively tipped the military balance in favour of Israel. During the second half of 1948 the Israelis not only outnumbered but also outgunned their opponents. While “the Arab coalition facing Israel in 1948 was one of the most deeply divided, disorganised, and ramshackle coalitions in the history of warfare, the final outcome of the war was not a miracle but a reflection of the underlying Arab–Israeli military balance” (*ibid*). Furthermore, since 1948 the Arab–Israeli military imbalance has been illustrated by the fact that Israel (with US backing) has developed the fourth most powerful army in the world and has become the only nuclear power in the region.

In the middle of the war, in May, the Zionist leadership issued the “Declaration of Independence” which stated: “the Land of Israel was the birthplace of the Jewish people. Here their spiritual, religious and national identity was formed. Here they ... created a culture of national and universal significance. Here they wrote and gave the Bible to the world”. While the State of Israel itself, according to the Declaration, was declared on the basis of “natural and historical rights” and on the basis of the November 1947 partition resolution of the UN, it was also supposed to be based “on the precepts of liberty, justice and peace”, as “taught by the Hebrew prophets”. The Declaration added that the state, “will uphold the full social and political equality of all its citizens, without distinction of race, creed or sex” – but not nationality (Kimmerling, 1999: 339–63).

The 1948 war is known in Israel as the “War of Liberation” (*Milhemet HaShihzur*) and “War of Independence” (*Milhemet Ha’Atzmaut*), as well as by the unmistakably messianic redemptionist name, “War of Resurrection” (*Milhemet HaKomemiyut*). This War of Resurrection, which led to the creation of the State of Israel on 78 per cent of historic Palestine (and not 55 per cent according to the UN partition resolution), resulted not in “equality for all citizens” “as taught by the Hebrew prophets” but in the destruction of much of Palestinian society, and much of the Arab landscape, in the name of the Bible, by the Zionist Yishuv, a European settler community immigrated into Palestine in the period between 1882 and 1948. The 1948 war was presented by the Zionist leadership in messianic terms as a “miraculous clearing of the land” and as another “War of Liberation” modelled on the Book of Joshua. The question is: from whom was the land “liberated”? From the British, whose colonial administration in Palestine after 1918 had alone made it possible for the growth of the European Jewish settlement against the will of the overwhelming majority of Palestinians? Or from its indigenous inhabitants, who had tilled the land and owned the soil for many centuries (quoted in W. Khalidi, 2005: 813), and for whom the Bible had become an instrument mandating expulsion (Prior, 2002: 44–5; 1997, 1999, 2001)?

From the territory occupied by the Israelis into 1948, about 90 per cent of the Palestinians were driven out – many by psychological warfare and/or military pressure, and a very large number at gun-point. The war simply provided the opportunity and the necessary background for the creation of a Jewish state largely free of Arabs. It concentrated Jewish-Zionist minds, and provided the security, military and strategic explanations and justifications for purging the Jewish state and dispossessing the Palestinian people (Masalha, 1992, 1997, 2003). Today some 70 per cent of the Palestinians are refugees; there are millions of Palestinian refugees in the Middle East and many more worldwide. In 1948 the minority of Palestinians – 160,000 – who remained behind – many of them internally displaced – became second-class citizens of the State of Israel, subject to a system of military administration by a government that confiscated the bulk of their lands.

Ben-Gurion had entered the 1948 war with a mind-set and premeditation to expel Palestinians. On 19 December 1947, he advised that the Haganah, the Jewish pre-state army, “adopt the method of aggressive defence; with every [Arab] attack we must be prepared to respond with a decisive blow: the destruction of the [Arab] place or the expulsion of the residents along with the seizure of the place” (Ben-Gurion, 1982: 58). There is also plenty of evidence to suggest that as early as the beginning of 1948 his advisers counselled him to wage a total war against the Palestinians, and that he entered the 1948 war with the intention of expelling Palestinians. First, there is Plan Dalet: a straightforward document, this Haganah plan of early March 1948 was in many ways a blueprint for the expulsion of as many Palestinians as possible. It constituted an ideological-strategic anchor and basis for the destruction of Arab localities and expulsion of their inhabitants by Jewish commanders. In conformity with Plan Dalet, the Haganah cleared various areas completely of Arab villages.

The general endorsement of transfer schemes and the attempt to promote them secretly by mainstream Labour leaders, some of whom played a decisive role in the 1948 war, highlight the ideological intent that made the 1948 refugee exodus possible. Ben-Gurion in particular emerges as both a persistent advocate of compulsory transfer in the late 1930s and the great expeller of the Palestinians in 1948 (Masalha, 1992; B. Morris, 1987; Flapan, 1987; Segev, 1986; Pappé, 1992; Rogan & Shlaim, 2001). In 1948 there was no need for any cabinet decision to drive the Palestinians out. Ben-Gurion and senior Zionist military commanders, such as Yigal Allon (1918–80), Moshe Carmel (1911–2003), Yigael Yadin (1917–84), Moshe Dayan, Moshe Kalman (1923–80) and Yitzhak Rabin (1922–95), played a key role in the expulsions. Everyone, at every level of military and political decision-making, understood that the objective was a Jewish state without a large Arab minority. Moshe Kalman also ordered the massacre of dozens of unarmed Palestinians in 1948 (W. Khalidi, 1992: 496; Pappé, 2006: 78; B. Morris 1987: 102).

ALIENS, DEFILEMENT AND PURGATION: OPERATION BIUR HAMETZ AND ETHNIC CLEANSING

From the beginning the drive for ethnic and demographic exclusivity was central to the Zionist colonial project in Palestine. This project deployed instrumentally the figurative and allegorical language of the Hebrew Bible in the military-strategic, demographic and ethnic cleansing operations of the Haganah and Israeli army in 1948. Benefitting from the relatively hidden confines of the Hebrew language, this deployment was exemplified by the language of key military operations, including “Operation Biur Hametz” (*Mivtah Biur Hametz*, “Operation Leaven Cleansing”). “Operation Passover Cleansing” was a re-worked Haganah military plan, entitled Operation *Misparayim* or “Operation Scissors”, carried out in the second half of April 1948 (B. Morris 2004: 95, 189), designed to capture the Palestinian Arab neighbourhoods, isolate Arab Jaffa – which was described as “a ‘cancer’ in the Jewish body-politics” (see below) – occupy and destroy the Arab villages to the east and generally purge the prospective Jewish state.

In Exodus (12:15) obedience to the Mosaic laws required the absence of all leaven from the Passover feast. Exodus (12:19) forbids *hametz* (leaven, a fermenting agent) in the house and the Jewish *halacha* forbade both *soer* (yeast) and *hametz* to be found in the house during the week of the Passover, one of the most important of all Jewish feasts, which commemorates the deliverance of the Israelites from the slavery of Egypt. On the 14 Nisan (in the Jewish calendar) all the leaven that had been found was burned in the ceremony called “Biur Hametz”, a Jewish

purity ritual of the destruction of the leaven. Theological this “cleansing”/“purging” of the leaven was believed to make them free from sin and the punishment for eating *Hametz* on Passover was the divine punishment of *karet* (“cut of” or “excision”), one of the most severe levels of punishment in Judaism. Commenting on the Haganah use of “psychological warfare” and blitz tactics in Haifa, Israeli historian Benny Morris writes:

Troughout the Haganah made effective use of Arabic language broadcasts and loudspeaker vans ... The Haganah [Radio] broadcasts called on the populace to ‘evacuate the women, the children and the old immediately, and send them to a safe haven’ ... Jewish tactics in the battle were designed to stun and quickly overpower opposition; demoralisation was a primary aim ... The mortar barrages and the psychological warfare broadcasts and announcements, and the tactics employed by the infantry companies, advancing from house to house, were all geared to this goal. The orders of Carmeli’s 22nd Battalion were “to kill every [adult male] Arab encountered” and to set alight with firebombs “all objectives that can be set alight. I am sending you posters in Arabic; disperse on route”.

(Morris, 2004: 191–2)

Although Ben-Gurion and his commanders did not drive the Palestinians into the sea, they did drive them from their homes and villages and ancestral lands and from Palestine and into squalid refugee camps. The irony of Ben-Gurion’s “chilling phrase” should not escape us. He demanded deference for a fictitious intention on the part of the Palestinians and Arabs while denying his own direct and personal involvement in the very real expulsion of the Palestinians (see Martin, 2005).

In 1948 more than half of the Palestinians were driven from their towns and villages, mainly by a deliberate Israeli policy of “transfer” and ethnic cleaning. The name of Palestine disappeared from the map. To complete this transformation of the country, in August 1948, a de facto Transfer Committee was officially (though secretly) appointed by the Israeli cabinet to plan the Palestinian refugees’ organized resettlement in the Arab states. The three-member committee was composed of Ezra Danin, a former senior Haganah intelligence officer and a senior foreign ministry adviser on Arab affairs since July 1948; Zalman Lifschitz, the prime minister’s adviser on land matters; and Yosef Weitz (born in Russia in 1890 and immigrated to Palestine in 1908), head of the Jewish National Fund’s land settlement department, as head of the committee. The main Israeli propaganda lines regarding the Palestinian refugees and some of the myths of 1948 were cooked up by members of this official Transfer Committee. Besides doing everything possible to reduce the Palestinian population in Israel, Weitz and his colleagues sought in October 1948 to amplify and consolidate the demographic transformation of Palestine by:

- ◆ concocting a new myth narrative of ‘retroactive transfer’ and blaming the victims of the Nakba for the refugee exodus;
- ◆ preventing Palestinian refugees from returning to their homes and villages in Israel;
- ◆ confiscating Palestinian lands and destroying Arab villages;
- ◆ settling Jews in Arab villages and towns and distributing Arab lands among Jewish settlements;
- ◆ seeking ways to evacuate Arab Jews from Iraq and Syria to Israel;
- ◆ devising schemes to ensure the resettlement of Palestinian refugees in Arab countries (Palestinian Muslim refugees in Iraq, Syria and Transjordan and Palestinian Christian

- refugees in Lebanon);
- ◆ confining the Palestinian population in the mixed Arab-Jewish cities to 15 percent of the total population; and
- ◆ launching an international propaganda campaign to block and discourage Palestinian refugee return.¹⁰

Apparently, Prime Minister Ben-Gurion approved of these proposals, although he recommended that all the Palestinian refugees be resettled in one Arab country, preferably Iraq, rather than be dispersed among the neighbouring states. Ben-Gurion was also set against refugee resettlement in neighbouring Transjordan (B. Morris, 1986a: 549–50).

An abundance of archival documents shows a strong correlation between the Zionist “transfer”/ethnic cleansing solution and the 1948 Palestinian Nakba. By the end of the 1948 war, hundreds of villages had been completely depopulated and their houses blown up or bulldozed. The main objective was to prevent the return of refugees to their homes, but the destruction also helped to perpetuate the Zionist myth that Palestine was virtually empty territory before the Jews entered.

In the decade or so before the Nakba the concept of “transfer” was discussed almost obsessively by the Jewish Agency Executive and its Transfer Committee. In the 1930s and 1940s, in particular, the general endorsement of “transfer” (in different forms: voluntary, agreed and compulsory) by the Zionist leadership was designed to achieve two crucial objectives: (1) to clear the land for European Jewish settlers and would-be immigrants; and (2) to establish an ethnocratic and fairly homogenous Jewish state. During the same period key leaders of Labour Zionism, such as Ben-Gurion, then chairman of the Jewish Agency, strongly believed that Zionism would not succeed in setting up a homogeneous Jewish state and fulfilling its imperative of absorbing the expected influx of Jewish immigrants from Europe if the indigenous inhabitants were allowed to remain.

From the beginning the drive for ethnic, racial and demographic exclusivity was central to the Zionist project in Palestine. In 1948 “ethnic cleansing” was at the heart of the military campaign to eliminate the indigenous population from the “Jewish homeland” in order to create a more secure, ethnically homogeneous “Jewish state”. In fact a pattern can be detected in the use of Hebrew terms in the military orders and operations which the Haganah/IDF High Command passed down to the army units on the ground: *tihur or le-taher* (“cleansing” and “purging”), *nikkuy* (“clearing”), *hisul* (“liquidation”), *gerush* (“expulsion”), *le-hashmid* (“to destroy” or “to exterminate”), *le-fanot* (“to evacuate”), *le-hatrid* (“to harass”), *siluk* (“removal”), *ha’vara* (“transfer”), *pinuy* (“evacuation”), *Mivtza Matate* (“Operation Broom”), *Mivtza Bi’ur Hametz* (“Operation Passover Cleansing”), *Pe’ulat Misparayim* (“Operation Scissors”), “Jafa as a ‘cancer’ in the Jewish body politics” – while individual Palestinian villages were ordered to be “cleaned”, “cleansed” or “destroyed” (Pappe, 2006: 72, 108, 110, 128, 138, 147, 155; B. Morris, 1987: 64, 75, 95, 121, 122, 134–8, 235). Commenting on “Operation Broom” of May 1948 and one of the tactics designed to clear Palestinians from Galilee, Yigal Allon, the commander of the Palmah, the Haganah strike force, wrote in *Sefer Hapalmah* :

We regarded it imperative to cleanse [of Arabs] the interior of the Galilee and create Jewish territorial contiguity in the whole of Upper Galilee ... We, therefore, looked for a means that would not oblige us to use force to drive out the tens of thousands of hostile Arabs left in the Galilee and who, in the event of an invasion, could strike at us from behind. We tried to utilize a stratagem that exploited the [Arab] defeats in Safad

and in the area cleared by [Operation] Broom – a stratagem that worked wonderfully.

I gather the Jewish *mukhtars* , who had ties with the different [local] Arab villages, and I asked them to whisper in the ears of several Arabs that giant Jewish reinforcements had reached the Galilee and were about to clean out the villages of the Hula, [and] to advise them, as friends, to flee while they could. And the rumour spread throughout the Hula that the time had come to flee. The fight encompassed tens of thousands. The stratagem fully achieved its objective.

(B. Morris, 1987: 122)

The clearing out and the displacement of the Palestinians did not end with the 1948 war and the Israeli authorities continued to “transfer” (a euphemism for the removal of Palestinians from the land), dispossess and colonize Palestinians during the 1950s (Masalha, 1997; Boqa’i, 2005: 73). As a result of the Nakba only 160,000 out of 900,000 Palestinians remained in the part of Palestine upon which Israel was established. After 1948 the Palestinians inside Israel had to endure eighteen years of military administration, which restricted their movements, controlled almost every aspect of their life and acted as an instrument for the expropriation of the bulk of their lands (Sa’di, 2005: 7–26; Kamen, 1987: 484–9; 1988: 68–109). The military government (1948–66) declared Palestinian villages “closed military zones” to prevent displaced Palestinians from returning. The Israeli army and the JNF, Zionism’s main executive arms, became the two institutions key to ensuring that the Palestinian refugees were unable to return to their lands, through complicity in the destruction of Palestinian villages and homes and their transformation into Jewish settlements, archaeological (biblical and Crusader) “national theme parks” of “ingathered” national heritage and European forests. As a quasi- governmental organization mandated to serve exclusively Jewish interests, the JNF lands cannot be sold or transferred to non-Jews, and the critics of its policies and practices consider it a symbol of Israeli apartheid.

In *Palestine in Israeli School Books: Ideology and Propaganda in Education* , Israeli education lecturer Nurit Peled-Elhanan (2012) examines the representation of Palestinians in hundreds of textbooks approved by the Israeli Ministry of Education. She shows Israeli textbooks depict Palestinians as “terrorists, refugees and primitive farmers”. Examining the historical narrative of the 1948 war, Peled-Elhanan shows the massacres of Palestinians in 1948 is depicted in Israeli textbooks as something that was necessary for the survival of the Jewish state (*ibid* .: 48–99; Sherwood, 2011). She reported: “It’s not that the [1948] massacres are denied, they are represented in Israeli school books as something that in the long run was good for the Jewish state” (Sherwood, 2011; Peled-Elhanan, 2012; see also Masalha, 2012).

Chapter 3

ARCHAEOLOGY AS CIVIC RELIGION

Secular nationalist ideology, excavating the Bible and the de-Arabization of Palestine

GOD'S CARTOGRAPHERS

The leading fathers of biblical archaeology and scholarship found the (supposedly “Eastern”) culture of the (indigenous) Canaanites and Philistines distasteful and religiously inferior to, and destined to be replaced by, the ethically superior Israelite (i.e. “Western”) culture. Thus the highly influential American biblical archaeologist William Foxwell Albright (1891–1971) – an early advocate of the “clash of civilization” theory – was a founding father, the dean of restorationist-historicist archaeology. Albright had an enormous impact not only on the rise of New and Old Testament archaeology, but after 1948 he became a key patron of Israeli biblical archaeology. The founding fathers of historicizing *völkisch* Israeli archaeology, including Benjamin Mazar and Yigael Yadin, were keen disciples of Albright and advocates of historicist maximalism and the historicity of the Genesis narrative which supposedly originated in the second millennium BCE .

Indeed, since the nineteenth century scriptural geography, biblical scholarship and biblical archaeology have sought to reinvent the Bible’s literary, allegorical and metaphorical narratives into an ethno-nationalist history. With their ethno-centric understanding of Palestine’s ancient history, they have contributed enormously to the suppression of Palestinian history and the de-Arabization of the history, geography and place names in Palestine (Thompson, 2008: 1–15; Aiken, 2010). In search of the roots of “Western civilization” Western travellers and explorers, scriptural geographers and cartographers, biblical archaeologists, Christian theologians, ethnographers, anthropologists, Orientalists, and theorists of race, ethnicity and “civilization” have been complicit – together with their Israeli counterparts – in the construction of a fictitious narrative which contributed to the silencing of Palestinian history, the erasure of Arab-Islamic place-names and the ethnic cleansing of Palestine (Thompson, 2008: 1–15; 2009: 133–42; Masalha, 2007: 240–62; Prior, 1997; 1997a: 20–21; 1998: 41–81; 1999: 129–55; 1999a: 69–88; 1999b: 2000a: 49–60; 2001: 9–35; 2002: 44–5; 2003: 16–45; 2003b: 192–218; 2005: 273–96; Whitelam, 1996; Sabbagh, 2006: 67–96). Greatly influenced by Edward Saïd’s work, Michael Prior’s critique of the biblical academy echoed Saïd’s critique of Orientalism (1978, 1980). Prior first came across the idea of reading the Bible “with the eyes of the Canaanites” in a critique of Michael Walzer’s *Exodus and Revolution* (1985) published by Saïd in 1986 (Prior, 2003a: 65–82; 2005: 273–96; Saïd, 1986: 289–303; Walzer, 1985) – although Prior was critical of Saïd for not pursuing his “Canaanite reading” of the biblical stories (Prior, 2005: 273–96).

The nationalist and ideological overtones of Israeli biblical scholarship are widely

acknowledged. In Israel the academic study of Jewish antiquities and archaeologies was and still is, in the main, a tool for validating Zionist Jewish colonization of, and continuous territorial expansion in, Palestine, rather than for prompting genuine interest in ancient histories and ancient antiquities (Abu El-Haj, 2001; Yiftachel, 2006: 54; Zerubavel, 1995). Since the time of the British mandate, the fact that Zionist and, later, Israeli politics of nation-building has been strongly guided by ideologically oriented biblical archaeology significantly undermines the integrity of Israeli scholarship. Scholarly works by Yael Zerubavel, Keith Whitelam, Nadia Abu El-Haj and Raz Kletter have repeatedly pointed out the consistent nationalistic distortions that have infected the field. The efforts of critical scholars to write a history of Palestine independent of biblical perspectives have corrected such distortions since the 1980s and have raised considerable doubt concerning the legitimacy of the Judeo-ethnocentrism which dominates nationalist Israeli claims on the heritage of ancient Palestine and the Bible (Thompson, 2009:133–42).

Biblical archaeology was established in the nineteenth century as a distinctly Western Christian discipline and a restorationist-corroborationist methodology – “redeeming the land to its rightful owners” by “restoring” the Zionist-Hebrew toponymy. From its beginning it was complicit with Western imperial expansion in the Middle East. With its theological/biblical theme of “promised land-chosen people” restorationist biblical archaeology has always privileged the narrative associated with Israelis, Zionist settlers or Jewish nationalists over those of the indigenous (predominantly Muslim) inhabitants of Palestine. Virtually all biblical archaeologists were Western Christians (many of them churchmen) or European Jews with a strong commitment to the “truth” and historicity of the Bible, interpreting their finds in light of the scriptures. No wonder, then, that biblical archaeological findings confirmed the Bible when researchers used the Hebrew Bible to identify, date and interpret the significance of the towns, buildings, pottery and other artefacts they unearthed. This complete disregard for the historical, demographic and political realities of (predominantly Muslim) historic Palestine was at the heart of a colonial tradition: the Western discipline of biblical archaeology – a tradition which from its beginning in the nineteenth century was established to validate Western roots in the Holy Land and authenticate the historicity of the Hebrew Bible.

Christian-oriented verificationist biblical archaeology began with Edward Robinson, an American adventurer, a millennialist Protestant, a Christian Zionist theologian and the father of “biblical geography” and “biblical archaeology” who played a key role in “identifying” biblical sites and biblical places names (Hallote, 2006:11–13). An instructor in Hebrew at Andover Theological Seminary and later professor of biblical literature at the Union Theological Seminary in New York, Robinson travelled to Syria and Palestine in 1837 and 1838 with the Arabic-speaking missionary Eli Smith. His intent was to identify archaeological ruins associated with events in the Bible; and in 1841 he published a massive three-volume book on his efforts called *Biblical Researches in Palestine, Mount Sinai and Arabia Petraea*. Robinson argued that hundreds of place-names of villages and sites in Palestine, seemingly Arab, were Arabic renderings or translations of ancient Hebrew names, biblical or Talmudic. Published simultaneously in England, the United States and Germany, it immediately established his international reputation in the West. Together with much of the British and American “Holy Land literature” of the nineteenth century,¹ Robinson’s biblical research, maps and “scientific discoveries” were popularized in the West and became central to the imagining of the “Holy Land” especially in the US and Britain (Long, 2003). They also provided the basis for the official Zionist-Hebrew colonial toponymy of the mandatory period, and the Hebrewization and

Judaization projects carried out by the State of Israel since 1948.

In the predominantly secular state of Israel there has always been an obsession with biblical archaeology; the convergence between biblical archaeology and Zionist settler-colonization has always loomed large, but became most pronounced after the post-1967 conquests. Furthermore Israeli biblical archaeology has remained central to European-Ashkenazi secular Zionism – most orthodox Jews in Israel were and still are indifferent its findings; many Heredi (orthodox) Jews are very hostile to Israeli archaeological digging and excavations (Elon, 1997a: 38). Driven by an invented tradition and the need to establish the “veracity” of the Hebrew Bible as a secular “title deed” to the land of Palestine, the Zionist-Hebrew archaeology of the Yishuv in Palestine, which was sponsored by the British colonial power (1920–48), was passionately Jewish nationalist.

The reconstruction of the figurative sacred history and scriptural geography of Palestine by Christian biblical scholars and archaeologists and its subsequent appropriation by the Zionist movement and the State of Israel determined to eliminate Palestinian and Arabic place names, “Hebrewize” the map of Palestine, redeem the land and colonize the present and, retrospectively, the past, has been discussed in several works, including Keith Whitelam’s *The Invention of Ancient Israel* ; Nur Masalha’s *The Bible and Zionism: Invented Traditions, Archaeology and Post-Colonialism in Palestine-Israel*; and Nadia Abu El-Haj’s, *Facts on the Ground: Archaeological Practice and Territorial Self-fashioning in Israeli Society* . This reconstruction and reinvention, Benvenisti argues, was designed

so as to emphasize the Jewish connection to the land, adding designations such as the biblical, Hasmonean, Mishnaic, and Talmudic periods. From the “early Muslim” period onward, however, they adopted the nomenclature of the “conquerors’ chronology” since in this way it was possible to divide the approximately 1,400 years of Muslim-Arab rule into units that were shorter than the period of Jewish rule over the Eretz Israel/Palestine (which lasted at most for 600 years), and especially to portray the history of the country as a long period of rule by a series of foreign powers who had robbed it from the Jews – a period that ended in 1948 with the reestablishment of Jewish sovereignty in Palestine. It was thus possible to obscure the fact that the indigenous Muslim Arab population was part and parcel of the ruling Muslim peoples and instead to depict the history of the local population – its internal wars, its provincial rulers, its contribution to the landscape – as matters lacking in importance, events associated with one or another dynasty of “foreign occupiers”.

(Benvenisti, 2002: 300)

But while the colonial attitudes of European and North American missionaries-cum-archaeologists towards former colonies of the West has begun to be reevaluated since the 1960s, the Israelis have chosen to consolidate the colonial tradition and colonial historiography in Palestine–Israel. Meron Benvenisti observes that

British, American, and other academics engaged in the study of the archaeology and history of their former overseas colonies have begun to reevaluate the attitudes that prevailed during the colonial period. They have admitted grave distortions that were introduced into the history of the colonies as an outcome of Eurocentric attitudes, ignoring or erasing remaining traces of the natives’ past and their material culture. In the wake of this evaluation, Amerindian, Aborigine, and native African sites were studied and restored, and a new history was written, focusing on the organic chronicles

of those regions, which had been a mere footnote in the history of the European peoples. The Israelis, by contrast, chose to maintain the colonial tradition with only minor changes ... The [Israeli] Antiquities Administration is aware of only two sites in Old Jaffa: the “Biium House” (the first home of this group of early Zionist pioneers in the country, in 1882) and the first building of the first [Zionist] Hebrew High School (“Gimnasiya Herzeliyya”), which have been declared “antiquities” in accordance with Article 2 [of Israeli Antiquities Law of 1978]. Of course no structure “of historical value” to the Palestinians has been declared as a protected antiquity under Israeli law.

(Benvenisti, 2002: 304–5)

This ideologically driven character of this discipline became even more pronounced after the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, when biblical archaeology became an obsession in Israel, firmly institutionalized as a cornerstone of Israel’s civic religion, testifying to exclusive Zionist claims to the land of Palestine (J. Rose, 2004: 7–25). The discipline of biblical archaeology has since been employed by Israeli academic institutions and the state to create a socially meaningful understanding of the past; its findings have been deployed by the state politically and educationally and have been presented to the Israeli public to foster Jewish nationalism and state-building and to legitimize the dispossession of the indigenous inhabitants of Palestine.

Among evangelical Christians there are widely held literalist readings of the Hebrew Bible (Barr, 1977:120–59). The same Christians often disguise themselves as mainstream scholars (Lemche, 2003). For them the Hebrew Scriptures are divine revelation and accurate history, conveyed directly from God to a wide variety of Israelite sages, prophets and priests. However the historicity of the biblical patriarchs is also important for most mainstream churchmen who feel that that unless these figures actually existed, their own religious faith would be somehow erroneous. Scholarly findings in archaeology, textual analysis, history, and newly translated ancient documents all point to a historical reality in ancient Palestine which is difficult for many traditional and fundamentalist believers (Christian, Jews and Muslims) to reconcile with a faith that depends on holy Scriptures, divine promises, prophecies and revelations being actual historical facts. Many Christian and Jews, in particular, are still wedded to the notion that the Five Books of Moses were set down by Moses himself just before his death on Mount Nebo; that the Books of Joshua, Judges and Samuel are regarded as sacred and recorded by Prophet Samuel; King David was believed to be the author of the Psalms, and King Solomon of Proverbs and the Song of Solomon.

ZIONIST BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE FASHIONING OF SECULAR HEBRAIC IDENTITY

The Zionist movement has appropriated the Jewish religion and regional cultures and traditions of Palestine for its own use. In *The Founding Myths of Israel* Israeli scholar Zeev Sternhell called the Zionist uses of Judaism “a religion without God” a secular-nationalist religion which has preserved only Judaism’s outward symbols (Sternhell, 1998: 56). Israeli biblical archaeology is a secular-nationalist “civil religion” in Israel. Its nationalist founding godfathers are all secular Ashkenazis and European immigrants to Palestine, who often relied on the Scripture and Written Torah but were unfamiliar with rabbinic Judaism or the anti-literalist interpretation of the Oral Torah, Midrash, Mishna, Talmud and Responsa and thus ignored the rich and complex

interpretative traditions of the Midrash – interpretative traditions that encouraged infinite interpretations of the Word of God and eschewed limitations on or definitive interpretations of the Written Torah (Armstrong, 2007: 79–101). As a state-driven “civil religion” designed to create a “scientific high culture” to stand above Talmudic and rabbinical Judaism and supersede two millennia of actual Jewish history and long traditions of rabbinical (Midrash) interpretations.

In contrast with 2000 years of rabbinical literature and the extremely diverse Midrash interpretations of the Hebrew Bible, definitive “scientific” biblical archaeology in Israel has constructed its own nationalist homogenizing discourses and sacred monuments: its amassed artefacts, objects, records, textbooks, journals, visual heritage industry, national museums and (national) Tanakh theme parks (see below) – like the Zionist “ingathering” of the ancient “biblical tribes” – are a site of a state-orchestrated collective memory and secular national identity. This “scientific/civil” religion of biblical archaeology uses the outward symbols of Judaism and Jewish religious texts (the Hebrew Bible and Talmudic literature) as ancient cultural artefacts; its founding fathers and practitioners and its military-academic elite have developed keen interest in biblical tools, biblical weapons and military tactics. Its current university professors and key academic practitioners serve on official town planning committees and state-sponsored projects such “development/Judaization” projects in the Galilee, the Negev and occupied east Jerusalem. Its widely photographed and televised excavations, routine conferences and semi-official publications are sponsored by the top brass of the Israeli army and showered with prizes by the heads of the Israeli state. It venerates biblical heroes and publishes commemorative works on biblical wars. It employs many of the methods of “civil religion”: its mimicry and repetitive rituals; its scientific obsession with ancient roots; its reinvention of the nation’s past and heritage manufacturing; its construction of founding national myths; its neurotic homogenizing view of the past; its collective commemorative social functions as a form of social cohesion, helping to unify the state; its construction of academic departments of archeology and “Land of Israel” studies as a national collective enterprise; and its construction of secular-national monuments and Jewish “national biblical-archaeological parks” (see below) as places of visual national heritage, leisure (picnic, barbecue) and worships.

In present-day Israel the claim is obsessively repeatedly made that the Bible is materially realized thanks to biblical archaeology, giving Jewish history flesh and bones, recovering the ancient past, putting it in “dynastic order” and “returning to the archival site of Jewish identity” (Saïd, 2004: 46). Biblical archaeology was always central to the construction of Israeli-Jewish identity and the perceived legitimacy of the Israeli state. The debate about “ancient Israel” biblical scholarship and biblical archaeology is also a debate about the modern State of Israel, most crucially because in the eyes of many people in the West, the legitimacy of Zionist Jewish “restorationism” depends on the credibility of the biblical portrait. One facet of that debate is the argument in the public domain over the use of the term “Israel” to denote the land west of the Jordan, both in ancient and modern times. The inevitable outcome of the obsession with the Hebrew Bible in Western biblical scholarship – by calling the land “biblical” and by its exclusive interest in a small section of the history of the land – has resulted in focusing on the Israelite identity of a land that has actually been non-Jewish in terms of its indigenous population for the larger part of its recorded history (Whitelam, 1996). This state of affairs would not happen in any other area of the planet. It is due to the Hebrew Bible and its influence in the West where an inherited Christian culture supported the notion that Palestine has always been somehow essentially “the land of Israel”. Traditional biblical scholarship has been essentially “Zionist” and has participated in the elimination of the Palestinian identity, as if over fourteen hundred years of

Muslim occupation of this land has meant nothing. This focus on a short period of history a long time ago participates in a kind of retrospective colonizing of the past. It tends to regard modern Palestinians as trespassers or “resident aliens” in someone else’s territory.

The obsession with the sacred artefacts of biblical archaeology has been central to the formation of Israeli secular-nationalist collective identity and Zionist nation-building since 1948. To make European Jewish identity rooted in the land, after the establishment of Israel the science of archaeology was summoned to the task of constructing and consolidating that identity in secular time; the rabbis as well as the university scholars specializing in biblical archaeology were given sacred history as their domain (Saïd, 2004: 45). Abu El-Haj’s seminal work, *Facts on the Ground*, explores the centrality of selective biblical archaeology in the construction of Zionist Jewish collective identity before and after 1948. The work provides a colonial archaeological exploration in Palestine, dating back to British work in the mid-nineteenth century. Abu El-Haj focuses on the period after the establishment of Israel in 1948, linking the academic practice of archaeology with Zionist colonization and with plans for the Judaization and repossession of the land through the renaming of Palestinian historic and geographic names. Much of this de-Arabization of Palestine is given archaeological justification; the existence of Arab names is written over by newly coined Hebrew names. This “epistemological strategy” prepares for the construction of an Israeli-Jewish identity based on assembling archaeological fragments – scattered remnants of masonry, tables bone, tombs – into a sort of special biography out of which the European colony the Yishuv emerges “visible and linguistically, as Jewish national home” (Abu El-Haj, 2001: 74; Saïd, 2004: 47–8; Bowersock, 1988: 181–91).

For early European Zionist settlers, Herzl’s *Altneuland* was a *terra incognita*. “Knowledge of the country” (*Yedi’at Ha-Aretz*), its topography and its inhabitants, intelligence-gathering, surveillance and reconnaissance became an obsession in the Zionist Yishuv and central to the Israeli educational system. Gradually a large number of the “founding fathers” of the State of Israel, and military commanders and writers – from General Yigael Yadin and General Moshe Dayan to David Ben-Gurion, Yitzhak Ben-Tzvi and Zalman Shazar and even General Ariel Sharon – became commentators on and practitioners of *Yedi’at Ha-Aretz*. Central to *Yedi’at Ha-Aretz* was Israeli biblical archaeology. Biblical archaeology also became the centre piece of *Yedi’at Ha-Aretz* and the “privilege Israeli science *par excellence*” (Saïd, 2004: 45–6; Kletter, 2003). Magen Broshi, a leading Israeli archaeologist, and a member of the Government Names Committee (see below), has noted:

The Israeli phenomenon, a nation returning to its old-new land [echoing Herzl’s German novel *Altneuland*] is without parallel. It is a nation in the process of renewing its acquaintance with its own lands and here archeology plays an important role. In this process archeology is part of a larger system known as *yedi’at haAretz*, knowledge of the land (the Hebrew term is derived most probably from the German *Landeskunde*) ... The European immigrants found a country to which they felt, paradoxically, both kinship and strangeness. Archeology in Israel, a *sui generis* state, served as a means to dispel the alienation of its new citizens.

(Quoted in Saïd, 2004:46)

In Jewish Zionism the homogenizing and highly “selective reconstruction of Antiquity was part of the historical mission of reviving the ancient national roots and spirit. [Selective] Antiquity became both a source of legitimacy and an object of admiration” (Zerubavel, 1995: 25). For the deeply secular founding fathers of political Zionism, in particular, the biblical story

essentially functioned as the objective historical account of the Jewish “title to the land” – a claim not necessarily borne out by archaeological findings. The passionate interest in biblical archaeology by deeply secular military leaders and politicians such as David Ben-Gurion, General Dayan and General Yadin (the latter two army Chiefs of Staff) and the significance given to the “last stand” at the biblical fortress of Massada, were designed to forge emotional bonds between the new Israeli army, European settlers and the land. The role of colonial archaeology in justifying South African apartheid has been described elsewhere (Hall, 1988: 62–4; 1984: 455–67). In contrast, however, although a great deal has been written about the role of Israeli ethnocentric biblical archaeology in confirming the legitimacy of the Zionist claim, little attention has been paid to the role of the biblical paradigm of “promised land-chosen people” and biblical archaeology in providing the ideological justification for the expulsion and dispossession of the Palestinians.

Thus wars of conquests were also central to evolving Israeli archaeology. Moreover, secular Israeli politicians have tended to use the Bible during and after wars of conquests. In November 1956 when the Sinai Peninsula was conquered during the Anglo-French-Israeli collusion and initiation of the Suez war, the Israeli attack on the Egyptian army was described by Ben-Gurion as a return to roots (Sternhell, 1998: 336). Ben-Gurion’s views of the biblical borders are found in his 1972 book, *Ben-Gurion Looks at the Bible*; “In days of old our neighbors were Egypt and Babylon” (Ben-Gurion, 1972: 4). In 1956 Ben-Gurion explained to the Israeli parliament the political and military reasons for Israel invading Sinai. In spite of being an atheist, proud of his complete disregard for the commandments of the Jewish religion, he pronounced in the Knesset on the third day of that war that the real reason for it was “the restoration of the kingdom of David and Solomon” to its biblical borders; at this point in his speech most Knesset members rose spontaneously and sang the Israeli national anthem (Shahak, 1994: 8–9). The Gulf of Sharm al-Shaykh was now called Mifratz Shlomo (Gulf of Solomon) and Ben-Gurion declared the whole war to be a “new Sinai revelation” – a historical repetition of the mythical national birth at Mount Sinai (Sternhell: 1998: 336–7). However, as a realist and pragmatist Labour expansionist, Ben-Gurion argued, in his public debates with maximalist Zionists who sought a Jewish state from the Nile to the Euphrates, for the need to distinguish between “biblical and historical rights” and the necessity of achieving internationally recognizable borders (recognized by the Western powers) for the State of Israel (see Ben-Gurion, 1967).

In *Recovered Roots: Collective Memory and the Making of Israeli National Tradition*, the Israeli–American historian Yael Zerubavel highlights the role that biblical archaeology played in shoring up the fiction of modern Israeli identity and reinforcing Zionist claims to the land of Palestine by creating a (mythical) continuity between the modern State of Israel and “biblical Israel” through large, government-funded excavation projects:

Archaeology thus becomes a national tool through which Israelis can recover their roots in the ancient past and the ancient homeland. To participate in the archaeological excavation ... is to perform a patriotic act of bridging Exile to re-establish the connection with the national past and authenticate national memory.

(Zerubavel, 1995: 59)

HISTORICIZING THE HEBREW BIBLE: *VÖLKISCH* NATIONALISM AND THE FOUNDING FATHERS OF ISRAELI

BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY

David Ben-Gurion: the prime minister's "Hebrew bible study circle"

A self-styled "biblical scholar" ² Israel's first prime minister and defence minister, David Ben-Gurion, was a deeply secular man. He was at the centre of Israel's creation in 1948 and was credited with key state-sponsored educational projects in the 1950s and 1960s. One leading Israeli university, Beer Sheva University, founded in 1969, was renamed "Ben-Gurion University of the Negev". Ben-Gurion also famously presided over, from the late 1950s onwards, a semi-official "Prime Minister's Bible Study Circle" a fortnightly study meeting held in the prime minister's Jerusalem residence. It was attended by senior Israeli officials, biblical academics, archaeologists and leading rabbis. On 4 November 1958 the Jewish Telegraphic Agency reported that on 2 November Ben-Gurion had inaugurated a series of lectures and discussions on the Hebrew Bible and that the first lecture was delivered by Professor Yehuda Elitzur, of Bar-Ilan University, then a religiously oriented university college founded by American and Canadian Zionist Jews. Among the 200 people who attended the inaugural meeting on 2 November were Professor Yigael Yadin, Israel's leading archaeologist and its second army chief-of-staff, biblical author, historian and minister of education and culture (1951 to 1955), Ben-Tzion Dinur, Jewish Agency executive member Zalman Shazar, Israel's first minister of education and subsequently the first president of Israel (from 1963 to 1973) and a large number of Israeli biblical scholars (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 1958). Ben-Gurion's volume, *Ben-Gurion Looks at the Bible* (1972), which consists of the speeches delivered by Ben-Gurion to a select group of biblical scholars and archaeologists who comprised the "Prime Minister's Tanakh Study Circle" was originally published in Hebrew in 1969. The Tanakh Study Circle was revived by Likud prime minister Menahem Begin during his 1977–83 premiership. It has also recently been resurrected by current Likud prime minister Binyamin Netanyahu.

In *The Hebrew Bible Reborn: From Holy Scripture to the Book of Books: A History of Biblical Culture and the Battles Over the Bible in Modern Judaism*, Israeli historians Yaacov Shavit and Mordechai Eran, who describe Ben-Gurion's view as "historical-fundamentalist" write:

Ben-Gurion's historical approach was, generally, conservative', and he regarded biblical historiography as a reliable historical story. He was aware that the [Hebrew] Bible wished to impart a 'religious lesson', but as far he was concerned, it was primarily an historical source and a guide for behavior in the present. He found perfection and unity in the Bible, although he agreed that possibly here and there, 'several verses were distorted omitted or added! Consequently, he claimed, 'the biblical testimony on historical events in the not too distant past, which preceded its composition, are more believable than the premises of German hair-splitters and others in the nineteenth and twentieth century'.

(Shavit and Eran, 2007: 456)

Armed with masses of biblical quotes and positivist "historical biblical facts" Prime Minister Ben-Gurion's projects include: (a) promoting a new Israeli ethno-*völkisch* identity and mobilized collective memory; (b) making the Book of Joshua central to Zionist politics and Israeli political culture; (c) deploying the biblical stories and biblical archaeology in the service of Israeli state policies. Prime Minister Ben-Gurion was also instrumental in making the study of the Book of Joshua a major component of the school curriculum in Israel; he initiated the conducting of Bible

quizzes in “Israel and the Jewish Diaspora”; he participated in conferences on rather uncritical biblical archaeology and initiated a regular nationalist Bible study circle in his official residence (Zamaret, undated). The ideological and political overtones of Israeli court archaeology have long been recognized (Elon, 1997a; Abu El-Haj, 1998; Zerubavel, 1995; Silberman, 1982, 1989, 1997; Meskell, 1998; Kapitan, 1999). Although *völkisch* archaeology and antiquities have been used in other countries to weld social bonds and nationalist consciousness essential to building modern nations (A. Smith, 1986; 1989: 340–67; B. Anderson, 1991; Shanks, 1992), biblical archaeology and biblical scholarship in Israel has always been a political and academic obsession, driven partly by the Ben-Gurion axiom: “the Bible is our mandate” Its “finds” have been used in virtually all “authentic” Israeli-Jewish national symbols, from the State Seal to medals and postage stamps (Elon, 1997a: 37). Inevitably its sites and “finds” were bound to be used by Ben-Gurion and others to prove Jewish historical roots and common descent, rights to Palestinian territories, and overall the superiority of Zionist claims (Abu El-Haj, 1998: 166–7, 180).

Benjamin Mazar: dean of Israeli biblical archaeology

In the post-1948 period, heavily politicized, massive Israeli government-sponsored excavation projects were carried out by the leading members of the first generation of Israeli archaeologists, the most important of whom were professors Benjamin Mazar (1906–95) and Yigael Yadin, the latter an army general who carried out large and widely publicized excavations from the 1950s to the 1970s, not only at Massada but also at the great Canaanite cities of Tell Gezer (in Arabic: Tall Jazar), Tell Hazor and Tell Megiddo (in Arabic Tall al-Mutasallim).

In fact three great Canaanite cities (Hazor, Gezer and Megiddo), which were important regional administrative and cultural centres in the ancient period, were among the most heavily excavated sites in Palestine by Western biblical archaeology in the twentieth century – a doctrinal archaeology driven by the desire to prove the historicity of the narrative of the Bible and demonstrate triumph of the superior Israelite religion which had “superseded” and “replaced” the “inferior” religions and traditions of the Canaanites and Philistines. Both Mazar and Yadin followed closely in the footsteps of Western (Catholic and Protestant) “replacement” archaeologists – of course, minus the liberationist theology discourses of the New Testament.

For over a century of biblical excavations the three ancient Canaanite cities of Gezer, Hazor and Megiddo have been the site of hegemonic narratives and discourses and a battleground of ideological biblical archaeology. Biblical excavations of the three sites show the rich, complicated, multilayered and messy history of ancient Palestine. Megiddo, an important city-state in ancient time, also became a Christian site and was known in the New Testament under its Greek name, *Armageddon* (a Hellenized name for Hebrew “Har Megiddo” Mount Megiddo). In 1964, during Pope Paul VI’s visit to the Holy Land (the first one by any pope), Megiddo was the site where the Pope was invited to meet with Israeli leaders, including Israeli President Zalman Shazar and Prime Minister Levi Eshkol. The meeting was designed to emphasize Megiddo’s significance for the neatly constructed “biblical identity” and heritage of (European) Christians and Israeli Jews. Later Yadin recalled: “the President of Israel ... Zalman Shazar, himself a biblical and Hebrew scholar ... would hold regular meetings in the presidential residence of the Jerusalem Bible Study Circle” to which Yadin and others were invited to give talks about their biblical studies and archaeological discoveries (Yadin, 1985: 37).

Both Jewish nationalist archaeologists, Mazar and Yadin, were central to the Israeli

archaeology project of “recovering” “inheriting” restoring, renaming, reclaiming the heritage of the land; both presided over the project of recovering the “national heritage” and validating other biblical “recoveries” of the Bible and the Jewish homeland. Both men chose to Hebrewize their last name. Benjamin Mazar was born Binyamin Maisler in Poland and was educated at the German universities of Berlin and Giessen. After he immigrated to Palestine in 1929, he became a member of the recently renamed “Jewish Palestine Exploration Society” (later, after the founding of Israel in 1948, to be renamed the “Israel Exploration Society”) and Hebrewized his last name to Mazar. Yigael Yadin was born Yigael Sukenik in 1917 to biblical archaeologist Eliezar Lipa Sukenik (1889–1953), who emigrated from Poland to Palestine in 1912. In 1935 Sukenik became a lecturer in archaeology at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and in 1938 he was appointed professor of archaeology; in the same year he also became director of the University Museum of Jewish Antiquities. Israeli writer Amos Elon had this to say on the influence of Eliezar Sukenik on the founding fathers of Israeli biblical archaeology, who were highly influenced by German *völkisch* ethnologists:

Sukenik (the father of Yigael Yadin) ... formerly a high school teacher of mathematics and geography in Jerusalem, had spent a year studying archaeology at the University of Berlin at a time when the leading archaeologists and ethnologists at that university were obsessed with *Volk* and other ethnocentric prejudice. He never graduated in Berlin. His great ambition was the creation of a “Jewish archaeology”. His view of history was narrowly Zionist, or if you like, Hegelian ... In his view Jewish history during the past eighteen centuries was only an insignificant interval between national independence lost in the first century and national independence to be regained in the twentieth. Sukenik lectured the young [secular] kibbutzniks on Jewish history, modern archaeology, and memory. Jews were a community of memory. In his enthusiasm for digging up remnants and relics of the glorious Jewish past [at Beit Alpha in the late 1920s], he won over most of the kibbutzniks. (Elon, 1997: 35)

After the 1967 conquests the Israeli state was bound to base its conception of Jerusalem upon a mythologized entity, “Jerusalem of Gold” and to involve abstract historical and ideological rights in the newly acquired territories, as well as resting its claim on territorial expansion and domination and the actual “redemption of land” through settlement and colonization.

Since June 1967 pseudo-scientist positivist-empiricist Israeli biblical archaeology has been consolidated further and deployed in Jerusalem and the West Bank as a tool of occupation and the ethnic cleansing of the Palestinians. In the immediate post-1967 period Israeli archaeological diggings concentrated on the old city of Jerusalem and the Israeli claims of exclusive control over Jerusalem benefited from the “discoveries” of Benjamin Mazar and other court archaeologists (see also Talhami, 2000: 113–29). Mazar, the father of the Israeli branch of biblical archaeology, was president of the Hebrew University, and Yadin was the head of the Institute of Archaeology of the Hebrew University, the oldest university department of archaeology in Israel established by the Yishuv in 1926. After 1948 Mazar continued the nationalist project of digging up the Bible – a project started by American biblical archaeologist William Foxwell Albright during the mandatory period.³ During the mandatory period Mazar served as secretary of the Jewish Palestine Exploration Society, renamed after 1948 the Israel Exploration Society. The ideologically driven work of the Israel Exploration Society inherited the archaeological colonial tradition of the West, the nineteenth century’s “formative work” of British and American “missionaries turned archaeologists” and the explorations carried out by

the London-based British Palestine Exploration Fund (PEF) and the American Palestine Exploration Society, which in the 1870s sent several expeditions to Palestine from its home base in New York (Hallote, 2006; Ben-Ze'ev 2011: 27–31).

But it was the positivist–empiricist–historicist maps and surveys of the PEF, which in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries systematically mapped out the region for British imperial, military-strategic commercial interests which have had the most profound impact on the creation of political boundaries in the region and the formation of Western colonial (and subsequent Zionist and Israeli) attitudes to the landscape, toponymy and people of Palestine (Green, 2009: 167–87). On the face of it the PEF's main objective was the “study of the biblical remains” – which produced new “scientific” 1:20,000 and 1:40,000 scale maps, with a strong biblical angle (Ben-Ze'ev, 2011: 29) – but military-strategic considerations were central to the mapping surveys of the expedition, whose key members included academics, clergymen and officers of the Royal Engineers of the British army. The most famous of these officers was Lieutenant (later Field Marshal Lord) Horatio Kitchener, later to become secretary of state for war shortly after the First World War broke out in 1914 (Ben-Ze'ev, 2011: 27–9).

The processes that had begun in the 1870s by the PEF with the mapping and standardization of the human and geographical landscape of Palestine in the 1870s led to the establishment of the British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem, established in 1919 by the PEF, a school which had close ties to the American School of Oriental Research led by American archaeologist William Foxwell Albright and the French Ecole Biblique and the establishment of (Zionist) “Jewish Palestine Exploration” in the mandatory period. This process culminated in the politicicide and toponymicide of the 1948 Nakba. Similar processes are evident in the current Israeli mapping, sign-posting and Hebrewization/biblicization of the Palestinian and Arabic place names of east Jerusalem and the West Bank.

The homogenizing and standardizing techniques, explorations and cartography of the PEF also contributed to the founding of the Society for the Investigation of the Land of Israel and its Antiquities (*Hachevra Lechakirut Eretz Yisrael Va'atikotaya*) by a group of Zionist intellectual in 1914. During the mandatory period it was renamed the “Jewish Palestine Exploration Society” and after the creation of Israel in 1948, it became the Israel Exploration Society (IES). Modelled on the British PEF, which combined both military-strategic and academic expertise, the IES's activities include raising financial support for archaeological projects, organizing excavations, disseminating biblical data and publishing excavation reports, and close coordination with official Israeli bodies and university biblical departments, archeological museums, biblical theme parks and even a “Hebrew Bible Zoo” based in Jerusalem in a collective national effort to promote the political causes and agenda of Jewish nationalism (*The Jerusalem Post*, 2010). The IES has disseminated “scientific and historical knowledge” to Hebrew audiences in *Qadmoniot* (Antiquities), including articles by amateur biblical archeologists such General Dayan, while *Israel Exploration Journal* caters for English readers. In 1989, the IES was awarded the Israel Prize for its special contribution to Israeli society and the State of Israel. The Israel Prize is an award handed out by the Israeli state, on Israel “Independence Day” 15 May (a day of celebration by Israelis and “Nakba Day” of commemoration by Palestinians), in a state ceremony in Jerusalem in the presence of Israeli president, Israeli prime minister and the head of the Knesset. The Prize judges noted: “It [IES] has been the principal and most effective institution for furthering knowledge of the archaeology and history of the country both at home and abroad since it was founded seventy-five years ago”.⁴

The above-mentioned Benyamin Mazar, the brother-in-law of Israel's second president,

Yitzhak Ben-Tzvi (1884–1963), was recognized as the “dean” of Israeli biblical archaeologists. He served for decades as the chairman of the IES and of the Archaeological Council of Israel (which he founded as the authority responsible for all archaeological excavations and surveys in Israel). Benyamin Mazar, recognized as the “dean” of Israeli biblical archaeologists, served for decades as the chairman of the IES and of the Archaeological Council of Israel, which he co-founded as the authority responsible for all archaeological excavations and surveys in Israel. Between 1951 and 1977 Mazar served as professor of biblical history and archaeology at the Hebrew University; in 1952 he became rector of the university and later (in 1953) its president for eight years.

The instrumentalization of the Bible as a colonialist methodology of appropriating the regional cultures of Palestine was massively boosted and perfected by the establishment of the Israeli state in 1948 and this, in turn, has dramatically transformed the fortunes of biblical archaeology and opened up unprecedented financial and political opportunities for Benyamin Mazar and other Israeli archaeologists. Driven by “replacement” archaeology and the quest to discover how the Canaanites and Philistines were “replaced” by the Israelites, Mazar was the first biblical archaeologist in the world to receive a permit granted by the newly created State of Israel to excavate at Tall Qassile, an archeological site in today’s Ramat Gan neighbourhood of Tel Aviv. The Hebrew city of Tel Aviv, now the largest city and effectively the cultural capital of Israel, was founded in 1909, in a region that was associated in ancient times with the powerful five city-states (the Philistine Pentapolis) of the Philistines. The site at Tall Qassile contains the remains of a port city founded by the Philistines in the twelfth century BCE . No Israelite artefacts were found. However, subsequent excavations in the 1980s showed the site was inhabited during the Arab and Islamic periods, with a *khan* , a roadside inn where travellers and traders could rest and recover from the long journeys. Today the site is part of the grounds of the Eretz Israel Museum. The museum appropriates and misrepresents the history and heritage of Palestine, including those of the Philistines and Canaanites. It displays some of the Philistine artefacts discovered at Tall Qassile, but of course within the overall scheme of the Israelis being the natural inheritors of the history and culture of the land.

Mazar, perhaps more than any other Israeli archaeologist, earned a formidable reputation in the Israeli and Western academia through his leadership of the Israeli branch of biblical archaeology, combining a traditional Zionist account of biblical history with archaeological evidence. Extensive excavations under the direction of Mazar were undertaken in the southwestern corner of the Muslim al-Haram al-Sharif (Temple Mount) in the Old City of Jerusalem in 1968–78. The site became accessible to Israeli archaeologists after the occupation of the Old City in 1967 and the excavations were undertaken by the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the semi-official Israel Exploration Society. As we shall see in the Conclusion, much of the work undertaken by Mazar has been discarded by a growing number of academics and critical archaeologists who view the “united kingdom” of Judah and Israel as a piece of fiction.

Following in the footsteps of Benjamin Mazar, several members of the Mazar family continue to play a key role in the dissemination of the findings of Israeli biblical archaeology. This included Benjamin Mazar’s son Ori Mazar, his nephew Professor Amihai Mazar – head of the department of archaeology at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and recipient of the Israel Prize for Archaeology in 2009 – his grandson Dan Mazar – a former co-chairman of the Christian Mideast Conference, an American Christian Zionist organization – and his granddaughter Dr Eilat Mazar. As we shall see below, Eilat Mazar, in particular, continues to

play a key role in the current biblical archaeology of displacement in Silwan in east Jerusalem and around the Muslim holy shrines of east Jerusalem. She also claims to have discovered the “Palace of King David” – a “discovery” typical of the invention of history and concoction of memory by the founding father of Israeli biblical archeology – a claim for which some current Israeli archaeologists say there is no evidence (Ra’ad, 2010: 223, n.40).

General Moshe Dayan: living with the Tanakh, bulldozing and looting the heritage of Palestine

Two Israeli army chiefs-of-staff, General Moshe Dayan and General Yigael Yadin, played key roles in the founding, popularization and glamourization of state-produced biblical heritage in Israel. In Israeli popular imagination, the charismatic defence minister Dayan was the hero of the spectacular Six Day War. A deeply secular man and a protégé of secular prime minister Ben-Gurion, who also took a keen interest in biblical archaeology, Dayan, perhaps more than any other Israeli leader, typified Labour territorial expansionism in the post-1967 era. He was a powerful military leader and politician, whose influence over Israeli politics was profound (Golani, 1998: 5, 195–9; Slater, 1991: 208–79). In 1956 Dayan was army chief-of-staff, leading the Israeli army to and in the 1956 Suez war. General Dayan was an “amateur archaeologist” and wrote a book called *Lehyot ‘Im Ha-Tanakh – Living with the Hebrew Bible* (1978) and “scientific” papers in *Qadmoniot* (Antiquities), the main Hebrew organ of the Israel Exploration Society.

Dayan did more than any other Labour establishment figure to popularize the concept of Greater Israel and to begin the actual integration of the newly occupied West Bank and Gaza into Israel proper. It was Dayan who, upon arriving at the Wailing Wall (*Hait al-Mabka*) – the Western Wall of the Temple Mount for Jews, and the Al-Buraq of the Haram Al-Sharif (the Nobel Sanctuary) for Muslims – in the Old City of Jerusalem, on the fourth day of the June war, uttered the widely publicized words: “We have returned to all that is holy in our land. We have returned never to be parted again” (in Sachar, 1976: 673; also Sprinzak, 1991:40). On another occasion that followed the 1967 war, during an emotional ceremony for the burial of Jewish casualties of 1948 on east Jerusalem’s Mount of Olives, Dayan repeated the same expansionist vision of Greater Israel – a revived vision which was also symbolically illustrated by the title of his 1969 book, *A New Map, Other Relationships* :

Our Brothers who fell in the War of Independence [in 1948] – we have not abandoned your dream and we have not forgotten your lesson. We have returned to the Temple Mount, to the cradle of our people’s history, to the inheritance of the Patriarchs, the land of the Judges and the fortress of the Kingdom of the House of David. We have returned to Hebron and Shechem [Nablus], to Bethlehem and Anatot, ⁵ to Jericho and the crossing of the Jordan at Adam Ha’Ir [a name mentioned in Joshua 3.16 and identified by Dayan with the Damya Bridge crossing over the Jordan River].

(Dayan, 1969:173)

During the pre-1948 mandatory period, David Ben-Gurion defined Zionism as *Transfer* : you “transfer” the Jews from Europe to Palestine and you “transfer” the indigenous Palestinian Arabs to neighbouring Arab countries. Zionism’s infamous slogan: “a land without a people for a people without a land” has echoed the same “transfer” doctrine; Zionism’s ongoing land and

racist demographic battles with the indigenous inhabitants of Palestine has always been a battle for “more land and less Arabs” or (as Labour leader and the fifth president of Israel Yitzhak Navon put it in the post-1967 period) a battle for “maximum land and minimum Arabs” (Masalha, 1997; 2000). General Dayan epitomized this demographically racist, territorially expansionist Labour Zionism in the post-1967 period. He was appointed defence minister on the eve of the 1967 war and retained this powerful post until 1974. He was the most famous and typical exponent of Israeli post-1967 expansionism and the de facto integration of the occupied territories into Israel. Dayan instituted a policy of “creeping annexation” a process by which Israeli administration, jurisdiction and law, gradually, incrementally and draconianly were imposed on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, in ever-expanding areas, yet without a comprehensive act of legal annexation. That process, also described as de facto annexation, is seen in the actual transformation of the demographic and physical realities of the “Administered Territories of Judea and Samaria”. “Living together in Judea and Samaria” had been repeatedly used by Dayan since June 1967 as a euphemism to express Israel’s determination to hold onto the West Bank and Gaza).

The 1967 war not only reopened the question of Israel’s borders, but also rekindled mass interest and excitement in the so-called “whole Land of Israel”. The influence of the biblical narrative in the secular intentions of Labour Zionism, including biblical conquest narrative of Joshua, had always been evident. In the wake of the 1967 conquests, Israeli author Amos Elon writes, the daily Hebrew press was filled with “maps of Joshua’s, Solomon’s and Herod’s conquests on both sides of the Jordan [River], and with argumentative articles proclaiming Israel’s right to the whole of Palestine” irrespective of the wishes of its Palestinian inhabitants (Elon, 1997: 46).

According to Elon, Jewish “biblical borders” included Sinai and the Syrian Golan Heights. Apparently he was upset by the Dayan declaration that Israel’s “historical borders” included only the West Bank (Elon, 1997: 46). Zionist Israelis advanced their claims of Jewish rights to the whole land based on security or economic or demographic or religious considerations. And so the contest over “biblical Israel” and its boundaries continued. There were many reasons why the expansionist sentiments of Greater Israel were sharply reawakened in the post-1967 period. First, the claims of “Jewish historical rights in the whole Land of Israel” had a deep basis in mainstream secular Labour Zionism. Second, the spectacular and manifold consequences of the 1967 military successes underlined the success of Zionism and the creation of a dynamic, powerful and expansionist settler society. Third, the mobilization of neo-Zionist, Jewish fundamentalist political and social forces in Israel were highly effective. Fourth, according to Amos Elon, the territory of Israel prior to the 1967 conquests, though rich in Roman, Byzantine, Nabatean, Crusader and Muslim historical sites and locations, actually had almost no historical monuments testifying to an ancient Jewish past. The pre-1967 territory never embraced the ancient territory of the Hebrews – who were peoples of the Hills – but rather, according to the Bible, that of their plainlands enemies, the Philistines, as well as the Negev of the Edomites and “Galilee of the Gentiles” (Elon, 1997: 46).

The 1967 conquests suddenly brought the vast mythic repertoire of the Hebrew Bible and biblical locations of “Judea” Hebron and Jericho under Israeli control. It would be illuminating to compare the irredentist drive for Greater Israel in the post-1967 period with some of its Central European equivalents – nations which were born in the nineteenth or early twentieth centuries and are committed to the recovery of their “unredeemed national territories” which are populated by still more national groups. But it would also be illuminating to compare the

religious messianism of the post-1967 period with the First Latin Crusade (1096–9). In the euphoric and feverously messianic environment of post-1967, Amos Elon writes:

Tombs of renewed Hebrew prophets and kings, all said to be absolutely authentic, as well as Saul's own throne and Samson's alleged cave were all discovered almost daily by enthusiastic and amateur archaeologists. The new discoveries also included tombs of minor biblical figures such as Abner, King Saul's chief of staff, and the prophet Nathan. (The discoveries were reminiscent of similar finds during the First Crusade – for example, “the discovery of the holy lance” at Antioch and the recognition of Baldwin I of “the cup of the Last Supper” among the booty at Caesarea).

(Elon, 1996: 92)

General Dayan was a colourful character, and an amateur archaeologist and collector; he never took academic or professional courses in archaeology (Slater, 1991: 161). However, during three decades between 1951 and 1981, he obsessively collected a vast collection of antiquities acquired through illicit excavations; as well as bought, exchanged and sold antiquities in Israel and abroad. Dayan's books and speeches are full of rhetoric about “living with the Bible” and “returning to the land of the Israelites”. In many ways he typifies the messy and complicated story of Israeli biblical archaeology: he sets out to collect biblical archaeological but ends up discovering and amassing a large number of “Canaanite artefacts” He turned his Tel Aviv house in Tzahala, a residential neighbourhood in the northeastern part of Tel Aviv, into a private archaeological theme park/museum; but this private theme was full of “Canaanite artefacts” (Dayan, 1976: 125; Ben-Ezer, 1997: 122–3). Ironically in Israel Dayan became associated not with “Israelite archaeology” but with “Canaanite archaeology”. One Israeli hagiographer commented on Dayan's collection: “the precious relics in the garden, as well as in his house, have made ancient Israel, Egypt, Mesopotamia and the Mediterranean Islands an inseparable part of his daily thoughts” (Teveth, 1972: 202).

Although seldom did General Dayan speak publicly or explicitly about his obsession with “Canaanite antiquity” one reads a lot between the lines of his book *Living with the Bible* (1978). The most famous incident of his digging activities took place at Azur near Tel Aviv in 1968, when he was badly injured by landslide while robbing a burial cave, and hospitalized for three weeks (Kletter, 2003). Most of Dayan's looting was done in areas conquered after 1967 and under his own military rule. It is even claimed that Dayan ordered a training exercise with soldiers practising entrenching at a known antiquity-site; so that once the exercise was over he could come and look for antiquities. Other IDF commanders began to follow Dayan in collecting and robbing antiquities (Ariel, 1976, 1986; see also Dayan, 1976: 258). Dayan's looting of Palestinian antiquities followed a long tradition of Israeli systematic appropriation of Palestinian assets and personal possessions in the post-Nakba, including archives, library collections, books, photo collections, private papers, historical documents and manuscripts, churches, mosques, urban residential quarters, transport infrastructure, police stations, prisons and railways (Masalha, 2012: ch. 4; W. Khalidi, 1992a). Of the 70,000 Palestinian books looted and collected by the Israeli army during the 1948 Nakba, many were destroyed, but some 6,000 of these books were eventually placed in the National (Jewish) and (Hebrew) University Library in Jerusalem (Masalha, 2012: 138; Goulordava, 2012).

After the 1967 war General Dayan started to buy antiquities on a large scale in Palestinian shops in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip, mainly in East Jerusalem (Dayan, 1986: 142). Dayan was a robber of antiquities, who had never acquired nor showed the slightest interest in

acquiring scientific knowledge, such as methods of excavation, dating, stratigraphy and layering. As a deeply secular man, religion was not important for Dayan. Although he amassed a large number of Canaanite antiquities, he always associated all antiquities with the biblical stories.⁶

Today, three decades after the death of Dayan, the Israeli biblical heritage has grown into a multi-billion dollar industry. It consists of more than 30,000 archaeological digs which are crammed not only with “biblical-era artefacts” and “biblical discoveries”, but also with colourful characters-biblical scholars, Protestant evangelicals, Catholic theologians, police detectives, professional artefact forgers and American billionaire collectors (Burleigh, 2008).

Bulldozers, archaeology and the destruction of the muslim Al-Magharbeh quarter

The bulldozer was a “weapon of choice” for the Israeli demolition of hundreds of Palestinian villages during the Nakba 1948 and for post-Nakba archaeological excavations (Slyomovics, 2007: 46). The bulldozer remains the symbol of the relationship between the Israeli state and indigenous inhabitants of Palestine (Halper, 2002). Since the ethnic cleansing of 1948 Palestinians have had to endure continuing waves of bulldozer afforestation programmes (A. Tal, 2002: 94–5) and “bulldozer archaeology”. In *Facts on the Ground* (2001) Nadia Abu El-Haj shows that the colonial practices of Israeli biblical archaeology went hand in hand with the use of bulldozers to clear ancient Palestinian sites and medieval Islamic architecture – in line with the efforts to make Jerusalem more of a Jewish-national site and to dominate or even bulldoze the multiplicity of other histories in the city (El-Haj, 2001; Bowersock, 1984:130–41; 1988:181–91).

General Dayan was always regarded as the symbol of the new fighting Israeli state, of the confident *Sabra* (the New Hebrew Man), and of a state-sponsored practical “bulldozer biblical archeology”; he was a warrior, military leader and Labour Zionist politician. He was born on Kibbutz Degania Alef (a secular *kibbutz* , literally called “Wheat of God”) near the shores of the Sea of Galilee in the middle the First World War to Jewish immigrants from the Ukraine. In 1948, his father, Shmuel Dayan, served as deputy speaker of the Knesset, representing the ruling Mapia party. At the age of 14, Moshe Dayan joined the Yishuv Jewish militia, the Haganah. In the late 1930s he served in the Special Night Squads under British Christian Zionist officer Orde Wingate, working to put down the great Palestinian Arab uprising. In 1948 he made a name for himself as a Samson-like commander and took part in blitzkrieg attacks on Palestinian population centres which led to the depopulation, ethnic cleansing, destruction and bulldozing of scores of Palestinian towns and villages. He became the fourth chief of staff of the Israeli army (1953–8), and defence minister shortly before the famous blitzkrieg spectacular air strikes on neighbouring Arab countries at the beginning of what became known in Israel and the West as the “Six-Day War” (*Milhemet Sheshet Ha Yamim*) and to Palestinians and Arabs as the Naksa, the Setback.

On the fourth day of the June 1967 war General Moshe Dayan entered the (walled) Old City of Jerusalem. Two days later, on the last day of the war, 11 June 1967, Dayan and key army generals (including Uzi Narkiss and Shlomo Lahat and Haim Hertzog), Reserve Colonel Ya’acov Yannai, director of the National Parks Authority, the historian and biblical archaeologist professor Michael Avi-Yonah, all played a key role in the eviction and bulldozing of the ancient al-Magharbeh Quarter in the Old City of Jerusalem. Thousands of Arab residents were turned out of their homes on 11 June, two days after the capture of east Jerusalem by the Israeli military, after three hours’ notice.⁷ The Palestinian quarter was completely demolished by bulldozers,

because Dayan and the Jewish city's biblical advisors and town planners wanted space for a large plaza in front of Wailing Wall, the Western Wall (al-Buraq) of al-Haram al-Sharif (the "Noble Sanctuary").

The Muslim al-Magharbeh Quarter housed the ancient and important Islamic Waqf foundation, originally established in 1193 by al-Malik al-Afdal, the son of Saladin. The Ottoman Muslim fortress wall which encircles the Old City of Jerusalem, completed in 1541, also preserved the al-Magharbeh name in one of its massive gates: Bab al-Magharbeh ("Gate of the Magharbeh"), named after the Muslim Arab immigrants from North Africa who lived in the nearby quarter. The hurried obliteration of the quarter in June 1967 resulted in destruction of old schools and several historic religious sites, including two historic mosques, two *zawiyas* and a great number of endowed residences which the quarter contained (for further details see Benziman, 1973: 37–46; Ben-Dov *et al.*, 1983: 163; R. Khalidi, 1992:139–40; Dumper, 1994:116; Levy, 1988; Melman & Raviv, 1988).

The levelling of the ancient al-Magharbeh Quarter and the eviction of 5,000–6,000 residents (Halsell, 1986: 92) were only the beginning of the sweeping changes carried out by Israel – changes designed to wrest control of the Old City and make it, eventually, an exclusively Jewish area.

The bulldozing of the quarter's historic monuments, schools and mosques created concern at the British School of Archeology in Jerusalem:

Alarmed about the safety of major Islamic monuments around Haram al-Sharif, the school began a survey of 1,300 years of Islamic architecture and pinpointed monuments that should be preserved. In their survey, the British School lists some 30 Islamic monuments in the old city from the Umayyad, Abbasid, Fatimid and Ayyubid periods, 79 from the [Muslim] Mamluk period and 37 [Muslim] Ottoman [period] buildings of note. The Islamic waqf authorities have responsibility for much of these buildings, which create the present shape and skyline of much of the old city and are therefore of great importance in determining its character.

(Ibid. : 92–3)

Army chief-of-staff General Yigael Yadin

Dayan's army colleague, General Yigael Yadin, became the second army chief-of-staff at the age of 32, serving in this post until 1952. Yadin was also a founding father of Israeli archaeology and perhaps the most influential of all Israeli archaeologists. In the 1950s the general-turned-biblical archaeologist Yadin acquired fragments of the Dead Sea Scrolls for the Israeli state in a cloak and dagger operation and published a book on this episode, entitled: *The Temple Scroll: The Hidden Law of the Dead Sea Sect* (1985). Yadin also wrote his doctoral thesis on the translation of these scrolls for which he received the state-sponsored Israel Prize – a prize set up by another biblical author, academic and minister of education and culture, Ben-Tzion Dinur ⁸ in 1953. Educated in Russia and Germany and lecturer at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Dinur was a prolific author. His Hebrew books include *Israel in its Land: From the First Days of Israel until the Babylonian Exile* (1938) and *Generations of the Bible: Research and Studies to Understand the Bible and the History of Israel in that Period* (1977). Both Yadin and Dinur were recipients of the Israel Prize, both originally had east European surnames (Sukenic and Dinaburg) (Myers, 1988: 167–93; Piterberg, 2008; also below), and ideological Zionist first

names (Yigael: “to be redeemed” and Ben-Tzion: “son of Zion”) and both were “par excellence” Israeli academic-politicians for whom Jewish history and biblical archaeology were secular nationalist ideology and (state-sponsored) civic religion.

General Yadin also played a key role in Israel’s wars: in the 1948 war he was responsible for the preparation of the infamous Plan Dalet of the Haganah which led to the destruction and depopulation of scores of Palestinian village and towns in the Nakba. In the 1967 war he served as a military advisor to Prime Minister Levi Eshkol and following the October 1973 (Yom Kippur) war he was a member of the Israeli Agranat Commission that investigated failings in the Israeli military in the run up to the war. From 1977 to 1981 Yadin became deputy prime minister in the coalition government of Menahem Begin. Yadin also effectively dominated Israeli archaeology for more than a generation from the mid-1950s to the 1970s. Yadin also took keen interest in biblical warfare and his two-volume work *The Art of Warfare in Biblical Lands In the Light of Archaeological Study* was published in 1963. In this book Yadin – who was Haganah chief of operations in 1948 and under his direction Plan Dalet was implemented in March-May 1948 – applies an operational perspective to the development of military technology and tactics in ancient Palestine in the light of his “archaeological discoveries”.

Professor Yadin has been described by Neil Asher Silberman in his biography *A Prophet from Amongst You: The Life of Yigael Yadin, Soldier, Scholar and Myth-Maker of Modern Israel*. Under Yadin, archaeology in Israel was not strictly an academic activity but a means of communication “between the people and the land” (Silberman, 1993). For General Yadin, like General Dayan and Ben-Gurion, biblical archaeology and “biblical history” was both a reliable historical record of the past and a guide to present state policies, as well as a kind of secular nationalist civic religion central to Israeli identity and Israeli society social cohesion (Elon, 1997a: 39). Commenting on his own mobilized archaeology, Yadin wrote in the Israeli army journal *Bamahane* of March 1969:

Everyone feels and knows that he is discovering and excavating findings are artefacts from the days of his fathers. And every finding bears witness to the connection and covenant between the people and the land... As far as Israel is concerned, it seems to me that the factor I mentioned – the search and the building of the connection to the people and the land – must be taken into consideration. [Archaeology] in my view reinforces the Hebraic consciousness, let us say – the identification and connection with ancient Judaism and Jewish consciousness.

(Quoted in Sabbagh, 2006: 90)

In 1962–3 General Yadin was put in command of the excavation of Massada, a hilltop fortress where some 1,000 Jewish warriors had “committed suicide” rather than surrender to the Romans in 73 CE . The archaeological paradigms centred on General Yadin’s excavations at Massada fed into what Zerubavel refers to as the “master commemorative narrative that highlights their members’ common past and legitimizes their aspiration for a shared destiny” (Zerubavel, 1995: 214). One of the outcomes of Yadin’s biblical archaeology was the emergence of Massada – a mountain-top, Hellenistic-Roman fortress site in the southern desert near the Dead Sea – as Israel’s main secular-nationalist-military shrine, a place where Israeli army recruits were assembled to take an oath of allegiance in dramatic night-time ceremonies – this despite complaints on the part of critical biblical scholars that evidence for a mass suicide was lacking and that there was reason to believe that ancient accounts of the event were actually falsified (cited by Lazare, 2002).

BIBLICAL MUSEUMS, ARCHAEOLOGICAL THEME PARKS AND SECULAR NATIONALIST SHRINES: THE PALESTINE ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM, FROM PALESTINE TO ISRAEL

Misappropriating the past and appropriating the Palestinian heritage and voices have always accompanied Zionist colonial practices in Palestine. In 1948 the Israeli state appropriated for itself immovable Palestinian assets and personal possessions including schools, libraries, books, pictures, private papers, historical documents and manuscripts, furniture, churches, mosques, urban residential quarters, transport infrastructure, police stations, prisons and railways (W. Khalidi, 1992). Encapsulating this colonial appropriation, Israel's toponymy projects and the renaming of Palestinian locations and material heritage continued and even expanded after the 1967 conquests. Almost immediately after the occupation of east Jerusalem the Palestine Archaeological Museum was renamed the "Rockefeller Museum". Some of items were taken to the "Shrine of the Book" in Hebrew, "*Hechal Ha-Sefer*". In biblical Hebrew the term *hechal* meant a large building which either referred to the main building of the Temple in Jerusalem, or to a palace, such as the palace of King Ahab. But here the Temple connotations are unmistakable. The *Hechal Ha-Sefer* building was a specially designated wing of the Israel Museum in West Jerusalem. Today it houses parts of the Dead Sea Scrolls discovered 1947–56 in the Qumran caves. As we shall see below, *Hechal Ha-Sefer* is also part of an artificially manufactured secular nationalist heritage industry – a well-funded state-sponsored industry, partly funded by American Jewish and Christian Zionist donors in the US – and dozens of memorializing biblical-archaeological theme parks and museums constructed across Israel, theme parks and museums which function as secular Zionist shrines in a largely secular Israeli society.

Some [archaeological theme parks] and museums in Israel are located at historical sites that have been assigned Hebrew names (*Ein Dor*, *Tel Hazor*, and *Tel Megedo*, for example) in an attempt to achieve an ideological structuring of the landscape that creates seemingly natural continuity between the history of the geographical site and the history of the Zionist movement.

(Natour and Giladi, 2001:158; see also Azoulay, 1994: 85–109)

In 2008, the three most popular tourist attractions in Israel were biblical theme parks/museums: the Massada National Park (with 720,000 visitors), the Caesarea National Park (a site with predominantly Crusader buildings, with 715,000 visitors) and the Jerusalem Tanakh Zoo (687,000 visitors). Apparently from 2005 to 2007 the Tanakh Zoo – with its collection of wildlife mentioned in the Hebrew Bible – established in 1940 – was the most popular tourist attraction in Israel and in 2009 had a record of 738,000 visitors (Yelinek, 2010).

Before the establishment of a Jewish state in 1948, Palestine had a diverse multicultural and multiracial population of many different peoples. Set up in mandatory Palestine, the Palestine Archaeological Museum attempted to represent this diversity, multiple histories, multilayered identity and diverse heritage of Palestine. Its site had been located on Karm al-Shaykh (the "Vineyard of the Shaykh"), a hill just outside the north-eastern corner of the Old City of Jerusalem. The museum had been conceived and established during the mandatory period, with financial support from the Rockefeller family. It was opened to the public in January 1938. The

museum housed a large collection of artefacts unearthed in the excavations conducted in Palestine in 1890–1948. Also among the museum’s possessions were eighth-century wooden panels from the al-Aqsa Mosque and twelfth-century (Crusader period) marble lintels from the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Until 1966 the museum was run by an international board of trustees, when it was taken over by the Jordanian state. Since 1967 the museum has been jointly managed by the Israel Museum and the Israel Department of Antiquities and Museums (later renamed Israel Antiquities Authority). The site is now the headquarters of the Israeli Antiquities Authorities. While the Palestine Archaeological Museum of the mandatory period still represented the positive diversity of religions and ethnicities that characterized Jerusalem and Palestine for many centuries, the Israel Museum and “Shrine of the Book” represent that single-minded determination of the Israeli Antiquities Authorities and the Zionist heritage industry to cleanse the land, retrospectively colonize the ancient Palestine and manufacture a new collective memory and national identity.

RECENT EXCAVATIONS IN OCCUPIED EAST JERUSALEM: THE CITY OF DAVID NATIONAL THEME PARK AND THE JUDAIZATION OF SILWAN

In the current Israeli drive to create the “City of David National Theme Park” in occupied Silwan in east Jerusalem, excavations deliberately destroy or obliterate any findings that do not add to the substantiation of Jewish presence in biblical times. Israeli excavations of Jewish roots in occupied Arab east Jerusalem began immediately after the June 1967 war. Armed with the Hebrew Bible and a divine mandate, Israel unilaterally annexed newly occupied east Jerusalem in 1967 in total violation of International Law and countless UN resolutions. Most Palestinians in east Jerusalem received only Israeli residency permits, not Israeli citizenship. According to recent Israeli statistics, more than 13,000 Palestinians – from a current population of 260,000 in east Jerusalem – have had their residency revoked since 1967. According to Dalia Kerstein, director of the Israeli human rights organization Hamoked, in an attempt to push as many Palestinians as possible out of Jerusalem, the number of residency revocations has risen sharply in recent years, with more than 4,500 Palestinians losing Jerusalem residency in 2008 alone. “It’s really a case of ethnic cleansing” designed to reduce what the Israelis call the “Palestinian demographic threat” (cited in Cook, 2011). In 2011 reports surfaced in the Israeli media suggesting that Israel’s security services have compiled a list of several hundred Palestinian community leaders and human rights activists in east Jerusalem whom they wish to issue with expulsion orders (cited in Cook, 2011).

Since 1967, Israel and the Jewish municipality of Jerusalem have pursued single-mindedly two goals: to maintain a clear Jewish majority in Greater Jerusalem and to Judaize the occupied eastern part of the city. With west Jerusalem, in 1948, the Israelis got all the forcibly vacated Palestinian stone houses without paying for them. In the areas occupied in 1967, the Israelis have built many exclusively Jewish colonies on public or confiscated lands and have evicted residents in order to take over their properties, particularly in east Jerusalem, using various pretexts. In *Discrimination in the Heart of the Holy City* Dr Meir Margalit, a member in the Jerusalem municipality between 1998 and 2002, details the discriminatory policies of the Israeli-controlled municipality, policies which were the outcome of

concerted action of a number of State authorities, most outstanding of which are the Ministry of the Interior, the Israel Police, the National Insurance Institute, the Labour Exchange and, of course, the Municipality – policies designed “to keep east Jerusalem down” through the preferential treatment of Jewish areas and “systematic deprivation” of Palestinian areas and other “racist” plans and actions. In any civilized country this would be called racism. In Israel, however, it is not nice to call a Jew a racist, for are we ourselves not the ultimate victims of racism? Yet the insufferable ease with which we harp on the demographic argument as a central goal in city planning proves that something has gone wrong in our own application of human values toward others.

(Margalit, 2006:11,159,177,180)

Commenting on the close links between recent biblical excavations and the de-Arabization/Judaization of east Jerusalem, Basem Ra’ad, Professor of Cultural Studies at Al-Quds University in Jerusalem and the author of *Hidden Histories: Palestine and the Eastern Mediterranean* (2010: 172–4), writes:

Now in east Jerusalem, the Judaizing plans are seen in new colonial suburbs built on confiscated land with Jewish contributions, and a house here or an apartment building there taken over by hook or by crook. These spaces of colonization are fenced in and well-protected, with large Israeli flags displayed, all designed to place mini-fortresses within and outside the Old City. Zionist organizations, or more usually their intermediaries, manage to concoct excuses for taking over a building or for wooing this person or that institution to sell property. This happened with the Greek Orthodox Patriarchy and a few Jerusalemite property owners – usually by trickery, when the Zionist system finds the weaker links... Israel has taken over houses in the previous noman’s land, spread out into the French Hill and Silwan, enlarged the boundaries of the city by building huge colonies to increase the Jewish population, and separated Jerusalem from its natural West Bank extensions. It has also instituted policies that make it more difficult for non-Jewish Jerusalemites to live in their city and that stifle their existence, in an attempt to Judaize the city by force. It is a creeping, many-pronged process that continues to be implemented with sacred sites and with place names#x2026; as has already occurred with the Hebron mosque, now more than 60 percent controlled by Jewish extremists, and as is planned for the Al-Aqsa Mosque and Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem... In Silwan, just east of the Old City walls – or what some Zionist archaeologists like to call ‘the City of David’ (although there is absolutely no evidence for that David, despite the many targeted excavations) – the plans are most insidious. A richly funded corporation by the name of ELAD has been given free reign to implement the Zionist agenda, colonizing, taking over properties, finding excuses to evict Palestinians, and building for Jews in confiscated space – basically violating even Israeli antiquities laws that would prohibit such ‘development’ in sensitive areas. Archaeology is used or abused to support these nefarious activities, as when (funded by rightwing Zionist financiers from New York) a Zionist archaeologist declared the ‘discovery’ of ‘King David’s palace’, despite objections by some Israeli archaeologists. Find a structure or a pile of stones, provide no proof, and call it anything you like.

(Ra’ad, 2010a)

Some Israeli and international archaeologists and academics have protested against the exploitation and manipulation of archaeology at the Palestinian village of Silwan.⁹ These Israeli archaeologists, operating through an organization for “alternative archaeology” have complained against the disregard of ethical standards in building plans in east Jerusalem and the manipulation of data about the site (Ra’ad, 2010a). As we shall see in the Conclusion, much of the work undertaken by biblical archaeology has been discarded by a growing number of academics and critical archaeologists as a piece of fiction. On 5 August 2005 the *New York Times* ran the headline “King David’s Palace Is Found, Archaeologist Says”:

An Israeli archaeologist says she has uncovered in east Jerusalem what may be the fabled palace of the biblical King David. Her work has been sponsored by a conservative Israeli research institute and financed by an American Jewish investment banker who would like to prove that Jerusalem was indeed the capital of the Jewish kingdom described in the Bible.

(Erlanger, 2005)

Gabriel Barkay, a professor of biblical archaeology at Bar Ilan University and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, remarked: “This is one of the first greetings we have from the Jerusalem of David and Solomon, a period which has played a kind of hide-and-seek with archaeologists for the last century” (*ibid.*). The “discovery” was made Dr Eilat Mazar, a fellow of the American-funded Shalem Centre in Jerusalem¹⁰ and the granddaughter of Benjamin Mazar, one of the founding fathers of Israeli literalist-fundamentalist biblical archaeology; she is also a cousin Amihai Mazar, a professor of archaeology at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Eilat Mazar is funded by Ir David Foundation (City of David Foundation) which controls the site at Silwan and supports Jewish colonization of east Jerusalem. Amihai Mazar called the find “something of a miracle”. He believed that the building “discovered” may be the Fortress of Zion that David was said to have conquered, which he renamed the “City of David” (Erlanger, 2005). As we shall see in the Conclusion, the whole “City of David” in the tenth century BCE is an invented religious tradition.

The Israeli state-orchestrated drive to Judaize the occupied Palestinian neighbourhood of Silwan (so-called City of David) has been accompanied by demolitions of Arab houses and the announcement of “archaeological discoveries”. Both Israeli settlement activities in the Arab neighbourhoods of Jerusalem and Israeli archaeological excavations in and around the Old City of Jerusalem are funded massively by American Jewish and Christian Zionist donor organizations in the US.

In 2011 Israel announced its plan to build some 4,000 settler units in Silwan (Amayreh, 2011). As a result of these Judaization policies the area of Silwan has been marked by high political tension and frequent clashes between the indigenous inhabitants and the new Jewish settlers. In 2009 about 60–70 Jewish settler families were living in the Silwan area; the growing number of these fundamentalist settlers in the Arab neighbourhood has become alarming (ICAHD, 2010). The Israeli authorities have demolished 24,000 Palestinian homes since 1967. In Silwan, demolition of Arab houses, which began in the 1990s, has recently been accelerated. In 2009, 47 Palestinian houses were demolished, leaving 256 people homeless. The Jewish Jerusalem Municipality justified demolitions under a range of pretexts, including the “Absentees’ Property Law” illegal construction (“building without a permit”), building on Arab land that has been declared by the municipality as “open green space” and archaeological excavations. Just over

100 permits are issued annually by the Jerusalem Municipality to the Palestinian residents of east Jerusalem, according to one estimate, leaving a gap of 1,100 new housing units per year needed by the Palestinian population (*ibid.*). The exact size of the Palestinian population in east Jerusalem is not known; in 2008 the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics reported the number of Palestinians living in east Jerusalem was 208,000.

Many Israeli demolition orders have been issued in Silwan since 2009, among them 89 in the “Al-Bustan” area (the “garden”). In this area the Jerusalem Municipality is planning to construct a tourist park on the ruin of these Arab houses. The plan is strongly supported by Jewish Mayor Nir Barkat who says that this area used to be the “garden of King David” and thus needs to be reconstructed for tourists – this mass demolition without taking into account that more than one thousand Palestinian residents are likely to be displaced in order to create the “garden”. Another area in Silwan at risk of mass demolitions is “Al-Abbasiya” where two apartment buildings, housing 250 people, have received demolition orders in March 2009. On 15 June 2010 Israeli bulldozers moved in and cleared the Aamer Siyam plot of land in the Al-Abbasiya neighbourhood of Silwan, destroying three structures (ICAHN, 2010).

As the Israeli Committee Against House Demolition has shown, Israeli policies of archaeological excavations-cum-Judaization-cum-house demolitions in occupied Silwan are in total violation of article 53 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which states that “any destruction by the Occupying Power of real or personal property belonging individually or collectively to private persons, or to the State, or to other public authorities, or to social or cooperative organizations, is prohibited, except where such destruction is rendered absolutely necessary by military operations” (*ibid.*).

Palestinian and Al-Quds University scholar Basem Ra’ad points out the limited but real efforts of the Kenyon Institute and the École Biblique in east Jerusalem to move away from their earlier, uncritical perspectives on biblical archaeology. But both the Albright Institute and the Jerusalem Center for Near Eastern Studies continue to orient their interests towards Zionist myths and “Jewish cultural roots” in their research and publications of Palestine’s antiquities. Scandalously the Albright Institute, with its continued commitment to the goals of biblical archaeology, actively collaborates with Zionist archaeological activities in occupied east Jerusalem and the de-Arabization policies of the city (Ra’ad, 2010:148–52).

Chapter 4

COLONIALIST IMAGINATION AS A SITE OF MIMICRY AND ERASURE

The Israeli renaming project

Since 1948 the Israeli state has encouraged a conception of an ethnocentric identity on the basis of the land and conquest traditions of the Hebrew Bible, especially on the book of Joshua and those dealing with biblical Israelites' origins that demanded the subjugation and destruction of other peoples. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that the book of Joshua is required reading in Israeli schools. Although (as we shall see in the Conclusion) the Israelite "conquest" was not the "Blitzkrieg" it is made out to be in the book of Joshua, this book holds an important place in the Israeli school curricula and Israeli academic programmes partly because the founding fathers of Zionism viewed Joshua's narrative of conquests as a precedent for the establishment of Israel as a nation (Burge, 2003: 82). While the account of the Israelites' enslavement in ancient Egypt as described in the book of Exodus is generally recognized as a myth, in Israeli schools and universities this is treated as actual history.

The "creation of a usable (biblical) past" (Peled-Elhanan, 2012: 12) by the Israeli educational system and the Israeli biblical academy has been examined by several Israeli academics and authors, including Nurit Peled-Elhanan (2012: 12–47), Benjamin Beit-Hallahmi (1992), Shlomo Sand (2011), Meron Benvenisti (2002) and Gabriel Piterberg (2001: 31–46; 2008). In *Original Sins: Reflections on the History of Zionism and Israel*, Beit-Hallahmi (of Haifa University) comments on Israel's ethnocentric biblical "regime of knowledge":

Most Israelis today, as a result of Israeli education, regard the Bible as a reliable source of historical information of a secular, political kind. The Zionist version of Jewish history accepts most biblical legends about the beginning of Jewish history, minus divine intervention. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are treated as historical figures. The descent into Egypt and the Exodus are phases in the secular history of a developing people, as is the conquest of Canaan by Joshua. The biblical order of events is accepted, but the interpretation is nationalist and secular.

The Historicization of the Bible is a national enterprise in Israel, carried out by hundreds of scholars at all universities. The starting point is biblical chronology, then evidence (limited) and speculation (plentiful) are arranged accordingly. The Israeli Defence Ministry has even published a complete chronology of biblical events, giving exact dates for the creation of the world ...

Claiming this ancient mythology as history is an essential part of Zionist secular nationalism, in its attempt to present a coherent account of the genesis of the Jewish people in ancient West Asia. It provides a focus of identification to counter the

rabbinical, Diaspora traditions. Teaching the Bible as a history to Israeli children creates the notion of continuity. It is Abraham (“the first Zionist”, migrating to Palestine), Joshua and the conquest of Palestine (wiping out the Canaanites, just like today), King David’s conquest of Jerusalem (just like today).

(Beit-Hallahmi, 1992: 119)

Commenting on the tight state control and supervision of the “biblical knowledge” in the Israeli educational system, Shlomo Sand (of Tel Aviv University) further explains:

The teachings of the Bible, used more as a book of national history than sacred religious canons, also became a separate subject in primary and secondary education in the eyes of the first immigrant [pre-1948 Yishuv] community in Palestine. Each student in every level of the Hebrew school system studies the history of their collective past separately from universal history. It was logical that the development of the collective memory was completed by an adequate university education. The “three-thousand years of Jewish nation” had the right to a separate field of pedagogy and research prohibited to “unaccredited” historians who would presume to access it. One of the most striking results of this original approach was that from the 1930s to the 1990s, no teacher or researcher from the various departments of ‘History of the Jewish People’ in Israeli universities considered him- or herself to be a non-Zionist historian. Historians of general history whose Zionist identity was not always as confirmed had the freedom to treat questions dealing with Jewish history, but they were ineligible for budgets, scholarships, research institutes, chairs or directing doctoral theses relate to Jewish history.

(Sand, 2011: 159–60)

Commenting on the construction, production and dissemination of Zionist “knowledge of the country” and biblical archaeology (“facts on the ground”), Meron Benvenisti, Israeli author and former deputy mayor of Jerusalem (from 1971 to 1978), explained that in the state school curriculum and in the army the subject of “knowledge” of the land of the Bible (*yedi‘at haaretz*) is obsessive. Furthermore “knowledge of the land” is both militarized and masculinized. This obsessive state-directed search for rootedness in the land by the Israeli academia and often Western-funded Zionist research centres and the treatment of the Bible as actual “history” is conducted by predominantly secular Ashkenazi historians, nationalist archaeologists and biblical academics. Benvenisti writes:

The Bible became a guidebook, taught by reference to the landscape, less for its humanistic and social message – and not for its divine authorship. There is nothing more romantic and at the same time more ‘establishment’ than to be connected in some fashion with this cult. Its priests are the *madrichim* – guides and youth leaders. An extensive institutional network sustained *yedia’t haaretz* [knowledge of the biblical country]: research institutes, field schools, the Society for the Preservation of Nature in Israel (SPNI), the Jewish National Fund, youth movements, paramilitary units, the army.

(Benvenisti, 1986: 20)

Those who conceived the expression *yedi‘at haaretz*, according to Benvenisti, were undoubtedly

aware of the biblical meaning of *yedi'a* , an act of sexual possession: “And Adam knew Eve, his wife” (*ibid* .: 19).

SILENCING THE PALESTINIAN PAST

The Palestinians share common experiences with other indigenous peoples who had their narrative denied, their material culture destroyed and their histories erased, retold or reinvented or distorted by European white settlers and colonizers. In *The Invasion of America* (1976), Francis Jennings highlighted the hegemonic narratives of the European white settlers by pointing out that historians for generations wrote about the indigenous peoples of America from an attitude of cultural superiority that erased or distorted the actual history of the indigenous peoples and their relations with the European settlers. In *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* , Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith argues that the impact of European settler-colonization is continuing to hurt and destroys indigenous peoples; that the negation of indigenous views of history played a crucial role in asserting colonial ideology, partly because indigenous views were regarded as incorrect or primitive, but primarily because “they challenged and resisted the mission of colonisation” (L. Smith, 1999: 29). She states:

Under colonialism indigenous peoples have struggled against a Western view of history and yet been complicit with the view. We have often allowed our ‘histories’ to be told and have then become outsiders as we heard them being retold ... Maps of the world reinforced our place on the periphery of the world, although we were still considered part of the Empire. This included having to learn new names for our lands. Other symbols of our loyalty, such as the flag, were also an integral part of the imperial curriculum. Our orientation to the world was already being redefined as we were being excluded systematically from the writing of the history of our own lands.

(*Ibid* .: 33)

In *The Ethnic Cleaning of Palestine* the concept of cultural memocide is deployed by historian Ilan Pappé, where he highlights the systematic scholarly, political and military attempt in post-1948 Israel to de-Arabize and “ecologicide” the Palestinian terrain, its names, space, ecology, religious sites, its village, town and cityscapes, and its cemeteries, fields, and olive and orange groves and the fruity prickly pears (cactus) famously grown in and around Arab villages and cultivated Arab gardens in Palestine. Pappé conceives of a metaphorical palimpsest at work here, the erasure of the history of one people in order to write that of another people over it; the reduction of many layers to a single layer (Pappé, 2006: 225–34).

In the post-Nakba period the ongoing process of de-Arabization has manifested itself most vividly in the city of Jerusalem: the Mamilla Cemetery, just to the west of the walls of the Old City of Jerusalem, is a highly symbolic case in point. Belonging to the Islamic *waqf* (religious endowment) it is a well-known historic Jerusalem and Muslim landmark. It contains centuries of Palestinian history and heritage and the tombs and remains of figures from the early Islamic period; some of the graves belong to Saladin’s men who fought the Latin Crusaders (W. Khalidi, 2009). The case is also a symbolic representation of Israeli policies in action; after decade of desecration¹ and wilful gradual destruction by the Jewish municipality of Jerusalem, recently the Israeli authorities announced plans to eradicate the cemetery completely from the landscape of the city, by designating the site as “Jerusalem Museum of Tolerance” – another example of a

manufactured Israeli heritage industry and a cynical public relations exercise backed by the Simon Wiesenthal Center in the US. (W. Khalidi, 2009). On 3 May 2004 the California governor Arnold Schwarzenegger laid the foundation stone for the Simon Wiesenthal Center in a ceremony attended by Israeli government officials including then vice prime minister Ehud Olmert and US ambassador to Israel Daniel Kurtzer. Apparently 200 million dollars was allocated to the project, funding raised mainly from American donors by the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles. In December 2005, Israeli bulldozers moved in and began erasing the last section of the cemetery (A. Khalidi, 2009). With echoes of “Israeli bulldozer archaeology”, the new facility also typifies current supersessionist efforts to eliminate Palestinian heritage in the city, create a distorted view of the history of the land and replace physically yet another landmark of Islamic heritage in the city – all based on an invented history and fabricated memory. Since then the Wiesenthal Center’s plans have drawn outrage from local Palestinians and international human rights organizations, which criticized the plan to build a facility on the site of one of the most important Muslim cemeteries in Jerusalem. ²

Palestinian responses to forced depopulation and ethnic cleansing from their villages and towns are “discursively rich, complex and protean” (Slyomovics, 2002). In recent decades novels, poems, films, plays, ethnographic and photographic documentation, maps, oral history archives, online websites, and a wide-range array of activities in exiled and internally displaced communities have been and are being produced, many with the aim of countering Israeli denial and correcting distortions of omission and commission that eradicate the Palestinian presence in the land. Also a large number of books have been produced both inside Israel and at Birzeit University, all dedicated to villages depopulated and destroyed. These form part of a large historical and imaginative literature in which the destroyed Palestinian villages are “revitalised and their existence celebrated” (Slyomovics, 2002). A monumental 1992 study by a team of Palestinian field researchers and academics under the direction of Palestinian historian Walid Khalidi details the destruction of hundreds of villages falling inside the 1949 armistice lines. The study gives the circumstances of each village’s occupation and depopulation, and a description of what remains. Khalidi’s team visited all except 14 sites, made comprehensive reports and took photographs. Of the 418 depopulated villages documented by Khalidi, 293 (70 per cent) were totally destroyed and 90 (22 per cent) were largely destroyed. Seven survived, including ‘Ayn Karim (west of Jerusalem), but were taken over by Israeli settlers. A few of the quaint Arab villages and neighbourhoods have actually been largely preserved and gentrified. But they are empty of Palestinians (some of the former residents are internal refugees in Israel) and are designated as Jewish “artistic colonies” (Benvenisti, 1986: 25; Masalha, 2005, 2012). While an observant traveller can still see some evidence of the destroyed Palestinian villages, in the main all that is left is a scattering of stones and rubble. But the new state also appropriated for itself both immovable assets, including urban residential quarters, transport infrastructure, police stations, railways, schools, books, archival and photo collections, libraries, churches and mosques, and personal possessions, including silver, furniture, pictures and carpets (W. Khalidi, 1992).

THE IMPORTANCE OF TOPONYMY AND THE POLITICS OF RENAMING

Empire and biblical toponymy: the Palestine Exploration Fund

The importance of toponymy, geographical renaming, mapping and remapping was recognized by the European colonial powers. In Palestine the highly organized Zionist–Hebrew toponymy project was critical to the ethnocization of European Jews and nationalization of the Hebrew Bible. It was inspired by and followed closely British and American archaeological and geographical “exploration” expeditions of the second half of the nineteenth century and first half of the twentieth century. In line with the reinventions of European ethno-romantic nationalisms, Zionist ideological archaeology and geography claimed to “own” exclusive “national” inheritance in Palestine; the “land of Israel” was treated as a matter of exclusive ownership. This process of ethno-nationalization and reinvention of “land of the Bible” intensified after the establishment of the Israeli state in 1948 as part of the general attempt to ethno-nationalize both Jews and the Hebrew Bible (Rabkin, 2010: 130).

In Palestine of the nineteenth century geographical renaming of Palestinian Arab and Muslim place-names became a powerful tool in the hands of the European powers competing to penetrate the land of the Bible and uncover the roots of Christendom. The British were the first to recognize and exploit the power of toponymy and to link scriptural geography with biblical archaeology and colonial penetration of Palestine. The “scientific exploration” of the British Palestine Exploration Fund (PEF), which was founded in 1865 by a group of biblical scholars, scriptural geographers, military and intelligence officers and Protestant clergymen, most notably the dean of Westminster Abbey, Arthur P. Stanley, was coordinated very closely with the British politico-military establishment and spying community anxious to penetrate Ottoman Palestine, country ruled by the Muslim “Sick Man of Europe”. With offices in central London, the PEF today is an active organization which publishes an academic journal, the *Palestine Exploration Quarterly*. In addition, the PEF presents public lectures and funds research projects in the Near East. According to its website, “Between 1867 and 1870 Captain Warren carried out the explorations in Palestine which form the basis for our knowledge of the topography of ancient Jerusalem and the archaeology of the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sherif [*sic*]”; “In addition to his explorations on, under, and around the Temple Mount/al-Haram al-Sherif, Warren surveyed the Plain of Philistia and carried out a very important [military] reconnaissance of central Jordan”.³ Captain (later General Sir) Charles Warren (1840–1927), of the British Royal Engineers and one of the key officers of the PEF, who was sent to map the “scriptural topography” of Jerusalem and investigate “the site of the temple”, noted: “[British] King Consul [James Finn] rules supreme, not over the natives of the city, but over strangers; but yet these strangers for the most part are the rightful owners, the natives, for the most part, are usurpers” (Shepherd, 1987: 127–8). Both Warren and the long-serving and famous British Consul, Finn, who was a mellinialist Christian Zionist involved with the Mission to the Jews (Shepherd, 1987: 110), apparently, “literally burrowed” beneath the Muslim shrines in Jerusalem to chart the “original dimensions” of the “Temple Mount”. The biblical archaeology, mapping, topography and toponymy of Warren and the Royal Engineers have remained basic data for many Israeli archaeologists, geographers and strategic planners of today (Shepherd, 1987: 195; Benvenisti, 2002: 11–27).

Following in the footsteps of the PEF, the British mandatory authorities in Palestine set out to gather toponymic and “biblical” information from the local Palestinian population. The British drive to present European colonialism as a continuation of an ancient Jewish ownership of the land means that place-names in Palestine became a site of fierce contest between the European Zionist settler-colonizer and the colonized Palestinians. Palestinian Arab names were (and continued to be) “unnamed” and Hebrewized by the Zionists using a colonizing strategy based on Hebrew biblical names. Indigenous Palestinian place names are deemed “redeemed” and

liberated when they are rendered from Arabic into Hebrew (Slyomovics, 1998, 2002). The genealogy of British colonial name commissions and the Zionist-Hebrew renaming project, which began in the nineteenth century, continued under the British colonial system in Palestine (Al-Shaikh, 2010) and were accelerated dramatically after the 1948 Nakba and the expansion of biblical and archaeological departments at Israeli universities.

The new biblical man: renaming as self-reinvention and symbolic indigenization of the settlers

Although eastern European Jewish settlers claimed to represent an indigenous people returning to its homeland after two thousand years of absence, in fact Russian nationals formed the hardcore of Zionist activism. This self-reindigenization required a great deal of effort to create the mythological New Hebrew Sabra Man and construct a new Jewish identity. No wonder, for the early Zionist settlers were intent not only on “inventing a Land, and inventing a Nation” (Rabkin, 2010: 130), but also on self-reinvention. Reinventing their own new, Hebrew-imagined biblical identity, the post-1948 period saw top Zionist leaders, army commanders, biblical archaeologists and authors changing their names from Russian, Polish and German to “authentic” Hebrew-sounding (biblical) names. Examples include the following:

- ◆ Moshe Sharett was born Moshe Shertok in Russia in 1894; he became Israel’s foreign minister in 1948; he chose to Hebrewize his last name in 1949, following the creation of the State of Israel.
- ◆ Golda Meir was born Golda Mabovitch in Kiev in 1898; later Golda Meyerson; Hebrewized her last name, interestingly, only after she became foreign minister in 1956; she was prime minister 1969–74.
- ◆ Yitzhak Shamir ⁴ was born Icchak Jeziernicky in eastern Poland in 1915; he was foreign minister 1981–82 and prime minister 1983–4 and 1988–92.
- ◆ Ariel Sharon was born Ariel Scheinermann in colonial Palestine in 1928 (to Shmuel and Vera, later Hebrewized to Dvora, immigrants to Palestine from Russia); he was prime minister 2001–6.
- ◆ David Ben-Gurion (1886–1973), the first prime minister and defence minister of Israel in 1948, was born David Grün in Russia; his mother was called Scheindel and his Russian-born wife was called Pauline Munweis when she met and married Ben-Gurion in New York (she later changed her name Paula); after immigrating to Palestine he became David Green; he then changed his name to the biblically sounding name David Ben-Gurion – Ben-Gurion literally means “son of the lion cub He also chose a biblical name for his daughter, Geula (“redemption ”), and for his son Amos, after a minor prophet in the Hebrew Bible.
- ◆ Yitzhak Ben-Tzvi ⁵ was born Yitzhak Shimshelvitsh in the Ukraine in 1884; he was the second president of Israel.
- ◆ Menahem Begin, the founder of the current ruling Likud party and the sixth prime minister of Israel, was born in Brest-Liovska, then part of the Russian empire, as Mieczyslaw Biegun.
- ◆ Yitzhak Ben-Tzvi’s wife, Rahel Yanait – a labour Zionist leader and a co-founder of the Greater Land of Israel Movement in 1967 – immigrated to Palestine in 1908, having been born in the Ukraine as Golda Lishansky Apparently she Hebrewized her name to Rahel Yanait in memory of the Hasmonean King Alexander Jannaeus (Hellenized name of Alexander Yannai) (126–76 BCE), a territorial expansionist, who during the 27-year reign

was almost constantly involved in military conflict and who enlarged the Hasmonean kingdom. Her two sons, born during the British mandatory period, were given biblical names: Amram, named after the father of Moses and Aaron, and Eli, named after the High Priest Eli.

- ◆ Levi Eshkol was born in the Ukraine in 1895 as Levi Školnik; he was Israel's third prime minister, 1963–9.
- ◆ David Remez was born David Drabkin in Belarus in 1886; he was Israel's first minister of transportation.
- ◆ Zalman Shazar, the third president of Israel (from 1963 to 1973), who immigrated to Palestine in 1921, was born in the Russian empire as Shneur Zalman Rubashov.
- ◆ Pinhas Rutenberg (1879–1942), a prominent Zionist leader and the founder of Palestine Electric Company, which became the Israel Electric Corporation, was born in the Ukraine as Pyotr Moiseyevich Rutenberg.
- ◆ Avraham Granot (1890–1962), director general of the Jewish National Fund and later chairman of its board, was born in today's Moldova as Abraham Granovsky; he changed his name after 1948.
- ◆ Shimon Peres was born in Poland in 1923 as Szymon Perski; he was Israel's eighth prime minister and in 2007 was elected as its ninth president.
- ◆ Right-wing Russian Zionist leader Vladimir Yevgenyevich Zhabotinsky (1880–1940) changed his name to Zeev Jabotinsky during the mandatory period.
- ◆ Prominent Labour leader Haim Arlozorof (1899–1933) was born Vitaly Arlozorof.
- ◆ General Yigael Yadin (1917–84), the army's second chief of staff and a founding father of Israeli biblical archaeology, was born Yigal Sukenik.
- ◆ Professor Benjamin Mazar, co-founder of Israeli biblical archaeology, was born Binyamin Maisler in Poland; educated in Germany, he immigrated to colonial Palestine in 1929 and Hebrewized his name.
- ◆ Yitzhak Sadeh (1890–1952), the commander of the Haganah's strike force, the Palmah, and one of the key army commanders in 1948, was born in Russia as Isaac Landsberg.
- ◆ General Yitzhak Rabin, the first native-born Israeli prime minister, 1974–7 and 1992–5, was born in Jerusalem to a Zionist settler from the Ukraine, Nehemiah Rubitzov.
- ◆ General Yigal Allon (1918–80), commander of the Palmah in 1948, government minister and acting prime minister of Israel, best known as the architect of the Allon Plan, was born in Palestine Yigal Paicovitch. His grandfather was one of the early east European settlers who immigrated to Palestine in the 1880s. After Israel was proclaimed in 1948 he changed his name to the Hebrew Allon ("oak" tree). General Tzvi Tzur (1923–2004), the Israeli army's sixth chief of staff, was born in the Zaslav in the Soviet Union as Czera Czertenko.
- ◆ General Haim Bar-Lev, Army chief-of-staff in 1968–71 and later a government minister, was born Haim Brotzlewsky in Vienna in 1924.
- ◆ Ben-Tzion Dinur (1884–1973), Israel's minister of education and culture in the 1950s, was born Ben-Tzion Dinaburg in the Ukraine and immigrated to Palestine in 1921.
- ◆ General Moshe Ya'alon, former army chief of staff, was born in Israel in 1950 as Moshe Smilansky.
- ◆ Prominent Israeli author and journalist Amos Elon (1926–2009) was born in Vienna as Amos Sternbach.
- ◆ Israel's leading novelist Amos Oz was born in mandatory Palestine in 1939 as Amos Klausner. His parents, Yehuda Klausner and Fania Mussman, were Zionist immigrants to

mandatory Palestine from eastern Europe. He is married to Nilly Zuckerman, with a common German Jewish surname meaning “sugar man”.

- ◆ Gershom Scholem, a German-born Jewish philosopher and historian and the founder of the modern, academic study of Kabbalah (Jewish mysticism) was born Gerhard Scholem; he changed his name to Gershom Scholem after he emigrated to mandatory Palestine in 1923.
- ◆ Yigal Tumarkin, a German-born Israeli artist known for his memorial sculpture of the Holocaust in Tel Aviv, was born in Dresden in 1903 Peter Martin Gregor Heinrich Hellberg.
- ◆ Israel’s greatest poet, Yehuda Amichai (1924–2000) (Hebrew for “Praise my people alive”), was born in Germany as Ludwig Pfeuffer; he immigrated to colonial Palestine in 1935 and subsequently joined the Palmah and the Haganah; in 1947 he was still known as Yehuda Pfeuffer.
- ◆ Historian Ben-Tzion Netanyahu, the father of the current Israeli prime minister, Binyamin Netanyahu, was born in Poland as Ben-Tzion (“son of Zion”) Mileikowsky in 1910.

Evidently many of these changes of name took place around or shortly after 1948. During the mandatory (colonial) period, it was still advantageous for individuals to have their original European names.

The above list also shows senior officers and army chiefs of staffs (*Rav Aluf*s in Hebrew) adopting Hebrew-sounding names in the post-1948 period. Ironically, although in the Hebrew Bible the Philistines are constructed as the Other arch enemy of the Israelites, since 1948 a Philistine term such as *seren*, a lord, has been used by the Israeli army as a rank equivalent to captain. Also the terms *Aluf* and *Rav Aluf* (major general and lieutenant general respectively), which have been used for the two highest ranks in the army, are all apparently from the Hebrew Bible. In the Hebrew Bible *Aulf* (“chief”, the one who commands a “thousand people”) was a rank of nobility among the Edomites, identified by some scholars to be of Nabataean Arab origins, and often depicted as the Israelites’ inveterate enemies whom the Hebrew prophets denounce violently.

The Israeli toponymy project: superimposing biblical names

In present-day Israel the claim is repeatedly made that the Bible is materially realized thanks to biblical archaeology, giving Jewish history flesh and bones, recovering the ancient past, putting it in “dynastic order” and “returning to the archival site of Jewish identity” (Saïd, 2004: 46; see also Silberman, 1982; 1989; 1993; 1997: 62–81; Silberman and Small, 1997; Elon, 1997: 35–47). Biblical archaeology was always central to the construction of Israeli–Jewish identity and the perceived legitimacy of the Israeli state. The debate about “ancient Israel”, biblical scholarship and biblical archaeology is also a debate about the modern State of Israel, most crucially because in the eyes of many people in the West, the legitimacy of the Zionist project and Jewish “restorationism” depends on the credibility of the biblical portrait. One facet of that debate is the argument in the public domain over the use of the term “Israel” to denote the land west of the Jordan, both in ancient and modern times. The inevitable outcome of the obsession with the Hebrew Bible in Western biblical scholarship – by calling the land “biblical” and by its exclusive interest in a small section of the history of the land – has resulted in focusing on the “biblical identity” of a land that has actually been non-Jewish in terms of its indigenous population for the larger part of its recorded history (Whitelam, 1996). This state of affairs would not happen in any other area of the planet. It is due to the Hebrew Bible and its influence in the

West where an inherited Christian culture supported the notion that Palestine has always been somehow essentially “the land of Israel”.

In *Facts on the Ground*, Abu El-Haj shows that in the post-1967 period the unearthing/displacing practices of Israeli biblical archaeology went hand in hand with the use of bulldozers to clear ancient Palestinian sites, old cemeteries and medieval Islamic architecture – as seen in the case of Mamilla Cemetery outside the Old City of Jerusalem and the Magharbeh Quarter inside the Old City of Jerusalem – in line with the efforts to make Jerusalem more of a Jewish-national site and eliminate the multiplicity of other histories in the city (Abu El-Haj, 2001; Bowersock, 1984: 130–41; 1988: 181–91; Glock 1999: 324–42). Biblical archaeology, scriptural geography and biblical scholarship have been essentially “Zionist” and have participated in the elimination of the Palestinian identity and the Islamic heritage in Palestine, as if over fourteen hundred years of Muslim occupation of this land has meant nothing. This focus on a short period of history a long time ago participates in a kind of retrospective colonizing of the past. It tends to regard modern Palestinians as trespassers or “resident aliens” in someone else’s territory.

Biblical archaeology, in particular, has played a key role in secular Zionist–Jewish nation-building as we see in the formation of Zionist–Jewish collective identity before and after 1948. To make European Jewish identity rooted in the land, after the establishment of Israel the science of archaeology was summoned to the task of constructing and consolidating that identity in secular time; the rabbis as well as the university scholars specializing in biblical archaeology were given sacred history as their domain (Saïd, 2004: 45). Abu El-Haj’s *Facts on the Ground* explores the centrality of restorationist/applied biblical archaeology in the construction of Zionist–Jewish collective identity before and after 1948. The work provides a colonial archaeological exploration in Palestine, dating back to British work in the mid-nineteenth century. Abu El-Haj focuses on the period after the establishment of Israel in 1948, linking the academic practice of archaeology with Zionist colonization and with plans for the Judaization and repossession of the land through the renaming of Palestinian toponymy. Much of this de-Arabization of Palestine is given archaeological justification; the existence of Arab names is written over by newly coined Hebrew names. This “epistemological strategy” prepares for the construction of an Israeli Jewish identity based on assembling archaeological fragments – scattered remnants of masonry, tables, bone, tombs, into a sort of special biography out of which the European colony the Yishuv emerges “visible and linguistically, as Jewish national home” (Abu El-Haj, 2001: 74; Saïd, 2004: 47–8; Bowersock, 1988: 181–91).

A large number of Israeli experts on and practitioners of biblical excavations – from General Yigael Yadin and General Moshe Dayan to even General Ariel Sharon – have remarked that biblical archaeology is the “privilege Israeli science *par excellence*” (Saïd, 2004: 45–6; Kletter, 2003). Magen Broshi, a leading Israeli archaeologist, and a current member of the Government Names Committee (see below), noted:

The Israeli phenomenon, a nation returning to its old-new land, is without parallel. It is a nation in the process of renewing its acquaintance with its own lands and here archaeology plays an important role. In this process archaeology is part of a larger system known as *Yedi‘at haAretz*, knowledge of the land (the Hebrew term is derived most probably from the German *Landeskunde*) ... The European immigrants found the country to which they felt, paradoxically, both kinship and strangeness. Archaeology in Israel, a *sui generis* state, served as a means to dispel the alienation of its new citizens.

(Quoted in Saïd, 2004: 46)

In Jewish Zionism the “selective reconstruction of antiquity and manufactured ‘biblical memory’ was part of the historical mission of reviving the ancient national roots and spirit. [Selective] Antiquity became both a source of legitimacy and an object of admiration” (Zerubavel, 1995: 25). For the deeply secular founding fathers of political Zionism and mobilized archaeological excavations, in particular, the biblical stories and ideology essentially functioned as the objective historical account of the Jewish “title to the land” – a claim not necessarily borne out by archaeological findings. The passionate interest in biblical archaeology by deeply secular military leaders and politicians such as David Ben-Gurion, Moshe Dayan and Yigael Yadin (the latter two army chiefs of staff), and the significance given to the “last stand” at the fortress of Massada, were designed to forge emotional bonds between the new Israeli army, European settlers and the land. The role of colonial archaeology in justifying South African apartheid has been described elsewhere (Hall, 1988: 62–4; 1984: 455–67). In contrast, however, although a great deal has been written about the role of ethnocentric biblical archaeology in confirming the legitimacy of the Zionist claim, little attention has been paid to the role of the biblical theology of “God’s People” and archaeological digging in providing the ideological justification for the expulsion and dispossession of the Palestinians.

The Israeli historians, biblical scholars, archaeologists and geographers, Meron Benvenisti argues in *Sacred Landscape: The Buried History of the Holy Land since 1948*, have reinvented and reconstructed a history and chronology of ancient Palestine, based on Israeli identity politics,

so as to emphasize the Jewish connection to the land, adding designations such as the biblical, Hasmonean, Mishnaic, and Talmudic periods. From the “early Muslim” period onward, however, they adopted the nomenclature of the “conquerors’ chronology”, since in this way it was possible to divide the approximately 1,400 years of Muslim-Arab rule into units that were shorter than the period of Jewish rule over the Eretz Israel/Palestine (which lasted at most for 600 years), and especially to portray the history of the country as a long period of rule by a series of foreign powers who had robbed it from the Jews – a period that ended in 1948 with the reestablishment of Jewish sovereignty in Palestine. It was thus possible to obscure the fact that the indigenous Muslim Arab population was part and parcel of the ruling Muslim peoples and instead to depict the history of the local population – its internal wars, its provincial rulers, its contribution to the landscape – as matters lacking in importance, events associated with one or another dynasty of “foreign occupiers”.

(Benvenisti, 2002: 300)

While the colonial attitudes of European and North American historians and social scientists towards former colonies of the West has begun to be reevaluated critically since the 1960s, the Israelis have chosen to consolidate the colonial tradition and colonial historiography in Palestine– Israel. In Israel there has always been an obsession with “biblical memory” and the convergence between archaeological excavations and Jewish settler-colonization has always loomed large, but became most pronounced after the post-1967 conquests. Furthermore Israeli biblical archaeology has remained central to secular Zionist identity politics and Israeli settler activities – most orthodox Jews in Israel were and still are indifferent to its findings (Elon, 1997: 38). Meron Benvenisti observes that:

British, American, and other academics engaged in the study of the archaeology and history of their former overseas colonies have begun to reevaluate the attitudes that

prevailed during the colonial period. They have admitted grave distortions that were introduced into the history of the colonies as an outcome of Eurocentric attitudes, ignoring or erasing remaining traces of the natives' past and their material culture. In the wake of this evaluation, Amerindian, Aborigine, and native African sites were studied and restored, and a new history was written, focusing on the organic chronicles of those regions, which had been a mere footnote in the history of the European peoples. The Israelis, by contrast, chose to maintain the colonial tradition with only minor changes ... The [Israeli] Antiquities Administration is aware of only two sites in Old Jaffa: the "Biuim House" (the first home of this group of early Zionist pioneers in the country, in 1882) and the first building of the first [Zionist] Hebrew High School ("Gimnasiya Herzeliyya"), which have been declared "antiquities" in accordance with Article 2 [of Israeli Antiquities Law of 1978]. Of course no structure "of historical value" to the Palestinians has been declared as a protected antiquity under Israeli law.

(Benvenisti, 2002: 304–5)

Central to the construction of Zionist collective identity – and subsequently Israeli identity – based on "biblical memory" was the Yishuv's memorializing toponymy project which was established in the 1920s to "restore" biblical Hebrew or to create new biblically sounding names of symbolic meaning to Zionist redemption of the land and colonization of Palestine (Ra'ad, 2010: 189). In the 1920s a JNF Naming Committee was set up to name the newly established Jewish colonies in Palestine to compete with the overwhelmingly Arabic map of Palestine; its renaming efforts were appreciated by the British mandatory authorities and were incorporated into the Palestine government's official gazette (Benvenisti, 2002: 26). Both the JNF Naming Committee and the Israeli Governmental Names Committee of the 1950s were generally guided by Edward Robinson's biblical geography and his *Biblical Researches in Palestine, Mount Sinai and Arabia Petraea* (1841), in which he had argued that the place-names of Palestinian villages and sites, seemingly Arabic, were modern Arabic renderings of old Hebraic names. An important part of the "New Hebrew" identity was the Zionist– Hebrew toponymy and Israeli maps which gradually replaced the Palestinian Arabic names: street names, geographical sites and toponymy (Cohen & Kliot, 1981: 227–46; 1992: 653–80; Azaryahu & Golan, 2001: 178–95).

The American–Israeli academic Selwyn Ilan Troen, of Brandeis University and Ben-Gurion University, rewriting under the subheading "Reclaiming by Naming", while rehashing many of foundational myths of Israel, remarks on the continuity of European Zionist colonization of Palestine and nineteenth century/early twentieth century Western archaeological excavations:

Zionism also set out to "re-imagine" and "re-constitute" the country's landscape. The process actually began with Christian explorers, and archaeologists and bible scholars from Europe and the United States who visited Palestine from the mid-nineteenth century when the country was under Turkish rule. Contemporary Arab names were but adaptations or corruptions of ancient designations found in sacred texts or other historical sources. Zionist settlers continued the process, although for them it was not merely to recapture the Holy Land of Scriptures. Rather it was a deeply personal attempt to re-imagine themselves in the land of their ancestors. As a consequence, in renaming the land they consciously ignored or set aside many of the physical markers as well as the social and cultural ones of both Europe and the Arab neighbours ... Zionists celebrated the return to history of Biblical Rehovoth ⁶ and Ashkelon ... In addition, thousands of names were give to streets, public squares and the landscape,

with signs in Hebrew everywhere. The total effect invited observers to appreciate that the settlements were the concrete manifestation of national revival by a people who could legitimately claim to be returning natives.

(Troen, 2008: 197)

These practices of “re-claiming by re-naming”, while displacing the indigenous names, were pivotal to the colonization of the land of Palestine and as a language of creating an “authentic” collective Zionist-Hebrew identity rooted in the “land of the Bible”. Referring candidly to the gradual replacement of Arabic place-names (and of Palestinian villages) by Hebrew place-names (and Jewish settlements) during the mandatory period, Israeli defence minister Moshe Dayan – and the author of *Living with the Bible* (1978) – had this to say in an address in April 1969 to students at the Technion, Israel’s prestigious Institute of Technology in Haifa:

Jewish villages were built in the place of Arab villages. You do not even know the names of these villages, and I do not blame you because geography books no longer exist. Not only do the books not exist, the Arab villages are not there either. Nahlal arose in the place of Mahlul; Kibbutz Gvat in the place of Jibta; Kibbutz Sarid in the place of Hunefis, and Kefar Yehoshua in the place of Tal al-Shuman. There is not a single place built in this country that didn’t have a former Arab population. ⁷

Dayan, who spoke Arabic, knew that the name of his own settlement (*moshav*) “Nahlal”, founded in 1921, was in fact a Hebrew rendering of the name of the Arabic village name it had replaced, “Mahloul”; however, to give it a “biblical authenticity”, the Hebrew sounding “Nahlal” was linked by the Zionists to the biblical name in Joshua (19:15). Also Kibbutz “Gvat”, set up in 1926, was a Hebrew rendering of the Arabic name-place it had replaced: the Palestinian village “Jibta”, but Gvat also echoed the Aramaic name Gvata (meaning hill) and a biblical name in the Galilee. In the 1920s the Palestinian land of “Wadi al-Hawarith” ⁸ in the coastal region was purchased (“redeemed”) by the Jewish National Fund from Arab absentee landlords, subsequently leading to the eviction of many Arab farmers. The Jewish settlement of Kefar Haro’e was established in 1934 on these lands. The Arabic name was rendered into the Hebrew sounding “Emek Hefer” (the Hefer Valley). In some cases the Zionist–Hebrew colonizing toponymy simply translated Arabic names into Hebrew.

Other Hebrew place-names did not preserve the Arabic names: for instance the first Zionist settlement in Palestine, Petah Tikva, was originally set up in 1878 (deserted and re-established in 1882), on the lands of, and eventually replacing, the destroyed Palestinian village of Mlabbis. Petah Tikva is known in Zionist historiography as *Im Hamoshavot* – the “Mother of the Colonies”. The Zionist religious founders stated that the name of Petah Tikva came from the biblical prophecy of Hosea (2:17). The land of Petah Tikva was bought from two Arab absentee landlords based in Jaffa, Salim al-Kassar and Anton al-Tayyan. Six decades after the Nakba Palestinian citizens of Israel still call the Jewish city of Petah Tikva “Mlabbis”.

The destruction of Palestinian villages during and after the Nakba and the conceptual deletion of Palestinians from history and cartography after 1948 meant that the names of depopulated Palestinian villages and towns were removed from the map. The physical disappearance of Palestine in 1948, the deletion of the demographic and political realities of historic Palestine and the erasure of Palestinians from history centred on key issues, the most important of which is the contest between a “denial” and an “affirmation” (Saïd, 1980a; Abu-Lughod *et al.*, 1991). The deletion of historic Palestine from maps and cartography was not only designed to strengthen the

newly created state but also to consolidate the myth of the “unbroken link” between the days of the “biblical Israelites” and the modern Israeli state.

The historic Arabic names of geographical sites were replaced by evoked biblical sites and newly coined Hebrew names, some of which vaguely resembled biblical names. It has already been shown that the replacement of Arabic places and the renaming of Palestine’s geographical sites follow roughly the guidelines suggested in the nineteenth century by Edward Robinson (1841). The obsession with biblical archeology and scriptural geography transformed Palestinian Arabic place-names, Palestinian geographical sites and Palestinian landscape into subjects of Zionist mimicry and camouflaging (Yacobi, 2009: 115). From the mid-nineteenth century and throughout the first half of the twentieth century Western colonialist imagination, biblical landscape painting, fantasy and exotic travel accounts, Orientalist biblical scholarship, Holy Land archaeology and cartography and scriptural geography have been critical to the success of the Western colonial enterprise in the Middle East, recreating the “Biblelands”, reinventing ahistorical-primordial Hebrew ethnicity, while at the same time silencing Palestinian history and de-Arabizing Palestinian toponomy (Masalha, 2007; Whitlam, 1996; Long, 1997, 2003). Israel’s biblical industry, with its Hebrew renaming projects, was embedded in this richly endowed and massively financed colonial tradition. Israeli historian Ilan Pappé remarks:

[in 1948–1949 the land] changed beyond recognition. The countryside, the rural heart of Palestine, with its colourful and picturesque villages, was ruined. Half the villages had been destroyed, fattened by Israeli bulldozers which had been at work since August 1948 when the government had decided to either turn them into cultivated land or to build new Jewish settlements on their remains. A naming committee granted the new settlements Hebraized versions of the original Arab names: Lubyā became Lavi, and Safuriya [Saffuriya] Zipori [Tzipori] ... David Ben-Gurion explained that this was done as part of an attempt to prevent future claim to the villages. It was also supported by the Israeli archaeologists, who had authorized the names as returning the map to something resembling “ancient Israel”.

(Pappé, 2004: 138–9)

The post-1948 project concentrated on the biblicalization/Hebrewization of Palestinian Arab geography and the practice of naming events, actions and places in line with biblical terminology. The Hebrewization project deployed renaming to construct new places and new geographic identities related to biblical names. The new Hebrew names embodied an ideological drive and political attributes that could be consciously mobilized by the Zionist hegemonic project (Peteet, 2005: 153–72).

Post-1948 Zionist projects concentrated on the Hebrewization/Judaization of Palestinian geography and toponymy through the practice of renaming sites, places and events. The Hebrewization project deployed renaming to construct new places and new geographic identities related to supposed biblical places. The “new Hebrew” names embodied an ideological drive and political attributes that could be consciously mobilized by the Zionist hegemonic project. The official project began with the appointment of the Governmental Names Committee (*Va’adat Hashemot Hamimshaltit*) by Prime Minister Ben-Gurion in July 1949. Ben-Gurion had visited the Naqab/Negev in June and had been struck by the fact that no Hebrew names existed for geographical sites in the region. The 11 June 1949 entry for his War Diary reads: “Eilat ... we drove through the open spaces of the Arava ... from ‘Ein Husb ... to ‘Ein Wahba ... We must give Hebrew names to these places – ancient names, if there are, and if not, new ones!” (Ben-

Gurion, 1982, vol. 3: 989).

THE POLITICS OF THE ISRAELI BIBLICAL ACADEMY

In a settler-colonial modern (and scientific) society like Israel scholarly knowledge follows closely the Foucaultian paradigm of knowledge/intelligence gathering/data collection/record keeping and state power (Foucault, 1980). Already during the Zionist Yishuv period many Zionist leaders, settlement executives, Haganah commanders and intelligence officers (David Ben-Gurion, Yosef Weitz, Yosef Nahmani and Ezra Danin included) were also prolific diarists and record keepers. In the 1930s and 1940s the various departments of the Jewish Agency, Haganah and Jewish National Fund instituted a massive intelligence-gathering operation relating to Palestinian society. In the 1938 the British mandatory authorities allowed the Jewish Agency to copy hundreds of thousands of official documents and practically all the official material and records existing on land registration and in tax offices relating to hundreds of Palestinian villages (Masalha, 1992: 99). Moreover from the late 1930s onwards the various agencies of the Yishuv amassed a huge amount of data and detailed information on the Palestinian villages: the “Village Files” (Pappe, 2006: 17–22). After 1948 the Israeli internal security services, the *Shin-Bet*, and other state agencies followed the same intelligence gathering tradition, compiling massive files on the Palestinian citizens of Israel (H. Cohen, 2010).

Also since 1948 Israeli academic institutions have continued the same colonialist tradition of intelligence gathering and data collection. The Israeli military and Israeli biblical academy, in particular, have always been intimately connected and close partners in nation-building. Engaging in nationalist mobilization through the mobilization of the Bible and myth-making through spurious scholarly activity involves a large number of Israeli academics and social scientists, in particular archaeologists, political geographers and Orientalists. The Governmental Names Committee, which has operated since the early 1950s, and continues to do so, from the Israeli Prime Minister’s Office, is perhaps the best example of the production of academic knowledge through myth-making.

In 2010, the Prime Minister’s Office website listed the large number of academics who are members of this committee, including: Prof. Avraham Biran, committee chairman, archaeologist; architect Avinoam Avnon of the Ministry of Transportation; Azariah Alon of the Society for the Protection of Nature; Prof. Yehoshua Ben-Arieh, a geographer at Hebrew University; Prof. Moshe Brur, a geographer at Tel Aviv University; Magen Broshi, of Israel Museum; Esther Goldberg of the Academy for the Hebrew Language; Prof. Amiram Gonen, a geographer at Hebrew University; Prof. Avinoam Danin, a botanist at the Hebrew University; Yehuda Ziv, chairman of Sub-committee for Settlement Names, an IDF representative; Prof. Moshe Kochavi, archaeologist at Tel Aviv University; Avi Goren, a representative of the JNF; Dr Zeev Mashal, an archaeologist at Tel Aviv University; Prof. Dov Nir, a geographer at Hebrew University; Prof. Zeev Safrai, of Israel Studies Department at Bar-Ilan University; Prof. Yoram Tzafrir, chairman of Sub-committee for Historical Names, an archaeologist at Hebrew University; Prof. Naftali Qadmon, chairman of Sub-committee for Geographical Names, at the Hebrew University; Prof. Zachariah Kali, archaeologist at the Hebrew University; Prof. Richav Rubin a geographer at the Hebrew University; Benyamin Ricardo, a representative of the Ministry of the Interior; Baruch Partzman, a geographer at the Centre for the Survey of Israel; Prof. Moshe Sharon, an Orientalist at the Hebrew University; and Hannah Bitan, a geographer and scientific coordinator of the committee.⁹ Today, as in the early 1950s, Israeli biblical archaeologists and geographers

continue to play a major role on the Government Names Committee and in its efforts in manufacturing new Hebrew names and a new collective consciousness.

In the immediate post-Nakba period Israeli archaeologists and members of the Israeli Exploration Society on the Government Names Committee concentrated their initial efforts on the creation of a new map for the newly occupied “Negev” (Abu El-Haj, 2001: 91–4). Commissioned to create Hebrew names for the newly occupied Palestinian landscape, throughout the documents produced by this committee, there were reported references to “foreign names”. The Israeli public was called upon “to uproot the foreign and existing names” and in their place “to master” the new Hebrew names. Most existing names were Arabic names. The committee for assigning Hebrew names in the Negev held its first meeting on 18 July and subsequently met three times a month for a ten-month period, and assigned Hebrew names to 561 different geographical features in the Negev – mountains, valleys, springs and waterholes – using the Bible as a resource. Despite the obliteration of many ancient Arabic names from the Negev landscape, some Arabic names became similar-sounding Hebrew names, for example Seil Imran became Nahal Amram, apparently recalling the father of Moses and Aaron; the Arabic Jabal Haruf (Mount Haruf) became Har Harif (Sharp Mountain); and Jabal Dibba (Hump Hill) became Har Dla‘at (Mount Pumpkin). After rejecting the name Har Geshur, after the people to whom King David’s third wife belonged, as a Hebrew appellation for the Arabic Jabal Ideid (Sprawling Mountain), the committee decided to call it Har Karkom (Mount Crocus), because crocuses grow in the Negev (Benjamin, 2006). However the sound of the Arabic name Ideid was retained in the nearby springs, which are now called Beerot Oded (the Wells of Oded), supposedly after the biblical prophet of the same name.¹⁰ As we shall see below, when Israel invaded Lebanon in 1982 some messianic rabbis campaigned for renaming the Lebanese capital, Beirut, to the Hebrew-sounding Beerot – the Hebrew for “well”. In its report of March 1956 the Israeli Government Names Committee stated:

In the summarized period 145 names were adopted for antiquities sites, ruins and tells: eight names were determined on the basis of historical identification, 16 according to geographical names in the area, eight according to the meaning of the Arabic words, and the decisive majority of the names (113) were determined by mimicking the sounds of the Arabic words, a partial or complete mimicking, in order to give the new name a Hebrew character, following the [accepted] grammatical and vowelings rules.

(Quoted in Abu El-Haj, 2001: 95)¹¹

In *Hidden Histories* Palestinian scholar Basem Ra‘ad, citing a 1988 study, *Toponymie Palestinienne: Plaine de St. Jean d’Acre et corridor de Jerusalem*, by Thomas L. Thompson, F. J. Goncalves and J. M. van Cangh, shows the Israeli toponymy committees went far beyond their original mandates:

There was simply not enough [biblical] tradition to go by, so [the project] could only continue by picking out biblical or Jewish associations at random. It had to Hebraize Arabic names, or in other cases translate Arabic to Hebrew to give the location an ideologically consistent identity. For example, some locations were rendered from Arabic into the Hebrew phonetic system: Minet el-Muserifa became Horvat Mishrafot Yam and Khirbet el Musherifa was changed to Horvat Masref. Sometimes, in this artificial process, the committees forgot about certain genuine Jewish traditions, as in the case of the total cancelling of the Arabic name Khirbet Hanuta, not recognizing

that it probably rendered the Talmudic Khanotah. This forced exercise of renaming often even went against biblical tradition, most notably in erasing the Arabic names Yalu and 'Imwas [after 1967]. Yalo became Ayallon, while 'Imwas, Western Emmaus, associated with the Christ story, was one of the three villages, along with Beit Nuba, razed in 1967. The old stones from the villages were sold to Jewish contractors to lend local tradition and age to new buildings elsewhere, and the whole area was turned into the tragic Canada Park, made possible by millions from a Canadian donor.

(Ra'ad, 2010: 188–9)

Of the hundreds of destroyed and depopulated villages in 1948, several survived until today, but were taken over by Israeli settlers. A few of the quaint Palestinian villages and neighbourhoods have actually been meticulously preserved. But they are empty of Palestinians (Benvenisti, 1986: 25; Masalha, 2005). In *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947–1949* (1987), Israeli historian Benny Morris gives the misleading impression that the Palestinian villages were depopulated and destroyed in the heat of the battle in 1948, or shortly afterwards in the period 1948–9; in effect Morris argues that, with the near-total physical destruction of the villages, refugee “return” had become practically impossible by the end of 1949. In *All That Remains*, Walid Khalidi observes in 1992 that of the 418 villages depopulated in 1948, 293 (70 per cent) were totally destroyed and 90 (22 per cent) were largely, but not completely, destroyed. Seven survived, including 'Ayn Karim (west of Jerusalem), but were taken over by Israeli settlers. A few have been preserved and transformed into an Israeli Jewish built environment.

In fact dozens of deserted Palestinian villages survived intact well into the mid-1960s when the official programme of village destruction was renewed by the Israeli authorities; many villages survived 1948 and they were slowly and methodically razed in the 1950s and 1960s. When in 1953 the Israeli High Court ruled that the state must honour its 1948 promise and allow the internal refugees from Bir'im to return, the army pre-empted the ruling by bombing the village from the air; today the only surviving building in Bir'im is the Maronite church. During the course of his research in Israeli official archives historian Aharon Shai of Tel Aviv University discovered that in 1965 the Israeli government had recruited the staff of the Jewish National Fund and prominent archaeologists to an official project to “clean” the land of these deserted Palestinian villages. In the first two decades of Israel there was still a general anxiety among Israeli leaders that, should the empty villages remain standing, the Palestinian refugees might lobby the international community successfully for their repatriation to their homes inside Israel (Pappe, 2006: 188; Cook, 2008: 30). According to Israeli revisionist historian Tom Segev, the arguments put forward in the mid-1960s, for renewing the destruction programme included:

The deserted villages spoiled the beauty of the landscape and constituted a neglected nuisance. There were pits filled with water which endangered the well-being of visitors, particularly children, as well as many snakes and scorpions. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs was concerned about the ‘unnecessary questions’ which tourists would present regarding deserted villages.

(Segev, 2002; quoted in Cook, 2008: 31, 256, n.73)

The renewal of destruction and further cleansing of Palestinian villages and towns was a joint project organized by the army, the Jewish National Fund, the Israel Lands Authority and the Association of Archaeological Survey. The latter issued permits needed by the government to make the continued programme of destruction “lawful”, while a body called the Society for

Landscape Improvement lobbied to preserve any architecturally important buildings. Historic or scenic mosques were something left intact: one in Caesarea became a restaurant and bar, for example, while another one in Al-Zeeb, a village located 13.5 kilometres north of Acre on the Mediterranean coast, was incorporated into the new Jewish site's beachfront resort which has been created using the village's old olive presses (Cook, 2008: 31).

The destruction of the Palestinian site and the negation of its Islamic heritage while promoting biblical sites and Crusader castles by the Israeli "national heritage" industry is evident in al-Zeeb. The village, with a population of two thousand in 1948, was mentioned by Arab geographers in the early Middle Ages. After 1948 the Arab village was razed and Kibbutz Gesher HaZiv ("Bridge of Splendour") and Kibbutz Sa'ar ("Storm") were established on its land. Sa'ar was set up by members of the Socialist-Zionist youth movement Hashomer Hatza'ir (which founded the Mapam party). Also the Akhziv National Park was established on its lands. Al-Zeeb has been renamed "Akhziv", supposedly after a name ("Akhzib") cited in the Book of Joshua (15:44); Akhziv is mentioned in the Bible as one of the towns that the "tribe of Asher" did not inherit. The archaeological excavations that have been conducted from the 1940s to the present (and more recently on behalf of the Institute of Archaeology of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem) on the site have uncovered four cemeteries associated with a large Phoenician settlement. ¹² Today the domed stone mosque has been restored and serves as a tourist site and the house of the last *mukhtar* (the village head), Husayn Ataya, is now a museum (W. Khalidi, 1992: 36). In *Disappearing Palestine*, Jonathan Cook writes:

Maps were changed too: over the course of several years [after 1948] a Jewish National Fund committee, replaced Arab place names with Hebrew ones, often claiming as justification to have 'discovered' biblical sites. The committee hoped to invent an ancient, largely mythical landscape all the better to root Israeli Jews in their homeland. The real landscape of hundreds of destroyed Palestinian villages were entirely missing from the new maps. Cleared of Palestinian traces, the 'empty' lands were handed over to Jewish agricultural communities, the *kibbutzim* (plural of *kibbutz*) and *moshavim* (plural of *moshav*) for exclusive Jewish use.

(Cook, 2008: 30)

The large and beautiful Palestinian village of 'Ayn Karim ("Karim's Spring"), in the Jerusalem district, was depopulated in July 1948. In 1945, of the estimated 3,180 people who lived in 'Ayn Karim, 2,510 were Palestinian Muslims and 670 Palestinian Christians (W. Khalidi, 1992: 272). After its depopulation and de-Arabization the name was rendered to the biblical-sounding "Ein Kerem" ("Vineyard's Spring"), and the village became a Jewish suburb of Israeli west Jerusalem. Archaeological evidence indicates that the village site was occupied as early as the second millennium BCE. According to Christian traditions, this was the site where John the Baptist was born and that Christ and the Virgin Mary visited 'Ayn Karim. According to Muslim tradition, the third caliph, 'Umar ibn al-Khattab, passed by the village and held prayer in it during the Islamic conquest of Jerusalem (W. Khalidi, 1992: 271–2). During the British mandatory period Christian churches and monasteries proliferated in the village, which became a popular destination for Christian pilgrims. According to Walid Khalidi,

'Ayn Karim was one of the few villages to survive its depopulation with its buildings intact. The others were Tarbikha (Acre District); 'Ayn Hawd, Balad al-Shaykh, and al-Tira (Haifa District); al-Safriyya (Jaffa District); and Dayr Yasin and al-Maliha

(Jerusalem District). The village houses are inhabited by Jewish families. One Christian Arab family, exiled from the village of Iqrit (Acre District) in 1949, lives in the village, in an old school building attached to the Franciscan monastery. Some of the larger houses are beautiful lime-stone buildings two or three storeys high with arched windows and doors recessed into a larger arched facade. Some doors open onto balconies with metal railings. There are seven Christian churches and monasteries in the village. There is also a Christian cemetery beside the Russian monastery; a Muslim cemetery in the center of the village, covered with refuse and dirt, contains a prominent tomb with a large structure. The village mosque, in a state of disrepair, still stands with its minaret. The spring of 'Ayn Maryam ["Mary's Spring"] flows out of the mosque courtyard. An Israeli hospital, Haddasa, has been built on the village site. Israeli tourist facilities with hotels and swimming pools have been built northeast of the village.

(W. Khalidi, 1992: 273)

Also hundreds of agricultural structures that once served a magnificent network of irrigation of 'Ein Karim can still be found around the village (Rinat, 2007).

The Palestinian city of Lydda (al-Ludd or al-Lid), 15 kilometres southeast of Jaffa, with a population of nearly 40,000 people in mid-1948, was occupied by the Israeli army in July 1948 and most of its Arab inhabitants were expelled at gun-point, at the orders of Prime Minister and Defence Minister David Ben-Gurion; only 1,056 inhabitants remained. The city was gradually transformed into a gentrified "Hebraic city" of Lod (Yacobi, 2009: 30–39; 115). The city was settled (in the 1950s) mainly by Jewish immigrants from Arab countries. The Hebrew name, Lod, finds reference in the Hebrew Bible. But the city is also closely associated with Christian and Muslim traditions: in the New Testament the city appears as its Greek form, Lydda, and it finds reference in an Islamic Hadith (a saying ascribed to the Prophet Muhammad). Although most of Palestinian population was expelled by the Israeli army in 1948, by the end of 2010 it had a population of 70,000, roughly 75 per cent Jewish and 25 per cent Palestinian Arab. Former Arab neighbourhoods were transformed into Jewish built environment and gentrified (Yacobi, 2009). Today the city is known only by its Hebrew name, with Israel's main international airport, Ben-Gurion International Airport (previously called Lydda Airport, or RAF Ludda), located near the city.

Commenting on the gentrification of several former Palestinian villages (like 'Ein Karim) and neighbourhoods (like those of Lydda and Safad) and their transformation into Jewish built environment, Israeli architect Haim Yacobi, of Ben-Gurion University, writes:

The Palestinian landscape is a subject of mimicry through which a symbolic indigenization of the [Zionist] settlers takes place. As in other ethnocentric national projects, such mimicry may be described as "an obsession with archeology", which makes use of historical remains to prove a sense of belonging ... The obsession with archeology and history, as well as with treating them as undisputable truths, is clearly evident in the texts that accompanied the design and construction of the gentrified Arab villages and neighborhoods. In this process, the indigenous landscape is uprooted from its political and historical context, redefined as local and replanted through a double act of mimicry into the "build your own home" sites.

(Yacobi, 2009: 115)

FORGETFULNESS FOR MEMORY: THE NAKBA AND THE HOLOCAUST AND ASHKENAZI ARTISTS' COLONIES ON THE SITES OF DESTROYED PALESTINIAN VILLAGES AND TOWNS

The Israeli–Hebrew toponymy of the Jewish “artistic colonies” was superimposed on the Palestinian Arab place names. The story of the Palestinian village of ‘Ayn Hawd and the Israeli artistic colony of ‘Ein Hod, one site with two identities in the Carmel Mountains south of the city of Haifa, recounts Palestinian Arab memory covered over by Zionist-Jewish memory, just as Maurice Halbwachs showed how medieval Christian memory superimposed itself on Jewish memory. Founded in 1953, the Jewish artists’ colony of ‘Ein Hod has trained some famous Israeli artists, including Yigal Tumarkin, who was born “Peter Martin Gregor Heinrich Hellberg” in Germany in 1933, immigrated to mandatory Palestine and became famous in Israel for his memorial sculpture of the Holocaust in the central square of Tel Aviv – renamed “Rabin’s Square” after the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in November 1995 by a Jewish fundamentalist. The artist colony of ‘Ein Hod has come to replace an agriculturally based Palestinian village of traditional stone houses that traces its establishment to the twelfth century (Slyomovics, 1998; 2002). Many of the inhabitants of ‘Ayn Hawd were driven out in 1948 and ended up in the Jenin refugee camp (in the West Bank). Those internally displaced inhabitants of ‘Ayn Hawd who managed to survive the Nakba were not allowed to return to their houses; they established a new village nearby, ‘Ayn Hawd al-Jadidah (New ‘Ayn Hawd). According to Palestinian historian Walid Khalidi, the remaining structures on the land of ‘Ayn Hawd are:

The village was not destroyed; it has been an artists’ colony since 1954, and is designated as a tourist site. The village mosque has been turned into a restaurant/bar, the “Bonanza”... The lands around the site are cultivated and surrounding forests are used as parks. Those few villagers who did not leave the country as refugees stayed nearby and built a new village, also called ‘Ayn Hawd, which was not legally recognised by the Israeli government and hence was denied all municipal services (including water, electricity, and roads). In the 1970s the Israeli government erected a fence around this new village in order to prevent them from expanding ... The 130 inhabitants of the new ‘Ayn Hawd have built a new mosque to replace the old one. Muhammad Abu al-Hayja, the son of a leader of the old village, represents the new village in its struggle to win municipal status.

(W. Khalidi, 1992: 151)

This new Palestinian village, rebuilt in Israel and named by Palestinians dispossessed of their former village, is an architectural statement of a tenacious indigenous Palestinian presence in the land (Slyomovics, 2002). It was recognized by the Israeli state only in 1992.

The European (Ashkenazi) artists’ colony of ‘Ein Hod came to symbolize not only the displacement of the Palestinian villagers and but also the contested nationalist narratives of Palestinians and Israelis as well as the selective memory of one man, the artist Marcel Janco (1895–1984), a Romanian-born Israeli painter and architect and one of the founders of the Dada movement. Arriving in Palestine in 1948, Janco proclaimed a “new”, utopian social movement: the Hebrew rendered colony of ‘Ein Hod (Slyomovics, 1998, 2002). Established in 1953 by Janco and his followers on the ruin of the Palestinian village of ‘Ayn Hawd. ‘Ein Hod (“Hod”,

Hebrew for “glory”) now houses the Janco-Dada Museum, opened in 1983 in gentrified former Palestinian houses, which features Janco’s work and explores the history of the Dada movement.¹³ Ironically the erasure of Palestine and the memoricide of the Nakba were carried out through the cynical manipulation of a highly selective memory of a pacifist movement established by a group of exiled poets, painters and philosophers in Zurich, Switzerland, who were opposed to war, discrimination and oppression in Europe.

To the north of ‘Ayn Hawd, the depopulated Arab village of Balad al-Shaykh, near Haifa, which housed the grave of the legendary guerrilla leader Sheikh ‘Izz ad-Din al-Qassam (1882–1935), became the Jewish town of Nesher (“Vulture”). Many of the Palestinian houses and shops are still standing and are occupied by the Jewish inhabitants of Nesher; today Balad al-Shaykh’s cemetery is in a terrible state of neglect (W. Khalidi, 1992: 152–3).

MIMICRY, REINVENTION AND CAMOUFLAGING: FROM MUSLIM SHRINES AS JEWISH SHRINES

The Israeli toponymy project has used a range of tools to ensure the effectiveness of the de-Arabization of Palestine. One of these tools centres on the official Israeli road signs, which are often in Hebrew, Arabic and English. But both the Arabic and English are *transliterations* of the new Hebrew place names – rather than reflecting the use of the original Palestinian Arabic name. Of course the overwhelming majority of Israelis cannot read Arabic; this is partly to remind the indigenous Palestinians inside Israel of the need to internalize the new Hebrew place names or perhaps seek the expressed approval of the vanishing Palestinian Arab (Shohat, 2010: 264), making Arabic complicit in the de-Arabization of Palestine.

Another tool of the Israeli colonization project has been the re-consecration of Muslim shrines – shrines which had never been part of the Jewish tradition – as Jewish shrines. Throughout the country the Hebrewization project included renaming Muslim holy men’s graves and holy sites into Jewish and biblically sounding ones. In *Sacred Landscape* Meron Benvenisti observes:

In the fifties and sixties the location and ‘redemption’ of holy men’s graves was in the hands of the religious establishment – especially the Ministry of Religions – and of Ashkenazi Haredi groups ... According to an official list, issued by a group known as the Foundation of the World and appended to a book published by the Ministry of Defense [Michelson *et al.* 1996], there are more than 500 Jewish holy places and sacred graves in Palestine (including the Occupied Territories). Many of these, albeit not the majority, are former Muslim sites.

(Benvenisti, 2002: 282)

In the centre of the country, south of Jaffa, the large Arab village of Al-‘Abbasiyya was depopulated in 1948; many of its residents ended up as refugees in Jordan. Until the 1930s the Palestinian village was known as “Al-Yahudiyya”. According to Palestinian oral history sources, the Arabic name had originated from the Muslim shrine in the village: “Maqam al-Nabi Huda” (Arabic for the “Shrine of Prophet Huda”).¹⁴ According to Meron Benvenisti, although the Arabic name derived from its biblical origin, Yahud, the name of a biblical site (Josh. 19:45), the Muslim shrine in the village was not part of the Jewish tradition (Benvenisti, 2002: 276). During the mandatory period, the Zionists claimed that the name Al-Yahudiyya was an Arabic rendering of the Hebrew word for “the Jewish”. In 1939, under the impact of the intense Palestinian–

Zionist struggle, the residents of the village decided change its name to Al-‘Abbasiyya. According to Israeli sources, this was “primarily in memory of Sheikh al-‘Abbas, who was buried there, but also an allusion to the Abbasid Muslim empire” (Benvenisti, 2002: 276, n.6: 348). The British mandatory authorities, however, refused to recognize the new name.

The Palestinian village was occupied on 10 July 1948 and depopulated; in the autumn of that year it was repopulated by the first wave of Jewish settlers and immigrants. In 1953 the settlement of “Yehud” (in Hebrew literally mean “Judaization”) was established on the site of the Arab village. The new Jewish town was populated by Ladino-speaking Jews of Turkish origins and subsequently also by Jews from Poland. In total five Jewish settlements, including Savyon, populated by Israeli millionaires, were built on the lands of the Arab town. A number of Arab houses remain, but they have been occupied by Jewish residents. The main mosque and the Muslim shrine (Maqam al-Nabi Huda) still stand. In the early 1950s, this Muslim shrine, which had never been part of the Jewish tradition, was consecrated as a Jewish holy place and as the burial place of “Yehuda ben-Ya‘acov” (Hebrew, “Judah son of Jacob”). It was reinvented as a biblical site and a place of Jewish “pilgrimage, prayer, and for miracles and healing the sick” (Benvenisti, 2002: 276).

Also in the centre of the country, among the many Judaized Muslim shrines and holy places were two sites: Nabi Yamin and Nabi Sama‘an, located one kilometre east of the Jewish town of Kfar Sava – a Jewish city itself named after a Palestinian village destroyed in 1948 (Kafr Saba). Until 1948, Benvenisti writes, these two sites were

sacred to Muslims alone, and the Jews ascribed no holiness to them. Today they are operated by ultraorthodox Jewish bodies, and members of the religion from which they were taken do not set foot there, despite the fact there is a large Muslim population in the area.

(Benvenisti, 2002: 276–7)

Muslim tombs and shrines were renamed as Jewish holy places. The tomb of Nabi Yamin was renamed the grave of Benjamin, representing Jacob’s youngest son, and Nabi Sama‘an became the grave of Simeon. Jewish women seeking to bear offspring pray at the grave of Benjamin:

The dedication inscriptions from the [Muslim] Mamluk period remained engraved in the stone walls of the tomb, and beside them hang tin signs placed there by the National Center for the Development of the Holy Places. The cloths embroidered with verses from the Qur’an, with which the gravestones were draped, have been replaced by draperies bearing verses from the Hebrew Bible.

(Benvenisti, 2002: 277)

FROM AL-MAJDAL TO ASHKELON

In 1948 the towns and villages of southern Palestine, including the cities of Beer Sheba and al-Majdal, were completely depopulated. Al-Majdal was established in the sixteenth century near the medieval Muslim city of Asqalan, a city that had a long history and a multilayered identity dating back to the ancient Canaanites and Philistines. Its medieval Arab name, Asqalan, preserved its ancient Palestinian name, Ashkelon. With the oldest and largest seaport in Canaan, it was one of the five famous cities of the Philistines (Gaza, Gath, Ahkelon, Ashdod, Ekron). Al-Majdal, on the eve of the 1948 war, had 10,000 (Muslim and Christian) inhabitants and in

October 1948, thousands more refugees from nearby villages joined them. Al-Majdal was conquered by the Israeli army on 4 November 1948 and many of its residents and refugees fled, leaving some 2,700 inhabitants, mostly women and the elderly, in situ. Orders in Hebrew and Yiddish were posted in the streets of the town, warning the soldiers to be aware of “undesirable” behaviour on the part of the town’s residents. “As was customary in such instances”, the Israeli intelligence officer wrote, “the behaviour of the population was obsequious and adulatory” (Levy, 2000). In December 1948, Israeli soldiers “swept through” the town and deported some 500 of its remaining inhabitants. In 1949 the commanding officer of the Southern Command, in the south Yigal Allon, “demanded ... that the town be emptied of its Arabs” (Masalha, 1997: 9). This was followed by an inter-ministerial committee’s decision to thin out the Palestinian population; another ministerial committee – “on abandoned property” – decided to settle al-Majdal with Jews; the town was being Judaized, and, with 2,500 Jewish residents, it was named “Migdal-Ad”. In December 1949, more Palestinians were deported to vacate more houses for Jewish settlers – this time for discharged Israeli soldiers. In the meantime the Israeli army made the life of those Palestinians who remained a misery, hoping they would leave. The new commanding officer of the Southern Command, Moshe Dayan, returned to the idea of Yigal Allon: “I hope that perhaps in the coming years, there will be another opportunity to transfer these Arabs [170,000 Israeli Arabs] out of the Land of Israel”, Dayan said at a meeting of the ruling Mapai party on 18 June 1950. Dayan also submitted a detailed proposal for “the evacuation of the Arab inhabitants of the town of Majdal”. Both the army chiefs of staff agreed, and Prime Minister Ben-Gurion authorized the plan on 19 June 1950 (Masalha, 1997: 9).

In the summer of 1950, almost two year after the 1948 war, the Arab inhabitants of Majdal received expulsion orders and, over a period of a few weeks, were transported to the borders of Gaza. They were loaded onto trucks and dropped off at the border. The last delivery of 229 people left for Gaza on 21 October 1950. The Israeli officials distributed the “abandoned” houses among new Jewish settlers. To this very day the Palestinian inhabitants of al-Majdal live in the shacks and shanties of the refugee camps in Gaza. In 1956, Migdal-Ad changed its name to the biblical-sounding one, Ashkelon (Levy, 2000). Since then it has been kept as a purely Jewish city. Commenting on Israeli educational policies, Professor Ismael Abu-Sa’ad, of Ben-Gurion University, writes:

The education system is essential to making the displacement of indigenous history and presence ‘official’, through texts such as that quoted from the 6th grade geography curriculum in Israeli schools, which teaches Palestinian children that the history of the coastal plain began only a hundred years ago, with the advent of European Jewish settlement and their transformation of this previously “abandoned area”. In the text, modern (Jewish) Tel Aviv overrides any mention of Arab Jaffa; modern (Jewish) Ashdod of (Arab) Isdud; ¹⁵ modern (Jewish) Ashkelon of (Arab) Al-Majdal. Modern Jewish Rishon Litzion and Herzliya and numerous other new towns are superimposed upon an unacknowledged landscape of Palestinian villages emptied and demolished in 1948. The indigenous landscape is erased *from* the curriculum, while it is simultaneously being erased *by* the curriculum, because of its absence from the official historical and geographical materials being taught about the region.

(Abu-Sa’ad, 2008: 24–5)

MIMICRY AND APPROPRIATION OF PALESTINIAN PLACE

NAMES

Jewish settlements were established on the land of the depopulated and destroyed Palestinian villages. In many cases these settlements took the names of the original Palestinian villages and distorted them into Hebrew-sounding names. This massive appropriation of Palestinian heritage provided support for the European Jewish colonizers' claim to represent an indigenous people returning to its homeland after two thousand years of exile. For instance, the Jewish settlement that replaced the large and wealthy village of Bayt Dajan (the Philistine "House of Dagon", with 5,000 inhabitants in 1948) was named "Beit Dagon", founded in 1948; Kibbutz Sa'sa' was built on Sa'sa' village; the cooperative *moshav* of 'Amka on the land of 'Amqa village; *moshav* Elanit ("tree" in Hebrew) on the land of al-Shajara ("tree" in Arabic) village (Wakim, 2001, 2001a; Boqa'i, 2005: 73). Al-Kabri in the Galilee was renamed "Kabri"; al-Bassa village renamed "Batzat"; al-Mujaydil village (near Nazareth) renamed "Migdal Haemek" ("Tower of the Valley"). In the region of Tiberias alone there were 27 Arab villages in the pre-1948 period; 25 of them – including Dalhamiya, Abu Shusha, Hittin, Kafr Sabt, Lubyah, al-Shajara, al-Majdal and Hittin – were destroyed by Israel. The name "Hittin" – where Saladin (in Arabic: Salah al-Din) famously defeated the Latin Crusaders in the Battle of Hattin in 1187, leading to the siege and defeat of the Crusaders who controlled Jerusalem – was renamed to the Hebrew-sounding "Kfar Hittim" ("Village of Wheat"). In 2008 the Israel Land Authority, which controls the Palestinian refugee property, gave some of the village's land to a new development project: a \$150 million private resort, which will have an 18-hole championship golf course, designed by the American Robert Trent Jones Jr. Nearby, the road to Tiberias was named the "Menahem Begin Boulevard" and heavy iron bars were placed over the entrance to Hittin's ruined mosque; the staircase leading to its minaret was blocked (Levy, 2004).

Kibbutz Ein Dor ("Dor Spring") was founded in 1948 by members of the socialist Zionist Hashomer Hatzair (Mapam's) youth movement and settlers from Hungary and the United States. It was founded on the land of the depopulated and destroyed village of Endur, located 10 kilometres southeast of Nazareth. Whether or not the Arabic name preserved the ancient Endur, a Canaanite city, is not clear. After 1948 many of the inhabitants became internal refugees in Israel ("present absentees", according to Israeli law) and acquired Israeli citizenship – but were not allowed to return to Endur. In accordance with the common Zionist practice of bestowing biblical names on modern sites and communities, the atheist settlers of Hashomer Hatzair appropriated the Arabic name, claiming that 'Ein Dor was named after a village mentioned in Samuel (28:3–19). However, it is by no means certain that the kibbutz's location is anywhere near to where the "biblical village" stood. An archaeological museum at the kibbutz contains pre-historical findings from the area.

In the centre of the country the once thriving ancient Palestinian town of Bayt Jibrin (or Bayt Jubrin), 20 kilometres northwest of the city of al-Khalil, was destroyed by the Israeli army in 1948. The city's Aramaic name was "Beth Gabra", which translates as the "house of [strong] men"; in Arabic *Bayt Jibrin* also means "house of the powerful", possibly reflecting its original Aramaic name; the Hebrew-sounding kibbutz of Beit Guvrin ("House of Men"), named after a Talmudic tradition, was established on Bayt Jibrin's lands in 1949, by soldiers who left the Palmah and Israeli army. Today Byzantine and Crusader remains survive and are protected as an archaeological site under the Hebrew name of Beit Guvrin; the Arabo-Islamic heritage of the site is completely ignored. The erasure of the history of one people at Bayt Jibrin in order to superimpose that of another people over it; the reduction of many layers of history to a single (Jewish) layer.

Fifty-six years after the Nakba, in March 2004, Israeli journalist Gideon Levy published an important article in *Haaretz*, entitled “Twilight Zone/ Social Studies Lesson” (Levy, 2004). The article describes an excursion to the hidden side of the Galilee – the ruins of depopulated Palestinian villages in eastern Galilee and the Tiberias region. The guided tour was organized in commemoration of the “Land Day” of 1976, by three NGOs: the Haifa-based Emile Toma Centre, the Association for the Defence of the Rights of the Internally Displaced in Israel (ADRID) and Zochrot (Remembering). Founded in 2002, Zochrot is a small group of Israeli citizens working to raise awareness of the Nakba. Gideon Levy writes:

The Zionist collective memory exists in both our cultural and physical landscape, yet the heavy price paid by the Palestinians – in lives, in the destruction of hundreds of villages, and in the continuing plight of the Palestinian refugees – receives little public recognition.

(Levy, 2004)

Commenting on the 2004 guided tour in Galilee, Levy writes:

Look at this prickly pear plant. It’s covering a mound of stones. This mound of stones was once a house, or a shed, or a sheep pen, or a school, or a stone fence. Once – until 56 years ago, a generation and a half ago – not that long ago. The cactus separated the houses and one lot from another, a living fence that is now also the only monument to the life that once was here. Take a look at the grove of pines around the prickly pear as well. Beneath it there was once a village. All of its 405 houses were destroyed in one day in 1948 and its 2,350 inhabitants scattered all over. No one ever told us about this. The pines were planted right afterward by the Jewish National Fund (JNF), to which we contributed in our childhood, every Friday, in order to cover the ruins, to cover the possibility of return and maybe also a little of the shame and the guilt.

(Levy, 2004)

ECOLOGIZING, “PINE DESERTS” AND ECOLOGICIDE: FASHIONING A EUROPEAN LANDSCAPE AS A SITE OF AMNESIA AND ERASURE

In the first two decades of the state Israelis had a deep anxiety about the discovery of the truth about the 1948 Nakba and the “nightmarish” prospect of Palestinian refugees’ returning to their towns and villages in what had become Israel. *Facing the Forests*, one of novelist A. B. Yehoshua’s first major works, was published in 1963. It opens with the destruction of a Palestinian village in 1948 and the planting of a JNF forest on its ruins. The novel recounts the story of an Israeli student who is “obsessed” with the history of the Latin Crusaders. The student, looking for a break and solitude, finds a job as a forest ranger. When he arrives at the watch house in the JNF forest he finds an Arab man whose tongue had been cut out and the man’s daughter. Shortly after his arrival the student begins to suffer from nightmares and his is constantly anticipating a catastrophe. As the summer continues the student begins to desire man’s daughter. The tension between the two escalates and suddenly the man sets fire to the forest and the whole forest burns down. At dawn the student “turns his gaze to the fire-smoking hills, frowns. There out of the smoke and haze, the ruined village appears before his eyes; born

anew, in its basic outlines as an abstract drawing, as all things past and buried”. While the student fails to see the truths unearthed by his research on the Crusades, the fire reveals it. The novel ends with the destruction of the forest and the re-emergence of the Arab village (Yehoshua, 1968; quoted in Gover, 1986).

The JNF’s forests, such as the Carmel National Park, became an icon of Zionist national revival in Israel and in Israeli Hebrew literature, symbolizing the success of the European Zionist project in “striking roots” in the ancient homeland and sacred landscape. Children were often named after trees and children’s Hebrew literature described young trees as children (Zerubavel, 1996: 60–99). Names such as Ilan (“tree”), Oren (“pine tree”) Tomer and Tamar (male and female for “palm tree”), Amir (“tree top”), and Elon or Allon (“oak tree”) are very common in Israel. Natural woodlands of oaks covered many areas of historic Palestine, especially in upper Galilee, Mount Carmel, Mount Tabor and other hilly regions. Some local Palestinian Muslim traditions in Galilee have even attributed holiness to ancient oak trees. The ancient oak tree and its leaves have been seen as a symbol of strength and endurance not only by Palestine but in many countries across the world. European pre-Christian and medieval Christian traditions of veneration of oak trees are well-known. The leaves of oak were also traditionally an important part of German Army regalia and symbolize ranks in the US army. In ancient Palestine this tree had its own cult in biblical mythology – mythology derived from Canaanite religious traditions; a tree which is associated also with life and supposed to have grown since the beginning of the world (Niesiolowski-Spanò, 2011: 132–7).

But the worship of the JNF (European-style) forests in Israel has also become central to Zionist secular collective *völkisch* memory. Israeli historian and journalist Amos Elon, who was born in Vienna as “Amos Sternbach” and immigrated to Palestine in 1933, changed his name to “Amos Oak”. In similar vein General Yigal Allon, commander of the Palmah in 1948, was born “Yigal Paicovitch” and changed his name to the Hebrew-sounding Allon (“oak” tree). As we have seen above this tradition of the “ancient woods” and wood worship was derived from central European notions of romantic nationalism. In 2004 Amos Elon moved to Italy, citing disillusionment with developments in Israel since 1967. In *The Israelis: Founders and Sons*, Elon writes: “[F]ew things are as evocatively symbolic of the Zionist dream and rationale as a ‘Jewish National Fund Forest’” (Elon, 1983: 200). Israel’s European-style forests and reforestation policies enjoy Western support. Planting a European-style forest in the “sacred soil” and “sacred landscape” confirms the undeniable ethical value of Israel’s (and by extension the West’s) project in the East. Afforestation is also linked, materially and symbolically, to the European Holocaust, and thousands of trees have been planted in memory of the lost communities and individual victims (Elon, 1983: 200). For Palestinians, however, few things better encapsulate the most notorious role of the JNF since the Nakba (Jamjoum, 2010).

Also crucially, the evacuated Palestinian lands were forested by predominantly pine trees – trees native to the northern hemisphere – non-indigenous conifers and cypress trees after uprooting indigenous trees and destroying the terraced landscape and ethnically cleansing over 500 villages from the areas that are now supposedly “forested”. These ecologically very destructive policies were pursued largely for political purposes to wipe out the ancient landscape and make the newly acquired areas Jewish European.

The JNF has always been and continues to be instrumental in the colonization of Palestine and the expropriation of Palestinian land. Central to Zionist collective *völkisch* memory is the persistent pride in how the European Jewish pioneers and settlers on the land purchased by the JNF from Arab landlords had been transforming the desolate, deserted and neglected Asiatic

desert of Palestine into blooming green European terrain full of forests and trees (Massad, 2004: 61). After 1948, afforestation and signposting were key tools used by the Israeli state and JNF to de-Arabize Palestine and erase traces of the destroyed Palestinian villages. All traces of Palestinian presence have been ruthlessly levelled, bulldozed and camouflaged by the JNF. A recent study by Noga Kadman found that 86 destroyed Palestinian villages were inside the JNF forests (Rinat, 2007).

The Birya Forest is the largest JNF forest in the Galilee, covering a total of 20,000 *dumun*s and conceals the lands of six Palestinian villages destroyed in 1948: Biriyya, ‘Alma, Dishon, Qaddita, ‘Amqa and ‘Ayn Zaytun. Today the Jewish *moshav* of “Birya”, built in 1971, is situated in the place of and taking its name from the Palestinian village of Biriyya. Located in the Safad region, the Birya Forest was created partly through the joint efforts of the JNF and the Israel Antiquities Authority. Analysing the information that the JNF provides on the Birya Forest, Israeli historian Ilan Pappé observes that none of the destroyed villages are mentioned; all disappear behind the website’s descriptions of the forest’s wonderful charms, Jewish heritage and archaeological attractions of the region: “No wonder that in such a huge forest one can find a plethora of interesting and intriguing sites: woods, bustans [Arabic for ‘fruit and vegetable gardens’], springs and an old synagogue” (Pappé, 2006: 230).

Khirbet Jiddin was one of the many Palestinian villages in the Galilee occupied and destroyed by the Israeli army in 1948. Located 16 km northeast of the city of Acre, the village, according to a 1945 census, had a population of about 1,500 people. In the twelfth century the Crusaders, who referred to the village as Judyn, built a fortress in the centre of the village. The fortress was later destroyed by Saladin. It was rebuilt in the eighteenth century by the Palestinian ruler of the Galilee, Dhaher al-Omar, who added a mosque and a bathhouse to it (Petersen, 2002: 251). At around 1775, the Ottoman’s successor to Dhaer al-Omar, Ahmad Basha al-Jazzar, destroyed the fortress. The Arab bedouin village, which was situated in the territory allotted to the Palestinian Arab state under the 1947 Partition Plan, was captured by the Israeli army on 11 July 1948 and completely destroyed, including its mosque. The only exception was the ruins of the Crusader fortress, which, together with the surrounding lands, has been preserved as a JNF “Jewish national park” and an archaeological tourist attraction. Part of the village’s lands are also occupied by Kibbutz Yehi’am, built by members of the Zionist–socialist Hakibbutz Hatzar movement, and named after Yehiam Weitz, son of Yosef Weitz, the most consistent advocate and practitioner of the ethnic cleansing of the Palestinians before and in 1948 (see [Chapter 2](#)).

“In many of the JNF sites”, Pappé – who analyses several sites mentioned by the JNF website, including the Jerusalem Forest – observes:

bustans – the fruit gardens Palestinian farmers would plant around their farm houses – appear as one of many mysteries the JNF promises the adventurous visitor. These clearly visible remnants of Palestinian villages are referred to as an inherent part of nature and her wonderful secrets. At one of the sites, it actually refers to the terraces you can find almost everywhere there as the proud creation of the JNF. Some of these were in fact rebuilt over the original ones, and go back centuries before the Zionist takeover. Thus, Palestinian bustans are attributed to nature and Palestine’s history transported back to a Biblical and Talmudic past. Such is the fate of one of the best known villages, Ayn al-Zeitun, which was emptied in May 1948, during which many of its inhabitants were massacred.

(Pappé, 2006: 230)

Described as a Jewish settlement, the destroyed village of ‘Ayn Zaytun is mentioned as follows:

Ein Zeitun [*sic*] has become one of the most attractive spots within the recreational ground as it harbors large picnic tables and ample parking for the disabled. It is located where once stood the settlement of Ein Zeitun, where Jews used to live ever since the medieval times and until the 18th century. There were four abortive [Jewish] settlement attempts. The parking lot has biological toilets and playgrounds. Next to the parking lot, a memorial stands in memory of the soldiers who fell in the Six Day War.

(*Ibid* .: 230–31)

Pappe also pointed out that the JNF publishes information about unique sites in the Jerusalem Forest and Sataf that testify to the extensive agricultural activity in the region. The information emphasizes the presence of terraces, describing them as ancient, biblical or Tamudic history, even if they were built and maintained by the Palestinian villages destroyed in 1948 (*ibid* .: 231–2).

In 1948 ‘Ayn Zaytun was an entirely Muslim farming community of one thousand, cultivating olives, grain and fruit, especially grapes; the village name was the Arabic for “Spring of Olives”; In 1992 Palestinian historian Walid Khalidi described the site as follows:

The rubble of destroyed stone houses is scattered throughout the site, which is otherwise overgrown with olive trees and cactuses. A few deserted houses remain, some with round arched entrances and tall windows with various arched designs. In one of the remaining houses, the smooth stone above the entrance arch is inscribed with Arabic calligraphy, a fixture of Palestinian architecture. The well and the village spring also remain.

(W. Khalidi, 1992: 437)

Today the old stone mosque, parts of which are still standing, is not mentioned by the JNF website. In 2004 the mosque was turned into a milk farm; the Jewish owner removed the stone that indicated the founding date of the mosque and covered the walls with Hebrew grafiti (Pappe, 2006: 217). Other mosques belonging to destroyed villages were turned into restaurants, in the case of the town al-Majdal and the village of Qisarya (currently the archeological, Roman–Crusader theme park of Caesarea); a shop in the case of Beersheba; part of a tourist resort, in the case of al-Zeeb; a bar/restaurant (called “Bonanza”) and a tourist site in the case of ‘Ayn Hawd (Pappe, 2006: 217; W. Khalidi, 1992: 151).

In eastern Galilee, Lavi (“Lion”), near Tiberias, a religious kibbutz founded in 1949 on the fertile lands of the Palestinian village of Luby, depopulated during 1948 by the Haganah forces, is another example of the appropriation of Palestinian name places by Israel. It seems clear that the source of the Hebrewized name “Lavi” is the Palestinian village “Luby”; the Zionists, however, claimed that Lavi comes from the ancient Jewish village that existed in the days of the Mishana and Talmud. At Luby the JNF put up a sign: “South Africa Forest. Parking. In Memory of Hans Riesenfeld, Rhodesia, Zimbabwe”. The South Africa Forest and the “Rhodesia parking area” were created atop the ruins of Luby, of whose existence not a trace was left. Here was a big village whose sons and daughters are now scattered throughout the world and who continue to carry the memories with them (Levy, 2004). Dr Mahmoud ‘Issa, a son of Luby and a Danish citizen, who accompanied Gideon Levy on the above excursion, made a film in Danish (with English subtitles) about his village. Dr ‘Issa, an oral historian, also published a book based

on interviews with refugees from Lubyā. Levy writes:

Deep in the grove, one can find a single wall that survived from the village, as well as a stone archway that covered a cavern used to store crops. The dozens of wells that belonged to the village ('Issa says there were more than 400) are surrounded by barbed wire. They are wrecked and full of garbage left behind by hikers in the South Africa Forest who must have thought that the JNF had dug big trash cans in the ground. How were they to know that these were freshwater wells?

(Levy, 2004; see also 'Issa, 2005: 178–96)

The history of the JNF before and after the Nakba and its politics of afforestation and planting are well-documented (Lehn & Davis, 1988; S. Cohen, 1993; Pappé, 2006; Nathan, 2005: 129–54; A. Tal, 2002). In 1948 the JNF was instrumental in the ethnic cleansing of Palestine. Today it continues to play a central role in maintaining Israel's land regime. Founded in 1901 and registered as an English company in 1907, the JNF was created to acquire land and property rights in Palestine for exclusive Jewish settlement, while the indigenous inhabitants of the land were barred from leasing or working on formerly Arab-owned land. Its Memorandum of Association defines its main objective as “to purchase, take on lease or in exchange or otherwise acquire any lands, forests, rights of possession and others rights in the prescribed region [Palestine and the surrounding areas] ... for the purpose of settling Jews on such lands”. The JNF was expressly prohibited from selling any land to ensure that it would control these lands in the name of the Jewish people in perpetuity (quoted in Lehn & Davis, 1988: 31–2).

As we have already seen, during the British mandatory period the leaders and senior executives of the Jewish National Fund, including Menahem Ushishkin (1863–1941; the Russian chairman of the JNF, 1923–41) and Yosef Weitz (1890–1972), director of its land settlement and afforestation Departments, were among the most consistent and obsessive advocates of the ethnic cleansing of the Palestinians. After 1948 the JNF was repackaged as an environmentalist organization carrying out afforestation and developmental activities. Today the JNF and its affiliate organizations enjoy charitable status in over 50 countries as environmental charities; in Europe these are entitled to tax exempt status.¹⁶ In 1953 the Jewish National Fund Law was passed by the Knesset for the purpose of defining the special legal status and role for the JNF in Israel's land and “development” policies. On 28 November 1961 a joint covenant with the Israeli government (following a series of Knesset laws) consolidated the position of the JNF; one of the covenant's principles was the “State's pronouncement that the Land of Israel was owned by the Jewish people and must not be sold in perpetuity” (A. Tal, 2002: 89–90). In 1966 the JNF planted the “Yatir Forest” in the northern Naqab/Negev, named after the “biblical town” of Yatir.

After the Nakba the JNF developed further its ecologizing settler-colonialism and erasure of the Arab landscape, reshaping of the physical environment, transforming the Arab village and cityscape, planting European style forests and demarcating the new “Israeli space” (A. Tal, 2002). In *The Other Side of Israel*, Susan Nathan shows how after 1948 the JNF planted many pine forests on the sites of the destroyed Palestinian villages; olive, fig, pomegranate and carob trees and *sabr* plants (particularly fruity type of cactus which flourishes in Palestine), which were cultivated for generations and upon whose fruits and oil Palestinian villagers had traditionally relied, were cut down and replaced by predominantly pine trees (native to the northern hemisphere) and cypress trees (Nathan, 2005: 129–30; A. Tal, 2002). The JNF afforestation policy was aimed at erasing traces of the Arab presence prior to 1948 and covering up the destroyed villages and towns (Nathan, 2005: 151–2). All traces of Palestinian presence have

been ruthlessly levelled, bulldozed, and camouflaged by the JNF.

In *Pollution in a Promised Land: An Environmental History of Israel* Israeli environmentalist Alon Tal describes the JNF afforestation programme as a series of ecological disasters:

The attack was multi-pronged. First, fires were lit to erase any remnants of indigenous bushes, trees, and brush. Next, bulldozers were brought to sweep away the debris; then plows prepared the soil for planting. Finally, pesticides ensured that the new pine seedlings would not be troubled by other undesirable biological activity. Environmentalists charged that the underlying soil inevitably suffered from the relentless onslaught, while the surrounding ecosystem was irreversibly knocked of balance. Once the trees grew their needles formed a highly acidic ground covered that decomposed very slowly. The result was a sterile forest bed inhospitable to additional undergrowth and to most animal populations. Environmentalists coined the term ‘the pine desert’ to describe them.

(A. Tal, 2002: 94–5)

By contrast, in *Memory and Landscape*, pro-Zionist British Jewish historian Simon Schama called the European JNF afforestation programmes uncritically “our proxy immigrants”, but without mentioning one of the key objectives of the JNF which was to cover the traces of the Palestinian villages destroyed in the Nakba and without referring (in 1995) to the mountains of new scholarship on the creation of Israel in 1948, including by Israeli “new historians”, discussed in chapter two. Also Schama must be fully aware that the JNF forests primarily originated not just from the encounter with the landscape of Palestine but in Europe, as part of the ideologies of European romantic nationalism of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, an invented European-Jewish nationalist tradition which borrowed heavily from pan-Germanic romantic nationalism and the myths of ancient woods and “Germanic tribes”. Pan-Germanic nationalism had also invented wood worship as the site of the original (mythological) Germanic tribes. This romantic tradition became central to secular collective memory. Indeed, Schama – whose *Memory and Landscape* focuses on the relationship between the physical environment and folk memory, traces the forest worship in racist pan-Germanic nationalism through the development of the German Reich in the 1870s into the Nazi era (Schama, 1995: 114–19) – fails to explain the obsession with, and indeed worship of, the “JNF forest” in secular Zionism and Israel, an obsession which can be traced to romantic European nationalist traditions, traditions invented by European pan-German and pan-Jewish romantic organic nationalisms, traditions which focused on the “ingathering” of historic roots and the mythologized ancient tribes. Recalling his own memory of childhood participation in an JNF programme of planting European pine trees in Israel, partly as a means of “rooting” the European Zionist immigrants and colonists in the soil of Palestine, Schama writes:

All over North London, paper trees burst into leaf to the sound of jingling sixpences, and the forests of Zion thickened in happy response. The trees were our proxy immigrants, the forests our implantation. And while we assumed that a pinewood was more beautiful than a hill denuded by [Arab] grazing flocks of goats and cheep, we were never exactly sure what all the trees were *for*. What we did know was that a rooted forest was the opposite landscape to a place of drifting sand, or exposed rock and red dirt blown by the winds. The [Jewish] diaspora was sand. So what should Israel be, if not a forest, fixed and tall?

(Schama, 1995: 5–6)

THE JNF, ECOLOGICIDE AND THE DESTRUCTION OF AL- ARAQIB, JULY 2010

As an organization dedicated to serve exclusionist Zionist objectives, until 1948 the JNF owned about 600,000 *dunums* of land. By 2007, the JNF controlled approximately 2.6 million *dunums* (some 650,000 acres) of land in Israel, which constitutes 13 per cent of all state lands (Pfeffer & Stern, 2007). It also appoints six out of thirteen members of the governing board of the Israel Lands Authority which manages much of the “public” land in Israel. Today the JNF controls directly and indirectly vast properties belonging to millions of Palestinian refugees; its current projects of afforestation, displacement and judaization centre on Arab localities in the Galilee and the Naqab – areas inhabited by Palestinian citizens of Israel.

In the latest example of ethnic cleansing in the Naqab/Negev, on 27 July 2010 the Israeli police razed an entire Palestinian Bedouin village, Al-Araqib, to the ground to make way for another JNF forest. The destruction of al-Araqib (north of Beersheba) was carried out by a 1,300-strong contingent of security forces, Jewish high school students, police and civilian guard equipped with guns, stun grenades and bulldozers. It was part of a larger project designed to reinforce Israeli apartheid and force the indigenous Bedouin communities away from their ancestral lands and into Indian reservation-style shanty towns the Israeli government has constructed for them. The land of the Bedouins will then be open to Jewish settlers. During a three-hour raid, 40 homes were demolished and 300 residents evicted, while simultaneously fruit orchards and olive and carob trees were uprooted.

Today there are 155,000 Palestinian Bedouins in the Naqab, many of them have been repeatedly displaced since 1948 (Abu-Sa’ad, 2005: 113–41); 83,000 of the Nagab Bedouin live in “unrecognized villages”, without electricity or running water or access to municipal or government assistance. Dr Neve Gordon, of Ben-Gurion University, who had witnessed the destruction of al-Araqib, wrote:

This time the impact of the destruction sank in immediately. Perhaps because the 300 people who resided in al-Arakib, including their children, were sitting in the rubble when I arrived, and their anguish was evident; or perhaps because the village is located only 10 minutes from my home in Be’er Sheva and I drive past it every time I go to Tel Aviv or Jerusalem; or perhaps because the Bedouins are Israeli citizens, and I suddenly understood how far the state is ready to go to accomplish its objective of Judaising the Negev region; what I witnessed was, after all, an act of ethnic cleansing.

(Gordon, 2010)

On 16 June 2010, five weeks before the destruction of the Palestinian village of al-Araqib, a JNF ceremony near Jerusalem celebrated the planting a new forest, “Lord Sacks Forest”, named after the British chief rabbi, Lord Jonathan Sacks. The latter has been part of the JNF ecologizing activities and its highly connected fund-raising campaign in the West – a campaign that has systematically concealed from Western public opinion the truth about the JNF’s “demographic transfer” and ethnic cleansing projects in Palestine and the “ecologicide” of the Palestinian landscape. The celebrations at the new JNF forest near Jerusalem, which was attended by Lord and Lady Sacks, were in “recognition of his [Sacks’s] personal contribution to the spiritual and

intellectual life of the country [Israel] and an honour for the whole Jewish community ... [and] as a lasting contribution to the beauty and environment of Israel and Jerusalem in particular". The chief rabbi declared that of "all the honours that Elaine and I have received, the planting of a forest in our name by JNF counts amongst the greatest of them all".¹⁷

Around Jerusalem thousands of acres of pine forests are designed to fashion a new pastoral "biblical landscape", create a new collective memory and give the impression of an "authentic" timeless biblical landscape in which trees have been standing forever. But this "natural landscape" is a carefully constructed scene to camouflage the systematically expropriated land of Palestinian villages, the destruction of cultivated olive groves and the ethnic cleansing of the Nakba. The underlying intention is to obscure the locations of the Palestinian villages and prevent any cultivation of the land by non-Jews. The Israeli architects Rafi Segal and Eyal Weizman, commenting on Israeli settlement and the creation of pastoral biblical landscape, write:

In the ideal image of the pastoral landscape, integral to the perspective of colonial traditions, the admiration of the rustic panorama is always viewed through the window frames of modernity. The impulse to retreat from the city to the country reasserts the virtue of a simpler life close to nature ... the re-creation of the picturesque scenes of Biblical landscape becomes a testimony to an ancient claim on the land. The admiration of the landscape thus functions as a cultural practice, by which social and cultural identities are formed. Within this panorama, however, lies a cruel paradox: the very thing that renders the landscape "Biblical" or "pastoral", its traditional inhabitants and cultivation in terraces, olive orchards, stone buildings and the presence of livestock, is produced by the Palestinians, who the Jewish settlers came to replace. And yet, the very people who came to cultivate the "green olive orchards" and render the landscape Biblical are themselves excluded from the panorama. The Palestinians are there to produce the scenery and then disappear ... The gaze that sees a "pastoral Biblical landscape" does not register what it does not want to see, it is a visual exclusion that seek a physical exclusion. Like a theatrical set, the panorama can be seen as an edited landscape put together by invisible stage hands ... What for the state is a supervision mechanism that seeks to observe the Palestinians is for the settlers a window on a pastoral landscape that seeks to erase them. The Jewish settlements superimpose another datum of latitudinal geography upon an existing landscape. Settlers can thus see only other settlements, avoid those of the Palestinian towns and villages, and feel that they have truly arrived "as the people without land to the land with people".

(Segal & Weizman, 2003: 92)

In *Pollution in a Promised Land: An Environmental History of Israel* Israeli environmentalist Alon Tal observes that the control "of such controversial lands [belong to Palestinian refugees] remains an enormous source of bitterness and outrage for Arab-Israelis and Palestinians, who still see the JNF as representing the most imperialist aspects of Zionism" (A. Tal, 2002: 57). The JNF's activities were not limited to the part of mandate Palestine that became Israel in 1948. The JNF's Canada Park in the Latron region, for example, covers the remains of the Palestinian villages 'Imwas, Yalu and Bayt Nuba, which were depopulated and razed by the Israelis in the course of the 1967 war. Today visitors to Canada Park, one of the most popular hiking and picnic sites on the way to Jerusalem, would have no idea that the park was built on the ruins of three

Palestinian villages whose inhabitants were forcibly evicted in 1967.

Operating through its subsidiary, Hemnuta, the JNF has also illegally acquired lands and houses in the occupied West Bank, and particularly in 1967 occupied Jerusalem. Inside the Green Line the JNF continues to operate as a state-chartered discriminatory organization and enforce a colonial system of land tenure. And as Palestine solidarity organizations from around the world have begun to challenge the colonial land regime operated by the JNF, the Lord Sacks Forest, South Africa Forest, Carmel Forest Spa Resort, Yatir Forest, Canada Park and other JNF forests planted and archaeological and historical theme parks built on the lands and ruins of hundreds of destroyed Palestinian villages have continued to veil from public view the Israeli government's heritage industry, which continued to erase the traces of the ethnic cleansing of Palestine. According to Zochrot, the Israeli remembrance organization, 86 JNF ecologically sound theme parks have been established on depopulated and destroyed Palestinian villages (Cook, 2008: 40). The JNF was fundamentally complicit in the denial of displaced Palestinians' rights to return, restitution and compensation, and in greenwashing Israel's regime of colonization and occupation.¹⁸

THE CONSTRUCTION OF NATIONAL HERITAGE INDUSTRY: ARCHAEOLOGICAL (BIBLICAL AND CRUSADER) “NATIONAL PARKS” ON THE SITES OF DESTROYED PALESTINIAN VILLAGES AND TOWNS

There are dozens of national and archaeological parks in Israel run by the Israel Nature and Parks Authority (*Rashut Hateva' Vehaganim*), a governmental organization set up in 1998 from the merging of two official organizations that had overseen national (i.e. Jewish) and archaeological parks and nature reserves since 1964. Applications for a permit to carry out archaeological excavation have to be approved by the director general of the authority's "Department of Archaeology and Heritage".

Many of these archaeological (biblical and Crusader) "national heritage" parks have been constructed on the ruins of Palestinian villages and towns destroyed in 1948. Today Crusader studies and the preoccupation with the history of the Latin Crusades are highly developed at Israel universities, and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem is a "global centre" of Crusader studies initiated by renown Crusade scholar Professor Yehoshua Prawer (1917–90) (Asali, 1992: 45–59).¹⁹ Interestingly, also the Crusader castle, Belvoir Fortress and settlement which were built in the twelfth century to serve as a major obstacle to Saladin's goal of recapturing Jerusalem from the Crusader kingdom of Jerusalem, has been restored as the Israeli tourist Belvoir National Park; today it has become the best preserved Crusader castle in Palestine-Israel. Like Hittin, Acre and Caesarea/Palestinian Qisarya, Belvoir Fortress/Palestinian Kawkab al-Hawa was the site of fierce fighting between the forces of Saladin and the Crusaders. Until 1948 the site of the fortress had been part of the land of the Palestinian village Kawkab al-Hawa ("Star of the Winds"), which had been depopulated and destroyed by Jewish forces in 1948. The site is known in Israel as *Kokhav Ha-Yarden* ("Star of the Jordan"). In *All That Remains*, Palestinian historian Walid Khalidi writes:

The village has been eliminated, but the site of the Belvoir Castle has been excavated and turned into a tourist attraction. Fig and olive trees grow on the village site. The

slopes overlooking the Baysan Valley and Wadi al-Bira are used by Israelis as grazing areas; they also cultivate the other surrounding lands.

(W. Khalidi, 1992: 53)

In *Sacred Landscape: The Buried History of the Holy Land Since 1948*, Israeli writer Meron Benvenisti explains how Kawkab al-Hawa/Belvoir National Park is typical of the Israeli policies of ethnic-cleansing in 1948 (Benvenisti, 2002: 169, 303). At Kawkab al-Hawa/Belvoir National Park all the Palestinian Arab structures were demolished, while the Crusader buildings were preserved and restored and made into important tourist attractions (Benvenisti, 2002: 168–9). Today sculptures by Israeli artist Yigael Tumarmin, famous in Israel for his memorial sculpture of the Holocaust in central Tel Aviv, are on display south of the site of the fortress. Benvenisti writes:

There is no better example of the eradication of all traces of an entire civilization from the landscape – leaving behind only Crusader remains, which did not interfere with the conveniently chosen historical narrative – than the restoration of Kokhav Hayarden (Kawkab al-Hawa, the Crusader Belvoir) and Caesarea. At those two sites the Arab structures were removed and the Crusader buildings were restored and made into tourist attractions. In the Israeli context, it is preferable to immortalize those who exterminated the Jewish communities of Europe (in the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries) and murdered the Jews of Jerusalem in 1099 than to preserve relics of the local Arab civilization with which today's Israelis supposedly coexist. Crusader structures, both authentic and fabricated, lend a European, romantic character to the country's landscape, whereas Arab buildings spoil the myth of an occupied land under foreign rule, awaiting liberation at the hands of the Jews returning to their homeland.

(Benvenisti, 2002: 303)

Ironically, one of these “Jewish national” parks is “Shivat National Park”, the site of a Nabatean Arab Christian city founded in the first century BCE in the heart of the western Negev desert; today it is a UNESCO world heritage site. The site Sbeita in the Negev, which was dug up in the 1930s by American archaeologists led by H. Colt (son of the famous American gun manufacturer), contains Roman and Byzantine ruins, churches and monks' cells. Several of the Israeli “national parks” are located in the occupied Syrian Golan Heights, Palestinian West Bank and east Jerusalem. These national parks, many created by the Jewish National Fund but run now by the Israel Nature and Park Authority, include:

- ◆ Akhziv National Park (Al-Zeeb: Palestinian village evacuated and destroyed in 1948). This national park contains the ruined Crusader Montfort castle, and is inside the “Nahal Akhziv nature reserve” (whose name echoes the name of the Palestinian village destroyed in 1948, Az-Zeeb); it is an important tourism site and the castle attracts many tourists both from inside and outside Israel.
- ◆ Nahal Alexander National Park (named after Hasmonean King Alexander Jannaeus).
- ◆ Arbel National Park and Nature Reserve.
- ◆ Ashkelon National Park (the medieval Arabic name: Asqalan).
- ◆ Bar'am National Park (Palestinian village Kafr Biri'm was evacuated in 1948 and destroyed in 1951).
- ◆ Beit Alfa Synagogue National Park.

- ◆ Beit Guvrin National Park (Palestinian town Bayt Jubrin was destroyed in 1948).
- ◆ Beit She'arim National Park.
- ◆ Caesarea National Park (Roman and Crusader archaeological park) on the site of the destroyed Palestinian Qisarya.
- ◆ Canada Park (built on sites of three destroyed Palestinian villages in the Latrun region: 'Imwas, Yalu and Bayt Nuba; destroyed in 1967).
- ◆ Castel National Park.
- ◆ The City of David National Park (in occupied in Silwan, east Jerusalem; archaeological park, see also above).
- ◆ Belvoir National Park/Kochav Yayardin: a Crusader national park; the Belvoir Fortress is the best preserved Crusader fortress in Israel; it was besieged and conquered by Saladin in 1189. After the Crusaders the site became part of the land of the Palestinian village Kawkab al-Hawa, "Star of the Winds", reflecting the strong winds on this hill top. An Arab writer described the site as "set amidst the stars like an eagles nest and abode of the moon" (Sire, 1994). The Palestinian Arab village was destroyed 1948 (see also above).
- ◆ The Beit She'an National Park contains the Roman Cardo; while the Arab town of Baysan was destroyed in 1948, the remains of Crusader buildings in Baysan have been preserved.
- ◆ National park at Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion's grave at Sde Boker (in the Negev).
- ◆ 'Ein Avdat National Park.
- ◆ 'Ein Gedi Antiquities National Park.
- ◆ 'Ein Harod Spring National Park: the park named after Kibbutz 'Ein Harod, a settlement founded in mandatory Palestine and re-named after a biblical name, Ma'ayan Harod ("Harod Spring") (Judg. 7:1). The area is known to Muslims and Palestinians as the site of the famous battlefield of 'Ayn Jalut, a medieval battle of huge historical importance where the Mongols were defeated and stopped for the first time, in 1260, by the Muslim Mamluks.
- ◆ 'Ein Hemed National Park.
- ◆ Eshkol National Park in the north-western Negev created by the Jewish National Fund.
- ◆ Gan Hashlosha National Park (known in Israel by its Arabic name: Sakhneh, "hot springs"). The Museum of Regional and Mediterranean Archaeology, located on the grounds of the park, houses items from the Greek period (Rubinsky, 2008).
- ◆ Hamat Tiberias National Park (the city of Tiberias, established in 20 CE, was named in honour of the Roman emperor Tiberius; the name was preserved in the Arabic Tabariyya, while the Hebrew name *hamat* derived from the Arabic name, *hammeh*, hot springs; the area was historically known for its hot springs believed to cure skin and other problems).²⁰
- ◆ Hermon²¹ National Park (in the occupied Golan²² Heights).
- ◆ Herodion National Park (archaeological park, near Bethlehem in the occupied West Bank: Herodium, from ancient Greek; the fortress and palace of Herod the Great on the top of Herodium; the site was known by the Crusaders as the "Mountain of Franks", while local Palestinians call it *Jabal Al-Firdaws* ("Mountain of Paradise").
- ◆ Korazim National Park.
- ◆ Kursi National Park (in the occupied Golan Heights).
- ◆ Manshit National Park.
- ◆ Masada National Park (archeological park).
- ◆ Mount Marmel National Park (on the site of several Palestinian villages destroyed in 1948).
- ◆ Nimrod Fortress National Park (the Hebrew name derives from the Arabic: Qala'at Namrud; archaeological park in the occupied Golan Heights).

- ◆ Qumran National Park (archaeological park in the occupied West Bank).
- ◆ Ramon National Park.
- ◆ Sharon National Park.
- ◆ Shivta National Park (archaeological park).
- ◆ Shomron (Samaria) National Park (in the occupied West Bank).
- ◆ Tell Arad National Park (archaeological park).
- ◆ Tell Beer Sheva National Park (archaeological park).
- ◆ Tell Gezer National Park (archaeological park, the site of Abu Shusha, a Palestinian village destroyed in 1948).
- ◆ Tell Hazor National Park (archaeological park).
- ◆ Tell Megiddo National Park (archaeological park).
- ◆ Yarkon National Park.
- ◆ Yehi'am Fortress National Park (archaeological park).
- ◆ Zippori National Park (archaeological park; Safuriyya village, evacuated and destroyed in 1948).
- ◆ Hurshat Tal National Park.

The Hurshat Tal National Park was created in the late 1960s in the northern Hula Valley, in an area whose local Palestinian population was completely cleared out in 1948. It is now run by the Israel Nature and Park Authority. According to its Hebrew website, this nature reserve was mainly declared to protect ancient Valonia oak trees:

This wood has survived for many years as part of a local Arab tradition which has attributed sacredness to the site. After examining the trees, it was found that their age was hundreds of years (about 350–400 years). Its Arabic name, *Sajrat al-'Ashara* (“Wood of the Ten”) is explained by a local Arab folktale, according to which ten of the companions of [Prophet] Muhammad stopped nearby to rest ... but could not find trees to which to tie their horses. They stuck their sticks into the ground, which became the roots of the big trees from which the wood has developed. The Hebrew name – Hurshat Tal – is inspired by Psalms 133:3: “Like the dew of Hermon, that cometh down upon the mountains of Zion”.²³

The JNF historical, archaeological and national heritage theme parks and forests are particularly popular with Israeli revellers and for holding picnics on Independence Day. For Palestinian citizens of Israel, especially the internal refugees, they are a poignant reminder of the Nakba. In *The Other Side of Israel*, Susan Nathan, an Israeli author of English origin, writes critically:

In April 2004, during the national celebrations for Independence Day, when Israeli Jews enjoy a day of rejoicing over the founding of their state, I joined a family from Nazareth who quietly commemorated the Palestinians’ mirror event, Nakba Day, which marks the Palestinians’ loss of their homeland. We visited a Jewish *moshav* called Tzipori, close to Nazareth, which has been built over the ruins of their parents’ village, Saffuriya ... the site of the Arab village is now hidden behind barbed wire and covered by the thick growth of yet another forest planted by the JNF. The only visible clues that Palestinians once lived there are the great mounds of cacti that Arab communities traditionally used as the boundaries to separate properties. Despite the

best efforts of the JNF to poison and burn these indigenous Middle Eastern plants, the cacti have refused to die or disappear.

(Nathan, 2005: 131)

Palestinian Saffuriya and Israeli Tzipori archaeological theme park

Located 6 kilometres north-north-west of Nazareth, Saffuriya, in many ways, encapsulated the multilayered Palestinian identity and heritage. In 1948 Saffuriya was the largest Palestinian village in the Galilee both in terms of its land size and population, which was estimated at 4,330 (Hadawi, 1970: 63). It thrived agriculturally on olives, figs, pomegranates and wheat. After the eviction of the inhabitants (on 16 July), most the inhabitants were driven to Lebanon, many ending up in the refugee camps of Ein al-Hilwa, Sabra and Shatila. The remainder became internal refugees (“present absentees”) in Nazareth. The land of the village was distributed between Kibbutz Sde Nahum, Kibbutz Hefziba and Kibbutz Ha-Solelim. The olive, fig and pomegranate trees were replaced with crops for cattle fodder (Benvenisti, 2002: 216).

The negation of both the Canaanite and Islamic heritage of the land by Israel’s heritage industry of archaeological theme parks is very much in evident today in Saffuriya – a heritage industry which is both geared towards retrospective colonization of the past and the fashioning of modern Israeli collective identity. With the destruction of the village, Israel sought to “resettle” the region and eliminate its historic and diverse cultural heritage. The Hebrew-sounding name of the Jewish *moshav* of Tzipori (established in 1949) named after Hellenized town of Sepphoris of the Roman period. Archaeology has shown that the site holds a rich and diverse historical and architectural legacy that includes Canaanite, Assyrian, Hellenistic, Jewish, Babylonian, Roman, Islamic, Crusader, Palestinian Arab and Ottoman influences. The remains of structures at the site include a roman theatre, a Roman villa, two early Christian churches, a sixth-century synagogue, more than 40 different mosaics and a Crusader fortress that was restored and rebuilt by Palestinian leader Daher El-‘Omar in the eighteenth century (Shahin, 2005). The upper part of this still-standing fortress was used as an Arab school from the early 1900s until 1948 (Petersen, 2002: 270). Since 1992 the former Arab village has been designated a “modern national park”, run by the Israeli National Park Authority. In *Marketing Heritage: Archaeology and the Consumption of the Past*, Yorke Rowan and Uzi Baram show the selective appropriation of the past and collective amnesia promoted by the Israeli heritage industry and the way the history of the site of Safuriya is presented by the National Park Authority: it covers the “Jewish heritage” and the periods up to Roman and Byzantine rule, with a brief mention of the Crusades. The fourteenth centuries of the Arab and Muslim rule and the rest of the modern history of the site is not mentioned at all (Rowan & Baram, 2004: 222; also Baram, 2007: 299–325).

Ironically some of the lands of the destroyed Palestinian villages which have been taken over by the JNF are dedicated to revolutionary South American heroes of liberation and struggle for independence. The JNF itself maintains offices in the capitals of Bolivia and Venezuela where they raise funds to entrench further Israeli apartheid system and erase the traces of the Nakba. An example of this is the JNF Eshtaol Forest which covers the lands of the two Palestinian villages Islin and Ishwa, and parts of the lands of two other villages, Bayt Mahsir and Bayt Susin. In Eshtaol Forest, there stand three courts. The first one is dedicated to the memory of Simon Bolivar, the revered nineteenth-century liberator of Latin America from European Spanish settler-colonialism; it stands on the land of the village Ishwa. The other two courts are dedicated to another leader of Latin America liberation, General Jose de San Martin; they stand on the land

of Bayt Mahsir. *Moshav* Eshtaol, built on the ruins of Ishwa, is a settlement of Jewish immigrants from the Yemen, who were transferred by the Zionist movement to Palestine shortly after 1948 (Mizrahi, 2009).

Tel Gezer archaeological park

Another “Jewish national” archaeological theme park is found at Tel Gezer (“Tall Jazar”). Gezer was a royal Canaanite city-state, with long and multiple histories. It was located 30 kilometres west of Jerusalem and 8 kilometres southeast of present-day Ramle, founded around 705–15 CE by the Muslim Umayyad Caliph Suleiman ibn Abd al-Malik after the Arab conquest of Palestine. Until 1948 a Palestinian village, Abu Shusha, was located on the south slope of Tall Jazar. The village was occupied by the Israeli army in May 1948 and its Muslim inhabitants were expelled (W. Khalidi, 1992: 358) and a study conducted by Birzeit University, based on interviews with former residents, showed that between 60 and 70 residents were killed or murdered during the Israeli army’s occupation of the village; two Jewish settlements (Ameilim and Pedaya) were established on the village’s land; the remains of the village were destroyed in 1965,²⁴ paving the way for the creation of a “biblical landscape” and a national archaeological theme park (Benvenisti, 1996: 248; Shai, 2006: 86–106).

The Canaanite city may have been settled as early as the fourth millennium BCE (W. Khalidi, 1992: 358) and the site was inhabited for thousands of years; the city was mentioned in the Egyptian records of the New Kingdom and Hebrew Bible. According to the Hebrew Bible, Joshua defeated the King of Gezer but the Israelites did not expel the Canaanite inhabitants; they lived together with them (Josh. 10:33). In Roman times its name was Gazara and the city was also mentioned in the New Testament. In 1177 the Crusaders fought and won a battle at the site (called “Mont Gisart” by the Crusaders) against Saladin; a Muslim shrine (*maqam*) on the Tall seems to have been constructed in the seventeenth century. Archaeological excavations at Tall Jazar have been going on since the early 1900s, first by Robert Alexander Stewart Macalister (1870–1950), an Irish biblical archeologist, who excavated the site on behalf of the Palestine Exploration Fund (Macalister, 1907, 1912); since then the site became one of the most excavated in Palestine; a century of excavations has uncovered the multiple histories of the site: a Roman house, Hebrew artefacts, early Christian lamps and artefacts, ceramics and coins dating to the thirteenth century and the Muslim period were found on the site (W. Khalidi, 1992: 358). In 1957 former army chief of staff General Yigael Yadin – guided by the Hebrew Bible and modern “supecessionist/replacement archaeology” – announced that he had uncovered a “Solomonic wall” and gateway identical in construction to the “Solomonic remains” excavated at the Canaanites cities of Meggido and Hazor.²⁵

Over the past one hundred years the archaeological evidence unearthed at Tall Jazar, Tel Megiddo, Tall Hazor and other sites has demonstrated the multilayered heritage and complex identity of these sites (Canaanite, Philistine, Persian, Hebrew, Greek, Roman, Christian Byzantine, Arabo-Islamic, Nabataeas, modern Palestinian Arab); local Canaanite and Philistine vessels uncovered at Tall Jazar attest to a predominantly mixed Canaanite/Philistine population of this city in ancient Palestine. Clearly the multiple histories of the site is of great significance not only for Jews, Christians and Muslims but also for the historical heritage of Palestinians, which extends over several millennia. Also today the Palestinian refugees of Abu Shusha and descendants, who number over 6,000, are scarred throughout the Middle East and beyond. No reference in the “Jewish national” archaeological (replacement) theme park at Tel Gezer to Abu

Shusha and its refugees or the Arabo-Islamic heritage of the site or the predominantly Canaanite heritage of its ancient history.

Similar retrospective settler-colonization of the ancient past with modern ideological and physical uses of “heritage sites” and the construction of national monuments and national archaeological parks are found in occupied Arab Jerusalem. The City of David archaeological park, in the Palestinian village of Silwan, at the foot of the Old City, is a prime example of a joint heritage stewardship by Israeli state, the municipality of Jerusalem and a fundamentalist settler organization, El-Ad (see above). El-Ad provides a sort of cover for official settlement activity in east Jerusalem and for the transformation of Jerusalem’s demography, topography and historic sites. In Jerusalem the state uses an array of tourist and heritage practices as a way of extending the Jewish infrastructure over the city and the expropriation of Palestinian heritage of Jerusalem. The City of David national archaeological park also highlights the “instrumentalization of varied architectural and visual resources” by the Israeli heritage industry as a tool of settler-colonial “exclusivist and antagonistic heritage stewardship” (Pullan & Gwiazda, 2008).

Chapter 5

GOD'S MAPMAKERS

Jewish fundamentalism and the land traditions of the Hebrew Bible (1967 to Gaza 2013)

FROM THE SECULAR TO THE SACRED: THE RISE OF JEWISH FUNDAMENTALISM SINCE 1967

Since its establishment in 1948 the Israeli state, which had been built by secular and atheist Labour Zionists, has undergone a gradual process of sacralization and clericalization, with leading Labour Zionists and founding fathers of the state seeking an alliance with religious Zionism – thus cementing the alliance between the sword and the Hebrew Bible, between the secular establishment of Zionism, which created the state and dominated the Israeli army for decades, and the Zionist religious parties (Cygielman, 1977: 28–37). As Mark LeVine observes,

Prime Minister Ben-Gurion granted orthodox Judaism sole authority over Jewish life in the new state, which meant that large sums of money were directed to yeshivas and other religious institutions that helped lay the foundation for the “religious revival” that occurred after 1967. (LeVine, 2009: 189–90, n.23)

This partnership between secular Labour Zionism and the forces of Jewish religious nationalism, Zeev Sternhell observed, was much deeper than appeared on the surface (Sternhell, 1998: 335).

Several Israeli scholars have documented the ongoing process of sacralizing Israeli state policies since 1948 and the growth of messianic Zionism since 1967. They have also observed a strong element of growing religious coercion in public life. Already in 1965 Israeli historian Ya'acov Talmon (1916–80) observed the major role played by the religious establishment in the state and society:

the Rabbinate is rapidly developing into a firmly institutionalized Church imposing an exacting discipline on its members and facing the general body of laymen as a distinct power. This is not a religious development, but, ironically enough, the outcome of the emergence of the [Jewish] State. The latter has given birth and legitimacy to an established Church.

(Talmon, 1965, cited in Tamarin, 1973: 37)

Talmon pointed out that none of this has roots in Jewish tradition or the Jewish diaspora.

The theocratic elements in Israeli state and society are often explained in terms of the

problems of coalition politics, but the socio-political and cultural reasons are much deeper. Such a theocratic development is not surprising in an “ethnocratic state” in which some basis must be established – in state ideology, cultural attitudes, and law – for distinguishing the privileged and dominant Jewish population from the non-Jewish citizens of Israel (Chomsky, 1975: 37–8). In fact since 1948 successive policies adopted by the ethnocratic State of Israel – land, ethnic and demographic, legal and political, military and strategic – have aimed at entrenching Jewish exclusionism and the domination of Israel’s ruling Jewish majority (Masalha, 2003; Yiftachel, 2006).

However, until 1967, religious Zionism remained relatively pragmatic in its language and demand for the application of the *halacha* within Israel as well as in foreign affairs. Since 1967, several critical Israeli scholars and intellectuals – including Israel Shahak and Norton Mezvinsky (1999), Tzvi Raanan (1980), Ilan Pappé (2000: 33–44), Yehoshafat Harkabi (1986), Ehud Sprinzak (1991), Avi‘ezer Ravitzky (1996), Uriel Tal (1985) and Yesha‘ayahu Leibowitz (1903–94) – have recognized that messianic neo-Zionism has become central to Israel’s domestic and foreign policies. Moreover, the relationship between the Jewish religion and Israeli ethnocratic policies has become increasingly intertwined (Harkabi, 1986: 207). Also, a right-wing political theology has been deployed in the service of settler-colonial policies and territorial expansionism (Lustick, 1988: 107; Shaham, 1979; Elitzur, 1978: 42–53). Furthermore since 1967 radical religious Zionism has transposed Theodor Herzl’s secular Zionism and the creation of a “state for the Jews” into the apocalyptic redemption of the “whole Land of Israel” (Prior, 1997; 1999: 67–102; 1999a; Masalha, 2000: 105–62) and purifying Greater Israel. Michael Neumann, of Trent University in Ontario (Canada) commented on the rise of Jewish fundamentalism in Israel:

[the late] Israel Shahak and others have documented the rise of fundamentalist Jewish sects that speak of the greater value of Jewish blood, the specialness of Jewish DNA, the duty to kill even innocent civilians who pose a potential danger to Jews, and the need to “redeem” lands lying far beyond the present frontiers of Israeli control. Much of this happens beneath the public surface of Israeli society, but these racial ideologies exert a strong influence on the mainstream.

(Neumann, 2002)

Today there are two distinct strands, with distinct discourses, of Jewish fundamentalism in Israel. The first is represented by the Jewish-Zionist fundamentalist or nationalist-religious camp (also known as the “messianic” camp), and the second by the ultra-orthodox rabbis and non-Zionist religious parties of the Haredim, both Mizrahi (eastern) and Ashkenazi (western).

The secular Herzl had been little concerned with the exact location of the *Judenstaat* or the scope of its boundaries. Since 1967 the Zionist messianic force, on the other hand, has been inspired by maximalist expansionism. Yet, as Israeli sociologist Baruch Kimmeling (1939–2007) has argued, the shift from the secular to the sacred was bound to take place from the moment European secular Zionist leadership invented a tradition and sought to renaming and reimagining Palestine as the “Land of Israel”:

[Zionism] has to repeatedly explain to itself and to the international community why it chose Palestine, the land retitled as “The Land of Israel” as its target-territory for settlement ... it was chosen out of ideological-religious motives. This fact not only turned the Zionist project into ... an essentially religious project, which was not able to disconnect itself from its original identity as a quasi-messianic movement. The essence

of this society and state's right and reason to exist is embedded in symbols, ideas and religious scriptures – even if there has been an attempt to give them a secular re-interpretation and context. Indeed, it was made captive from the beginning by its choice of a target-territory for immigration and a place for its nation building. For then, neither the nation nor its culture could be built successfully apart from the religious context, even when its prophets, priests, builders and fighters saw themselves as completely secular.

(Kimmerling, 1999: 339–63; see also Cook, 2006: 174–5)

MESSIANISM AND DIVINELY “CHOSEN PEOPLE”

This radical shift from secular to messianic Zionism was reflected in the findings of a public opinion poll conducted in the late 1990. It showed, *inter alia*, that a majority of 55 per cent of the Jewish population of Israel believed absolutely in the biblical story that the Torah (“*matan Torah*”, in Hebrew) was literally “given” to Moses on Mount Sinai – only 14 per cent rejected it outright as a historical reality. Furthermore, 68 per cent believed that the Jewish people were a divinely “chosen people” (“*am nivhar*” or “*am segula*”) – only 20 per cent rejected this supremacist belief. Some 39 per cent believed in the coming of the Messiah (but they were not asked about the time of his coming); only 14 per cent had some doubts about this and only 32 per cent completely rejected the messianic idea (Kimmerling, 1999: 339–63). In the 1980s even the leader of the secular Labour party, Shimon Peres, was undergoing a process of orthodoxization. Israeli media reports and pictures showed him going to the Wailing Wall after being sworn in as prime minister and head of the national unity government in September 1984; then he was observed taking Talmud lessons from a chief rabbi – although these displays of piety elicited some ridicule and derision in the secular press (Beit-Hallahmi, 1992: 136).

Jewish religious revivalism and the ascendance of Israel's radical right – which includes both secular and fundamentalist currents – were partly the outcome of the 1967 war which was a watershed in the history of Israel and which had a profound effect on the country's religious and secular camps (Masalha, 1997; 2000: 105–62). Even for many secular Israelis who were indifferent to religion or even opposed to it, the capture of east Jerusalem and the West Bank represented a conversion of almost mystical proportions: “Religious and ‘secular’, Right and Left, fathers and sons, still felt that they shared historical and cultural rights based on the sanctity of the Jewish heritage [of the Bible]” (Sternhell, 1998: 335). Israel's victory created a sense of triumphalist sacred history among many non-believing Israeli Jews, who saw the capture of the old city of Jerusalem as a “sign from Heaven”.¹ This sacred triumphalism brought to prominence neo-Zionism and gave rise to messianic Zionism (Margalit, 1991).

In the wake of the war, and the rise of radical religious Zionism, the role of the militarist traditions within Zionist ideology and Israeli settler activities increased significantly. Radical religious Zionism has since developed into a major political and cultural force, with a considerable influence on the attitudes, commitments and votes of a large number of religious and secular Israelis. Its organized focus is the colonial-settlement movement of Gush Emunim (“the Bloc of Faithful”), the most influential extra-parliamentary movement in the country, which also activates the entire panorama of neo-Zionist and secular ultra-nationalists, including some of Israel's most powerful secular leaders (Lustick, 1988: ix, 12–16, 153; Newman, 1982; Pappé, 2000: 33–44; Cook, 2006; Friedman, 1992; Gorenberg, 2000; Inbari 1984: 10–11).

On the whole, the rise of radical neo-Zionism in Israel – unlike the variety of Islamic

fundamentalism in Palestine – is not the product of socio-economic or political marginalisation.² It is, rather, a middle-class phenomenon and the product of state policies, the influence of Zionist elites, and coalition politics. Moreover, because of its middle-class Ashkenazi origins, the powerful settlement movement of Gush Emunim has been the most successful extra-parliamentary movement to arise in Israel since 1948, and has had a profound influence upon the Israeli political system (Lustick, 1988: 8, 12–15; Schnall, 1985: 15). Its practical colonization of the West Bank has been the main vehicle of the political success of neo-Zionism inside Israel. In *The Ascendance of Israel's Radical Right* Sprinzak writes: “Gush Emunim is still a very dynamic force, by far the most viable component of the radical right. It may also be the most effective social movement that has emerged in Israel since 1948” (Sprinzak, 1991: 107).

With thousands of full-time devotees (Aronoff, 1985), Gush Emunim colonists’ real power lies in the organization’s extensive settlement network, its thousands of highly motivated settlers, its dozens of illegal colonies established in the West Bank and in the Golan Heights since 1967, with their huge financial and material assets, and above all in the activities of its leading personalities in all the political parties of the right (Sprinzak, 1991: 130; Newman, 1985: 533; Lustick, 1988: 10). Gush Emunim has drawn crucial support from the Likud, the National Religious Party (NRP), Tzomet, Moledet, Tehiya, Matzad, Ihud Leumi (National Union) and Yisrael Beiteinu. Knesset members of these parties identified with Gush Emunim objectives and openly campaigned for their implementation. In 1987, members of the Knesset faction Matzad, all of whom were closely identified with Gush Emunim, succeeded in capturing key positions within the NRP. Furthermore, several leading Gush Emunim personalities, including Hanan Porat, Rabbi Eli’ezer Waldman and Rabbi Haim Druckman have been Knesset members (Newman, 1994: 533; Joffe, 1996: 153).

Messianic Zionism in Israel, in its various shades, emphasized the “chosenness” and “territorial wholeness” of the “Land of Israel” and constructed a sacred racial notion of the Israeli state. Not only the Israeli state is sacralized, its weapons of mass destruction, its tanks and American-made aircraft (and possible even its nuclear arsenal) are viewed as sacred. Israeli tanks and aircraft are ritually blessed by messianic rabbis serving in the Israeli army. In constructing neo-Zionist ideology, national identity is not simply a socio-cultural phenomenon, but a geopolitical and territorial ideal (Pappe, 2000: 33–44; Lustick, 1987: 118–39). This is reflected in the popular slogan: “The Land of Israel, for the People of Israel, According to the Torah of Israel”. As the late Rabbi Tzvi Yehuda Kook, the spiritual leader of messianic Zionism, put it: “The Land was chosen before the people”. Hanan Porat, one of the most influential leaders of Gush Emunim, echoed the same view:

For us the Land of Israel is a Land of destiny, a chosen Land, not just an existentially defined homeland. It is the Land from which the voice of God has called to us ever since that first call to the first Hebrew: “Come and go forth from your Land where you were born and from your father’s house to the Land that I will show you”.

(Lustick, 1987:127)

Although there is a variety of Jewish fundamentalist groups and movements in Israel, they invariably envisage a theocratic regime for Israel based on the *halacha* and spurn universal, humanistic and liberal values. For them Zionism and the Israeli state (with its army, tanks, aircraft and other weapon systems) are divine agents (Ravitzky, 1996). The political theology of the Israeli messianic trend is based on four major components: (a) messianic fervour related to a belief in the territorial “sanctity” of Greater Israel; (b) the building of the Temple on the site of

the Muslim shrines in occupied east Jerusalem; (c) the ethos of a theocratic utopia, reflecting the desire to build a theocratic state based on the *halacha* ; (d) the establishment of Jewish political sovereignty over Greater Israel (Gorny, 1994:150–51). Moreover, the creation of the Israeli state in 1948 and the conquest (“liberation”) of additional territories in the 1967 war are both perceived as constituting part of the divine process of messianic redemption – a process that, according to neo-Zionists, should not be stopped or altered by any government of Israel (Newman, 1994: 533).

The ideology of the messianic current generally conceives a radical and sharp distinction between Jew and non-Jew in Israel–Palestine and assumes basically antagonistic relations between them. For messianic Zionists, the conflict with “gentiles” over Jerusalem, and even war against them, is “for their own good” because this will hasten messianic redemption (Lustick, 1988: 120). For the messianic rabbis, who embrace the supremacist paradigms of Jews as a divinely “Chosen People” and Israel as a sacred racial state, the indigenous Palestinians are no more than illegitimate tenants and squatters, and a threat to the process of messianic redemption; their human and civil rights are no match for the divine plan and the divine ordained commandment (Hebrew: *mitzvah*) of conquering, ethnic cleansing, possessing and settling the “promised land”.

KOOKIST POLITICAL THEOLOGY: THE *SITRA AHRA* AND “NEW PHILISTINES, CANAANITES AND ISHMAELITES”

The single most influential ideologue of political messianic Zionism was Rabbi Tzvi Yehuda Kook (1891–1982), who was the head of the large Yeshivat Merkaz Ha-Rav in Jerusalem. His father was the first Ashkenazi chief rabbi of the Jewish community in mandatory Palestine, between 1920 and 1935, Rabbi Avraham Yitzhak HaCohen Kook (1865–1935). Rabbi Kook the elder was also the founder of Yeshivat Merkaz Ha-Rav, at which all of Gush Emunim’s spiritual authorities and many of its settler leaders in the West Bank were educated. He was a prolific author, the founder of the Zionist religious and messianic ideology who promoted the idea that that the era of messianic redemption for the Jews had already begun with the rise of modern Zionism in the late nineteenth century, the British Balfour Declaration of 1917, and the growing Zionist Yishuv in mandatory Palestine. He was a key figure in accommodating the ideology of secular Zionism to classical Jewish orthodoxy, and is held in great regard not only by Jewish messianics but also by many secular Zionists. He established the Chief Rabbinate of Israel, the *Rabbanut* , and Israel’s national rabbinical courts, *Batei Din* , which work in coordination with the Israeli government, having jurisdiction over much law relating to marriage, divorce, conversion and education. He also built political alliances between the secular Labour Zionist leadership and followers of religious Zionism. He believed, according to his theological system, that the secular and even anti-religious Labour Zionist settlers of the pre-state period were part of a grand divine scheme of building up the physical land, laying the groundwork for the ultimate messianic redemption of world Jewry. The Kooks (father and son) were key figures in Israel’s Ashkenazi (religious and secular) establishment (Lustick, 1988: 8, 12–15; Schnall, 1985: 15). Their sacralization of Zionism and the demands that the *halacha* guide official policies towards the Palestinian population is widely accepted in religious circles and parties in Israel.

The teachings of the Kooks (father and son) integrated the traditional, passive religious longings for the land with the modern, secular, activist, settler Zionism, giving birth to a new ideo-theology of the “sacred state of Israel” (Jones, 1999: 11–14; Prior, 1997a: 20–21; Aran,

1997: 294–327). Kook (the son) defined the predominantly secular State of Israel as the “biblical kingdom of Israel”; for him secular Zionism and secular state policies were imbued with holiness. Israel’s spectacular territorial conquests in the June 1957 war transformed the status of Kookist political theology from the margins of Israeli politics to the centre stage. This Kookist theology saw the 1967 war and the occupation of the Old City of Jerusalem as a miraculous turning-point in the messianic era and messianic process of redemption/cleansing and the deliverance of the *Eretz-Yisrael* from the *Sitra Ahra* – the “evil Other” – the “new Philistines, Canaanites and Ishmaelites” the mystical force that embodies defilement, corruption and the (Arab) “devil’s camp” (Tal, 1985; Jones, 1999: 12). For Rabbi Tzvi Yehuda Kook, believing that the Israeli state was now existing in the messianic age, all biblical rules regarding the biblical kingdom of Israel, including strict *halachic* injunctions, should be now applicable to the State of Israel. Rabbi Tzvi Yehuda Kook also rushed with his settler-colonial “biblical claims” towards the West Bank immediately after the 1967 conquests:

All this land is ours, absolutely, belonging to all of us, nontransferable to others even in part ... it is clear and absolute that there are no “Arab territories” or “Arab lands” here, but only the lands of Israel, the eternal heritage of our forefathers to which others [the Arabs] have come and upon which they have built without our permission and in our absence.

(Quoted in Schnall, 1984: 19; Leor, 1986)

Rabbi Tzvi Yehuda Kook’s messianic politics were described by the Israeli journalist David Shaham as “consistent, extremist, uncompromising and concentrated on a single issue: the right of the Jewish people to sovereignty over every foot of the Land of Israel. Absolute sovereignty, with no imposed limitations”; “From a perspective of national sovereignty” Kook says, “the country belongs to us” (quoted in Shaham, 1979). Immediately after the 1967 war, Tzvi Yehuda Kook demanded the annexation of the occupied territories, in line with explicit *halacha* provisions.³ He also said at a conference after 1967:

I tell you explicitly ... that there is a prohibition in the Torah against giving up even an inch of our liberated land. There are no conquests here and we are not occupying foreign land; we are returning to our home, to the inheritance of our forefathers. There is no Arab land here, only the inheritance of our God – the more the world gets used to this thought the better it will be for it and for all of us.

(Quoted in Pichnik, 1968: 108–9)

These statements were made in the presence of senior public figures, including the Israeli president Zalman Shazar, ministers, members of the Knesset, judges, chief rabbis and senior civil servants.

Rabbi Tzvi Yehuda Kook and his supporters of Gush Emunim promoted an ethno-centric doctrine of the Jews as a superior “race” rooted in the knowledge of God, while the “Oriental” (predominantly Muslim) Palestinians, descendants of the demonic Other, Ishmael (Hebrew: Yishmael; Arabic: Isma’il), were an “inferior race” (Rachlevsky, 1998: 392–3). Ishmael is a figure in the Hebrew Bible and Quran. The Quran views Isma’il as a prophet, and as the actual son that Abraham (Arabic: Ibrahim) was called on to sacrifice. The Bible, however, generally views Ishmael as a “wicked” though repentant son of Abraham; although he is Abraham’s eldest son, he was born of his wife Sarah’s handmaiden Hagar (Gen. 16:3). Furthermore, Jewish

believers maintain that Isaac (the “father of the Jewish people”) rather than Ishmael was the “legitimate” son and true heir of Abraham; “The distinction between Yitzhak [Isaac] and Ishmael [the ‘father of the Arabs’] is a clear racial distinction” Kook wrote (Rachlevsky, 1998: 406). For Tzvi Yehuda Kook, Sarah was a free woman and Jewish descendants were entitled to inherit the land; Hagar was a slave and her son Ishmael and his so-called “Arab descendants” were disinherited by the Bible.

For Tzvi Yehuda Kook and his disciples, in the new messianic era the sacralized State of Israel must continue the “biblical battles” over colonization of the “Land of Israel” to be won by a combination of religious faith and military might. The devotion of an increasingly powerful trend to the ethnic cleansing of Jerusalem and Greater Israel, and to messianic redemption, has turned the Palestinians in east Jerusalem – illegally occupied and unilaterally annexed to Israel after 1967 – into resident aliens in their own historic city. The same political theology has spawned Jewish terrorism in east Jerusalem and the West Bank. This Jewish terrorism has been reflected in, among others, the violence of *Hamahteret Hayehudit* (the Jewish Underground) and “Terror against Terror” of the early 1980s; the Hebron massacre in February 1994; and the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin on 4 November 1995.

For the followers of Tzvi Yehuda Kook and the fundamentalists of Gush Emunim, continuing settler-colonialism, combined with the establishment of Israeli sovereignty over Greater Israel and the replacement of the Al-Aqsa Mosque with the “Third Temple” in the Old City of Jerusalem, are all part of implementing the divinely ordained messianic redemption. Rabbi Shlomo Aviner, a Parisian-born Jew and the former Rabbi of Beit El, a religiously observant Israeli settlement on the West Bank, and currently the chief rabbi of the 'Ateret Cohanim yeshiva in east Jerusalem's Old City – a fundamentalist group campaigning to rebuild the Jewish Temple on the Al-Haram Al-Sharif (the Noble Sanctuary) (Aviner, 2000) – called for further territorial expansionism beyond the current occupied territories: “Even if there is a peace, we must instigate wars of liberation in order to conquer additional parts of the Land of Israel” (Aviner, 1982: 110). According to Rabbi Yehuda Amital (1924–2010), the rabbi of a military Hesder Yeshiva⁴ in the West Bank, Yeshivat Har-'Etzion, and a former member of the Israeli cabinet, wars initiate the process of purification, of refinement, “the purifying and cleansing of the congregation of Israel” (Tal, 1985).

THE *HALACHA* STATUS OF *GER TOSHAV* AND THE PALESTINIANS

Since 1967, neo-Zionists have debated whether Palestinians residing in the “land of Israel” qualify for the *halachic* status of *ger toshav* (“resident alien”). In line with this *halacha* concept of *ger toshav*, both Palestinian Muslims and Palestinian Christians are viewed by some Jewish religious nationalists, including many of the Gush Emunim rabbis, as temporary resident aliens, a population living, at best, on sufferance. While the relatively moderate members of the NRP have categorized the Palestinians as resident aliens, the more radical Jewish fundamentalists pointed out that biblical status of *ger toshav* refers to only non-Jews who adopt Judaism (Num. 10:14).

Jewish messianics have also reinvented the rational Arab-Jewish medieval philosopher and theologian Moses Maimonides and metamorphosed him from being a rationalist and universalist philosopher – the most illustrious example of the Golden Age of Arabo-Islamic-Judaic symbiosis – into anti-Arab religious zealot (Masalha, 2002: 85–117). The messianics invoke theological

orthodoxy and a conservative interpretation of the Jewish *halacha* of Maimonides to justify their attitudes. Quoting selectively and misleadingly from Maimonides's work, the neo-Zionists conceive a racial distinction between Jew and non-Jew in Israel. They pointed out that Maimonides had made it clear in his law code that the *Torah* concept of *ger toshav* refers to a "righteous gentile" who becomes a Jew (Nisan, 1992: 167). That position is found in the publications of Mordechai Nisan (1992; original Hebrew, 1986, 2011), an Israeli professor of middle east studies at the Rothberg International School of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, a senior lecturer at the university and an associate of the Ariel Center for Policy Research, based in the Ariel settlement on the West Bank. The *halachic* status of *ger toshav* is, according to Nisan, as follows: a gentile who accepts the Seven Laws of Noah (Hebrew: *Sheva mitzvot B'nei Noah*),⁵ enjoys a social standing in the "Land of Israel" above a man who is a slave to a Jew:

The Gentile in Eretz-Israel who accepts the Seven Noahide Laws becomes a *Ger-Toshav* (a resident alien) ... The concept of the *Ger-Toshav* refers to a person who has gone through the process of a partial conversion before a Rabbinic court of three. The *Ben-Hoah* assumes a more inferior and limited status if his acceptance of Torah is due to a rational decision alone, but not a Divinely fixed obligation. The *Ger-Toshav*, then, is positioned between the *Ben-Noah* and the Jew.

(Nisan, 1992: 163)

Nisan, who has elsewhere expressed a rationalization for and endorsement of Jewish settlers' violence against the Palestinians of the occupied territories,⁶ writes: "The Bible states the Jewish right regardless of non-Jewish presence ... The land is the eternal possession of the Jewish people alone (Nisan, 1983, quoted in Chomsky, 1983: 444, 470, n.3). In August 1984, Nisan, who supports the replacement of Israel's secular law by the *halacha*, repeated the same ideas in an article in *Kivunim*, an official organ of the World Zionist Organization (Nisan, 1984: 151–6; 1992: 156; Harkabi, 1986: 216–17).

THE "VERDICT OF AMALEK": THE ISRAELI PUBLIC DEBATE ON THE "GENOCIDE COMMANDMENT" OF THE TORAH

The indigenous Palestinians are viewed by radical rabbis as temporary alien residents, and as a population living, at best, on sufferance. The same rabbis deny that a Palestinian nation exists and strongly opposes the idea of Palestinian rights in Jerusalem. According to them, there is no need to take into consideration the Arab residents, since their residence in the city for hundreds of years was prohibited and was based on theft, fraud and distortion; therefore, now the time has come for the Arab "robbers" to depart.

According to the Bible, the Amalekites were a nomadic people who dwelt in the Sinai desert and southern Palestine, who were regarded as the Israelites' inveterate foe, and whose "annihilation" became a sacred duty, and against whom war should be waged until their "memory be blotted out" forever (Exod. 17:16; Deut. 25:17–19). Although the biblical stories assert that the Amalekites were finally wiped out during the reign of Hezekiah in the eighth century BCE, rabbinical literature dwells on Amalek's role as the Israelites' permanent arch-enemy, saying that the struggle between the two peoples will continue until the coming of the

Messiah, when God will destroy the last remnants of Amalek. In April 1969, in a statement in the journal of the Israeli Army Rabbinate, *Mahanaim*, a certain Shraga Gafni cited biblical authority for driving the “Canaanite peoples” from the land and explains the “relevance” of the judgment of Amalek (1 Sam. 15) to the Palestinian inhabitants of the West Bank and Gaza:

As to the Arabs – the element that now resides in the land is foreign in its essence to the land and its promise – their sentence must be that of all previous foreign elements. Our wars with them have been inevitable, just as in the days of the conquest of our possessions in antiquity ... In the case of the enemies ... there is no remedy but for them to be destroyed. This is “the judgment of Amalek”.

As Rabbi Shlomo Aviner explains:

To what can this be compared[?] It resembles a man entering his neighbour’s house without permission and residing there for many years. When the original owner of the house returns, the invader [the Arab] claims: “It is my [house]. I have been living here for many years”. So what? All of these years he was a robber! Now he should depart and pay housing rent as well. A person might say: there is a difference between a residence of thirty years and a residence of two thousand years. Let us ask him: Is there a law of limitation which gives a robber the right to his plunder? ... Everyone who settled here knew very well that he was residing in a land that belonged to the people of Israel. Perhaps an Arab who was born here does not know this, nonetheless the fact that a man settled on land does not make it his. Legally “possession” serves only as evidence of a claim of ownership, but it does not create ownership. The Arabs’ “possession” of the land is therefore a “possession that asserts no right”. It is the possession of territory when it is absolutely clear that they are not its legal owners, and this possession has no legal and moral validity.

(Aviner, 1983:10)

In a similar disposition Rabbi Tzvi Yehuda Kook, who apparently inspired Aviner’s apologia, wrote:

We find ourselves here by virtue of our forefathers’ inheritance, the foundation of the Bible and history, and there is no one that can change this fact. What does it resemble? A man left his house and others came and invaded it. This is exactly what happened to us. There are those who claim that these are Arab lands here. It is all a lie and falsehood. There are absolutely no Arab lands here.

(Kook, 1982: 10)

The imagery of the homecoming Jew and the Arab invader permeates the writings of a variety of spiritual leaders of messianic Jewish fundamentalism, and implies that the Jew has the right to evict the “alien” Arab “invader”. Moreover these ideologues interpret the Zionist assertion of “historical rights” to the land as meaning that the very fact of Arab residence on, and possession of, the land is morally flawed and legally, at best, temporary; therefore, the Arabs must evacuate the land in the interests of the “legal owners” of the country, and depart (Aviner, 1983: 10).

Palestinian resistance to the extension of Jewish sovereignty over the “whole Land of Israel” will, according to many Jewish messianics, result in their uprooting and destruction. Reflecting

on the appropriate policy to adopt towards the Palestinians, Rabbi Tzvi Yehuda Kook cited Maimonides to the effect that the Canaanites had three choices – to flee, to accept Jewish sovereignty, or to fight – implying that the decision by most Canaanites to resist Jewish rule justified their destruction (Kook, 1982: 19).

Some of the religious radicals insist on giving the “biblical commandment” to “blot out the memory of Amalek” an actual contemporary relevance in the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians. *Milhemet Mitzvah* (Hebrew: “War by Commandment”) is the biblical term for a war during which the Israelite kings would go to war against their enemies – such as the war against Amalek – in order to fulfil a commandment based on the Torah and without needing approval from a Sanhedrin.

The most extreme position in this regard, annihilation, was expressed in an essay by Rabbi Yisrael Hess, a former campus rabbi of Bar-Ilan University, published in the official magazine of Bar Ilan University students, *Bat Kol* in February 1980, under the title “The Genocide Commandment in the Torah” (Hebrew: “*Mitzvat Hagenocide Batorah*”). Liking the Palestinians to the biblical Amalekites (the “descendants of the treacherous Amalekites” according to Hess) who were deservedly annihilated according to the Hebrew Bible, the title of Hess’s article left no place for ambiguity. It ends with the following: “The day is not far when we shall all be called to this holy war, to this commandment of the annihilation of Amalek” (Hess, 1980; Rubinstein, 1980: 125; Tal, 1985: 27; Sprinzak, 1986). The manner of carrying out this commandment is described in 1 Samuel 15:3: “Go now, attack Amalek, and deal with him and all that he has under the ban. Do not spare him but kill man and woman, child and infant, ox and sheep, camel and ass”.

According to Rabbi Hess, the commandment of carrying out the annihilation of Amalek was based on two arguments: (a) racial purity; (b) holy war. The racial justification was as follows: according to Genesis 36:12, Amalek is the son of Timna, who was Eliphaz’s concubine. Yet according to I Chronicles 1:36, the same Timna was the daughter of Eliphaz and thus Amalek’s sister. Rabbi Hess thus concluded that Eliphaz cohabited with his wife (who herself was somebody else’s wife), begat his daughter Timna by her, took his daughter as a concubine, cohabited with her, and thus Amalek was born. Thus, Rabbi Hess argued, it was impure blood that flowed in Amalek’s veins and in the veins of Amalek’s descendants for all time. His second argument was: Amalek is the enemy who fought against Israel in a particularly cruel manner and embodied utter evilness; Israel and Amalek represent light and darkness, purity versus contamination; the people of God versus the forces of evil; that this opposition continues to exist with respect to the descendants of Amalek for all time; that the Arabs are the descendants of Amalek (Tal, 1985).

According to the late Professor Ehud Sprinzak, Hess’s exterminationist position was an isolated one and was not never repeated by any of Gush Emunim leaders (Sprinzak, 1986).⁷ But, in fact, Hess was not the first national religious rabbi to liken the Palestinians to the biblical Amalekites: this had already been done in a book written in 1974 by Rabbi Moshe Ben-Tzion Ishbezari, the rabbi of the city of Ramat Gan⁸ as well as in the above article in the Israeli Army Rabbinate journal *Mahanaim* in April 1969. Clearly the “verdict of Amalek” theology is not confined to a single rabbi, Hess, who believed the Palestinian were the “Amalekites of today” who “desecrate the Land of Israel”. In his *On the Lord’s Side: Gush Emunim* (1982), Israeli journalist Danny Rubinstein has also shown that this notion of the “Amalekites of today” permeates the Gush Emunim movement’s bulletins.⁹ In his Bar Ilan article Hess describes the Palestinians as Amalekites and reminds his Israeli readers of the Hebrew Bible commandment of

the obligation to exterminate the Amalekites (Hess, 1980; 1 Sam. 15:3). Hess adds:

Against this holy war God declares a counter jihad ... in order to emphasise that this is the background for the annihilation and that it is over this that the war is being waged and that it is not a conflict between two peoples ... God is not content that we annihilate Amalek – “blot out the memory of Amalek” – he also enlists personally in this war ... because, as has been said, he has a personal interest in this matter, this is the principal aim.

(Hess, 1980)

Citing Hess’s article, Professor Amnon Rubinstein, then Knesset member and a lecturer in law at Tel Aviv University, commented:

Rabbi Hess explains the commandment which instructs the blotting out of the memory of Amalek and says that there is not the slightest mercy in this commandment which orders the killing and annihilation of also children and infants. Amalek is whoever declares war on the people of God.

(Rubinstein, 1980: 125)

Rubinstein pointed out that “no reservation on behalf of the editorial board, the students or the University was made after publishing this article which was also reprinted in other newspapers” (*ibid.* : 179). However, a subsequent issue of *Bat Kol* (no. 2, 16 April 1980) carried two articles written by Professor Uriel Simon and Dr Tzvi Weinberg severely criticizing the article of Rabbi Hess. Clearly, for Hess, Amalek is synonymous with the Palestinian Arabs, who have a conflict with Israeli Jews, and they must be “annihilated” including women, children and infants. His use of the Arabic term *jihad* leaves no doubt as to against whom such a war of “annihilation” should be waged.

But it was the late Professor Uriel Tal, who was professor of modern Jewish history and holder of the Jacob M. and Shoshana Schreiber Chair of Contemporary Jewish History at Tel Aviv University, and who conducted his study in the early 1980s, who did more than anyone to expose the “annihilationist” notions preached by the rising messianic force in Israel. Tal, who had also done extensive research on anti-Semitism between the two world wars, concluded that these messianic doctrines were similar to ideas common in Germany during the Weimar Republic. The gist of Tal’s research was presented to an academic forum at Tel Aviv University on 11 March 1984. The forum was organized by the International Centre for Peace in the Middle East. It was also published in the daily *Haaretz* on 26 September 1984 and was subsequently widely publicized in the Hebrew press and Israeli journals.

Tal recognized the totalitarian messianic character of the Gush Emunim settlers and pointed out that their radical supporters promote an attitude towards Palestinians consisting of three degrees or stages:

- (a) the reduction of the Palestinians to the *halacha* status of *ger toshav*, resident alien; this first degree is still relatively moderate: it states that equality of the rights of citizens is a foreign principle and not binding; that the status of Palestinian can only be that of foreigners (*gerim*). Of the two kinds of *gerim* – the righteous proselyte (*ger tzedek*) and the sojourner (*ger toshav*) – only the latter applies;
- (b) the promotion of Arab “transfer” and emigration;

- (c) the implementation of the commandment of Amalek, as expressed in Rabbi Hess's article: "The Commandment of Genocide in the Torah" in other words, "annihilating" the Palestinian Arabs (Tal, 1985: 27; also Tal, 2004; Kim, 1984; Peri, 1984; Rash, 1986: 77; Nisan, 1986; Rubinstein, 1982: 91; Litani, 1984).¹⁰

Like Tal, many liberal Israelis found the resurgence of this zealotocracy a chilling prospect. Yoram Peri, an Israeli political scientist, remarked in 1984:

The solution of the transports and the trucks is not the end of the story. There is a further stage which the proponents of racist Zionism do not usually refer to explicitly, since the conditions for it are not ripe. But the principles are there, clear and inevitable. This is the stage of genocide, the annihilation of the Palestinian people.

(Peri, 1984)

Many religious Zionist figures sought to legitimize discussions of ethnic cleansing. In October 1987, a prominent office-holder from the religious right, Yosef Shapira, a former member of the NRP and a minister in the cabinet of Yitzhak Shamir, referred to "transfer" as a reasonable solution, suggesting that a sum of \$20,000 should be paid to a Palestinian family ready to leave permanently (Sprinzak, 1991: 346, n.20). In support of his proposal, Shapira cited a survey his party conducted among rabbis in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, in which 62 per cent of them responded that "we must force them to do so by any means at our disposal and see in it an exchange of population"; 13 per cent favoured the encouragement of voluntary emigration (*Nekudah*, November 1987: 37).

Rabbi Yitzhak Levy was born in 1947 in Casablanca, Morocco, and immigrated to Israel in 1957. He served as leader of the NRP and is currently chairman of the same party. In the period 1996–2008, Levy served as minister of transport; minister of education and culture; minister of religious affairs; minister of housing and construction; minister without portfolio; minister of tourism; deputy minister in the prime minister's office; a deputy speaker of the Knesset. According to the daily *Haaretz* of 25 February 1998, Levy – who had previously made clear his opposition to allowing Israeli Arab Knesset members the right to vote on the Oslo Accords of 1993 – was reputed to have supported "exiling Arabs" in the occupied territories to other Arab states (Jones, 1999: 19). More recently, in June 2007, Levy urged the blocking of humanitarian aid reaching Gaza – in effect, starving the population – until captive Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit would be released. Rabbi Levy is also known to be close to former Sephardic chief rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu, another advocate of Greater Israel, who has called for the rehabilitation of Yigal Amir, Yitzhak Rabin's assassin (Jones, 1999: 19). In 1983, while serving as Sephardi chief rabbi, Eliyahu sponsored a conference with Ateret Cohanim Yeshiva on the rebuilding of the Third Temple on the site of the Muslim shrines in east Jerusalem. He believes that the Third Temple would descend from heaven amid flames of fire – at that point the Muslim shrines, the Dome of the Rock and al-Aqsa Mosque, would be burnt and the Third Temple built in their place (Ronel, 1984: 12).

Yitzhak Levy does not represent a small group of fanatics on the margins of Israeli society. In 1989, *Times* magazine reported the findings of a public opinion poll which indicated that some 18 per cent of Jewish Israelis supported the replacement of the Muslim shrines with the Third Temple in Jerusalem. By 1996 this proportion had risen to 58 per cent, according to a Gallup poll sponsored by the Israeli Temple Mount Faithful group (Sizer, 2007: 117). These figures followed closely the rise of messianic Jewish fundamentalism in Israel and the growth of radical settler

Jewish activities in the West Bank and east Jerusalem. Israeli journalists, who have covered east Jerusalem and the West Bank for over three decades, provide some of the best accounts of the ideology of the settlers' movement and its dehumanizing concepts (Grossman, 1988). In his work on Gush Emunim, Danny Rubinstein concludes that the majority of the Gush Emunim settlers are in favour of expelling the Arab population, describes the anti-Arab feelings that permeate the Gush Emunim meetings and provides excerpts from the settler movement's pamphlets and bulletins and their debates on the Palestinians as "the Amalekites of today" (Rubinstein, 1982: 90–93 and 151; also Aronson, 1990: 289).

The political theology of the fundamentalists, including the notion of the "Amalek of today" also found an echo in an article published by the chief military rabbi of the IDF Central Command, Rabbi Avraham Zemel (Avidan) who, according to Professor Amnon Rubinstein, gave *halacha* justification for the "murder of non-Jewish civilians including women and children, during war" (Rubinstein, 1980: 124). Rabbi Yisrael Ariel, using and abusing Maimonides, justified the campaign of the Jewish Underground terrorist organizations, implying that the killing of a Palestinian was not murder:

Any one who searches through the code of Maimonides, which is the pillar of the *halacha* in the Jewish world, [and searches for] the concept "you shall not murder" or the concept "holy blood" with regard to the killing of a non-Jew-will search in vain, because he will not find [it] ... It follows from the words of Maimonides that a Jew who kills a non-Jew ... is exempt from the prohibition "you shall not murder". And so Maimonides writes of murder in the *halachot* : "An Israelite who kills a resident alien is not sentenced to death in the court of law".

(Ariel, 1980)

With the rise of the fundamentalist currents in Israel in the last four decades, many far-reaching ideas, such as annihilating the "Ishamaelites, Amalekites, Canaanites and Philistines of today" have entered mainstream Zionist religious thinking. Inspired by a militant interpretation of some of the traditions of the Hebrew Bible, especially the Books of Exodus, Deuteronomy and Joshua, their political theology presents ethnic cleansing as not only legitimate, but as required by the divinity. It has already been shown that the discourse of ethnic cleansing is widely supported by nationalist religious groups as well as by the Gush Emunim movement, both leaders and members. If the very idea of Arab residence in Palestine is based on "theft" is morally flawed and legally temporary, according to Jewish fundamentalists in Israel, then, Arab removal is the logical conclusion. Rabbi Yisrael Ariel bluntly demanded expelling the Palestinians as necessitated by Jewish religious commandments:

On the one hand there is a commandment of settling *Eretz-Yisrael* , which is defined by our sages of blessed memory also as the commandment of "inheritance and residence"... Every young student understands that "inheritance and residence" means conquering and settling the land. The Torah repeats the commandment "You shall dispossess all the inhabitants of the land" tens of times, and [Rabbi] Rashi [Rabbi Shlomo Yitzhaki] explains that "You shall dispossess – You shall expel". The Torah itself uses the term "expulsion" a number of times such as: "Since you shall expel the inhabitants of the country with my help". The substance of this commandment is to expel the inhabitants of the land whoever they may be ... "Because [of the commandment] to settle *Eretz-Yisrael* – to expel idolaters and to settle Israel there" ...

the commandment to settle aims at the expulsion of the non-Jew from *Eretz-Yisrael*.
(Ariel, 1980)

For messianic fundamentalists, the Palestinians face the same predicament as the Canaanites of the Bible and have little choice but to convert or leave the land (Nisan, 1990/91: 139–41; Prior, 2003: 26–9).

An Israeli soldier, who was also a yeshiva student, asked his rabbi about the subject of “*tohar haneshik*” (the “purity of arms”). From the answer of the rabbi the soldier concluded: “During war I am permitted or even obliged to kill every male and female Arab that happens to be in my way ... I must kill them even if this involves complication with the military law’ (Rubinstein, 1980: 124). Professor Rubinstein, who in his book *The Zionist Dream Revisited: From Herzl to Gush Emunim and Back* cites many references made by the spiritual mentors of Gush Emunim to the Arabs as the “Amalek of today” wrote critically in an article in *Haaretz* daily on 3 February 1983:

We are dealing with a political ideology of violence. It is needless to show how this ideology is expressed in the way the Arabs are treated. The Rabbis of Gush Emunim ... publicly preach incitement to kill Arab civilians, and those who kill civilians, and are caught and brought to court, are later amnestied by the Chief of Staff [General Raphael Eitan], who believes the Arabs understand only the use of violence. Those who think that it is possible to differentiate between blood and blood are wrong. The verdict on “Amalek” can easily be extended to the enemies within, the traitors.

There is good reason to suggest that the greater the role of the Jewish *halacha* in the political life of Israel becomes, the more vigorously this messianic current will demand that the Palestinian Arabs be dealt with according to *halachic* regulations – including the imposition of the status of “resident alien” on them; the insistence on diminishing Arab numbers by making life more difficult; the revival of the command to “blot out the memory of Amalek”; the insistence that the Palestinians are the “Amalekites of today” to be dealt with by annihilations; and the repetition of the assertion that the killing a non-Jew is not a murder.

The neo-Zionist messianic current is inspired by maximalist territorial annexationism (Lustick, 1988: 107; Shaham, 1979; Elitzur, 1978: 42–53); many rabbis in the Zionist religious camp see the Israeli army “operations” against the Palestinians as part of a *milhemet mitzvah* commanded by the Torah against modern Amalek and the “Canaanites of today”. Although at present the colonization drive is confined to the occupied territories, according to the late Ehud Sprinzak, the author of *The Ascendance of Israel’s Radical Right* :

When Gush ideologues speak about the complete [whole] Land of Israel they have in mind not only the post-1967 territory, but the land promised in the Covenant (Genesis 15) as well. This includes the Occupied Territories – especially Judea and Samaria, the very heart of the historic Israeli nation, and vast territories that belong now to Jordan, Syria and Iraq.

(Sprinzak, 1991: 113)

Traditionally, Transjordan, where, according to biblical stories, the Israelite tribes of Reuven, Menashe and Gad were supposed to have resided, has been the primary focus of Gush Emunim’s expansionist ambitions (Lustick, 1988: 107), although other expansionist aspirations in all sorts

of directions across the Fertile Crescent have also been openly expressed. In the judgement of the late Rabbi Tzvi Yehuda Kook, the spiritual leader of Gush Emunim, the destined borders of the Jewish state would stretch broadly across the whole area: Transjordan, the Golan Heights, the “Bashan” (the Jabal Druze region in Syria), are all part of the “Land of Israel” (Shaham, 1979). Echoing the same geopolitical ambitions, Yehuda Elitzur, one of the most influential scholars in Gush Emunim, considered the “promised land” and “patriarchal” boundaries to extend to the Euphrates river, southern Turkey, Transjordan and the Nile Delta; the lands that Israel is required eventually to conquer, “redeem” “inherit” and settle include northern Sinai, Lebanon and western Syria, the Golan Heights, and much of Transjordan (Elitzur, 1978: 42–53).

THE 1982 INVASION OF LEBANON

Israel’s military invasion of Lebanon in 1982 (“Operation Peace for Galilee”) encouraged many messianic fundamentalists to discuss “*halachic* imperatives” towards territorial expansion in the direction of Lebanon, regardless of the price. Some of the leading spokesmen of the messianic camps expressed their views in *Nekuda*, the organ of the Jewish settlers in the occupied territories, that the invasion of Lebanon was another sanctified war, a war of religious duty, and that Israel’s military occupation of south Lebanon confirmed the validity of the biblical promise in Deuteronomy 11:24: “Every place on which the sole of your foot treads shall be yours; our border shall be from the wilderness and the Lebanon, from the river, the River Euphrates, to the Western Sea” (Tal, 1985).

Jewish fundamentalists further claimed that large tracts of Lebanon were the domain of the “biblical tribe” of Asher. Beirut was even Hebrewized to Beerot – the Hebrew for “well”. Members of the Israeli army’s rabbinate issued a leaflet which quoted the “inheritance of Asher” in the Book of Joshua (Shindler, 2002: 155). In September of that year the Gush Emunim journal *Nekudah* published “a study” of Yehuda Elitzur, which claimed that the most serious distortion of Israel’s borders was in the north – in Lebanon (Lustick, 1988: 107). The following month a paid advertisement of Gush Emunim in support of the invasion of Lebanon asserted that south Lebanon was part of *Eretz-Yisrael* and that the 1982 war “brought back the property of the tribes of Naftali and Asher into Israel’s boundaries” (Talmom, 1965: 37). In the same month messianic rabbis reiterated the same claim in a book entitled *This Good Mountain and the Lebanon*. Rabbi Ya’acov Ariel – currently the chief rabbi of the city of Ramat Gan and one of the leading rabbis of the religious Zionist movement in Israel who in 2003 was one of the leading candidates for the Israeli Ashkenazi chief rabbi – his brother, Rabbi Yisrael Ariel – the former chief rabbi of Yamit and founder of the Temple Institute – and Rabbi Dov Leor – currently the chief rabbi of the Kiryat Arbaa settlement on the West Bank – declared southern Lebanon to be the lands of the “biblical tribes” of Zevulun, Asher and Naphtali. Yisrael Ariel went even further by asserting that the boundaries of the Land of Israel included Lebanon up to Tripoli in the north, Sinai, Syria, part of Iraq and even part of Kuwait.¹¹ In the same month he called for the annexation and settlement of most of Lebanon with its capital Beirut to Israel, at any price:

Beirut is part of the Land of Israel – about that there is no controversy, and being that Lebanon is part of the Land of Israel we must declare that we have no intention of leaving. We must declare that Lebanon is flesh of our flesh, as is Tel Aviv and Haifa, and that we do this by right of the moral power granted to us in the Torah. Our leaders should have entered Lebanon and Beirut without hesitation, and killed every single one

of them. Not a memory or a trace should have remained ... We should have entered Beirut at any price, without regard to our own casualties, because we are speaking of the conquest of the Land of Israel.

(*Nekudah* , 12 November 1982: 23)

Forty American rabbis who had been brought to the hills surrounding Beirut to view the Lebanese capital besieged and bombarded by the Israeli army declared that Operation Peace for Galilee was, Judaically, a just war and a *milhemet mitzvah* – a “commandment war” or an obligatory war – a war that resulted in the death of some 20,000 Palestinians and Lebanese. Following the invasion of Lebanon, a leading American Jewish scholar, Rabbi J. David Bleich, suggested that a verse from the biblical Song of Songs (4:8) supported the acquisition of southern Lebanon. Bleich interpreted this as another step towards complete redemption (Shindler, 2002: 155). The Ashkenazi chief rabbi of Israel, Shlomo Goren – a former chief chaplain of and brigadier general in the Israeli army – went even further and, following Maimonides, cited three categories of obligatory wars, which included Joshua’s battle to clear the “land of Israel” when “biblical Israelites” crossed into Canaan, the battles against the Amalekites, who became the symbolic biblical enemies of the Israelites down the centuries, and the contemporary war in Lebanon (Shindler, 2002: 156). The Lubavitcher Rebbe, the Hasidic leader who held court in Brooklyn and popularized the messianic idea, fiercely opposed Israel’s partial withdrawal in 1985 from southern Lebanon, describing the area as Israel’s “North Bank” which allegedly had been part of the “biblical Land of Israel” (Shindler, 2002: 193).

Back in 1982, shortly before Israel’s invasion of Lebanon and immediately after Israel’s evacuation of the settlement of Yamit in northern Sinai, leading Gush Emunim figures, such as Beni Katzover and Rabbis Moshe Levinger and Haim Druckman, formed an organization called Shvut Sinai (“Return to Sinai”), dedicated to campaigning for the reconquest of Sinai by Israel and Jewish rule over it (Lustick, 1988: 61). Two years later, in 1984, Ya’acov Feitelson, a Tehiya party member and the former mayor of Ariel, the Jewish settlement in the West Bank, echoed the same Jewish imperial vision:

I am speaking of a tremendous vision. We are only in the infancy of the Zionist movement ... Israel must squarely face up to the implementation of the Zionist vision ... I say that Israel should establish new cities throughout the entire area. I mean really the whole area of the Middle East, without limiting ourselves: we should never say about any place: here we stop.

(*Koteret Rashit* , 14 November 1984: 23)

In the same year (1984), Rabbi Eli’ezer Waldman expressed opposition to the idea which was then being propagated by Likud leaders, such as Ariel Sharon and Yitzhak Shamir, that Jordan had become the Palestinian homeland. Waldman and the majority of Gush Emunim opposed any final agreement relinquishing the east bank of Jordan to non-Jewish rule (Lustick, 1988:107).

This geopolitical vision of territorial expansion across the region could only be ensured by military campaigns and holy wars. In fact the actual settlement drive in the West Bank is viewed and planned as nothing less than a military campaign. Military might, war and warfare are desired and often eagerly sought by many neo-Zionist groups. War simply represents a time of testing, a sign of strength – a necessary means by which the will of Providence is worked out. Territorially ambitious rabbis and leaders of Gush Emunim share the same attitude to war. Within Gush Emunim, war, leading to Jewish rule over the “whole Land of Israel” is a central

component of the purgative process that will bring about messianic times. Emphasizing expansion by military means, Rabbi Tzvi Kook asserted:

We are commanded both to possess and to settle [the land]. The meaning of possession is conquest, and in performing this *mitzvah*, we can perform the other – the commandment to settle ... We cannot evade this commandment ... Torah, war, and settlement – they are three things in one and we rejoice in the authority we have been given for each of them.

(Kook, 1982: 19)

In a similar vein Rabbi Shlomo Aviner writes: “We have been commanded by the God of Israel and the creator of the world to take possession of this *entire* land, in its holy borders, and to do this by wars of defence, and even by wars of liberation” (Lustick, 1988: 106). Hanan Porat, a leading Gush Emunim figure, spoke in 1982 in terms of practical preparations for future opportunities that will arise:

We must prepare ourselves in terms of our consciousness and by establishing new settlement nuclei, to settle those portions of the Land of Israel that today are still not in our hands ... nuclei for the Litani area [in south Lebanon], Gilead, Transjordan, and Sinai.

(*Nekudah*, 12 May 1982: 17)

In the political culture of the post-colonial world order, Israel is a society plagued by the problem of identity politics and deep cultural divisions (Kimmerling, 1999: 339–63). On the liberal Israeli side, many authors voiced strong criticism of messianic Zionism and pointed to the violent activities of groups such as Jewish Underground and TNT (Terror Against Terror [Hebrew: Terror Neged Terror], a militant Jewish group that carried out several attacks against Palestinian targets in the 1970s and 1980s) as an inevitable consequence of the philosophy and activities of Gush Emunim (Shahak & Mezvinsky, 1999; Evron, 1995: 223–41; Shlaim, 2000; Elon, 1997). But the actual reluctance of the state in general and the Likud administrations in particular to punish those settlers who murdered Palestinian civilians, as exemplified by the delayed publication of, and subsequent reticence over, the Karp report on settlers’ violence against Palestinians, only encouraged militant Gush Emunim settlers in the West Bank and their radical right-wing supporters who were determined to drive the Palestinians out one way or another. The same reticence over widespread settler violence against Palestinians must also have encouraged those Jewish fundamentalists who were prepared to use violence against those perceived to be dovish Israeli Jews.

In the 1990s the Oslo process and the Israeli-Palestinian agreements clearly shocked the messianic current, including the rabbis and leaders of Gush Emunim, and brought to the surface the deep divisions that had been developing inside Israeli society in response to the peace talks with the Palestinians. The establishment of the Palestinian Authority in Gaza and the West Bank and the appearance of armed Palestinian police and the sight of Palestinians waving flags all constituted visible evidence of the weaknesses of the messianic vision of a quick redemption. In the 1990s the messianic rabbis even turned their hatred on the “Jewish traitors” whose treason spoiled God’s plan. Rabbi Yair Dreyfus, a settlement leader, declared:

The true Jews, desirous to live as Jews, will have no choice to separate themselves in

ghettos, The new, sinful Canaanite-Palestinian state will soon be established upon the ruins of the genuine Jewish-Zionist state ... God may even make war against this polluted throne of his. The Jews who lead us into that sin no longer deserve any divine protection ... Our leadership will walk a Via Dolorosa before it understands that we are commanded to resist the [secular] state of Israel, not just its present government.

(Quoted in Shahak & Mezvinsky, 1999: 89)

THE SEIGE AND WAR OF GAZA: THE ARMY RABBINATE AND THE WAR AGAINST THE “PHILISTINES OF TODAY”

The Jewish *halacha* makes a distinction between the obligations of Jews and those of non-Jews. The most basic distinction is that Jews are subject to 613 *mitzvot*, whereas non-Jews, as *benei noah*, are obligated only by the “Seven Noahide Laws” and their various applications. The messianic rabbis interpret this difference as creating a sharp distinction between the lives and souls of Jews and non-Jews. This widespread racist discourse is evident in a book published in early November 2009 by Rabbis Yitzhak Shapira and Yosef Elitzur of Yitzhar, a Jewish settlement on the West Bank. Rabbi Shapira is the head of the Dorshei Yihudcha yeshiva in the settlement of Yitzhar in the West Bank, which receives substantial funding from the Israeli government (Eldar, 2009). However on 1 November 2011 the daily *Haaretz* reported that the Israeli education ministry, following recommendations by the Shin Bet secret service, decided to close down Dorshei Yehudcha yeshiva after its students were found engaging in violent acts not only against local Palestinians but also against the Israeli army. ¹²

In the book entitled *The King’s Torah (Torat Hamelech)* Rabbis Shapira and Elitzur present, in [chapter 5](#), “Murder of non-Jews in a Time of War” a halachic injunction on the killing of non-Jews, including women, children and babies. Endorsed by prominent rabbis and even some members of the Israeli Knesset, the marble-patterned, hardcover book embossed with gold Hebrew letters looks like any other religious commentary you’d find in an Orthodox Judaica bookstore – but it reads like a rabbinic instruction manual outlining acceptable scenarios for killing non-Jewish babies, children and adults. The prohibition “thou shalt not murder” applies only “to a Jew who kills a Jew”; non-Jews are “uncompassionate by nature” and killing them will “curb their evil inclination” while babies and children of Israel’s enemies may be killed since “it is clear that they will grow to harm us” write Rabbis Shapira and Elitzur. Apparently thousands of copies were sold in Israel and the book, widely referred to in the Israeli media, was widely distributed by key religious and secular bookshops, including Moriah, a large Jewish bookstore in occupied east Jerusalem, near the “Western Wall” Robinson Books in Tel Aviv, Pomeranz Bookseller in western Jerusalem and Felhendler in Rehovot – but the book also caused a minor media uproar and elicited condemnations both in Israel and abroad (see Sharon, 2009; Eldar, 2009; Estrin, 2010; Knell, 2011; Pinner, 2011). ¹³

The legend of Samson and Delilah (Judg. 16) ¹⁴ and the story of Samson’s “holy wars” against the Philistines, was effectively deployed by Vladimir Jabotinsky, the leader of the revisionist Betar movement, the forerunner of the present-day Likud, in his writings on Zionist struggle against the Palestinians. Jabotinsky developed his concept of militarist Zionism in his historical novel *Samson* (1930) – named after the biblical hero who is said to have lived during the period when the Israelites were oppressed by the power of the ancient Philistines of Gaza and other southern coastal cities. In the novel the final message Samson sends to the Israelites consists of

two words: “Iron” and “King” the two themes the Israelites were told to strive for so that they would become the lords of Canaan (cited in Bresheeth, 1989: 123). Jabotinsky’s “Iron Wall” doctrine, in particular, with its revival of militarist biblical traditions from Joshua to Samson, and its celebration of modern militarism, has formed a central plank in Zionist attitudes towards the indigenous inhabitants of Palestine, through the early mandatory period to the 1948 Palestinian Nakba to the current “Separation (Apartheid) Wall” in the occupied West Bank (Jabotinsky, 1923; quoted in Brenner, 1983: 74–5; and in Masalha, 1992: 28–9; 2000: 56).

Jabotinsky’s “Iron Wall” doctrine manifested itself in the devastating military assault launched by Israel against the people of Gaza which began on 27 December 2008 – in a campaign codenamed “Operation Cast Lead”. Quoting sources in the Israeli defence establishment, the daily *Haaretz* reported that defence minister Ehud Barak had instructed the Israeli army to prepare for the campaign more than six months earlier. According to *Haaretz*, “long-term preparation, careful gathering of information, secret discussions, operational deception and the misleading of the public – all these stood behind ‘Operation Cast Lead’ campaign against Hamas targets in the Gaza Strip” (Barak, 2009). This widely expected repetition of Israel’s campaigns in Lebanon in 1982 and 2006 was carried out after nearly two years of a silent but no less brutal Israeli siege of the Gaza Strip. The ferocity of Israeli bombings and the ongoing siege of Gaza were little to do with the often ineffectual Qassam rockets fired at southern Israel. In fact Operation Cast Lead was taking place in the context of a fairly successful ceasefire with Hamas.

The Israeli campaign started with an intense bombardment of the Gaza Strip, including civilian infrastructure, mosque, houses and schools. After 22 days of the offensive against Gaza, Israel declared a unilateral ceasefire. In the days following the ceasefire, the BBC reported that more than 400,000 Gazans were left without running water. As a result of the Israeli bombings, 4,000 Gazan buildings were razed and 20,000 severely damaged. In the three-week war against the people of Gaza – with air strikes aimed at civilian areas in one of the most crowded and destitute stretches of land on earth – 1,314 Palestinians were killed, mostly civilians, including 412 children, with the remainder being Palestinian police officers and Hamas fighters. Also, 14 Israelis were killed during this conflict, including three civilians. The Israeli strikes not only killed scores of ordinary policemen and destroyed every police station in Gaza, but also killed and injured thousands of civilians; one air strike killed groups of young people in Gaza City on 27 December in a busy street. Seven of the dead were students on their way back home from a UN college for Palestinian refugees.

The growing secular role of the military rabbinate and assimilation of radical political religion into the fighting battalions of the Israeli army is increasing and as part of a recent plan of the military rabbinate it was decided that a battalion rabbi would be appointed for every fighting battalion in the army.¹⁵ Deploying the biblical antagonism towards the “Philistines of Gaza” the military rabbinate also played an important role in the war against the people of Gaza. On 26 January 2009 *Haaretz* reported on the substantial role of religious officers and soldiers in the front-line units of the army during the Israeli campaign, and on the fact that, for the first time, army units were supported by the significant presence of rabbis in the field. Also, on two occasions, the army weekly magazine *Bamahane* was full of praise for the military rabbinate. The chief army rabbi, Brigadier General Avihai Rontzki, himself joined the Israeli troops in the field on several occasions, as did other rabbis under his command. Israeli officers and soldiers reported that they felt “spiritually elevated” and “morally empowered” by conversations with rabbis who gave them encouragement before the campaign against the Palestinians. In mid-January, a reservist battalion rabbi told the religious newspaper *B’Sheva* that Rabbi and Brigadier

General Rontzki explained to his staff that their role was “to fill them with yiddishkeit and a fighting spirit”. *Haaretz* reporter Amos Harel writes:

An overview of some of the army rabbinate’s publications made available during the fighting reflects the tone of nationalist propaganda that steps blatantly into politics, sounds racist and can be interpreted as a call to challenge international law when it comes to dealing with enemy civilians.

(Harel, 2009)

Haaretz obtained some of the military rabbinate’s publications through a group of former soldiers called “Breaking the Silence” soldiers who collected evidence of unethical conduct by the army during the campaign. The following quotation is from the material obtained:

[There is] a biblical ban on surrendering a single millimetre of it [the Land of Israel] to gentiles, though all sorts of impure distortions and foolishness of autonomy, enclaves and other national weaknesses. We will not abandon it to the hands of another nation, not a finger, not a nail of it.

There was also an excerpt from a publication entitled “Daily Torah” studies for soldiers and commanders taking part in the campaign, issued by the military rabbinate. The text is from “Books of Rabbi Shlomo Aviner”. The above-mentioned Aviner heads the Ateret Cohanim Yeshiva in the Muslim quarter of the Old City in Jerusalem. The following questions were posed in one publication: “Is it possible to compare today’s Palestinians to the Philistines of the past? And if so, is it possible to apply lessons today from the military tactics of Samson and David?”

Rabbi Aviner was again quoted as saying:

A comparison is possible because the Philistines of the past were not natives and had invaded from a foreign land ... They invaded the Land of Israel, a land that did not belong to them and claimed political ownership over our country ... Today the problem is the same. The Palestinians claim they deserve a state here, when in reality there was never a Palestinian or Arab state within the borders of our country. Moreover, most of them are new and came here close to the time of the War of Independence [1948].

(Harel, 2009)

The army rabbinate, also quoting Rabbi Aviner, described the appropriate code of conduct in the field: “When you show mercy to a cruel enemy, you are being cruel to pure and honest soldiers. This is terribly immoral. These are not games at the amusement park where sportsmanship teaches one to make concessions. This is a war on murderers.”

The same view was echoed in publications signed by Rabbis Chen Halamish and Yuval Freund on Jewish consciousness. Freund argues that “our enemies took advantage of the broad and merciful Israeli heart” and warns that “we will show no mercy on the cruel”. In addition to these official publications, right-wing groups managed to bring into army bases flyers and pamphlets addressed to Israeli soldiers and commanders with racist messages. One such flyer was attributed to “the pupils of Rabbi Yitzhak Ginsburg” – the former rabbi at Joseph’s Tomb and author of the article “Baruch the Man” which praised Dr Baruch Goldstein, an American-born Israeli army physician who massacred 29 Palestinians (and wounded another 150) at prayer

in the Ibrahimi Mosque in al-Khalil (Hebron) in February 1994. The flyer called on

Soldiers of Israel to spare your lives and the lives of your friends and not to show concern for a population that surrounds us and harms us. We call on you ... to function according to the law “kill the one who comes to kill you”. As for the population, it is not innocent ... We call on you to ignore any strange doctrines and orders that confuse the logical way of fighting the enemy.

(Harel, 2009)

More recently, the army rabbinate produced and distributed to army bases an educational packet ahead of the holiday of Hanukkah in December 2011, featuring a photo of Jerusalem’s Temple Mount without the Dome of the Rock, one of the most famous buildings in the world and (together with the al-Aqsa Mosque) the most famous symbol of Palestinian religious and living cultural heritage. The manufactured image and documents of the army rabbinate – whose rabbis are dominated by Ashkenazi Jews – describing the Jewish revolt against Hellenistic rule, edited out the Dome of the Rock from the picture, partly as a way of illustrating a period in which the holy sites were not in the hands of Muslims and effectively imaging Jerusalem with its Palestinian and Arab heritage (Cohen, 2011). In contrast with the living, day-to-day, memory and cultural heritage of the Palestinians, the displacing power, maps, rhetoric and actual practices of the army rabbinate have continued unchecked.

By any standard, the Israeli blitz against Gaza was a crime against humanity, taking place against a largely defenceless civilian population in what has been described as the largest concentration camp in the world. Quoting ancient texts to justify modern crimes against humanity, the rabbi of Kiryat Arba, Dov Lior, was recently quoted as saying: “A thousand non-Jewish lives are not worth a Jew’s fingernail” (cited in Amayreh, 2008). According to *Haaretz*, Rabbi ‘Ovadia Yosef, a former chief rabbi and the spiritual leader of the ultra-orthodox Shas party (who is considered by many in Israel as one of the greatest living sages of the Torah), was quoted as telling his followers during a weekly sermon in Jerusalem that Israeli soldiers need to be blessed by God for killing and maiming Palestinians; “Had it not been for them, would we have time to study the Torah?” Clearly these rabbis think that it is only through murder of Palestinians that Jews can sit down and study the Torah (cited in Amayreh, 2008; see also Shraga, 2008).

The ascendance of Israel’s extreme right (with both its secular and fundamentalist currents) has been exemplified by the meteoric rise of Yisrael Beiteinu, whose leader, deputy prime minister Avigdor Lieberman – a Moldovan immigrant and a member of Rabbi Meir Kahane’s Kach party in his youth (Levy, 2009) – has been at the centre of Israeli politics in recent years. A secular far-right party, Yisrael Beiteinu openly advocates expulsion of the Palestinian citizens, who constitute about one-fifth of Israel’s total population. On the eve of the 2009 general election *Haaretz* published an article entitled “Lieberman’s Anti-Arab Ideology Wins Over Israel’s Teens.” Typical of this inflammatory racist rhetoric is the slogan “Death to the Arabs” which has become as popular a chant among Israeli youth nowadays as the Tikva, Israel’s national anthem. Apparently you hear the former far more frequently than the latter in the 2009 election rallies, in football matches and in random gatherings of Israeli youth anywhere near the Palestinian citizens of Israel, especially in mixed cities like Jaffa, Acre and Ramie, and in Upper Nazareth.

Israeli settlement expansion in the West Bank and east Jerusalem continues, and the Israeli current government continues to disregard the terms agreed to in the Oslo accords nearly two

decades ago. At the same time the radical religious right has remained a driving force in the Israeli colonization of the occupied territories. Having organized themselves into a well-disciplined force inside and outside the Israeli army, with the encouragement of successive Israeli governments, and having always regarded themselves as being subject to supremacist biblical and *halachic* laws, the messianic rabbis and their fanatical followers in Jewish settlements of the occupied territories would represent the severest challenge to any Israeli government that might consider ceding West Bank territory to Palestinian sovereignty. Moreover as messianic theology spreads in Israel, with its mystical and fanatical attacks on rationalism, its repercussions for inter-ethnic and inter-faith relations in the Holy Land at large is a major concern.

CONCLUSION

The new scholarly revolution, and reclaiming the heritage of the disinherited and disenfranchised Palestinians

THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL REVOLUTION

The confidence that the Bible is a reliable witness to the historicity of the events it describes has collapsed over the last quarter of a century. The myth of Israelite tribal “nomadic” religion emerging in the Sinai desert has been completely demolished. The “new” archaeology of the Holy Land raises the following questions: What if the Hebrew Bible is largely fictional? What if Moses did not lead the Israelite tribes from Egypt to Canaan? What if the fabled walls of Jericho never fell before Joshua’s armies? For Christian traditionalists there are deep concerns about any questioning of the veracity of these claims and about the findings of the archaeology which challenges biblical literalist–historicist readings of the language of the Hebrew Bible. In Israel, furthermore, any attempt to question the historicity and reliability of the biblical stories is perceived as an attempt to undermine Jewish nationalism, the construction of Israeli identity in primordialist terms and, more crucially, the “Jewish historic right to the land” and as shattering the myth of the State of Israel as continuing and renewing the ancient Kingdom of Israel (Herzog, 1999: 6–8).

In *The Archaeology of Knowledge (L’Archéologie du Savoir* , 1969, 2002) and *Power/Knowledge* (1980) Michel Foucault analyses the conditions for the production of “scholarly knowledge” in various discursive formations and the role of power in hegemonic discursive practices and knowledge generation. Similarly, in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962), Thomas Kuhn has shown how “scientific knowledge” and “scientific truths” relied heavily on intellectual paradigms, a set of ideas and discourses based on which “normal science” is practised. A paradigm begins to break down when researchers discover contradictions and anomalies that cannot be explained under the assumptions of the paradigm; the paradigm collapses and the process of formation of a new paradigm takes place. From the nineteenth century until the 1970s “biblical archaeology” with its efforts to ground the narratives of the Bible in demonstrable historical reality, was the dominant research paradigm for those archaeologists excavating the ancient history of Palestine. Today this paradigm has collapsed. Many archaeologists today even prefer to speak of “Syro-Palestinian archaeology”. The demise of the historicist paradigm and the emergence of new critical discourses in biblical studies are not just a nominal shift but reflect major theoretical and methodological developments, and a real revolution in biblical studies (T Davis, 2004). This is particularly evident in New Testament archaeology where archaeologists do not set out deliberately to prove or refute elements of the gospels, but focus on excavating sites such as Caesarea, Capernaum and Sepphoris (modern Arab Saffuriya) in the hope of shedding light on the social, religious and political conditions during or after the life of Jesus (Cline, 2009: 3).

The archaeological revolution and critical scholarship of ancient Palestine that has emerged in

both Israel–Palestine and the West is a good example of the formation of new paradigms and new scholarly discourses. The new paradigm presents a major challenge to the historicity of the Hebrew Bible and to both biblical scholarship and Israeli nationalist historiography. The data of the critical archaeology, which suggests a reconstruction of the ancient past very different from that implied in the biblical stories, did not emerge in a vacuum. Already in the late 1960s and early 1970s attempts began to separate history from legend, and the archaeology of ancient Palestine from biblical and theological studies (Thompson, 1999: xi–xii; Dever, 1995). Tracing data and evidence from Palestine’s ancient history itself, rather than solely on its biblical associations or biblical “historical truths” a critical trend of archaeologists and biblical scholars began to treat the historical evidence from the past and archaeological “discoveries” in Palestine as they would those anywhere else. They examined traces, fragments, remains of archaeological “discoveries” from the past and anthropological models critically, and used modern methods to identify settlement patterns, bits of artefacts, pottery, old buildings, architecture, animal bones, seeds and soil samples to produce a description based on scholarly “evidence” and “knowledge” which resulted in (to borrow from Thomas Kuhn) “scientific revolutions” (Finkelstein & Silberman, 2001; Kuhn, 1962).

For Israelis the “archaeological revolution” raises fundamental emotive and ideological issues, partly because this critical scholarship is now being espoused by some leading archaeologists who are themselves living in Israel and teaching at Israeli universities (including Israel Finkelstein, Zeev Herzog and David Ussishkin) and Israeli–Jewish biblical scholars who feel free from Zionist biases and the previous legendary conceptions of Western and Israeli biblical archaeology. They were able to look at the reality of ancient Palestine in a completely different way, thus contributing to the demolition of the Eurocentric concentration on the testimony of the Hebrew Bible and making this new scholarship one of the most important developments of recent years.

Paradoxically, the Israeli conquest of the West Bank in the 1967 war and its aftermath contributed to the rise of two contradictory currents in Israel: on the one hand, the messianic fundamentalist current of Greater Israel (discussed in chapter five) and, on the other, the “new” archaeology. In the aftermath of the 1967 territorial conquests, Israeli archaeologists began to excavate and analyse the hill country of the southern part of the West Bank (“biblical Judah”), looking for settlement patterns, evidence of lifestyles, and changes in demography and the environment. These surveys revolutionized the study of ancient Palestine (Finkelstein & Silberman, 2001: 107). Indeed, since the late 1960s archaeological discoveries “have revolutionized the study of early Israel and have cast serious doubt on the historical basis of such famous biblical stories as the wanderings of the Patriarchs, the Exodus from Egypt and conquest of Canaan, and the glorious empire of David and Solomon” (*ibid.* : 3).

For centuries Jews, Christians and Muslims believed (and continue to believe) in the historicity of Abraham (Ibrahim for Muslims) and other biblical patriarchs. However, more recent archaeology and scholarship have adopted critical approaches to the biblical testimony and sources for the history of the Canaanites, Philistines and Israelites, “recognizing” as John Barton explains, “that much of what the Bible asserts does indeed lie in the realm of legend, especially for the earlier periods” (Barton, 2010:112). The German scholar of the Hebrew Bible, Martin Noth (1902–68), one of the pioneers of the historical–critical approach, highlighted the role of oral traditions in the creation of the biblical stories and argued that there was no reason to think that Moses was a real historical figure (Noth, 1943, 1981; 1981a; Barton, 2010: 114). In 1974 Thomas L. Thompson, now emeritus professor of the old testament and archaeology at the

University of Copenhagen, and the author of *The Historicity of the Patriarchal Narratives: The Quest for the Historical Abraham* (1974) and *The Bible in History: How Writers Create a Past* (1999), was among the first to question the historicity of the patriarchal stories and epics. Thompson concluded: “Not only has ‘archaeology’ not proven a single event of the patriarchal traditions to be historical, it has not shown any of the traditions to be likely” (Thompson, 1974: 328). At the same time Canadian scholar John Van Seters, in *Abraham in History and Tradition* (1975), a seminal work in its field, questioned the historical validity of the patriarchal narrative and argued that no convincing evidence existed to support the historical existence of Abraham or other patriarchs or the historical reliability of their origins in Mesopotamia and their exploits and travels as depicted in Genesis. He also showed that these biblical stories could only have been written in the sixth century BCE or even later. Subsequently Van Seters published *In Search of History: Historiography in the Ancient World and the Origins of Biblical History* (1983), for which he was awarded the James H. Breasted Prize of American Historical Association (1985) and the American Academy of Religion book award (1986).

In the 1980s, John Romer showed in *Testament: The Bible and History* that the account of the “enslavement and freedom” of the “biblical Israelites” in the scale and type described in the Book of Exodus, “did not exist in ancient Egypt or anywhere in that ancient world” (Romer, 1988:62). Biblical scribes, Romer suggests, grafted themes of liberation – distilled from the Israelites exile and subjugation in Babylon – onto this earlier period. The Mesopotamian roots of the Bible theory was recently reinforced in *Babylon, Mesopotamia and the Birth of Civilization*, in which Paul Kriwaczek also argues that “Outside the Hebrew Bible, the obligation to abstain from work every seventh day is first recorded in Assyria” (Kriwaczek, 2010: 209).

Before and since the mid-1970s, the situation created by the mountains of evidence and findings excavated from “biblical sites” paradoxically began to undermine the historical credibility of the Bible descriptions instead of reinforcing them; also importantly no evidence has been unearthed that can sustain the patriarchal period (or the legends of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob), dated between 2200 and 1900 BCE or its chronology (Herzog, 1999: 6–8). Broadly speaking, the collapse of the historicity of the events described in the Hebrew Bible, Iron Age I, over the last three decades, has been the result of three interrelated factors: archaeological evidence, textual and literary criticism; and a post-colonial critique of biblical studies.

In 1986 the journalist and broadcaster John McCarthy was taken hostage together with several Westerners by Islamic fundamentalists in Beirut. Apparently the Bible was the only book his Islamist prison guards would allow him and the other hostages. During his long and painful ordeal, which lasted until August 1991, McCarthy read the Bible twice (Rose, 2004: 21). McCarthy became fascinated and intrigued by the biblical epics and when he was released he stumbled across the works of a group of Israeli archaeologists from Tel Aviv University. The outcome was a British television documentary entitled *It Ain't Necessarily So*, presented by McCarthy. The November 2001 ITV series shows McCarthy going to the Holy Land to examine the validity of stories from the Hebrew Bible, with the help of leading archaeologists in the field. Apparently the ITV producers panicked about its radical content; McCarthy was given six half-hour transmissions at a midnight slot; and with minimum publicity hardly anyone watched the shows (Rose, 2004: 22).¹ The documentary covered critical archaeology, revisionist historiography and critical biblical research, and McCarthy's journey to the Holy Land and his attempt to explore the truth behind the legends of Joshua's conquest of Canaan, the Promised Land and Jericho's “tumbling” walls. Key questions were considered: Who was Solomon? When did the Jews become monotheists? What was Zion? And when was the text of the Hebrew Bible

actually written?

Zeev Herzog, professor of archaeology at Tel Aviv University, and the director of its Institute of Archaeology, was one of the key advocates of this new discourse of critical archaeology. Appearing on an Australian TV programme in April 2000, also entitled *It Ain't Necessarily So*, he debated the issue with William Dever, a leading American archaeologist and former head of the University of Arizona's Near Eastern Studies Department. Already in October 1999, in a now-famous article in the Hebrew daily *Haaretz*, entitled "The Old Testament: There are no Findings on the Ground" Herzog argued

Following 70 years of intensive excavations in the Land of Israel, archaeologists have found out: The patriarchs' acts are legendary, the Israelites did not sojourn in Egypt or make an exodus, they did not conquer the land. Neither is there any mention of the empire of David and Solomon, nor of the source of belief in the God of Israel. These facts have been known for years, but Israel is a stubborn people and nobody wants to hear about it.

(Herzog, 1999: 6–8)

The continuities between indigenous religions and the development of monotheism in the Palestine are widely acknowledged today. Herzog explains how the new critical archaeology of Palestine has shown that the Exodus and Joshua's conquest of Canaan could not have happened:

This is what archaeologists have learned from their excavations in the Land of Israel: the Israelites were never in Egypt, did not wander in the desert, did not conquer the land in a military campaign and did not pass it on to the 12 tribes of Israel. Perhaps even harder to swallow is the fact that the united monarchy of David and Solomon, which is described by the Bible as a regional power, was at most a small tribal kingdom. And it will come as an unpleasant shock to many that the God of Israel, Jehovah [Yahweh], had a female consort [see below] and that the early Israelite religion adopted monotheism only in the waning period of the monarchy and not at Mount Sinai. Most of those who are engaged in scientific work in the interlocking spheres of the Bible, archaeology and the history of the Jewish people – and who once went into the field looking for proof to corroborate the Bible story – now agree that the historic events relating to the stages of the Jewish people's emergence are radically different from what that story tells.

(Herzog, 1999: 6–8; see also Harcourt, 1997: 282–96)

The Bible is diverse folk tales, theology and moral tales, not history. The critical archaeology of ancient Palestine has produced a process that amounts to a scientific revolution in its field; critical archaeology – which has become an independent professional discipline with its own conclusions and its own observations – presents us with a picture of a reality of ancient Palestine completely different from the one that is described in the Hebrew Bible; Holy Land archaeology is no longer using the Hebrew Bible as a reference point or an historical source; the traditional biblical archaeology is no longer the ruling paradigm in Holy Land archaeology; for the critical archaeologists the Bible is read like other ancient texts: as literature which may or may not contain some historical information (Herzog, 2001: 72–93; 1999: 6–8).

The Hebrew Bible is not "historical data" or positivist "historical knowledge" of the past; the

Bible was not written to be a factual account of the past; it may or may not contain fragments and echoes from the past. Historically and archaeologically it is very difficult to tell “Israelites” from “Canaanites”. The books of the Bible (Old and New Testaments) are a sophisticated collection of ancient literature: warriors’ epics, many different genres, poetry, drama, monarchic religion, wisdom literature as exemplified by Proverbs and oral traditions. Biblical “divine commandments” evolved during autocratic monarchies. The creation myths of the Bible and biblical war epics, like the creation myth in Hesiod – which has long been held to have Near Eastern influences – or Homer’s heroic epics of warriors, or the Mesopotamian epic poem of Gilgamesh, all may have evolved from multiple oral traditions, but they are not history; they may or may not contain echoes, traces and fragments of the past and were created to be heard (rather than read) from story-tellers, like the *hakawatis*, in Middle Eastern Arab and Palestinian oral traditions.

William Dever, by contrast, drew different conclusions. Although he does deny the historicity of Genesis–Joshua, gives the impression that his past certainties were under strain and concedes that no serious scholar today doubted the late date of the final redaction of the biblical tradition, he asserts that the biblical stories may contain genuinely historical material, some of it possibly contemporary with the events the narrative purports to describe. He agreed that there was need for a fresh approach to “ancient Israel” one that is critical, comparative, marked by dialogue between biblical scholars and archaeologists (Dever, 2001: 25; Davies, 2003).² Dever’s work, *What Did the Biblical Writers Know and When Did They Know It? What Archaeology Can Tell Us about the Reality of Ancient Israel* is an attack on the new critical scholarship (see below) and those who dared to challenge the historicity of the Hebrew Bible and “standard presentation” of Jerusalem and ancient Palestine (Whitelam, 2003: 286).

The critical archaeologists do not ignore the richness of the biblical stories and literature. Their argument is complex: that there is a need to distinguish between two distinct historical periods. The first period, “Iron Age I” covered the earlier phases of the Bible and the origins of the Israelites. The second period describes a proto-history of the Israelites: the sojourn in Egypt; the wandering in Sinai; the very story of the patriarchs; the military conquest of Canaan. The main archaeological debate is about the historicity of the Bible during this period. Virtually all the events which are described in detail in the biblical stories appear to be contradictory. The current debate is not about the absence of archaeological evidence. Over the last 70 years, the “new” archaeologists argue, the crucial evidence at digs in Israel–Palestine, Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon suggest that most of the famous stories in the Hebrew Bible: the wanderings of the patriarchs; the Exodus from Egypt, which provides the foundation of the notion of “liberation” within traditional Judaism; Joshua’s conquest of Canaan; the ‘empire’ of David and Solomon, are completely unfounded.

THE MYTH OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF DAVID AND SOLOMON

Israeli claims for *exclusive* possession of and control over Jerusalem benefited greatly from the “findings” of Israeli court archaeologists and Western orthodox biblical historiography, both of which relied on the historicity of the Hebrew Bible. The latter tells of the golden age of the united kingdom of the Israelites ruled over by a Judean monarch, first David and then his son Solomon. It describes a vast empire spreading from the Red Sea to the border of Syria, the splendour of Jerusalem and the First Temple built by Solomon, as well as other magnificent

building projects. This “united kingdom” then split into Israel in the north and Judah in the south. But the archaeological discoveries contradict this picture. Although there is some archaeological evidence for the biblical monarchies of Judah and Israel from the ninth century to the sixth century BCE, including in documents from neighbouring countries, mainly Assyria, there is also serious debate about its actual history. The archaeological evidence presents a picture completely different from the scale of the kingdoms of David and Solomon described in the Bible. The “united monarchy” of David and Solomon, which the Bible describes as the zenith of the political, military and economic power of the Israelites, emerges from the recent archaeology – not as a major regional power – but as two small tribal chieftainships. Israel and Judea were from the outset two separate, small tribal chieftainships, and at times were in an adversarial relationship (Herzog, 1999: 6–8).

A secularized Zionist version of Israeli mythologies about Jerusalem being the “national and religious capital” of the Israelites under David and Solomon is currently being promoted by leftwing Zionists and moderate Israelis, some of whom even utilize the findings of the critical archaeology to refute the biblical foundational narratives of Zionism. Daniel Gavron, a British Zionist journalist who immigrated to Israel in 1961 and became the head of English News of Israel Radio – he was also a co-founder of the *Palestine-Israel Journal* which supports the two-state solution – wrote a piece which was posted on the Israeli foreign ministry website in September 2003, entitled “King David and Jerusalem: Myth and Reality”. The extraordinary thing about this public relations piece is the fact that it endorses many of the findings of critical Israeli archaeologists (including Finkelstein and Nadav Naaman), but, at the same time, desperately clings on to some old Zionist myths and Israeli propaganda, while even articulating new myths centred on Jerusalem (Gavron, 2003).

Gavron begins by commenting on the evidence produced by the new archaeology:

To most Israelis it is axiomatic that the celebrations for the 3,000th anniversary of the conquest of Jerusalem by King David mark a real and tangible event; but this is far from certain. The biblical account of the capture of the city is the only one we have, and in the opinion of most modern scholars, the Bible is not an entirely reliable historical document. Corroborating evidence is required, and some indeed exists; but it is not conclusive. When all the available information has been assembled, the most that can be said is that there was probably an Israelite ruler called David, who made Jerusalem his capital sometime in the tenth century BCE. However, the precise date cannot be determined, and consequently there is no way of knowing exactly when the anniversary falls ... The Bible is not – and was never intended to be – a historical document. A work of theology, law, ethics and literature, it does contain historical information; but if we want to evaluate this information we should consider when, how and why the Bible was compiled ... The historical evidence to back up these events is sparse, and, in some cases, contradictory. In particular, the account of Joshua’s conquest of Canaan is inconsistent with the archaeological evidence. Cities supposedly conquered by Joshua in the 14th century BCE were destroyed long before he came on the scene. Some, such as Ai and Arad, had been ruins for 1000 years ... The conclusion is somewhat startling to Bible readers who know the Canaanites portrayed in the Bible as immoral idolaters: most of the Israelites were in fact formerly Canaanites. The story of Abraham’s journey from Ur of the Chaldees, the Patriarchs, the Exodus, Sinai, and the conquest of Canaan, all these were apparently based on legends that the various elements brought with them from their countries of origin. The

consolidation of the Israelites into a nation was not the result of wanderings in the desert and divine revelation, but came from the need to defend themselves against the Philistines, who settled in the Canaanite coastal plain more or less at the same time the Israelites were establishing themselves in the hills.

(Gavron, 2003)

Gavron then goes on to reimagine Jerusalem as the “national and religious capital” of the Israelites under David, implying that David did not expel the “Jebusites” from his “capital” city, therefore Israel today should also allow the Palestinians to live in Jerusalem:

[The] founders of Israel were not Abraham and Moses; but Saul and David. It was apparently Saul who consolidated the hill farmers under his rule and created fighting units capable of confronting the Philistines. It was David who defeated the Philistines and united the hill farmers with the people of the Canaanite plains, thus establishing the Kingdom of Israel and its capital city. It is generally accepted among scholars today that there is genuine historical material in the Books of Samuel, which describe the careers of Saul and David; but even these books must be critically examined to distinguish between legend and fact, in as much as it can ever be known. Some of the materials in Samuel I and II, notably the lists of officers, officials, and districts are believed to be very early, possibly even dating to the time of David or Solomon. These documents were probably in the hands of the Deuteronomists when they started to compile the material three centuries later ... The 3,000th anniversary celebration of David’s capture of Jerusalem is perceived by some people, both in Israel and abroad, as an indication of an exclusive Jewish claim to the city. Although, as we have argued here, it is probable that David did take the city some three millenia ago, and make it his personal, national and religious capital, the Biblical evidence points to the fact that the great Israelite monarch found a way to share his capital with his former adversaries. The Jebusites continued to live there; their property rights were respected and they were given a role in the administration of the city.

(*Ibid.*)

These secularized nationalist claims that Jerusalem was always the “capital city” of the “united monarchy” under David and Solomon have no foundation in the history of ancient Palestine: they are fabricated modern myths (von Waldow, 2004: 222–53) – myths that are crucial to the secular Zionist camp in Israel, but not the religious orthodox or messianic ones. In fact the archaeological discoveries show Jerusalem was not even the spiritual centre of the biblically described but rather legendary united monarchy. Zeev Herzog writes:

The picture becomes even more complicated in the light of the excavations conducted in Jerusalem, the capital of the united monarchy. Large sections of the city have been excavated over the past 150 years. The digs have turned up impressive remnants of the cities from the Middle Bronze Age and from Iron Age II ... No remains of buildings have been found from the period of the united monarchy (even according to the agreed chronology), only a few pottery shards. Given the preservation of the remains from earlier and later periods, it is clear that Jerusalem in the time of David and Solomon was a small city, perhaps with a small citadel for the king, but in any event it was not

the capital of an empire as described in the Bible. This small chiefdom is the source of the “Beth David” title mentioned in later Aramean and Moabite inscriptions. The authors of the biblical account knew Jerusalem in the 8th century BCE, with its wall and the rich culture of which remains have been found in various parts of the city, and projected this picture back to the age of the united monarchy. Presumably Jerusalem acquired its central status after the destruction of Samaria, its northern rival, in 722 BCE

(Herzog, 1999: 6–8)

Jerusalem appears to have been abandoned between 1000 and 900 BCE and the actual history of ancient Palestine – in contrast with the Bible stories – is not a history that is dominated by Jerusalem (Thompson, 2004: 7), although Finkelstein and Silberman believe that David and Solomon did exist – but only as minor highland chieftains ruling a population of perhaps 5,000 people. There is no archaeological evidence around 1005–970 BCE for David’s empire or conquests, nor for Solomon’s (legendary) empire (970–31 BCE). More crucially there is even no evidence of monumental architecture in Jerusalem, which was no more than a village:

As far as we can see on the basis of the archaeological surveys, Judah remained relatively empty of permanent population, quite isolated, and very marginal right up to and past the presumed time of David and Solomon, with no major urban centers and with no pronounced hierarchy of hamlets, villages, and towns.

(Finkelstein & Silberman, 2001:132)

Current evidence refutes the existence of a unified kingdom:

The glorious epic of united monarchy was – like the stories of the patriarchs and the sagas of the Exodus and conquest – a brilliant composition that wove together ancient heroic tales and legends into a coherent and persuasive prophecy for the people of Israel in the seventh century BC.

(Finkelstein & Silberman, 2001:144)

Not only there is no evidence of written documents or inscriptions for the palace of Solomon or the Jewish Temple; in fact buildings once identified by Western archaeologists with Solomon have been shown by recent archaeology to date from other periods (Finkelstein & Silberman, 2001: 144). In *David and Solomon: In Search of the Bible’s Sacred Kings and the Roots of Western Civilization* (2007) Finkelstein and Silberman dismissed the existence of Solomon’s Jerusalem temple and argue that the Solomonic kingship fable had been modelled on Assyrian kingship. However, mainstream Israeli archaeology is still ignoring this scholarly revolution.

ISRAELITES VERSUS CANAANITES AND PHILISTINES? MODERN CONSTRUCTION OF “ETHNICITY” AND IDENTITY-POLITICS

The Bible began as a collection of oral traditions and ancient folk tales which, like Homer’s *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* (composed near the end of the eighth century BCE), were meant to be heard (not

read) from public story-tellers, known in the Palestinian Arabs as *hakawatis* . The sanctity bestowed on these folk tales and their codifications evolved across many centuries. In time the Bible evolved into a whole library of books based on multiple oral traditions and epic stories drawn from multiple (Near Eastern and Hellenistic) contexts. The collection of books was compiled, edited, revised and translated in a variety of languages across many centuries. Today, scholars, historians and archaeologists recognize the many traditional literary genres and traditions of the Bible –traditions which cannot be traced to a single history or style, but to diverse literacy styles and historical contexts.

This collection of library of books synthesizes and syncretizes multiple local and regional cultural and linguistic and literary traditions including those of the Canaanites, Phoenicians, Mycenaean Philistines, Israelites, Amorites, Greeks, Assyrian, Mesopotamians, Babylonians, Egyptians and Persians. Much of the Hebrew Bible is believed to have been put together during the Persian period (538–332 BCE) and under the influence of monotheistic Zoroastrianism and Babylonian epics. Moreover, the legend of David and Goliath, an epic story derived from the theme of confronting the monster, may have been inspired by or even modelled on Homer's *Odyssey* , whose Greek hero Odysseus, the legendary king of Ithaca, encounters and kills the hostile giant one-eyed Cyclops Polyphemus. Today the syncretistic, multiple traditions imbedded in the Bible are widely known and generally accepted by students in the field of critical biblical scholarship. The facts about the syncretistic nature of the Jewish and Christian traditions, combining of different beliefs and melded practices of various Mediterranean and Near Eastern religions traditions, cannot be obscured by the contemporary obsession with identity politics or the late-modern discourse of the Christian–Jewish 'roots', or 'Judeo-Christian civilization', a political discourse which has more recently been refuelled by the "clash of civilizations" doctrine, Christian Zionism and the obsession with the so-called Islamic "threat" to the West.

Since the nineteenth centuries Western biblical scholarship and mainstream biblical studies have been dominated by anthropology, ethno-racial categories and the search for and "discoveries" of ethno-historical roots and questions of ethnic origins and ethnic identity (Thompson, 2003: 1). Important recent amazing developments in biblical studies, however, have introduced new critical methodologies which have revolutionized our understanding of the history of ancient Palestine. The scholarly debate about the origins of Judaism has now reached a revolutionary stage and it flies in the face of Zionist claims and much of what is taught in the Israeli biblical academy.

The name "Israel" is found in the famous ancient Egyptian Stele of Pharaoh Merneptah text of the end of the thirteenth century BCE . But these names do not refer to a particular ethnic group among other groups in the region; in the Egyptian Stele the name "Israel" occurs as a metaphor of myth, not a name of any historical people; the same syncretistic biblical traditions can easily be identified as belonging to the Phoenicians, Canaanites, Philistines or even Egyptians (Thompson, 2003: 4–5). However, Thompson goes on to argue that in the mid-eighth century BCE it is possible to speak of "ethnic formation" in connection with names such as Ammon, Edom, Moab and Aram, as well as "Israel" and Judah:

But, even so, there are problems that should make us hesitate to give such names the significance of coherent and mutually exclusive, ethnic groups. The dominant, patron-client, political structure of the time, which orients both region and state in pyramids of personal ties of loyalty, perceived in metaphors of the family, is reflected in the names of three of these new states: Bit Ammon, Bit Humri (Israel) [the Samaritans with their capital in the town of Samaria] and possibly Beytdwd (Jerusalem? O Judah). An

Ammonite, Israelite or Judean is identifiable as belonging to such a group of people, not because of birth, but by personal bonds of loyalty to the king. The association with specific patron deities is in accord with these political divisions (the god of Chemosh for Moab, Hadad for Aram [with its capital in Damascus], Yahweh for Israel and Qa'os for Edom). Religion, however, seems first of all tied to the political allegiance of a specific ruler to his god as patron, than with what one might describe as the faith of a people. While languages throughout the region are closely associated ... For instance, a "core Canaanite" language can be recognized by associating the several dialects of Israelite with Phoenicians.

(Thompson, 2003: 5–6)

Furthermore, Thompson explains:

[The] regional settlements ... developed the respective patron age monarchies of *Bit Humri* (Israel) – centred in Samaria and controlling the central highlands during the mid-ninth to late eighth centuries until its annexation by the Assyrians in 722 BCE and *Jaúdaa* (Judah) – centred in Jerusalem and controlling the southern highlands from a time late in the eighth century until 597 BCE, when it was conquered by the Babylonians ... These regionally based patronage kingdoms of Palestine's Iron Age ... were not rooted in the immigration of new groups from outside of Palestine, but rather in region-wide shifts in subsistence strategies and political development throughout southern Syria. Descriptions of this region-wide and centuries-long transformation of the Palestinian economy in the service of a modern [Zionist] origin story for Israel have been centred in politically tendentious efforts to identify the renewal and expansion of highland agriculture with the unified, ethnically defined concept of Israel on the one hand, and a complex effort to support an assumption of historicity of the biblical narratives of a united monarchy of David and Solomon in Jerusalem on the other.

(Thompson, 2011: 97–108)

It was only in the second century BCE, first with the period of Hasmonean rule, that Jerusalem came to play a dominant role in the politics of Palestine. But it lost this role, with the Roman conquest of Palestine under Pompey in 65 BCE (Thompson, 2011: 97–108).

The Hebrew Bible tells us that the Canaanites were the first people in Palestine. But nationalism and ethnicities are modern European ideological constructions and, contrary to the biblical stories, the Israelites, Canaanites and Philistines were not ethnic groups or distinct nationalities in ancient Palestine. More recently, critical archaeology has shown that the imagined biblical distinction between Israelites and Canaanites is largely fictional. This construction also "performed the useful function of denigrating the indigenous Palestinian population, as modern Zionist archaeology tries to do" (Sabbagh, 2006: 96).

In fact outside the fields of Israeli archaeology and Christian theology, new archaeological discoveries have shown that the cultural and technological accomplishments of the Philistines were markedly superior to those of the "biblical Israelites". The Philistines long held a monopoly on iron-smithing (a skill they possibly acquired during conquests in Anatolia), and perhaps the biblical story of Goliath's armour (see below) is consistent with this iron-smithing technology. As former Israeli foreign minister Abba Eban commented in his Channel 4 documentary of the

1980s, *Heritage, Civilisation and the Jews* , “the Philistines were not barbarians but skilled craftsmen” (Eban, 1984: 40; Rose, 2004: 17). General Moshe Dayan’s infamous collection contained a large quantity of Canaanite vessels and ceramics, which were robbed by him from Canaanite tombs (see [Chapter 3](#)). So why was Canaanite civilization regarded as inferior to Israelite civilization? Commenting on the biblical ranting against, and demonology of, the Philistines, Canaanites and Ishmaelites, Palestinian scholar Karl Sabbagh writes:

Judging by the discoveries that have been made, the Canaanites had a rich tradition of ceramics, faience, glass and jewellery, and some small sculptures that reveal a skilful modelling of the human form. However, they are sculptures of naked women and were used in fertility cults and this [moral attitude] would not do.

(Sabbagh, 2006: 95)

The term “Israel” has many different meanings in the Bible (Davies 1992). The Israelites were, most likely, Canaanites who developed in a different way. Israel Finkelstein, professor of archaeology at Tel Aviv University, proposed that they were the pastoral shepherds who wandered in this hill area throughout the Late Bronze Age. The archaeological evidence shows (a) that the population which was later developed into the kingdoms of Judah and Israel, originated from within the country – within Canaan or ancient Palestine; it did not come from Egypt or from any other place; (b) that in biblical times (as in modern times) the concept of ethnicity was fluid; (c) that Palestine was plagued by social fragmentation throughout antiquity (Thompson, 2004: 23; Lemche, 1995:13); (d) that the Iron Age I settlements on the central hills of ancient Palestine, from which the later kingdom of Israel developed, reflect continuity with Canaanite culture. The emergence of early Israelites, Finkelstein and Silberman write, was an outcome of the collapse of the Canaanite culture, not its cause. The early Israelites were themselves originally Canaanites (Finkelstein & Silberman, 2001:118).

The new critical biblical scholarship has taught us that the Israelites were no different from other Canaanites (Lemche, 1991). This radical “Israelites as Canaanites” theory has raised strong objections from both Israeli and Palestinian scholars. The theory was described by Palestinian scholar Basem Ra’ad, in his important work *Hidden Histories: Palestine and the Eastern Mediterranean* , as politically dangerous:

This theory is not detected as dangerous by scholars keen to debunk biblical historicity: Nur Masalha, in his otherwise excel lent chapter on biblical un-historicity in *The Bible and Zionism* ... seems to praise Finkelstein and others for the Israelites-are-Canaanite theory, praise I have also heard from some Palestinian archaeologists. But such a theory in effect appropriates Canaanite culture as it supplies a replacement for old stories of conquest and other foundations of Zionist claims which have been shown to lack historicity.

(Ra’ad, 2010: 223, n.41)

But the “Israelites as Canaanites” theory is not confined to the writings of Finkelstein. It has been put forward by key critical biblical scholars such as Thomas Thompson (2004) and Niels Lemche (1991). Furthermore, accurate knowledge of the ancient history of Palestine should not be dictated by current political calculations and considerations. Also crucially contrary to the above political sentiments and the vitriolic anti-Canaanite and anti-Philistine sentiment of the

Hebrew Bible authors, the new scholarship has shown that the biblical portrayal of the Israelites' origins in terms of a conflict between them and the Canaanites or the Philistines is not justification for assuming that such a conflict ever took place in history, in either the twelfth century or any other period. Canaanites and Israelites never existed as opposing peoples fighting over Palestine (Thompson, 2004; 23; Lemche, 1991). Lemche comments on the invention of the ethnic and racial divide between the Hebrews and Canaanites by the Bible writers during the post-exilic period:

The “Canaanites” embraced that part of the Palestinian population which did not convert to the Jewish religion of the exiles, the reason being that it had no part in the experience of exile and living in a foreign world which had been the fate of the Judaeans who were carried off to Babylonia in 587 BCE . The Palestinian – or rather old Israelite – population was not considered to be Jews because they were not ready to acknowledge the religious innovations of the exilic community that Yahweh was the only god to be worshipped. Thus the real difference between the Canaanites and the Israelites would be a religious one and not the difference between two distinct nationals.

(Lemche, 1991:162, n.12)

The real history of ancient Palestine and its peoples – often suppressed in favour of the biblical ideo-theology (Whitelam, 1996; 2002:194–223) – is very different from the biblical stories (Thompson, 2004: 7) and the history of “biblical Israel” which often involves literary and ideological problems (Thompson, 2004: 7–10). In the biblical narrative of Samson, Saul and David, the “Philistines” are the “people” of the southern and central coastal plain, where they play the role of Israel’s enemy, parallel to the role of the Canaanites of the holy war stories of Joshua and Judges, as the evil which attempted to resist the (imaginary) construction of the Hebrews. But the Canaanites, Hebrews and Philistines were not ethnic designations of the Bronze or early Iron Age (Thompson, 2004: 5–6; 1992: 260–77; Ahlström, 1993: 334–70).

The early term “Canaan” (*Kinahhi*) does not refer to any historical people. It is a geographical term. It is used in reference to a people only in the sense of the various peoples who lived in the region or land of *Kinahhi* (Thompson, 2004: 5–6; Lemche, 1991). It is used in reference to a people only in the sense of the various peoples who lived in the region of *Kinahhi*. It also overlaps with other geographic terms, such as *Churnx*, *Retenu*, *Amurru* or *Hatti* (Rainey, 1963: 43–5). One of the most important works produced by recent Israeli archaeology, *The Bible Unearthed: Archeology’s New Vision of Ancient Israel and the Origins of Its Sacred Text*, written by Israel Finkelstein and Neil Asher Silberman (2001), discusses the link between the archaeological finds and ethnicity. Finkelstein and Silberman note that even in modern times there is no agreed definition of ethnicity; that the concept is fluid, making its identification in terms of material culture a very difficult task. The identification of ethnic and racial boundaries between Canaanites and Israelites, or between Philistines and Israelites, in ancient cultures is highly problematic and completely fictional in the critical period of “Israelite origins” (Iron Age I).

In *The Invention of the Jewish People*, Israeli historian Shlomo Sand has further undermined the Zionist myths of enforced exile under the Romans by showing that the Jewish diaspora was the consequence, not of the expulsion of the Hebrews from Jerusalem and Palestine, but of proselytizing across southern Europe and north Africa (Sand, 2009; see also Sand 2008a). Under

Roman rule, Jerusalem's Jews did suffer discrimination, but neither ethnic cleansing nor any mass deportation of population ("exile") was practised by the Romans in the manner of the Assyrians and Babylonians. Jews continued to prosper in Palestine. Although the temple in Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans in 70 CE, Judaism continued to have a major impact on life throughout Palestine and established important alternative centres in the Galilee. In 638 CE, when Jerusalem came under the Umayyad administration, the Muslims established a pluralistic system that enabled Jews, Christians and Muslims to live in Jerusalem for the first time. While before Islam, Christians and Jews had developed a vision of Jerusalem that had seen its sanctity as dependent upon the exclusion of others, the Muslims introduced a more radical and inclusive notion of the sacred which reflected their vision of the continuity and harmony of the three Abrahamic traditions (Armstrong, 1997: 243). The city's Jewish and Christian populations were neither persecuted nor deported, but coexisted autonomously within a diverse city. Most Jews in Jerusalem (and Palestine) integrated themselves into the new Muslim empire by adopting an Islamic interpretation of their common Abrahamic traditions and embraced Islam (Thompson, 2011: 97–108).

SYNCRETIC RELIGION AND THE CANAANITE PAGAN ROOTS OF THE HEBREW BIBLE: YAHWEHISM WITHIN THE PANTHEON OF THE CANAANITE DEITIES

Today the historicity of the nomadic desert religion has been discredited. Religion in the ancient Near East was a product of the desert – it was the result of the rise of city and urban civilization about 6,000–7,000 years ago. The city, religion and "law and order" went hand in hand. Religion was needed to maintain social and political cohesion and enforce the law. In the Hebrew Bible, as well as in the Semitic languages of Arabic and Hebrew, the term religion ("*din*") is almost synonymous with the terms law, litigation, courts and judgement – and legal processes and procedures are all associated with the rise of the city and complex urban society and civilization.

Furthermore many of the Hebrew Bible stories can be traced not only to Canaanite cities, religion and traditions but to the wider urban society and cities of the ancient Near East. The striking similarities between the Code of Hammurabi and Hebrew Bible laws are widely recognized and it is generally assumed that Hebrew Bible laws reflect, to a great extent, Hammurabi Code of the type of "*ayin tahat ayin* /an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth". In both the Code of Hammurabi and Hebrew Bible the harshness of the law of retaliation and the principle of exact reciprocity are applied to social equals: if a person caused the death of another person the killer would be put to death. By contrast, in the New Testament, Jesus of Nazareth – a Palestinian Jew who typified the radical biblical "prophetic tradition" of dissent – in the Sermon on the Mount radically rejects this Hebrew Bible tradition: "You have heard that it was said, 'an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth'. But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you" (Mt. 5:38–42). In July 2010 a team of Hebrew University archaeologists reported that a fragmentary Akkadian cuneiform tablet was discovered at a famous Canaanite site, Tel Hazor, in the Galilee, containing a text dated to around 1700 BCE that was said to be partly parallel to portions of the famous Babylonian Hammurabi Code of the eighteenth century

BCE . ³ Hazor was a major administrative and cultural centre in the Middle and Late Bronze Ages. Contrast this recent “discovery” with previous Israeli excavations and “national heritage” discoveries at the site in the 1950s and 1960s, which were presided over by General Yigael Yadin.

Historical writing and recorded “historical consciousness” emerged for the first time in the urban civilizations of ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt and they were later developed further in ancient Greece (Van Seters, 1983). Indeed many of the Canaanite and biblical traditions, including the biblical myth of creation, were probably originated in Babylon (the god Marduk) and Egypt (the god Ptah) (Campanini, 2007: 43–4). The creation myth in Genesis is closely associated with monolatry or monolatry Canaanite Yahweism – the term is distinguished from post-exilic “new Canaanite/Israelite” monotheism, which acknowledges the existence of only one god. It was perhaps first used by Julius Wellhausen to describe the recognition of the existence of many gods, but with the consistent worship of only one deity (Eakin, 1971: 70). The biblical creation myth appears to have been invented in the Babylonian exile by those “new Canaanites”/Israelites. John Romer draws remarkable parallels between the myth of creation in Genesis and Enuma Elish, a Mesopotamian epic and a Babylonian creation myth (Romer, 1988).

⁴ It is generally recognized now that the stories and texts of the Hebrew Bible were written by multiple authors, largely during the period of Israelites’ exile in Babylon. They were put in their final form many centuries after the events they describe. They reflect the world of the later authors of the Hebrew Bible rather than actual historical facts. They also then expressed the ideology of a “new” religious movement that arose among the ancient Israelites at a relatively late period. These accounts reflect a time when Babylon influenced exilic Judaism – after 587 BCE , and especially in the succeeding Persian period (538–332 BCE) when both Babylon and ancient Palestine were under Persian rule (Davies, 2002; Lemche, 1991). In 529 BCE the Persian emperor Cyrus the Great, who had conquered the Babylonians, allowed Jewish exiles who wished to return to Palestine to do so. The Hebrew Bible was, for the most part, written after the Babylonian exile in 500–400 BCE and therefore was largely the product of exilic imagination: in the process of inventing and constructing a new tradition, Lemche argues, much of the previous Israelite history – including the exodus from Egypt, the conquest of Canaan and even the existence of the Canaanites – was an invented tradition, created to reflect the experiences of those returning from the Babylonian exile (Lemche, 1991; Bowman, 1999: 58–62). Commenting on the earliest compositions of the Hebrew Bible, Thompson writes:

During the Persian period, “Samaritans” were able to build a temple on Mt. Gerizim already by the 5th century BCE and had a substantial responsibility for the development of the biblical *Torah* or Pentateuch: one of the earliest compositions of the Bible. Gerizim developed a city, according to the estimates of archaeologists, of some 10,000 people during the Hellenistic period.

(Thompson, 2011: 97–108)

While mainstream (predominantly Christian) biblical archeology insisted on the essential Otherness of Yahweh from the Canaanite gods from the very beginning of Israel’s history – as typified by William E Albright’s *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan: An Historical Analysis of Two Contrasting Faiths* (1968) and *The Archaeology of Palestine: From the Stone Age to Christianity* (1949, revised 1960) – the critical archaeological evidence – including places of worship and temples discovered in Palestine and Syria Byblus, Baysan/Bethshan, Lachish and

Megiddo – suggests that the greater part of the Israelite population was of Canaanite origin; they spoke a West Semitic dialect in a family of languages to which Hebrew belongs, along with Canaanite/Phoenician, Ugaretic, Edomite, Moabite – they were similar enough to be mutually intelligible – and worshiped local Canaanite/Ugaretic gods. In fact Yahweh was one of many deities in the Canaanite pantheon. Scholars of the ancient Near East have shown Yahweh worship as emerging from a West Semitic and Canaanite background (Gnuse, 1997: 74–87; M. Smith, 2002). The words *beit/bayt* (house in Hebrew and Arabic) and the word El (in Ugaritic and Hebrew) and Elah/Allah (in Arabic), which refers to the power of the high and mighty, can all be traced to Phoenicians and Canaanites. The Ugaretic father-god El (high, heavenly), who was associated with the polytheistic traditions of the Near East, is closely associated with the Canaanite pantheon of deities, which included the worship of the mother-goddess Asherah in the south of Palestine, along with other Canaanite deities, including Yehweh, El and Ba'al (Ra'ad, 2010: 58–9). Many scholars, including William G. Dever, have asserted that Asherah was worshipped as a consort of Yahweh/Elohim, until at least the sixth century BCE, when strict monolatry, or monolatry, of Yahweh became prevalent among the Israelites (Dever, 2005; also Hadley, 2000:122–36).

The Canaanite pantheon included a vast array of deities, and clearly Yehweh/Elohim, El (father-god), Asherah, or Athirat (mother-earth), Ba'al (or Ba'el, mentioned widely in the Hebrew Bible) Allat (Elat, Ilat) and Dagan were all present in the Canaanite pantheon; several of these were associated with the Canaanite cosmic fertility cycles. Asherah also appears in a number of ancient sources including Akkadian and Hittite writings. She was associated with the “Tree of Life” worshiped in groves and identified as the wife or consort of El, the Most High (*el 'elyon*), the oldest deity of the Canaanite/Ugaretic pantheon. Referred to sometimes as Elat or Ilat (goddess of the god El), Asherah is the most prominent goddess in the Ugaritic pantheon, though her origin appears to go back well before Ugarit (1200–1400 BCE) to the time of the Ebla tablets. In the Ugaritic pantheon she is the consort of El and referred to as the “mother of the gods” or “procreatress of the gods” and “Lady Athirat of the sea” and by the Semitic word *qd* (holy). She figures prominently in the Ugaritic texts in which Baal and Anat are requesting from El a palace for her son Ba'al (Herrick, undated). Ba'al is one of the preeminent gods of the Canaanites. The worship and veneration of Asherah persisted among the Israelites. Believed to be the wife of El, Asherah was the wife of Yahweh/Elohim (Leeming, 2005: 32). This role gave her a similarly high rank in the Ugaritic pantheon (Binger, 1997: 74, 108). The name Allat (Elat, Ilat) was also associated with Asherah, and the Book of Jeremiah refers to Asherah as the “queen of heaven” (Jer. 7:18; 44:17–19, 25; Alberty, 2010:143).

There is no evidence for a monotheistic cult in Canaan in the period leading up to 1000 BCE. In fact by contrast there are mountains of archaeological evidence to suggest that monotheism came much later than the Bible suggests. Furthermore this much later development in monotheistic Judaism did evolve from Canaanite paganism, polytheism and monolatry. The latter recognized the existence of many gods, but with the consistent worship of only one deity. The archaeological evidence that shows Yahweh being worshipped alongside a female deity is not only widely known but also universally acknowledged. Already in the late 1960s archaeologist William Dever discovered at excavations at Khirbet al-Kom near Hebron (al-Khalil) that Yahweh, the god of the Israelites, had a female consort called Asherah (Dever, 2005). Asherah was also identified as a Canaanite deity, a fertility goddess. The inscription Dever discovered was written in ancient Hebrew, dating from the mid-to-late eighth century BCE, which ran: “Blessed ... by Yahweh ... and his Asherah” (cited in Rose, 2004: 23). Dever later

recalled: “When I first discovered it, I didn’t really want to publish it, as a young scholar. It was too controversial. But then in the 1970s a second site was found by Israeli archaeologists –also in the eighth century in Sinai. And you have the same expression: ‘may X be blessed by Yahweh and his Asherah’” (cited in Sturgis, 2001:173)

The Canaanite pagan, polytheistic and syncretic roots of the Hebrew Bible lingered on in rural villages and hamlets long after post-exilic monotheistic Judaism had been accepted in Jerusalem. These lingering polytheistic roots of the Hebrew Bible, alongside monotheism, can even be seen in the famous Dead Sea Scrolls from Qumran (Ra’ad, 2010: 58–9). Syncretism and the Canaanite roots of worship in the Hebrew Bible have been preserved in Deuteronomy (32:8–9), where Israelite deity Yahweh is part of a Canaanite pantheon ruled by El. Both monolatrist Yahweism and subsequent monotheistic Yahweism were syncretic traditions and the outcome of Yahweh’s struggle with other Canaanite/Phoenicians/Moabite deities, especially Ba’al and Asherah, and a transformation of Canaanite religious traditions over a long period of time. Several archaeological discoveries have been made connecting the cult of Yahweh to Asherah. The discovery of these inscriptions shows that in the minds of many Israelites Yahweh – like other gods of the ancient Near East – had a consort and that the pagan polytheistic deities of the Israelites and Canaanites were widely shared and that the Israelite religion was an integral part of a much wider tradition of religious syncretism in ancient Palestine – with radical implications for the theory of monotheism and when exactly monotheism was adopted. Herzog explains:

Jehovah and his consort: How many gods, exactly, did Israel have? Together with the historical and political aspects, there are also doubts as to the credibility of the information about belief and worship. The question about the date at which monotheism was adopted by the kingdoms of Israel and Judea arose with the discovery of inscriptions in ancient Hebrew that mention a pair of gods: Jehovah and his Ashera. At two sites, Kuntiliat Ajrud in the southwestern part of the Negev hill region, and at Khirbet el-Kom in the Judea piedmont, Hebrew inscriptions have been found that mention “Jehovah and his Ashera” “Jehovah Shomron and his Ashera” “Jehovah Teman and his Ashera”. The authors were familiar with a pair of gods, Jehovah and his consort Ashera, and send blessings in the couple’s name. These inscriptions, from the 8th century BCE, raise the possibility that monotheism, as a state religion, is actually an innovation of the period of the Kingdom of Judea, following the destruction of the Kingdom of Israel.

(Herzog, 1999: 6–8)

MAXIMALIST AND MINIMALIST APPROACHES

The Albrightean scholars and their Israeli followers have adopted maximalist approaches to the Bible and history, asserting, contrary to the available evidence, that “biblical history” can be traced to 1000 BCE and beyond. In fact positive evidentialism points to the opposite conclusion. It is true to argue, as John Barton does, that the Hebrew Bible contains events and individuals that are mentioned in other Near Eastern sources (Barton, 2010; 109–10). But the archaeological findings dovetailed with the conclusions of the critical school of Hebrew Bible scholarship which suggested that at least the biblical conquest stories be viewed as the epics of Homer’s *Odyssey* or the Mesopotamian epic of Gilgamesh, etiological legends, folk tales and moral stories. In the 1980s and 1990s a group of critical biblical scholars emerged in Britain, Denmark,

US, Italy and Israel, including Philip Davies (1992; 1994), Keith Whitelam (1996; 2002: 194–223), Thomas Thompson, Niels Lemche (1991), who is also professor of old testament at the University of Copenhagen. In the UK many of their books were published by Sheffield Academic Press.⁵ Davies, Thompson, Lemche and Whitelam became closely associated with the phenomenon; they were called the “gang of four” by their detractors and as part of the smear campaign against them (Thompson, undated) – but there were scores of other biblical scholars and archaeologists highlighting different aspects, and reflecting different degrees, of minimalism.⁶ The term minimalism was coined by their detractors in the mid-1990s; it is not supposed to be flattering. However while critics reacted by attacking them as an isolated and extreme group, the minimalists are not a fringe group and their discourse is internationally debated as part of the critical biblical studies.

Thompson argues for the necessity of distinguishing between the interpretation of the Bible, which is the task of those engaged in biblical approaches, and the attempts to write a history of the region in the pre-biblical period, which is the domain of historians and particularly archaeologists. Minimalism in biblical studies refers to a trend that, in the estimation of its opponents, plays down the historical character of the biblical stories. Biblical minimalism is based on direct evidence from archaeology and historical geography, supported by analogies that are primarily drawn from anthropology, sociology and linguistics. Secondary literature, such as we find in the Bible or other collected summaries of traditions such as Manetho, Berossus and Josephus in the Hellenistic period, gives us information about their use of past traditions.

According to Thompson there are three guiding principles of biblical minimalism. (a) The first and most central principle was the understanding of the relationship between biblical interpretation and the writing of a history of pre-Hellenistic Palestine (Thompson, 2004). (b) The Bible is neither an historical account of Palestine’s past, nor did its authors try to write history. It is a secondary collection of tradition that is theologically motivated. The earliest surviving manuscripts of biblical books come from the Dead Sea scrolls. Nevertheless, the secondary and collective nature of biblical works allows us to speculate on earlier forms of these literary productions. Recognizably stereotypical themes and motifs provide a major key to understanding and interpreting the function and ideologically important motivations of the texts. (c) The hotly debated question about the historicity of the Bible as a tool used by historians to assess the value of a source for reconstructing events of the past. It is rare that historicity can be attributed to a literary or theologically oriented production. Since the Bible is filled with literary and theological motifs and themes, it is necessary to understand the author’s literary strategy before there is any attempt to use it in an historical synthesis.

Thompson also argues: (a) that the biblical tradition was largely irrelevant to a history of ancient Palestine (Thompson, 1987: 11–40); (b) a history of the Israelites’ origins is not a history of ancient Palestine; (c) that it was necessary to write a history of Israelites’ origins – on the basis of evidence rather than of ideology or theology – independent of the perspectives of biblical historiography; and (d) the current understanding of “biblical Israel” whose origins we seek in the biblical tradition, comes from ideological and theological questions. The evidence from extra-biblical sources for Israel was wholly inadequate to the task of origins, if we are asking for the origins of the Israel of the Bible.

Clearly the historicity of the Hebrew Bible is important for several groups, including Zionist Jews, fundamentalist evangelicals, conservative Catholics and many scriptural geographers and biblical archaeologists. The settler-colonization or identity politics of these groups depend in some way upon the belief that the Hebrew Bible relates real history. Once these interests are

exposed, one can easily understand the rage and public outcry in the Israeli press and the orchestrated assault against biblical scholars who questioned the historicity of the Hebrew Bible (Herzog, 2001: 72–93). But the linking of “minimalism” with “anti-Semitism” and the deployment of the standard Zionist charge of anti-Semitism to intimidate academics is completely spurious. While conservative evangelicals and Zionist nationalists reacted to the new scholarship by reiterating the dogma that the Bible equals history, the minimalists responded by saying that, by separating the Bible from history, they were merely losing bad history (Davies, 2002, 2003; also Pfoh, 2009: 11–68). The critical archaeologists and biblical scholars were attacked by mainstream Zionists as “anti-Bible” “anti-Israel” and even “anti-Semitic” (Lemche, 2003; Thompson, undated).⁷

Thompson illustrates the hostility towards critical scholarship exhibited by some biblical scholars and Israeli writers by citing one of the most vicious attacks on his work, by Magen Broshi, former director of the Israel Department of Antiquities. This is found in a review of “The Bible in History: How Writers Create A Past” in *The Jerusalem Post*, 24 December 1999. This review ends with a slanderous note: “Is it possible he does not believe in anything? Apparently there is a certain book that he does take seriously. A mutual acquaintance told me that Thompson confided in him that he is a staunch believer in The Protocols of the Elders of Zion.” Apparently this open accusation of “anti-Semitism” which was repeated by several pro-Zionist propagandists, effectively put an end to the sales of Thompson’s book on the American market (Lemche, 2003).

The “minimalists” questioned the historicity of much of the Hebrew Bible and the relationship between its historical narrative and the archaeological evidence. By separating the Hebrew scriptures from history and historical evidence and releasing it from the chains and claims of historicity, they were not getting rid of the Bible but rather getting rid of bad history and providing new ways of reading the Hebrew scriptures as epics, literature, wonderful folktales and beautiful poetry; like the epics of Homer and Gilgamesh, the epics and legends like the story of Abraham or the binding of Isaac should be treated as moral tales (Thompson, 1999); they were to do with the myths of origin which we find among the Assyrians, Babylonians, Arabs; even the Irish have a myth of origin: originating from one single person. But the minimalists were not a monolithic group; they all published separately and independently; there are also important differences among them (Davies, 2002).

Also, crucially, the minimalists do not deny there was an ancient Israel or that early Judaism was a religious factor in Palestine’s history. *In Search of Ancient Israel*, Davies (1992), who does not like the term minimalism (2003), has an entire chapter devoted to the historical Israel; but for him the Hebrew Bible represents a narrow slice of the ancient world – maybe a few hundred years before Christ – rather than the 1,500 years that biblical theologians consider it to be. Thompson’s work (1992) deals extensively with the states of Judah and Israel as historical entities. Lemche’s detailed analysis of the historical and scholarly evidence for ancient Israel (1998) is the closest to denying that there was an ancient Israel, though he likewise is speaking of an Israel defined by biblical categories. The point at issue is not whether an ancient Israel ever existed, but whether the historical ancient Israel was like the portrait in the Bible.

Biblical “minimalism” remains no more monolithic than any mainstream movement and there exist major differences among critical biblical scholars; not all minimalists like or use the term. Not all the minimalists agree that they are part of a school, or a group; there is no such common agenda (Davies, 2002; 2003; Pfoh, 2009: 11–68). The scholarly approach of Thompson, Lemche, Whitelam and Davies is not identical and the four are following slightly different paths: some are

influenced by new historical criticism and post-colonial studies, others by the recent archaeology of the Holy Land or by the sociology of ethnicity; some rely on anthropological modelling (Davies, 2002). That Thompson, Whitelam, Lemche and Davies worked at some stage either in Copenhagen or Sheffield may indeed suggest to superficial observers a “school”. Thompson moved to Copenhagen only after his book *Early History of the Israelite People* was published; he wrote it in Milwaukee. Whitelam’s *The Invention of Ancient Israel* was written in Stirling, Scotland, before its author was appointed to a chair in Sheffield in 1999. The four scholars have come to talk to each other through geographical proximity and through their shared notoriety; but not one of them developed his ideas in close contact with the others (Davies, 2002).

There is still widespread disagreement among critical archaeologists and biblical scholars with regard to the question as to when the biblical stories began to be written (Amit, 1999: 20–33). Finkelstein and Silberman argue that Genesis was an “epic” created in the seventh century BCE : although “no archaeologist can deny that the Bible contains legends, characters, and story fragments that reach far back in time ... archaeology can show that the Torah and the Deuteronomistic history bear unmistakable hallmarks of their initial compilation in the seventh century BCE ” (Finkelstein & Silberman, 2001: 23). By contrast, both Thompson and Davies argue that the bulk of Hebrew Bible literature was an invented tradition, and created during, and within the context of, the Persian empire by urban intellectuals (Thompson, 1991; 2004: 7, 24; Davies, 1992, 2002; Lemche, 1991: 7). Davies, in particular, asks what were the motives of the writers who compiled in stages an epic history that went back to creation, invented a twelve-tribe nation that escaped from Egypt and annihilated the “Canaanites” generated several portraits of an ideal society set in a mythical wilderness scenario, developed a monotheistic religion and assigned it to antiquity (Davies, 2001: 239–52.). Davies’s argument that the writings are not to be approached as history does not imply that there are no historical elements whatsoever: only that the picture as a whole is ideal, not real, that there never was a society as described by Joshua or Judges.

This conflicts with the more radical views of Lemche that it is Hellenistic (Lemche, 1993:163–93) – one thousand years after the events they describe – while Whitelam has not engaged in this question of dating at all but focuses rather on the ideology of representation of “Israel” and “Palestine” in ancient and modern sources. Only Lemche has written that the Tel Dan stele may be a forgery. Whitelam and Davies do not hold this opinion. These last examples illustrate a second problem about minimalism: there is a widespread view that minimalists agree in their main opinions, but this is not entirely true (Davies, 2002).

The biblical minimalists are not a homogeneous group; but they generally agree that the Bible is actually a record of what later generations commented about their oral traditions history; that the representation of ancient Israel in the Hebrew Bible is largely idealized and fictionalized; that the story of David and Solomon is a literary text produced by biblical authors writing hundreds of years after the purported events. But while their critics, many of whom are neo-conservative authors, continue to insist on the historicity of the Hebrew Bible (Davies, 2002), the vast majority of biblical scholars lie in a spectrum between maximalist Albrightean scholars and the mimimalists. Davies, a leading scholar of the ancient world who has been carrying out textual analysis of the Bible for over 30 years, argues that the minimalists pursue the main lines of critical biblical scholarship over the last century; that the mainstream view of critical biblical scholarship accepts that Genesis-Joshua (perhaps Judges) is devoid of reliable history; that it was in the Persian period that the bulk of the Hebrew Bible literature was either composed or achieved its canonical shape; that the later dating of much biblical literature is increasingly

finding support among mainstream academics; and that although there were degrees of biblical minimalism over David, the historicity of David was generally being questioned by many scholars in the mainstream (Davies, 2002, 2003).

Davies explains how and why the Jewish scriptures came into existence. What motivated the writers to create them? Who were the writers? Davies relies partly on archaeology and partly on anthropological modelling. He is not satisfied merely with concluding that the stories of Genesis to Joshua are unhistorical. Davies's theory is that the canonized writings represent a monumental project, partly conscious and partly unconscious, of defining the origins and nature of a society re-established in a small province of the Persian empire, a society composed of a group of Aramaic-speaking immigrants and a large number of indigenous, Hebrew-speaking "people of the land". The process of creating a religion, a society, took centuries but began essentially after the period of independent statehood had disappeared. Davies believes that the Hebrew Bible should not interfere in this way with modern politics.

The State of Israel was the result of modern forces rather than divine promises and ancient occupations. The Bible, as Philip Davies argues, is irrelevant – except in the indirect but very serious sense in which it has promoted the persecution of Jews in Europe, the main justification in his opinion for the establishment of a secure Jewish homeland in Palestine. What is important is not to politicize biblical studies but to de-politicize the discipline and distance it from any political stance towards the present Israel–Palestine crisis and thus permit that crisis to be seen in its modern and contemporary terms (Davies, 2002).

The Hebrew Bible is not an historical account of Palestine's past, nor did its authors try to write history. It is a secondary collection of traditions compiled by many authors who were theologically and ideologically motivated. The Bible is not history but theology, literature, law and ethics – a work of theology that does contain historical information; but if we want to evaluate this information we should consider when, how and why the Bible was compiled. Since the Bible is filled with literary and theological motifs and themes, it is necessary to understand the author's literary strategy before there is any attempt to use it in an historical synthesis.

As Neil Lemche pointed out, Canaanites and Israelites–Hebrews never existed as opposing peoples fighting over ancient Palestine (Lemche, 1991). Although the Canaanites and Hebrews (as well the Philistines and Amorites) may all play the role of "peoples" in the Bible's narrative, they were not ethnic designations of the Bronze or early Iron Age. "Canaanites" – the name was a variation on other biblical names such as the Amorites or Jebusites – were hardly distinguishable and all three groups appear in different stories as the original population of Jerusalem. Furthermore, in the biblical stories of Samson and Delilah (Judg. 14:19–18:2), Saul and David, the "Philistines" are the people of the southern and central coastal plain of Palestine, where they play the role of the Hebrews' enemy, parallel to the role of the Canaanites of the sacred war stories of Joshua and Judges. In Genesis, however, the Canaanites live in the Negev, together with the Philistines, Hittites and Amorites, and, in the role of indigenous peoples of Palestine, are friendly to the patriarchs.

MULTILAYERED MODERN PALESTINIAN IDENTITY AND CULTURAL HERITAGE

The biblical story has many theological and legendary connotations and it cannot be read as history or as a primary "historical source" for ancient Palestine or the Canaanites and Philistines. Yet the study of ancient Palestinian history independent of the biblical text and narrative must

also include a reassessment of the history and contribution of the Canaanites and Philistines who have given their name to the land of Palestine and modern Palestinians. The name “Palestine” itself has been preserved across the ages. It was also preserved by medieval Islam, by medieval Arab and Muslim geographers and historians, and it is now largely associated with the modern Palestinian Arabs (both Muslims and Christians) as the indigenous people of historic Palestine; until the advent of Zionism and establishment of Israel the modern Palestinians have also included a small minority of “Arab Jews”.

The multilayered modern Palestinian identity is deeply rooted in the culturally diverse heritage and land of Palestine. Reflecting on the Palestinian naming tradition and multilayered Palestinian identity, Dr Hanan Mikhail Ashrawi, legislator, activist, scholar and formerly dean of the faculty of arts at Birzeit University, had this to say:

My name means “tenderness”. True to the Arab, and generally Semitic, tradition, we Palestinians attach a great deal of significance to names – their meaning and music, historical allusion and authenticity, identification and identity. More often than not our names are a form of indulgence in wishful thinking, rather than descriptive accuracy as in the case of rather homely daughters called Hilweh or Jamileh for “pretty” or “beautiful” ... But most important, our long series of names are proof of line age, or roots for a people uprooted, of continuity for a history disrupted, and of legitimacy for an orphaned nation ... Hanan Daud Khalil Mikhail (Awwad) – Ashrawi is my personal and collective narrative. I am Tenderness, the daughter of David, who is the son of Khalil (Abraham) from the family of Michael (also the name of an ancestor), which is of the clan Awwad (the one who inevitably returns).

(Ashrawi, 1995: 132–4)

Palestinian nationalism (both secular and religious), however – like all modern nationalisms – with its construction of national consciousness and identity, is a modern phenomenon (R. Khalidi, 1997). The Palestinians, until the 1948 catastrophe, were predominantly peasants, deeply rooted in the land of Palestine. The local dialect and the names of their villages and towns preserved a multilayered identity and diverse cultural heritage and place-names in Palestine. In early (Umayyad) Islam the medieval territorial-administrative district of Palestine, *Philastin* or *Philistine*, came from *Jund Filastin*: the “military district of Palestine” was one of several districts of the Umayyad and Abbasid Caliphates province of Syria. At its greatest extent, Jund Filastin extended from the Mediterranean coast to the Jordan River and from Rafah in North Sinai to parts of lower Galilee in the north – with Galilee as a whole being part of Jund al-Urdun (the “military district of Jordan”). Its predominantly Muslim towns included Gaza, Nablus, Jafa, Lydda, Ramie, Caesarea, Emwas, Yibna, Rafah, Sebastia and Bayt Jibrin. In the ninth century Jund Filastin was the most fertile of Syria’s districts. The medieval Arabic term was identical to the old French (“Frankish”) term, *Philistin*, which came from Latin *Philistina* or *Philistinus*, which, in turn, derived from the Roman name of the province, *Palestina*, which was based on the ancient name preserved in the Hebrew Bible and a variety of ancient languages, including Akkadian *Palastu* and Egyptian *Parusata*. However today it is widely accepted that the Palestinians are a mixture of groups (including descendants of ancient Hebrew and Canaanite tribes) who remained in the land and converted to Christianity and Islam, and were later joined by some migrants of Arab descent (Doumani, 1995; Yiftachel, 2006: 53; Ateek, 1989: 16). The evidence for mass conversion of Samaritans to Islam ⁸ also raises the possibility of mass

conversion of Jews and Christians to early Islam, and this may also explain the syncretistic nature of popular religion in Palestine and Islamic popular traditions in Palestine centring on local shrines and joint holy places.

Today the Palestinians are culturally and linguistically Arab and largely but not exclusively Muslim. The Palestinian Muslim population was mainly descended from local Palestinian Christians and Jews who had converted to Islam after the Islamic conquest in the seventh century and inherited many of the social, cultural, religious and linguistic traditions of ancient Palestine, including those of the Israelites, Canaanites and Philistines (Shaban, 1971: 25–161; Donner, 1981; Nebel & Oppenheim, 2000: 630–41; Rose, 2010: 25–49; Esler, 2011). Furthermore the similarities between their Arabic language and Ugaritic suggests that Arabic was not a late intruder into Palestine from 638 CE onwards, following the Arabo-Muslim conquest (Ra’ad, 2010). Also many Palestinians are Christian Arabs who have historic roots in Palestine and a long heritage in the land where Christ lived. Commenting on the multilayered cultural identity and diverse heritage of the Palestinians, Palestinian sociologist Samih Farsoun (1937–2005) writes:

Palestinians are descendants of an extensive mixing of local and regional peoples, including the Canaanites, Philistines, Hebrews, Samaritans, Hellenic Greeks, Romans, Nabatean Arabs, tribal nomadic Arabs, some Europeans from the Crusades, some Turks, and other minorities; after the Islamic conquests of the seventh century, however, they became overwhelmingly Arabs. Thus, this mixed-stock of people has developed an Arab-Islamic culture for at least fourteen centuries.

(Farsoun, 2004: 4)

Some Palestinian nationalists, seeking to fashion a secular Palestinian national identity, have, anachronistically, advocated ancient “historical roots” for Palestinian nationalism – “ethnic roots” going back over the past three millennia, thus seeing in people such as the Canaanites, Jebusites, Amorites and Philistines and Phoenicians the direct forebears and linear ancestors of the modern Palestinian nation (R. Khalidi, 1997: 149, 253, n.13). Although the cultural heritage of the Palestinians goes back over thousands of years to the ancient Canaanites, Phoenicians and Philistines, Palestinian nationalism, like all nationalisms (Arab and Jewish included), is a distinctly modern ideology.

The fact that the biblical stories state that the Canaanites were the “original” inhabitants of Palestine and that the names of Palestine and the Palestinians are derived from the ancient “Philistines” has led many secular Palestinian nationalists to adopt the biblical narrative to construct a Palestinian national identity based on Canaanite “national historical roots”. The renowned Palestinian internationalist jurist and author Henry Cattan (1906–1992) – a Palestinian Christian born in Jerusalem – for example, argues, in *Palestine, the Arabs and Israel: The Search for Justice*, that the dispossessed and disinherited indigenous Arab inhabitants of modern Palestine, whether Muslim or Christian, were simply Arabized Canaanites (Cattan, 1969: 3–6). Cattan’s narrative should be viewed in the context of Palestinian cultural resistance to Zionism and Zionist erasure of modern Palestine. Cattan also operated in Foucauldian terms, in a world of discourses divided between the accepted (Zionist–Jewish) discourses and marginalized or silenced (Palestinian) discourses, between the dominant Israeli discourse and the dominated Palestinian one.⁹ He found it necessary to recourse to a biblical portrayal of the ancient history of Palestine in order to articulate a Palestinian counter-narrative – a narrative designed to

reaffirm the realities of Palestine and the Palestinians.

The development of Palestinian nationalism in recent decades has brought with it a much greater awareness of critical archaeology and historical writing based on critical biblical studies and the question of the shared historical heritage of Palestine and the Palestinians (Thompson, 2003: 1). Also interestingly, Palestinian scholar Mazin Qumsiyeh has suggested, in his *Sharing the Land of Canaan*, a more realistic and less dichotomous approach to the debate on Canaanites–Israelites. He argued for coexistence in Palestine–Israel based on shared historical heritage and cultural and genetic affinities between the “Canaanitic people”: Mizrahi Jews and Palestinian Christians and Muslims (Qumsiyeh, 2004: 28–30; see also Nebel & Oppenheim, 2000: 630–41).

Indeed it would not be unreasonable to argue that the modern Palestinians are more likely to be the descendants of the ancient Israelites (and Canaanites) than Ashkenazi Jews, many of whom were European converts to Judaism. Certainly historically – in contrast to the myth of “exile and return” – many of the original Jewish inhabitants of ancient Palestine had remained in the country but had accepted Christianity and Islam many generations later. Today, however – in contrast to the mythologized Ashkenazi Zionist and Arab nationalist historiographies – more and more archaeologists and biblical scholars are convinced that the ancestors of the Israelites had never been in Egypt and that the biblical paradigm of a military conquest of Canaan was completely fictional. Indeed, the archaeological evidence undermined, in particular, the Book of Joshua. If the Exodus from Egypt and the 40 years’ desert journey around Sinai could not have happened and the military conquest of the “fortified cities” of Canaan (according to Deuteronomy 9:1: “great cities with walls sky-high”) were totally refuted by archaeology, who, then, were these Israelites, Philistines or Canaanites?

Also interestingly, Palestinian oral history has emerged in recent decades as a significant methodology not only for the construction of an alternative history of the Palestinian Nakba and memories of the lost historic Palestine but also for an ongoing indigenous life, living Palestinian practices and a sustained human ecology. In contrast with the Israeli hegemonic heritage-style industry and an orthodox biblical archaeology, with its obsession with assembling archaeological fragments, remains and traces of the ancient past – scattered traces of history, remnants of pottery, masonry, tables, bones, tombs – and officially approved historical and archaeological theme parks of dead monuments and artefacts destined for museum, Palestinians have devoted much attention to the “enormously rich sedimentations of village history and oral traditions” as a reminder of the continuity of native life and living practices (Saïd, 2004: 49; Masalha, 2008:123–56).

The moral critique and speaking the truth about the devastating consequences of the instrumentation of both the Hebrew Bible and modern Jewish Holocaust for the indigenous people of Palestine is vital. Surely the ocean of Nakba and post-Nakba suffering experienced by the Palestinians is resonant with all extreme human suffering, including the historic Jewish suffering in Europe. Without minimizing the scale and the magnitude of the Jewish Shoah, both the Nakba and the continuing Palestinian suffering are surely a reminder of the reality of suffering of Jews in Europe. Acknowledging and resisting the continuing Palestinian Nakba and ethnic cleansing in Jerusalem is central to peace and reconciliation in the Holy Land.

Acknowledging and preserving the ancient heritage and material culture of Palestine and the Palestinians is vital. The ancient history of Palestine and the Palestinians (Muslims, Christians and Jews included), to be taught in Palestinian textbooks, schools and universities, is urgently needed. This understanding and teaching should encompass the new critical biblical scholarship

of Palestine–Israel and the new critical understanding of the ancient history of the land. The cultural heritage of Palestine and the Palestinians goes far beyond the religio-cultural Abrahamic traditions. This heritage encompasses languages such as Phoenician, Canaanite, Aramaic, Hebrew and Arabic; all shared some common aspects, including the language and style of writing. This heritage is part of the wider heritage and cultures of the ancient Near East. In both the Quran and the Hebrew Bible the term *Bani Israeel* (in Arabic) and *B'nei Yisrael* (in Hebrew) mean the “sons of Israel” the “tribe of Israel” or the “children of Israel”. However, the term “Israel” should never be used synonymously with modern Israel. In fact, as we have seen above, it is more likely that the modern Palestinian Muslims and Christians are descendants of the ancient Hebrews – as well as the ancient Canaanites – than the Ashkenazi Zionist Jewish founders of the State of Israel. Catastrophically, however, the Hebrew Bible has become closely associated in modern thinking with the State of Israel and, consequently, it is taught only in a few Palestinian Christian church schools. This ideological conflation of “biblical Israel” (a theological term) with modern secular “State of Israel” (a political term), and between the modern “Israelis” and ancient “Israelites” and “Hebrews” has compounded the general obfuscation and widespread abuses surrounding the Bible and the Israel-Palestine conflict.

The same dispossessing instrumentalization of the Bible and the biblical heritage industry in the service of settler-colonialism has continued to dislodge the indigenous inhabitants of Palestine of much of their ancient history and heritage. Furthermore, as Keith Whitelam’s has shown, the obsession with “biblical Israel” has come to dominate and effectively silence the study of the history of ancient Palestine and the ancient Palestinians (Whitelam, 1996; 1998: 9–21). The textbooks and schools of the Palestinian Authority pay particular attention to the holy Christian sites, especially those in Bethlehem and Jerusalem, and generally to the narratives of Jesus and Mary (Grey, 2010: 114) – both figures are highly venerated not only in the gospels but also in the Quran. Sadly, however, the ongoing Zionist colonization and ethnic cleansing of Palestine have also ensured that the wider issues of the Bible are not taught in most Palestinian state schools. This is despite the fact the Bible forms an important part of the heritage of Palestine and the Palestinians – the “Palestinians” being Muslims, Christians and Jews. A critical treatment of the biblical issues in mainstream Palestinian textbooks and schools is vitally important.

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1. The Tanakh is an acronym formed from the initial Hebrew letters of the three traditional (Masoretic) texts: *Torah*, *Neviim* ('Prophets') and *Ketuvim* ('Writings').
2. The term Nakba was coined by Arab historian Constantine Zurayk (1949, 1956).
3. Founded before the sixth century BCE and formerly among the world's largest religions, its decline was due to the rise of Christianity and Islam.
4. For conservative evangelical attitudes to Wellhausen, see Barr (1977: 121–2).
5. This Quranic tradition has survived in local Palestinian Arab traditions and in the "Gate of the Prophet David" ("Bab al-Nabi Dawud"), one of the gates of the Ottoman wall which encircles the Old City of Jerusalem.
6. Originally an Assyro-Babylonian god which evolved into a major fertility deity of the Philistines and Canaanites; in Ugaritic the root *dgn* also means *grain*; in Hebrew *dagan*. Dagon also evolved into an important diety (the god-fish) of the maritime Canaanites. This could explain the Hebrew *dag* for "fish".
7. Based on private communications with Thomas Thompson of Copenhagen University.
8. The Khazar state had its capital at Atil and included territory comprising much of modern-day Russia, western Khazakhstan, eastern Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Armenia, and large portions of the northern Caucasus.
9. Maimonides died and was buried in Fustat but, according to Jewish tradition, his bones were later taken to and reinterred in Tiberias.
10. Literally means in Zionist terminology "land redemption and land conquest".
11. See <http://www.enotes.com/ernest-renan-criticism/vie-de-jesus-joseph-ernest-renan>.
12. 'Anti-Semitism', in *Jewish Encyclopedia*; see <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/1603-anti-semitism>.
13. Ruppin was one of the founders of the city of Tel Aviv; he is also credited as the "father of Zionist sociology".
14. Also written Berdichevsky, a Russian journalist and author of essays and novels in German, Yiddish and Hebrew.
15. For further discussion of the mythological Sabra, see Zerubavel (2002: 115–44).
16. Hebrew examples include *demokratia*, *autonomia*, *sotziologia*, *psychologia*.

1. FRAMING THE CONFLICT: INSTRUMENTALIZING THE HEBREW BIBLE AND SETTLER-COLONIALISM IN PALESTINE

1. Subsequently branches were opened in Jerusalem, Beirut, Haifa, Tiberias, Hebron, Safad and Gaza.
2. An original Jewish organization was founded in New York in 1843.
3. Israeli historian Yossi Ben-Artzi showed that in 1938, only 17 per cent of the Templers in Palestine were members of the Nazi party.

2. PROMISED LAND AND CONQUEST NARRATIVES: ZIONISM AND THE 1948 PALESTINE NAKBA

1. The Bible refers to the country as "the land of Canaan" (Num. 34:1; 35:10). However, it was the Philistines – one group among many associated with the "Sea Peoples" – who have given the country its present name, Palestine. Martin Bernai (1987) believes that the Philistines were Greek speakers.
2. See http://www.books.google.co.uk/books?id=3YEfAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA108&output=text#c_top; see also Sokolow (1919: 124); Masalha (2007: 95); Hyamson (1918: 127–64; 1939).
3. The village of Artas was visited in the 1870s by members of the Palestine Exploration Fund. In the 1920s Granqvist lived in Artas as part of her research on the women of the Hebrew Bible. She had gone to Palestine "in order to find the Jewish

ancestors of Scripture”, but she changed the focus of her research to an investigation of the customs, habits of the inhabitants of the village. See Elbendary (2001) on the exhibition “Artas: Portrait of a Palestinian Village Then and Now in Photos by Hilma Granqvist and Mia Grondahl”. Also Granqvist ([1947] 1975) and Artas Folklore Centre, <http://www.palestine-family.net/index.php?nav=223-222>

4. ‘History of Jerusalem; see: http://www.jewishmag.com/120mag/kerem_avraham/kerem_avraham.htm.
5. For a collection of Israeli-Zionist views, see Doron (1988).
6. In 1854 he joined the Society for the Promotion of Christianity Among the Jews.
7. Herzl recorded one meeting in Vienna with Hechler in detail: “Yesterday ... I visited the Rev Hechler ... [who] showed me his biblical treasures. Then he spread out before me his chart of comparative history, and finally a map of Palestine. It is a large military staff map in four sheets which, when laid out, covered the entire floor ... He shows me where, according to his calculations, our new Temple must be located: in Bethel! Because that is the centre of the country. He also showed me models of the ancient temple: ‘We have prepared the ground for you’” (quoted in Merkley, 1998: 16–17).
8. Examples include the Ashkenazi-sounding “Tzippori” for Hellenized “Sepphoris” and Palestinian Arabic “Saffuriya”, and the Ashkenazi name “Tzfatzat” for Palestinian Arab “Safad”
9. In *All that Remains*, Walid Khalidi (1992), relying on the *Palestine Index Gazetteer* (1945) and the *Village Statistics* (1945), both compiled by the British mandatory authorities, listed 418 depopulated and destroyed villages. However, Salman Abu-Sitta’s figure of 531 includes 77 destroyed Bedouin villages in the south.
10. Ben-Gurion (1982), *Yoman Hamilhamah* vol. 3, entry for 26 October 1948, pp. 776–7.

3. ARCHAEOLOGY AS CIVIC RELIGION: SECULAR NATIONALIST IDEOLOGY, EXCAVATING THE BIBLE AND THE DE-ARABIZATION OF PALESTINE

1. For instance, Herman Melville’s *Clarel: A Poem and Pilgrimage to the Holy Land* and Mark Twain’s travel satire *The Innocents Abroad; or, The New Pilgrims’ Progress*.
2. See “Moses and Ben-Gurion”, *Time* magazine, 30 May 1960.
3. On Albright and the politics of biblical archaeology, see Long (1997). See also [Chapter 2](#).
4. See http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Israel_Exploration_Society.
5. ‘Anata is a Palestinian town northeast of Jerusalem in the West Bank.
6. Raz Kletter, of the Israel Antiquities Authority, writes: “At first, Dayan was helped by family members, but soon he became involved with amateur and professional robbers, dealers and smugglers. I have documented 35 sites where evidence of robbing and illegal digging by Dayan exists. No doubt, this is only the tip of the iceberg, but it testifies to the scale and temper of his activities. The distribution of sites fits his arena of activities, first in the south when he commanded the southern front, then in whole Israel until 1967, later extending to the Occupied Territories. I present a sample of four of the robbed sites” (Kletter, 2003). Dayan robbed antiquities; lied about it; abused his high position by using army personnel and material for his private aims, sold antiquities, and did not pay income tax for profits from selling antiquities. His illicit digging and his eclectic collection was even displayed in the Israel Museum in Jerusalem in April 1985. His Israeli critics complained that that he corrupted the whole archaeology of Israel in his archaeological activities. Some liberal Israelis criticized the Israel Museum for displaying stolen antiquities, and for buying them for so much money (Segev, 1986: 61–2). But leaders of archaeological research institutions and Israeli took no action. Dayan apparently was given a free hand by Ben-Gurion, Israel’s first prime minister. After many private complaints about Dayan’s activities, Ben-Gurion concluded that Dayan should not be allowed to dig illicitly, but should be allowed to “go after the plough” and pick “stray” antiquities (Kletter, 2003). Other Israeli army commanders started to cultivate their own collections.
7. See Jerusalem Diary of Sister Marie-Therese, in *Cahiers du Temoignage Chretien* (Paris), 27 July 1967; Hirst (1983: 225).
8. Dinur has published a large number of books in Hebrew including: *Israel in its Land: From the First Days of Israel until the Babylonian Exile: Sources and Documents* (1938); *Path Makers: Prominent Figures in the Sad History of the Return to Zion and the Renewal of Israel* (1946); *The Changing of the Generations: Researches and Studies in the History of Israel from Early Modern Times* (1955); *The Struggle of the Generations of Israel for its Land: from the Destruction of Betar until the Renewal of Israel* (1975); *Generations of the Bible: Research and Studies to Understand the Bible and the History of Israel in that Period* (1977); *Generations and Impressions: Researches and Studies in Israeli Historiography, its Problems and its History* (1978).
9. See <http://www.alt-arch.org>.
10. The Shalem Center (“Whole” or “Complete” Center) is funded by a group of American Jewish businessmen and supporters of the Whole Land of Israel. Established in 1994 and with keen interest in Jewish and Zionist history, biblical archaeology, the Bible and Talmud, Middle Eastern and strategic studies, its Senior Fellow Martin Kramer has been chosen to serve as the first President of planned Shalem College, established in January 2013. Other senior fellows include former Israeli Chief of Staff Moshe Ya’alon. He is currently Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Strategic Affairs.

4. COLONIALIST IMAGINATION AS A SITE OF MIMICRY AND ERASURE: THE ISRAELI RENAMING PROJECT

1. In November 2011 assailants also sprayed paint Mamilla Cemetery headstones with the slogan “Death to Arabs”. See <http://www.israeli-occupation.org/2011-11-10/muslim-gravestones-desecrated-in-jerusalem-in-suspected-price-tag-attack>.
2. See Saree Makdisi’s critique of the Simon Wiesenthal Center’s plan at http://tari.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=55:a-museum-of-tolerance-we-dont-need-by-saree-makdisi&catid=5:announcements-and-breaking-news&Itemid=57.
3. See <http://www.pef.org.uk/Pages/Warren.htm>.
4. Shamir means flint. In the Talmud there is the myth of King Solomon using Shamir in the construction of the first temple in the place of cutting tools.
5. Ben-Tzvi, literally “son of deer”
6. Founded in 1890, the new Zionist settlement of Rehovot was named after a biblical town of a similar name, Rehoboth, which stood at a completely different location in the Negev Desert.
7. Reported in *Haaretz*, 4 April 1969.
8. Wadi al-Hawarith was also the name of Palestinian village depopulated in 1948.
9. See <http://www.pmo.gov.il/PMOEng/PM+Office/Departments/depgovnames.htm>.
10. Yadin Roman; see <http://www.erezt.com/archive/jan3000.htm>.
11. Approximately a quarter of all geographical names were derived from the Arabic names on the basis of the similarity of sounds.
12. See <http://www.archaeology.huji.ac.il/depart/BIBLICAL/EILATM/achziv.asp>.
13. See <http://www.jancodada.co.il/he/index.php>.
14. See, for instance, “Palestine Nakba Oral History: Interview with Hasan al-Kanash” Part 1, produced by PalestineRemembered.com, at <http://www.PalestineRemembered.com/Jaffa/al-'Abbasiyya/Story1595.html>.
15. Isdud: District of Gaza. See <http://www.palestineremembered.com/Gaza/Isdud/index.html> (accessed 4 February 2006).
16. Alternative Information Centre. See <http://www.alternativenews.org/english/index.php/topics/news/2646-stop-the-jnfstop-greenwashing-apartheid-call-for-endorsements>.
17. See http://www.jnf.co.uk/trees_lord_sacks.html.
18. Information in this paragraph is from Alternative Information Centre; see <http://www.alternativenews.org/english/index.php/topics/news/2646-stop-the-jnfstop-greenwashing-apartheid-call-for-endorsements>.
19. Praver was a scholar of the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem. He immigrated from Poland to Palestine in 1936, and after 1948 became an important figure in the Israeli higher education system. After 1967 he also advised the Israeli authorities on setting up the Tower of David Museum of the History of Jerusalem in an Islamic Mamluke fortress near the Jaffa Gate entrance to the occupied Old City of Jerusalem.
20. According to the New Testament, Jesus performed a number of miracles in the Tiberias region, including the two miraculous catches of fish. Muslim geographer Nasir Khusraw, who visited Tiberias in 1047, describes an Arab city with a “strong wall”: “numberless buildings erected in the very water, for the bed of the lake in this part is rock; and they have built pleasure houses that are supported on columns of marble, rising up out of the water. The lake is very full of fish ... The Friday Mosque is in the midst of the town. At the gate of the mosque is a spring, over which they have built a hot bath ... On the western side of the town is a mosque known as the Jasmine Mosque (Masjid-i-Yasmin). It is a fine building and in the middle part rises a great platform (dukkan), where they have their Mihrabs (or prayer-niches). All round those they have set jasmine-shrubs, from which the mosque derives its name” (Le Strange, 1890: 336–7).
21. The sites of Mount Hermon were used by the Canaanites in their religious rituals. The name in the Hebrew Bible, *Har Hermon* (“Mount Hermon”), derived from these Canaanite traditions. In Arabic the snow-covered mountain is called *Jabal el-Shaykh* (“Mountain of the chief”, or “Grey-haired mountain”). The Arabic name may also be linked to the Transfiguration of Jesus narrative in the New Testament.
22. The Arabic name is “Jawlan”. In the Hebrew Bible *Golan* is mentioned as a city located in Amorite territories.
23. See %D7%A9%D7%9E%D7%95%D7%A8%D7%AA_%D7%97%D7%95%D7%A8%D7%A9%D7%AA_%D7%98%D7-%9C.
24. Birzeit University series on Palestinian destroyed villages, 276 page report on Abu Shusha.
25. “Gezer” in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*; see <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/232313/Gezer>.

5. GOD’S MAPMAKERS: JEWISH FUNDAMENTALISM AND THE LAND TRADITIONS OF THE HEBREW BIBLE (1967 TO GAZA 2013)

1. The term “Jewish fundamentalists” applies here to those individuals, parties or movements with a religious fundamentalist approach to religion and state, invariably wanting Israel to become a *halachic* state; that is, one governed by Jewish religious

law.

2. Interview with Dr Han Pappé, a leading Israeli “new historian”, 6 May 2003.
3. *Hatzofeh* , 23 June 1967.
4. Yeshivat Hesder is an Israeli army *yeshiva* programme which combines advanced Talmudic studies with military service in the army.
5. According to the Talmud, the Noahide Laws are a set of seven binding moral commandments that were given by God to Noah.
6. See the *American Zionist* (May/June 1976).
7. See also *Nekudah* , 29 August 1980: 12.
8. *Yedi'ot Aharonot* , 20 December 1974.
9. See for instance *Torah Ve'avodah* [*Torah and Work*], no. 6 (Jerusalem, 1984 [Hebrew]).
10. See also *Journal of Palestine Studies* 10, no. 1 (Autumn 1980): 150 and the *Jerusalem Post* international edition, 8–14 June 1980.
11. *Ma'ariv* , 18 March 1983.
12. See <http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/israel-closes-down-yitzhar-yeshiva-due-to-violent-acts-against-palestinians-1.393210>.
13. See also *Torat Hamelech* , Part One: “Laws of Life and Death between Israel and the Nations”, a 230-page compendium of Halacha, published by the Od Yosef Chai yeshiva in Yitzhar.
14. From the root *dal* , meaning “weak”. It literally means the one who weakened or impoverished Samson. In the Bible, Delilah (like the foreigner Ruth) is the “doubly other”; but she is also the dangerous foreign woman whom Samson loved. She betrayed him for money and was his downfall.
15. Nahum Barnea, *Yedioth Ahronoth* , 4 July 2011.

CONCLUSION: THE NEW SCHOLARLY REVOLUTION AND RECLAIMING THE HERITAGE OF THE DISINHERITED AND DISENFRANCHISED PALESTINIANS

1. *It Ain't Necessarily So: Investigating the Truth of the Biblical Past* is the title of a 2001 book written by Matthew Sturgis, with a foreword by John McCarthy.
2. At a conference in October 1999 at Northwestern University, Dever attacked minimalist biblical scholars as “anti-Israel” “anti-Bible” and “nihilistic” (Davies, 2002).
3. Arutz Sheva, 26 July 2010; see <http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/138788>.
4. This epic was discovered in 1849 in the ruined Royal Library of Ashurbanipal at Nineveh (Mosul, Iraq), dating to the seventh century BC , and published by George Smith in 1876. The epic, a major source for understanding the Babylonian worldview, centres on the supremacy of Marduk, the chief god of Babylon, and the creation of humankind for the service of the gods.
5. Sheffield Academic Press also published Amit (1999). Some works were published with Routledge.
6. Many scholars are associated with the recent critical biblical scholarship, although not all of them are called minimalists. These include Israel Finkelstein, David Ussishkin, Zeev Herzog, Neil Asher Silberman, Yairah Amit, Gösta Ahlström, John Van Seters, Rainer Albertz, Axel Knauf, Robert Carroll, David Gunn, Etienne Nodet, Herbert Niehr, Graham Auld, Giovanni Garbini, Carlo Zaccagnini, Mario Liverani, Pietro Fronzaroli, Fred Cryer, Tilde Binger, Allan Rosengren, Hans Jørgen Lundager Jensen, Margreet Steiner, Terje Oestigaard, Margit Sjeggstad, Diana Edelman, Flemming Nielsen, Thomas Bolin, Ingrid Hjelm, Greg Doudna, Emanuel Pföh, Bernd Diebner and Henk Franken.
7. In November 1999 the internet journal *Miqra* published a piece by Hershel Shanks, the editor of the magazine *The Biblical Archaeology Review* , with accusations of anti-Semitism against Professors Zeev Herzog, Niels Peter Lemche and Philip Davies.
8. On the mass conversion by Samaritans to Islam in Palestine during the early Muslim period, see Levy-Rubin (2000: 257–76).
9. This world of discourses is described in an excellent article entitled “The Politics of Tour Guiding” by Bowman (1991: 121–34).

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