The Shaping of Israeli Identity

Myth, Memory and Trauma

Edited by
ROBERT WISTRICH
and
DAVID OHANA

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Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK

First published 1995 by
FRANK CASS AND COMPANY LIMITED

Published 2013 by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY, 10017, USA

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

The Shaping of Israeli Identity: Myth, Memory and Trauma — (Israel Affairs Series, ISSN 1353-7121; Vol. 1, No. 3)
I. Wistrich, Robert S. II. Ohana, David
III. Series
956.94

ISBN 13: 978-0-714-64641-1 (hbk)
ISBN 13: 978-0-714-64163-8 (pbk)

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
A catalog record for this book is
available from the Library of Congress

This group of studies first appeared in a Special Issue of *Israel Affairs*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (Spring 1995), [The Shaping of Israeli Identity: Myth, Memory and Trauma].

Publisher's Note

The publisher has gone to great lengths to ensure the quality of this reprint but points out that some imperfections in the original may be apparent.

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Introduction

ROBERT WISTRICH and DAVID OHANA

Historical "Revisionism" is in fashion in Israel as in most of the western world as established views of the past are criticized, reassessed or openly debunked. The heroic view of the Israeli War of Independence as a struggle of the few against the many or of a uniquely peace-loving Zionist movement facing intransigently hostile Arab enemies has been challenged by a new generation of Israeli historians: so, too, have the alleged "myths" that over half-a-million Palestinian Arabs voluntarily fled Palestine in 1948 (or expected to return in the wake of conquering Arab armies) rather than being expelled from Israel by force. During the past decade it has become a commonplace of much Israeli historiography to question and undermine these and other "myths" at the core of Israeli self-perception which had created structures of thinking and propaganda that long shaped Israeli policy. Along with the war of 1948 (and virtually all of Israel's subsequent wars), the heroes of Zionism and Israel have also come in for a battering. The visionary and charismatic founder of the movement, Theodor Herzl has been reduced in stature to a highly narcissistic conflict-ridden, neurotic personality; the revered founding-father and first Prime Minister of the Jewish State, David Ben-Gurion has been accused of inactivity and indifference during the Holocaust, of favouring the "transfer" of Arabs out of Israel in 1948 and of subsequently squandering opportunities to achieve peace with surrounding Arab states. The indomitable Golda Meir is today frequently execrated for her total inflexibility towards the Palestinians while the legendary Moshe Dayan has been debunked as a selfish, womanizing megalomaniac. The cherished image of the early pioneers and hardy Zionist warriors like Joseph Trumpeldor (along with the myth of Tel-Hai where he died in defence of the Galilee) has also suffered along with that of the 1948 generation and of Israel's leaders since her independence. Whether it be the defenders of Masada and the revolt of Bar-Kochba nearly 2,000 years ago or Operation Entebbe in 1975, the Maccabees or the PALMACH, Joshua or Ariel Sharon, it would appear that some Israelis have no further need of larger-than-life heroes, least of all role models of reckless bravery or military prowess.

The assault on "heroic" idealism did not of course begin overnight and probably has its roots in the attitudes of the sceptical generation that came of age in the 1960s. The disillusion generated by the scarring traumas of the 1973 Yom Kippur War, the disastrous Lebanon

adventure in the 1980s and the Palestinian uprising, doubtless reinforced this trend and paved the way for a new iconoclasm. So, too, did the impact of the modern electronic media, especially on a younger generation for whom pop stars, comedians and basketball stars are better known and loved today than Israeli politicians or Zionist ideologues. In contemporary Israel, with its technological sophistication, its more easy-going individualism and all-too-cynical knowingness, nothing, it would seem, is sacred any more. The old heroes, the ideal of self-sacrificing patriotism, collectivist ideologies or the naive cult of the Sabra (native-born Israeli) seem increasingly out of date – at least to much of the liberal and leftist intelligentsia or the new professionals seeking access to the warming prosperity of the global economy. It is the stock-exchange rather than the Kibbutz, technocracy instead of Zionist visions, the dream of quick profits not Hebrew prophets, which sets the tone for much of present-day Israeli society. In this kind of climate in which there are no great causes left, debunking the founding fathers and myths of Israel has become a national sport. For the left, this is a welcome part of the new maturity in Israel, a healthy and necessary process of adapting to modernity, and freeing the country from its imprisonment in outmoded ideologies and dogmas. In that sense, the demystification of Israeli history is viewed as a positive contribution to the peace process. Moreover, it tends to emphasize the virtues of negotiation and compromise rather than the mystique of self-sacrifice and death in the service of the homeland, encouraged by an earlier generation of Israelis. By the same token, this trend is seen on the right as undermining the ethos, the ideals and goals of Zionism – as a blow to the self-sustaining convictions and belief-systems that have animated the country from its inception. This assault on founding myths is often presented as a form of decadence, as the cultural expression of defeatism and as a retreat from the dominant Zionist ideology, which can only lead to disaster.

The essays in this volume seek to avoid both these extremes, while reflecting some of the intensity and depth of the revision of the Israeli past which is now taking place. This is a debate which is no less about history per se. The focus here is not, however, on the Israeli-Palestinian or the Jewish-Arab conflict, which has taken up so much international attention whether from politicians, academics or the media. It is concentrated much more on those internal Jewish factors which have shaped Israeli collective consciousness and national–cultural identity during the past 100 years – in all their pluralism, ambivalence and contradictions. Naturally these myths, memories and traumas that have shaped Israeli identity did not develop in a vacuum nor as the pure product of internal developments within 20th century Jewish history. They have all along interacted with external forces in the non-Jewish

world and been profoundly modified by confrontation and conflict with the Arab-Muslim Middle Eastern environment. But Israeli society and culture also have their own inner historical dynamics which have for too long been ignored, whether through ignorance or design.

The deconstruction of national mythologies is of course a perfectly legitimate and necessary element in seeking to understand any long-term historical process. But it needs to be remembered that myth is something more subtle than merely an erroneous belief or dogma held to against all the historical evidence. The popular usage which equates myth with fallacies that can be disproved by logical reasoning or the simple reference to historical facts, is frequently accepted in a naïve fashion by revisionist historians. New documentation and new interpretations of historical events based upon them are a normal and natural part of the evolution of historiography in any society. Demythicizing a past which has been invested with a quasi-sacred character or pointing out that events which have been given unique significance by one generation may not retain this meaning for its successor, is equally natural. After all, most interpretations of history are to some extent based on an arbitrary selection of events and can easily assume a mythical character. Israeli history and historiography are no exception to this rule and like the writing of history elsewhere, have inevitably been influenced by ideology. But the process of de-ideologizing that history and stripping it of its allegedly mythical aspects is by the same token not immune to similar objections of selectivity and arbitrariness. Is "revisionist" history, for example, any less subject to an ideological or political agenda, to the conscious (or unconscious) desire to create counter-myths, than the very orthodoxy against which it rebels?

The essays in this volume by and large recognize that myths can simultaneously perform many functions. Not all of them are negative or merely justificatory rationalizations of a particular status quo. They may indeed provide legitimation for existing social and political practices, for a dominant elite, social group or ideology. Myth may also be intended as a mobilizing agent to galvanize commitment or identification with a cause, as has often been the case all over the world in the past two centuries. Above all, most myths are to some degree narratives which seek to anchor the present in the past – and the Zionist "myths" under attack today do not differ from this pattern. Myths seen in this light, as a special kind of narrative, as symbolic statements or frames of reference which give meaning to the past, are not necessarily false or harmful examples of pseudo-history. Their true significance more often lies in what they can tell us about the ways in which a particular nation, social group or set of individuals, seek to organize its collective memory and to establish a distinctive identity. The process

of analyzing or deconstructing myth is most revealing precisely when it unveils the deeper social and unconscious needs that are served by the construction or symbolic invention of a particular national past. In the case of Zionism, its political leaders from Herzl onwards, often displayed an acute understanding of the constructive role of myth in the nation-building process. The will to nationhood in a dispersed, powerless people like Diaspora Jewry had to be forged against a formidable array of obstacles, both external and internal. Not only did Zionism operate under difficult and frequently unfavourable conditions, both in the Diaspora and in Mandatory Palestine, but even after the creation of Israel its leaders have had to navigate in an intensely hostile and unenviable geo-political environment. Moreover, before 1948 (and to a lesser extent since then) Israeli and Zionist leaders had to face considerable opposition from within the Jewish people to the realization of their national goals. In these adverse conditions the establishment and consolidation of a coherent and distinctive Israeli identity has been a remarkable historical feat. It would have been virtually impossible without the ability to harness such potent "myths" as the ingathering of the exiled, the upbuilding of Zion as a model society, the creation of a new Hebrew or "Jewish" type and an overarching vision of national redemption. The task was rendered even more complex by the relative lack of Jewish political experience during two millennia, the tension between Judaism as a religion and the ideal of statehood, the clash between nationalist particularism and universalist ideals in Jewish history, as well as the structural weaknesses of the Zionist movement. Even without the devastating blow of the Holocaust and the wall of Arab-Muslim hostility that confronted the new Israeli state, the challenge of constructing a viable Israel would have been formidable. To convert an urban-based Diasporic people whose cohesion had already been significantly eroded by cultural assimilation into a "normal" nation rooted in its own land and Hebrew language, was a huge task even under the most optimal set of circumstances. The ideological synthesis of socialist Zionism and the driving myths that shaped Israeli society in its early years reflected many of these imperatives, constraints and challenges. The emphasis on *mamlakhtiut* ("statism"), on national security, unity, rootedness, pioneering settlement and military virtues as well as the priority attached to a "melting pot" ideology, seemed appropriate to the immediate imperatives of survival under adverse conditions. Similarly, the "heroic" Spartan ethos, so decried by current fashion, was in many respects a functional necessity for a country poor in natural resources, surrounded by enemies and dependent on a high level of motivation, collective willpower and implacable determination to re-root itself in the land. The dominant myths underwent a subtle shift after 1967 as ter-

ritorial expansion and rule over a large Palestinian population created a new set of problems and dilemmas. The future of the occupied territories, questions of borders and ultimate national goals, the globalizing of the Arab-Israeli conflict and a changed relation with the Diaspora, became contentious and central issues in Israeli politics.

New forms of integral nationalism and religious fundamentalism related to the sanctity of the Land of Israel, began to change the contours of Israeli identity. The balance between the constituent elements of Israeli collective identity were further affected by the erosion of the dominant Zionist-socialist pioneering ethos in the early 1970s; by the crisis of confidence in the labour leadership and in the military elites after the Yom Kippur War; by the gradual rise in influence of Israel's underprivileged Sephardim who helped bring Likud to power in 1977; by growing settlement across the green line and violent confrontation with Palestinians in the territories, and by the sharpening divisions between the religious and secular segments of Israeli society. The decline in the internal national consensus and the increasingly harsh criticism and condemnation of Israeli policies abroad, were two of the most obvious symptoms of malaise in the 1970s and 1980s. Inevitably, they too began to change the contours of Israeli identity, the focus of its collective consciousness and memory and the perception of Israel's role in the world. This was the context in which Zionist ideology itself came to be called into question from within and the older nation-building myths which had already lost much of their mobilizing power, were challenged. Israel's international isolation and the successive traumas of the Lebanon War, the intifada and the unaccustomed Israeli passivity during the Gulf War, provided important external stimuli for this fundamental debate about the means and ends, the goals and purpose of the Zionist project. Alongside these stresses and strains, Israeli society was becoming increasingly westernized in the 1980s - more materialistic, individualist and consumer-orientated. In this de-ideologized environment, there was far greater scope for a plurality of identities, for recognizing the validity of the private realm and the needs of the individual. A flourishing indigenous Hebrew-language culture and literary experimentation encouraged a new freedom in addressing time-honoured ideals and deflating established myths. The era of grand ideological syntheses appeared to be over and increasingly calls for "normalization" could be heard that reflected a palpable war-weariness and a longing for peace now. The Palestinian question could no longer be swept under the carpet in the 1980s and increasingly impinged on the Israeli collective psyche as a problem that directly affected the identity of the Israeli people and its state.

At the same time the belated awareness of the Holocaust – a process that had begun in the early 1960s – attained new heights and emerged

as a dominant myth in cementing the national identity. Its role in the Israeli collective memory underlined the degree to which the Zionist rupture with the Diasporic past of Jewry was beginning to break down. The image of the Holocaust as the nadir of Jewish powerlessness in *Galut* (exile) and the stigma attached to it, gave way to an increasingly strong symbolic identification with this traumatic memory. The traditional Zionist contrast between tough, resourceful Israelis who make their own history and the passive Diaspora Jews who went like "lambs to the slaughter" has been steadily muted. There is much less need today to dramatize the rupture with the Diasporic past, to create a counter-model to the exilic Jew. In its place has come a more realistic and humane approach to suffering, less eagerness to embrace death in the heroic mould and a much greater interest of Israelis in their own personal and collective roots, which lie after all in Diaspora traditions.

In the more diversified Israeli society of the 1990s, the melting pot has been replaced by a marked trend towards ethnic particularism, localism and the cultivation of Diasporic roots. The two thousand years of Jewish exile in the Diaspora are no longer perceived as a potential threat to the viability of Israeli statehood, but as an integral part of Israel's past, to be integrated into its contemporary history. An Israeli identity, divorced from its Jewish sources, therefore seems increasingly unlikely despite the tension that still exists between the Zionist aspiration and the reality of the Diaspora. In the 1990s, even the "ingathering of the exiles" – the ultimate raison d'être of Zionist ideology – has assumed new contours. During the past five years the mass aliya of over 500,000 Jews into Israel from the ex-USSR has changed the face of the nation in unexpected ways. These Russian-speaking immigrants, unlike the more Zionist orientated wave of the 1970s, show little inclination to identify with Israeli culture. Instead they have created their own sub-culture in its midst —an unprecedented phenomenon which, given the size of this immigration (10 per cent of the total Jewish population of Israel) is likely to continue in this generation. The xenophobic hostility of much of the native population, the media and even some politicians to this influx and their stereotypical responses, suggest that Israel may have reached a saturation point in its current ability to absorb new immigrants.

Such tensions and difficulties are probably inevitable in the building of a sovereign society and in their own way are the imperfect outcome of the very successes of Zionism in accomplishing many of its original aims. On the eve of the Holocaust, the Jews of Palestine represented a mere 3 per cent of world Jewry. In the past fifty-five years, Israel has ingathered one third of the entire Jewish people and early in the 21st century it may well contain over 50 per cent of the world Jewish population. This is a phenomenal transformation achieved

under democratic rule (flawed though it has often been for its Arab citizens) in conditions of siege and continuous warfare during the last half a century. Such achievements are easy to overlook in the atmosphere of fashionable cynicism, frustration, debunking and self-denigration that has seized many Israelis. There is a danger that the present disillusionment with the peace process, which despite its risks offers the hope of finally resolving a blood-stained hundred year war with the Arabs, may unduly exacerbate this mood. There is also something disturbing about the current Israeli fixation on the collective Jewish trauma of the Holocaust and the weakening of allegiance to the symbols of national unity to the state and its real achievements.

On the other hand, as the essays in this volume amply demonstrate, there is much that is healthy and invigorating in the plurality of versions of Israel's past that are currently on display. As the 20th century draws to a close, Israel stands at the most important crossroads in its history, in the long march towards peace. Its ability to critically examine and where necessary to demythologize its own past is a testament to its continuing vitality as a living democracy.

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Theodor Herzl: Zionist Icon, Myth-Maker and Social Utopian

ROBERT S. WISTRICH

THEODOR HERZL, the creator of political Zionism, was not only a living legend in his own lifetime but had already become the personification of the "Jewish State" 50 years before its actual creation in the land of Israel. When Herzl wrote in his diary in 1897 that he had "founded the Jewish State" at the First Zionist Congress in Basle, he knew that in the eyes of most contemporaries this could appear as little more than an idle fantasy or perhaps even worse as the megalomaniacal dream of a political demagogue. Yet despite the difficulties and the strength of the opposition to his ideas, especially in the Jewish world, Herzl was supremely confident in the validity of his prophecy. This confidence did not arise out of a mystical religious faith rooted in traditional Judaism but rather from the complex interaction between his personality structure, his liberal utopianism, his understanding of the Jewish condition and of the role of myth in politics. More than any other Zionist leader of his time, Herzl was attuned to the importance of myth as a vital rallying-cry and driving-force in modern national movements and mass politics. This sensitivity, as we shall see later, was closely related to his Austro-Hungarian background and to his intimate familiarity with German *Bildung* and *Kultur*.

But awareness of the centrality of myth and symbolism was also something that came naturally to Herzl as part of his own highly developed aesthetic consciousness. From an early age, his poetic and dramatic inclinations, and the attention to outward appearance and deportment which he had inherited from his mother, were striking features in his personality. His instinctive sense of stage management and ceremonial occasion led him to insist on formal black dress and white ties at the First Zionist Congress and helped ensure the required aura of dignity and solemnity. In organizing the Zionist movement, Herzl displayed that sense for imagery, design, symbolism and dramatic spectacle that helped transform it from a literary debating club into a fac-

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tor of international politics. He gave to Zionist assemblies and gatherings that binding, quasi-sacred feeling of a shared experience of solidarity, elation and strength. As a product of Central European culture, Herzl was only too aware of how important folklore, myths, legends and national heroes were in forging the imagined pasts out of which modern nations were born or being reborn in the course of the nineteenth century. Though not a religious believer or a traditionalist himself, he understood that to cement a *modern* Jewish national consciousness he would have to find analogous ways to fuse modernity and tradition. The methods of organization, agitation and propaganda employed by political Zionism might be modern but its emotional appeal resided in much more ancient, even archaic symbols like the "Promised Land", the Covenant or the "faith of the fathers". This tradition would have to be tapped into, resurrected and reinterpreted in the light of current political needs in order to regenerate the demoralized Jewish masses.

Herzl was convinced that his aim of national renaissance could never be achieved without recourse to those "imponderable", unconscious factors in the lives of individuals, groups and whole nations, which make them ready to die for a cause. Not for nothing was Herzl, as a contemporary of Sigmund Freud and of the Frenchman, Gustave Le Bon (whose pioneering study of *Crowd Psychology* first appeared in 1895, the year of Herzl's conversion to Zionism) so fascinated by the new mass politics which had arisen in *fin-de-siècle* Austria, Germany and France. From his own observation of the populist movements of the 1890s he could see just how important the appeal to archaic myths had become in modern political movements.

Ironically, of course, Herzl himself was to become one of the most potent myths and symbols of the Zionist movement which he had created. In his outward appearance and bearing, he exuded the strength, pride, nobility and physical beauty which Zionism offered as a counterweight to the "degeneration", the ugliness and misery of ghetto life. If Zionism proposed to create a new muscular Jewry (as Herzl's leading lieutenant, Max Nordau, constantly insisted) and a new Jewish man – upright, virile, honourable and dignified – then Herzl appeared perfectly fitted for the role. In his physiognomy the core of the Zionist programme already seemed to be contained. The manly figure, the handsome face, the gravity, the impressive beard (recalling the prophets of Israel) and the penetrating, melancholy eyes, embodied for many of his followers the Zionist promise of regeneration. When he ascended the podium at the First Zionist Congress, for some observers he looked like "a royal scion of the House of David, risen from the dead, clothed in legend and fantasy and beauty". It was as if, after 2,000 years of exile, the Messiah himself had come to inaugurate a new epoch of Jewish history.

The Zionist mythology that developed around his person, especially after his untimely, early death in 1904, reinforced the power of Herzl's legend. His picture now adorned virtually every Zionist meeting hall, office or reading room just as it would gaze out over his followers at future Congresses of the movement. It could be found on trademarks of Jewish ceremonial objects, household articles, canned milk or cigarette boxes. Herzl's portrait would still be there in May 1948 behind David Ben-Gurion as he read Israel's historic declaration of independence and he would silently preside henceforth over the debates in the Israeli parliament. This iconization of Herzl has been a useful and unifying cohesive force for Zionism, transcending the gulf between Right and Left, liberals and conservatives, secular and religious Jews. There is potentially something for everybody in Herzl's rhetoric of unity, in his visionary "third way" between capitalism and socialism, in his enlightened, optimistic liberalism.

But it is perhaps less the content of Herzl's Zionist programme than his image itself, which captured the imagination of the Jewish people a century ago. Zionism in its bold aim to radically transform Jewish consciousness and the external conditions of Jewish life, desperately needed a hero and a founding myth. The hero must symbolize the manliness and vigour that had been stunted by centuries of ghetto life, divorce from the soil and nature. He must radiate authority if a fragmented, dispersed and demoralized people were to be mobilized and work towards a common end. He must be a man of high culture and of the wider world, if he were to command the respect of Jews and non-Jews alike. Herzl fitted all of these criteria and more, for he was driven by that quasi-messianic sense of personal mission and readiness to sacrifice his own comfort and security for a greater cause, that is part of the heroic persona. The fact that he underwent a kind of personal "martyrdom" in the service of Zionism could only add to the aura of the mythical hero.

For the Jewish masses in Eastern Europe, with their own latent messianic longings for social redemption and national liberation, Herzl's image was even more potent because he was a "Westerner" who had scaled the peaks of German culture and was used to dealing with princes, politicians and priests. The regal bearing echoed distant memories of ancient Jewish kings, the full beard seemed a reassuring link with Jewish tradition, the elegant, flowing prose was the mark of the Jew who had successfully conquered "the ordeal of civility". But to grasp how this Herzlian myth was constructed, we need to return to the world into which Herzl was born – that of the *fin-de-siècle* Austro-Hungarian Empire.

The only son of a middle-class merchant family in Budapest, Herzl grew up in a social milieu which cultivated a deep love of German lan-

guage and literature while retaining a certain loyalty to Jewish values and tradition. In a short autobiographical sketch, written in January 1898 for the London *Jewish Chronicle*, Herzl recalled: "I was born in 1860 in Budapest in a house next to the synagogue where lately the rabbi denounced me from the pulpit in very sharp terms because, forsooth, I am trying to obtain for the Jews more honour and greater freedom than they enjoy at present. On the front door of the house in the Tabakgasse where I first saw the light of this world, 20 years hence a "notice" will be posted up with the words – 'This house to let'."[1]

From 1866 Herzl attended the primary school of the Budapest Jewish community, where he studied Hebrew for four years as well as secular and religious subjects.[2] Excelling in Hungarian, German, arithmetic and science, he received only "good" for his efforts in *lashon ha-Kodesh* (the holy tongue). In his autobiography, the Zionist leader observed, not without humour: "My earliest recollection of that school consists of the caning which I received from the master because I did not know the details of the Exodus of the Jews from Egypt. At the present time a great many school masters want to give me a caning because I recollect too much of the Exodus from Egypt."[3]

In the autumn of 1870 Theodor joined the *Realschule*, a secondary school which emphasized the sciences and modern languages rather than classical studies. His marks in mathematical and technical subjects were disappointing (ending his dream of becoming an engineer like his boyhood hero, Ferdinand de Lesseps) and in religion they were lower-than-average.

His adolescent imagination was, however, sparked by a book of Jewish legends which he received as a *Bar-Mitzvah* gift in May 1873. As Herzl later confessed to Reuben Brainin shortly before he died, it was the Messiah legend which excited him the most – "the coming of the Messiah whose arrival is awaited daily by many Jews even in this generation".[4] He dreamed that the King-Messiah had taken him up in his arms into the heavens where they encountered Moses.[5] The Messiah in the dream, echoing the words of the biblical Hannah to her son Samuel, had called to Moses: "It is for this child I have prayed." To the 13 year old Herzl, the King-Messiah had reportedly said: "Go declare to the Jews that I shall come soon and perform great wonders and great deeds for my people and for the whole world."[6] Herzl kept the dream secret and its conscious effect on his political path is difficult to assess, but his unconscious identification with the example of Moses and with a special calling to lead the Jews, was a revealing pointer to his future career.

The interests of the adolescent Herzl were increasingly turning to literature and, at the age of 13, he began to organize a pupils' literary society *Wir* ("We") in Budapest – "to enrich our knowledge, to make

progress in the use of the language, and perfect the style". He wrote essays in fluent Hungarian (as well as in German) on subjects as diverse as Napoleon, Savonarola, Muhammad, on Hungarian patriots and poets, on Greek mythology, religion and heroism; there were also short stories, sketches, literary criticism and speeches on topics like "The Achievements of Modern Civilization".[7] The essays reveal that he was thoroughly conversant with modern Magyar and German literature. They include sympathetic reviews of the works of Hungarian poets like János Arany (1817-1882), author of the great national epic *Toldi* and of Mikhály Vörösmarty (1800-1855), author of the Hungarian national anthem.[8] At the same time, Herzl was also sensitive to the fact that even in post-emancipation Hungary, discrimination had by no means disappeared and that it was difficult for Jews to obtain jobs in government service.[9] In 1875, the same year that Theodor left the Technical High School and transferred to the Evangelical Gymnasium (attached to Budapest's main Protestant church), antisemitism had been placed in the political map by Győzö Istóczy's speech in the Hungarian Parliament. Istóczy claimed that the Jews were an aggressive, socially exclusive cosmopolitan caste which had tenaciously resisted assimilation for nearly 4,500 years and whose "liberalism" was merely a cunning fraud to deceive the Gentiles. The true aim of these nomadic alien invaders was world economic domination.[10]

Particularly intriguing is the fact that Istóczy made an extraordinary speech on 24 June 1878 in the Hungarian Diet, favouring the restoration of a Jewish State in Palestine, at the very time when the eighteen-year-old Herzl was sitting his final exams and the *matura* in Budapest. Istóczy's "Zionist" speech took as its point of departure the existence of an alleged state of national emergency in Hungary, provoked by Jewish domination of the country. "It may very well be that in no other land in Europe does the Jewish Question necessitate a more urgently radical solution than in our monarchy [i.e. empire] and especially in Hungary."[11]

In the Middle East, Istóczy maintained, political conditions were now ripe for a return of the Jews to Palestine and the restoration of the state "from which they have remained expelled for 1800 years". Istóczy believed this was an international problem which required the concerted efforts and vision of European statesmen and politicians like Disreali, Gambetta, Lasker, Glaser and Unger ("the souls of the Austrian Cabinet") – all of whom he thought of as being Jews by "race" – if the "Jewish Question" were to be solved in the interests of public unity and welfare.[12] Istóczy appealed therefore to Jewish patriots to begin rebuilding their ancestral home, while demanding of their cosmopolitan brethren that they cease to form a "state within a state",

that they assimilate fully with non-Jews and make "an honest peace with Christian civilization". There is no direct evidence that Istóczy's speech influenced Herzl, but the latter's arguments for Zionism nearly two decades later were amazingly similar on certain points.[13] Herzl was certainly aware of the Hungarian deputy's agitational role in the Tisza-Eszlar blood libel of 1882 and pogromist atmosphere this aroused in his native land.

This may possibly have contributed to Herzl's rejection of Hungarian culture and the scarcity of his references to Hungary itself, once his parents moved to Vienna in 1878. But the repression of his Hungarian background was probably shaped far more by the desire to integrate as rapidly as possible into the German student milieu of Vienna where he was, initially at least, an outsider. Herzl's passionate interest in German literature, history and politics, manifest since his earliest years, made his transition easier than it might otherwise have been. From his Germanophile mother (*née* Jeannette Diamant), he had acquired that fervent admiration of German *Kultur*, typical of so many middle-class Budapest Jews before the Magyarization process accelerated after 1880.[14]

Herzl was quickly drawn towards Pan-German student nationalism in Vienna. A Hungarian Jewish outsider in Vienna, Herzl's *Deutschtum* was in many respects pro-Prussian rather than Austrian, making the Pan-German nationalist option more attractive.[15] It promised him a way of overcoming his social marginality and self-alienation in Vienna, a city which for all its cosmopolitanism still remained predominantly German.

Though Herzl rapidly shed any earlier residues of Magyar patriotism during his Vienna years, he probably owed more to his Hungarian background than he consciously admitted. Like his fellow Jews from Budapest, Adolf Fischof, Theodor Hertzka and Max Nordau, Herzl proved to be far more politically activist in temperament than most native Viennese intellectuals.[16] His heroic style, gift for improvization and readiness to gamble, the mixture of utopian imagination and flair for the diplomatic *beau geste* were more obviously Hungarian than Austrian characteristics. It was perhaps from Hungary that Herzl may have derived his consciousness of *national* identity even if German rather than Magyar nationalism was his model for the Zionist movement.[17]

Herzl was already one generation removed from the Jewish religious orthodoxy of Eastern Europe. His paternal grandfather, Simon Loeb Herzl (1805-1879) who lived in Semlin, a small Austro-Hungarian frontier town near Belgrade, had remained a pious, strictly orthodox Jew.[18] The son of a rabbi, he sometimes led the religious services in the small congregation in his home town. He had been a fol-

lower of one of the pioneers of religious Zionism, the rabbi of Semlin, Yehuda Alkalai (1798-1878), who as early as 1834 had proposed the establishment of Jewish settlements in *Eretz Israel*.[19] Simon Loeb Herzl, who annually visited his family in Budapest, always spoke enthusiastically of Alkalai's ideas and this may have been his grandson's first exposure to the existence of Palestinian Jewish resettlement.

Herzl's father, Jacob, a highly successful bank director and timber merchant had also spent his first 17 years in Semlin, where he, too, had been a pupil of Rabbi Alkalai. Later in Budapest, Jacob Herzl became a supporter of the Hungarian proto-Zionist rabbi, Joseph Natonek (1813-1892).[20] Significantly, Jacob Herzl provided strong moral and financial support for his son's efforts to maintain the momentum of the new Zionist movement after 1897.[21] His strong-willed possessive mother, Jeannette, was also very supportive of Herzl's Zionist activity. Her love of the German classics and of the values of middle-class *Bildung* by no means excluded loyalty to Jewish family and national traditions. It was from this handsome, self-willed woman that Theodor inherited his strong sense of aesthetic form, sartorial elegance, social etiquette and deportment.[22] His extraordinarily close attachment to her was to exercise a powerful grip on his whole personality.[23] On the other hand, it clearly affected his already shaky marriage, his curiously desensualized view of women and perhaps indirectly influenced his eventual conversion to Zionism and to the idea of redeeming a lost motherland.[24]

During Herzl's early years in Vienna, he had studied law and in his own words "took part in all the stupid student's farces, including the wearing of a coloured cap of a *Verbindung*, until this association one fine morning passed a resolution that no Jews should henceforth be received as members."[25] This humiliating episode, with all its bitter associations of social rejection, was far more significant in Herzl's personal development than he himself probably realized. In the first place, his youthful allegiance to the semi-feudal values and the German nationalism of the Austrian *Burschenschaften* (fraternities) had been intense.[26] Herzl enjoyed the romantic ritual of Teutonic student fraternities, the sporting of glamorous swords, coloured caps and ribbons. He sympathized with the ardent pro-Prussian and Germanocentric nationalism of his fellow students and their generational revolt against the older pieties of rationalistic Austrian liberal-bourgeois culture.[27] The dramatist Arthur Schnitzler recalled in his memoirs:

> One of the Jewish students who belonged to a German-national fraternity before the changes just mentioned, was Theodor Herzl. I can remember seeing him with his blue student's cap and black walking-stick with the ivory handle and the F.V.C. (*Floriet Vivat*

> *Crescat*) engraved on it, parading in step with his fraternity brothers. That they eventually expelled him, or, as the students called it, "bounced" him, was undoubtedly the first motivation that transformed this German-national student and spokesman in the Academic Debating Hall (where we had stared at each other contemptuously one evening at a meeting, without however knowing each other personally), into the perhaps more enthusiastic than convinced Zionist, as which he lives on in posterity.[28]

Schnitzler had been unfavourably impressed at the time by the somewhat haughty, snobbish condescension of Herzl as a fraternity student. But he was impressed and even envious of Herzl's precocious *savoir-faire*, elegance, self-possession and undeniable oratorical capacities which had already been demonstrated in the *Akademische Lesehalle*.[29] What struck Schnitzler was the casual, seemingly effortless and commanding aristocratic pose, unusual among the bourgeois Jews of Vienna.

In 1881 Herzl had decided to join the nationalistic duelling fraternity *Albia*, which four years earlier had adopted the black, red and gold ensign of German nationalism.[30] His *nom de combat* was Tancred, recalling the young aristocratic hero of a novel by Great Britain's Prime Minister, Benjamin Disraeli, which had first been published in 1847. In *Tancred*, Disraeli had expressed a visionary, romantic Toryism, looking to re-establish the harmony of English society and to revitalize the Church as a moral and religious force by restoring its Jewish foundations. For this purpose, the hero of the novel (like the young Disraeli himself) actually visits Palestine. In *Tancred*, Disraeli also spoke vigorously in favour of restoring national independence to the Jews, and, unusually for a convert, he criticized Jewish assimilationists who were ashamed of revealing their race.[31] The young Herzl might well have identified with Disraeli's conservative nationalism, with his romantic extravagance and novelistic celebration of exotic medieval adventurism. These ingredients, as well as the Judeo-Christian strain of messianism or proto-Zionism, perhaps attracted him to the Tancred symbol.[32]

Herzl fought his obligatory student's duel on 11 May 1881, readily adapting to the aristocratic code of honour which the Austro-German student corporations observed. But the rise of German anti-semitism posed a serious problem for the 22 year old Herzl. Hermann Bahr, a prominent member of the *Albia* fraternity (and later to become one of Austria's most famous writers), had publicly called on his fellow students to seek their spiritual renewal through an "Aryan" Pan-Germanism. The occasion for his outburst had been Richard Wagner's death on 13 February 1883 and the memorial cele-

bration in the composer's honour by the Union of German Students in Vienna. The funeral obsequies quickly degenerated into a pro-Bismarckian, Pan-German, and anti-semitic demonstration against the Habsburg dynasty. Herzl's indignant letter of protest to the fraternity leadership in which he offered to resign as "a lover of freedom" (*Freiheitsliebender*) even were he not a Jew, was coldly accepted and terminated his relationship with Albia.[33]

Herzl had begun to concern himself intensively with the "Jewish Question", a year earlier, as a result of reading a novel, *The Jews of Cologne*, by the popular and prolific German writer, Wilhelm Jensen. This led him to make some unflattering observations in his notebooks about the physical and moral effects of the ghetto on the Jews. Their degenerated physique and mentality was in his view essentially the result of a lack of crossbreeding with other races. It was the "gloomy ghetto" whose influence endured "long after its material walls had fallen" (and which still cramped the outlook of many educated Jews) that had been directly responsible for the misshapen historical development of Jewry. It had acted like a tight ring tormenting and paralysing the fingers, preventing creative activity, initiative and free movement in Jewish life.[34]

Herzl's subsequent reading of Eugen Dühring's *Die Judenfrage als Racen, Sitten under Kulturfrage* (The Jewish Question as a Question of Race, Morals and Civilization), a learned treatise by a Berlin lecturer, which had become popular in Viennese student circles, provoked an even angrier response:[35]

> This rogue – the teeth past which his villanies gush should be bashed in! – turns up his eyes with odious mock-libertarian piety to say: To all men, the most boundless freedom; but for the Jews "a law of exception" (*Ausnahmsgesetz*): the new phrase for the medieval ghetto.[36]

Dühring was nothing but a malicious, hypocritical *Freiheitsjesuit* (an "infamous freedom cleric") whose would-be "solution" of the Jewish question combined restoring the ghetto with "a modern systematic dejudaizing (*Entjudung*) of the press and usury...", of law, medicine and the other free professions.[37] The base motive for this policy of "dejudaization" was to destroy Jewish economic competition. But a new rationale had been required for the 1880s which Herr Dühring had duly provided. The German Jew-baiter clearly realized that accusations of ritual murder and well-poisoning were inadequate in a more rationalistic, secularized society.

> They recognize, as does Herr Dühring, that religious attacks on the Jews no longer work. Now race must step forward! The faggots of the middle ages have become damp; they refused to ignite. Modern fuel is needed for them to blaze jollily, for spluttering Jew-fat to send up its savory smell to the straight noses of Protestants, of those free-thinkers who replace the Dominicans, who in medieval times supervised such matters. From fire to loot - or vice versa - Herr Dühring and company hunt for loot and find it... Greed is the low, stinking motive of all movements against the Jews... the only change has been more sophistication, erudition, intelligence...[38]

At the same time Herzl acknowledged qualities of Dühring's German prose-style. He even admitted the possibility of learning from the pitiless exposure of Jewish faults to be found in this book.[39] But, Dühring's vengeful racial prejudices had led him to exaggerate and to overlook the historical conditioning of Jewish qualities.[40] The young Herzl still seemed confident that enlightened tolerance would eventually win the day. "Yet despite new nursery tales against the modern Jews, one hopes for a brighter future in which humane, unimpassioned men will look back upon contemporary anti-Jewish movements as educated people, even educated anti-semites, today look back at those of the Middle Ages."[41]

Neither the shock of Dühring's academic assault on Jewry nor his own traumatic experience with the *Albia* fraternity, were as yet enough to transform Herzl into a Zionist. The new Teutonic racialism troubled him, wounded his pride and forcefully reminded him that he was a Jew. But he was still wholly unaware in the 1880s of the new Zionist critique of assimilation, already undertaken by Moses Hess, Peretz Smolenskin, Leo Pinsker and Nathan Birnbaum. He knew nothing of Pinsker's *Auto-emanzipation* (1883) nor even of the Zionist student society, *Kadimah* (Forward), established in the same year at the University of Vienna. This ignorance is all the more striking, since the "Jewish Question" had become a popular issue in Austria in the 1880s, and as we have seen, it did affect Herzl's own life.[42]

During the next decade Herzl travelled widely throughout Europe, turned out some 30 plays of varying quality as well as innumerable articles, travelogues and short stories. Newspapers in Vienna and Berlin opened their columns to his witty *feuilletons*, a fragile and evanescent art-form in which he displayed consummate mastery.[43] Then, in 1891, he was invited to fill the highly prestigious post of Paris correspondent of the *Neue Freie Presse*, the leading newspaper of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy.

In his Zionist diary begun in Paris around Pentecost 1895, Herzl

noted that despite his public silence concerning the "Jewish Question" it had "gnawed and tugged at me, tormented me and rendered me profoundly unhappy. In fact, I always came back to it whenever my own personal experiences – their joys and sorrows – lifted me to a higher place."[44] Herzl even fantasized at times about slipping over "into some corner of the Christian world". But when Dr. Heinrich Friedjung, a leading Jewish Pan-German and editor of Vienna's *Deutsche Wochenschrift*, advised him "to adopt a pen name less Jewish than my own", he had flatly refused.[45] Before arriving in Paris, Herzl had already thought of writing a "Jewish" novel based on the milieu of his close friend Heinrich Kana (who had committed suicide in Berlin in February 1891) in order to contrast the sufferings of poor Jews with the comfortable complacency of their richer brethren.

His four years in Paris were, however, to be crucial in giving Herzl a new sense of his own powers and understanding of politics as well as a new insight into modern anti-semitism:

> In Paris I came into close contact with politics – at least as an observer. I saw how the world is governed. I stared, too, at the phenomenon of the crowd – for a long time without understanding it. I also attained here a freer and more detached attitude toward anti-Semitism, from which I did not suffer, at least in any direct manner. In Austria or Germany I constantly have to fear that someone will shout, "Hep, Hep!" at my heels. But here I pass through the crowd "unrecognized". In this "unrecognized" lies a terrible reproach against the anti-semites.[46]

Herzl had been aware of anti-semitism all his life, as a schoolboy, as a university student and as a young adult. He had encountered it in Hungary, in Germany and especially on his "home" soil in Austria. Only in Paris, however, did he begin to see it as a *universal* phenomenon, to "understand it historically and to pardon". At the beginning of September 1892 he had written his first published article on the subject, following the killing of Captain Armand Mayer, a young Alsatian Jewish officer in the French army, by the aristocratic anti-semite, the Marquis de Morès. Full of sarcastic humour, Herzl's report still maintained a certain measured optimism:

> Until recently there was a measure of decency in French anti-semitism, one could almost say: courtesy ... Even when it burst out against the Jews directly, it did not deny that they were human beings. For one coming here from other countries this was very surprising. In France the particular sin with which the Jews were charged was that they came from Frankfurt; the injustice is plain to see for some are from Mainz and even from Speier. They

> are often called *Israélites* which must be seen as expressing a more relaxed attitude. However, the Jews have been most fortunate of all in their death. When their brilliant lives, the object of so much envy, duly came to a successful end, these Jewish humans are buried among the Christian humans.[47]

Herzl, in the course of his regular reporting on French parliamentary politics, financial corruption, class warfare, anarchist terror and the rise of anti-semitism, sought at first to maintain a certain aesthetic distance from the phenomena he was describing. Gradually, however, he began to see disturbing parallels between the slow disintegration of the Republican order in France and of traditional liberalism in his Austrian homeland.

The new mass politics of the Right and Left, a loss of faith in the parliamentary system, the triumph of irrationality symbolized in some ways the growing importance of the "Jewish Question" and were part of this general crisis of European liberalism in the 1890s.[48] By 1893 Herzl thought, for example, that anti-semitism could only be answered by a larger mass movement such as Social Democracy. As he wrote in a long letter on the "Jewish Question" sent from Paris on 26 January 1893 to Baron Friedrich Leitenberger, a leading industrialist in Vienna: "If one cannot suppress a movement, one reacts with another movement. By that I simply meant Socialism. It is my conviction that the Jews, pressed against the wall, will have no other alternative than Socialism."[49]

Herzl had for some time been convinced of "the emptiness and futility of trying to combat anti-semitism in the spirit of liberal Christian Leagues such as that presided over in Vienna by Baron Leitenberger.[50] But as he watched from France the steady progress of the Christian Social anti-semitic movement in successive Viennese elections and the growth of parallel agitation in Paris and other European cities, his faith in a universalist solution of any kind to the "Jewish Question" – whether liberal, socialist, feudal-aristocratic or Catholic – began to fade.

For a brief moment in 1893 Herzl had flirted with the idea of solving the Jewish problem by personal combat, even imagining himself challenging either Schoenerer, Lueger or Prince Lichtenstein – the leading Austrian anti-semites – to a duel. Should he lose his life he would become a martyr to "the world's most unjust movement", but if he would win,

> then I would have delivered a brilliant speech which would have begun with my regrets for the death of man of honour ... Then I would have turned to the Jewish question and delivered an oration worthy of Lassalle. I would have sent a shudder of admira-

> tion through the jury. I would have compelled the respect of the judges, and the case against me would have been dismissed. Thereupon the Jews would have made me one of their representatives and I would have declined because I would refuse to achieve such a position by the killing of a man."[51]

From this "affair of honour", Herzl passed to an even more archaic and bizarre solution – the mass conversion of Austrian Jewry to Catholicism – all in perfect accordance with his strict code of chivalry. Baptism would of course be free and honourable, "inasmuch as the leaders of this movement – myself in particular – would remain Jews, and as Jews would urge a conversion to the majority-faith. In broad daylight, on twelve o'clock of a Sunday, the exchange of faith would take place in St. Stephen's Cathedral, with solemn parade and the peal of bells."[52]

The editor of the *Neue Freie Presse*, Moritz Benedikt, fortunately vetoed this fantastic plan, based on an approach to the Pope in Rome through the Austrian princes of the church, quietly pointing out to Herzl, "For a hundred generations your race has clung fast to Judaism. You are proposing now to set yourself up as the man to end this stand. This you cannot do, and have no right to do. Besides, the Pope would never receive you."[53]

Abandoning these naive fantasies, Herzl now began to develop a new philosophical approach to anti-semitism, as a result of his talks in Baden with the Austrian Jewish journalist and art critic, Ludwig Speidel (1830-1906). The Jews had remained a foreign body among the nations, Herzl reasoned with his friend, as a result of anti-social characteristics developed in the ghetto. The oppression and discrimination practised by the Catholic Church had forced them into usury and damaged their character, so that even after emancipation they still remained "ghetto Jews"; only now, they were concentrated in the liberal professions, creating "a terrible pressure upon the earning powers of the middle classes, a pressure under which the Jews themselves really suffer most."[54] At this stage, Herzl believed nonetheless that anti-semitism would do the Jews no harm. "I hold it to be a movement useful for the development of Jewish character. It is the education of a group by the surrounding populations and will perhaps in the end lead to its absorption. We are educated only through hard knocks. A sort of Darwinian mimicry will set in. The Jews will adapt themselves."[55]

A few months later, in Paris, while sitting for his bust in the studio of the Moravian-born Jewish sculptor, Samuel Friedrich Beer (1846-1912), Herzl conceived his last non-political attempt to overcome anti-semitism. His play, *Das neue Ghetto* (1894), written in a mere 17 days, depicted the familiar milieu of the assimilated Jewish bourgeoisie in Vienna. The high-minded Jewish lawyer hero of the play, Dr. Jacob

Samuel, (clearly a self-portrait of Herzl) is married to Hermine, the spoiled, emotionally shallow daughter of a rich businessman.[56] The play begins with his marriage and ends with Jacob's tragic death in a duel, shot by an anti-semitic aristocrat and retired captain of cavalry, Count von Schramm; but not before he makes his dying statement on stage. "O Jews, my brethren, they won't let you live again – until you ... Why do you hold me so tight? (Mumbles) I want to – get – out! (Louder). Out – of – the Ghetto!"[57]

In the play Dr. Samuel had acquired his chivalric sense of honour and gentlemanly conduct from a boyhood gentile friend, Dr. Franz Wurzlechner, to whom he unashamedly confesses: "I learned big things and little - inflections, gestures, how to bow without being obsequious, how to stand up without seeming defiant - all sorts of things."[58]

Wurzlechner's own reluctant break with Dr. Samuel is the direct result of his decision to go into politics and his frank recognition that with "too many Jewish friends, brokers, speculators", he would automatically be labelled a *Judenknecht* ("Jew-lackey"). The male bourgeois milieu around Dr Samuel, of the millionaire Bourse-Jew Rheinberg, the small stockbroker Wasserstein, the apostate physician Dr Bichler and Rabbi Friedheimer, is very critically depicted by Herzl as superficial, materialistic and irredeemably warped by historically conditioned ghetto qualities. Nevertheless, the market-playing Rabbi Friedheimer is permitted to defend the ghetto for its preservation of patriarchal family virtues. He warns Jacob: "When there was still a real ghetto, we were not allowed to leave it without permission, on pain of severe punishment. Now the walls and barriers have become invisible, as you say. You are still rigidly confined to a moral ghetto. Woe to him who would desert it."[59]

Jacob Samuel, escorting the Rabbi to the door, appears to express Herzl's own view that "the inner barriers we must clear away ourselves. We ourselves, on our own." Escape from the ghetto did not therefore simply involve a struggle against gentile anti-semitism but above all a self-emancipation from negative Jewish qualities. The last thing Herzl had in mind was "a defence of the Jews or a rescue-attempt on their behalf" as he made clear in a letter to Arthur Schnitzler, defending his play against the charge of misanthropy. He was not in the least interested to present positive, sympathetic Jewish characters.[60]

Das neue Ghetto, which was Herzl's favourite play, was not performed until 5 January 1898 at the Vienna Carl Theatre where it ran for 25 performances. But in his personal development it marked an important stage in his moving towards a novel perception of the "Jewish Question".[61] As in many of his other plays, there was also a strong element of social criticism, directed at the materialism and

moral decadence of the middle classes. Herzl's hero, Jacob Samuel, promises to help a coal miner in the play, in order to save workers' jobs and avoid catastrophe in the mine, whose funds had been irresponsibly dissipated by its titled owner, Captain von Schramm. "You are guilty", Samuel tells the owner, after the mine has been flooded and lives needlessly lost "because while pursuing your aristocratic pastimes, you permitted your slaves to drudge for you underground ... for miserable starvation wages."

Herzl's plays often reveal the tyrannical hold of money on society, something which influenced his perception of the need to create a new type of Jew, free from any taint of egoistic materialism.[62] In 1894 he had told Ludwig Speidel that the "ruling powers forced us into the money-traffic" and as the Emperor's vassals (*Kammerknechte*) Jews had served as a medium for indirect taxation. "We extracted from the people money which the rulers later robbed from us or confiscated. All of these sufferings rendered us odious and changed our character, which in former times had been proud and noble."[63]

Herzl saw Zionism as a way of overcoming the corruption and decadence induced by this dominance of money-values in middle-class Jewish life. Significantly, in a letter to Baron de Hirsch on 5 July 1895, he complained that Jews seemed unable to understand "that a man can act for other motives than money, that a man can refuse to be dominated by money without being a revolutionist."[64] This unhealthy preoccupation with Mammon, like such other "ghetto" virtues as restraint, timidity and fear, stood in sharp contrast to the new behavioural ethos that Herzl publicly advocated as crucial to the forging of an independent nation. For him, Zionism meant a radical transvaluation of values in the Nietzschean sense, the forging of "a noble ideal of a new Jew, a man living by the myth of chivalry", who would be the anti-thesis of the old ghetto culture.[65] A diary entry of 8 June 1895, written after dining with some middle-class Viennese Jewish friends, revealed his awareness of the yawning gap between his own ego-ideal and that of his immediate surroundings.

> Well-to-do, educated, depressed people. They groaned under their breath against anti-semitism ... The husband expects a new Saint Bartholomew's Night. The wife thinks that conditions could hardly be worse. They disputed whether it was good or bad that Lueger's election as mayor of Vienna had not been officially validated.
>
> Their despondency took the heart out of me. They do not suspect it, but they are Ghetto creatures, quiet, decent, timorous. Most of our people are like that. Will they understand the call of freedom and manliness?[66]

Herzl's interview with the Baron de Hirsch in June 1895 underlines his view that Zionism must uplift the Jews, make them strong for war, virtuous and properly educated in the love of work.[67] The encouragement of deeds of "great moral beauty", of *actions d'éclat* would be part of the training in "true manhood" that would liberate Jews from the legacy of the ghetto and its shabby occupations.[68] Herzl's emphasis on the importance of a flag ("with a flag you can lead men where you will"), of fantasy, visions and imponderables in the organization of the masses demonstrated his own heroic style and grasp of the psychological dynamic behind nationalist movements.[69]

Herzl's aesthetic politics with its love of the dramatic gesture owed much to his sense of the theatre and feeling for the importance of liturgy, myth and symbolism in the life of individuals and nations.[70] In his collection of fragmentary thoughts for the *Judenstaat* he recognized that "in all this I am still the dramatist", taking "poor, ragged fellows from the street", dressing them in beautiful garments and allowing them to "perform before the world a wonderful play which I have devised".[71] In *fin-de-siècle* Vienna he had perfected this feeling for dramatic orchestration, through which he would subsequently capture the imagination of the Jewish masses and impress Zionism as a political movement on the consciousness of the outside world.

Herzl had a unique talent for weaving the illusion of power, for creating the mood and then forcing the will for nationhood on a demoralized and dispersed people. His capacity to metamorphose private fantasy and archaic dreams into concrete deeds, to give visual form and representation to his political ideas was unique among the Zionist leaders of his generation though not among other Austrian practitioners of the new politics.[72] "With nations", he once said, "one must speak in a childish language: a house, a flag, a song are the symbols of communication."[73] The same theatrical sense was apparent in his staging of the First Zionist Congress as an elegant, impressive, festive spectacle and in his stubborn insistence that delegates wear formal dress.[74] Peter Loewenberg has admirably summed this up: "Herzl was a man of the theatre who brought the theatre into politics, making drama of politics. He had the capacity to pass from the unreal to the real, to mix the spheres of drama and politics, to transfer the enchantment of make-believe staging to the world of diplomacy and political power."[75]

Herzl's passage to Zionism can be seen as the most important outcome of his subjective sense of failure as a playwright and his unconscious desire to turn politics into a more successful drama, with himself as stage-manager, director and leading actor.[76] In the new play which he would stage, the theme was to be: "the poignant salvation of a people, the plot was one man's vision and sacrifice, which would overcome all odds, the supporting cast was the rulers of the world's

nations, and the backdrop was the grim tale of anti-semitism and racial persecution in European history."[77]

Herzl's conversion to Zionism presupposed that he become convinced of the failure of the liberal project of assimilation in Central Europe.[78] In *Der Judenstaat* (1896) he wrote:

> We have everywhere tried sincerely to merge with the surrounding national community (*Volksgemeinschaft*), seeking only to maintain the faith of our fathers. It is not permitted to us. In vain are we loyal patriots, even super-loyal in some places; in vain do we make the same sacrifices of blood and property as our fellow citizens; in vain do we strive to increase the fame of our fellow citizens; in vain do we strive to increase the fame of our native lands in the arts and sciences or their wealth by trade and commerce. In our native lands, where we have lived for centuries we are still decried as aliens (*Fremdlinge*); often by those whose ancestors had not yet arrived at a time when Jewish sighs had long been heard in the country. Who the alien is, that is something decided by the majority; it is a matter of power (*eine Machtfrage*) like everything else in the relations between nations.[79]

The final crystallization of Herzl's radical view that anti-semitism had made the liberal assimilationist goal impossible has often been attributed to the impact of the Dreyfus Affair. Certainly, Herzl had witnessed the highly stylized degradation of Captain Alfred Dreyfus (a French-Jewish officer convicted of selling military secrets to the Germans) in Paris on 22 December 1894. His dispatches reveal that he was shaken by the scenes at this ceremony, especially the cry of the Parisian mob at the École Militaire: "à mort! à mort les juifs!"[80] Nevertheless, his reporting on the Affair was by no means "Zionist" in its tone or conclusions.[81] Indeed, only after the announcement of the second guilty verdict against the Jewish officer in September 1899, did Herzl publicly draw the far-reaching conclusion that Dreyfus's fate represented that of the Jew as a whole in modern society: "the Jew who tries to adapt himself to his environment, to speak its language, to think its thoughts, to sew its insignia on his sleeves – only to have them ruthlessly ripped away."[82]

It was then that Herzl first suggested in an article for the *North American Review* (1899) that the original Dreyfus trial had made him into a Zionist.[83] The case had not been simply a miscarriage of justice but "contained the wish of the overwhelming majority in France, to damn a Jew, and in this one Jew, all Jews."[84] Herzl now concluded that it was the people itself who "in republican, modern, civilized France, one hundred years after the Declaration of the Rights of Man", that

had spontaneously revoked the edict of the Great Revolution.[85]

But though the violence of French anti-semitism during the Affair undoubtedly shocked him, the evidence does not suggest that Dreyfus's first condemnation, four years earlier, could have made Herzl into a fully-fledged Zionist.[86] Significantly, there is no word about Captain Dreyfus in the early part of Herzl's Zionist Diaries, begun only four months after the degradation scene which he had witnessed in the École Militaire in Paris. Indeed, it is scarcely discussed in the diaries at all and in *Der Judenstaat* the Affair in altogether ignored, while French anti-semitism *per se* is still seen as little more than a social irritant.[87] This stands in marked contrast to the preoccupation in Herzl's Diaries with the growth of Austrian anti-semitism scarcely surprising in view of Karl Lueger's crushing electoral victories in the Austrian capital.[88]

Der Judenstaat should not be attributed to any one event but rather to the interaction between Herzl's impressions of politics in France and Austria during the mid-1890s and the complex evolution of his personality at this time. The tract was in fact written in a semi-mystical state of ecstasy and possession.[89] Moreover, Herzl was fully aware that his Zionist project might be taken as the extravagant imaginings of a madman and that, (as he wrote to Bismarck), "the first impulse of every rational human being must be to send me to the observation room – Department for Inventors of Dirigible Balloons."[90]

For all Herzl's oscillations between euphoria and depression (not to mention the narcissistic fantasies that overwhelmed him during the gestation period), *Der Judenstaat* was essentially a sober, rational analysis of the "Jewish Question" with a detailed and practical plan of operation. In contrast to older liberal views of anti-semitism as a vestigial relic of the Middle Ages, Herzl contended that it was a product of emancipation, indeed a consequence of its outward success. The Jews, who had already become a bourgeois people in the ghetto, had in the aftermath of emancipation, emerged as particularly dangerous economic competitors of the gentile middle classes. Accelerated assimilation into the wider society and the growth of Christian envy at Jewish wealth had exacerbated anti-semitism; so, too, had well-intentioned Jewish responses such as emigration – which merely spread anti-semitism to the lands where Jews emigrated – or socialism which had accentuated the exposed position of the Jews at the poles of capitalist society.[91] The causes of anti-semitism, Herzl argued, were ineradicable and rooted in the very structure of pre-emancipation Jewish life:

> We are what the ghetto made us. We have without doubt attained pre-eminence in finance because medieval conditions drove us to it. The same process is now being repeated. We are again being

> forced into money-lending – by being kept out of other occupations. But once on the stock exchange, we are again objects of contempt. At the same time we continue to produce an abundance of mediocre intellectuals (*mittlere Intelligenzen*) who find no outlet, and this is no less a danger to our social position than our increasing wealth. The educated and propertyless Jews are now rapidly becoming socialists. Hence we will certainly suffer acutely in the social struggle [between classes].[92]

Herzl regarded anti-semitism as a highly complex movement containing "elements of cruel sport, vulgar commercial rivalry (*gemeiner Brotneid*), inherited prejudice, religious intolerance" and even of Gentile self-defence.[93] He pointed out that "the old prejudices against us are still deeply ingrained in the folk ethos" (*Volksgemüt*) and that "folk wisdom and folklore are both anti-semitic".[94] These prejudices might theoretically be overcome through full assimilation but this socio-historical process was now highly unlikely in the Gentile middle classes where the "Jewish Question" was centred.[95] Moreover, Herzl no longer believed that the Jews as a people could or should even wish to assimilate:

> The distinctive nationality of the Jews neither can, will, nor must perish. It cannot, because external enemies consolidate it. It does not wish to as two thousand years of appalling suffering have proved. It need not as I am trying to prove in this pamphlet, in the wake of countless other Jews who did not give up hope. Whole branches of Jewry may wither and fall away. The tree lives on.[96]

Herzl made it clear that he regarded the Jews as "one people" (*ein Volk*) and the "Jewish Question" as pre-eminently a *national* question whose solution would have to be discussed "by the civilized nations of the world in council".[97] Since there was no reasonable hope for the disappearance of anti-semitism, an orderly exodus of the Jews to their own homeland and the creation there of a sovereign Jewish state, would have to be worked out in conjunction with the Great Powers. This exodus would permit "an inner emigration of Christian citizens into the positions evacuated by the Jews", hopefully weakening anti-semitism. This exodus, Herzl naively assumed, would not be accompanied by economic disturbances, crises or persecutions.

Responsibility for the exodus would be assumed by a political body called the Society of Jews to be established in London and their resettlement was to be assured by the Jewish Company, to which the longest chapter in Herzl's pamphlet is devoted.[98] On the crucial question of a territory, Herzl was still undecided in 1896 between Palestine

or Argentina, though clearly leaning towards "our unforgettable homeland":

> The very name [of Palestine] would be a force of extraordinary potency for attracting our people. If His Majesty the Sultan were to give us Palestine, we would in return undertake to regulate the finances of Turkey. There we should form a portion of a rampart for Europe against Asia, we would be an outpost of civilization (*Kultur*) against barbarism. We should as a neutral state remain in contact with all of Europe, which would have to guarantee our existence. The Holy Places of Christendom would be placed under some form of international extraterritoriality. We should form a guard of honour about these holy places ... [which] would be the great symbol of the solution of the Jewish Question after 1800 years of Jewish suffering.[99]

Der Judenstaat and its subsequent effects placed Zionism on the map of international politics, forcing a public discussion of the "Jewish Question", exactly as Herzl had hoped. It signalled the beginning of his exhausting seven-year involvement at the head of the world Zionist movement. He had created its organization, its infrastructure and diplomacy by setting in place the first Zionist Congress in Basle (29-31 August 1897).[100] This *tour de force* of political activity did not, however, earn him the gratitude of most of his Jewish contemporaries in his home city of Vienna or elsewhere in Western Europe. Whatever their personal respect and even admiration for Herzl, the movement he represented remained anathema in the eyes of most middle-class Central European Jews.[101]

To understand the bitterness which much of Jewish Vienna felt towards Herzl after 1896 one must recall the enthusiastic affection with which the pre-Zionist feuilletonist of the *Neue Freie Presse* had been regarded by these same circles. They were fascinated by his sparkling, worldly essays with their pathos, lucidity and charm, by the elegance of his aphorisms and the refinement of his ironic scepticism. Stefan Zweig observed that none was better able to provide what the Viennese public unconsciously wanted:

> When, in collaboration with a colleague, he wrote a graceful comedy for the *Burgtheater*, it was just right, just what everyone wanted, a dainty morsel made of the finest ingredients and artistically served. Moreover, the man was strikingly handsome – courteous, obliging, entertaining; indeed, none was more beloved, better known or more celebrated than he among the entire bourgeoisie – and also the aristocracy – of old Austria.

> This popularity, however, suddenly received a terrible blow. As the century approached this close there gradually penetrated a rumour ... that this graceful, aristocratic, masterly *causeur* had, without warning, written an abstruse treatise which demanded nothing more nor less than that the Jews should leave their Ringstrasse homes and their villas, their businesses and their offices – in short, that they should emigrate, bag and baggage, to Palestine, there to establish a nation.[102]

The most serious consequence of this Jewish irritation was its effect on his position in the *Neue Freie Presse*. The paper for which he worked as literary editor since his return from Paris in 1895, remained a stronghold of German-orientated liberalism of the classic assimilationist variety. Its proprietor and editor-in-chief Moritz Benedikt (1849-1920) once told Raoul Auernheimer (1876-1948), a cousin of Herzl and well-known member of the *Jung Wien* literary circle: "I am not *pro*-Jewish; I am not *anti*-Jewish; I am *a*-Jewish."[103]

The *Neue Freie Presse* had traditionally espoused a policy of passivity, silence and *attentisme* towards radical, anti-liberal mass movements (including anti-semitism), a strategy with which Herzl had decisively broken. Even before his conversion to Zionism, his bold advice to Eduard Bacher (1846-1906) co-editor and proprietor of the newspaper, that the Austrian Liberals should advocate universal suffrage, had been unceremoniously rejected. In serious political matters he was still considered a mere *feuilletonist*.[104] Herzl had nevertheless hoped for a sympathetic hearing from Bacher on his *Judenstaat* ideas, though from their first discussion of the issue in September 1895 it was clear that "he [Bacher] would likely fight them tooth and nail."[105] Bacher believed that anti-semitism was an "unpleasant" but essentially ephemeral movement.[106] Shortly afterwards, when Herzl brought up the subject with Moritz Benedikt, his employer emphatically refused to open the columns of the *Neue Freie Presse* to a discussion of Zionism, arguing: "Your idea is a powerful machine-gun and it may go off backwards."[107]

Herzl knew that his determination to persist with Zionism was leading to an inevitable confrontation with his editors which would not be easy to weather.[108] In a conversation on 3 February 1896, Bacher had warned Herzl that the anti-semites would seize on his claim that Jews could not assimilate, picking out of his text whatever suited their purpose and quoting it "forever after".[109] The next day, Benedikt strongly urged Herzl to desist from publishing the *Judenstaat* on the grounds that he was risking his established literary prestige and damaging the paper. Zionism in any case contradicted several principles of the *Neue Freie Presse*. Benedikt maintained that it was wrong

for Herzl to take upon himself "the tremendous moral responsibility of setting this avalanche in motion – endangering so many interests." As the editor-in-chief saw it: "We shall no longer have our present fatherland, and shall not yet have the Jewish state."[110] Herzl, who had already published a synopsis of the *Judenstaat* in the London *Jewish Chronicle* refused to bow to this pressure.[111] Benedikt in turn threatened, cajoled and flattered him – emphasizing that as "one of our most distinguished collaborators, you are part and parcel of the *Neue Freie Presse*" – all to no avail.[112]

The continuing duel with his editors became even more acrimonious when in 1897 Herzl founded the Zionist weekly *Die Welt* in Vienna and it transpired that a number of its leading writers were also on the staff of the *Neue Freie Presse*. On 18 June 1897 Benedikt warned his literary editor that *Die Welt* must either disappear or else Herzl must severe all connections with it. Herzl recorded the clash as follows:

> Benedikt sought, as a friend, to dissuade me from my "stubbornness". Then a threat: I could not take my furlough until I had given a definite answer, that is to say, stop the publication of *Die Welt*. Then a promise: he guaranteed I should not regret it if I complied with his wish... Furthermore, I must not play a prominent part at the [Zionist] Congress, I must not step to the fore."[113]

Having exerted "all the weight of his superior position" Benedikt then told Herzl with a naivete that the cruellest mockery could not surpass: "Of course I am not trying your conscience – only you must do nothing that may hurt the *Neue Freie Presse*."[114]

Bacher, though echoing Benedikt's threats concerning *Die Welt* and forcefully advising him against becoming an itinerant Zionist preacher, was generally more amiable and paternalistic towards Herzl.[115] On one occasion, on 19 March 1897, recounting an old Jewish legend of how the famous Prague synagogue, the *Altneuschul*, came into being, Bacher even confessed that he would like to take a trip to Palestine.[116]

Such momentary stirrings aside, Herzl's editors were still adamant in refusing to publicize or even discuss Zionism in their powerful newspaper. While they privately regarded Herzl's involvement in the Zionist movement as a foolish, inexplicable act verging on madness, they were not prepared to dispense with his highly valued services as a prestigious literary editor. Herzl, for his part, as a result of his heavy financial outlays in Zionism, had become more dependent than ever on his income at the *Neue Freie Presse*. On 24 August 1899 he wrote:

> I have to tremble lest I be dismissed; I don't dare to take the holiday which my health requires, for I have already been away from

> my desk for six weeks – the whole of it spent on active service for Zionism. So, once more, I return today to the office, after having been a free and mighty lord at Basle, [the Third Zionist Congress] and enter my employer Bacher's room like a submissive clerk back from vacation. Cruel![117]

Herzl, the wandering Jewish statesman without a state, continued therefore to lead a somewhat schizophrenic existence in Vienna after 1897. He was at one and the same time, the celebrated leader of an international movement and the "wage slave" of the *Neue Freie Presse*, in constant dread that neglect of his responsibilities might lose him his literary post in Vienna and an indispensable source of income. Furthermore, his inability to convince his superiors to recognize the existence of Zionism seriously hampered the progress of the movement in Austria as he explained to its Foreign Minister Count von Goluchowski on 30 April 1904:

> Here in Austria, I said, our movement is relatively unknown, owing to the silence of the *Neue Freie Presse*. This, in turn, is due to the fact that Benedikt denies the existence of a Jewish people. I happen to affirm this with a simple proposition: The proof of their existence is that I am one of them.
> And he? asked Goluchowski, what is he? A Protestant? No, Herzl replied. He belongs to a species which I have never laid eyes on. He is an Austrian. I am acquainted with Germans, Poles, Czechs – but I've never yet seen an Austrian...[118]

Another major source of disappointment to Herzl in his adopted home of Vienna was the Rothschild family. His *Judenstaat* had originally been prepared as a 20,000 word "Address to the Rothschilds" and he tried hard to win them over to his project.[119] He felt that with their help, the solution of the Jewish problem would be much easier and obviate the need for turning to the masses.[120] In his "Address" he had sought to prove that the Jews, and especially the House of Rothschild, were seriously threatened by anti-semitism. In Russia, the property of the Jews would be confiscated, in Germany there would be anti-Jewish legislation and in Austria a wave of pogroms would break out. The Jews would be expelled from all these countries and some of them killed in flight. Hence a Jewish State must be created to avoid this danger and the Rothschilds should invest their capital in this venture.[121] Herzl at first believed that they should direct his proposed "society of Jews" and the "Jewish Company", taking in hand the political work for the establishment of the new State. Neither his father Jacob (who from the outset disbelieved in the possibility of the Rothschilds' co-operation) nor Rabbi Güdemann, nor even his closest lieutenant, Max

Nordau, could dissuade Herzl from this approach.[122]

It was through Güdemann that Herzl initially hoped to set up a meeting with Albert von Rothschild (1844-1911), the head of the Vienna branch of the family and to read him his "Address". Impatient of the delays, Herzl wrote a long personal letter to Albert Rothschild from Paris on 28 June 1895, declaring his readiness to come to Vienna should this be necessary, to explain his ideas. Herzl informed the Viennese Rothschild: "I am only trying to overcome anti-semitism, where it originated and where its main source still remains – in Germany. I consider the Jewish Question as extremely grave. Whoever believes that Jew-hatred is merely a passing phase is greatly mistaken. It must continually worsen until the inevitable revolution breaks out ..."[123]

Albert Rothschild did not deign to answer this letter or to listen to his "Address", a deeply wounding rebuff which finally prompted Herzl to publish it independently. He was to discover to his chagrin that it was frequently easier to obtain an invitation from the Turkish Sultan, the German Emperor, Russian Imperial statesmen, British Cabinet Ministers and even His Holiness the Pope than from the Rothschild family. Herzl did not, however, abandon his efforts to win over the English and French Rothschilds though the Vienna Rothschild was henceforth beyond the pale. In Herzl's novel *Altneuland* (1902) he is fleetingly mentioned in unflattering terms under the guise of Baron von Goldstein.

Herzl's dealings with wealthy, influential Jews like the Rothschilds and Baron de Hirsch reflected a certain ambiguity in his attitudes to the question of power. On the one hand he thought that he was providing the Rothschilds and de Hirsch with a great historical mission – to organize the Jewish exodus from Europe.[124] Furthermore, their capital resources were an essential part of his strategy of persuasion aimed at gaining the support of the Turkish Sultan and the European Great Powers for the resettlement of the Jews in Palestine. At the same time Herzl constantly dreamed of and sometimes even publicly threatened to mobilize the Jewish masses against the plutocracy.[125] The warnings issued against the rich Jews had on occasion a somewhat intimidatory and frankly demagogic ring. Nevertheless, Herzl did recognize, for example, the utility and indispensability of the stock-exchange despite tending at times to blame the Bourse-Jews for the growth of anti-semitism.[126]

As a journalist and playwright Herzl had long shown considerable sensitivity to human suffering and the economic inequalities of bourgeois society. In 1893 he had even proposed a plan of *assistance par le travail* (help through work) to the Austrian government based on a West European model of restoring the unemployed masses to productive labour.[127] In Vienna he had supported the strike of the exploited

streetcar workers for a shortening of their working day, even though Jews were among the stockholders in the streetcar company.[128] In his notes and jottings in June 1895 concerning the *Judenstaat*, he would write: "No women or children shall work in our factories. We want a vigorous race. The State shall take care of needy women and children."[129]

On 11 June 1895 the thought even struck him that he was solving not only the Jewish Question but "*tout bonnement*, the social question!". The key lay in the creation of new economic conditions on a virginal soil, which would free people from "ancient abuses, habitual inertia, and inherited or acquired wrongs".[130] The reproach of toying with state socialism did not bother Herzl, provided "the State aims at the right things", not the advantages of a group or caste "but the gradual ascent of everyone toward its distant lofty goals of humanity".[131]

Der Judenstaat, which had been inspired by modern secular ideals rather than any traditionalist dream of restoring the ancient Kingdom of David and its sacral splendour, envisaged a tolerant, open society free from nationalist or clerical pressures. At the same time Herzl had broken with the classical liberalism of *laissez-faire* economics, sketching out the role of the State in organizing work-battalions for the unemployed, destroying urban slums, taking responsibility for old-age insurance, public health and the integrity of the family.[132] Herzl, like other Austrian thinkers, was influenced here by the Central European *étatiste* tradition of political thought which modified his legalistic liberalism and gave an anti-democratic tinge to some of his writings.[133]

But there was also an anti-statist side to Herzl's social thought which became manifest in his utopian novel *Altneuland*, with its vision of a "mutualist", co-operative society that functions without state control or the rule of professional politicians.[134] In Herzl's utopia, the state had truly "withered away",[135] there is no government but rather a "Council of administration"; there is no ministry of defence, no "high policy" or borders dividing people from one another. Economic and technological considerations in the best Saint-Simonian tradition have supplanted military and political affairs. *Altneuland* is a society preoccupied with the development of industry, commerce, education, housing, welfare and technical inventions. Its pioneers have applied and realized the utopian socialist ideologies of Fourier, Cabet, Proudhon, Louis Blanc, Bellamy and Theodor Hertzka;[136] they have implemented in practical form the co-operative experiments of the 19th century Rochdale pioneers and absorbed the lessons of the model Irish village of Rahaline.[137]

In Herzl's new society, all the land is in public ownership. Industries, banks and newspapers are co-operatively owned by workers and consumers who live in clean, well-planned cities.[138] The new

society is open, secular, cosmopolitan and pluralist. It enjoys a seven-hour workday, female suffrage and scrupulously observes full equality between Jews and non-Jews.[139] Reshid Bey, the Muslim Arab protagonist is, for example, a full member of the New Society, and explains to an astounded Mr Kingscourt, his aristocratic Prussian questioner: "Jewish immigration was a blessing for all of us. Naturally first of all for the landowners who either sold their acres to the Jewish company at high prices, or kept them waiting for even higher ones. As regards myself, I've sold my land to the New Society because I find myself better off that way."[140]

The Arab fellaheen, he points out, have benefitted no less than the landowners from the general economic and technical progress created by the new society. With the draining of swamps, building of canals, planting of eucalyptus groves and avenues, a veritable transformation of living conditions had occurred. "These people are far better off than before; they are healthy, they have better food, their children go to school. Nothing has been done to interfere with their customs or their faith – they have only gained by welfare."[141]

Thus the co-operative vision of Zion in Herzl's *Altneuland* which also embraces the Muslim Arabs, is that of secular, humanist universalism - of a tolerant, progressive society that "could very well exist anywhere, in any country of the world."[142]

But *Altneuland* is also one of the most personal and revealing of Herzl's fantasies in spite of its woodenness as literature. Its central figure, the young Viennese Jewish lawyer Friedrich Loewenberg (transparently a self-portrait) turns his back on Europe after a disappointment in love and together with his Prussian officer friend, Kingscourt, sets out for the South Seas, visiting a decaying, backward *Eretz Israel en route*, as Herzl had done in 1898. Returning 20 years later to a flourishing Palestine, Loewenberg finds the family of the poor beggar boy from the Brigittenau district, David Litwak, whom he had saved from starvation in Vienna. The enterprising, hardworking Litwaks – Herzl's ideal Jewish family – have been reborn in Palestine and David is about to be elected president of the New Society. As foils to their honesty and simplicity, Herzl depicts typical Viennese Jewish bourgeois families like the Loefflers and Laschners, with their gaudy wealth and empty lives, prototypes of the self-seeking materialism he detested; cynics like Gruen and Blau, "the two wittiest men of Vienna", who in the early part of the novel had ridiculed Zionism; and spoiled, overdressed, coquettish women like Ernestine Loeffler, who had broken Friedrich Loewenberg's heart in Vienna:

> In this circle money was everything, for it bought pleasures and profits, the only things worth having. And he, Friedrich, was tied

> to this circle, to the Jewish bourgeoisie, since they were his future clients, and he depended on them for his livelihood – worse luck! He would be fortunate if he became counsel for Baron Goldstein. The Gentile world was closed to him as surely as if it were bolted and barred. So what was left to him? Either to accommodate himself to the Loeffler's circle, share their mean ideal of life, act on behalf of doubtful moneyed people ... Or, if this was too unpalatable, loneliness and poverty.[143]

Friedrich Loewenberg's escape from this rotten middle-class world eventually carries him into the dream of a Utopian future in Palestine where the tone is no longer set by parvenu Jewish types, like the Loefflers, the Laschners, the Schiffmanns and their friends. To be sure, they too, are found in *Altneuland*, still as cynical and materialistic as ever, but their role is no longer significant. The representative types, like David and Miriam Litwak, modest, unpretentious and dignified, epitomize a new kind of Jew, whom Herzl imaginatively constructed as the antithesis of the Viennese Jewish bourgeoisie of his own time and place.

In the New Society there was no room for arranged marriages, crooked business deals, stock-exchange speculation and beggary or the careerist politicians that Herzl had condemned in his Viennese plays and journalism. His ideal blueprint of a reborn Jewish nation in *Eretz Israel* was not therefore simply a transplantation of Austro-liberalism to Zion but involved a radical restructuring of the ethos, values and behaviour-patterns of the middle-class Jewish society which he knew in Vienna. His great achievement had been to embody this dramatic change in his own personality, which combined a regal and chivalric bearing with a gift for political leadership and a daring vision that deeply impressed the Jewish masses of eastern Europe. Their desperate need transmuted Herzl into the King-Messiah figure which he had longed to be in his own child-like fantasies. The founder of political Zionism showed indeed an acute awareness of his own metamorphosis from Viennese *literat* to saviour of his people. After a meeting in the East End of London in July 1896 he coolly observed:

> As I sat on the platform of the Working Men's stage last Sunday I underwent a curious experience. I saw and heard my legend being made. The people are sentimental, the masses do not see clearly. I believe that by now they no longer have a clear image of me. A faint mist is beginning to rise and envelope me, and may perhaps become the cloud in which I shall walk.
>
> But even if they no longer see my features distinctly, still they sense that I mean truly well by them and that I am the little people's man.[144]

In Vienna, on the other hand, the epithet "King of Zion", coined by the satirist Karl Kraus, had stuck to Herzl like the mark of Cain, provoking laughter, mockery and the malaise of those who could not fathom what had happened "to this otherwise intelligent, witty and cultivated writer".[145] For the mass of poor Jews in Eastern Europe and throughout the world, the premature death of Herzl on 3 July 1904, at the age of 44, had however a startling unforgettable and quite different effect. None was to capture the scene with greater artistry than Herzl's young protégé, the Viennese writer, Stefan Zweig:

> Suddenly, to all the railroad stations of the city, by day and by night, from all realms and lands, every train brought new arrivals. Western, Eastern, Russian, Turkish Jews; from all the provinces and all the little towns they hurried excitedly, the shock of the news still written on their faces; never was it more clearly manifest what strife and talk had hitherto concealed – it was a great movement whose leader had now fallen. The procession was endless. Vienna, startled, became aware that it was not just a writer or a mediocre poet who had passed away, but one of those creators of Ideas who disclose themselves triumphantly in a single country, to a single people at vast intervals ... All regulation was upset through a sort of elementary and ecstatic mourning such as I had never seen before nor since at a funeral. And it was this gigantic outpouring of grief from the depths of millions of souls that made me realize for the first time how much passion and hope this lone and lonesome man had borne into the world through the power of a single thought.[146]

CONCLUSIONS

Theodor Herzl's charismatic power in the moment of his death was clear even to a cultivated Europeanized Jew like Stefan Zweig who had no special sympathy for Zionism.[147] The fallen leader had been already transformed into the *personification* of the great Idea – the rebirth of the Jewish nation. Through his activity and the legend surrounding him, Herzl had himself become an absolutely central component of the Zionist myth, able to galvanize the Jewish masses in both east and west. It was not simply that he was the founder of the organized political movement, with its Congresses, its institutions, its propaganda, its flags and its emblems as well as of its secular, politicized ideology. Herzl himself also embodied the more mythical, "irrational" side of the movement's appeal – he was the perfect archetype of the "new Jew" that Zionism aspired to create.[148]

This is very apparent in Zionist pictures, photographs and postcards from the pre-First World War period where Herzl was invariably the single most popular subject. The profusion of such portraits, especially after his death, was extraordinary and demonstrated how vital was the role played by Herzl's image both in Zionism's self-definition and the way it represented itself to the Jewish world. This was not simply kitsch, though the mass diffusion of Herzl's image was linked to new technologies and possibilities created by the popular press, photography and graphics technology.[149] It touched something more fundamental – which had deep aesthetic, symbolic and mythical resonance for everyone involved in early Zionism, including its critics. Let me quote a recent assessment by Michael Berkowitz that sums this up well:

> Herzl's physiognomy, to most Zionists, was the purest symbol of Zionism's aspirations. One might say his was the specific countenance of the movement. Herzl was presented as serious, proud, intelligent, noble, attractive, unique and at the same time – recognizably Jewish. He was eminently respectable and manly. Summarizing the whole of Zionist imagery, the Herzl portraits looked both forward and backward. His beard and visage placed him squarely in the context of traditional Judaism while his gaze was directed towards the future. His manliness and handsome looks consciously rebuked the anti-semitic stereotype of Jewish effeminity and ugliness while his dark complexion and face were perceived and extolled as the perfect face in which the Zionist movement and Jews could take great pride.[150]

A famous illustration of this was the much reproduced photograph by E. M. Lilien of Herzl overlooking the Rhine in Basle (during a Zionist Congress) and brooding about the future.

Herzl's impressive beard was, without doubt, an important detail in the dissemination of his myth and that of Zionism itself, as a movement of genuine national unity. The thick black beard was reassuring in the sense that it also recalled *traditional* Judaism and its messianic hopes. It appeared to reinforce the link between Herzl, modern Zionism and the revered image of the ancient Herbrew prophets. Yet the beard's owner was clearly a *modern* culture-hero, proposing "a modern solution to the Jewish question". Modernist, aesthetic and prophetic-messianic motifs fused here in the mythical glow that surrounded Herzl's *persona*. Berthold Feiwel, a close friend of Martin Buber and a leading Austrian cultural Zionist, described as follows the enormous impact of Herzl's personality on his entire generation. "In our earliest youth", he noted, Herzl signified "the embodiment of all beauty and greatness. We, the young, had been yearning for a prophet, for a leader. We created him with our longing."[151]

This is indeed the core of the Herzl myth – the need of his *followers* for a larger-than-life Messiah figure, for a saviour of the Jewish people. It was something that Herzl himself had recognized as early as 1896 when he wrote in his diaries about "the light fog" which was beginning "to rise around me, and it may perhaps become the cloud in which I shall walk". Indeed, Herzl even wrote that this was "perhaps the most interesting thing I am recording in these notebooks – the way my legend is being born ..."[152] He had grasped in a remarkably sober way the psychological source of his own myth – that the charisma of the Leader lay in the eye of his followers and in *their* need for a hero, a prophet and a Messiah. Naturally, it helped a great deal that Herzl's own virile appearance, his knightly chivalric conception of honour and dignity, corresponded so precisely to the psychological needs of his followers.

No less indispensable for the efficacy of the myth was the fact that a whole generation of youth in Russia and Eastern Europe was ripe for the Zionist message. David Ben-Gurion recalled how, in his youth, the charismatic Herzl had come to his home town of Plonsk in Russian Poland:

> When he appeared in Plonsk, people greeted him as the Messiah. Everyone went around saying, "The Messiah has come", and we children were much impressed. It was easy for a small boy to see in Herzl the Messiah. He was a tall, finely featured man whose impressive black beard flowed wide down to his chest. One glimpse of him and I was ready to follow him then and there to the land of my ancestors.[153]

But as Ben-Gurion rightly emphasized, more was involved than simply Herzl's impressive beard and striking features. Jews, of his own age, he recalled, were fed up with mere talk, dreams or passive waiting for the magic fulfilment of prophecies – they were ready for emigration and the active building of *Eretz Israel*. "In such a sense, Herzl was indeed the Messiah since he galvanized the feeling of the youth that *Eretz Israel* was achievable. He, Herzl added, however, that it could only come to pass with our own hands."[154]

It is interesting to compare this recollection by Ben-Gurion with Martin Buber's assessment of the Herzl myth at the time of his death. In delivering a eulogy for Herzl at his graveside in 1904, the young Buber did not disguise his sharp divergences of opinion nor his critique of the dead leader. In his eyes, Herzl had no sense of Jewish national culture, no inward relationship to Judaism or to his own Jewishness and overrated the marks of outward success, especially the importance of diplomatic ceremony. Herzl's view of the Jewish cultural renaissance was for Buber essentially propagandist and superficial; worst of

all, Herzl was intolerant of other opinions – he had the soul of a dictator.[155] In spite of this harsh (and in some ways unfair) assessment, Buber acknowledged Herzl's indescribable impact on the movement, the suggestive power of his physical presence, his lyrical feel for gesture and mood, the clarity of his demand for a Jewish state. Herzl was in Buber's eyes a master myth-maker, whose overwhelming sense of "Jewish fate" (that is, Jewish suffering) enabled him to rise above petty politics, to give meaning and a world-historical dimension to Zionism. Above all, Buber recognized the impact of Herzl – as a hero and poet (*Dichter*) – on the popular fantasy (*Volksphantasie*) of ordinary Jews, who wove tender legends around him and covered him with a messianic halo.

Already at the first Zionist Congress in Basle (August 1897) this weaving of legend, archaic myth and messianic hope was patently visible. As one Zionist writer, Ben-Ami vividly recalled: "That is no longer the elegant Dr. Herzl of Vienna, it is a royal descendant of David arisen from the grave who appears before us in the grandeur and beauty with which legend has surrounded him. Everyone is gripped as if a historical miracle had occurred."[156] For no less than 15 minutes, Ben-Ami observed, the applause and rejoicing continued. "The two-thousand-year dream of our people seemed to be approaching fulfilment; it was as if the Messiah, the son of David, stood before us. A powerful desire seized me to shout through this tempestuous sea of joy: "*Yechi Ha-melech*! Long live the King."[157]

An inextricable part of Herzl's myth – as revealed in this account – was the magical power invested in Herzl's *regal* persona. The myth of the reborn King-Messiah evoked both the ancient Davidic kingdom and its glories as well as the theatrical methods of modern mass politics. The Leader inspires and directs the masses, yet he is also their mirror and his myth is created in their image as a response to their secret hopes. Herzl kept, however, his reserve and distance from these masses even as he pursued a self-consciously populist politics. This, too, enhanced his myth and his messianic aura.

At the same time, as Buber willingly admitted, Herzl was a "man of the deed" (*Tatmensch*) – the greatest perhaps of the New Jewish era. Even if virtually all his diplomatic initiatives had failed, it was he who provided the firm, guiding hand that first unified the dispersed Zionists. He had concentrated Zionism into a real, political movement, created the instruments for its implementation and the means for its agitation and propaganda among the masses. Only with Herzl did Zionism truly seize the public imagination of Jews and non-Jews alike, thanks to Herzl's aesthetic politics, his sense of the dramatic gesture and his tireless diplomatic activity. As Buber put it, Herzl gave *form* to what was previously only a dream and a heroic image to a

demoralized people – an uplifting, noble ideal of freedom.[158] For Buber he was "a great poet in the unconscious of his own life" and his gift of grace – the ability to create the illusion of power where there was none – enabled him to make Jewish "high politics" in exile for the first time in nearly two thousand years.

In 1910 (when Herzl would have been only 50 years old), Buber returned to these themes. Despite Herzl's mistakes, his failures and his lack of Jewish spiritual profundity, the six years since his death had proved how much Zionism was orphaned without him. Herzl remained *the* great model for a life of deed and action.[159] His strength lay in the "elementary" activist side of his nature and his ability to inspire hope, longing, expectations and the belief of the Jewish masses in their future happiness. A new Jewish people could only be reborn through the "greatness" that Herzl embodied in his deeds, his personality and his myth.

Herzl was himself very conscious of the importance of mythical, symbolic and aesthetic dimensions in propagating the new mass movement he was welding together. He had long been convinced that one could only reach the people through the power of images, through "imponderables, such as music and pictures". He had already learnt from his student apprenticeship in the German nationalist movement the importance of "dreams, songs, and fantasies".[160] He admired Wagnerian opera and its theatrical effects. Indeed, there is a sense in which Zionism itself could be regarded as his political *Gesamtkunstwerk* (total work of art), in Wagner's sense of the concept.[161] As an artist-politician, one could almost say that Herzl saw himself as a Jewish synthesis of Wagnerian art and Bismarckian *Realpolitik*. The mythical ingredients were, however, usually balanced by a sober, rational analysis of the Jewish condition and a commitment to the liberal, emancipatory humanism of his formative years.[162]

Herzl was also the first of the great Zionist myth-makers in the sense that he reinvented the Jewish past and instrumentalized Judaism for secular, nationalist ends. The heroic, chivalrous Jew that he had sketched could not be expected to identify with the passivity of the Diaspora, when Jews had become universally stigmatized pariahs and their culture had stagnated in the ghetto. The new Jew, according to Zionism, must overcome this aberration of 2000 years of isolation and self-contempt and hark back to the glory of the Maccabees. It was this heroic past, associated with political sovereignty, military prowess and the spirit of freedom, which was relevant to Herzlian Zionism and not the "degenerated" rabbinical Judaism of the Diaspora.

Nevertheless, Herzl's myth-making had its limits and he did not indulge himself in the *fin-de-siècle* European romantic nationalism that celebrated ancestral roots in the soil and the cult of the dead. The land

of Israel was not the "Holy Land" or in any deep sense the "land of the fathers" for Herzl. It aroused no powerful sentimental associations in him, no cult of tribal or ancestral memories, no nostalgic yearnings for the Orient. On the contrary, he was appalled by the dirt, the filth, the backwardness and the religious fanaticism which he encountered during his sole visit to Palestine in 1898.[163] He never envisaged that the future Jewish State would have a Middle-Eastern flavour, that it would be Hebrew-speaking, constantly at war with its Arab neighbours and endlessly preoccupied with its national security. Herzl's vision of Israel was thoroughly European, rational, liberal-utopian and modernist. It was to be a transplant of the best Western European culture (including Viennese opera, Parisian cafés, German culture and English sports) to the Eastern Mediterranean.

Theodor Herzl is buried today on one of the highest points in the modern city of Jerusalem. In 1897 he had predicted that within 50 years, the Jewish State would arise and on 15 May 1948 the prophesy was vindicated. He could not have envisaged that within a short distance of his tomb there would be a large military cemetery with the fallen from Israel's many wars. Nor, despite his prescience about modern anti-semitism, could he have imagined in his worst nightmares that six million Jews would be "scientifically" slaughtered by Germans (the epitome of culture in his eyes) only 40 years after his death. The Holocaust memorial honouring their memory at *Yad Va-shem* is within walking distance of the Herzl Museum. On Mount Herzl and its immediate surroundings, the elements of myth, memory and traumas which have shaped modern Israeli identity are symbolically interwoven.

NOTES

1. *Jewish Chronicle* (London), 14 January 1898.
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3. *Jewish Chronicle*, 14 January 1898.
4. Reuven Brainin, *Heiye Herzl*, (Life of Herzl), New York, 1919, pp.17-18.
5. Grete Mahrer, "Herzl's Return to Judaism", *Herzl Yearbook*, Vol. 2, New York, 1959, pp.28-33.
6. Quoted in Alex Bein, *Theodor Herzl: A Biography*, Philadelphia, 1962, pp.13-14.
7. Patai, "Herzl's School Years", p.60.
8. Ibid., p.68. See also Andrew Handler, *Dori: The Life and Times of Theodor Herzl in Budapest (1860-1878)*, University of Alabama, 1983, p.xii.
9. Nathaniel Katzburg, *Ha-antishemiut be-Hungaria, 1867-1914* (Anti-semitism in Hungary, 1867-1914), Tel-Aviv, 1969.
10. Handler, *Dori*, pp.114-115.
11. Jacob Katz, *From Prejudice to Destruction: Anti-Semitism, 1700-1933*, Cambridge, Mass., 1982, pp.238-242.
12. Handler, *Dori*, p.115.
13. But in 1896 Herzl did note in his diaries the warm reception given to his *Judenstaat* by the Hungarian anti-semitic deputy and former colleague of Istoczy, Ivan von Simonyi. See *The Diaries of Theodor Herzl*, ed. and trans. by Marvin Lowenthal,

London, 1958, pp.101, 103.
14. Amos Elon, *Herzl*, New York, 1975, p.24 ff; Handler, *Dori*, pp.65-66. Avner Falk, *Herzl, King of the Jews. A Psychoanalytic Biography of Theodor Herzl*, New York & London, 1993, makes his relationship to his mother the key to his personality, politics and cultural orientations.
15. See Robert S. Wistrich, *The Jews of Vienna in the Age of Franz Joseph*, Oxford, 1989.
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18. Desmond Stewart, *Theodor Herzl: Artist and Politician*, London, 1974, pp.26-27.
19. See the extracts from Alkalai in Arthur Hertzberg (ed.), *The Zionist Idea: A Historical Analysis and Reader*, New York, 1973.
20. Zev Y. Zahavi, *Me-ha-Hatam Sofer ve-Ad Herzl* (From the Hatam Sofer to Herzl), Jerusalem, 1966, pp.196-215.
21. Falk, *Herzl, King of the Jews*, p.236.
22. Falk, *Herzl, King of the Jews*, pp.4-11; Stewart, *Theodor Herzl*, p.26; Ludwig Lewisohn (ed.), *Theodor Herzl: A Portrait for This Age*, New York, 1955, pp.34-35.
23. Bein, *Theodor Herzl*, pp.64, 68-69. For the psycho-dynamics, see Peter J. Loewenberg, "Theodor Herzl: a Psychoanalytic Study in Charismatic Political Leadership", in Benjamin B. Wolman (ed.), *The Psychoanalytic Interpretation of History*, New York, 1971, pp.150-191.
24. Loewenberg, "Theodor Herzl", pp.176, 179, 183-184 and Falk's biography where it is a central thread.
25. Theodor Herzl, "An Autobiography", *Jewish Chronicle*, 14 January 1898.
26. Elon, *Herzl*, p.54.
27. William J. McGrath, "student Radicalism in Vienna", *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (July 1967), pp.183-202.
28. Arthur Schnitzler, *Jugend in Wien: Eine Autobiographie*, Frankfurt, 1981, p.153.
29. Wistrich, *The Jews of Vienna*, pp.596-611.
30. Stewart, *Theodor Herzl*, pp.84-85.
31. Benjamin Jaffe, "A Reassessment of Benjamin Disraeli's Jewish Aspects", *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England* (1975), pp.115-123.
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33. Stewart, *Theodor Herzl*, pp.94-95; Elon, *Herzl*, pp.60-61.
34. Tullo Nussenblatt (ed.), *Theodor Herzl Jahrbuch*, Wien, 1937, p.22 ff.
35. Ibid. See also Leon Kellner, *Theodor Herzls Lehrjahre (1860-1895)*, Wien, 1920, pp.127-134.
36. Kellner, *Theodor Herzls Lehrjahre*, p.133.
37. Ibid., p.132.
38. Ibid.
39. Elon, *Herzl*, pp.57-58.
40. Wistrich, *The Jews of Vienna*, p.432; Pawel, *The Labyrinth of Exile*, p.76.
41. Kellner, *Theodor Herzls Lehrjahre*, p.134.
42. Wistrich, *The Jews of Vienna*, pp.348-406.
43. Carl E. Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture*, London, 1980, pp.9-10.
44. *Diaries*, p.4.
45. Ibid., pp.4-5.
46. Ibid., pp. 5-6.
47. *Neue Freie Presse*, 3 September 1892.
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53. *Diaries*, p.8.
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60. See Olga Schnitzler, *Spiegelbild der Freundschaft*, Salzburg, 1962, p.90 ff.
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62. Ibid.
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64. Ibid., pp.26-27.
65. Loewenberg, "Theodor Herzl", pp.169-171.
66. *Diaries*, pp.38-39.
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69. Ibid., p.22.
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71. Ibid.
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73. *Diaries*, pp.36-38 (7 June 1895).
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75. Loewenberg, "Theodor Herzl", p.166.
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78. Wistrich, *The Jews of Vienna*, p.441.
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88. See for example *Diaries*, p.69 (20 September 1895).
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91. *Der Judenstaat*, pp.20-21.
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94. Ibid., p.12.
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96. Ibid., p.14.
97. Ibid., p.11.
98. Ibid., pp.30-50.
99. Ibid., p.28.
100. Vital, *The Origins of Zionism*, pp.267-375.
101. Diaries, p.88. See also "Die Wahlen in der österreichischen Cultusgemeinden", *Die Welt*, 9 November 1900.
102. Stefan Zweig, "König der Juden", *Herzl Year Book*, 3, New York, 1960, p.110.
103. Raoul Auernheimer, "Beard of the Prophet", *Herzl Year Book*, 6, New York, 1964-65, p.75.
104. *Diaries*, pp.7-8.
105. Ibid., p.66.
106. Ibid., p.67.

107. Ibid., p.70.
108. Ibid., p.89 (entry of 1 February 1896).
109. Ibid.
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111. Herzl, "The Solution of the Jewish Question", *Jewish Chronicle*, 17 January 1896.
112. *Diaries*, p.92.
113. Ibid., pp.216-217.
114. Ibid., p.217.
115. Ibid., pp.219-220.
116. Ibid., pp.203-204.
117. Ibid., p.319 (entry of 24 August 1899).
118. Ibid., pp.437-438 (entry of 2 May 1904).
119. Josef Fraenkel, "Herzl and the Rothschild Family", *Herzl Year Book*, 3, New York, 1960, pp.217-236.
120. *Diaries*, p.188.
121. Fraenkel, "Herzl and the Rothschild Family", pp.218-219.
122. *Diaries*, p.64.
123. Fraenkel, "Herzl and the Rothschild Family", p.123.
124. *Diaries*, p. 35 (entry of 7 June 1895).
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128. See Theodor Herzl, *Zionist Writings: Essays and Addresses*, New York, 1973, Vol. I, p.85.
129. *Diaries*, Vol. 41 (11 June 1895).
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131. Ibid.
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133. Joachim Doron, "Social Concepts Prevalent in German Zionism: 1883-1914", *Studies in Zionism*, No. 5 (April 1982), pp.1-31.
134. Theodor Herzl, *Altneuland*, Haifa, 1960, p.59.
135. Ibid., p.210.
136. Ibid., p.114.
137. Ibid., pp.115-118.
138. Ibid., pp.67-72.
139. Ibid., p.108.
140. Ibid., p.95.
141. Ibid., p.95.
142. This was precisely the grounds for the vehment critique of *Altneuland* by Ahad Ha-am, who argued that Herzl's Zionist vision was ape-like mimicry of western culture. It ignored the Hebrew language revival and distinct character of the Jewish national spirit. See Pawel, *The Labyrinth of Exile*, pp.471-472. See also S. J. Zipperstein, *Elusive Prophet. Ahad Ha-am and the Origins of Zionism*, London, 1993, pp.128-145, 193-199.
143. *Altneuland*, p.18.
144. *Diaries*, p.182.
145. Stefan Zweig, *The World of Yesterday*, New York, 1943, p.103.
146. Ibid., p.109.
147. Zweig, *The World of Yesterday*, pp.85-91, for his relations with Herzl and Zionism.
148. See Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna*, pp.146-180; Robert S. Wistrich, *The Jews of Vienna*, p.421 ff.
149. George L. Mosse, *Myths of the World Wars*, New York, 1988; Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna*, pp.xx-xxvii.
150. Micheal Berkowitz, "Art in Zionist Popular Culture and Jewish National Self-Consciousness, 1897-1914", in E. Mendelsohn (ed.), *Art and Its Uses. The Visual Image and Modern Jewish Society*, Studies in Contemporary Jewry, Vol. VI, Jerusalem, 1990, pp.24-25.
151. Berkowitz, "Art in Zionist Popular Culture", p.26, for Feiwel's remark, made to the Austrian Jewish poet, Richard Beer-Hoffmann. See also Gershom Scholem, *From Berlin to Jerusalem*, New York, 1980, p.28.

152. *The Complete Diaries of Theodor Herzl, 1895-1904*, New York & London, 1960, pp.421-422.
153. David Ben-Gurion, *Recollections*, London, 1970, p.34.
154. Ibid., p.35.
155. "Theodor Herzl" (1904), in Martin Buber, *Die jüdische Bewegung Gesammelte Aufsätze und Ansprachen 1900-1914*, Berlin, 1920, p.146.
156. See Alex Bein, *Theodor Herzl. Biographie*, Vienna, 1934, p.341.
157. Ibid.
158. Martin Buber, "Herzl und die Historie" (1904), in *Die jüdische Bewegung*, p.169. Buber defines Herzl's great achievement as *Formgebung* – giving a political and artistic form to Zionism as a movement.
159. Martin Buber, "Er und wir" (1910), ibid., p.201. In this later appreciation, Buber describes Herzl as an *Elementaraktiver* and "ein Führer zum handelnden Leben".
160. Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna*, p.165. Herzl told Baron Hirsch in 1895 that "Bismarck merely shook the tree that fantasies had planted." German unification was for Herzl a classic example of the power of myth in politics.
161. McGrath, "Student Radicalism in Vienna", *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. II, No. 2 (1967), pp. 195-201; Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna*, pp.163-164. Steven Beller, "Herzl's Tannhäuser: The Redemption of the Artist as Politician", in Robert S. Wistrich (ed.), *Austrians and Jews in the Twentieth Century*, New York, 1992, pp.38-57.
162. Wistrich, *The Jews of Vienna*, pp.440 ff. See also Jacques Kornberg, *Theodor Herzl. From Assimilation to Zionism*, Bloomington, 1993, for Herzl's relation to Austro-liberalism and the legacy of Jewish emancipation.
163. See Ernest Pawel, *The Labyrinth of Exile. A Life of Theodor Herzl*, London, 1990, pp.384-387; Avner Falk, *Herzl. King of the Jews*, pp.352-353. Both of these recent biographies, it is worth noting, and also the shorter study by Kornberg, are deflationary, not to say debunking accounts that seek to explode the Herzl myth. However, the process of demystification becomes self-defeating at the point where psychological reductionism narrows down the life and activity of Herzl to bundles of unresolved neuroses.

Zarathustra in Jerusalem: Nietzsche and the "New Hebrews"

DAVID OHANA

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE (1844–1900) is regarded as one of the philosophers who has had the greatest influence, since the late nineteenth century, on European cultural and political discourse. This fact is borne out by recent research on the reception of Nietzsche by diverse national cultures and political ideologies.[1] There is clearly something special about Nietzsche that enabled his thought to exert such an impact on divergent political streams, on artists, educators, political leaders and philosophers – whether religious or atheist, left or right-wing, individualists or collectivists. By examining some of the main stages in the gradual acceptance of Nietzsche within modern Hebrew culture, we can also discover some major conflicts and ongoing problems which have marked modern Jewish nationalism from its inception. These turning points and tensions fuelled the construction of myths which were refined in the crucible of Nietzschean discourse.

In the dynamics of ideological development, the influence that philosophers exert on movements can take diverse forms. There are, for example, philosophers who have deliberately sought to proselytize their ideas by publishing books and manifestos, fostering disciples or establishing journals. A good illustration of this type of thinker was Karl Marx, who was active on three different planes – philosophical, ideological and political. Nietzsche belongs to a very different category. He worked solely on the philosophical plane and was not involved in politics as such. Nietzsche's radical style had a greater impact on his readers than did his ideology, while certain revolutionary elements in his philosophy were adopted and even served to intensify specific attitudes among his audience. He made no conscious effort to disseminate his theories but was nevertheless adopted by disparate ideological camps.

The case of Nietzsche and modern Hebrew culture is particularly fascinating since he has often been seen as one of the key philosophi-

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cal sources for National Socialist ideology. Concepts which he coined, such as "the blond beast", "the Superman" or "slave morality" have been taken out of context and misused for political ends. This is one more reason why the significance of Nietzsche in Hebrew culture before and after the Second World War needs to be placed in historical context.[2] Nietzschean ideas like the "Superman" or the "Will to Power" can alter their meaning in translation, depending on the strategies adopted in a particular cultural discourse and social framework.

The question of Nietzsche's influence on modern Jewish culture and nationalism needs to be distinguished from his attitude towards Judaism and the Jews, though the connection between these issues is not entirely coincidental. Nietzsche's admiration for the Hebrew Bible and the strength of character of the Jewish people is well known, while his distaste for priestly Judaism stemmed from the fact that it was the basis for Christianity, which he despised.[3] His comments on Judaism and on the Jews are scattered throughout his writings. In *The Will to Power*, for example, he comments on "The Jewish instinct of the 'Chosen': ... they claim all the virtues for themselves without further ado, and count the rest of the world their opposites; a profound sign of vulgar soul".[4]

From the turn of the century, Nietzschean ideas, whether veiled or overt, permeated the mainstream of Jewish philosophy, political ideas and cultural discourse in modern Hebrew literature and poetry. The main figures in early Zionism, whether left or right-wing, secular or religious, pioneers of the Second and Third *Aliya* or ideologues of the Jewish underground LEHI and the "Canaanite" movement came under his influence before 1948. After the establishment of the Israeli state, however, the "new Hebrew" became the "Sabra" (ideal type of the indigenous Israeli) and the passionate drive to build a "new man" made way for a more personal outlook. Nietzscheanism ebbed though it did not altogether disappear.

The first Hebrew essay on Nietzsche was written by David Neumark, a rabbi and philosopher, in 1894, and published in *From East to West*. It was entitled "Nietzsche: An introduction to the Theory of the Superman". Neumark was a decade younger than the Zionist theorist Ahad Ha-am with whom he had close ties. He was among the first to join Herzl and he participated in the First Zionist Congress. Neumark sought to fashion what he called the "new Hebrew" in the image of the Nietzschean "Superman". Reuben Brainin's comment is relevant in this respect: "The future generation shall not be small and weak, beaten and sickly as is this dwarfish generation, rather shall a strong and mighty generation arise, a generation of giants, a generation which shall inculcate new physical strengths and new mental capacities which we never imagined, a generation of the 'Superman'".

Neumark was the first to render *Übermensch* ("Superman") into the Hebrew, *adam elyon* (higher man). In this regard, it is interesting to note that the Kabbalistic book, the *Zohar* refers to a concept of *adam ilaha*, which is virtually the same term.

Nietzschean concepts, as we have remarked, coined a lexicon which served a wide spectrum of ideologies. The question arises, then, as to how Nietzsche was read by disparate thinkers representing the main currents in Jewish nationalism and how they used him for their philosophical and political objectives. Which Nietzschean principles (the Will to Power, the "Superman", the transvaluation of values, the slave and master morality or the revolt against history) did they choose to emphasize and which to ignore? What was there about the Nietzschean texts which invited so many diverse readings and exerted such influence on wide circles in modern Jewish nationalism? Part of the attraction lay no doubt in his poetical and aphoristic style that can be appreciated by almost all readers. Nietzscheanism was moreover radical in both style and content, its metaphorical and symbolic form of expression inviting a multiplicity of interpretations. The distinct aspects of his "philosophy of life" (*Lebensphilosophie*) – voluntarism, will, vitality and myth – enabled thinkers who wished to break new ground or to blaze a new path to radicalize their positions.

BERDICHEVSKY: THE HEBREW NIETZSCHE?

Nietzsche's prominence as the philosopher of nihilism and of the Will to Power did not go unnoticed in the Hebrew cultural revival which was taking place in Europe at the turn of the century. This culture had evolved through the European form of Jewish national particularism. Like its European counterparts, Jewish national ideology drew on romantic tradition, attempting to restore the distant national past in order to legitimize a separate group identity. The emerging nationalism sought to justify itself through history. Ahad Ha-am was the most outstanding exponent of this historicist trend which emphasized that past generations had served to pave the road towards national redemption and progress.

Another dimension of Western cultural influence on Ahad Ha-am's Zionist thought was the humanistic nationalism of the mid-nineteenth century, which endeavoured to integrate a sense of national destiny with the longing for universality. This romantic nationalist vision of a brotherhood of nations, each with its own unique mission, was shared by Giuseppe Mazzini and Adam Mickiewicz. To Mazzini's "Third Rome", with its messianic echoes and Mickiewicz's vision of Poland as "the Christ of Nations", Ahad Ha-am added a higher sense of ethics as the universal destiny of Jewish nationalism.

Ahad Ha-am believed there was a direct line which led from the sages of Yavneh, nearly 2000 years earlier, to the modern Judaic concept of Israel's role among the nations. In his article "Good Advice", he developed the concept of "Jewish Nietzscheanism" which, as Berdichevsky claims, was not revolutionary but rather another strata in Jewish evolution.

> If, therefore, we agree that the purpose is the Superman, we must then also agree that an integral part of this purpose is the Supreme People: that there exists in the world one people that is enabled by spiritual characteristics to be more ethically developed than other peoples ...[5]

Ahad Ha-am sought to create a synthesis between the concept of the Superman and the moral singularity of the Jewish people, distinguishing between the "human" and the "Aryan" aspects of Nietzschean philosophy. The "human" aspect, which could be accepted, should call, as he put it, for "the ascendency of a human type among the chosen of the species to be above the general level". The "Aryan" aspect, which he rejected, was the belief in physical might and beauty. Possibly Ahad Ha-am's Nietzschean language was used here as a polemic weapon. What is certain is that he did not share Nietzsche's radical individualism and that he was sceptical about the Zionist vision of a "new man". His approach was one in which individuals exist for the nation rather than for themselves, something far removed from Nietzsche or the "new Hebrew Nietzscheans".

Micha Yosef Berdichevsky, like some other intellectuals, artists and critics at the turn of the century, represented another trend, closer to Nietzsche's existential philosophy. Berdichevsky had discovered Nietzsche for the first time during his studies in Berlin in 1893. In a letter to Shkapniuk written in the same year, Berdichevsky wrote:

> This summer, I read much written by Friedrich Nietzsche, the man who is creating such commotion throughout Europe. Perhaps you could obtain his book, *Beyond Good and Evil*, which has made a stronger impression on me than any book I have read ... He is now in a lunatic asylum.[6]

During the next two years, which he spent in Switzerland, Berdichevsky saw himself as a pure Nietzschean, defining this concept according to the criteria of power and individualism. In a letter to a friend he wrote: "As I believe you are aware, I am a Nietzschean ... and know only might, power, power!".[7] During the years 1897-1999, he began to change his priorities, placing a greater emphasis on the historical Jewish collectivity rather than on the individual who sanctifies his liberty.

Berdichevsky did not, however, completely abandon his German master: witness the fact that when, in 1897, he translated *Sefer Ha-hasidim*, he gave it the title *The Wanderer and His Shadow (Der Wanderer und sein Schatten*, 1880). This was the same title as the second part of Nietzsche's *Human, All Too Human*. Towards the end of his life, when he gathered together all his work, Berdichevsky was careful to remove the Nietzschean quotes and themes. In 1905 he wrote in his diary:

> Nietzsche's theories were not the starting point of my ideas, except insofar as I distance myself from tradition and pointed out the damage which traditional morality causes a nation *per se*; it was as though, on the path to transvaluation, I met him along the way.[8]

Like many of his contemporaries, Berdichevsky was exposed to the late nineteenth century European intellectual revolution which sought to expose and unravel the experiential elements of modern human consciousness. Gustave Le Bon's psychology of the masses, George Sorel's sociology of myth and Henri Bergson's philosophy of time; the rediscovery of Gambatista Vico's theory of *ricorso* (renewal) and renewed interest in Edward von Hartman's view of the unconscious were all part of this intellectual revolution. With its new sociological, psychological and aesthetic concepts, this upheaval exercised an important influence on the emergence of radical national consciousness in the first decade of the twentieth century. Friedrich Nietzsche's anti-historical revolt stood in the vanguard of this revolution. Historicism, romanticism, evolutionary and liberal ideas of progress had emphasized throughout the nineteenth century a view of man determined by historical development. Nietzsche sought to introduce an original anthropological approach according to which the New Man as an expression of existential nihilism is the product of eternal return.[9]

Ahad Ha-am and Berdichevsky represent two opposing traditions (Hegelian and Nietzschean) with respect to the concept of time in the historical culture of the nineteenth century. Ahad Ha-am followed Hegel in arguing that if time is infinitely open, then perpetual improvement is a viable concept; thus, the idea of progress is based on the assumption of improvement from the lowest point towards the highest. Berdichevsky, like Nietzsche, negated this value-based imposition on history which he saw as being beyond good and evil. In his view, the idea of progress was a variation of the attempt to imbue a process with inner meaning; if the main point about the Will to Power is to overcome and to intensify, then the important thing is not completing the historical process, but engaging in it. Life understood as the

Will-to-Power is the real and central need or as Berdichevsky puts it, "a powerful life, a courageous life".[10] Enlightenment and education are not goals in their own right, but subject to the authority of life itself.

The "new Hebrew", as depicted by Berdichevsky, does not receive his world from an inherited culture or from history, but rather from his identification with modernity through the adoption of a particular lifestyle. There are no more inherited themes from the culture of the past that can be taken for granted, no more illusions about rational development or normative ethics. Instead, he offers an unmeditated view of the modern world as an *aesthetic* experience that should be affirmed. Since reality is dynamic, the human being must not rest on his laurels. He must identify with the rhythm of the world, which is the Will to Power and with himself as subject. This radical existentialism adopted by Berdichevsky, in the footsteps of Nietzsche, contained a new form of individualist ethics which emphasized the relation of man to himself rather than to his fellow man.[11]

Berdichevsky's voluntarist, revolutionary conception of the past was critical of the approach taken by the "science of Judaism" as represented by the German Jewish historians Leopold Zunz and Zachariah Frankel. He respected, however, Abraham Geiger "who with all his great and tempestuous spirit would have desired to renew Israel in the present, rather than making do with its life in the past as did Zunz and his faction". Within his dynamic conception of the present, Berdichevsky, following Nietzsche, abandoned the guiding hand of historicism, romanticism, enlightenment and progress. Instead, he preferred the dimension of the actual present, the existential experience as such, over historical understanding.

During his stay in Weimar, Berdichevsky visited Neitzsche's home several times. In this twilight period of the father of the "Will-to-Power", Nietzsche's sister forbade visitors to come to their home. In a letter from 1898 to Yosef Melnik, Berdichevsky writes: "There, at the periphery, live Nietzsche and his sister. The guilt of this great man will always be with me".[12] His son, Emanuel Ben-Gurion, writes in his memoirs, *Reshut Ha-yahid* (The Private Domain):

> During the years when he was writing the novel, Micha Yosef Berdichevsky spent several months in Weimar (the autumn and winter of 1898), where he visited, among other places, the Nietzsche archives which were being established by the philosopher's sister, Elisabeth Förster – Nietzsche. (Nietzsche, who had been insane for eight years, was still alive, and visitors to the house where his possessions were displayed on the first floor could hear the sick man pacing restlessly in his room on the floor above.) The year after Berdichevsky's death, my mother and I vis-

> ited Weimar and viewed the archives. The old woman remembered her meeting with Berdichevsky twenty-five years earlier and recalled a particular scene from a novel, *The Leave Taker*, which he had told her about. The hero of the novel, or his friend, negates the Torah scroll and stabs it with a knife, and blood spurts from the parchment. I cannot cast any light on this - the manuscript has disappeared, or perhaps been destroyed.[13]

Out of this kind of existential experience the "new man" emerged who is *not* motivated by rational assumptions and who abandons accepted ethical distinctions of good and evil. The rebel against history identifies with a world which is the fruit of his own labour, and he thereby becomes authentic rather than decadent. Indeed, one of the main characteristics of the "new man" is the quest for *authenticity* – a search which was common to philosophers at the turn of the century. Authenticity was a response to the alienation that existed between the individual and his world. Berdichevsky bemoans the fact that, "there is nothing that unites us in all the corners of our souls, in our characteristics. There is no total or perfect unity".[14] Turn-of-the-century modernism cultivated the personal style of the "new man", basing itself on the Nietzschean theory of perspectivism which argued that there are no facts, only interpretations.

Berdichevsky continued in the steps of Nietzsche when he wrote: "There is no single currency, no single class and no single horizon. We do not face two paths, but hundreds of paths; not one way of living, but hundreds of ways ...".[15] Nietzsche, however, was also misunderstood by Berdichevsky, when he writes in a naturalistic language: "Return to Nature, return to your Mother, to all that is alive and note that precisely as you drew nearest to Nature, to the sanctuary, you are as tall and broad as they are".[16] Nietzsche did not in fact advocate the destruction of culture and a return to a natural or primitive state. Rather he sought to eliminate the dichotomy between intellect and life. Intellect must become nature and nature must be shaped by the "new man". Transvaluation is one of the merits of the "new man". In 1882, Nietzsche wrote to Lou Andreas Salome: "First, man must liberate himself from chains and lastly he must also liberate himself from this liberation". Berdichevsky's "new Hebrew" is also marked by transvaluation and self-legislation: "A man gives himself commandments and treads his own path".[17]

In common with the Nietzschean critics of culture at the turn of the century, who sought to transform Zarathustra into a political militant, Berdichevsky faced the problem of translating an esoteric philosophy into sociological language. How could a link be forged between the individual and a revolutionary movement? This is the classic problem

of intellectuals who wish to shape a "new man" – in the final analysis, they coalesce with militant avant-garde groups and with elite movements which remain aloof from the masses. Berdichevsky's "new Hebrew" eventually joins those who, like him, foment revolution. "Days of change are coming for the nation and the individual when they shall weary from carrying their arid burden and gather strength with which to shake the foundations of their heritage and create new values, according to which a man shall feel himself to be a new creation with a new soul; man must wake from his slumber and abrogate those things which he was hitherto careful to maintain".[18]

The tradition of heroism in nineteenth century European culture, celebrated by Thomas Carlyle, prepared the hero to represent a new type of human nurtured by national movements at the beginning of the twentieth century.[19] Berdichevsky sees the individual as a partner in this movement for renewal, realizing the fundamental principle of nationalism and symbolizing the new society to be established on the ruins of the old. At the turn of the century, many intellectuals and artists had already turned their backs on conservative nationalism, which relied on the tradition of generations, privilege and rank. They constructed instead a *revolutionary* nationalism based on the present, on action and the primacy of the individual. Similarly, Berdichevsky developed a secular existentialism which entailed a new perception of nationalism, emphasizing the individual rather than the community, the present rather than the past and aesthetics rather than ethics.

In his dissertation "On the Relationship between Ethics and Aesthetics", written when he was 30, Berdichevsky notes: "We have become accustomed to thinking of action in the context of ethics, whereas in the context of aesthetics we think only in terms of observation or passive action".[20] The old ethical norm of "substance" and "content" makes way for a new aesthetic principle of "manner" and "form". In this sense, Berdichevsky adapted the Nietzschean existentialist concept of the "Will to Power" for his own purposes. *Macht* (power) became *Kraft* (force). Thus Berdichevsky joined a long line of culture critics who, at the turn of the century, used Nietzsche freely, drawing on him for their own nationalist purposes. Berdichevsky writes:

> There comes a time for an individual and for a people, to live by the sword, by power and by the fist, by the vitality of being. This is the time of existence, of life – life itself. The sword is not a concept divorced from life or separate from it; it is the incarnation of life in its vitality and essence.[21]

The "new man" is alienated from historical culture and does not see himself as part of it. In Berdichevsky's words: "The living man takes

precedence over the heritage of his forefathers."[22] If progress which is the outcome of the rationalist ideals falls, then myth rises. Myth, the fruit of existentialist perception, regulates the correct relationship between man and his world, between ethics and aesthetics, between the transient and the eternal. The new discourse has moved from the intellectual and historicist dimensions to that of the mythical and aesthetic. Myth is preferred to paralyzing history, because it encapsulates the unity of modern man and his world in an aesthetic and existential experience. This modernism was the result of early twentieth century thought which made a revolutionary use of myth.[23]

The "new Hebrew" builds his modern world not through belief in progress (a kind of Jewish "evolutionism") but rather through a new myth. Berdichevsky sought to renew myth, to revolt against Ahad Ha-am's historicism, in order to achieve a revitalization of Jewish history. This explains why Berdichevsky devotes so much space in his work to Jewish mysticism – the *Kabbala* and *Hasidism* – as original syntheses of myth and Judaism. Ahad Ha-am, by contrast, represented the traditional conception defined by Gershom Scholem as "the general trend of classic Jewish tradition: the trend towards the destruction of the myth as the central spiritual force".[24]

As the anthropologist Yonina Talmon pointed out, mythical time is essentially different from historical time.[25] Another Israeli professor, Shmuel Verses, demonstrated this very well when he distinguished between psychological and chronological time in Berdichevsky's writings.[26] To these distinctions, I would add that there is a dialectical connection between time in myth and historical time, and that each "time" designs the other in its own image. Time in myth tends to legitimize and preserve, while historical time tends to innovate in keeping with current changes, though, in order to do so, it necessitates the rewriting of time mythically. In all cultures, whether they include historiography or not, one may discern the events of the past, whether these are relevant or not to the present. As far as the living are concerned, there is no value in preserving tales of events which have no significance for the present in the collective consciousness. It is the myths that are important, not history. To quote Nietzsche:

> Without myths, history loses its natural and healthy creative force. Only when the cultural horizon is comprised of myths does the process of cultural creation reach internal consolidation.[27]

In the case of Berdichevsky, the mythological-synchronic past and the historical-diachronic past merge dialectically. The mythological past which Berdichevsky reveals, as a critic of culture, is intended to empower modern history – the period of the Hebrew renaissance – through the heroic myths of the past:

> The people's heroes from past ages and their deeds, will serve as a symbol and a source of power for the generation to come, wherever they go and whatever they may have to overcome. The main thing is not simply to know one's origin, but to use this origin as the driving force in social and national life.[28]

This is not the unity of continuity but rather the unity of rebellion.

Berdichevsky not only turned to the world of folk tales, of *Hasidism* and the *Kabbala*, but he was also attracted to the ancient Hebrews. In view of his secularism, his rebellion against Jewish history and his yearning for ancient myths, Berdichevsky could be seen as the father of the "Canaanite" movement ("Young Hebrews"). Indeed, as the Hebrew literary critic Baruch Kurzweil pointed out, the Canaanite movement was no more than "a logical and consistent conclusion of spiritual and aesthetic yearnings which have been present in our literature for a hundred years". Kurzweil, however, scorned the paradoxical attempt to blend modernity and myth, writing of the Canaanites: "Those who fight a bitter war against Judaism, in its entirety, in the name of modern progressive thought place themselves in a strange situation when they attempt to prove their realistic and practical sensibilities by mythological argumentation".

Berdichevsky and the "Young Hebrews" were the targets of attack long before Kurzweil appeared on the scene. One of the main protagonists was the critic Michael Rabinovitz, who published an article entitled "Judaism and the Superman" in Ahad Ha-am's journal *Ha-shiloah* in 1912. In his article, Rabinovitz wrote:

> Nietzsche's theory, which captivates many hearts with its innovation, has reached our circles in recent years through our young writers who make frequent and impassioned use of Nietzsche's questionable innovations in order to make a new voice heard within the Jewish people. In so doing, they adopt a "total transvaluation" in our historical life.[29]

The Hebrew Nietzschean, threatening a total transvaluation to the point of the nihilization of Jewish themes, was the target of many counter-attacks. The waves of controversy did not abate and the attacks were soon taken up by writers and public figures such as A. D. Gordon, Arieh Samiatizky, Moshe Glickson and Yechiel Halperin, as well as critics like Baruch Kurzweil, Abraham Sha'anan, Moshe Giora and Aliza Klausner-Eshkol. On the other hand, there were also critics who did not regard Berdichevsky as the Hebrew Nietzsche. Brenner refused to see him as "Nietzsche's student" merely because he used the term "transvaluation" – "a comparison which is like a blunt knife".[30] Similarly, Ya'akov Rabinowitz wondered: "Was he really a disciple of

Nietzsche? What does this tent-dweller have to do with the 'blond beast'? He learned from Nietzsche to negate, but he did not accept Nietzsche's positive views". Literary critics like Yitzhak Lamdan, Emanuel Ben-Gurion, Daniel Ben-Nahum, Dov Sadan, Alexander Barzel and Menachem Brinker all rejected the comparison between Berdichevsky and Nietzsche. But it is difficult to deny that Berdichevsky's double-edged message of anti-historical radicalism and the "new Hebrew" were the main axis of the "Young Hebrews" revolt.

ON THE ACCEPTANCE OF NIETZSCHE IN HEBREW CULTURE

The themes which marked the rebellion of the "Young Hebrews" led by Berdichevsky and Ehrenpreis were adopted by the Hebrew poets Saul Tchernichovsky (1875-1943) and Zalman Schneur (1886-1959) and creatively reworked in their poetry. They, too, put "life" before "literature". Their poems include many Nietzschean elements, particularly from his early period when Nietzsche took the Greek myths and the Dionysian paeans to vitality as the antithesis to the paralysing historical culture of nineteenth century Europe. Ahad Ha-am published only two of Tchernichovsky's poems in *Ha-shiloah*; however, when Klausner took over the helm in 1903, Tchernichovsky began to regularly contribute poems imbued with the spirit of vitalism. His main goal was to find in Judaism parallels for the Greek heroes ("Songs of the Exiles", "Facing the Sea"), such as Bar-Kochba.[31] "Facing Apollo's Statue" (1899) is the most Nietzschean of his poems; in this respect, the motif "they bound him in the straps of phylacteries" recalls the stabbing of the bleeding Torah scroll by Berdichevsky's hero in his unpublished novel *The Leave Taker*.

Tchernichovsky does not merely suggest "a new function for poetry, but also has a recommendation for a new model of man", as the literary critic Yehudit Barel puts it. Kurzweil, who grapples with the dilemma of the "New Hebrew", stranded with his Judaism but devoid of a living G-d, argues that "Nietzsche's anti-Christian effect is now injected by Tchernichovsky into the enlightenment polemics of the Russian-Jewish writer, Y. L. Gordon". In this context, it is worth quoting Klausner, who felt that such Jewish enlightenment figures as Lilienblum, Mendele and Y. L Gordon sought to create a new synthesis between religion and life. But it was a life of intellect and knowledge in keeping with European bourgeois rationalism and liberalism. By contrast, the war against Jewish tradition in the work of Tchernichovsky, Berdichevsky and Schneur was the war of the *mythos* against the *logos* – spirit and knowledge oppose life and the demand for life implies renewal through mythical and mystical powers.

Zalman Schneur who, in his poem "On the Banks of the Seine"

wrote that "G-d is dead, but man has not yet been resurrected" might be considered the greatest Nietzschean among the Hebrew renaissance poets. As in the case of Berdichevsky and Techernichovsky, one also finds pagan rituals in Schneur's work ("Hidden Tablets") and the longing for beauty, in contrast to the culture of the priests and prophets: "What are you doing here, Creator of Beauty? You will never light a spark in the hearts of these shopkeepers". Schneur's poem "I Understand" is interesting in its approach to accepting the concept of the "Superman" in his poetry. "The fog cleared for me, and the ape rose up into a man".[32]

In 1920, Y. H. Brenner criticized Schneur's "heroic" interpretation of Nietzsche, "as that of a militant journalist, who saw Nietzsche's rear but not his face."[33] Does Schneur also see the "Superman" as a still-unfulfilled promise? Regarding the attempts of Schneur and Tchernichovsky to rewrite Jewish history, the literary critic Menachem Brinker comments:

> There can be no doubt that it was solely Nietzsche's influence that radicalized the conflict between past and present to the point of rejecting the past in the name of the needs of the present. In turn, this rejection led to a rejection of the collective tradition in the name of the cultural and instinctive needs of the modern Jewish individual.[34]

In Europe, the appearance of Nietzsche's books was a powerful source of inspiration at a time when the universities were dominated by a positivism which left no room for intuition, emotion, or imagination. Nietzsche came as a breath of fresh air into an atmosphere dominated by pessimism, passivity and a sense of inertia. His calls for "transvaluation" seeped through into visions of a new order. It is hardly surprising that his opponents saw him as a demonic figure, the agent of the devil, a pioneer of immorality and a symptom of degeneration, all of which was asserted in Max Nordau's book *Degeneration* (1892) which was translated into Russian a year after it appeared.[35]

Nietzschean concepts provided an intellectual framework for psychological and aesthetic speculations current at the time. The duality of his Dionysian and the Apollonian characterizations in *The Birth of Tragedy* promoted opposition to positivism and utilitarianism. The Dionysian served as a symbol for religious, psychological and aesthetic urges, becoming a window for the innermost needs of soul and spirit. Symbolists equated the spirit of music with Dionysus, unaware of the fact that Nietzsche had abandoned his admiration of Wagner. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* also attracted the symbolists because of its poetic language, aphoristic style and philosophical tone. The symbolists saw the book as a battle cry for individualism, scorning the masses and

rejecting socialization. They saw the artist as the "Superman" – apolitical and asocial, opposing materialism, intellect, positivism and optimism. For the symbolists, the artist's duty was solely to his own feelings and vision.

The desire to create a new humanity was particularly evident in the German avant-garde. Artists blurred traditional distinctions between left and right, rational and mystical, truth and lies, good and evil; each artist painted his visions in a different political colour. Why were artists attracted to Nietzsche? Like them, he saw the world as an artistic creation. "It is only as an aesthetic phenomenon that existence and the world are eternally justified".[36] The expressionist movement, which was founded in Dresden in 1905, drew its name from a concept which appears in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Elsewhere, the "Superman" is described as a bridge cast over a ravine. In a letter, Schmidt-Rotloff, tells his fellow expressionist painter, Nolde: "To draw together all the revolutionary and vibrant elements; this is what we mean by the word bridge". For the avant-garde, Nietzsche symbolized the new anti-historical radicalism. As the expressionist manifesto put it: "We, the youth who bear the future, want to create for ourselves physical and spiritual freedom in place of the values of the old establishment generation".[37]

While David Frishman (1859-1922) – writer and critic, aesthete and translator – supported some of the ideals of the Hebrew revival movement, he rejected the Zionist movement, claiming that the Zionist idea was unworthy of realization. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* was published in Hebrew for the first time in Frishman's translation during the years 1909-1911; firstly in *Reshafim* and then separately in the collection of Frishman's works. Frishman saw Nietsche's work as a late biblical book – a "Third Testament" after the Old and New Testaments. His understanding was not far removed from that of Nietzsche himself, though the Nietzschean Zarathustra was aimed as a rebellion against Judeo-Christian ethics, in order to declare the birth of a new civilization. In Frishman's translation, the dissonant book became overly harmonic and classical. Aesthetes such as Frishman, who sought to create the "new Hebrew" by placing him in opposition to the "Old Jew", took as their inspiration Hebrew history as expressed in the Bible, rather than the Diaspora period.

The first poem by Ya'akov Cohen (1881-1960), poet, playwright and translator, was published in Frishman's journal *Ha-dor* in 1901. Cohen proposed to create the "new Hebrew" and sought to illustrate this idea in the collection of that name which he edited in Warsaw in 1912. "The 'New Hebrew' will be the new human... The appearance of the New Hebrew will surely be splendid as he walks upright on his forefathers' land, the fresh, pure skies of the G-d of Renewal above his

head; proud and tall he will walk, like the ancient Hebrew".[38] Brenner would later criticize Ya'akov Cohen's Nietzschean pretensions in seeking to create the "New man", writing:

> Who is this "New Hebrew?"... Are they really fighting heroes? Is it really in distorted lines from *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* – we the few, we the geniuses, is this our force as we march to the future – can a war really be fought with such miserable weapons? ... Can the Hebrew revolution really be generated under such slogans – to destroy the Diaspora and all that comes from it?

Cohen's approach in his article "The Hebrew Revolution" (1912) supports modern Jewish nationalism as a *renaissance*, as the basis of all revival, its symbol, model and slogan. Cohen combined Nietzschean elements of renewal and autonomy with a return to the historical sources.

On the other hand, the organic nationalist perceptions of Johann Gottfried Herder had little impact on Zionism except for A. D. Gordon and Martin Buber. The Herderian vision did not appeal to Herzl. His world-view was liberal rather than organicist. In both concept and style, he and his followers were far removed from revolutionary or violent radicalism. Herzl mentions Nietzsche only once in his writings on 28 June 1895.[39] However, Max Nordau does certainly refer to Nietzsche in his book *Degeneration*, published in Berlin in 1892. More surprising is that Chaim Weizmann expressed his admiration for Nietzsche and warmly recommended his work in a letter to his future wife.[40] Ernst Mueller, in the official world organ of the Zionist movement[41] and Gustav Witkovsky, in a German-Jewish Zionist journal, both referred to Nietzsche in clarifying fundamental issues in Zionism.[42]

One of the most serious attempts in modern Hebrew literature to deal with Nietzschean problems was made by Yosef Haim Brenner (1881-1921). His heroes observe the meaninglessness of existence and their reflections are full of Nietzschean quotes and themes. In *Mi-saviv La-nekuda* (Around the Point), Abramson prefers insanity to suicide; Feuerman in *Ba-horef* (In Winter) expresses the choice as "Lose your mind or kill yourself; therefore choose death". Yehezkel Hefetz asks in *Shachol Ve-kishalon* (Bereavement and Failure): "Will he eventually find enough inner strength to uproot all this miserable hell within through redeeming nothingness?" Two literary characters can be found in Brenner's stories who have a profound relationship to Nietzsche: Lapidot in *Mi-kan U-mikan* (From Here and There) is an artistic representation of A. D. Gordon and the ideal of labour Zionism which purifies; Uriel Davidovsky in *Mi-saviv La-nekuda* (Around the Point) is a portrait of Sander Baum, Brenner's friend. Baum, Brenner, and the

cultural critic Hillel Zeitlin were the main core of the Nietzsche Circle in Homel at the turn of the century. The history of this circle is an enlightening example of how each shade of opinion in the group drew its ideological justification from a Nietzschean theme.

To understand the spiritual background one needs to recall that from the 1860s onwards, the Russian intelligentsia had been characterized by extreme atheism. Comments such as "if G-d exists, then man is a slave" or "the yearning for destruction is also the creative yearning", anticipated similar remarks by Nietzsche. From Pushkin and Lermontov to Tolstoy and Doestoevsky, the main issue in Russian literature was the meaning and purpose of life. Harbingers of Nietzsche can also be found in Doestoevsky's characters, Kirilov and Raskolnikov. But it is Konstantin Leontiev (1831-1891) who is considered the quintessential "Russian Nietzsche" because of his aesthetic and elitist approach, his scorn for democracy and his amoral attitudes.

Alongside the Russian variant of Nietzschean atheism, there also developed in *fin-de-siècle* Russia a "new religious consciousness". Dmitri S. Merezhovsky adopted an apocalyptic interpretation of Christianity which included a Third Covenant or Third Coming. Influenced by the Nietzschean critique of traditional Christianity, Merezhovsky yearned for a new form of the religion which would encourage cultural and aesthetic creativity, individualism and self-expression. Lev Shestov, a leading figure in the religious renaissance, was attracted for his part, by Nietzsche's "critique of intellect". In his essay "The Good in the Teaching of Count Tolstoy and Nietzsche" (1900), he attacked philosophical idealism and rationalism. Critical of Tolstoy and his moralism, Shestov claimed that tragedy, evil and suffering are inevitable. In his book *Dostoevsky and Nietzsche: The Philosophy of Tragedy* (1903), he argued that both thinkers had engaged in a similar attack on rationalism. In later essays, he claimed that there are no eternal truths, that good and evil are always present in humanity and that the role of philosophy is not to reach a compromise but to stimulate a struggle for the impossible.

Jewish cultural critics wrote and philosophized against the backdrop of this general intellectual atmosphere in turn-of-the-century Eastern Europe, particularly Russia. Hillel Zeitlin (1877-1942) was profoundly influenced by Shestov's thought. Zeitlin, a Yiddish publicist with a tendency to mysticism derived from his Hasidic upbringing, moved to Homel and was sent by the town as a delegate to the Fifth Zionist Congress in 1901. His preference for the people of Israel over the Land of Israel led him to support the Uganda Plan and four years later he published a comprehensive monograph on Nietzsche in *Hazman*. His work is not just another attempt to inform the Hebrew reader of Nietzsche's theories (as Neumark had already done) but a

conscious expression of attraction to his personality which seemed to him that of a great man who had undergone an "inner holy experience". In 1919, Zeitlin published a further essay entitled "Superman or Supergod" in which he sought to repent his youthful follies by painting Nietzsche's ideas in a religious and mystical light, remarking: "One should progress from the 'Superman' to the 'Supergod'".[43] In this context, the attraction of religious thinkers to Nietzsche is fascinating. The interest of Neumark, Zeitlin, Rav Kook, Martin Buber and today, of Arieh Leib Weisfish from ultra-orthodox Mea-Shearim, reflects the affinity between religious existential discourse and the father of modern secular existentialism.

Hasidism and the *Kabbalah* were two modern attempts to revitalize Judaism by renewing it through myth. Martin Buber and Gershom Scholem are each related to one of these historic phenomena, granting a central status to myth in their research. The revolutionary nature of their approach is reflected mainly in their critique of the assumption that saw Judaism as an essentially anti-mystical religion, resolved as Gershom Scholem put it, to eliminate myth. Both scholars broke with tradition by perceiving myth as an innovative factor in traditional Judaism. Nietzsche exerted a significant influence in shaping the approach of Buber and Scholem to myth, rehabilitating it as a vital and creative element in all societies. It is instructive to read Scholem's comments regarding Nietzsche's influence on Buber:

> Alongside his analysis of mysticism as a social factor in Judaism, Buber developed a no less keen interest in its mythical foundations which related to a change in appreciating the vital nature of myth. This change of assessment, common to many of Buber's generation, was the result of Nietzsche's influence.[44]

It is possible that Gershom Scholem may here be revealing something about himself. He, too, assigned Nietzsche a central role in re-evaluating myth. In this context, it should be noted that Scholem, together with Mircea Eliade, the famous writer on comparative religions and also the depth psychologist Carl Gustav Jung, participated in the "Eranos Circle" which stressed the centrality of myth in understanding religious and cultural phenomena.

Nietzsche's well-known declaration about the "Death of G-d" does not contradict the religious dimension of his thought. *Zarathustra* itself is written in a biblical vein. Nietzsche, who sought to create "new tablets of the law", placed Dionysus in opposition to Jesus, at the same time enthroning the "Superman". The theologian Hans Galwitz who combined Protestantism with Nietzscheanism, even asserted that the combative values of Nietzsche were the very heart of authentic Christianity. Gallwitz entitled his essay "Friedrech Nietzsche as an

Educator for Christianity". Albert Kalthoff (1850-1906) was an even more fervent advocate of the absorption of Nietzsche into the Protestant Church. Primitive Christianity and Nietzsche shared, he believed, the common radical urge of seeking to change all values.

In 1895, the young Martin Buber, like many of his generation, was no less excited by Nietzsche's writings, even translating into Polish the first section of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.[45] Buber wrote: "This book did not influence me as a gift might but as an invasion which robbed me of my liberty and it was a long time before I could free myself from it". Indeed, the importance of Nietzsche for Buber extends right through his life, including his essay on "Nietzsche's Theory of Man" [*Gilyonot*, 1937] and the chapter "Feuerbach and Nietzsche" in his Hebrew book *The Faces of Man*. Again, as with many of his generation, Buber's enthusiasm for the First World War was due in part to his attraction for Nietzsche's *Lebensphilosophie*.[46] It should be remembered that together with Goethe's *Faust* and the New Testament, *Zarathustra* became one of the most popular works in Germany during the war. In 1917, 40,000 copies of the book were sold. Ironically, *Zarathustra* took its place on the battlefield alongside the Bible and thus the author of *The Anti-Christ* found himself once more side by side with the Holy Scriptures.

Buber, Scholem and Shmuel Hugo Bergman were all members of the pacifist Palestinian Jewish organization *Brit Shalom*, which advocated a bi-national state. Bergman wrote a number of articles on A. D. Gordon which show Nietzschean influences, the first of which was entitled "A. D. Gordon's Polemic with Nietzsche".[47] Gordon, the labour Zionist ideologue of the Second *Aliya*, joined in the debate about Nietzsche that was taking place in Hebrew culture at the beginning of the century. In a letter to Brenner, he had declared himself a member of the nation that invented the morality of slaves. In his article "Assessing Ourselves", Gordon attacked Ahad Ha-am for neglecting to draw the logical conclusions from his debate with Berdichevsky. "Ahad Ha-am failed to finish what he had started; he moved over to the 'morality of Judaism' and ended up with 'Torah from Zion'". A. D. Gordon condemned those Hebrew writers who, "hypnotized by Europe", wish to become like the others:

> Berdichevsky comes along and confounds not Nietzsche's position – far from it – but fathers his own. Instead of studying the way of Nietzsche the individual, instead of discovering new horizons, depth and light, he simply accepts Nietzsche's theory, like all those who accept a theory from anyone who would give them one and with all his soul he becomes no more than an interpretation of Nietzsche's ego.[48]

A. D. Gordon believed that Nietzsche above all set a personal example and had cast a new light on higher morality. To the extent that Gordon was influenced by the psychology and philosophy of the unconscious laid out by Jung and Henri Bergson, and also by *Kabbalistic* or transcendental phenomena, he spoke as a mystic and not as psychologist. Gordon developed a new ethics which represented a transition from the Nietzschean "Superman" to the Gordonian version of the "Holy Man". In his concept of the "religion of labour", Gordon linked the creative man with his creation and in his concept of the "man-nation" (a social extension of the notion of the "superholy man") he linked the creative Jewish man with his human destiny. Gordon expanded his interpretation of the Nietzschean "Superman" into a Zionist social framework with a national and universal goal.

Gordon had fled from the decadence of European bourgeois culture at the age of 47 to begin a new and creative life in the Land of Israel. He argued that the purely intellectual consciousness was sovereign only over an artificial culture and that the old standards of bourgeois morality that Nietzsche was so eager to destroy, had become bankrupt. Henceforth, man will be judged by a new standard: expansion or contraction. The "vital consciousness" is aware of the fact that man or society, especially in crisis, longs for the solution of *authenticity* – the desire to return to one's own people, the wish to be at home with oneself. Gordon and Brenner both attempted to realize this conception, in a practical way, through pioneering activity in the Land of Israel.

Pioneers of the Second *Aliya*, in responding to Nietzsche, were mindful of the precarious nature of their own existence. Unlike the "young Hebrews" in *fin-de-siècle* Europe, A. D. Gordon felt, for example, that existence could not be based solely on "smashing the old Man", because this was just a slogan and an escape from authenticity. Nietzsche would remain an important thinker for some Zionist socialists coping with the crisis of values in society, with the proper balance between individualism and collectivism within the kibbutz and with the need for a theory of will. Nietzsche was studied intensively by members of *Ha-shomer Ha-tzair* and of the *Gedud Ha-avoda* (Labour Battalion). There was also a "Nietzsche Circle" which functioned within the literary societies of the kibbutzim even in the 1970s.

Significant Nietzschean themes can equally be found in Revisionist Zionism, including its leader, Ze'ev Jabotinsky, the nationalist poet, Uri Zvi Greenberg and the right-wing ideologue, Israel Eldad. Nietzsche's name crops up frequently in their discussions. In his autobiography, Jabotinsky noted the enormous influence exerted by European culture on himself and the "Hebrew Circle" in which he participated as a youth, where "we used to debate Nietzsche and moral questions – not the future of Judaism".[49] In 1899, Jabotinsky confessed

his admiration for Maxim Gorky - "an echo of Nietzsche's theory in Russian garb" – a theory which brought "glory to men of will and action and scorn for those enslaved by the sterile reflex which stunts any act of daring".

Jabotinsky recounted how a group of friends, gathered at a summer resort, had to choose 10 books to be saved from a fire. One of the group said: "I confess that among the ten books to be saved from the fire there must be one written by a harbinger of the strong personality ... Therefore we should prefer Gorky". The selection of the books served as the pretext for a discussion of forceful personalities. "We all indulge in dreams of a strong, dominant personality; we are all longing for its arrival on the stage of history ... so that each individual can, on the new soil, develop into a bold personality". Needless to say, Nietzsche's name was raised in the debate and accompanied the discussion of the strong personality.

Extensive evidence can be found in Jabotinsky's writings of his deep affinity with Nietzsche's innovative philosophy. In his article "On America", he poses the question: "Who in our youth was the teacher and prophet of all the troublemakers, who carries the blame (or the credit) for all the fires now burning down the fences of our world?" He immediately answers his own question. "His name was Nietzsche. He emerged from the narrow straits not in terms of conscience and experience, but in the domain of morality, duty, good and evil".[50] Elsewhere, Jabotinsky writes: "A long line of great thinkers and intellectuals paved the path away from the attitude that everything is 'alright' (Jabotinsky uses the English term) to the approach which now prevails, of wondering, experimenting, changing. This line includes such giants as Nietzsche, Ibsen and Bergson". There are just a few of the instances where Jabotinsky's respect for Nietzsche is evident; the writings of the father of Revisionist Zionism include such obviously Nietzschean themes as the tension between power and morality, the centrality of ceremony and drama, the aesthetic experience of might and the desire for a new man.

Another Nietzschean was Uri Zvi Greenberg, the great Hebrew poet, who immigrated to Palestine in 1924. Two years later, at the age of 30, he published his book *Ha-gavrut Ha-olah* (The Rising Masculinity). In contrast to *Great Fear and Moon* and his early Yiddish poetry, in which he rejected his Judaism, *The Rising Masculinity* is a collection of existential poems praising Jewish values and symbols. "While there I turned my back on my earlocked Jewish brothers ... Here, from a distance, during the days of Hebrew purification on the land of this race and amidst the divinity of Jerusalem, here, by G-d, I shall not turn my back on my earlocked brothers". Uri Zvi Greenberg despised Christian Europe and hated the Latin script. "What if I saw

Nietzsche's vision of the Superman in these letters?"[51] His poetry is saturated with the Nietzschean *Lebensphilosophie* though unlike Berdichevsky and the "Young Hebrews", who sought to Europeanize Jewish culture, in the case of Greenberg the central thrust is directed *against* European culture. Elsewhere, in his poem, "Shir Ha-ugavar" ("Song of the Organist") Greenberg's yearning rises above mountains and lights, seeking to turn in Nietzschean fashion the Jew into the most elevated of beings.

In 1944, the centennial of Nietzsche's birth, Israel Eldad – a leading thinker and activist of the Hebrew underground revolt against British mandatory rule in Palestine (who would later become Nietzsche's translator into Hebrew) invoked the German philosopher's name in his appeal to his countrymen. He called on Hebrew youth to elevate itself "to the same heights as Zarathustra, in the pure, sharp air – not only for aesthetic pleasure, but also for instruction: To learn what it means to be a free man".[52] The article, entitled "Substance and Veneer in the Philosophy of Nietzsche", does not, of course, carry its author's name since it was published in the underground magazine of the LEHI ("Fighters for the Freedom of Israel"). The LEHI leader, Yair, (Avraham Stern), was also a Nietzschean and authored "The Principles of Rebirth", the manifesto of this extremist underground movement. Yair's Sixth Principle clearly carries the fingerprints of the Nietzschean Eldad:

> Together with this courage to cast life aside in time of battle... "to go happily towards death" – alongside this, an entire world of dancers and poets stand in amazement in the face of the powerful will for life inherent in the bodies of the tortured and the oppressed. You shall live therein, not die therein: And you shall choose life.

Nietzsche's name even became embroiled in the controversy that engulfed the Jewish community in Palestine following the murder of Lord Moyne by LEHI activists. At a meeting of the inner cabinet of the Zionist Executive in 1944, a leading Labour leader, Eliyahu Golomb, linked the assassination of Lord Moyne to the admiration felt by LEHI and by Eldad in particular, for the Nietzschean concept of the "Superman". Eldad's "new Hebrew" sought, he alleged, to create an impossible link between Nietzscheanism and Hebrew nationalism. Eldad had therefore always preferred Berdichevsky's "wisdom of life" to Ahad Ha-am's "professional wisdom". Berdichevsky alone had truly managed to ascend to Nietzschean solitude. For Eldad, he was closer to the truth than Ahad Ha-am. While Eldad is usually considered an integral nationalist, it would probably be more accurate to see him, like Berdichevsky, as part of the category of "individual nationalism".

His ideology was a form of nationalism which emphasized the importance of the individual, of style and existential experience.[53]

The fate of Berdichevsky in Hebrew culture had some parallels to that of Nietzsche in European thought – both became a public myth in the collective memory. This makes it easier to understand how Nietzsche and Berdichevsky could have been adopted by diverse ideological camps, who sought to create the "Superman" or the "new Hebrew" in their own image. The efficacy of Nietzsche in this regard was due mainly to his style and this is probably the key to his enormous influence on writers, thinkers and artists. In this sense, Nietzsche was an inveterate modern, since modernism is "more a search for style than any particular style".[54] Berdichevsky eventually abandoned Nietzsche, just as one discards a ladder which is no longer needed. The literary critic, Lahover, relates that Berdichevsky was grateful to him for cleansing him of his "original sin with Nietzsche".

A chronological and thematic examination of the influence exerted by Nietzsche, one of the major philosophers of modern times, on the emergence of Zionism may hold important lessons for grasping the pattern of its ideological development. In this article I have attempted to raise some key points in the history of the reception of Nietzsche in modern Hebrew culture, concentrating on fundamental debates: tradition versus innovation, particularism versus universalism, individualism versus collectivism and the "new Hebrew" versus the Jew. Such tensions accompanied modern Jewish nationalism from the outset and fuelled the development of myths which were often refined in the crucible of Nietzschean categories.

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Ben-Gurion's Mythopoetics

ZE'EV TZAHOR

Myth is no less a truth than history, but it is an additional truth, a different truth, a truth which resides alongside the truth; a non-objective human truth, but a truth which makes its way to the historical truth.
S. Yizhar

When he was 18 years old, David Ben-Gurion wrote to his close friend Shmuel Fox, "I hate rhetoric".[1] This letter is one of the earliest examples we have of Ben-Gurion's writing, which continued for the next 69 years, containing hundreds of thousands of printed pages in the Ben-Gurion Archive in Sde-Boker. They portray a leader whom Dan Miron has characterized as "the practically-minded politician *par excellence* in modern Jewish history".[2] His letters, writings, speeches, articles and numerous books reveal a skilled writer, his Hebrew script unhampered, his points clear and direct. Though not sparing with words, Ben-Gurion's style was, on the whole, sparse and unencumbered – as though it had been deliberately purged of any symbolic, imagistic or metaphoric elements. One may search his entire corpus for a trace of allusive language and hidden meanings, but to no avail. His few romantic letters tend towards banality. If Ben-Gurion was blessed with an imagination, it is not apparent in his writing. As a rule he was unmoved by natural wonders and exquisite landscapes. In his many letters dealing with his activities, there is a paucity of sensual expressions: they are almost wholly bereft of colours, fragrances and tastes. For someone who frequently told the story of his own life,[3] the absence of references to personal aspirations, as well as to legends, folk-tales and folklore, is conspicuous. Even Ben-Gurion's "I" is impersonal; his biographical exposure is merely perfunctory as everywhere he appears as a member of a group or as the agent of a collective. His personal longings are superseded by the national yearning for redemption.

The few times that he is swept away in his writing reveal a writer with a gift for description. Thus, it would seem that Ben-Gurion consciously avoided pathos and grandiloquence, preferring to adapt his writing to the strictures of a materialist analysis. Yet the mission he set

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himself – the redemption of the Jewish people in their historic homeland – exceeded the bounds of materialism and necessitated the use of a terminology and of values drawn from the realms of the ethical and the sentimental, and, at times, of the mystic and the mythic as well. Thus, for instance, one finds that Ben-Gurion made frequent use of the term "Vision" (*Hazon*) or "Messianic Vision" (*Hazon Meshihi*).[4] In Ben-Gurion's terminology "Vision" does not denote an utopia or an unattainable yearning, but a long-term political plan of action aimed at a well defined, concrete, objective, which lies at the end of a long journey. He sought to delineate this plan from the outset: "In the beginning was the 'Vision'", he declared with pathos.[5] Elsewhere he wrote: "Vision is not an issue of believing, thinking or preaching, rather it is something which one lives, day in and a day out, which focuses all that a man does and accomplishes in his life. It is that to which one's will is unconditionally subjected."[6]

For Ben-Gurion, "Vision" was what materialist movements termed the "Maximum Plan". That is, the programme which set forth long-range goals. For short-range purposes the "Minimum Plan", which deals with courses of immediate action, must suffice.

The intensity of the vision entailed a discussion of subjects such as metaphysics and the place of God. While Ben-Gurion was not an atheist, he could not, as a materialist, accept the straightforward belief in God. He preferred the phrase, "Historical Providence".[7] Despite his propensity for clear writing, this remained an obscure, albeit powerful, phrase.

Ben-Gurion was convinced that "Historical Providence" had destined him to play a leading role in the fulfilment of "The Vision", and he was acutely aware of the difficulties which lay ahead of him. Up until the 1930s, the chief problems were internal: the vast majority of the Jewish people had not joined the Zionist movement, and appeared to have no intention of immigrating to Israel to fulfil the vision. Ben-Gurion believed that exilic life had distorted the Jewish people and afflicted them with blindness. It followed, then, that one of his central roles as a leader was to speak with the people and help them see the light.

Unlike his friends of the Second *Aliya*, and the labour movement, Ben-Gurion did not frequent intimate social gatherings, nor was he associated with groups which performed the ceremonial rite of long soul-searching conversations.[8] In fact, it was not until he joined Sde-Boker, as the 67-year-old prime minister of Israel, that Ben-Gurion became a member of a commune or of any intimate group for that matter. His peers noted that he was distant and removed from social activity in general. Even those who spent many years at close quarters with Ben-Gurion claimed that there was always a barrier of sorts sep-

arating him from those surrounding him.[9] Nevertheless, he possessed a penetrating knowledge of the human soul, and was aware of the importance of the mystical and the irrational in the human consciousness, including the role played by myth.

Ben-Gurion allotted to myth a double role. Its internal function was to open the eyes of the Diaspora Jews, whose consciousness had been distorted by long years of exile. This must be nourished by the past yet face towards the future; through it he emphasized heroic figures and a historic narrative which would foster Jewish pride and constitute a common denominator for a dispersed people. The other, external function was to help legitimize the extraordinary Zionist demand for ownership of the Land of Israel.

Thus, myth can become an instrument in the hands of the mythopoetic leader. Since his message did not aim at eschatological significance, and had no particular ceremonial meaning, it might seem to overstep the narrow definition of the term. In this article, however, myth will be viewed primarily as aetiological, as seeking to educate, clarify and explicate the yearnings of Zionism by means of the past and the collective images drawn from it.

EDUCATION

In 1963, at the time of his final retirement as Prime Minister in favour of the seclusion of Sde-Boker, Ben-Gurion wished to spend time writing his memoirs. This man, who had served as Secretary of the *Histadrut*, Chairman of the Jewish Agency, Prime Minister and Minister of Defence, who was fully aware of the central role he had played in the founding of the State of Israel, claimed that writing his memoirs was the single most important thing he had done up to that point.[10] From the very outset he did not intend to write a personal biography. His is the story of a group of people who underwent a profound metamorphosis, which gave them the privilege to be the founders of a new society. The emphasis of his collectivistic biography is placed on this group's stubborn cleaving to the land, their willingness to make do with very little, their devotion to the needs of the collective, their readiness to sacrifice and, finally, to the historic breakthrough which made the founding of the Israeli state possible. It is not for nothing that Ben-Gurion called his biography *The Renewed State of Israel* (*Medinat Yisrael Ha-mehudeshet*).

Ben-Gurion was a firm believer in the possibility of radical change in human beings and their life-style. It was this belief that guided his decision – immediately after the founding of the state – to open Israel's gates to unselective, mass immigration. The assumption was that life within the Israeli "melting pot" would cause dramatic changes in the

new immigrants. Those entering the melting pot were "human dust", clay in the hands of the potter. Ben-Gurion saw himself as this potter.

In order to build the new Israeli, it was necessary to find a model, a prototypical figure or set of figures to be emulated. Ben-Gurion was admittedly not the first thinker to deal with this question, but his intensive efforts to further this issue, made him one of the most important. The most interesting instance of a figure proposed by Ben-Gurion as an educational prototype for the nation was in fact himself. He never made the slightest effort to downplay his much publicized and highly dramatic move to the heart of the Negev, or the fact that he chose a secluded wooden hut for a home. These were to serve as examples of his private resolution: the move to the desert, the act of settlement, the simple life and the pioneering spirit.

The Israeli youth were his primary objective and in them he invested the greatest effort. Shortly after his move to Sde-Boker he met with a large group of youth in Be'er-Sheva and, in a somewhat intimate tone, he shared with them his lifelong belief in "the power of living example, the power of truth which radiates from an exemplary way of life."[11] Two months later, in Nahalal, he drew a didactic distinction between "bad" and "good" youth. The former were urban youth who frequent cafés, theatres and night-clubs, live the life of "restless agitation, temptation and greed, seeking an easy career and a vacuous life." These youngsters read "slick, polluted yellow journals, awash with stories of marital infidelity, sensationalism and pornography". The good youth are the pioneers, living an exemplary life in the Negev settlements, making the wilderness flower.[12] In a programmatic article written at a later date, Ben-Gurion asserted that it was impossible to advocate the concept of a new person verbally – but only through a model, "not by preaching, but by *living example.*"[13] Exemplary living, which serves as a vibrant example, can effect radical change in the people and in their life-styles. If the exemplary figure is properly formed and advanced, then he or she will serve as a role-model for "the immigrant settlements can be just like Degania and Nahalal."

The models which Ben-Gurion promoted were real, not heroic or supernatural gods. They can be defined as mythical due to their glorified status, and their role as prototypes.[14]

GENIUS

Ben-Gurion was *not* an adherent of Ahad Ha-am's philosophy. He did not wish to turn Israel into an exclusive spiritual centre. On the contrary, the state was founded in order to absorb a maximum of Jews, from all walks of life,[15] who would immigrate to Israel in order to live their everyday lives as a healthy society, established on Western-style

political and economic foundations. Yet the return of the Jews to their homeland would bring about the fulfilment of the Vision of "a unique people", destined to be "a light unto the nations".[16] Israel will be "a great world centre of erudition, wisdom, science and research" not because the universities will be the focus of the society, but because of the life-style of society at large, which will emphasize moral virtue and seek "brotherhood among men" while eliminating all societal defects.[17]

The ability of the Jewish people to attain this level is an expression of its special genius. In the first speech Ben-Gurion ever made, as an adolescent in Plonsk, he spoke of the "Hebrew People" as a people of "genius", unique among the nations.[18] Over half a century later his words had hardly changed. "The fact of our historical existence for nearly 4,000 years, that is, both the whole of Jewish history and the rebirth of Israel, constitute, in essence, unique phenomena, unlike anything else in the history of mankind."[19] Elsewhere, he noted with pride that "our importance in human history is in opposite proportion to our size."[20] Like many of his friends, Ben-Gurion was fond of listing the Jewish Nobel Prize winners, and calculating their share among the laureates. It is no coincidence, then, that after the death of Chaim Weizman (Israel's first president), Ben-Gurion offered the presidency to Albert Einstein. This gesture was at once an expression of – and a means of promoting – the genius of the Jewish people.

As a historical materialist, Ben-Gurion sought an explanation for the uniqueness of the Jewish people. He found it in the form of their history, which had always forced them to fight for physical and spiritual survival. He was fond of noting that "of all the other people who lived in the Land of Israel in ancient times, not a trace remains".[21] The series of historical calamities which had befallen the Jews caused them to amass "tremendous forces, the likes of which cannot, perhaps, be found in any other people".[22] It was possible for the Jew, therefore, to "overcome his destiny and the destiny of his people, and to alter the course of the history and of the geography of his ancient homeland."[23]

Ben-Gurion subordinated this capacity to the great Vision. Jewish history, which proves that the Jews have exceptional ability, likewise proves that "everything is malleable, repairable, and the choice is given to man", hence that "nature can be altered".[24] At times, the conclusions he drew from his observations of Jewish genius, were little more than commonplace. In a letter to the American President Dwight D. Eisenhower, Ben-Gurion adduced proof for the uniqueness of the Jews in the form of the disproportionately large number of Israeli agricultural counsellors among those involved in the worldwide aid to Africa. He went on to draw yet another conclusion from this fact, namely, that the Jews possessed the ability to conquer the desert. The Jewish genius, the forces buried within the Jewish people, would be realized in the

Negev. The Jews of Israel would demonstrate their genius by making the barren Negev bloom. Since one third of the world's oil was in the desert, and since most of the deserts were in poor countries, Israel would teach the world to make its deserts bloom, thus feeding the hungry of the world, and, in the process, fulfil its destiny of becoming a "light unto the nations".[25]

When he dealt with subjects that border on the mystical, Ben-Gurion had trouble anchoring his claims in materialistic explanations. From time to time he would admit that concepts such as "the advantage of man" or "the advantage of the Jews" could not bear the scrutiny of rational analysis. It was then that he permitted himself to do away with the materialism which is characteristic of his thought, and to return to the divine voice which addresses the Jew. His careful qualification allows for an alternative to a theistic approach: "There are those who think that the voice originates in the heaven, and there are others who believe it originates in the heart. It is the voice which is important, not the dispute over its origin."[26] In any case, "the revelation of the genius of our people" can be most clearly seen in the Bible, a book "which forged the image of the Jewish nation to a greater extent than did any book shape any other nation".[27]

THE BIBLE

In 1969 Ben-Gurion published *Iyunim Ba-Tanakh* (Biblical Analyses), a summary of his biblical exegesis. The book presented a number of controversial theses,[28] but no one doubted Ben-Gurion's deep familiarity with the Bible, and his ability to employ academic standards in his research. As someone who felt himself politically destined by "Historic Providence" to redeem his people, Ben-Gurion did not have the leisure to pursue purely intellectual matters. The efforts he made in the study of philosophy, history and, above all, the Bible, were meant to aid him in his mission. He studied the Bible since, "the Bible was, without doubt, one of the central agents in the shaping of our nation."[29] He always emphasized that the Bible contained everything from tales of the forefathers who founded the nation, to poetry, wisdom, ethics and daily comportment. With the Bible a continuum began which stretches from Abraham to Spinoza and Einstein. But the Bible teaches about more than just the past – it teaches about the future as well: the future of the Jewish nation and of the entire human race. Careful scrutiny of the Bible will reveal "answers to the two fateful questions facing humanity today: that of capital and labour in society, and the problem of war and peace among nations."[30]

As Prime Minister, Ben-Gurion would write a programmatic article each year and publish it in the government's annual report. These arti-

cles included references to biblical verses which served both as examples and as proof of his claims concerning the past, the present and the future of the State of Israel. Elsewhere he explained this himself as follows:

> The tales of the forefathers 4,000 years ago, the story of Abraham's life and travels, the wanderings of the Children of Israel in the desert after the exodus from Egypt, the wars waged by Joshua and the Judges who succeeded him, the lives and deeds of Saul, David and Solomon, the tales of Uziah King of Judah and Jeroboam II King of Israel, all these are more relevant, more current, more fascinating and more vital for the new generation which was born and raised in Israel, than all the speeches and disputes of the Basel congresses put together.[31]

The fact that generations of Bible scholars had preceded him in no way deterred Ben-Gurion's belief that he could make a novel contribution in the field of biblical research. This belief was predicated on the claim that only a Jew living and labouring in the Land of Israel could truly understand the Bible. All the biblical commentators – including the Jews – who wrote in the diaspora, could not attain a profound understanding of the biblical text, that had been written on the soil of Israel. The intimate familiarity with the geographic, climatic and historic uniqueness of Israel, along with the lived experience and the special bond to this special land, allowed for a distinct understanding of the Bible – one which is clearer and truer. Thus Ben-Gurion writes: "For two thousand years there have been commentaries written on the Book of Joshua ... but the commentary this book received in form of the battles of the War of Independence ... overshadows them all."[32] The Bible was, in Ben-Gurion's eyes, the ultimate scientific authority, perhaps more authoritative than the learned science of the research institutes. "This is the single most trustworthy source of knowledge concerning Israel"; from it one can learn more about the hidden treasures of the Negev – "whose stones are as iron and from whose mountains shall you mine copper"[33] – than from any expert. By comparing the exodus from Egypt, the return to Zion after the Babylonian exile, and the mass immigration after the founding of the State, one finds that the Jewish genius contains a yearning for liberty and independence.[34] The settlement in the Negev in the days of the Judean and Israelite kingdoms constitutes scientific proof of the potential contained in the desert.[35] This approach motivated him to aid Professor Michael Even-Ari in building an experimental farm which would try and reconstruct the ancient agricultural techniques employed in the Negev.[36] In time, when he began to abandon the dogmatic socialism of his early political days,[37] he used the Bible as a philosophic-ethical

source: the creation of man in the image of God became an ethical dictum from which the Jewish people derived the values of fraternity, equality and justice. This idea did not originate with the French Revolution or Karl Marx, but was spread throughout the world by the prophets of Israel.[38]

Ben-Gurion's most significant (and controversial) contribution to biblical exegesis was his claim that the ancient Hebrew tribes never went into exile in Egypt. They remained faithful to their land and to their soil. It was only Joseph's family that emigrated from Israel. The founder of the new faith, Moses, forged the monotheistic faith in the desert, and it was Joshua who spread it among the tribes who had remained in Israel.[39] This theory conforms with Ben-Gurion's idea that many of the Arabs inhabiting present-day Israel stem from these tribes;[40] it also served as proof, for Ben-Gurion, that the exilic condition is not an inherent aspect of the Jewish people, but a deviation from their true nature. It contains a possible solution to the Arab question. The events of the time of Moses and Joshua can occur again today; the Arabs, who are flesh of our flesh, can adapt once again, assimilate and return to our midst. This is, admittedly, far-fetched, but as stated above, the Vision is not a utopian ideal, but a political "Maximum Programme". With regard to the matter at hand, preliminary inquiries were made concerning the possibility that the Bedouin tribes in the Negev might return to the Jewish people.[41] Ben-Gurion utilized the Bible in establishing his mode of negotiation with neighbouring Arab countries, and in assessing the prospects of reaching a peace with them.[42]

In the name of the effort to "renew our days as of old", that is "to return to the labour and to the soil of our homeland",[43] Ben-Gurion turned a blind eye to a period which he felt deserved to fall into oblivion – the period of Israel's exile. Among Ben-Gurion's hundreds of articles and the thousands of historical references in them, there is hardly a single positive remark to be found concerning the course of Jewish history outside of the Land of Israel.

The Bible is not only the philosophical-ethical source of Jewish and universal humanism, not simply a scientific authority regarding the land and its inhabitants, it is also the common denominator for construction of the renewed State of Israel. Ben-Gurion was aware of the differences in culture and mentality between the various groups which made up Israeli society. The Bible was, in his eyes, a work accepted by all, which could serve as a basis for the unity of the Jewish people as they return to their homeland. Thus it is "inconceivable that education in Israel not be based on the Bible".[44] The Bible was also his main source for heroes. Who was better suited than the ancient forefathers of the nation to play a central role in the newly revitalized myth?

HEROES

Despite the centrality of the Bible in his thought – and perhaps because of it – Ben-Gurion made selective use of it in educational matters. His heroes were those men who had conquered the land – first and foremost Joshua; those like David and Solomon who had expanded the kingdom; and those who possessed a collective-nationalistic vision, such as Saul and Uziah King of Judah. Ben-Gurion was not bound by the religious criteria of the Biblical editors. Thus, Jeroboam II the King of Israel, who did "evil in the eyes of the Lord", earns high marks with Ben-Gurion for having enlarged the kingdom and conquered Damascus.[45] In the works of the prophets, by contrast, he emphasized their striving for peace. Isaiah was one of the biblical authors whom Ben-Gurion most frequently cited; he considered him "a visionary" thanks to his enduring vision that "nation shall not lift sword upon nation nor study war no more".[46] Other heroes had brought about breakthroughs in the history of the Jewish people. Abraham, a righteous and heroic man and the founder of the nation, or Moses who planted in the people the monotheistic faith. The amount of attention accorded to Moses and Aaron in Ben-Gurion's writings might lead one to think that they serve as more than just exemplary figures and a collective common denominator for the renewed nation. Might it be that Ben-Gurion wished to see in them an example for himself and for his personal role in the process of redemption?

The selection of heroes, along with the emphasis on their importance and their incorporation in the national consciousness, did not end with the Bible. When, at the time of the Second *Aliya*, he decided to hebraicize his name, he took the name Ben-Gurion, after one of the heroes of Jerusalem at the time of the Revolt against the Romans. Heroism was a central and recurrent motif in the fostering of the Jewish historic patrimony. In this ancient history we find a great number of rebels, especially the Macabbee family from Modiin who led the revolt against Antiochus, the Zealots who rebelled against Roman rule in the Second Temple, and Bar-Kochba with his warriors. In a pamphlet issued by the Central Committee of *Poalei Zion*, apparently written by Ben-Gurion in his first years in Palestine, he turned to his generation and asked with great pathos – "where are you sons of the Maccabees, offsprings of Bar-Giora and Bar-Kochba. Come take the place of the fallen heroes, who fell in the struggle for their liberty and their people."[47]

His admiration for great thinkers was renowned. Ben-Gurion studied Plato's writings passionately, was steeped in the works of Spinoza, and even learned Sanskrit in order to better understand Buddhism. But this was not learning for learning's sake; it had an objective which

would further the process of redemption. Plato supplied him with concepts for understanding the role of the leader, Spinoza gave him arguments against the Diaspora and Buddhism opened before him a portal to Asia, where Israel was to be assimilated economically and culturally. Ben-Gurion's practical approach to the realms of thought and knowledge, fostered in him a propensity for rating historical figures. In his evaluation, Rabbi Akiva appears as the "greatest figure in post-destruction Jewry". The reason was practical – Akiva was not satisfied with exclusive Torah study, but had actively participated in the Bar-Kochba revolt. It was in the service of the revolt against Roman rule that he gave his life.[48]

It should be noted that the heroic saga deals with heroes and not with sites of heroism. Masada, which holds a place of honour in the education of Israeli youth, is mentioned only rarely. On the contrary, Ben-Gurion explicitly stated on several occasions: "neither Massada nor Vichy"[49] – that is, he fervently repudiated heroism which was not aimed at an objective from which one could extract some benefit – political or otherwise. The story of Masada ends with utter destruction and collective suicide, a barren heroism which bears no fruit, while he saw himself as a leader of renaissance and renewal. He was, likewise, opposed to total subjugation *à la Vichy*. He was not among the first to ascent the snake-path to Masada. The first time he saw the fortress was from the air, in 1949, on his way to the Dead Sea. In his diary he noted, "From above, the cliff seemed small and could not have contained a great camp."[50]

As we have seen, Ben-Gurion examined everything he said and wrote quite thoroughly. His words were aimed at specific objectives and were, therefore, free of unchecked insights or chance phrases. In his choice of heroes one can detect a surprising degree of consistency, whose roots reach back to the days before he entered politics. This choice gives us an indication of the considerations which guided his mythopoetics when he became a national leader. In an early letter to his friend Fox, written in 1904, he mentioned the Macabbees, King David and Rabbi Akiva, who died while reciting the word "One" of the prayer "Shma".[51] These heroes would accompany him for the rest of his life. In the same letter to Fox they served to illustrate the greatness of another hero – the greatest of them all – the founder of the Zionist movement, Theodor Herzl. This was the man who combined "the might of a Macabbee, the cunning of David, the bravery of Rabbi Akiva ... with the humility of Hillel, the beauty of Judah Hanassi and the burning love of Judah Ha-levi. It is but once in several millennia that such a wondrous man is born."[52] In later years, Ben-Gurion recalled that this messianic image of Herzl had been instilled in him when he was a boy of 10.[53] But as the years passed, Herzl's image faded

somewhat and no longer held so central a place in the pantheon of heroes Ben-Gurion had constructed. He was neither Joshua nor David, neither Judah Maccabee nor Rabbi Akiva and Bar-Kochba. He was a statesman, a pioneer among Zionist diplomats, but true pioneering necessitated personal realization of ideals. In the ethos suggested by Ben-Gurion, authentic pioneering was only possible in the Land of Israel.

PIONEERING FORERUNNERS

According to Ben-Gurion, the Land of Israel was never completely abandoned. Jews continued to inhabit it and made pilgrimages to it throughout the centuries. Some of them abandoned their faith, but held on to their land. According to his outlook, Zionist historiography, which sought to negate all that had preceded Zionism, was misleading. He was aware that he himself had been an adherent of this historiography. In his youth, he dated his letters according to a new calendar which begins with the first Zionist Congress in 1897. Thus, the year 1904 is "year seven" of the Congress Era.[54] He further contributed to the periodization of the waves of immigration to Israel according to the accepted Zionist historiography beginning with the First *Aliya* in 1882 followed by the Second *Aliya* of the labourers in 1903, and so forth. In later days, this periodization seemed to him "sectarian" and political.

The change in Ben-Gurion's historiographic outlook took place at a relatively early stage. In the late 1920s he began to shift the focus of his political activity "from the [socio-economic] class to the people", from a politics centred on the labour movement to the wider domain of the Jewish people. This shift, which gained momentum in the 1930s, entailed wide-reaching conceptual changes. The main changes were ideological and organizational, but they were also about creating a mythology. From the 1940s Ben-Gurion began slowly but steadily to undermine the conceptual structure fostered by his own movement (and by himself), according to which the Second *Aliya* signified a new beginning, antithetical to its predecessor. The first step in this historiographic revision was to promote the national role of Yemenite Jewry. The centrality of Yemenite Jews in Ben-Gurion's outlook was to become a part of Israeli folklore: they were transformed into the first group of immigrants to Israel and its leading pioneers. Since he could not completely erase the role of the Zionist immigration in the process of redemption, he allotted it the role of "renewers of agriculture and labour".[55] This relatively modest role was not accepted in Israeli historiography, which continued, much to Ben-Gurion's consternation, to draw a clear line between the "old *Yishuv*" and the "new, Zionist

Yishuv", and to give primacy to the pioneers of the Second *Aliya*.[56]

Ben-Gurion's decision to devote himself to the writing of his memoirs showed the importance he ascribed to historiography and his feeling that it was erroneous and skewed. Indeed, a short time before leaving the government in 1963, he took a special vacation in order to concentrate on a wide-ranging and independent research project. With this enterprise, which was to be based on scientific criteria, he sought to verify his historiographic claims. The article "Rishonim" (Pioneering Forerunners) presents a summary written by Ben-Gurion, fully conscious that he is in the autumn of his political life, and engaged in shaping the historic meta-narrative in which he had played the central role. He had full confidence in his ability to understand the process of national renewal. He considered himself an authority "regarding the study of the Jewish nation" since "only the generation which renewed its independent national life in its ancient homeland can understand the spirit and the soul of its predecessors who laboured, battled, conquered, created, worked, suffered, contemplated, sang and prophesied in the same homeland."[57] From his own innovative perspective he sought to emphasize that the terms "first, second and third *Aliya*" are misleading.[58] According to Ben-Gurion, the first *Aliya* occurred when the children of Israel left Egypt and came to Israel, where they found the ancient Hebrews; the second *Aliya* occurred when the Jews returned from Babylon after the destruction of the First Temple. They, too, found in Israel those who had refused to leave it. In the twentieth century, Jews were witnessing "the third return unto Zion".[59] Ben-Gurion now emphasized that the pioneers of the third return to Zion encountered Jews in the Land of Israel – Jews who had been living in Israel prior to the "first" wave of immigration in 1881. While they were not part of the Zionist-pioneer sector, they "merit our admiration and esteem",[60] and ought not be treated with the scorn meted out to them by Zionist writings.

In formulating his historiographic revision, Ben-Gurion did not hesitate to attack knowingly the Zionist "men of action" and especially the "experts". Among his entourage there circulated a story concerning a visit he had made to Makhtesh Ramon. Standing at the edge of the precipice, Ben-Gurion – who was usually unmoved by landscapes – stared at the huge crater yawning beneath him. Suddenly he turned to one of his aides and demanded, "Why haven't we filled the *Makhtesh* with water?" "That is impossible", came the reply. "Who says?!" asked Ben-Gurion. "The experts", responded the aide. "Well, why don't we replace the experts?!" he shot back defiantly.[61] Time and again he repeated the fact that the "men of action" had opposed the founding of the State, the mass immigration and the settlement of the Lakhish strip. In a like manner, he delineated a long list of experts and

men of action who were actually "men of obstacles".[62] He distinguished between two groups: on the one hand those who are blessed with analytic capabilities and are able to diagnose a given situation with great perspicacity, but who become enslaved to the results of their analysis (as an example he cited Ahad Ha-am). On the other, there were the "visionaries and revolutionaries" who never ignore the given reality but who were able to look far "beyond this reality".[63]

The pioneering forerunners (Rishonim) were neither such "men of action" nor experts, but pursued the dictates of their heart and their vision. Despite their being pioneers, they did not create *ex nihilo*. Instead, they formed a link in a long chain for they have been "trained towards their pioneering enterprise by many generations of education".[64] The important task of promoting an education which yields pioneers, determined to a great extent Ben-Gurion's mythopoetic activity. He spared no effort in finding references and data, in learning, updating and comparing. His library, which included some 30,000 volumes, was a crucial resource. By subordinating his research to the educational needs of his time, he could stray from the hard facts and sometimes even alter them in a manner which better suited the didactic objectives of his research. One of the examples of this phenomenon was the question of primacy, that is, to determine which groups constitute the "Pioneering Forerunners". Among the forerunners mentioned by Ben-Gurion one can find Hasidic and Misnagdic rabbis, members of both the old and the new *Yishuv*, Jews from Yemen, Russia, North Africa, Iraq, Romania and France, the founders of Petah-Tikvah and of Tel-Aviv, and, of course, the Zionist labour movement. At times, his desire to maintain a symmetry distorted the true impact of the heroes cited in these different examples. In an article in which he mentions the Labour pioneers, he lists the contributions of those who founded "Nahalal, Degania, Ein-Harod, Tirat-Zvi, Mishmar Haemek and Hafetz Hayyim",[65] each of which belonged to the first settlement movement.[66] In Ben-Gurion's ideology, the continuum of forerunners becomes a symmetry of sorts which allots an equal weight to the single settlement of the non-Zionist, orthodox *Poalei Agudat Israel* (Hafetz Hayyim) as against a whole settlement movement which includes dozens of kibbutzim founded by the socialist Zionists. As always, this is no random set of names which surfaced in the process of writing. In various speeches the exact same settlements are listed, not one more and not one less.[67]

The concept of pioneering forerunners was expanded by Ben-Gurion to include those who immigrated to Israel in every generation and from all parts of the Diaspora, people from all social, religious and ideological sectors of the Jewish people. They "experienced the bitterness of hardships which befall the first builders of a state: they did bat-

tle with the forces of nature and the desert wilderness, fought hostile neighbours and rampant malaria, and faced a lack of water and a state of constant distress and danger to life and property."[68] This description, usually reserved for pioneers, is not here restricted to a single group, but extended to all Jews who braved the dangers inherent in immigrating to Israel. With the exception of a few key figures, Ben-Gurion's heroes are usually anonymous. Their heroism is *collective* and finds expression in their very decision to immigrate to Israel and to make it their home. Interestingly, their other characteristics are collective as well. Thus Ben-Gurion labels all the members of the Second *Aliya* "men of strife and of contention".[69] In speaking of pioneers from another realm – the soldiers of the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) – he tends to get carried away and falls into fantastic descriptions. In a letter to Nathan Rotenstreich, in which he described the 1956 Suez War, he evokes the halo which shone on the heads of the IDF troops "as though their parents had been present at the revelation on Mount Sinai".[70] These anonymous heroes form a link in the continuum which originates with the ancient forefathers of the nation, who immigrated to Israel, took the land as their patrimony and tenaciously clung to it. The chain continues with the renewing pioneers – Ben-Gurion himself and his peers – and now the heroes are the new immigrants. This line of heroism is not the exclusive holding of the famous heroes – they are merely symbols of it. Heroism is an organic part of the Jewish genius, but it can be manifested only in the Land of Israel.

LAND

The descriptions of the Land of Israel in Ben-Gurion's writings contrast with his usually precise and judicious language. Even before he saw it with his own eyes, he knew the land to be "wonderful, the land of poetry and truth, of flowers and the visions of visionaries, there shall we behold a wondrous sky radiating pure azure luminosity, there shall we hear the babble of the holy river which ages ago heard the song of the shepherds and their innocent, enchanted love."[71] There, in the land of Israel, the nation – which in its exilic state "inhabits the grave" and is in a state of "morbid sleep", will awaken. Years later, Ben-Gurion recounted how the image of the Land of Israel was etched in his consciousness at the tender age of three. In his early days, he had imagined its landscapes after the manner of the embroidery on the curtain of the Torah Ark in the Plonsk synagogue. He could not recall precisely whether it was a lion leaning on a date palm or perhaps something similar; in any case it was an impressive work which stirred in him a terrible longing for the land of his forefathers.[72] The image which was set in his mind prior to his immigration to Israel, was of a

land which had been razed and now lay barren.

The phrases "a razed land" and "barren wilderness" appear frequently in Ben-Gurion's writings. But at the same time, and occasionally in the same text, we find phrases such as "the land of flowers and sun, ever-green trees and richly hued fields."[73] One way or another, the force which the landscape and the qualities of the land exerted on Ben-Gurion remained constant, from the days before he had set eyes on it and after he was intimately familiar with its landscapes. For Ben-Gurion it is "the land in which all the cultures will come together and from it will emerge mankind's ultimate genius, to spread its rule over the entire world". It will be "the focal point of the whole world" but under one condition – that the land be managed by "its children". For if, once again, the children of Israel cease to inhabit the land – it will become "bereft of life" and be transformed into "a heap of ruins".[74]

From his childhood in Plonsk to his last days, Ben-Gurion was convinced that "the internal structure of our homeland is unlike any other land on the face of the earth" and that in Israel there is "a wealth of climates, landscapes and beneficent qualities".[75] He also believed that there was a connection between a landscape and the traits of the people who grow up in that landscape. The tremendous, unparalleled role that the Jewish people played in the history of the human spirit and culture, is a result of the mutual interaction between the people and the land.[76] Both elements – land and people – are necessary conditions for this unique contribution to come about, but only the combination of both is a sufficient condition. The Jews of the Diaspora are incapable of such a collective contribution to human culture, just as a contribution of universal significance by the Arabs of Israel is inconceivable. As far as Ben-Gurion was concerned, the role of the Arabs in the history of the Land of Israel was that of destroyers. At times he went so far as to state that until the arrival of the new Hebrew, the "tiller from the People of Israel", the expanses of the land were "barren".[77]

Only rarely did Ben-Gurion get carried away and write descriptions drenched with light, colours mists and even smells. Usually this occurred when he described the physical characteristics of the Land of Israel. Thus, for instance, the special smell of the land "rises from every handful of earth".[78] There is a difference in the intensity of the landscape in different areas of the land, and this had left its mark on the inhabitants. "The plainsmen are more cultured, more spoiled, light of foot and soft of heart, while the hillsmen are rough, simple, brave and rooted in their soil. This difference has not been blurred until this day, neither among the Jews nor among the Arabs".[79] This was not just a piece of fanciful penmanship. Ben-Gurion himself believed in the myth which he had helped to create. He was indeed convinced that

there was a difference between the Judeans, who are "pusillanimous", and the "fierce" Galileans.[80] His faith was so complete, that as part of the educational task of shaping a new Hebrew, Ben-Gurion decided, before all else, to shape himself. This approach guided his decision to move to the Galilean settlement Sejara, shortly after he arrived in Palestine. He believed that it was necessary that the new Hebrew be less cultivated, less spoiled, that he become a fierce, simpler person, rooted in his soil. It seems that this ideal was deeply impressed in Ben-Gurion's consciousness and was expressed in his daily life and behaviour.

The myth which deals with the land, with its uniqueness and its influence on the inhabitants, is not the fruit of Ben-Gurion's original philosophy. Rather it is an internalization of a series of images, legends and prejudices, mixed with some ignorance. In one of his early letters from Israel (1906), the youth wrote of "the foul miasma which rises from the fallow earth when it is ploughed for the first time in 2,000 years",[81] thus echoing the belief shared by some Zionists of the time, that between the destruction of the Second Temple and the new Zionist settlement the land had become a crust under which noxious gases accumulated. Experts and scientists no less blindly followed this imagery. For many years, respected men of science held that widespread planting of eucalyptus trees in malaria-ridden areas would help stop the disease.[82]

Such a combination of indifference to nature and landscapes, and simultaneous wonder at the beauty of the Land of Israel is probably only possible in a man who dedicated his entire life to a single goal. Ben-Gurion did at times allow himself to be carried to the spiritual heights or to succumb to the emotional experience brought on by the encounter with the majesty and the beauty of nature. But he did not forswear the instrumental aspect of this emotional experience. He describes the land of Israel in hyperbolic terms even before he had laid eyes on it. This description is repeated after he reaches Israel and over the course of many decades. At times it seems as though the landscape of Israel is not a sight he observes, but a yearning in his soul.

The special status of the Galilee – and later of the Negev – in Ben-Gurion's mythology, underlines even more his complex attitude towards Jerusalem. Like his friends of the Second *Aliya*, Ben-Gurion often hiked throughout Israel. The routes they took demonstrate a clear preference for the Galilee, the Sea of Galilee and even for distant Mount Hermon. Jerusalem does not head the list, indeed, at times it is at the very bottom, at other times it does not even appear.[83] Ben-Gurion lived in Jerusalem in the days of the Second *Aliya*, but his attitude towards the city during this period is unclear. He allots it no role in his mythology of the Land of Israel. It almost seems as if prior to the

founding of the Jewish State, Ben-Gurion, like many of his friends, did not view Jerusalem as an organic part of the new land. It is, however, doubtful that a line can be drawn from this fact to his willingness to accept, at two different junctures, a Jewish state which did not include Jerusalem (the Peel Plan of 1937 and the Partition Plan of 1947). In stark contrast, during the War of Independence, Ben-Gurion devoted most of his attention to Jerusalem.[84] After the founding of Israel, Ben-Gurion allotted Jerusalem a central place. The city was widely recognized as the capital of the Jewish people, and had over the centuries acquired a profound symbolic meaning. That was one of the reasons for Ben-Gurion's decision to declare Jerusalem the capital of the Jewish state. This decision was, nonetheless, made against the advice of a number of his top ministers who felt that the symbolic importance of Jerusalem could not justify the anger such a move would provoke in parts of the Christian and Muslim world. There were logistic problems as well: Jerusalem lay at the end of a road which was controlled by Arab forces on either side, making it difficult for the city – isolated from the rest of the Jewish State – to serve as its capital. In this case, Ben-Gurion preferred emotional, axiological and symbolic considerations to the political and functional arguments.

Thus, many years after he had left Sejara, there transpired a change in Ben-Gurion's thinking regarding the place and importance of Jerusalem. This change was the outcome of a twin process. His perceptions as to his target audience had shifted and he had also re-evaluated the role of myth and the means by which it was to be transmitted. During the Second *Aliya*, his audience had been the other members of the *Poalei Zion* party in Palestine and those overseas party members in the Diaspora about to immigrate there. They constituted a small, clearly defined group of young Zionists, attuned to revolutionary ideas and willing to pay a high personal price in the service of the great cause. Zionism involved national, social and personal redemption, but it was in no way related to the religious ideal of "reinstating the glory of old". In the symbolic framework of the pioneers, Jerusalem represented the antithesis of all that they believed in: the city, which was populated by Jews of the old *Yishuv* who lived off philanthropic donations, was a symbol of the benighted orthodoxy and of an unproductive way of life.

The socialist revolutionaries of the Second *Aliya* spoke with great concern of the possibility that the Jewish ghetto might be transposed from the Diaspora to Israel. The new Jew, the Hebrew, was to be a man rooted in the earth, in the soil of his homeland. He must discover within himself new forces, including physical strength. He would become antithesis of the exilic Jews – among them the population of Jerusalem who had preserved the *modus vivendi* of the Litvak *Yeshivas*

and the Hasidic courts of the Carpathian Mountains. The Land of Israel would awaken within the new Jew "an active, creative and conquering spiritual might, a might which is not satisfied with surrendering to fate, but seeks to subdue fate itself and to alter it."[85] The alpha and omega of the transformation of the old Jew into the new Hebrew was to be found in "Hebrew villages erected on the abandoned and uninhabited marshlands, desert sands and rugged terrain."[86] Jerusalem was not part of this corrective framework.

Ben-Gurion's conceptual shift "from class to people" entailed reconciling himself to the fact that not all Jews were going to immigrate to Israel in the near future. Moreover, only a small fraction of those who did so would voluntarily opt for life in a village in the marsh or desert. The myth of the fierce spirited Galilean which was formed at Sejara no longer sufficed. At this time, Ben-Gurion had become a political leader who spent time in London and New York. He now realized that few in the Diaspora were likely to share or even understand his myth of Galilean bravery, and of these even fewer would be willing to make the sacrifice of those who settled Sejara.

Ben-Gurion was willing to give up Sejara and the Sea of Galilee as the ideological foci of Zionism. Tel-Aviv and Jerusalem did not admittedly represent his ideal and they remained outside his Land of Israel mythology. But they did become the main centres of immigrant absorption, the chief demographic bases of the new state and, in the process, the most important reservoir of Zionist forces of that era. Some time after he had displaced his ideological focus from class to the people, he also shifted his main activity from the *Histadrut* to the political leadership of the Jewish Agency for Palestine. From the second half of the 1930s his central objective was the immediate founding of a Jewish state. Tel-Aviv and Jerusalem became increasingly important to the realization of this central objective.

ARMY

Ben-Gurion's activity and involvement with the security forces has received a great deal of attention. He was one of only few members of the small group to which he belonged when he immigrated to Palestine, who were not accepted into *Ha-shomer*, the first clandestine Jewish military organization in the land. On the other hand, he helped found the Palestinian Jewish Brigades in the United States during the First World War, arriving in Palestine in the service of the British army. In his latter years he recalled that he had been fond of the uniforms, the daily roll call and even the salutes.[87] Although the *Hagana* (Jewish Defence Force) was tied to the *Histadrut* – which he headed – he devoted scant attention to it. He never participated in activities initi-

ated by the *Hagana*, not even in the symbolic act which his friends so loved: waiting in the dark for the arrival of ships bearing illegal immigrants, helping them disembark and leading them to a safe haven in Palestine.

Ben-Gurion's uneasy personal relationship with the local organizations which tended to the security needs of the settlers, does not, however, reflect the attention he paid to fostering the importance of security issues. The saga of Hebrew heroism played a crucial role in his conception. He had personally claimed to be the first sentinel (*Shomer*) in Sejara[88] which was "the first settlement to instate Jewish sentinels and the first to suffer the casualties of this method of defence."[89] Although the claim itself is dubious, there is no doubt that Ben-Gurion did participate in the defence of Sejara and witnessed, during an organized Arab raid, the death of one of the defenders who stood next to him. It is characteristic of Ben-Gurion to go to great lengths in describing this event, which acquired, with the years that dramatic air which was to characterize the central motifs in creating the saga of Hebrew heroism.[90]

There are several features in this saga of Hebrew heroism. The most important motif is that of the "few against the many". Ben-Gurion was not interested, here, in estimates based on the actual number of troops in battle but rather with the demographic potential of each side. This outlook is most clearly manifested with regard to the War of Independence, where "we stood as few facing the many, 650,000 against thirty million".[91] Time and again he used the phrase "one against forty – and victory was ours". Repeatedly, he described the Arab advantages in manpower, equipment, arms, training and a professional command.[92] When dealing with this topic, Ben-Gurion's usual precision with numbers and facts gave way to indiscretion. Thus, he reported to the Interim State Council, in June 1948, that Israel was battling five Arab states and proceeded to list them: Lebanon, Syria, Transjordan, Iraq and Egypt.[93] Yet in his public addresses of the day he spoke of the Israeli army which withstood seven Arab states.[94] He attributes the incredible ability of the few to brave the overwhelming force of the many, to the Jewish genius and to the "spiritual superiority" of the Jewish forces.[95]

The second element in Ben-Gurion's myth is his exaggerated emphasis on the volunteer spirit of Israeli youth during the various wars, and especially during the 1948 War of Independence. The War of Independence broke out some six months before the founding of Israel so that the defence of the land had to be maintained on a volunteer basis. In internal discussions Ben-Gurion in fact expressed dissatisfaction with the rate of enlistment and therefore with the number of volunteers. But he did not express these feelings in public. Instead

he emphasized in his speeches those who had enlisted and spoke of their courage. The heroic myth was fully exploited when he spoke of the Jewish volunteers from around the world. He was not referring to the new immigrants who had acquired military training in immigrant camps before they arrived in Israel, but to volunteers who came to Israel to assist in the battle for the land. He declared that volunteers had come from 52 states,[96] among them officers and soldiers, sailors and pilots. From his speeches one almost gets the impression that the role of these volunteers was so important that it contradicts the previous claim – that of the few against the many.

According to Ben-Gurion, it was the volunteers who came from the Diaspora who plugged the gaps in training, command and professionalism. But this was not the case. The number of overseas volunteers was disappointing, and, in general, the incidence of voluntarism in 1948 was no more than partial at best. Among those volunteers whose help was most needed, such as military professionals and especially pilots, part of those who came from overseas to fight for Israel (but not to live in it) were not Jewish. Some were adventurers, while other professionals (pilots for instance) received large payments. It was only the power of myth which transformed these mercenaries into volunteers. There were, of course, Jews who came to fight for the Jewish state, but they were few and their military influence, while important, was limited. Ben-Gurion situated them along one of the central axes of the myth of Hebrew heroism; their willingness to voluntarily go to war for a state forged in fire made them a symbol of "the wondrous unity and the shared destiny of the Jewish people".[97] It is noteworthy that, unlike his peers, Ben-Gurion ignored one of the most troubling phenomena of the day: the fact that in Tel-Aviv, a mere 30 minutes from the brutal battles being waged for control of the route to Jerusalem, those who had not volunteered continued their lives as normal as if the State of Israel was not fighting for its very survival.[98]

The third element in the saga of Hebrew heroism was the willingness to sacrifice. It should be noted that in general Ben-Gurion dealt with bravery and self-sacrifice in a restrained manner. He did not often tell the story of Tel-Hai, was unimpressed with the Israeli volunteer paratroopers who were dropped behind enemy lines in Nazi Europe, and did not give prominence to the heroic deeds of individuals in Israel's wars. Ben-Gurion's idea of heroism was more collective; it flowed from within, from the historic fact of Jews returning to their homeland. Heroism was never valued in and of itself. The role of the military was viewed as merely instrumental. The day would come – and there was a period when Ben-Gurion believed that day to be close at hand – when the army would undergo retraining and devote itself to agriculture. The yearning, then, was for redemption, at which time

there would be no need for wars and heroism.[99]

In the saga which Ben-Gurion wished to inculcate in the rejuvenated Israeli society, a central role was given to ancient heroes. Still, the admiration for Moses and Joshua, David and Solomon, Rabbi Akiva and Bar-Kochba, at no point became religious adulation and it had no ritual significance. This myth, then, did not transform its heroes into immortals. On the contrary, they are depicted as very human and more as images to be emulated. The heroes of the Ben-Gurion mythology are scions of the Land of Israel. They form an uninterrupted chain from Abraham to Rabbi Akiva, a chain which is renewed with the first Yemenite settlers and other pioneers of the modern era. This renewal erased in one stroke 1,800 years of exile. The soldiers of the IDF became, in this myth, a link in the chain which passes from the Hasmoneans, the Zealots and the Bar-Kochba rebels to modern Zionism.

But this continuity did not materialize of its own volition. Tens of generations of exilic life had turned the Jews into "human dust". The return to the historic continuum which had occurred in the Land of Israel necessitated a profound intervention in moulding the lives and the values of those immigrating to Israel. Familiar models for emulation must be set before them, given pride of a place and emphasized as particularly relevant. This ideology engendered Ben-Gurion's intensive study of the Bible, Jewish history and the history of the Land of Israel.

Despite his special status as the charismatic Prime Minister of the Jewish State, Ben-Gurion was conscious of the fact that only one third of the population had voted for him. Of the two thirds who had not, many were vehemently opposed to his politics. In order to reach them Ben-Gurion needed the aid of people who could transmit the desired values in the realm of culture and the arts. For this purpose he frequently met with authors, poets and men of letters. He demanded that they enlist in establishing a national consensus to be founded upon a set of clear guidelines drawn from the distant and recent past, which could constitute a model to be emulated. He saw nothing wrong with the fact that a Prime Minister gathers a group of writers together and attempts to influence their artistic creation. He did not hesitate to realize his vision by mythopoetic means.

One of the people with whom Ben-Gurion frequently met was the writer S. Yizhar. Yizhar's biography reflects the schism between two opposing forces – the aspiration to creative freedom and commitment to the truth and the demand to subsume the quest for truth to the needs of the collective. For many years Yizhar was a political figure, a member of Knesset and a loyal party member, who worked in Ben-Gurion's inner circle. At the same time, he published important books which are today considered among the cornerstones of modern

Hebrew literature. In these works he detached himself from the heroic myth and the pathos favoured by Israeli politicians. He also adopted strict academic criteria and began to work as a university researcher meticulously faithful to truth and precision.

Recently, Yizhar published an essay in which he has tried to synthesize the demands of truth and of myth. The myth, writes Yizhar, flourishes "in the morning period" which is a new beginning. When he speaks of his own generation, which possessed "both great vision and great blindness", he seems to be referring to Ben-Gurion, who was swept away by the vision he himself created and was, perhaps, blinded by it. Myth, says Yizhar, is a potent creative force for which there can be no substitute. We build dreams on it and we draw strength from its power. It is, therefore, a "truth of sorts" which turns its gaze upwards, towards the great ascent.[100] This, in my view, was Ben-Gurion's intention when he set out to fashion a new society in Israel.

NOTES

1. The letter is dated 14 June 1904, Ben-Gurion, *Igrot*, Vol. I, Tel-Aviv, 1971, p.121.
2. D. Meron, "The Great Arc", *Al Ha-mishmar*, 16 May 1991.
3. See Z. Shalom, "Ben-Gurion's Diary as an Historical Source", *Cathedra*, Vol. 56 (1990), p.136 ff.
4. The word "Vision" appears in the titles of many of his speeches and articles. He titled his collected writings, published in five volumes in the 1950s, *Hazon Ve-derekh*.
5. David Ben-Gurion, "Mission and Task of Our Generation", *Annual Government Report*, Jerusalem, 1962, p.6 (Hebrew).
6. From a speech given in Beersheba, 10 March 1954. Published in the pamphlet, *Shlihut Ha-dor Ha-tzair* (The Mission of the New Generation), Tel-Aviv, 1954, p.7.
7. David Ben-Gurion, "Israel Among the Nations", *Annual Government Report*, Jerusalem 1953, p.7 (Hebrew).
8. On the ritual of soul-searching conversations see N. Benari, "Cultural Revelations in the Renewed Hebrew Village", *Kamah*, 1948, p.450.
9. Interview with Yehuda Erez, who worked with Ben-Gurion for many years.
10. Ibid.
11. Ben-Gurion, *Shlihut*, pp.5-6.
12. The Assembly of Moshavim Youth, Nahalal, 11 June 1954, in *Le-yesha Ha-olim Veha-shmama* (To Redeem the Immigrants and the Desert), pp.39-40.
13. Ben-Gurion, "Mission and Task", p.35 (emphasis in the original).
14. See Eli Bar-Navi, "Myth and Historic Reality: the Case of the Sali Law", *Zmanim*, Vol. 15 (1981), p.6ff.
15. Z. Tzahor, "Ben-Gurion's Attitude Towards the Diaspora", *Judaism*, Vol. 32 (1983), pp.10-13.
16. *The First World Council of Jewish Youth, 1958*, Jerusalem, 1959, p.187.
17. Ibid.
18. Letter to Fox, 16 July 1904, in *Igrot*, pp.3-9.
19. *The First World Council of Jewish Youth*, p.187.
20. From a speech given at a students' convention in Sheikh Munis, 10 June 1954, in *Shlihut*, p.14.
21. *The First World Council of Jewish Youth*, p.187.
22. *Shlihut*, p.5.
23. David Ben-Gurion, "Pioneering Forerunners", *Annual Government Report*, 1953, p.13.

24. *Shlihut*, p.5.
25. Ben-Gurion, "Mission and Task", p.20 and following.
26. David Ben-Gurion, "Eternal Splendour of Israel", *The Annual Government Report*, 1954, p.29.
27. M. Kogan, "A People and Its Land", in B. Uffenheimer (ed.), *Ben-Gurion Veha-Tanakh* (Ben-Gurion and the Bible), Beersheba, 1989, p.4.
28. Uffenheimer, ibid., p.4.
29. David Ben-Gurion, *Iyunim Ba-Tanakh* (Biblical Analyses), p.44.
30. Ben-Gurion, "Eternal Splendour", pp.36-37.
31. David Ben-Gurion, "Terms and Values", *Hazut*, Vol. III, 1957, p.11.
32. Ben-Gurion, "Israel Among the Nations", p.36.
33. Ibid.
34. Ben-Gurion, *Iyunim*, pp.209-218.
35. David Ben-Gurion, "To the South", in *Annual Government Report 1957*, p.7 ff.
36. M. Even-Ari, L. Shenan and N. Tadmor, *Ha-Negev* (The Negev), Jerusalem, 1980, pp.1-7.
37. Z. Tzahor, "Ben-Gurion: From Socialism to Statehood", *Midstream*, January 1986, pp.36-39.
38. David Ben-Gurion, *Medinat Yisrael Ha-mehudeshet* (The Renewed State of Israel), Vol. I, Tel-Aviv, 1969, p.5.
39. Uffenheimer, *Ben-Gurion Veha-Tanakh*, p.59.
40. "The Origin of the Fellahin", in David Ben-Gurion and Yitzhak Ben-Zvi, *Eretz Yisrael Ba-avar Veba-hove* (The Land of Israel: Past and Present), Jerusalem, 1980, p.195.
41. Testimony of Sasson Ben-Zvi, deputy military governor of the Negev after the founding of the State of Israel.
42. Ben-Gurion, "Israel Among the Nations", p.20.
43. Ibid.
44. Ben-Gurion, "Eternal Splendour", p.20.
45. Ben-Gurion, "Terms and Values", p.11.
46. Ben-Gurion, "Mission and Task", p.66.
47. Pamphlet of the central committee of Poalei Zion, 1909, in *Kovetz Ha-shomer* (The Shomer Anthology), Tel-Aviv, 1938, p.337.
48. Ben-Gurion, "Israel Among the Nations", p.33.
49. Y. Erez, "On Ben-Gurion's Literary Jubilee", in Sh. Lahover, *Kitvei David Ben-Gurion* (The Writings of David Ben-Gurion), Tel-Aviv, 1960, p.11.
50. Diary entry from 10 June 1949, Diary file of 1949, *Ben-Gurion Archive*.
51. *Igrot*, p.22.
52. Ibid.
53. David Ben-Gurion, *Beit Avi* (The House of My Father), Tel-Aviv, 1975, p.16.
54. See for example his letters from 1904, *Igrot*, p.17ff.
55. Ben-Gurion, "Pioneering Forerunners", p.4.
56. Y. Bartal, "The Old *Yishuv* and the New *Yishuv*: Image and Reality", *Cathedra*, Vol. 2, 1977, p.3 ff.
57. Ben-Gurion, "Israel Among the Nations", p.36.
58. Ben-Gurion, "Pioneering Forerunners", p.2.
59. Ben-Gurion, "Israel Among the Nations", p.4.
60. Ben-Gurion, "Pioneering Forerunners", p.3.
61. Told by Yehoshua Cohen, Sde-Boker. Another version tells of a visit to kibbutz Dorot where he asked why they did not grow tomatoes; it is recounted by Gilad Ziv, Dorot.
62. Ben-Gurion, "Mission and Task", p.13.
63. Ben-Gurion, "Pioneering Forerunners", p.47.
64. Ben-Gurion, "Mission and Task", p.35.
65. *Ibid.*
66. Ben-Gurion's expertise in the history of the settlement of Israel is displayed by his distinction between Beit-Alfa, the first kibbutz of Ha-shomer Ha-tzair, and Mishmar Ha-emek, the first kibbut of Ha-kibbutz Ha-artzi, the movement founded by Ha-shomer Ha-tzair.
67. *Le-yesha*, p.39.
68. Ben-Gurion, "Israel Among the Nations", p.4.
69. Ben-Gurion, *Shlihut*, p.7.
70. Letter to Nathan Rotenstreich, 22 March 1957, in M. Keren, *Ben-Gurion veha-*

intelektualim (Ben-Gurion and the Intellectuals), Sde-Boker, 1988, p.70.
71. *Igrot*, p.22.
72. Interview, January 1971.
73. Ben-Gurion and Ben-Zvi, *Eretz Yisrael*, p.227 ff.
74. Ibid.
75. Ben-Gurion, "Israel Among the Nations", p.5.
76. Ibid.
77. David Ben-Gurion, "In Judah and in the Galilee", *Kovetz Ha-shomer*, p.324 ff.
78. Ibid., p.235.
79. Ibid., p.324.
80. Ibid.
81. Letter to his father, *Igrot*, p.77.
82. B. Rosen, "The Beginnings of Eucalyptus Acclimatization in Israel", *Cathedra*, Vol. 59, 1991, p.97 ff.
83. Interview with Shlomo Tzemah, January 1971.
84. From a government meeting held on 16 June 1948, in David Ben-Gurion, *Be-Hilahem Yisrael* (Israel in Battle), Tel-Aviv, 1950, p.130.
85. Ben-Gurion, *Shlihut*, pp.16-17.
86. Ben-Gurion, "Israel Among the Nations", p.4.
87. Interview, January 1971.
88. David Ben-Gurion, *Zikhronot* (Memoirs), Vol. I, Tel-Aviv, 1971, p.38.
89. Ibid., p.44.
90. *Kovetz Yizkor* (in Yiddish), New York, 1916.
91. Ben-Gurion, *Shlihut*, p.10.
92. See for instance his speech in the MAPAI council, 19 June 1948, *Be-hilahem*, p.150 ff.
93. Speech made in the interim council of the state, 3 June 1948, ibid., p.115.
94. Ben-Gurion, *Shlihut*, p.10.
95. Ibid.
96. Ibid., p.11.
97. Ibid.
98. See for example N. Ben-Yehuda, *Bein Ha-sefirot* (Between the Realms), Jerusalem, 1981.
99. Speech to NAHAL soldiers, 13 November 1949, in G. Rivlin and A. Oren (eds), *Yoman Milhama* (Ben-Gurion's War Diary), Vol. III, Tel-Aviv, 1982, p.823.
100. S. Yizhar, "Afternoon of the Myth", *Yediot Aharonot*, 7 July 1991.

The Zionist Right and National Liberation: From Jabotinsky to Avraham Stern

JOSEPH HELLER

In Israel, committed historical literature is a device which is more often characteristic of the political right, although the left is by no means innocent in this regard. At any rate, it has proved a hindrance to serious research and to any satisfactory treatment of the subject of the Zionist leadership. With respect to the systematic construction of myths, Avraham Stern is perhaps the most typical case in point. His disciples viewed him as a charismatic leader who provided ample evidence of his magnetic powers. But far from being the leader of an unprecedented revolution, he was a link in a chain of revolutionary leaders of the maximalist Revisionist school, that is the radical Zionist right. His efforts followed those of Abba Ahimeir, Uri-Zvi Greenberg, Yehoshua Heschel Yeivin and Uriel Heilperin (Yonaton Ratosh). But unlike these men, who published their political beliefs under their own names and signatures, Avraham Stern, insofar as he published the basic principles of his ideology, did this under a pseudonym, Elazar Ben-Yair (the Masada hero). In general, he tended to conceal his long-range aims, as befitting a man who originated in the underground and aimed to use it as a device in the pursuit of influence and power. In other words, for him, the underground did not represent an end in itself, but, rather, the means to an end. His inability to achieve complete success with respect to his means and his total inability to achieve his goal, meant in essence, that his personality as a leader never grew beyond the initial stages of development. Hence there was a special need to invent myths, a need that was inseparably linked to the fact of his personal sacrifice. Although his foremost mentor, Ze'ev Jabotinsky, was also wrapped by his disciples in layer upon layer of myth and legend despite the fact that he, too, died without seeing his goal fulfilled, Jabotinsky, unlike Stern, succeeded in building a political movement, and providing it with an ideology. Stern only succeeded in laying the foundations for a future movement and its ideology. Having said this,

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however, there is nothing to prevent us from elucidating the roots of his ideological and political emergence, examining his attempt to establish a new leadership from the radical right and addressing the question of whether or not he can, in fact, be viewed as a truly charismatic leader.

A LEGEND BORN

The following statements were printed in *He-hazit* (The Front), the journalistic mouthpiece of Stern's organization, the LEHI (acronym for *Lohamei Herut Israel*, Fighters for Israel's Freedom, known in English as the Stern Group, or Gang). In the first issue published after the re-establishment of the organization in the summer of 1943, we read:

> ... He [Avraham Stern] was the world's first truly free Jew. His Zionism was not just excess baggage to the aims of Churchill or Stalin ...
> ... Stern was not prepared to serve either of the combatant sides. To him this was simply a war of Gog and Magog inasmuch as neither side had declared support for the national aspirations of the Jews, and both had done harm to our people in one way or another. Nevertheless, the willing slaves of all the Zionist camps hastened to prove their loyalty to the Ruler ...
> ... and they did not care to consider the fearsome danger that awaited the masses of the House of Israel in the event of a declaration of war on the part of the Jews against Nazi Germany. Who can tell whether all these declarations and recruitment drives of the Jewish Agency and the New Zionist Organization, and that terrifying propaganda that was already being orchestrated in the earliest days of the war – who knows whether these reasons were not the very ones that caused the intensified persecution of the Jews in Europe?[1]

Less than a year later, on the second anniversary of Stern's death and just a few days after the start of the "Revolt" of the IZL (acronym for *Irgun Zva'i Leumi*, National Military Organization, commonly referred to in English as the "Irgun") under the command of Menachem Begin, the following was written by LEHI in a booklet dedicated to the memory of the founding father:

> ... He was a lion, and the cravings of the foxes were foreign to him. He was an eagle who did not know how to fly low ... He was not of those who live and die, like all human beings. He was a Prometheus, one who appears but once over many generations.[3]

> ... How great was the hatred aimed at Copernicus and how fierce the battle against him, when he publicized his simple discovery! Yair (Stern's *nom de guerre*) was the dialectician of the Hebrew freedom movement, the Euclid of the national Geometry ...
> ... a man of vision and a believer. These were the virtues that made Yair the first Hebrew statesman of the Land of Israel since David Ha-Reuveni.[3]

In response to this unique apotheosis, the following statement appeared in the IZL journal *Ba-herev* (By the Sword):

> ... You are hereby attempting to turn a great patriotic figure into a sacred idol. A new Jesus. One can state with certainty that such a campaign would have disgusted Yair himself had he still been alive ... But you were driven to create yourselves a "leader" ... since, the Great Leader, who was a leader to multitudes among the people ... you destroyed, you disqualified, you tarnished his reputation. You made Jabotinsky into Yair's student! ...
> ... You thus have an example you can emulate: this is what they did in Russia, by turning Stalin into a living idol. In order to destroy the memory of Trotsky ... But even the brazenness of these (Russians) had its limits ... Even they did not dare to taint the name of Lenin, the true leader, recognized by the masses ...[4]

A senior member of the IZL, most probably Menachem Begin himself, went even further, taking issue with Stern's disciples in reference to the LEHI's maxim at the beginning of 1944: "Kill or be killed – never get arrested", and asked:

> In light of the maxim of *He-hazit*, the difficult and troubling question arises: why did Yair not keep a pistol in his room, and why didn't he prepare himself for a battle with the police? The authors of *He-hazit* write that he was a man of *absolute* logic: he knew it all and understood it all. We may therefore assume that he understood that the danger of *elimination* awaited him ...

The IZL member was of the opinion that

> *Yair did not wish to die this way*, Yair did not want to be involved in a shoot-out with a policeman – a drunken assassin. Yair was prepared to be arrested, and to die as well. But he was hoping – hoping against hope – that he would be made to stand trial, that he would be granted the opportunity to tell the world about his demands, and then go to his death like (the IZL's martyr) Shlomo Ben-Yosef, with heroism and with joy, thus serving as an example

> to the fighting youth. But fate denied him even this favour, as he himself wrote in his magnificent poem just before his tragic death. He was felled by the bullet of a criminal in a policeman's uniform.[5]

So much for the legend of Avraham Stern as a revolutionary of the radical right. But perhaps as a result of the fact that the LEHI had adopted a new policy of "National Bolshevism" in 1944-49, its leftist "wing" began to construct a new myth – the myth of a leftist Stern.

In late February 1949, Natan Friedman-Yellin, chief of LEHI's Centre (in 1949 he changed his name to Yellin-Mor), spoke at the conference of the "*Lohamim*" (Fighters) Party (LEHI). He claimed that in the spring of 1939 it was suggested to Stern that Abba Ahimeir (Yair's main mentor) be invited to participate in the publication of the IZL newspaper in Poland, *Di-Tat* (Yiddish: The Act):

> Yair expressed his reservations ... *Di-Tat* must not publish anything that represents a war against socialism. His clarification on this point aroused the anger of Abba Ahimeir. Yair did not yield even an inch. The conversation ended with Ahimeir slamming the door as he left the meeting place enraged and defected. This was not simply a case of arbitrary antagonism on a personal level. It was in fact a clash between two schools of thought ... one made anti-socialism into its religion. And the other school may be defined as "anti-anti-socialism" ... opposition to the view of socialism as an intrinsically anti-nationalist outlook. And implicitly one may reveal (in this opposition) an additional component – namely, that there is no reason to insist that nationalism and socialism cannot coexist ... Yair recommended that members of the movement join the *Histadrut* (the General Federation of Labour). One may, of course regard this recommendation as a tactic, aimed at penetrating the *Histadrut* in order to seek converts under camouflage.[6]

Ahimeir did not deny that there were differences of opinion between himself and Stern. Whereas the former believed that there should be two fronts, namely internal and external, the latter was of the opinion that there was but one - external - front, until the foreign power was expelled:

> On the main points, Yair agreed with Ahimeir's position: (1) absolute neutrality with respect to internal "gentile" affairs; (2) a boycott of products of the Reich; and (3) a war against the general leftist slant dominating the Jewish journalistic establishment. However, Yair was opposed to the title "anti-Ma(rxism), Yair's

> reasons being by his own account, not ideological, but strictly tactical: "Our newspaper must capture the Bundist youth and let us not repel them from the start with titles that are unfamiliar to them.[7]

Nevertheless, it was not just Dr. Israel Eldad (Scheib), now expelled from the Fighters' Party and Yellin-Mor who went to the trouble of constructing the Stern legend. In 1949, they were joined by Yitzhak Shamir, their partner in the leadership of the LEHI, who relied on his comrades to build the legend. He himself, as a pragmatic leader with little patience for ideologies but with a thirst for power, was inclined to put an end to the ideological rivalry at the conference at which the LEHI was split. He also tried to repudiate some of the dissenting views of Yellin-Mor, whom he supported not only ideologically but also because he needed an organizational framework for continuing his political career. He did not "spare the rod" from Stern himself, albeit implicitly, when he pointed out that

> No combative activity will be possible even outside Israel without the existence of strong bases inside the country. Whoever thinks differently is detached from reality. This is a manner of thought especially characteristic of a type of people who are known in political movements as "the intelligent ones" ... These "intelligent" individuals play an important and necessary role in any political movement, but they have a tendency to show detachment and disregard for realistic factors when implementing their ideas. Without their ideas we are nothing, but without an understanding of reality, their ideas will forever remain strictly in the realm of theory.

Shamir did not reserve these statements strictly for his opponents at the Fighters' conference of 1949, but intended them for Stern as well, who had also considered, on the basis of unrealistic judgement, the possibility of attacking the British minister of state in the Middle East (1941-42), Oliver Lyttelton; the "proper" action which was not detached from reality, was carried out by the LEHI in November 1944, with the assassination of Lord Moyne.[8]

A LEADER DE-MYSTIFIED

What is then the true image of "Yair" Stern? Regarding the distinction between legend and historical reality with respect to the Ba'al-Shem-Tov and Herzl, the late Professor Ben-Zion Dinur stated in 1962 that "the legend surrounding the former is the historical reality known to us, and the historical reality concerning the latter has become legend".[9]

Can the same be truthfully said of Stern? In other words, was "Yair" a born revolutionary? Was he a revolutionary of the right or the left? Did he really rebel against Jabotinsky's outlook in its entirety, or only against parts of it? Were the "Principles of Renaissance" truly a revolutionary innovation, as maintained by the official historiography of LEHI? Was his orientation indeed geared solely to the independent Hebrew nation, or did he perhaps also tie his fate to other powers? Was his attempt to establish connections with the Axis Powers a tactical misjudgment or a strategic error? Did he wish to die the way he did, achieving an end result that was calculated from the start, or is it possible that his former comrades from the IZL were correct in asserting that he would have preferred to stand trial as a political defendant? Was the myth built around his personality after his death intended to serve the interests of the received LEHI, struggling for its ideological and political uniqueness, or was it perhaps faithful, at least in part, to the historical reality?

To begin with, a distinction must be made between Stern's intellectual wellsprings, and his development as a political leader. Secondly, although there is evidence of mutual influence between the two, there are also dichotomies between his intellectual sides and his growth as a leader. Thirdly, unlike some political leaders, Stern could not always calculate the course of his future development. The special political dynamism and multifarious intrigues of the years 1936-39 were required for his historical personality to become fully crystallized. Apart from the heavy load of romantic baggage of Polish and Russian revolutionary literature, brought with him upon arrival in Palestine in 1925, the principal period of his intellectual development was in the years 1932-38. Two major schools of thought influenced him: the revolutionary Russian, Polish, Italian and Irish; and the Jewish nationalistic-messianic trend.

The first school, namely the Russian, comprised three distinct elements: first, the *Narodnaya Volya* (People's Will), from which he inherited the compulsion towards personal sacrifice (a sentiment powerful enough to find lyrical expression in his poetry) that was inextricably linked to individual terrorism as a strategy for attaining redemption. People like Timofei Mikhailov, Andre Zelyabov, Sofya Petrovskaya, and Sergei Kibalchich were undoubtedly on his mind when he wrote his poems of the early 1930s; second, the "Fighting Brigade" of the Social-Revolutionaries under the leadership of Boris Savinkov and its deeds; third, Lenin's tactics in seizing power, as well as his foreign-policy strategy as exemplified during the Brest-Litovsk negotiations at the close of the First World War. The Polish school also comprised a number of elements: Poland's romantic rebellions of the nineteenth century; the patriotic legacy of Adam Mickiewicz's *Konrad*

Wallenrod, Juliusz Slowacki and Adam Skwarczinski; and, finally, the edicts of the leader for whom Stern's reverence was perhaps the greatest, Pilsudski: "How do we educate towards a battle for national liberation? For instance,

> The blood that was spilt today, the lives that were extinguished today, shall produce their bountiful yield only in the future. But let us heed this fact: no political ideal, no system in this world ever came into being without gaining notoriety at the outset; and we always find that those trends that were most abhorred were the ones that triumphed. Such was the destiny of the banner of armed rebellion ... the sooner we arrive at the realization that there is no way out of the present situation other than armed warfare - the better off we will be ...[10]

Stern was enchanted by the Italian revolutionary movement, as expressed through the figures of Garibaldi, Mazzini, and in a different sense, Mussolini,[11] as well as by the Irish Struggle for independence, especially with respect to the martyrology of the Easter Rising of 1916.[12]

No less than the above, Stern was influenced by the Jewish national struggle, particularly those that possessed messianic tendencies. These heroes of his began with the Hasmoneans and the Zealots, most notably such figures as Elazar Ben-Yair, hero of Masada, and Bar-Kochba, who was, in his eyes, the most prominent representative of the kind of "realistic-activistic messianism" that inspired the people and strove for their freedom. Along with this, Stern was captivated by the legends surrounding the Messiah son-of-Joseph, who "must fall, and then a dreadful world war will break out ... and with the termination of this war the Messiah, Son-of-David, will appear at the head of his troops, and he will make the Hebrew nation sovereign over the entire world." Finally, Stern referred to the writings of Maimonides, who gave three clear signals marking the success of the Messianic King: victory over the surrounding nations, the building of the Holy Temple, and the ingathering of the exiles of Israel.[13]

Stern rebelled against the approach of evolutionary Zionism. In this respect he followed in the footsteps of Jabotinsky, whom he adored with an admiration which also included his qualities as a politician, as expressed in his reliance on England, and as evidenced by his support for the "Petition" (1934). He certainly shared Jabotinsky's determination to build an image of a new kind of Jew: "people with a healthy imagination and a strong will aspiring to express themselves in the battle of life", and as such coined slogans such as "Die or capture the mountain".[14] But much as he revered Jabotinsky, a man like Stern could not stand behind a political leader who, even in the turbulent

period of 1936-39, put his trust in diplomacy and conscience, and pinned his faith on the democratic world, without preparing a political alternative. The declining leader was, gradually but consistently, clearing the way for people who symbolized personal sacrifice, figures such as Sarah and Aaron Aaronsohn. Furthermore, he was now presenting NILI (the secret Jewish organization, of which the Aaronsohns were members, which, during the First World War, worked in Palestine for Allied intelligence in the hope of ensuring future Jewish settlement) as a model for the future rebellion, no less than the Irish Easter Rising of 1916.[15] These latter figures were preceded not only by Jabotinsky, but also by two additional teachers whose influence on Stern was decisive: Uri-Zvi Greenberg and Abba Ahimeir. Greenberg provided Stern with the messianic, masterly dimension of the new *Sicarii* (Jewish terrorists of the late Second Temple period, who assassinated collaborators with the Roman authorities) which he regarded as necessary for the contemporary political situation: "The Jewish community that eagerly anticipated the coming of the Messiah... and the Jewish community under siege are surrounded by the hostile forces of Christianity and Islam ..."[16] Though Stern had not yet been influenced by Greenberg in the direction of the idea of England's "treachery" ("Thou hast betrayed me, O King"), he was nevertheless influenced by him in another respect: a view of the Arabs as an enemy that had to be battled till the bitter end:

> Thou shalt not triumph over My Jerusalem, O Daughter of Arabia! ...
> A Jewish soldier prays for your peace with a rifle
> May it please you to be charmed more by a rifle than by the playing of a pipe organ.[17]

The link that connected Jabotinsky (whose outlook was revolutionary in part while still expressing faith in England) and Greenberg, who held that Zionism would be fulfilled strictly through messianic mysticism, was Abba Ahimeir. He preached a war of national liberation along the lines of integral nationalism and European fascism, beginning in 1928. But it was the riots of 1929 that gave him a particular impetus to disseminate his ideas in a vigorous effort to transform the Revisionist movement from a champion of parliamentary democracy into a revolutionary liberation movement and a fighting force that relied on bloodshed. Jabotinsky himself was, according to this scheme, to be made into a *Duce*. Ahimeir's influence on Stern was actually long-term rather than short-term, as Stern himself would admit in a private letter dated June 1936.[18] However, Ahimeir influenced this particular student of his not only by recommending the recourse to a war of national liberation, but also by proposing the method of indi-

vidual terrorism.[19] He, along with Professor Joseph Klausner, taught Stern that the fact of national defeat does not necessarily represent the final word, and heroism is destined to triumph.[20]

The last of Stern's intellectual mentors was Uriel Heilperin (Ratosh), with whom he maintained intimate contact from 1936 onward. Heilperin bequeathed to him his booklet *We Lift Up Our Eyes to Sovereignty* as a revolutionary programme *par excellence*, largely abandoning Jabotinsky's policies by insisting that sovereignty must have priority over the will of the majority, and further suggesting that the rule of the revolutionary (elitist) minority be implemented: the theory of "the Sons of the Caste", the revolutionary avant-garde, the "circle within a circle" that will arouse the masses and send them off to battle. When he finally despaired of imparting his programme to the Revisionist movement from which he originated, Heilperin proposed an alternative scheme that subsequently became known as "Canaanite",[21] but the latter would be rejected by Stern, on account of its repudiation of the Jewish heritage. But he enthusiastically adopted Heilperin's revolutionary theory, which acquired a new practical and dialectic significance in the light of the report of the Peel Commission (July 1937) extolling the vigour of the Jews of Palestine. The revolutionary approach seemingly became even more relevant after the hanging of Shlomo Ben-Yosef by the British authorities.

The summer of 1938 was to witness Stern's final intellectual crystallization. It began with the recognition of the need for a new war for freedom under the title given by Heilperin, "The Sovereign Will", which came as a consequence of Ben-Yosef's execution, and continued with a personal clash with Jabotinsky, who refused to support Stern's request for war of the IZL against the Haganah and the Arabs. It ended that same summer with a dispute over strategy between Jabotinsky and Menachem Begin at the Third World Convention of Betar (the Revisionist youth organization) in Warsaw; on this occasion, Begin, then leader of Betar, demanded that Jabotinsky adopt the conception of "Military Zionism", because, in his words, "Cavour would not have attained the liberation of Italy without Garibaldi".[22] "Yair" was dissatisfied by the ambivalence that characterized Jabotinsky's position: on the one hand, explicit support for regarding Ben-Yosef's failed mission as a model worthy of emulation ("the dew that renders the soil fruitful"), and on the other hand, the insulting rejection of Begin's proposal to revise the Oath of Betar from "defence" to "defence and conquest". Such a revision, had it been adopted in practice and not simply on paper, could have represented a revolutionary change in the political position and fundamental approach of the leader of the New Zionist Organization.[23]

From this point onwards – that is, from the summer of 1938 – with

the conclusion of the period in which his ideological position was consolidated, Stern went off on his own independent path. He was now free to reinforce his position as a political leader, thus assuming the role which he had been called upon to fill, according to his own conception, built on the assumption that Jabotinsky's course had failed. Until now he had lacked the outlet for his political aspirations, though it was clear to him that the principal instrument for this purpose was the IZL, reorganized after the split that occurred in 1937. His functions as adjutant to Avraham Tehomi [the founder of IZL and its Head of Command (1931-1937), before it became a Revisionist organization], as Command Secretary, and as a member of the Command, ostensibly provided him with the wellsprings of power, but only in the event that he could successfully manipulate the Head of Command. Theoretically, conditions for such developments existed from the time the IZL became an arm of the Revisionist movement. But Jabotinsky was serving as president of the New Zionist Organization and as supreme commander of the IZL, as well as the Head of Betar. Consequently he had to manoeuvre between the maximalist and the more moderate elements. Thus it was clear that the IZL was having problems getting its own house in order with respect to its independent policy, especially in view of the fact that Jabotinsky himself persisted in maintaining support first and foremost for a policy of "self-restraint", and would not relinquish his orientation towards Britain. The constraints that forced the "Supreme Commander" to accept the change of direction on the question of self-restraint enabled the continued cooperation between the Command and the Supreme Commander. However, it soon became evident that the differences were considerable, extending to the issue of the leader's authority. Jabotinsky attempted to overcome this nagging difficulty by means of the Paris Agreement in early 1939, intensifying his control over the IZL. It was no coincidence that Stern abstained from this agreement. Nor was David Raziel (1910-1941), Head of the Command, satisfied by the state of affairs, but he did not dare to voice his dissent regarding the "grand strategy" of the "Supreme Commander". Stern, in contrast, by the spring of 1939, had begun to regard Jabotinsky as an "ex-activist".

However, at a press conference which he convened in Warsaw, Stern spoke mainly of the need to break the Arab resistance, to enlarge the *Yishuv* (the Jewish community in Palestine) by means of illegal immigration, to nurture the "reservoir" of the Jewish people through mass education, and to attract sympathizers and gather support from "states whose interests are directly or indirectly compatible with the realization of the goals of the IZL". But even before the time had arrived to declare Britain an incorrigible, implacable enemy, hints

could be discerned: "If England, out of inertia and as a consequence of the contradictions in her policy, surrenders to the Arab rebellion, which is, after all directed against the vital interests of the Empire, then to our good fortune we have states that are objectively potential allies of the Jewish liberation movement". This was one wish. Another goal was expressed as follows: "On the other hand, the states of Eastern Europe objectively also represent potential allies, inasmuch as a Jewish problem objectively exists in these countries and there is no desire to solve this problem by barbaric means in the form of annihilation and pogroms, but rather through constructive cooperation in order to eliminate the Diaspora and establish Jewish independence in the Land of Israel".[24]

At the same time, Stern came into contact with the Polish authorities (at the bureaucratic, not the ministerial level, as his disciples would have us believe), indeed as a result of a recommendation from Jabotinsky, who did not at first suspect that Stern was undermining his authority. Nor did Jabotinsky know that the IZL was organizing a commanders' training course in Andrychow, Poland, to prepare the cadre for the programme which would enlist 40,000 young people who would be ready to capture the Land of Israel at the opportune moment.[25] Thus Stern's leadership was now headed in a new direction. Would this be a dead-end course, or would it be the starting point for the longed-for redemption?

It was the White Paper of May 1939 that confirmed Stern's prediction regarding Britain's "treachery" once and for all. Nevertheless, his operative conclusions were not yet clear, and there is no evidence to suggest that he sought the cooperation of the Axis powers at this early stage. But he did rephrase his warning to Britain in harsher terms, while taking pains to explain that the "enemy" was the Arabs and not Britain. The British were, in any case, "pro-British", and concerned with one thing only: the protection of their own interests. Ostensibly, he still spoke of the same basic, desired solution espoused by the Jabotinsky school, namely, "a covenant between the Empire and the Hebrew state". It is inconceivable that he was still deluding himself and his friends with respect to the nature of the true enemy. It is possible that he adopted this tactic in order to deceive the political leadership of the New Zionist Organization, while at the same time attempting to inform the British that "... the moment it becomes clear that it is not the intention of Great Britain to fulfil the condition (a Hebrew state), the Jews shall cease to be loyal to Britain – ally of the Arabs - and in any case, they will have no choice: they will find themselves other allies".[26] The die was cast, but an ally was yet to be found.

Stern's leadership was put to the test on the final day before the outbreak of the Second World War, when Jabotinsky proposed a plan

for the staging of a "symbolic" rebellion, a proposal which Stern rejected outright, suspecting that its real aim was the elimination of the IZL.[27] Just one month earlier, Stern had publicly clarified his own intentions and defined the basic principles that would guide his actions. By the end of May, it became possible for him to express his views freely, in the wake of Raziel's arrest and the appointment of his close friend, Hanoch Kalay (who had been commander of the Kfar-Sava cell of Betar and the IZL commander for the Haifa district and the *Moshavot* settlements) as Head of Command. He was now presenting himself and his organization as the "true leadership" of the *Yishuv*, owing to the capitulation of the *Yishuv* in the face of the White Paper. Thus, he felt justified in referring to his following as the "New Israelite Liberation Movement". At the end of July 1939, he again denounced Jabotinsky, by insisting that there was no difference between the New Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency. With regard to the fundamental principles, which pointed in the direction of Social Darwinism, as befitting the radical right, he stated that

> force is always the decisive factor in the lives of the conquerors of lands and of those who fight for freedom. Force has always shaped the fate of nations ... Fiume, Vilna (Vilnius), Ethiopia, Austria, the Sudetenland, China, Spain and Czechoslovakia. Such force would be forged in the underground by dreamers and fighters, by those who would betray oaths of allegiance and relieve themselves of the burden of agreements, by opponents of law and order, and by national revolutionaries.

The IZL is the Hebrew army, the "army of freedom and royalty". It shall be the one to establish the "Kingdom of Israel". Stern now proceeded to formulate the model upon which this kingdom would be established. As was the fortune of T. E. Lawrence and the Bedouin tribes in the course of the First World War, so would be the destiny of the People of Israel: "When the imminent war breaks out, foreign diplomats and officers will come to us... and strive to draw us to their side ..."[28]

Here, for the first time, Stern was undoubtedly trying to publicly hint at his ultimate intentions, namely, to assume the political leadership of both the Revisionist movement and the *Yishuv* in general, operating under the inspiration of his ideological mentors Greenberg and Yeivin. But although he was sure of his basic aims, the ally that would assist him, when the need arose, in adopting the role of the Messiah Son-of-Joseph had yet to appear on the horizon. He had not yet developed any feeling of sympathy towards Germany. On the contrary, his own sympathies, as well as those of the IZL in general in Poland and in Palestine, were directed towards Poland, which in those days was

seeking to contain Nazi Germany by peaceful means over the issue of Danzig and the Polish corridor.[29]

Stern's arrest on the day before the outbreak of the Second World War prevented him from realizing his ambitions of national revolutionary leadership. But, during the period of his internment, and especially during his confinement in Mazra Prison from February to June 1940, he found his ally. His admiration for Germany's victories on land and at sea influenced him to examine the possibility of forging a treaty with one or two of the Axis powers. At the same time, he sought to take command of the IZL, with the support of the maximalist "Indictment and Faith" faction of the New Zionist Organization. The poems he wrote while in prison ("To Our Motherhood" and "The Messiah") resound with his spirit of self-sacrifice, as exemplified by Shlomo Ben-Yosef, Ya'acov Raz and Arieh Yitzhaki.[30]

By this stage the principle had assumed political significance and could be viewed as something that was likely to be actualized; judging from the IZL organ *Ba-herev*, published just prior to Stern's release from prison, opposition to England was steadily growing within the organization, as evidenced by the attitude to the draft.[31] Neither Jabotinsky nor Dr Arieh Altman, chairman of the Revisionist movement in Palestine, had any idea of Stern's real intentions. In any event, they had already made up their minds to support England, as David Raziel had already done under their inspiration when he signed an agreement with Police Inspector-General Allan Saunders. Nevertheless, Order No. 112 (26 June 1940) should not be viewed as the beginning of the split and the establishment of the IZL in Israel, despite the fact that in this document, Stern called for evasion of the draft, and announced that the "IZL forges alliances within Israel and with the nations, but does not sacrifice its freedom".[32] The split had not yet begun here, because Stern still had hopes of taking over the IZL in its entirety. Among other things, these hopes were based on his own efforts to convince Jabotinsky that Raziel was no longer fit to command the IZL. Stern pointed to no fewer than 10 faults and efforts of which Raziel was guilty, in his opinion, each of which should have served as sufficient evidence, both internally and externally of Raziel's failure as Head of IZL Command. The Command had lost confidence in him, he insisted, even before the issue of opposition to England and support for Italy had arisen.[33] Jabotinsky, who at that time was living in the United States, was depressed over the setbacks that the Allied forces had suffered in the war, and over the failure of the New Zionist Organization and the IZL to establish a new centre of power in the United States. With this in mind, Stern probably assumed that Jabotinsky would be unable to control the affairs of the IZL from afar.[34] Eventually, at any rate, Jabotinsky's death seemed to provide

him with an opportunity to put himself forward as replacement, not Raziel.

The IZL in Israel was established on 3 September 1940, when the command published its first communiqué. This was, in itself, an admission of hopelessness with respect to the chances of gaining control of the IZL; in view of the meagre number of recruits, there was no alternative other than the establishment of an "Underground of Revolutionaries". Although it was promised that the new organization would have to take control of the entire country by force of arms at the earliest opportunity, and that it would eventually become clear to the entire world that it was the single legitimate spokesman for the fighting Jewish nation,[35] it was also clear that its star would rise only in response to a revolutionary political act. Stern, since the summer of 1939, had been strictly anti-British (as he himself indicated already at the time of the IZL's proclamation of a ceasefire, dated 10 September 1939); it was obvious to him that the only way to break through the thick wall of British opposition to the aspirations of the Hebrew nation for freedom, was by means of a treaty with a power hostile to Britain.

Thus, Stern was now taking his life in his hands, and placing his future as a political leader in the balance. At this point, the battle against England was being transformed from a stratagem to a fundamental principle; England as the occupier of the homeland was now a very real "enemy", in contrast with Hitler, who was simply a "troublemaker".[36] It was a decision which would set Stern on an irreversible course, apparently one which could not be abandoned even in the face of an initial failure. The Italians – the first candidates for an alliance – obviously also belonged in the category of "troublemakers", but Stern was unable to make any significant contacts with them. Italy's downfall in North Africa and Greece put an end to her candidacy.[37]

It was the proposal delivered to the Germans (in early January 1941) that showed Stern hopelessly entrapped in his own illusions. His willingness to forge an ideological-political treaty with Hitler can be partly explained by the fact that the extent of the Holocaust was as yet unknown. Nevertheless, it was Stern's insistence that the ideological and practical aspects of Nazi anti-Semitism could be separated from Hitler's international politics in general and his policy with respect to England in particular,[38] that confirm his ignorance of the earliest signs of the impending calamity. He believed that the issue at hand was simply an additional link in the chain of events whose roots were to be found in the likes of Plehve, Petlyura and the Transfer Agreement. The treaty proposal was proof of the limitations of radical politics, not only at the tactical, but also at the strategic level. The negative reply sent by Stern's emissary, Naftali Lubenchik, was an indication that among

decision-makers in Germany, *Idealpolitik* (that is, the trend of extermination of the Jews) had prevailed over *Realpolitik* (namely, the trend of expelling them). These events brought about the first split within the "Underground of Revolutionaries", with the desertion of two members of the command, at least one of whom decided to leave in protest over the attempted treaty with Germany. Stern had become nothing more than a political "supreme leader"[39] over a small band of people, fanatical elitists – at least in terms of their own self-perception – who still believed in the course he was taking. Henceforth, he would be obliged to prove the validity of his basic assumptions; not only did he resume his efforts to establish ties with the Germans, but he also began to resort to individual terror, adopting the concept of "expropriation" (that is, mainly bank robberies) as befitting a revolutionary underground. Within just a little over a month's time, his underground movement reached its bitter end, for even if its members truly believed that "the ends justify the means", the means at their disposal were too meagre to ensure a meaningful success in any shape or form.

The tragic end that befell Avraham Stern and his friends was seemingly inevitable. It was not just Order No. 1 and the conceptions of "trouble-makers" and "enemy" that brought it about, but also the "Principles of Renaissance". The reference here is not to those principles that simply represented a return to the basic doctrines of Revisionist maximalism (particularly those inspired by Uri-Zvi Greenberg and Yehoshua H. Yeivin), but rather to operative clauses such as "the forging of treaties with all parties that have an interest in the organization's battle, and are prepared to lend it direct assistance" (Paragraph 7), and a "never-ending battle against all who intend to stand in the way of the fulfilment of the destiny" (Paragraph 9). It was no coincidence that Stern separated the Principles of Renaissance into two categories, specifically those that apply to "the Era of War and Conquest" and those that pertain to "the Era of Rule and Redemption".[40] The operational failures were not enough to undermine Stern's mystical and "realistic" fundamental assumptions, as had happened to his deputy, Hanoch Kalay.

It should also be pointed out that Stern did not harbour the slightest trace of socialist sentiment, as demonstrated by the paragraph (No. 12) relating to "the Regime of Justice":

> The establishment of a social regime, in the spirit of the morality of Israel and prophetic justice; under this regime, no one shall be hungry nor unemployed. Here, all sons of the Nation, by virtue of being her sons, shall live a life of freedom, honour, and friendship. It shall be a symbol and a model to the nations.

This was written under the inspiration of Professor Joseph Klausner.

There was no ideological or political significance to Stern's recommendation to his comrades to join the *Histadrut*, beyond his hope of subverting the foundations established by the left, which he despised; for he was in total agreement with the rejection of the concept of *Mif'al U-binyan* (literally – "industrial enterprise and construction"). This was a contemptuous anti-socialist slogan used by the Revisionists with all its social, economic and political connotations, as evidenced by his proclamations against the Jewish Agency and the Haganah in the years 1938-39.[41] His support for the "National Worker's Front" was intended as a means of taking advantage of every force that was opposed to the Revisionist movement which, in his opinion, had failed. As one who had truly believed that the ends justified the means and "let judgement breach the mountain", he was unable to sit and wait for any form of pause in the action, or for a more opportune moment, in order to translate his ideology into politics, despite the sparse means at his disposal.

Nevertheless, throughout the various stages of Stern's development as a leader, the theme of personal sacrifice did not always appear as the central motif, so dominant in his poetry ["Only death can rescue one from the ranks"; "It is our dream to die for our nation" (1932); "Let us greet him (the redeemer of Zion): let our blood be a red carpet in the streets, and on this carpet, our minds shall be like white lilies" (1934)]. This theme did not always bear an unequivocal political significance, since he was, at the same time, campaigning on behalf of Jabotinsky's Petition (the "Bridge of Paper", in the words of Abba Ahimeir). It was indeed his intellectual mentors Yeiven and Ahimeir who warned him in vain against the German connection. Yeivin, to whom he had stated that he would re-establish NILI, asked him the following:

> Is he fully aware of the odds, and of the immensity of the danger? With awe and compassion, we pay tribute to the memory and the mighty heroism of the people of NILI. But they were battling against the Turks, who were despised by Jews throughout the world, whereas the enemies of the Turks were the *English*. But you want to fight the English, whom the Jewish people regard as allies in the war against Hitler. They will speak of you as one who is lending assistance to Hitler ... They will cover your memory with spit and with contempt. You will be hated and despised by the people whom you are attempting to liberate. He (Stern) responded simply: "I know this. And I will do it nonetheless". He took the path of destruction and the torment of Hell which he created for himself.[42]

Stern's other mentor, Ahimeir, also warned him:

> It would have yet been understandable had LEHI succeeded in aligning themselves with the *Sam*(mael, the Satan) in the hope of preventing the slaughter of the European Diaspora ... War against Britain under the present circumstances is nothing less than the creation of a fifth column for the benefit of the *Sam*(mael).
> Yair: We shall somehow manage to get along with the Germans once they capture the Land. Even the Soviets managed to reach a settlement with them when the need arose.
> Ahimeir: You remind me of the marksman who shoots and then draws a circle around the spot where the bullet hit ...[43]

Stern's self-indoctrination with respect to "troublemaker" and "enemy" was the factor that prevented him from comprehending the events unfolding in Europe; thus he believed that Hitler was simply an ordinary pogrom-monger in the style of Haman or Petlyura, as evidenced by his response to the Madagascar Plan, or to the events that were taking place in the Warsaw Ghetto in March of 1941:

> ... It is incumbent upon us to seek the least of all evils ... The Jews of the Middle Ages lived in the ghetto for hundreds of years ... From this same ghetto came the Jewry that later ... succeeded, with one hand, in establishing a great part of modern industry and international trade, while at the same time, with the second hand, nurtured Marx and Lassalle. Tens of internationally renowned scholars, great thinkers, writers and artists were produced by her (i.e., Medieval Jewry) within this space of time ... If the day comes when he (the Jew) leaves the ghetto a second time after being fired in the crucible of affliction, refined and purified of assimilated impurities, he will again capture a place in the sun, to live a life of creativity and sovereignty in his Hebrew homeland. Because if the nation wishes to leave the ghetto once and for all, it must leave the Diaspora. For in times of war or on the eve of peacetime, neither within the walls of the actual ghetto, nor within the walls of hatred that preceded the ghetto, can there be redemption in the Diaspora.[44]

Paradoxically, it was Jabotinsky against whom Stern had rebelled, who managed to convince Stern of the relevance of "the anti-Semitism of things" and "the anti-Semitism of human beings" to the situation of 1940. In other words, although Polish anti-Semitism was more severe than the German variety, there was a remedy for both. Like Stern, Jabotinsky had in no way predicted the Holocaust, and believed that his "evacuation plan", along with the rehabilitation of the European Diaspora, would still be relevant in the aftermath of the war. But unlike Stern, he never had any doubts regarding the orientation that the Jewish people must adopt.[45]

STOCK-TAKING

What, then, is Stern's proper place in history in relation to his political opponents in the Zionist leadership? Was his failure actually "a victory in defeat" as his followers insist to this very day? In a sense it was, inasmuch as there are grounds to the assertion that LEHI in its later revival would not have arisen had it not been for Stern's ideological and political legacy. But despite the legends around his personality nurtured by his successors, under the harsh constraints of the underground they, too, understood and admitted among themselves that they must shake themselves free of his failures. Nevertheless, they felt justified in regarding these failures as a strictly tactical error, especially in view of the fact that the war that Stern declared on England "proved" to be warranted, even in the opinion of the IZL and the Jewish Agency (in the period of the "United Hebrew Resistance Movement"). But they conveniently ignored a number of details, namely, that Stern's declaration of war was *premature*, and his plans – based on an intention to capitalize on an anticipated victory of the Axis powers. The official Zionist leadership and the Revisionist opposition, whom he had vigorously denounced as Quislings, managed to survive as leaders because they did not regard the White Paper of 1939 as spelling the end of Zionism, and they considered the outbreak of the war as actually offering an opportune moment for the strengthening of Zionism. Ben-Gurion, Weizmann, and Jabotinsky, unlike Stern, did not make the assumption that the White Paper and the war, critical as they may have been, were the final word in the history of the Jewish people. Unlike Stern, they believed that the only criterion for the use of violence, if indeed there were one, had to be a symmetry between will and capacity.

In his article on Franklin D. Roosevelt, Isaiah Berlin distinguished between two types of statesmen, without making the essential distinction between right and left. One type is that of a

> man of single principle and fanatical vision. Possessed by his own bright, coherent dream, he usually understands neither people nor events. He has no doubts or hesitations and by concentration of will-power, directness and strength he is able to ignore a great deal of what goes on outside him ... The second type of politician possesses antennae of the greatest possible delicacy, which convey to him, in way difficult or impossible to analyze, the perpetually changing contours of events and feelings and human activities round them – they are gifted with a peculiar, political sense fed on a capacity to take in minute impressions, to integrate a vast multitude of small evanescent unseizable details, such as artists posses in relation to their material ...[46]

It seems that a third category can be added here, of those who are devoured by the fire of their own revolutions, people of the left and the right, each in his own way, figures such as Zelyabov, Patrick Pearse, and Drieu la-Rochelle, and not least among them, Avraham Stern. When he had already realized that his end was near, in the summer of 1941, he wrote:

> At times when nations struggle and collapse, in times of war and on the eve of revolutions, many search for the single one, and the masses [search] for a leader. The yearning hearts, the hopeful eyes, all turn towards the great anonymous one, he who bears the idea of freedom. When faith is lost in the rule of law, when the sense of security in the power of the public collapses, the primordial instinct, fixed deeply within the hearts of human beings, comes to the fore: total surrender to the mighty, blind following on the heels of the leader. The decay of democracy in Athens preceded the arrival of Alexander the Great, the destruction of the French Revolution led to the rise of Napoleon, and in our own time we are witnessing the helplessness of the majorities and of the rulers of many lands, beginning with Soviet Russia and Nazi Germany and ending with Fascist Italy and democratic England. In the annals of the Hebrew nation, the rule of the mighty hand – of the fighter, the judge and the king – has become a tradition. Interwoven throughout many generations as glorious links in the chain of rule are the names of [Moses] Son-of-Amram and Joshua Son-of-Nun, of King David and Mattathias the Hasmonean, of Bar-Kochba and David Ha-Reuveni, all the way to Herzl and his successors ... Now, as well, the nation is calling for an anonymous leader who will guide them along the path of redemption. The Hebrew freedom movement which dwells in the underground awaits the arrival of the commander. It does not make the fulfilment of the destiny dependent on the name of that man, for [the movement] knows in advance that agony and the gallows await its commander, and ... [that] another shall take his place, to confine his life to austerity in the name of an idea. The *idea* is the pillar of the fire that goes before the camp of the freedom fighters.[47]

By the time he recorded these words, Stern had already despaired of using T. E. Lawrence, Lenin, and Pilsudski as leadership models. Their places were taken by the sacrificial models of Masada, NILI, and the Irish Easter Rebellion of 1916. His 10-year dialogue with death in the name of national liberation had now come to an end.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Beyond his belief in the ability of personality to impose its will upon reality, Stern embrace the idea of the influence of one single, impersonal, historical process, that of Social Darwinism. In practice, this meant that although the Hebrew nation had abundant military strength and vigour at its disposal, this was still insufficient; thus, a pact with a victorious power was necessary in order to fill the needs. Stern was politically and psychologically prepared to leap from revolutionary thoughts to revolutionary deeds. But his essential nature was that of a romantic leader. As such, in his own way, he interpreted the ideology of the conservative right of Jabotinsky, the first of his mentors, as he did with the ideology of the radical authoritarian right, as imparted to him by his teachers Ahimeir, Yeivin, and Ratosh. His disciples – Natan Friedman-Yellin (Mor), Yitzhak Yezernicki (Shamir), and Dr Yisrael Eldad (Scheib) – would learn the appropriate lessons, and would seek to emphasize the need for a suitable balance between ideology and politics. But because of new circumstances and changing times, they were constrained to foster a new ideology, one of National Bolshevism. Stern had never dreamed of any such ideology; he sought to be the one who ignited the Hebrew revolution (the same revolution sought by Jabotinsky since 1912),[48] but of his own will, he was consumed by its fire because of the failure of his ideological concepts.[49] The nimbus of charisma that was later spun around his personality by his successors was simply the product of the ideological, political, and practical necessities of the times, in the face of a hostile environment. But there was no basis for it in the reality of Stern's life and times. In essence he was a revolutionary typical of the radical right and a victim of its Zionist version.

Unlike Menachem Begin, who survived by leading a controlled guerrilla war and by transforming his underground movement into a political party at the appropriate time, Stern had conducted unlimited terrorist warfare. His suicidal war against Britain depended on an Axis victory. Later, his successors in the leadership of LEHI chose the Soviets as an ally. The crucial difference was the fact that Stalin, never a fanatical racist anti-Semite like Hitler, proved to be supportive of Zionism in the crucial years of the struggle for a Jewish State, while Hitler could never have constituted even a potential ally. Stern (and for that matter his successors) never succeeded in creating a legal party which could have guided the underground, whether politically or ideologically. True, Begin inaugurated his "Revolt" against the position of his mother party, but he gradually took over the Revisionist party and turned it into his political arm. This process which had already begun in Jabotinsky's lifetime, when the latter failed to control the Irgun from his exile in Europe, and had to accede to its anti-Arab politics (and by implication to its opposition to the Jewish Agency's "self-

restraint" line), ended in Begin's complete control over the Herut party in the elections to the first Knesset (1949). The Fighters' Party, which replaced the underground LEHI failed in these elections as a result of its total rejection of Jabotinsky's social and economic legacy. This had been oriented to the middle classes and has been minimalist with regard to state intervention. LEHI also turned its back on Jabotinsky's anti-communism – it was handicapped, moreover, by the greater heroism demonstrated by the larger Irgun during the final years of British rule. Stern's schism in 1940, and his later failures, undermined his successors' attempts to win over the radical Right. After 1949, the survivors of LEHI would find their ideological home in the Herut (Freedom) Party, and later in the Likud. Except for one important exception, Dr Israel Eldad, they realized that their radical ideology could win only by achieving legitimacy through unity with the moderate right, the so-called liberals and the former General Zionists. Eldad remained the truest disciple of Stern's myth because of his persistent refusal to accept the democratization of the radical Right brought about by Begin's leadership or Yitzhak Shamir's pragmatism. Unlike Stern, Eldad granted greater importance to ideological education than to revolutionary activity. Both, however, avoided judging historical events by the criteria of Messianic activism. Eldad was careful not to let the revolutionary spirit consume him, although after the foundation of the State of Israel he continued to support extra-parliamentary groups. While in the underground he incurred some personal risk and was arrested by the British police, though never exiled. Unlike Stern who remained a marginal figure, Eldad, after the Six Day War carved out a central position for himself as the ideologue of the radical Right. Indeed, he learnt the lesson from Stern's failure to build a legal and political framework which could have provided him with a wider room for manoeuvre. Stern had torpedoed his own prospects by his excessive Messianism, his misconceived alliance with the Axis (which even Ahimeir considered a terrible mistake), and his terrorist inclinations.

Stern's burning desire to establish the Third Temple at the centre of the restored Kingdom of Israel was a utopian dream far removed from the ideology of Jabotinsky and Begin, both of whom loathed Messianism of any kind. In this sense, Jabotinsky and his followers were nearer to the conception of the Zionist final goal held by Chaim Weizmann and David Ben-Gurion than to Stern. As to the means, they differed only in the pre-State period. Stern could have survived only by adopting a neutral policy in the Second World War, as *Ha-shomer Ha-tzair* did between 1939 and 1941, and by postponing the terrorist campaign. But then he would not have been true to himself as the uncompromising revolutionary who was "betrayed" by everybody,

especially by his former colleague, the commander of the Irgun, David Raziel, who fell as a British officer in Iraq in 1941. The negative reply he received from the Germans to his alliance proposal in the autumn of 1941 fatefully reduced his chances for survival. An internal split following this reply threw the underground into the hands of terrorists without vision, who thought that the assassination of police officers could prevent their own liquidation. The dream of the revival of the Kingdom of Israel, whatever principled megalomania it represented, was reduced now into a running battle with the British mandatory police.

Far less messianic in their approach Begin, Friedman-Yellin or Shamir would never have fallen into such a trap. Fortunately for them they did not have to face Stern's predicament. They were placed either in exile, prison or found themselves on the margins of the underground. Consequently they were in a position to learn from Stern's mistakes. While Stern could not rely even on his former colleagues, his disciples knew that Ben-Gurion, though temporarily in collaboration with the British police, would not go as far as an open civil war on the Irish model. Conversely, they collaborated in the United Hebrew Resistance Movement (1945-46). The very idea of such an arrangement would have been anathema to Stern, even though it did not heal the basic rift and was not to repeat itself. All underground leaders agreed willy-nilly with the foundation of partitioned Israel although reconciliation was hindered by the Altalena episode (the ship which attempted to bring arms for the Irgun), and the assassination of Count Bernadotte, the UN mediator by LEHI. Paradoxically, both episodes served to shorten the path of the underground movements to full participation in Israel's parliamentary democracy.

It is an exercise in historical speculation, of course, to ask whether Stern would have collaborated with Israeli democracy. It fell far short of his goals and ambitions. Would he have followed Friedman-Yellin in joining the Israeli radical Left, a move which eventually ended in fiasco? Or would he have emulated Itzhak Shamir, rejoining the mother party (Herut) after two decades of adaptation? Or perhaps he would have joined Eldad as an uncompromising extreme right ideologue? Most probably none of these options, since Stern yearned to become a martyr on the model of Messiah son-of-Joseph who would pave the way for the Messiah son-of-David, the ultimate saviour. This judgement marks him as a typical example of politics misconceived as the art of the impossible.

NOTES

1. E. Katz, "The Person in the Attic", *He-hazit*, 1, Tamuz 5703 (1943); republished in: LEHI, LEHI Writings, 1, Tel-Aviv, 1959, p.125 (Hebrew).
2. Eldad, "The Way of his Life and Death", Yair, 25 Shevat 5704 (1944); republished in LEHI Writings, p.376.
3. "His Portrait", ibid., pp.379, 382. In the LEHI, the image of David Ha-Reuveni, the sixteenth-century false Messiah, came to be favourably regarded, against the judgement of Ahimeir. See "Letter to the Zionist Youth", *Doar Ha-yom*, 21 October 1930.
4. "Letter to the Editors of HeHazit", *Ba-herev*, Nisan 5704 (1944), pp.27-28.
5. "Revolutionary Hysteria", ibid., p.35. Ben-Yosef was executed by the authorities in June 1938 after a failed anti-Arab retaliatory operation conducted by members of the Betar company in Rosh Pinah. The poem was quoted by Y. Shamir, on the eighth anniversary of Stern's death, in *La-haver* (internal, February 1950), p.6:
   Perhaps even this favour will not be granted by fate:
   Not against the wall will I be made to stand – upon a gallows:
   Beheaded at the neck like a wretched criminal:
   I will let my soul blow away between Earth and Heaven.
6. Natan Friedman-Yellin (Gera), On Problems of Government and Society, 25 February 1949, in: Archives of Beit "Yair", Lohamim (Fighters) Party Files, File No.4 (Hebrew). See also, *Ba-mahteret*, 6, republished in LEHI Writings, 1, p.71.
7. Abba Sikra (Ahimeir), "'Tvarda' and 'Gilboa' (Two meetings with Yair, May the Lord Avenge his Blood)", *Herut*, 27 May 1949; see also the response of Yellin-Mor: N. Freidman-Yellin, "Not a Deliberate Distortion - Just a Weakness of Memory ... (response to Abba Sikra from Herut), *Ha-ma'as*, 4 (86), 5 Sivan 5709 (2 June 1949).
8. P.Ginosar, "Lehi Revealed. Minutes of the Conference of the Fighters for the Freedom of Israel (March 1949)", Ramat-Gan, Bar-Ilan University, 1985, pp.97-98.
9. "The Great Man and His Age. Lectures Delivered at the Eighth Convention of the Historical Society of Israel, December 1962", Jerusalem, The Historical Society of Israel, 1963, p.11.
10. *Omer La-am* (Evening paper), 29 July 1939. W. T. Drymmer's *Memoirs, Historical Notebooks*, XIII (in Polish), Paris 1968, pp.70-71, 76-77.
11. Garibaldi and Mazzini were adopted as role models for the Revisionist movement, largely thanks to Jabotinsky. See his article: "Rebel of Light" of 1912 (*Uma Ve-hevra*, Jerusalem, 5719 (1959), pp.99-110). On Garibaldi, see also "Liberated Jerusalem" (in Polish), No 20 (28), June 1939, pp.11-12. With reference to the influence of Mussolini, cf. A. Stern to H. S Ha-levi from 15 February 1934, in *Ha-uma*, 82 (1986), pp.86-89.
12. P. S. O'Hegarty, "The Victory of Sinn Fein (The Rising of 1916)", *Ba-mahteret*, 5 Shevat 5701 (1941), in LEHI Writings, 1, pp.53-56. With reference to IZL's esteem for Sir Roger Casement, cf. "From the Lives of Great Revolutionaries: Sir Roger Casement", in Ba-herev, Adar 5702 (1942), pp.4-6. The anonymous writer seems to have had Stern in mind. See also F. X. Martin, "The Evolution of a Myth: The Easter Rising, Dublin 1916 in E. Kamenka (ed.), *The Nature and Evolution of an Idea*, New York, 1976, pp.57-80.
13. Stern, "The Messianic Movements in Israel", *Ba-mahteret*, 4, Tevet 5701 (1940); 5, Shevat 5701 (1941); and 6 Adar 5701 (1941); (republished in LEHI Writings, 1, pp.47-48, 55-56, and 63-66 respectively).
14. Jabotinsky, "Sienkiewicz", *Hadashot Ha-aretz*, 8 October 1919 (also published in *Al Sifrut Ve-omanut*, Jerusalem, 5708 (1948), p.164). cf. also Jabotinsky's play *Samson* (1927). The "song of Betar" was published for the first time in *Hazit Ha-am*, 22 March 1932.
15. *Ba-mahteret*, 4, Tevet 5701 (1940), dedicated to Avshalom Feinberg, in LEHI Writings, 1, pp.43-44.
16. U. Z.Greenberg, *The Book of Indictment and Faith*, Jerusalem 5697 (1937), pp.53-58.
17. U. Z. Greenberg, *Ezor Magen U-ne'um Ben Ha-dam* (The Zone of Defence and Address of the Son of Blood), Jerusalem 5690 (1930), pp.5-6, 15, 30, Cf. articles by Stern in *Ha-metzudah*, Nos. 3-6 (1932-1933), "We and Our Neighbours", which provide evidence for a concept of eternal confrontation.
18. Cf., his letter to Ronnie Burstein, 11 June 1936 (in the possession of Ronnie Zamir). With reference to Ahimeir's political doctrine and his dispute with Jabotinsky, cf. my

"Ends and Means - The ideological and Political Debate between Jabotinsky and Achimeir, 1928-1933", in *Zion*, 5747 (1987), issue 3, pp.3154-369.

19. Cf. his "The Sicarii Scroll", in A. Ahimeir, *Ligat Ha-sicarikim* (The League of the Sicarii), Tel-Aviv, 1972, pp.217-223.
20. On Klausner, cf. his *When a Nation Fights for its Freedom* (in Hebrew), 1st printing 5696 (1936); 2nd printing, Jerusalem, 5699 (1939).
21. Platform for the World Convention. *Ha-medinah*, Warsaw, 13 Tammuz 5698 (12 July 1938), and a more complete text in Jabotinsky Institute 3/1/2/2; a final echo of the "honeymoon" between Heilperin and Stern is to be found in the article "The Hebrew as Colonialist and Fighter", *Ba-mahteret*, 6, Adar 5701 (1941), republished in LEHI Writings, 1, pp.31- 32.
22. Protocol of the Third World Conference of Betar (Bucharest, 1940), p.60. For the conversation between Jabotinsky and Stern, cf. "Conversation with Pitt (Jabotinsky)", ("Yair" to Raziel), 19 August 1938, "Ha-kad" Archives ("Yair's" personal manuscripts found hidden in a milk pitcher, Kad in Hebrew), now in possession of his brother, David Stern (henceforth: Yair's "Milk Pitcher").
23. CF. Dr. I. Eldad (Scheib), *The First Tithe: Chapters from Memoirs and Moral*, 2nd edition,. Tel-Aviv, 5723 (1963), pp. 19-26; and my "Jabotinsky and the Question of Self-Restraint" (1939-1986)", in: *Transition and Change in Modern Jewish History* (essays presented in honour of Shmuel Ettinger), Jerusalem, 5747 (1987), pp.283-320.
24. Slutzki, *The History of the Haganah*, 3 (1), Tel-Aviv, 5732 (1972), pp.62-63. Cf. also: in Di-Tat (in Yiddish), 10 March 1939, where France and Turkey are mentioned as potential allies.
25. J. B. Shechtman, *Ze'ev Jabotinsky – The Story of his Life*, 3, Tel-Aviv, 1959, pp.233-236.
26. E(lazar) B(en-) Y(air) (i.e., Stern), The Enemy, K12/ 4-4, Jabotinsky Institute; and manuscripts amended by Stern, P3A/ 223, Jabotinsky Institute.
27. *The History of the Haganah*, 3 (3), p.1615 (in a note to line 9).
28. E(lazar) B(en-) Y(air), "Principle and Conclusions". *Omer La'am*, 29 July 1939; cf. also, A Most Respectable Gentleman, P3A/223, Jabotinsky Institute. Y. Zelnik, Stern's close confidant at the time, claims that Stern was influenced by T. E. Lawrence's *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*. On the influence of Social Darwinism on the radical right, cf. S. G. Payne, *Fascism, Comparison and Definition*, Madison, 1980.
29. Cf. U. Z. Greenberg, "The Legend of Ya'acov Raz", in *Omer La-am*, 29 July 1939, and "In My Blood Shall You Live Forever" in: A Stern – "Yair", *Poems* (no date), pp.105-114, 130-131.
30. Ya'acov Raz attempted to plant a bomb in the Arab market in the course of an IZL mission in the summer of 1938, but was captured and beaten to death. Arieh Yitzhaki was killed in the summer of 1939 in the process of preparing a mine while on a retaliatory mission on behalf of the IZL.
31. "The War Aims of the Jewish People", *Ba-herev* (May 1940). With reference to Stern's admiration for Hitler's victories, cf. accounts given by his comrades in the IZL Command: B. Zeroni, A. Heichman, H. Lubinski and H. Kalay; the Haganah Archives.
32. "Announcement of the Command No. 112", LEHI Writings, 1, pp.17-18
33. Stern's letter to Jabotinsky, unsigned and undated, 5 July 1940, from Weinshal's book (2nd Ed., 1976), between pp.165 and 168.
34. Merlin to Raziel, 11 July 1940, Yair's Milk Pitcher, File No. 40; Stern to Merlin, 22 July 1940, ibid.
35. The Command of the IZL in Israel, No. 1, eve of Rosh Ha-shanah 5701 (3 September 1940), LEHI Writings, 1, pp.19-20.
36. With reference to the terms "troublemaker" and "enemy". cf. account given by Moshe Svorai in: Y. Banai, *Hayalim Almonim* (Unknown Soldiers), Tel-Aviv, undated (1958), p.72.
37. The Italian document appears in: D. Niv, *Battle for Freedom: The Irgun Zvai Leumi*, 3, Tel-Aviv, 1967, p.177. Cf, also M. Roten (Rothstein), "Italian Espionage in the Land (of Israel)", secret evidence, Haganah Archives, File of Secret Evidences.
38. The German document appears in: D. Yisraeli, *The Palestine Problem in German Politics, 1889-1945*, Ramat-Gan, 1974, pp.315-317. Ada Amichai-Yeivin did in fact cite most of the German document in her book, but she missed the point by underestimating the document's dire significance, owing to her blind devotion to Stern: *In the Purple: the Life of Yair - Avraham Stern*, Tel-Aviv, 1986, p.226 and Appendix 12. (The

following statement was deleted: "In its philosophical outlook and its structure, the IZL feels itself closest to the totalitarian movements of Europe").

39. Ya'acov (Yashka) Eliav, *Wanted*, Tel-Aviv, 1983, pp.130-193.
40. Ba-mahteret, 5, Shevat 5701 (1941); in Yair's Milk Pitcher, File No. 89.
41. A. Stern, The Crimes of the Jewish Agency, Jabotinsky Institute Archives, p. 233. See also, E(lazar) B(en-) Y(air), Ba-herev, Nisan 5699 (1939). For Stern's hostility towards communism, cf. his article: "Israel in the Lands of Dispersion (A Historical Review)", *Ha-metzudah*, 1 (1932, ed. H. S. Ha-Levey), Tel-Aviv, 1978, pp.19-20.
42. Dr Y. H.Yeivin, "The Inception of the Movement for the Kingdom of Israel: Yair – the 'Bar-Mitzvah' of his Death", *Sullam*, 11 (71), Year 6, Adar 5715 (1955), p.23. (The meeting took place in the winter of 1940, according to Yeivin.)
43. Abba Sikra, "'Tvarda' and 'Gilboa' – Two Meetings With Yair, May the Lord Avenge his Blood", *Herut*, 27 May 1949. (The meetings took place at the end of the summer of 1941 according to Ahimeir). Also, in a meeting with Ya'acov Orenstein (In Chains, Tel-Aviv, 5733 (1973), p.148), Stern mentioned the example of Lenin and Brest-Litovsk. In a conversation with Dr. H. Rosenblum (Barkai, Johannesburg, February-March 1950, p.5-6) he spoke of Pilsudski's journey to Japan during the First World War. N. Friedman-Yellin's response to Ahimeir, "Not a Deliberate Distortion -Just a Weakness of Memory ... (response to Abba Sikra from Herut)", *Ha-ma'as*, 4 (86), 5 Sivan 5709 (2 June 1949).
44. "Diaspora and Redemption (On the Question of the Ghetto)", *Ba-mahteret*, 6, pp.20-23, in Yair's Milk Pitcher, File 89 (deleted from the LEHI Writings).
45. Z. Jabotinsky, *The Jewish War Front*, London, 1940, Chapters 4-5.
46. Isaiah Berlin, *Personal Impressions*, London, 1980, p.27.
47. The Leader, in: "Yair, 25 Shevat 5702 - 25 Shevat 5704 (early 1942 - early 1944)", in: LEHI Writings, 1, pp.395-396.
48. Z. Jabotinsky, "The Igniter", 1912, in: Z. Jabotinsky, *Reshimot* (Notes), Tel-Aviv (undated), pp.13-17.
49. "Let us Greet the Redeemer of Zion ... /let our blood be a red carpet in the streets/and on this carpet, our brains shall be like white lilies". A. Stern – Yair, "In Thy Blood Shalt Thou Live Forever", *Poems* (no date), p.33.

The Multivocality of a National Myth: Memory and Counter-Memories of Masada

YAEL ZERUBAVEL

The rise of Masada as a narrative of major national significance was one of the cornerstones of the new Hebrew culture constructed during the formative years of the Jewish society in Palestine. When the State of Israel was founded in 1948, Masada was known as a site of pilgrimage for Israeli youth and an important symbol of national pride, love of freedom and readiness for patriotic sacrifice. The extensive excavations of Masada during the mid-1960s turned it into a prominent archaeological site and one of Israel's most famous tourist attractions. The combination of a highly dramatic story from Antiquity, a remote cliff that offers a spectacular view of the Judean Desert and the Dead Sea and a large area covered by interesting archaeological ruins has contributed to Masada's evolution from a neglected story in Jewish history to a major Israeli national myth.

I have analyzed elsewhere this process of evolution which offers a fascinating case for examining the dynamics of collective memory and the construction of a national tradition.[1] A nationally inspired Hebrew literature, a youth pilgrimage and a range of patriotic rituals enhanced the visibility of Masada and encouraged its emergence as a national myth. I have argued that Masada is particularly interesting for the study of the development of memory because it is based on a single historical source, hence it is easy to study the constant negotiations between the historical record and the commemorative traditions it has generated. In this essay, I would like to further this argument by focusing on the multivocality of the Masada narrative as evidenced in the emergence of a wide range of *counter-myth narratives*.[2] By analyzing the debates on the meaning of Masada, I wish to show that the multivocality of national myths becomes both their source of power and their point of weakness. While the mythical construction allows mem-

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ory to create selective representatives of the past, it can also engender competing narratives that subvert these representations and thereby challenge the meaning of the myth.

THE ACTIVE AND THE TRAGIC COMMEMORATIONS OF MASADA

Josephus's account of the occurrences that took place on top of Masada in AD 73 provides the foundation for the Masada myth.[3] According to his historical account in *Wars of the Jews*, a group of close to one thousand Jewish men, women and children found refuge in Masada during the Great Revolt against the Romans and continued to hold out even after the latter had conquered Jerusalem and destroyed the Second Temple in AD 70. Having celebrated their victory in Judea, the Romans proceeded to crush the remaining pockets of resistance, leaving Masada to the very end. After a prolonged siege the Romans succeeded in destroying the fortress's walls. When the leader of the Masada group, Elazar Ben-Yair, realized that the Roman storming of the fortress was inevitable, he gathered his men and convinced them to kill themselves so that they would die as free people rather than fall into their enemy's hands. Having first rejected his proposition, the men were later persuaded by his long and passionate speeches. They proceeded to kill the women and the children, set the fortress and the remaining supplies on fire and then killed themselves. Only two elderly women and five children who hid in a cave managed to escape this fate. When the Romans entered the fortress the next day, they were shocked by the sight of this scene of mass death, which deprived them of any pleasure of victory. The death of the 960 people at Masada thus marked the end of the Jewish Revolt.

Zionism rekindled Jewish interest in Jewish Antiquity, the "golden age" of the Hebrew nation, and highlighted the importance of the ancient Jewish wars of liberation. As a result Josephus's historical works, which were largely ignored by the Jews during the Middle Ages and the early modern period attracted a new attention. Masada's rise as a national myth is thus connected to Josephus's *Wars of the Jews* (first translated into Hebrew in Europe in 1862 and later into modern Hebrew in mandatory Palestine in 1923). In the emergent national Hebrew culture, Masada came to represent a resolute commitment to national freedom and its inhabitants were hailed for preferring to die free rather than yield to the Romans.

The activist interpretation of Masada stressed the rebels' fight against the Roman forces and played down the suicide, defining it as a patriotic death in the battle for freedom. Masada's significance as a symbol of active resistance to superior power in a situation that left lit-

tle hope for victory was enhanced during the Second World War, when it provided a historical counter-model for the Holocaust.[4] Whereas the Hebrew youth in Palestine had difficulty identifying with the fate of European Jews whom they associated with the submissive mentality of exile, they turned to Masada as a historical model of heroism and national pride. The ancient freedom fighters were glorified as an inspiration for the Zionist struggle to rebuild a Jewish national home in Palestine and later continued to be used as role-models for Israeli soldiers. Military units thus continued the pilgrimage tradition that the Hebrew schools, Zionist youth movements and military underground developed during the pre-state period. "Never again shall Masada fall!" – a verse from a popular poem by the Hebrew poet Yitzhak Lamdan – became a national slogan and a patriotic vow that was used in ceremonies conducted at the site.[5] Within this context, Masada was reinterpreted as a myth of renewal, representing a fight to guarantee the nation's survival and hence symbolically leading to the modern Zionist revival.

Israel's changing political reality since 1973 – the trauma of the Yom Kippur War, the rise of the Likud government, the War of Lebanon and the *Intifada* – these and other developments contributed to internal divisions within Israeli society and growing disillusionment with national myths constructed during the earlier, formative years. In this climate, a different interpretation of the national myth emerged in Israeli culture, transforming its meaning. In this version, the emphasis has shifted from Masada as an example of an active fight for freedom, to Masada as one of the greatest traumas in Jewish history. The version, which I call "the tragic commemorative narrative", presents Masada as a historical model of a hopeless situation in which Jews face persecution and death. In this framework, Masada becomes analogous to the Holocaust. It is no longer a model to follow, but a historical warning.

Both the activist and the tragic commemorative narratives of Masada coexist in contemporary Israeli culture, supporting its meaning as a myth of major national importance. Either as a model to emulate (the activist version) or a situation to avoid by all means (the tragic version), Masada is expected to inspire contemporary Israelis to take a powerful stance *vis-à-vis* their enemies and be ready to sacrifice themselves for their country.

CRITICISM OF MASADA: THE COUNTER-MYTH TEXTS

The prominence of Masada as a major archaeological site and a tourist attraction since the late 1960s has also attracted attention to its meaning and status as a new Israeli national myth. As we shall see below,

criticism of the Masada myth was multivocal, challenging it from different perspectives. While some counter-myth texts target the validity of Josephus's record, most texts choose to focus on discrepancies between this account and the commemorative narratives it has generated. By highlighting the tensions between history and memory, these texts question various aspects of the myth, denying the legitimacy of its representation of the past as well as the values that it promotes. Some other voices of criticism focus on the impact of the tragic commemorative narrative on current Israeli policies, underscoring the role of memory in negotiating between the past and the present.

JOSEPHUS'S RECORD: BETWEEN FACTS AND FICTION

Josephus's account of Masada is largely perceived within Israeli culture as a reliable historical document about a major event in the nation's past. Scholars, however, have long recognized the need for a critical evaluation of his writing, for Josephus was not only a contemporary of the Masada defenders but was also directly involved in the Jewish revolt he described: a prominent commander of the rebel's army in the Galilee, he betrayed his comrades after they faced defeat and surrendered to the Romans. He later joined the Roman court and devoted his life to historical writing under the Emperor's patronage.[6] Clearly, Josephus's precarious position in reporting the history of the Jewish revolt and his concern with his immediate readers' reactions to his writing must be taken into account in evaluating his work.[7] Although these facts are known, Israeli popular culture accepts Josephus's narrative as an authoritative text about Masada. Josephus, according to this view, suspended his highly critical approach to the Sicarii (the rebel group with which the Masada defenders had been affiliated according to his report) under the impact of their final brave act. The admiration and awe that this deed instilled in him as well as his guilt at his own failure to do the same along with his comrades a few years earlier led him to produce a detailed and accurate account of that event. In his popular book about the Masada excavation, archaeologist Yigael Yadin articulates this view:

> No one could have matched his (Josephus's) gripping description of what took place on the summit of Masada on that fateful night in the Spring of 73 AD. Whatever the reasons, whether pangs of conscience or some other cause we cannot know, the fact is that his account is so detailed and reads so faithfully and his report of the words uttered by Elazar Ben-Yair is so compelling, that it seems evident that he had been genuinely overwhelmed by the record of heroism on the part of the people he had forsaken.[8]

Yadin, who headed the archaeological mission, defined its goal as being "to see what evidence we could find to support the Josephus record", and indeed, the excavations were publicly seen as authenticating this record.[9] The only part of Josephus's account of the fall of Masada that is generally believed to be fabricated are Elazar Ben-Yair's speeches. Scholars tend to agree that Josephus composed these speeches, drawing on his own literary skills, in conformity with the historiographic norms of the period.[10] It is interesting to note, however, that in spite of this recognition, these speeches are considered so effective, that they are often read on site to impress the listeners – whether Israeli school children, soldiers or foreign tourists.[11]

The historical accuracy of Josephus's account was publicly challenged, however, in the debates surrounding the elevation of Masada as a national myth. In a series of editorials, published in the *Jewish Spectator* from 1966 to 1969,[12] Trude Weiss-Rosmarin claimed that Josephus's description of the mass suicide at Masada was a literary fabrication. This, she argued, explains why there is no other historical record of that event. Considering the Jewish prohibition against suicide and the Masada defenders' strong ideological commitment to the revolt, the idea that they would have killed themselves rather than continue to fight against the Romans was highly unlikely. Josephus invented this account, Weiss-Rosmarin suggested, to clear from his conscience his betrayal of his own comrades who chose to end their lives in a similar manner to that he ascribed to the Masada fighters. The historian Mary Smallwood accuses Josephus of making up the suicide scene in order to cover up the Romans' barbaric behaviour following the Masada people's real surrender.[13]

These opinions received attention but little support. Other scholars maintain that Josephus could not have invented the suicide since he was writing his history at the time when witnesses of the death scene were still living. Although he did not record the sources of his information, it is most likely that he had access to the Roman archives that held the testimonies of the two female survivors of Masada and the Roman soldiers who found the dead.[14]

THE MASADA DEFENDERS: FREEDOM FIGHTERS OR TERRORISTS?

Yadin's interpretation of Josephus's record was severely criticized by scholars who claimed that his eagerness to support the activist commemorative narrative led him to misrepresent both the historical record and his own archaeological findings. American historian Solomon Zeitlin accused Yadin of ignoring Josephus's identification of the Masada men as Sicarii and of referring to them instead as Zealots.

By so doing, argued Zeitlin, Yadin evaded Josephus's more negative description of the Sicarii that could tarnish the Masada defenders' image and associated them with the Zealots whose image as freedom fighters had been glorified in Hebrew culture.[15]

The Sicarii and the Zealots, Yadin's critics argued, were two distinct groups whose names were not interchangeable. These two factions pursued different courses of action during the Jewish revolt and were actually in conflict with each other.[16] The Sicarii were members of an extremist sect who accepted only G-d's rule and defied any human authority. Their main opposition was directed not at the Romans as their nation's oppressors but at those, including Jews, who represented authority. This explains why Josephus does not describe the Sicarii fighting the Romans. Instead, he tells of how they terrorized and exploited the Jewish settlements around them.[17] After they had found refuge at Masada, the Sicarii did not take an active part in the war, nor did they support the Zealots' struggle in Jerusalem. Even during the Roman siege of Masada they maintained a policy of watchful waiting and at the end they chose to take their own lives rather than fight. As Sidney Hoenig argues in support of Zeitlin's position, the Zealots acted as "defenders" whereas the Sicarii were "anarchists and defeatists who contributed to the fall of the Jewish state".[18]

Zeitlin and Hoenig also asserted that Yadin's material evidence supporting his portrayal of the Masada men as highly devout Jews was questionable. There was not enough evidence to substantiate his claim that certain structures had served as the *mikva* (ritual bath) and the synagogue, for laws concerning both developed later; and the donation boxes unearthed at Masada could have been part of the Sicarii's loot from neighbouring Jewish settlements.[19]

Such criticism triggered an intense and lengthy debate in which other scholars intervened on behalf of the Masada defenders and in support of Yadin's interpretation.[20] Yadin, who refused to enter this debate in defence of his position, made the following statement in an interview in the Israeli military magazine *Ba-mahane*:

> Professor Zeitlin, as it is well known, argued against the early dating of the Dead Sea Scrolls and other findings at Masada that confirmed the early dating of the scrolls. And maybe, as a result of this, he has recently started to make statements that I, at least, consider as *a slander* of the group of Zealot Jews who fought for freedom and who died for *Kiddush Ha-Shem* because of their desire for freedom about two thousand years ago. Here I find it necessary to *react strongly, and not necessarily as a scientist* (emphasis added).[21]

Yadin's response indicates that he clearly saw his patriotic commitment

to Masada as an important dimension of his work. His critics, however, found his position highly problematic, stating that it biased his scientific work and shaped it in accordance with the activist commemorative narrative.[22]

THE LEGITIMACY OF TRADITION: MASADA OR YAVNE?

Israeli collective memory constructed Masada as the embodiment of the ancient national spirit that Zionism wished to revive. Yet the "Masada spirit" became one of the main targets of the critics of the myth. According to them, the much-celebrated message of the Masada activist commemorative narrative, that death in freedom is preferred to life in submission, represents an extremist view that mainstream rabbinical Judaism has justifiably rejected. "In the scale of Jewish values, life occupies the highest rung. Unlike the Romans and the Greeks, the Jews did not glorify those who died by their own sword on the battlefield".[23]

While Weiss-Rosmarin uses this argument to support her view that Josephus fabricated the scene of mass suicide, other critics interpret the Talmud's silence with regard to Masada as indicating the sages' disapproval of the collective suicide. The Pharisee Rabbis did not accept the Sicarii's position that any form of political submission detracted from the total submission to G-d. Rather, they emphasized the importance of adherence to the principles of Judaism as the essence of Jewish life and accepted political submission when it was deemed inevitable. "Respect for government and authority was always taught by the Rabbis ... Rome was regarded by many as an instrument of G-d. The priestly maxim was especially aimed to restrain strife and to preserve Israel from destruction".[24]

As a counter-model to Masada these critics raised another historical event of the same period which, they believed, reflected more genuinely the spirit of Jewish tradition: the creation of a rabbinical academy at Yavne. Following the Great Revolt, Yavne became the spiritual centre that filled the void created by the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple. The Talmud which refrained from alluding to Masada, contains several versions of Rabbi Yohanan Ben-Zakkai's initiative to found a new rabbinical academy in Yavne. Accordingly, when he realized that Jerusalem was about to fall into the Romans' hands, his students smuggled him in a coffin out of besieged Jerusalem, thereby evading the Zealots who controlled the city's exits in order to prevent Jews from escaping. When Ben-Zakkai reached the Roman camp, he asked Vespasian to allow him to settle in Yavne (in some versions this was his reward for prophesying to the Roman general that he would become the next Emperor).[25]

Whereas Masada represents the choice of death, Yavne represents survival by accommodation to the same political reality. The Israeli historian Binyamin Kedar wrote in the Israeli newspaper *Ha-aretz*:

> Indeed, Judaism's main road does not pass through Masada but Yavne. Masada is a cul-de-sac, a dead end, a dramatic finale. He who tells the soldiers of the Armoured Corps during the oath ceremony at Masada that "thanks to the heroism of the Masada defenders we stand here today" lives in error and misleads others. If Judaism has survived, if the Jewish people has survived, it is not by virtue of Masada but by virtue of Yavne; it is not thanks to Elazar Ben-Yair, but thanks to Ben-Zakkai.[26]

Both the supporters and the critics of the myth agree that Masada represents a departure from traditional Jewish memory, yet they differ in their evaluation of this development. While the supporters praise it as an indication of the resurrection of the ancient national spirit that was suppressed during centuries of submissive Jewish life in exile, the critics justify the centuries-long disregard for Masada by its incompatibility with traditional Jewish values. For them, Masada represents a fanatic response to political oppression that Jewish tradition could not approve.

The supporters of Masada argue that the lack of any reference to Masada in Jewish rabbinical sources does not reflect agreement among the rabbis about the revolt. At the time, they argue, the rabbis were divided on this issue. Some, like the famous Rabbi Akiva who supported Bar-Kokhba's revolt against Rome (132-135 AD), were sympathetic to the idea of armed resistance; others, who did not believe that a revolt could be successful, sought a more peaceful accommodation to Roman rule. This division, however, was political and not religious, representing divergent assessments of the prospects of this war.[27]

The tension between Masada and Yavne as historical models of divergent Jewish approaches to catastrophic situations is in some cases acknowledged and then played down. "Undoubtedly, Yavne saved the Jewish people from extinction. But maybe Masada saved it as well?" the Zionist historian Yosef Klausner wrote. "Who knows if, in addition to the Torah, the memory of the heroism of Yohanan of Gush-Halav, Shimon Bar-Giora, and Elazar Ben-Yair did not save the Jewish people from stagnation and extinction?"[28] And after juxtaposing the symbolism of these two events, within the context of his discussion of Masada, Beno Rotenberg asserts: "There is no point in raising the question as to who was right in an argument that never took place between Yavne and Masada".[29]

DEATH AT MASADA: SUICIDE OR MARTYRDOM?

The issue of communal death at Masada was also examined from a religious-legal perspective. Since traditional Jewish sources make no mention of Masada, the legal interpretation of this case is based on inference from other cases specifically addressed by *halakha* (Jewish Law). The legal debate returns to the historical narrative to examine the special circumstances of the participants' death and their motivation in executing the plan of collective death. Josephus provides a detailed account of Elazar Ben-Yair's arguments to his people for ending their lives and of how they carried that out. Once they were persuaded by their leaders, the Masada men slew the women and children and then drew lots to determine the 10 men who would slay the rest. The 10 men later repeated the procedure to determine the one who would kill the nine others and then kill himself.[30]

The historical narrative thus tells of people killing each other, with the single exception of the last person who took his own life. Whereas causing someone else's death is usually labelled "murder", a self-inflicted death is defined as "suicide". Determining the voluntary basis of the Masada act is therefore crucial in assigning it to one of these two categories. It is extremely significant, however, that the issue of murder hardly appears in the legal debate. Rather, the controversy focuses on the conflicting definitions of "martyrdom" and "suicide". I shall return to the issue of murder later in this discussion, but at this point will follow the arguments raised in this debate.

The legal controversy thus revolves around the question of whether the death at Masada can be interpreted as an act of *Kiddush Ha-Shem* ("the Sanctification of G-d's name", the Hebrew concept of Martyrdom) or defined as suicide. This issue is of primary significance, since Jewish law treats these two categories very differently, elevating the former as the most sublime manifestation of religious devotion (namely, a *mitzva*) while condemning the latter as a sin.

Jewish religion sets a high value on the preservation of life (*piku'ah nefesh*) and objects to suicide as a violation of this principle. A person who commits suicide defies divine control over life and death and is guilty of destroying G-d's creation. Jewish law therefore denies those who commit suicide certain posthumous honours and privileges that are customarily extended to all Jews and they are believed to be denied their place in the world to come.[31]

The laws concerning Jewish martyrdom crystallized in the second century in response to Roman religious persecutions. The rise of martyrdom during that period became so alarming that the rabbis felt obliged to provide clear guidelines as to when it is expected. Jewish law thus recognizes specific circumstances in which one is required to

choose death over life as an act of religious devotion rather than commit one of the three most severe transgressions: idolatry, adultery or incest, and murder. In the case of other transgressions, the principle of preservation of life supersedes the issue of religious violation, unless this becomes a matter of public display (when one is forced to commit a minor transgression in front of at least ten witnesses).[32] If the Masada communal death can be legally defined as an act of *Kiddush Ha-Shem*, then this classification would justify its elevation as an important symbolic event. But if it cannot be defined as such, as its critics argue, the myth crumbles as a misrepresentation of Jewish spirit and values.

To refute the legitimacy of the Masada death, the critics claim that Jews are expected to assert their devotion by being ready to *be killed by others*, not by killing themselves. To support this position, they turn to the example of the famous Ten Martyrs whose readiness to endure terrible suffering from the Romans was seen as the ultimate expression of their devotion to the Jewish faith.[33] Moreover, the Masada defenders were not faced with the major transgressions that called for martyrdom and, therefore, were not permitted to kill themselves. Their act was inspired by Stoic ideas that are in essence alien to Jewish laws concerning matters of life and death.[34]

Those who accepted the death at Masada as an act of *Kiddush Ha-Shem* argued that the laws concerning martyrdom had been formed at a later period and could not have served as guidelines for the Masada people. Moreover, their death is legitimate even under those later laws since this may be considered a case of public demonstration.[35] The proponents of the myth turn to other historical examples to support their views. The death of King Saul, who had fallen on his sword before the Philistines reached him, was justified as an act of *Kiddush Ha-Shem*, and his case was even applied by the chief chaplain of the Israeli army, Shlomo Goren, to a ruling concerning Israeli soldiers faced with similar circumstance.[36] Medieval Jews who died for their faith during the Crusades, enacting scenes of communal deaths similar to that of Masada, were considered martyrs.[37] Similarly, Jewish victims who died because of their Jewishness during the 1648-49 pogroms in Ukraine and the Holocaust are accepted as martyrs regardless of the specific circumstances of their death.[38] *Kiddush Ha-Shem* is thus an evolving concept and the Masada defenders should not be judged by stricter standards than other Jewish martyrs throughout the ages.

COLLECTIVE SUICIDE OR MURDER?

The debate whether the death at Masada can be considered an act of *Kiddush Ha-Shem* reveals a tacit assumption that it was the result of a collective decision and can therefore be seen as "collective suicide".

Within this context, how that suicide was carried out becomes a secondary, indeed a technical, issue. Although Josephus's narrative does not provide direct evidence of a voluntary acceptance of death by all those subject to that fate, the issue of murder is hardly raised even by the critics of Masada.[39]

Yet Josephus's historical narrative addresses only the men's response to Elazar Ben-Yair's plan of collective suicide and ignores the women's and children's perspectives. Josephus does not tell us if the women and children agreed to be slain by their husbands and fathers or if their opinion, indeed, mattered at all. In his description the narrator clearly positions himself with the men, recounting how their leader persuaded them to carry out his plan, how each man embraced and kissed his beloved ones before he slew them and how the men extended their necks to be slain by the other, thus expressing their voluntary agreement to this act. We do not know whether the women and the children too extended their necks or whether they showed any reservations or resistance. The ambiguity of this situation is reflected in statements by seventh graders whom I interviewed, who tried to adjust the intransitive verb "to commit suicide" to fit the Masada reality.[40]

Disregard of the perspective provided by women and children is expressed not only by the ancient historian but also by most contemporary critics of Masada. The accusation of murder is much more severe than that of suicide: "Thou shalt not murder" is one of the Ten Commandments and its violation is one of the three most severe transgressions by a Jew. Avoidance of this issue in the discourse about Masada may indicate that most critics consider the charge of murder too harsh for people who acted out of religious zeal. The men's decision to die is thus accepted as a collective representation of the choice of the community as a whole, thereby allowing memory to reinforce the suppression of women's and children's voices in the historical narrative.

While the issues raised above were central to the debates on the meaning of the Masada myth, they appeared to be marginal concerns in the interviews I conducted in the late 1970s. Masada's compatibility with traditional Jewish values was not questioned and the few informants who objected to the suicide on religious grounds were not aware that this was a subject of an ongoing controversy in academic circles. Informants seemed to take Masada's "traditional status" for granted, an assumption that is clearly reinforced by the activist commemorative narrative. Furthermore, the legal debate on the definition of the Masada deaths took place mostly in Jewish journals published outside of Israel (such as *Tradition*, *Or Ha-mizrah*, *Ha-do'ar*), and although some Israeli academic and rabbinical scholars participated in

it as well, they had little impact on the popular attitude towards Masada. Informants appeared to take it for granted that the death of the Masada defenders was an act of *Kiddush Ha-Shem*.[41] Clearly, the identification of an ancient synagogue and ritual bath among the ruins of Masada and the official funeral given in 1969 by the State of Israel to bones identified as the remains of the Masada defenders helped eliminate any doubts about the religious legitimacy of the death at Masada and the appropriateness of their veneration as martyrs.

THE MASADA MODEL: HEROISM OR ESCAPISM?

The most common objection to the Masada myth raised by secular Israelis has addressed the glorification of the Masada defenders' decision to die by their own hands as heroic. Rejecting the activist commemoration of Masada as symbolizing a commitment to fight the enemy "till the last drop of blood", this counter-myth text argues that the Masada defenders' behaviour reflects a decision to *avoid confrontation* with the Romans. Contrary to the Masada myth, then, Josephus's historical record is interpreted as presenting an escapist solution to a conflict situation, a solution that brought death upon everyone in that community and that runs against the grain of the early Zionist emphasis on the value of active resistance. In the words of my interviewees: "They shouldn't have killed one another", "I would have wanted to fight against them and at least, to kill one of them. But to die like that – killing one another – we don't gain anything by this!", "This isn't heroism. One should go on fighting till the end. A person who commits suicide has a weak character".

This line of argument has also been pursued by scholars engaged in demolishing the Masada myth. Two staunch opponents of the myth, Zeitlin and Hoenig, voiced the most vehement opposition to the suicide on this ground. As Zeitlin stated, the Sicarii "offered no resistance. They committed suicide and by this act they simply *delivered* Masada to the Romans".[42] Binyamin Kedar objected to the continuing glorification of the suicide as a model of patriotic sacrifice for contemporary Israeli youth: "We ought to ask ourselves in the most critical way: should we educate the youth by this myth? Is Masada indeed an example of 'sacrifice and voluntarism' as the commander of the GADNA (paramilitary youth) recently said to several hundreds of 17-year-old boys and girls? Should we really present the collective suicide of the defenders of Masada as a model?".[43]

Curiously, the activist commemorative narrative fits better the modified version of the story of Masada in the *Book of Jossipon* than Josephus's original version. In that version, the Masada men killed the women and children but then went on to fight the Romans until they

all fell in the battlefield.[44] Yet the activist commemoration of Masada derives its legitimation from Josephus's account and is historically connected to the Jews' rediscovery of his works, while Jossipon's version did not attract Jewish memory during the centuries and has been largely ignored within the modern commemoration of Masada.

Like other counter-myth texts, then, this critique focuses on the commemorative and not the historical narrative. Although the claim that Masada represents an escapist attitude was the most common objection to the myth among those I interviewed, it is important to note that this objection was voiced by a relatively small minority (16 out of 120).[45] It is quite likely that today more Israelis would share this criticism in the face of a greater cultural appreciation of *Kiddush Ha-hayim* (the sanctity of life) in Israeli culture.[46]

A "MASADA COMPLEX" OR POLITICAL REALISM?

The tragic commemorative narrative has generated its own counter-myth text. Accordingly, the prominence of Masada as a historical metaphor in Israeli culture turns it into the essence of Jewish past experiences and shapes Israelis' perceptions of the present in conformity with its lessons. Thus, these critics argue, the tragic commemorative narrative has created a "Masada complex" that leads contemporary Israelis to look at the world as if they were still situated on top of besieged Masada, helpless and overpowered by their enemy. This outlook has direct political implications, manifested in Israel's allegedly uncompromising position towards the Arab states and the Palestinians.

The introduction of a psychological term such as "complex" into the political discourse implies that groups, like individuals, can suffer from pathologies and these affect their behaviour.[47] "An Israeli leader who sees himself standing at the top of Masada might lose the ability to view reality as it is", warns Kedar.[48] And American Jewish historian Bernard Lewis supports this caveat: "Care is needed not to carry it (Masada) beyond the stage of recovery into that of illusion. Dedication and courage are both noble and necessary – but they must not lead again to self-destruction in a dead-end of history".[49]

This line of criticism is not altogether new. Early critics of the Masada myth cautioned against blurring the past and the future and the implications of raising Masada up as a model for present political decisions.[50] But the term "the Masada Complex" indicates a relatively new awareness of the scope of this issue.[51] The term gained popularity in the 1970s, when a *Newsweek* article by Stewart Alsop, entitled "The Masada Complex", reported a top State Department official's complaint that Israel's prime minister, Golda Meir, suffered from it.[52] Two

years later, Alsop published yet another article, reporting Meir's direct response to his first piece on the subject:

> She suddenly turned and fixed me with a basilisk eye, "And you, Mr Alsop," she said, "you say that we have a Masada Complex. "It is true," she said, "We do have a Masada complex. We have a pogrom complex. We have a Hitler complex." Then she gave a small, moving oration about the spirit of Israel, a spirit that would prefer death rather than surrender to the dark terrors of the Jewish past.[53]

Alsop's articles called attention to the "Masada complex" and triggered a wider use of this concept in Israeli and American political discourse.[54] Israeli Government officials acknowledged that Masada, like the Holocaust, is central to Israeli collective memory, but they dismissed the accusation of "a complex".[55] This fact does not indicate a collective pathology of Israeli society, but the pathologies of the history that the Jews have lived through. Rather than a complex, it is a realistic assessment, based on Jewish historical experience.

Clearly, the debate on the Masada complex was fuelled by its relevance to current politics.[56] Israel's political positions following the 1967 Six Day War triggered harsh criticism of what was seen as its lack of willingness to compromise on the issue of trading territories for peace. The outbreak of the 1973 Yom Kippur War, the 1982 Lebanon War and the *intifada* were taken as evidence of the endless cycle of wars to which a Masada psychology can lead. As Alsop warned, "beyond the horizon, it may be that Israel is creating its own Masada".[57] Although the use of Masada and the Holocaust as political metaphors preceded the Likud's rise to power in 1977, scholars and political activists on the Left accused Begin's government of making this trend more prominent. By identifying the situation of contemporary Israel with that of Masada and Holocaust, they argued, the Likud government was reinforcing its view of Israel as "a people dwelling alone" in a hostile world and shaping its policies accordingly.[58]

The debate on the Masada complex reveals different constructions of the past. While the proponents of the myth highlighted the historical continuity between Masada, the Holocaust and the State of Israel, its critics wished to emphasize the gap between those traumas of the past and Israel's present reality. Within a broader framework, then, the argument revolved around the construction of historical continuities and discontinuities in Israeli memory.

The construction of Masada in modern Israeli culture discloses the capacity of myth to encompass various interpretations and diffuse the tensions between them. The multivocality of the Masada myth that manifests itself in the duality of the activist and the tragic commemo-

rations is also expressed by the multivocality of its counter-narratives. The activist commemorative narrative has generated counter-narratives that focus on the act of committing suicide and challenge it from various perspectives. The tragic commemorative narrative has generated a counter-narrative that emphasizes the deep-seated fears of persecution and death that the historical narrative evokes.

In challenging the Masada myth, as constructed in Israeli culture, the counter-myth contests the validity of memory in the name of history. Thus, critics return to Josephus's historical narrative in order to point out what they see as its misrepresentation in the commemorative narratives. Underneath their different arguments, they share the view that memory's selective reference to the single historical record about Masada invalidates the myth. The debate on "the Masada complex" reveals an even greater awareness of the role of memory in contemporary society and the dangers it poses. As these critics claim, collective memory not only reconstructs the past, it also serves as an important resource for shaping the future. The transformations of the Masada myth disclose that it has not simply lost its symbolic significance: a more diversified and more politically polarized Israeli society shares less agreement on the part of Israeli collective memory, providing an avenue to re-examine the past as well as the future.

NOTES

1. See Yael Zerubavel, *Recovered Roots: Collective Memory and the Making of Israeli National Tradition*, Chicago, 1995, chaps. 5 & 8.
2. This essay is a shortened version of the discussion of the politics of commemorating Masada in Chapter 11 of *Recovered Roots*.
3. Josephus, *The Wars of the Jews*, book 7, chapters 8-9, in his *Complete Works*, translated by W. Whiston, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1960, pp.598-603.
4. For a detailed discussion of the relations between Masada and the Holocaust, see my "The Death of Memory and the Memory of Death: Masada and the Holocaust as Historical Metaphors", *Representations*, 45 (Winter 1994), pp.72-100.
5. Lamdan's Poem *Masada*, Tel-Aviv, 1927, was important in bringing the historical event to the collective consciousness of the Zionist settlers. English translation by Leon I. Yudkin is published in his *Isaac Lamdan: A Study in Twentieth-Century Hebrew Poetry*, Ithaca, 1971. For the analysis of the poem's impact, see Barry Schwartz, Yael Zerubavel and Bernice Barnett, "The Recovery of Masada: A Study in Collective Memory", *Sociological Quarterly*, Vol. 27, No. 2 (1986), pp.147-164 and Tamara Blaushild, "Aliyata U-nefilata Shel Ha-po'ema Masada Le-Yitzhak Lamdan", (The Rise and Fall of Yitzhak Lamdan's Poem), Master's Thesis, Department of Hebrew Literature, Tel-Aviv University, 1985. On the use of the slogan in rituals see Zerubavel, *Recovered Roots*, chapter 8.
6. Josephus, *Wars of the Jews*, 3.8, pp.515-516.
7. Henry Thackeray, *Josephus: The Man and the Historian*, New York, 1960; Menachem Stern, "Josephus's Approach to Historical Writing", in *Historyonim Ve-askolot Historiyot* (Historians and Historical Schools), Jerusalem, 2nd edition, 1977, pp.22-28, and "Josephus's *Wars of the Jews* and the Roman Empire", in Uriel Rappaport (ed.), *Yosef Ben-Matityahu: Historyon Shel Eretz Yisrael Ba-tekufa Ha-Helenistit Veha-Romit* (Josephus Flavius: Historian of Eretz Israel in the Hellenistic-Roman Period),

Jerusalem, 1982, 237-245; Magen Broshi, "The Credibility of Josephus", ibid., pp.21-27.

8. Yigael Yadin, *Masada: Herod's Fortress and the Zealots' Last Stand*, New York, 1966, p.15. See also the discussion of Josephus's position in a popular book, *Metsada Shel Yosef Ben-Matityahu* (Josephus's Masada), by Avinoam Heimi, Ramat-Gan, 1976, pp.7-9.
9. Mikha Livne, *Homer Ezer La-madrikh bi-Metsada* (Instructional Materials for the Tourist Guide to Masada), Department of Tourism and National Parks Authority, 1966, p.60. Most guides about Masada quote extensively from Josephus's account.
10. See, for example, Thackeray, *Josephus*, p.41; Menahem Luz, "Clearchus of Soli as a Source of Elazar's Deuteroisis", in Rappaport, *Yosef Ben-Matityahu*, pp.79-81.
11. Reading Elazar Ben-Yair's speech became part of the Masada tradition even prior to the archaeological excavations, as part of the educational experience of the Hebrew youth in field trips to Masada. Recently, a tour guide told me that even when he does not want to read the speech, he is forced to by popular demand.
12. Trude Weiss-Rosmarin, "Masada and Yavne", *Jewish Spectator*, 31 (November 1966), pp.4-7; *idem*, "Masada, Josephus and Yadin", *Jewish Spectator*, 32 (October 1967), pp.28, 30-32; *idem*, "Reflections on Leadership", *Jewish Spectator*, 33 (March 1968), pp.2-5; *idem*, "Masada Revisited", *Jewish Spectator*, 34 (December 1969), pp.3-5, 29.
13. Mary E. Smallwood, *The Jews under the Romans' Rule*, Leiden, 1976, p. 338. Clearly, this argument fails to explain why Josephus did not refrain from reporting the Romans' revenge on the Jewish rebels in other cases.
14. On Josephus's sources see Thackeray, *Josephus*, p.45; Broshi, "The Credibility of Josephus", pp.21-27.
15. The change in the Zealots' image can be traced back to early Zionist literature, such as poems by Ya'acov Cahan, Haim Nahman Bialik, Shaul Tchernichovsky and others. For the observation that Israeli scholarship has tended to be more pro-Zealot while criticism of that group has been voiced mostly out of Israel, see Yisrael L. Levin, "The Zealots at the End of the Second Temple as a Historiographic Problem", *Cathedra*, 1 (1977), pp.40-41; Yehuda Rosenthal, "The Zealots in Jewish Tradition: Two Approaches", *Katedra*, 1 (1977), p.58.
16. Solomon Zeitlin, "The Sicarii and Masada", *Jewish Quarterly Review*, 57 (April 1967), p.263; and "The Slavonic Josephus and the Dead Sea Scrolls: an Expose of Recent Fairy Tales", *Jewish Quarterly Review*, 58 (January 1968), p.198; Sidney B. Hoenig, "The Sicarii in Masada: Glory or Infamy?", *Tradition*, 13 (Fall 1972), pp.101-103. See also Morton Smith, "Zealots and the Sicarii: Their Origins and Relations", *Harvard Theological Review*, 64 (January 1971), pp.1-19; Richard A. Horsley, "Josephus and the Bandits", *Journal for the Study of Judaism*, 10 (July 1979), pp.37-63; Arye Kasher (ed.), *Ha-mered Ha-gadol: Ha-sibot Veha-nesibot Li-fritsato* (The Great Revolt: Its Causes and Circumstances), Jerusalem, 1983, pp. 299-388.
17. For example, Josephus describes a Sicarii raid on Ein Gedi in which they killed seven hundred people, mostly women and children, when they knew that neither the Roman forces nor the Jews in Jerusalem would intervene. See his *Wars of the Jews*, 4.7.2., p.537.
18. Hoenig, "Historic Masada and the Halakha", p.112; and "Sicarii in Masada", pp.14-17.
19. Soloman Zeitlin, "Masada and the Sicarii: The Occupants of Masada", *Jewish Quarterly Review*, 55 (April 1965), p.313; and "Sicarii and Masada", pp.255-256; Hoenig, "Sicarii in Masada", p.24; and "Historic Masada and the Halakha", p.109. See also Yehuda Rosenthal, "On Masada and Its Heroes", *Ha-do'ar*, 20 September 1968, pp.693-695; and "A Reply to a Critic", *Ha-do'ar*, 15 November 1968, p.44.
20. Shubert Spero, "In Defense of the Defenders of Masada", *Tradition*, 11 (Spring 1970), pp.31-43; and "A Letter to the Editor: The Defenders of Masada", *Tradition*, 13 (Fall 1971), pp.136-138; Reuven Gordis, "On the Heroism of the Masada Heroes", *Ha-do'ar*, 37 (no. 40), 25 October 1968, pp.755-756; *idem*, "In the Margins of the Discussion and the Study of Masada", *Ha-do'ar*, 48 (no.7), 13 December 1968, pp.102-103; *idem*, "Masada: The Chapter that is Seemingly Forced Upon Us", *Ha-do'ar*, 48 (no. 18), 28 February 1969, pp.277-278; Louis I. Rabinowitz, "The Masada Martyrs According to the Halakha", *Tradition*, 11 (Fall 1970), pp.31-37.
21. Yigael Yadin, interview with Nathan Yanai, *Ba-mahane*, 18 March 1969; on his refusal to engage in a public debate with Zeitlin and others, see Orlan, "On the Margins of

the Discussions and Examinations of Masada", p.102.

22. This view was also expressed by other scholars. See, for example, Robert Alter, "The Masada Complex", *Commentary*, 56 (June 1973), pp.21-22; Baila A. Shargel, "The Evolution of the Masada Myth", *Judaism*, 28 (1979), pp.364-365; Pierre Vidal-Naquet, *Les Juifs, la memoire et le present*, Paris, 1981, pp.43-59.
23. Weiss-Rosmarin, "Masada and Yavne", p.6.
24. Hoenig, "Sicarii in Masada", pp.8-9. See also Rosenthal, "On Masada", pp.693-695; Leo Gutman, "Masada and the Talmud: A Letter" *Tradition*, 10 (Fall 1969), pp.98-99.
25. The story of Yohanan Ben-Zakkai appears in a few texts, including *Avot de-Rabi Natan*, 4, pp.22-24 (1st version), 6:19 (2nd version); *Ekha Rabba* 1:31; Babylonian Talmud, *Gittin* 56, pp.1-2. For a comparative analysis of these versions, see Gedalyahu Alon, *Mehkarim be-toldot Yisrael Bi-yeimei Bayit Sheni Uvi-tekufat Ha-Mishna Veha-Talmud* (Studies in the History of Israel in the Days of the Second Temple and in the Mishna and the Talmud Eras), Tel-Aviv, 1967, pp.219-252.
26. Binyamin Z. Kedar, "The Masada Complex", *Ha-aretz*, 22 April 1973, p. 16; an English version was later published as "Masada: The Myth and the Complex", *Jerusalem Quarterly*, 24 (Summer 1982), pp.57-63; see also Weiss-Rosmarin, "Masada and Yavne", p.7, and Bernard Lewis, *History: Remembered, Recovered, Invented*, Princeton, 1975, p.102.
27. Rabinowitz, "Masada Martyrs", pp.34-37; Spero, "In Defence of the Defenders of Masada", pp.31-43. See also an earlier statement by Israeli historian Gedalyahu Alon to this effect in *Mehkarim Be-toldot Yisrael*, p.269.
28. Yosef Klausner, *Historia Shel Ha-bayit Ha-sheni* (History of the Second Temple), Jerusalem, 1951, p.289.
29. Beno Rotenberg, *Metsada* (Masada), Tel-Aviv, 1963, p.46. See also Louis Finkelstein's position in "Masada and Its Heroes", in *Masada*, New York, 1967, pp.12-15.
30. Josephus, *The Wars of the Jews*, 7.9.1. p.603.
31. Those who committed suicide are denied public eulogy, a grave in the communal Jewish lot and the wearing of mourning garments in their memory. See Solomon Ganzfried (ed.), *Code of Jewish Law*, New York, 1961, book 4, pp.108-109; "Suicide", *Encyclopedia Judaica*, Jerusalem, 1972, 15, pp.89-90.
32. See Itamar Grunwald, "Kiddush Ha-Shem: The Clarification of the Concept", *Molad*, 1 (1967), pp.476-484; "On Kiddush Ha-Shem and Hillul Ha-Shem", *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 10, pp.977-981.
33. See Weiss-Rosmarin, "Masada and Yavne", pp.3-7; Hoenig, "Sicarii in Masada", pp.17-18; Bernard Heller, "Masada and the Talmud", *Tradition*, 10 (Winter 1968), p.33.
34. Weiss-Rosmarin, "Masada and Yavne", p.7; Heller, "Masada and the Talmud", p.34; Hoenig "Sicarii in Masada", pp.19-21; D. Frimer, "Masada in Light of the Halakha", *Tradition*, 12 (Summer 1971), p.33; Kedar, "The Masada Complex", p.16.
35. Rabinowitz, "Masada Martyrs", pp.33-37.
36. For King Saul's death, see Samuel I, chapter 31, 4-6. On its analogy with Masada, see Zvi Kolitz, "Masada: Suicide or Murder?" *Tradition*, 12 (1971), pp.23-25; Frimer, "Masada", pp.28-34; Shlomo Goren, "The Heroism of Masada in View of the Jewish Law", *Mahanayim*, 67 (1963), pp.7-12. Goren's position, published as early as 1960 in the Orthodox American Hebrew magazine *Or Ha-mizrah* drew sharp criticism as violating the spirit of Jewish law from another Israeli rebbe (Moshe Zvi Neria "Suicide: The Masada Heroes in View of the Jewish Law", *Or Ha-mizrah*, 8 January 1961, pp.8-12). See also the discussion of Goren's position in Frimer, "Masada", pp.27-39.
37. On Jewish Martyrdom during the Crusades, see Ivan G. Marcus, "From Politics to Martyrdom: Shifting Paradigms in the Hebrew Narratives of the 1096 Crusade Riots", *Prooftexts*, Vol. 2, no. 1 (1982), pp.40-52; Robert Chazan, *European Jews and the First Crusade*, Berkeley, 1987. For examples of the use of those cases in support of Masada, see Frimer, "Masada", p.29; Spero, "In Defence of the Defenders of Masada", pp.39-40; Kolitz, "Masada, Suicide or Murder?", p.24.
38. Ya'akov Katz, "Martyrdom in 1096 and 1648-49", in S, Ettinger, S.W. Baron, B. Dinur and I. Halpern (eds), *Sefer Ha-yovel Le-Yitzhak F. Baer* (Yithak Baer: Jubilee Book), Jerusalem, 1960, p.332; Shimon Huberband, *Kiddush Ha-Shem: Ketavim Mi-yemei Ha-shoah* (Kiddush Ha-Shem: Writings from the Days of the Holocaust), edited by Nahman Blumental and Yosef Kermish, Tel-Aviv, 1969; Yosef Gotferstein, "Kiddush Ha-Shem During the Holocaust and its Distinction During the Period of the

Ha-Shem During the Holocaust and its Distinction During the Period of the Holocaust", in *Ha-amida Ha-yehudit Be-tekufat Ha-shoah* (Jewish Stand During the Holocaust), Jerusalem, 1970, pp.359-374.

39. A rare example is Bernard Heller's article "Masada and the Talmud", which accuses the Masada defenders of committing murder. He later retracted. ("Masada: Suicide or Murder?", p.5). Note that when Goren applied the Masada precedent to situations when a soldier in captivity fears torture or betrayal, he recommended killing oneself over killing each other to avoid the prohibition of "thou shalt not murder" ("The Herosim of Masada", p.11).
40. In the late 1970s I conducted open-ended interviews with students of the seventh and eighth grades in two "general" (secular) and two religious public schools in the Tel-Aviv area, and their parents (total of 120 interviews).
41. Only four informants objected to the commemoration of Masada as a heroic act, quoting the religious prohibition against suicide and only 3 objected to it on the grounds that it involved murder: two of those were orthodox Jews and one was a Holocaust survivor who protested vehemently against the glorification of Masada.
42. Zeitlin, "Sicarii and Masada", p. 262; 45; Hoenig, "Sicarii in Masada", p.15.
43. Kedar,"The Masada Complex".
44. See *Sefer Yosifon* (The Book of Jossipon), ed. by David Flusser, Jerusalem, 1978, 1, pp.430-431.
45. Most of those who objected to the suicide on these grounds were students and parents associated with the general public schools who more clearly subscribe to the secular Hebrew values, including the idea of fighting to the very end. A few of the students from a religious public school voiced similar criticism, but none of their parents did.
46. This change is clearly manifested in the commemoration of the Holocaust and the attitude towards Holocaust victims and survivors. For a recent study of these changes, see Yair Auron, *Zehut Yehudit Yisraelit* (Jewish Israeli identity), Tel-Aviv, 1993. On the value of *Kiddush Ha-hayim* in the Holocaust, see Sha'ul Esh, "Kiddush Ha-hayim Betokh Ha-hurban", ("The sanctification of Life During the Holocaust"), in Yisrael Gutman and Livia Rotkirchen (eds), *Sho'at Yehudei Eirope* (The Holocaust of European Jews), Jerusalem, 1973, pp.255-268; Yisrael Gutman, "Martyrdom and the Sanctification of Life", *Yalkut Moreshet*, 24 (October 1977), pp.7-22.
47. For example, an Israeli-born psychiatrist, Jay Gonen, diagnoses the emergence of "Samson and Masada Psychologies" in Israeli political culture, indicating a disposition towards suicide and death (*Psycho History of Zionism*, New York, 1975, pp.213-36); and an Israeli social psychologist, Daniel Bar-Tal, analyzes what he calls the "Masada Syndrome" which, he warns, might turn into a self-fulfilling prophecy ("The Masada Syndrome: A Case of Central Belief"), Discussion Paper 3, Tel-Aviv, International Centre for Peace in the Middle East, 1983.
48. Kedar, "The Masada Complex".
49. Lewis, *History*, p.102.
50. See Shlomo Tsemah's comments on the enthusiastic response to Lamdan's *Masada* in "Masada: Yitzhak Lamdan", *Ha-po'el Ha-tza'ir*, pp.26-27, 15 April 1927, L 43. In discussions concerning his opposition to Jewish terror against the British, Chaim Weizmann is reported to have said: "Masada for all its heroism was a disaster in our history. Zionism was to mark the end of our glorious deaths and the beginning of a new path whose watchword is life" (in a speech at the 22nd World Zionist Congress, quoted in Abba Eban, *An Autobiography*, New York, 1977, p.68). Similarly, David Ben-Gurion displayed a critical attitude towards Masada after 1948 (Charles Liebman and Eliezer Don-Yehiya, *Civil Religion in Israel*, Berkeley, 1983, pp.99-100).
51. The earliest use of the term "the Masada complex" that I have found goes back to an editorial entitled "The Moral of Masada" in the London-based publication, *The Jewish Observer and the Middle East Review*, 27 December 1963.
52. Stewart Alsop, "The Masada Complex", *Newsweek*, 12 July 1971, p.92.
53. Stewart Alsop, "Again, the Masada Complex", *Newsweek*, 19 March 1973, p.104.
54. Ya'akov Reuel, "Sisco and the Masada Complex", *Jerusalem Post Weekly*, 3 August 1971, p.9; Kedar, "The Masada Complex"; Dan Margalit and Matti Golan, "The Administration in Action", *Ha-aretz*, 27 April 1973, p.13; Alter, "Masada Complex", pp.19-24; Marie Syrkin, "Paradox of Masada", *Midstream* 19 (October 1973), pp.66-70.
55. Alsop's second article provoked a letter from a top official in the Israeli Ministry of

Foreign Affairs, arguing that "the Jewish imagination of disaster has, more than once, only too horrifyingly been confirmed by history" (Michael Elizur, letter to the editor, *Newsweek*, 16 April 1973, pp.10-11). A senior cabinet member, Pinhas Sapir, declared in the Knesset that "we have a Warsaw Ghetto complex, a complex of the hatred of the Jewish people, just as we are filled with the Masada Complex". (*Ha-aretz*, 29 April 1973, quoted in Bar-Tal, "The Masada Syndrome", p.11.

56. For similar debates on the commemoration of the Bar-Kokhba revolt and the defence of Tel-Hai and their political implications, see *Recovered Roots*, Part 4.
57. Alsop, "Again the Masada Complex"; see also Robert Alter's poignant remarks on this issue in "Masada Complex".
58. Ilan Peleg, *Begin's Foreign Policy, 1977-1983 and Israel's Move to the Right*, New York, 1987, pp.51-93; Ian S. Lustick, *For the Land and the Lord: Jewish Fundamentalism in Israel*, New York, 1988, pp.72-90; Dani Rubenstein, *Mi La-Adonai Elai: Gush Emunim* (On the L-rd's Side: Gush Emunim), Tel-Aviv, 1982, pp.44, 128. Masada's centrality is also manifested in the choice of an extremist right-wing underground group to name itself *Ha-sikarikim* (that is, the Sicarii).

Political Dimensions of Holocaust Memory in Israel During the 1950s

YECHIAM WEITZ

In their book, *Trouble in Utopia*, Dan Horowitz and Moshe Lissak write that "Israeli society inherited from pre-State Israel a tradition of political activity which was not only intensive but also tended to enter areas of activity which are not necessarily political in other societies". As a result, the politicization of various aspects of life, both in pre-State Israel and after 1948 was far-reaching – with positions in public service being filled according to the political balance of power. Furthermore, "activities such as promising employment, education, housing, culture and sport took place, to a certain extent, through the good offices of the political parties and under their guidance."[1] This process decreed that even large publishing houses such as "Sifriyat Ha-poalim" and "Ha-kibbutz Ha-meuhad Publishing House" were identifiable not only ideologically but also politically.

This phenomenon may be simply understood as the desire to accumulate political power but it is also the expression of a concept of politics as a means of influencing society, its image, its priorities and even its soul. The extension of politics into all walks of life may therefore be seen as the totalistic desire to form a new man and a new society. It was not by chance that Anita Shapira wrote about Berl Katznelson, editor of *Davar* and founder of "Am Oved", that he sought to escape a fixed position and formal authority "because he wished no less than to capture souls, to form the collective personality of the nation in *Eretz Israel*".[2]

The tendency to view issues through a political prism also expressed itself in the way Israeli society conceived and remembered the Holocaust during the 1950s. Contrary to the standard view, there was no political consensus regarding the Holocaust at that time. Remembering the six million dead was by no means a purifying experience and one cannot say about the accompanying pain, as does poetess Leah Goldberg, that it was "as clear as the light of day, honourable

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above doubt, complete in faith". The memory of the Holocaust and its victims was accompanied by unending political strife. These debates were always harsh, bitter, full of tension and emotional. Occasionally, they were violent and even deadly.

These debates may be understood against the background of events connected with the Holocaust that stood at the centre of public interest during the 1950s. They included the debate over the reparations from Germany, the crystallization of commemoration patterns and the trial of Malkiel Gruenwald (known as the "Kastner trial"), during which the line of demarcation between memory and politics was not blurred but simply disappeared.[3] An additional event which should be mentioned in this connection is the trial of Adolf Eichmann which marked the end of the era in which the memory of the Holocaust was first and foremost a point of both emotional and political conflict.

One can categorize Israeli attitudes into four different types – the radical, the patronizing, the defensive-consensual and the enigmatic position. The radical position was held by two political bodies on the periphery of the political spectrum: the Israeli Communist Party on the left and the Herut Party on the right. Both parties adopted harsh, uncompromising positions in order to delegitimize their political opponents. The Herut movement wished to undermine the Israeli Labour movement in general and the ruling MAPAI (The Israeli Labour Party) in particular. The Israeli Communist party had broader aims: to negate and delegitimize the Zionist movement in its entirety. Despite the fundamental divergence between them, on this matter the two parties kept to a type of secret "lepers' agreement" which sometimes blurred the differences between their positions. It is no wonder that during the summer of 1955, on the eve of the elections to the Third Knesset, newspaperman Shabtai Teveth wrote that "a person who does not know how to distinguish at the ballot box between K and H (letters of the two parties) might end up voting for the opposite end of the spectrum to Herut and vice versa. The citizen hearing the high octaves of the Israeli Communist Party and Herut sees the two parties as being of the same colour".

The radical position also included *Ha-olam Ha-zeh*, a weekly edited by Uri Avneri and Shalom Cohen since 1950. One expression of its extreme negation of the Diaspora was to view the Holocaust as proof of the righteousness of the path chosen by "Sabra" heroes such as King David, Samson and particularly Judah Maccabee, over the diasporic intercessionary path of the Jew Mordechai.[4]

The patronizing position was held by the Zionist left and particularly the Kibbutz movements with which it was connected. The Zionist left saw itself as the only legitimate bearer of a resistance tradition during the Holocaust, claiming that this tradition granted it a favoured

status not only regarding the past but also the present. The defensive-consensual position was held by the political centrists and particularly by the party in power – MAPAI. This defensive position stemmed from two points: first, most of the attacks made by the radical camp were levelled against MAPAI and second, unlike *Ha-kibbutz Ha-artzi* and *Ha-kibbutz Ha-meuhad*, the two main kibbutz movements, MAPAI had no part in the patronage over heroism in the ghettos and forests. It had no "Anteks" and "Anilevitches"[5] and it was quite difficult to make Eliezer Geller, "Gordonia" leader in the Warsaw Ghetto, a national hero. The defensive position had an additional aspect – the attempt to reach a consensus. This effort stemmed from several factors: its position in the centre of the political spectrum; MAPAI's vision of itself as responsible for crystallizing a new system of national values (including the institutionalization of Holocaust memory); and, finally, visualizing the consensual position as a means of neutralizing attacks levelled against it as a party.

The enigmatic position was connected with the ultra-orthodox world. From public sources, particularly newspapers, it is difficult to determine to what extent at that time it viewed the Holocaust as its main weapon to be used against the secular Zionists.[6]

During the first half of the 1950s these positions were either partially or fully expressed with regard to three events which took place during the years 1953-54. These were the Knesset debate over the memorialization of the Holocaust; the ceremonies in 1954 during the tenth anniversary of the pre-State parachutists' mission behind enemy lines during the Second World War; and the polemics over the poet Natan Alterman's position on the connection between the *Judenrat* and the underground movements.[7] Both the patronizing and the defensive positions were expressed in these debates; the former may be found in the words of Ya'akov Hazan, leader of MAPAM and Ha-kibbutz Ha-artzi, in the Knesset debate over the Holocaust and Heroism Memory Law. There he emphasized:

> We must not forget the important fact that at the centre of the great revolt, that which not only encompassed the Warsaw, Vilna and Bialystok ghettos but expressed itself in different forms in dozens of places, stood the members of the Zionist and pioneering youth movements, particularly Ha-shomer Ha-tzair, Dror, He-halutz Ha-tzair and the labour movements, led by *Poalei Zion Smol* (Left), who were connected with *Eretz Israel*.

The second point was that the combination of the two flags – blue-white and red – stood at the centre of acts of heroism not only in the European ghettos and forests. Regarding this point Hazan stated:

> Not only over the head of Mordechai Anilevitch – commander of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising – stood two flags: That of the Hebrew nation returning to its rebirth and that of the fighting class over the future of all humanity. The flags of the PALMACH were also the blue-white flags of the nation and the red flag of the working class. Because only their combination expresses our complete vision of the future.[8]

This patronizing position was clearly expressed in two other events taking place at that time. During the ceremonies held to mark the tenth anniversary of the parachutists' mission, the connection of the fallen parachutists with their youth movements was accentuated. Ha-kibbutz Ha-meuhad emphasized Hannah Senesh, member of Kibbutz Sdot-Yam, who was killed in Hungary and Ha-kibbutz Ha-artzi singled out Haviva Reik, member of Kibbutz Ma'anit, who had been killed in Slovakia. In a ceremony in memory of Hannah Senesh, Moshe Braslavski of Kibbutz Na'an stated how important it was in those days to emphasize that "when all around people are looking to denigrate the image [of Ha-kibbutz Ha-meuhad] to push it into a corner", that "Hannah, she and others like her, children of the tribe wishing to bring Israel to its final glory, found the world closest to them within Ha-kibbutz Ha-meuhad".[9]

In the debate with Nathan Alterman, the Zionist left assumed a key position. Dan Laor, who wrote about this matter, noted that in opposition to Alterman's position – which denied any gulf between the policy of the *Judenrat* and that of the underground movements –

> stood a strong fighting resistance that continually expressed surprise at his position, sharply criticized the various arguments he used and which portrayed, in opposition to them, a completely different evaluation of this difficult episode... Most of Alterman's critics, both written and oral, came from the left wing of the labour movement: some were former underground members, some were leaders of Ha-kibbutz Ha-meuhad and Ha-shomer Ha-tzair and the parties connected with them (MAPAM and Ahdut Ha-avoda), as these bodies were traditionally connected with pioneering youth movements and fighter's organizations, and thus saw themselves the guardians of these organizations and the representatives of the heroic traditions in the ghettos.

There were two prime expressions of the defensive-consensual position. The first was the attempt to crystallize an accepted national concept as expressed in the words of Ben-Zion Dinur when introducing the Holocaust and Heroism Memory Law. Dinur, one of the most important specialists in modern Jewish history, was Minister of

Education and Culture during the Second Knesset (1951-55). In his speech[10] he raised several points whose purpose was to develop an accepted position towards the memory of the Holocaust. One point centred on the fact that the purpose of Yad Va-shem – the national institution of Holocaust commemoration on Har Ha-zikaron – was to "combine all the existing (Memorial) institutions in Israel, to guide them and unite them. It is obvious that one cannot agree to a phenomenon of multiple institutions, of decentralization and separation, and one should combine the efforts of the entire nation in the field of Holocaust and heroism memory." A second point was that this institution was to be the one central Holocaust memorial authority of the Jewish people. Regarding this matter is was stated that:

> The name of the enterprise Yad Va-shem means not only a place, but also contains the meaning that the place is in Jerusalem. That is the heart of the nation, the heart of Israel, there it is meant to be.

These words expressed the national Zionist aspect of Holocaust memory and also the position which gave preference to national and united Holocaust commemoration over and above the particularistic commemoration of individual movements. An additional expression of this concept may be found in the words of Knesset member Beba Idelson of MAPAI, who emphasized the Zionist lesson of the terrible tragedy. Idelson claimed that the debate in itself "raised anew the conditions surrounding the tragedy, and reminded us that then we had no nation, no government, no fighting force". However, the debate was taking place "when we were in an independent nation, having acquired the possibility of concentrating the Jews here as a multitude and among them the Holocaust survivors".[11]

The defensive aspect was expressed by MAPAI's strained efforts to take part in ceremonies marking the tenth anniversary of the parachutists' mission. MAPAI's bad luck was that it lacked heroes – none of the killed parachutists were entirely identified with that party; even a small movement such as *Ha-oved Ha-tzioni* could claim a fallen parachutist – Abba Berdichev, for example, after whom the Kibbutz Alonei Abba in the Zevulun valley was named. MAPAI's one candidate was Enzo Sereni (1905-44), a founder of Kibbutz Givat-Brenner and a leader of Ha-kibbutz Ha-meuhad. In 1944 he parachuted into occupied Europe and was probably killed at Dachau in November of that year. This mission occurred on the eve of MAPAI's split, with Sereni having barely stated which of the sections he wished to join. In order to underscore Sereni's tendency towards MAPAI, which he had expressed before his death, and to make him a *de jure* member "post mortem", a special meeting of the party's secretariat was convened

during which Knesset member Akiva Guvrin suggested:[12]

> On the tenth anniversary of his death MAPAI members should stand in the streets and sell all passers-by the booklet about Sireni. This type of undertaking must make an impression on the public. I suggest that Knesset members and members of the *Histadrut* executive should be among the sellers – that must make an impression.

Another incident, this time tragic rather than pathetic, was the ceremony held at Kibbutz Ma'agan on the shores of the Kinneret to mark the tenth anniversary of parachutist Peretz Goldstein's death. The ceremony was held for two reasons: to commemorate the memory of the forgotten parachutist who had been a member of the kibbutz which,after the split within Ha-kibbutz Ha-meuhad, belonged to the Ihud Ha-kevutzot Veha-kibbutzim.; and to give Prime Minister Moshe Sharett a platform to answer the accusations levelled against MAPAI during the Kastner trial, in which he refused to testify. The ceremony in itself ended with a terrible disaster. A piper cub – which was supposed to drop a letter from the president into the crowd – crashed into the waiting spectators, killing 18 people.

Natan Alterman's position in the debate over the "two paths" was also part of the defensive approach. As the central cultural figure identified with MAPAI's leadership in general and with Ben-Gurion in particular, Alterman was in a unique position.[13] In this connection one must quote the Secretary of MAPAI, Knesset member Yona Kesse, in a special debate which MAPAI's secretariat held in view of the harsh attacks which were being levelled against the party after the publication of Judge Benjamin Ha-levy's verdict in the Gruenwald trial. Kesse happily announced to the participants that yesterday he had "met with Alterman and he stated that he was busy writing an answer to Gur and Carmel and that it would be the longest column which he had ever written".[14]

A year later, during the harsh debate attending the publication of Ha-levy's verdict, and in view of the elections to the third Knesset which took place five weeks later, these positions reached their full expression. One may claim that the debates which had taken place a year or two later were no more than a "dress rehearsal" for the debate taking place during the hot summer of 1955. This time the major voice heard was that of the radicals – from both the right and left. The most striking claims were printed in *Kol Ha-am*, the communist daily which was the only newspaper to demand that Israel Kastner be put on trial according to the laws relating to the Nazis and their accomplices.[15] Apart from this, the Israel Communist Party (MAKI) gleefully used the verdict to launch a full frontal attack against the "collaboratory"

Zionists. One example is a statement made by the Party's General-Secretary, Knesset Member Shmuel Mikunis, at an elections meeting in Jerusalem:

> The verdict about Kastner is a verdict on the Jewish Agency, the heads of State in Israel and all their accomplices who share the *Judenrat*'s responsibility of the Holocaust. This is a verdict on those, whom our party has rejected throughout the years as collaborators and those who carried out the policy of the enemies of peace and the nation, of the black forces of imperialism.[16]

This position is also expressed in *Dvar Yad Hannah*, the internal organ of the only kibbutz which was connected with MAKI. In a special edition of the bulletin to mark the verdict, the question "What is Kastnerism" was asked, and the question, which was voiced in rather ungrammatical Hebrew was:

> The significance of Kastner's trial goes far beyond Kastner the man and sheds light on the entire field and on the leaders of that time which today still head the nation and the Zionist Executive and on whose authority Kastner acted during that time when he "sold his soul to the devil" according to the Judge's verdict. Otherwise, one could not understand why the authorities and the parties connected with the Zionist Executive would cover up for a criminal of the worst type like Kastner who was one of their leaders in Hungary during the war.[17]

The paper then claimed that the agreement which Kastner reached with SS officer Kurt Becher during the war was "actually a precedent to no less an unclean agreement between Ben-Gurion, Adenauer and (John Foster) Dulles".

MAKI's heaviest attack was on MAPAM, a radical socialist-Zionist party. It accused that party of co-operating with Kastner and profaning the memory of the ghetto fighters in general and of Mordechai Anilevitch, leader of the Warsaw ghetto uprising and member of Ha-shomer Ha-tzair, in particular.[18] They particularly attacked Rafi Ben-Shalom, member of Kibbutz Ha-ogen and a leader of Ha-shomer Ha-tzair in Hungary during the war, for having signed a petition supporting Kastner's fight against his great rival, Moshe Kraus, the deposed head of the Palestine office in Budapest. The petition was signed during the 22nd Zionist Congress in Basel which took place in December 1946. This matter was used by MAKI as part of the harsh propaganda campaign it waged against MAPAM. MAKI claimed that the petition proved that "many groups were interested in going along with *Davar* (the MAPAI newspaper) and *La-merhav* and other papers

regarding the blurring of the Kastner trial. This self-testimony of MAPAM only helps the public and the ordinary righteous people in MAPAM to get to know the nature of those who stand at the head of a national socialist liberation movement of the Jewish people".[19]

Herut's position, which identified Kastner not with the Zionist movement in general but with MAPAI, was expressed in a series of addresses delivered during the election campaign and in a series of articles published in the movement's organ *Herut*. One such example was an article published in response to a speech delivered by Prime Minister Moshe Sharett in the course of a Knesset debate over a no-confidence motion, proposed by Herut and MAKI after the government attorney general decided to appeal against Ha-levy's verdict. Under the headline "The Speech of Evasion" it said:

> The Prime Minister's attempt to base himself upon "history", "morality" and the like in order to save MAPAI and its leaders from the moral and historical blows dealt to it did not succeed. The broken hands of the coalition which were raised during the no confidence vote in the government, or abstained from voting out of fear of rising up against their masters, are not those which will change the historical verdict which Mr Sharett so fears, and rightly so ...[20]

Herut's belligerent position stemmed not only from a feeling that the verdict had done historical justice to the path of the Revisionist movement but also from concrete political considerations. A look at the protocol of the special meeting of the movement's centre, which took place several days after the verdict, shows that on the eve of the Knesset elections the Herut movement was unable to sit with folded hands while others were using the verdict to their own political ends. Yosef Shofman, a leader of Herut and Knesset member between 1955-69, stated that "they have already begun to attack about Kastner. It is already being taken care of. Therefore one can not sit on the side and be silent. There are already proclamations of the communists and Ahdut Ha-avoda, therefore one can not sit on the sidelines." Knesset Member Haim Landau stated that "regarding the Kastner trial, everyone jumped on that bandwagon except us... it is a card which one can use... and if one presents the incident in a correct manner using sharp analysis – it can be useful."[21]

However, for all its harshness Herut's was not the most extreme position which the radical right expressed. Further to the right was the periodical *Sulam*, edited by Dr Israel Eldad (Scheib), one of the ideologues of the radical Right in Israel for many years. This periodical, as opposed to Herut, did not completely accept the rules of the accepted democratic parliamentary game. Unlike Herut, which specifically

attacked MAPAI, *Sulam* attacked all parties and shades of the Zionist movement. Like MAKI, it made no distinction between right and left and claimed that all of them – from MAPAM leader Meir Ya'ari to Herut leader Menachem Begin – were in the same boat and were infected with the same disease called "collaboration". Therefore the symmetry between *Sulam* and MAKI was greater than that between Herut and MAKI. Under the headline "Collaborators With All The Enemies – Unite!" the first page of the paper published after the verdict read:

> From the "kibbutz" to a minister of the "Aliya Hadasha" party (Justice Minister Pinchas Rosen) to all those collaborating with the "White Paper" government which abandoned the Jewish people – all shouted together to save Kastner's flesh and blood. The learned Minister of Justice who has not yet seen the verdict with his own eyes already knows that there has to be an appeal. The learned Minister of Justice who, along with Weizmann, was always for immigration of "prominents" (like Kastner) and against immigration of the masses, rapidly announced that the Kastner issue was *sub judice* and therefore one cannot speak about it. He was only twenty four hours late after another lawyer, Mr Menachem Begin, announced that he will not speak about Kastner because it is *sub judice*. One way or the other it is good for MAPAI that it has such learned jurists in both the coalition and the opposition. MAPAI sings the juridical anthem and fools stand at "attention".[22]

As opposed to 1953 and 1954, during which the patronizing position of guardianship predominated, in 1955 the radical position established primacy; the voice of the patronizers, though not completely silenced, was somewhat muted as circumstances prevented it from fully expressing itself. In 1955, a year after MAPAM's final split, this camp appeared with two heads. The first was Ahdut Ha-avoda, in its first independent appearance after the elections, during which it gave extensive coverage to the collaborators' betrayal. The general secretary of the party, Yisrael Galili, wrote:

> We have a double duty not to let the *Judenrat* overshadow the revolt, not to let the impurities overshadow the holy... not to allow the two fields to be mixed up and to erase the boundary which cuts between the honourable and wise path of revolt and national rescue and that which began, or ended, with addiction to the devil.[23]

In order to emphasize this message and give it the necessary ceremo-

nial status, the party enlisted Yitzhak Zukerman (Antek), who at a packed meeting which took place in Tel-Aviv stated:

> I want to announce before all... that if we are the fighters and they are the *Judenratniks*, we are brothers and we have one way to save Jews with Jewish responsibility. I announce that I and my few friends who remained alive put ourselves up for trial for the murder of our "brothers", the *Judenratniks*. I announce that we murdered Dr Alfred Nossig and Ya'akov Likin... with our own hands. And if it is necessary, I will give other names. Our hands are tarnished with the blood of the *Judenratniks*. There will be a trial in Israel and we will be judged by the entire nation – the millions who were murdered, the thousands of fighters who fell and the tens of traitors whom we killed. It is not a privilege but a necessity for the nation to judge.[24]

This position was also expressed by MAPAM. A poster put out by that party hailed the part of the "emissaries of our movement and the best of its sons who stood at the head of the ghetto revolt, the partisans' struggle, the organization of the fighting underground and sending the parachutists to Jewish areas, in order to encourage them and arouse them to armed resistance."[25] The path taken by Yisrael Kastner was severely criticized. Haika Grossman, a leader of the party who during the Holocaust was a commander of the Bialystok ghetto, claimed that "the Kastner trial proved again and with greater strength, that which we, members of the armed underground in the ghettos knew already in 1941: *any attempt to speak with the fascist Nazis bore rotten fruit.*"[26]

However, even the policy line expressed by Ahdut Ha-avoda – and still more so, that of MAPAM – was a shaky one which stemmed from the apologetic situation in which they found themselves because of the strength of the radical position. MAPAM found itself in this situation because of MAKI's belligerence and it devoted much attention to counter-attack.[27] The apologetic facet was expressed in the party's attitude towards the Hungarian underground. These apologetics were due to the problematic position of the survivors of the pioneering underground in Hungary – who dealt "only" with rescue and not with revolt – and to MAKI's attacks on Rafi Ben-Shalom. Such attacks caused the Hungarian resistance to be portrayed as a variant of the Polish underground, that is - not as an underground which dealt primarily with rescue but one whose dominant characteristic was that of fighting. A poster printed by MAPAM stated, in particular, that "the pioneering underground in Hungary, led by our friends Ben-Shalom and Alpan, devoted itself to a daring struggle against the Nazis and to saving Jews and other anti-Nazi fighters".[28] This apologetic aspect was expressed in

a more moderate fashion by Ahdut Ha-avoda. An editorial in *La-merhav* stated:

> Everyone who had a hand in the rescue operation knows that even if Kastner will be found guilty in the final trial – no man has the right to level these accusations against the institutions of the Zionist movement, just as one cannot accuse a military command of a commander's treason in one part of the front.[29]

The power of the radical argument did influence the more patronizing attitudes but its main impact was on the defensive position. The fact is that Yisrael Kastner was a member of MAPAI and the harsh attacks which rained down upon that party from all sides – both right and left – after the verdict was handed down, caused it to seek diversions. These attempts were made even before the verdict. For example, Kastner, who was included in MAPAI's list of members to the First and Second Knesset, was not included in the list of candidates to the Third Knesset. His place as representative of the Hungarian immigrants was taken by Hillel Danzig who was placed in the 53rd slot (the list was put forth some three weeks before the verdict was given). These diversions continued in view of the sentence and were sharply expressed in the confused and fearful statements of Prime Minister Moshe Sharett in his diary upon learning the harshness of the verdict: "[the verdict] was a new blow... a nightmare, horrible, what did the judge take upon himself! Strangulation for the party, the worst of the pogroms."[30]

Such sentiments may also be found in statements made during the special meeting of MAPAI's secretariat, held to decide how to escape the difficult and embarrassing situation in which the party found itself after the verdict.[31] At the meeting different ideas were proposed such as that of Ehud Avriel, one of Ben-Gurion's closest advisers, who wanted to invite "an important historian from abroad, who will be given the means of investigating the entire issue and publishing his results in order that many could read about it in Israel and abroad". Such suggestions apart, there was a sense of stress, of siege and a desire to turn the entire incident into "something which it wasn't". This position was expressed by Hillel Danzig, newspaper reporter and leader of the union of immigrants from Hungary, who spoke of the need for an offensive whose purpose was "to repel the many attacks which are directed against us after the verdict...". It was also reflected in the opening words of MAPAI's Secretary-General, Knesset Member Yona Kesse, who claimed that "it is desirable that the episode known as the Kastner trial will leave the arena of our lives", and that the topic is "easy to attack and defame and on the other hand it is hard... to appeal to the clear mind of the human being and to his sense of responsibility."

MAPAI's feelings of stress and siege were also expressed in the *Igeret La-haverim*, one of the organs of Ihud Ha-kvutzot Veha-kibbutzim, the kibbutz movement connected with MAPAI. It complained about the frontal assault "of everyone against the central party of the working nation", an attack "which is characterized by a snakelike detouring path of defaming individuals, falsifying recent history and nibbling at the roots of the world of that generation which expressed the Zionist ideal". This combined attack

> was carried out with great ability, with the basic psychological understanding of the masses ... The dark sources of inspiration of the American newspaper market were combined with new fascist propaganda styles and the influence of the pearls of the Cominform dictionary.[32]

The Eichmann trial, which opened in Jerusalem on 11 April 1961, took place in a very different atmosphere from that in which the Kastner trial was held. At the head of the panel of judges sat Supreme Court Justice Moshe Landau. The fact that the presiding judge at the trial was also a member of the Supreme Court stemmed from a desire to keep Benjamin Ha-levy, who continued to serve as president of the capital's district court from presiding over the panel. But in retrospect it added a sense of seriousness and importance to the trial.[33] As in the Kastner trial, the attorney general, who was now Gideon Hausner, was also the prosecutor. This showed the supreme importance given to a trial in which the accused, Adolf Eichmann, was held responsible for the implementation of the mass murder of European Jewry. This time it was not Yisrael Kastner, the Jewish Agency, or the leaders of MAPAI, but the devil himself who was on the bench of the accused where only a few years earlier, those who had "sold him their souls" had been sitting.

Hausner's opening speech which evoked six million "prosecutors" unable to stand up and point a finger towards the accused, set the tone that was subsequently associated with the trial. It was a speech which would become a canonical text. This feeling was expressed by Nathan Alterman, who saw the opening day as one where "we were as dreamers" and the trial itself as part of the fulfilment of a dream of generations. Thus he wrote:

> The sudden sharp voice of the bailiff announced – "members of the court!" and thus the trial began. This common official announcement, made by the clerk on duty, is one of the daily procedural accessories of justice, but this time it had a ring which it had never had before... a new authority, one which had never been more than a dream and farther away from becoming a real-

> ity for hundreds of years, suddenly became part of the Jewish history; when, upon hearing the two Hebrew words, "the court", the head of the destroyers of the Jewish people during one of the most miserable periods in the history of mankind got up on his feet and stood at attention.[34]

The trial also marked the beginning of a new attitude towards the masses of Jews who lived and died in occupied Europe under Nazi rule. This was the first time that they did not appear as the accused, as those who had merely gone to their deaths like "sheep to the slaughter". For the first time the survivors were offered the possibility of publicly telling their own painful story. A new legitimacy was given to the story of the life and death of the simple Jew, one of the millions, who was neither a hero nor a traitor, neither a saint nor a collaborator. About this Natan Alterman wrote:

> Only during this terrible trial, as the witnesses from over there continued, one by one, to go up to the witness stand, these strange and anonymous individuals who passed by on countless occasions now joined together until we had the clear and sudden understanding that these individuals were not only a public of individuals but... an ineradicable part of the quality and form of the living nation to which we belong.[35]

The Eichmann trial was also different because of Ben-Gurion's attitude. Unlike Moshe Sharett, he had not dealt at length with the Kastner trial: in his diary it is only mentioned once in an almost laconic manner.[36] However, the Kastner case, including Ha-levy's verdict, had troubled him. He had expressed great surprise at the content and style of the verdict, noting that "there is not a man in the world who is incapable of making a mistake, that justice and righteousness demand that his verdict be sent to the Supreme Court, as in a judgement of life one man cannot sit as a judge alone".[37]

A somewhat clearer statement came in the only letter he wrote about this matter during the summer of 1955.[38] It opened by admitting that "regarding the Kastner issue I know very little because I did not follow the trial, did not read the verdict, with the exception of several lines which appeared in the headlines". Nevertheless, those few lines that he did read "shocked me as they appeared in the judge's verdict, and I do not think that this issue (the behaviour of Jews in countries under Nazi rule) is an issue for legal redress". Ben-Gurion further added:

> The *Judenrat* issue (and possibly the Kastner issue) should be left for the judgement of historians in the next generation. The Jews

> who sat comfortably during the Hitler time should not take upon themselves to judge their brothers who were burned and murdered... I saw a few of the survivors in the Displaced Persons camps in Germany immediately after the war. I heard about a few of the horrors and I saw ugly behaviour among a few of them, but I did not feel that I had the right to be their judge after I knew what they had undergone.

In a rare disclosure of his personal attitude towards the Holocaust, Ben-Gurion stated at the end of the letter:

> The tragedy is deeper than a chasm and the members of our generation who did not taste this hell – it would be better for them (in my humble opinion) to be silent in sorrow and modesty. My brother's daughter, her husband and two children were burnt alive. Can one speak of it?

Ben-Gurion's attitude towards the Eichmann trial was very different. His involvement in it was much greater and to a certain degree he was indeed its initiator. Hannah Arendt described his involvement in a sharply critical tone stating that this was a "show trial" whose hidden but real producer was none other than Ben-Gurion. In a tone more sarcastic than accurate she wrote:

> Clearly, this courtroom is not a bad place for the show trial David Ben-Gurion, Prime Minister of Israel, had in mind when he decided to have Eichmann kidnapped in Argentina and brought to the District Court to stand trial for his role in the "final solution of the Jewish question". And Ben-Gurion, rightly called the "architect of the state", remains the invisible stage manager of the proceedings.[39]

Whatever one thinks of Arendt's tone, there can be little doubt regarding Ben-Gurion's involvement in the trial and the importance which he assigned it. A revealing example in this connection is the fact that after Hausner finished writing the prosecuting speech he gave it to Ben-Gurion. The Israeli Prime Minister made several comments. For example, he felt that each time Hausner spoke of "Germany" one should add and emphasize that it was Nazi Germany and that it would be preferable to omit the deterministic claim which stated that Nazism was unavoidable.[40]

The trial was held against the background of a fundamental change in the attitudes of Israeli society to the Holocaust and to Diaspora Jewry. It was a change which heralded a loosening up of the hold of *Mamlakhtiyut* (statism), the concept whose driving-force was Ben-Gurion, a key instrument in uniting the nation and even ensuring its

survival.[41] One of its main motifs was "negating the Diaspora", whose vulnerability and passivity was contrasted with the "new Jewish man" seen as a self-confident, free citizen of Israel. The *Mamlakhtiyut* ideology sought to repress Jewish history in the Diaspora and chose in its place symbols and myths from the earlier periods of Jewish statehood particularly from the time of the First Temple. In this statist concept, the Holocaust was "the most salient and deplorable symbol of the Jewish plight in the diaspora", as Eliezer Don-Yehiya has pointed out. Thus, the memory of the Holocaust was greatly muted during the 1950s. "The architects of *Mamlakhtiyut* sought to cultivate and emphasize the memory not of defeats – even glorious ones – but of victories", in accordance with the prevailing ethos of the new state.

Towards the end of the 1950s or the early 1960s, there was a shift in awareness. It began with the recognition that the Israeli State and society were in practice very different from the ideal model about which Ben-Gurion had dreamed. This shift created formidable identity problems, none of which found a satisfactory answer in *Mamlakhtiyut* or other varieties of secular Zionism, including socialist Zionism. According to Don-Yehiya this was the background to Ben-Gurion's decision to hold the Eichmann trial, as part of the broader change in attitude of Israeli society towards the Holocaust and Diaspora Jewry. It was a belated recognition that *Mamlakhtiyut* could not answer all problems.

What then was the connection between the Eichmann trial and the various positions about remembering the Holocaust which were formed and expressed in the 1950s? Should one understand the decision to hold the Eichmann trial as a unifying and consensual event after the nadir to which the defensive establishment position of MAPAI had fallen during the mid-1950s? Though a complete answer cannot be given as yet, I believe that we have before us a decision whose roots were political while at the same time seeking to de-politicize the Holocaust. After the turbulent 1950s in which the Holocaust had served as a weapon for attacking the state, MAPAI, and its leader, Ben-Gurion, it was now seen as desirable to remove it from this context. This was even more necessary during the stormy years of the "Lavon affair" (1960-61) which further undermined the charisma of Ben-Gurion and the hold of the Labour Party establishment. The Eichmann trial in this context can be regarded as an attempt to make the Holocaust a non-political, non-party, national affair. The determination to neutralize its political aspects was an indirect tribute to the strength of this dimension in the 1950s.

NOTES

1. Dan Horowitz and Moshe Lisak, *Trouble in Utopia - the Overburdened Polity in Israel,* Tel-Aviv, 1990, pp.198-199.
2. Anita Shapira, *Berl* Tel-Aviv, 1980, p. 732 (Hebrew). Berl Katznelson (1887-1944) was one of the founding fathers and leaders of the Zionist Labour movement in Mandatory Palestine.
3. In 1952 there was a fierce debate in Israel whether a reparations agreement should be signed with the German Federal Republic compensating Jews for possessions plundered by the Nazis during the Holocaust. The Kastner trial which also aroused Israel's public opinion dealt with the behaviour of Labour Zionist leader, Yisrael Kastner, during the Holocaust. Kastner had negotiated with the Nazis in Budapest in 1944 over the rescue of Hungarian Jewry and was later accused of "collaboration" with them.
4. Shabtai Teveth, "The Kastner Affair and the Election Parable", *Ha-aretz,* 15 July 1955; *Ha-olam Ha-zeh*, 22 September 1954. During the 1950s, *Ha-olam Ha-zeh* held fiercely oppositionist positions and was a major critic of Israeli governments, headed by MAPAI.
5. Mordechai Anilevitch and Yitzhak Zuckerman ("Antek") were leaders of the Warsaw ghetto uprising.
6. Regarding this issue see: Dina Porat, "Amalek's Accomplices, Blaming Zionism for the Holocaust: Anti-Zionist Ultra-Orthodoxy in Israel during the 1980s", *Journal of Contemporary History* 27 (1992), pp. 695-729. Porat particularly refers to the book *Va-yoel Moshe*, written by Rabbi Joel Teitelbaum, the Satmar Rebbe, which appeared in anti-Zionist historiography (pp. 698-699).
7. Natan Alterman, *Between Two Roads, Selections from a Diary* edited, annotated and afterword by Dan Laor, Tel-Aviv, 1989 (Hebrew; henceforth cited: Laor). Alterman was a leading Hebrew poet and writer.
8. Meeting number 229 of the Knesset, 18 May 1953, *Divrei Ha-Knesset*, Vol. 25, p. 1332.
9. "A Voice Called and I Went", *Ba-kibbutz,* 229, 17 November 1954; regarding Haviva Reik's commemoration see: "Ten Years Since Haviva Reik's Mission", *Al Ha-homa*, 10 November 1954.
10. *Laor*, p. 135; Meeting 227 of the Knesset, 12 May 1953, *Divrei Ha-Knesset*, Vol. 25, pp. 1310-1314.
11. *Ibid.*, 18 May 1953, pp. 1336-1337.
12. Meeting of the MAPAI Secretariat, 13 August 1954, Labour Party Archives 24/54 (henceforth cited LPA). See also Yechiam Weitz, "Israel Kastner's Changing Image in Israel", *Cathedra 69* (September 1993), p. 139, fn 9.
13. Yechiam Weitz, "Two Explanations for Two Roads", *Cathedra*, 53 (September 1989), pp.123-130 (Hebrew), and particularly pp. 129-130. Dina Porat expressed a position diametrically opposed to mine, completely disregarding the existence of a political cause. ("Note on Two Paths", *Ha-zionut* 15 (1991), pp. 223-235.
14. Meeting of the MAPAI Secretariat, 12 July 1955, *LPA* 24\55; Meir Ben-Gur was a newspaper reporter for *La-merhav* and Moshe Carmel was the commander of the Northern Front during the War of Independence and one of the leaders of the Ahdut Ha-avoda Movement. They wrote articles against MAPAI which were published in *La-merhav*, Ahdut Ha-avoda's organ; Carmel's article "Chasms at the feet of a Generation", published on 8 July 1955, was widely acclaimed.
15. "The Government Should Decide to Put Kastner on Trial", *Kol Ha-am*, 26 June 1955.
16. "The Masses Demand the Arrest and Bringing to Trial of the Nazi's Accomplice in the Destruction of the Hungarian Jewry", Ibid.
17. *Davar Yad Hannah*, No. 13, July 1955.
18. Regarding this matter see "Who Does Y. Hazan Serve", *Kol Ha-am*, 27 June 1955.
19. *Davar Yad Hannah*, No. 13, July 1955.
20. *Herut*, 29 June 1955.
21. Meeting of the Movement's Central Committee on 26 June 1955, *The Jabotinsky Institute in Israel.* Regarding this matter see: Yechiam Wietz, "Herut and the Kastner Trial", *Yahadut Zemanenu*, 8 (1993), pp. 243-265.
22. *Sulam*, Vol. 7, No. 3 (75), Tammuz 1955.
23. "He Who Distinguishes Between Holiness and Abomination", *La-merhav*, 1 July 1955.

24. From his talk at an election meeting on 15 July 1955. The protocol was given to me by Zvika Dror and I wish to thank him for it. Nossig and Likin were Jews who were killed by the Jewish underground in the Warsaw ghetto.
25. "MAPAM's Declaration about the Kastner Trial and the Coalition's Breakup", *Al Ha-mishmar*, 8 July 1955.
26. "I Will Not Be Silent Regarding the Truth", *Al Ha-mishmar*, 8 July 1955 (emphasis in the original).
27. See for example "How Low Does MAKI Go?", *Al Ha-mishmar*, 3 July 1955.
28. See note 25; also Yechiam Weitz, "Between Warsaw and Budapest – Regarding the Term Armed Resistance During the Kastner Trial" (forthcoming). Moshe Alpan (Pil) was a commander of Ha-shomer Ha-tzair's pioneering underground movement in Hungary during the Nazi occupation.
29. "In praise of rescue and condemnation of handing over", *La-Merhav*, 11 July 1955.
30. Moshe Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, Vol 4, 22 June 1955, Tel-Aviv 1978, p. 1073.
31. Meeting of the MAPAI Secretariat, 12 July 1955, *LPA*, 24/55.
32. Ya'akov Margalit, "Facing the Stagnant Wave", *Igeret La-haverim*, 186, 7 July 1955 (the writer was a member of kibbutz Mishmar-Ha-sharon).
33. Regarding this matter see: Yitzhak Olshan, *Din U-devarim*, Tel-Aviv, 1976, pp. 315-317.
34. "The First Day", *Ha-tur Ha-shevi'i*, 2, Tel-Aviv, 1973, p. 501 (emphasis in the original).
35. "A Portrait", ibid., p. 522.
36. Having learned the results of the elections to the Third Knesset in which MAPAI lost about 10 per cent of its vote, Ben-Gurion summarized in his diary the factors influencing the outcome: 1) The Kastner Trial; 2) M.S. (Moshe Sharett)'s security policies; 3) Arazi and the Arlosoroff Trial; 4) Anger of the working intelligentsia; 5) A few bad local MAPAI branches (Acre, Beersheeba etc.). See, Ben-Gurion's Diary, 30 July 1955, Ben-Gurion Archives at Sde-Boker (henceforth cited: BGA).
37. "D. Ben-Gurion Regarding the Trial", *Davar*, 27 June 1955.
38. Letter written to A.Z. Stein, a newspaperman from *Davar*, 17 August 1955, BGA.
39. Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem – A Report of the Banality of Evil*, New York, 1964, pp. 4-5.
40. Tom Segev, *Ha-million Ha-Shvi'i* (The Seventh Million – Israelis and the Holocaust), Jerusalem, 1991, p. 327.
41. Eliezer Don-Yehia, "Memory and Political Culture: Israeli Society and the Holocaust", *Studies in Contemporary Jewry*, 9 (1993), pp. 139-161.

"In Everlasting Memory": Individual and Communal Holocaust Commemoration in Israel

JUDITH TYDOR BAUMEL

Commemoration according to one dictionary definition means "to honour and preserve the memory of something for all eternity".[1] An ancient concept created out of the human need to bridge the gap between past and future, to leave a concrete reminder for coming generations. Commemoration comes in many shapes and sizes, depending upon the circumstances of its creation and the desires of its designers. In principle, commemoration is inspired by historical sources but in practice, it begins where history ends. As historian Yosef Haim Yerushalmi states at the close of his book *Zachor*: "In the terrifying time in which we live and create, eternity is not our immediate concern".[2]

Commemoration fulfils several needs simultaneously. The first is sociological: the common creation of a memorial or ritual acts as a source of unification and continuity. The second is educational: commemoration acts as a tool to develop an ethos which may be passed on from generation to generation. The third is psycho-theological: by creating ceremonies and sacred spaces, commemoration integrates with or substitutes for existing patterns of belief, thereby hastening the recovery process. However, all forms of commemoration have a common denominator – simultaneously facing the present and future, they almost always serve the interests of the commemorators and not necessarily of those being commemorated. Above all, commemoration begins at the juncture of cultures influencing the commemorator's soul. In his book, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller*, historian Carlo Ginzburg describes the metaphysical encounter of cultures existing within an individual and analyzes the dialectical relationship between the different cultural levels on which a person functions. Only recently – Ginzburg writes – have

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researchers liberated themselves from a narrow and paternalistic viewpoint which concentrated solely upon the culture of the elite. As a result, they discovered the sub-cultures practised by those of foreign origin or belonging to minority groups. It is often difficult to determine the nature and significance of these cultures as they are usually transmitted in a non-textual form. However, their influence is more obviously identifiable in the sphere of commemoration, which is analyzed by interpreting social and cognitive "codes". For as much as "official" commemoration primarily mirrors the majority culture, popular commemoration grants expression to all cultures influencing the individual's universe.[3]

This is doubly true with regard to Holocaust commemoration. Since the end of the Second World War, the Holocaust has been commemorated throughout the world in various ways and by many different populations. In certain countries it was commemorated nationally; in others, Holocaust commemoration initially began on the individual and communal level. Each form of commemoration arose from a unique blend of cultures: the official local culture, the popular local culture, and the original culture of the commemorators, many of whom were both immigrants and survivors. The impact of each cultural component differed in accordance with the type of commemoration in question. While national commemoration granted more weight to the first two components, communal and individual commemoration reflected a different cultural admixture. Furthermore, the line of demarcation between Holocaust commemoration and memorialization of the Second World War was often blurred, thus determining the impact of the various cultural components influencing commemoration. In the United States, the meeting between survivors and American G.I. liberators took centre stage in national Holocaust commemoration; in France, the "Unknown Jewish martyr" was canonized; in communist countries most forms of commemoration blurred the Jewish identity of the victims.

Holocaust commemoration in Germany was an issue unto itself. How could one commemorate the Holocaust in the midst of a population, part of which had originally identified with the murderers? There, too, Holocaust commemoration arose from a meeting of cultures and a struggle over cultural primacy between Germany's past and present. As a result, unique commemorative patterns emerged in Germany, such as the "disappearing monument" in Hamburg or the "signpost-memorial" in Berlin. This latter monument, listing names of concentration and extermination camps as if they were train destinations, is located at the entrance to a central Berlin train station, directing the onlookers to non-existent destinations, at least in today's Germany.

The purpose of Holocaust commemoration also differs from place to place. James Young's pathbreaking study of the texture of memory lists five reasons for establishing Holocaust memorials throughout the world: a desire to educate, the Jewish dictum to remember, the need of European governments to explain themselves to the public, exoneration of guilt, and the desire to attract tourism.[4] In the State of Israel an added and unique factor comes into play – a sense of Jewish mission born of the acceptance that Israel has become the spiritual and practical heir to all Holocaust victims. For over a generation, national patterns of Holocaust commemoration in Israel were canonized, at least by State leaders and official Israeli institutions. The first serious threat to Israel's primacy in Holocaust commemoration came in 1993, following the establishment of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington DC. However, not only did the Israeli political establishment express its primacy in matters of Holocaust commemoration towards bodies outside Israel; for years, certain forms of Holocaust commemoration within Israel received almost no acknowledgement from persons and institutions officially involved in national Holocaust commemoration. Two "forgotten" or "ignored" forms of Holocaust commemoration – those existing on the individual and the communal levels and the meeting of cultures which they reflect – are the subject of this essay.

During its first decade of existence, the fledgling State of Israel was characterized by a dominant political culture which both reflected a national ethos and encouraged its continuity. Side by side with this official culture, a popular "sabra" culture flourished, promoting the same ethos but viewing it through a softer, more tolerant and almost ironic prism. These two cultures were ideological – one official, the other popular. In addition, however, a third, almost clandestine culture continued to exist – the popular culture of European immigrants which continually weaved its way in and out of the stream of consciousness. This culture, scorned by members of the second and third *aliyot* (immigrants of 1904–14, 1918–23), reached the shores of pre-State Israel along with the immigrants of the 1930s. It later received a substantial booster with the arrival of Holocaust survivors in the late 1940s. These immigrants attempted to use their homegrown culture in order to preserve, and later reconstruct, a number of European frameworks which had been devastated by the Holocaust. Here they rapidly came up against an official brick wall – the authorities' frigid, almost hostile attitude towards the import of spiritual baggage from the diaspora, most of which was viewed as a potential danger to the Zionist ethos. As a result, the makers of the national culture tended to ignore the existence of foreign cultures transplanted to Israel. In an attempt to blur their centrality in the lives of a complete sector of immigrants,

these immigrant cultures were often dismissed as "folklore", a photograph-print of a true culture. Nevertheless, the European immigrant culture in Israel continued to flourish in many spheres, both during the 1950s and long afterwards.[5]

Two of these spheres, explored in the following pages, are Holocaust commemoration on the individual and the communal level.[6] The term "individual commemoration" applies to memorialization which is carried out by the individual, the citizen – even when he or she commemorates the Holocaust in its entirety; the term "communal commemoration" has a twofold meaning – historical and anthropological. One definition focuses upon commemoration carried out by bodies functioning in the present as a community. These include organized communities in cities and small settlements which act as communities, such as moshavim, kibbutzim and agricultural settlements. Our discussion excludes commemoration taking place on the national, municipal, institutional-political, settlement movement and religious levels, which usually reflect the attitude of official dominant Israeli culture towards the Holocaust. Furthermore, notwithstanding its centrality in understanding the culture of official Israeli Holocaust commemoration, I will not analyze commemorative patterns established by Yad Va-shem – the official National Holocaust and Heroism Authority in Israel. Nor shall I focus upon patterns established by the Ghetto Fighters House or other institutions of the various settlement movements active in the field of Holocaust commemoration.[7]

Two interwoven themes will be simultaneously developed: the dynamics of commemoration and those involved in its development; and the meeting of cultures from which commemoration is born, concentrating upon what Yosef Haim Yerushalmi calls the "functional dynamic of memory" in the State of Israel.[8] Finally, the patterns of individual and communal Holocaust commemoration within the framework of the general Israeli commemorative culture will be examined, thus demonstrating their significance in creating its citizens' individual and collective memory.

Unlike recent studies of Holocaust memorialization, this essay does not examine the artistic facet of commemoration but, rather, concentrates primarily on the historical-anthropological aspects of the topic.[9] Furthermore, since I am not analyzing historical scenes from the past but describing an ongoing process, I will not create an inventory of all existing monuments and *Yizkor* (memorial) books but will instead focus upon repetitive patterns and analyze their significance. Not least, it is imperative to remember that each type of commemoration mentioned is a topic unto itself, worthy of in-depth study.

COMMUNAL COMMEMORATION

Yizkor Books

But if every monument is a text, begging to be read, is every commemorative text a written monument? This question accompanies our examination of Holocaust *Yizkor* books. A European Jewish tradition of literary commemoration has existed ever since the first crusade in 1096. One of its expressions was the liturgical-martyrological compositions combining three dimensional descriptions of pogroms with profiles of major communal figures. Simultaneously, a second literary tradition was born – local record books ("Pinkas Kehilot") which documented the organizational, human and halakhic aspects of communal life. In both types of communal literature, historiography was not an end unto itself but a means of developing ritual, a tool for preserving the memory of those who "sanctified the Lord's name".[10]

The secularization process characterizing European Jewry from the nineteenth century onward left its mark on both Jewish historiography and patterns of commemoration. Its influence was particularly felt upon "spontaneous" Jewish historical literature composed in Eastern Europe during the 1920s. These books, edited in the best tradition of "Pinkas Kehilot", combined tales of pogroms and lists of victims with descriptions of the economic, social and cultural aspect of communal life. Unlike traditional martyrological literature, the authors did not seek a theological explanation for the vagaries of fate which overtook European Jewish communities. Yet similar to the memorial books and "Pinkas Kehilot", they considered the pogroms to be part of a historical chain of events, inseparable from two thousand years of Jewish existence as a persecuted minority, a harsh reminder of the ancient claim that "Esau will always hate Jacob".

Simultaneously, a different genre of memorial literature developed in pre-State Israel, reaching its apex with the publication of the 1911 and 1916 *Yizkor* books. By the early 1920s, the commemorative pattern had been set: ideological and descriptive memorial books which commemorated martyrs of the Zionist cause, those who had been sacrificed upon the altar of the struggle for Jewish national rebirth. This form of memorial literature differed from its European counterpart in both subject and historical framework. While European *Yizkor* books turned their spotlight on rabbis and communal leaders, those published in pre-State Israel concentrated upon figures considered central to the *Yishuv's* (pre-state Jewish community) ethos. Furthermore, both the traditional martyrological and the "secular" European memorial literature considered all pogroms to be part of one continuous historical process. Zionist memorial literature, on the other hand, attached its martyrs to a different historical narrative – that which began in

Masada, skipping nineteen hundred years of diaspora Jewish history. In the words of historian Emmanual Sivan, these books created a secular, activist and collectivist ethos suitable to the Zionist ideology which attempted to create a "new Jew".[11]

Communal *Yizkor* books were among the first commemorative responses to the Holocaust. Some of the earliest post-war ones were already published in 1946, both in Israel and abroad, almost always at the initiative of the "landsmanschaften" – organizations composed of former members of a European community. These organizations, which had traditionally cared for their members' burial, now felt obliged figuratively to bury their dead and erect a memorial. In the words of the author of one memorial book: "May the *Yizkor* books be an eternal tombstone and substitute grave for those whose bones were crushed in Auschwitz and Belzec and whose bodies were turned to ashes in Majdanek and Treblinka."[12]

From the 1950s onward more than ninety per cent of the *Yizkor* books were published in Israel, often financed by *landsmanschaft* members living abroad. The pattern was set by these first books – articles by *landsmanschaft* members, edited by a professional author, historian or editor, describing the *Shtetl*'s pre-war history, its travails during the occupation and finally, its destruction by the Nazis. Most of the first *Yizkor* books were written in Yiddish, mother tongue of the survivors and *landsmanschaft* members, or appeared in bi- or even trilingual editions (Hebrew, Yiddish and English). This multi-lingual structure remained prevalent for many years, even when almost all of the *Yizkor* books were published in Israel and their authors could fluently express themselves in Hebrew. Why? By insisting on writing a portion of the book in Yiddish, *landsmanschaft* members were making a conscious effort to preserve a small portion of their former communities' cultural life. Furthermore, it enabled those members abroad – who had often financed the book's publication – to read the results. Then why not use only Yiddish? The other side of the coin was the desire to involve the post-war Hebrew and English-speaking generation in *landsmanschaft* activities, to introduce them to their cultural heritage. As a result, several *landsmanschaft* have recently published English-language editions of their *Yizkor* books, thus making them accessible to members of the "second generation" living abroad. Indeed, creating a bond between the past and future generations was a central factor influencing the compilation of memorial literature.[13]

A glance at the publication dates of several hundred *Yizkor* books shows that only a few appeared before 1953. That year marked the beginning of a slow upward trend, peaking in 1967 when eighteen such books were published – double the annual average for the previous fourteen years. Their numbers then remained stable until 1974

when 40 more *Yizkor* books were published in Israel than during any of the previous seven years. From there on their numbers declined drastically. The drop in collective memorial books was accompanied by a sharp rise in the number of survivor memoirs – an additional indication of the rise of individualism, marking the dissolution of the "togetherness" syndrome characterizing the first years of Israel's existence.[14]

What can be learnt from these statistics? Does the tempo of publication mirror waves of interest in the Holocaust, trends among survivors, or contemporary events? *Yizkor* books are usually the result of several years work and their date of publication has often little to do with when they were begun. Thus, the numerous *Yizkor* books published in 1961, 1967 and 1974 were not necessarily the results of the Eichmann trial, the Six Day War and the Yom Kippur War, though these events may have hastened the publication of those books already in process.[15] Certain books had long been written but their publication depended upon donations from abroad. These donors were often found as a result of the "Jewish national awakening" accompanying the trial, the military events and particularly the Six Day War. Furthermore, by strengthening the Zionist national ethos, the 1967 War may have caused many *landsmanschaft* members to delve into their own roots and desire to commemorate their own culture. This may explain the numerous memorial publications appearing between the 1967 and the 1973 wars.

The survivors' economic status and aging processes were also factors affecting the publication of *Yizkor* books. During the first post-war years most survivors were young and involved with rebuilding their lives. The rise in the number of publications after 1960 was often an expression of both their communal awareness and their growing economic stability. Furthermore, during the 1960s many survivors became aware of their own aging process, an additional factor affecting commemorative patterns. It therefore appears that these two factors had more impact on the publication of *Yizkor* books than did the growing awareness of the Holocaust in the western world from the mid 1970s onward, just when the number of *Yizkor* books published began to drop precipitously.

How accurate is the historical picture described by the *Yizkor* books? Three issues which act as litmus tests for historical accuracy are the idealization of *Shtetl* life, the description of problematic wartime issues and the amount of space devoted to armed resistance. Following the "secular" European *Yizkor* book tradition, post-war *Yizkor* books devoted a significant amount of space to pre-war Jewish communal life. However, by viewing the events through a Holocaust prism, the result was often a picture of retrospective solidarity, even in those

communities which had actually been beset by constant strife. Apart from protecting the privacy of the persons involved, this was a means of keeping the *Yizkor* books from becoming a battleground for settling old scores. As a result, the opening sections of the *Yizkor* books – those describing pre-war life – often portray only a partial picture of *Shtetl* reality and should not be taken at face value.

It was even harder for literature to mirror reality when describing the war years. How should one describe the *Judenrat* (Jewish council) and the Jewish police – groups whose wartime activities often came under harsh scrutiny? Some editors faced the dilemma head on by including opposing viewpoints in their books.[16] Others smoothed over the problem by presenting a historical survey of the issue, bearing in mind that the books were written as an eternal monument to the community and a historical source for years to come. Then there was the gordian knot connecting the narrator, the subject and the reader. Both writers and readers were well acquainted with the painful issues being raised – even obliquely – in the *Yizkor* books. All were aware that many of the *Judenrat* members had also been pre-war Jewish communal leaders. Thus, any attempt to smear their good name would destroy the idyllic description of the *Shtetl* in its heyday. The issue at stake was that of eternal commemoration – what should be remembered and what should be forgotten, what should be emphasized and what should be erased. It was usually decided to preserve a nostalgic description of an idyll rather than portray the often cruel historical reality.

Almost every *Yizkor* book devoted only a few short paragraphs to the underground movements thus mirroring the proportional impact of armed resistance in most Jewish Holocaust experiences. By doing so, the editors challenged the prevalent Israeli trend of the 1950s and the 1960s which developed the ethos of "physical heroism" during the Holocaust far beyond its natural proportions. On the other hand, most *Yizkor* books devoted a great deal of space to spiritual heroism, to "sanctification of life". The wedding held at the Zelichow ghetto's cemetery which according to tradition would halt the typhus epidemic; the Passover *seder* conducted at the Hasag labour camp; the Jew who dared to read humorous stories in Yiddish which denigrated Germans before an SS man – all these were points of light illuminating the Holocaust's darkness for thousands of Jewish survivors who commemorated their experiences in *Yizkor* books.[17]

To what tradition do the post-war *Yizkor* books belong? Are they part of the mediaeval *Memorbuch* tradition, the early twentieth century European *Yizkor* books or the memorial books of pre-State Israel? In their study of Polish-Jewish *Yizkor* books Annette Wieviorka and Yitzhak Nivorsky state that these books are characterized by a sacred

dimension, making them into a "memorial prayer for those lacking a grave".[18] This same dimension makes it difficult to place the post-war *Yizkor* books into any of the memorial genres which preceded them. Their ritual use in communal memorial services carries back to the medieval tradition of memorabilia liturgy. The lack of martyrological theology is reminiscent of the secular *Yizkor* books written in early twentieth century Europe. However, they have little in common with the *Yizkor* books of pre-State Israel which ignored two thousand years of diaspora pogroms in order to connect the ancient struggle for Jewish statehood with that of the Zionist movement. Holocaust memorial literature – even that published in Israel – definitely belonged to the European Jewish historical tradition which considered the pogroms and later the Holocaust to be part of an ongoing process. Thus it is clear that the meeting of cultures which gave birth to the post-war *Yizkor* books developed along the Warsaw–Kovno geo-historical axis without stopping along the way at Masada, Betar or Tel-Hai.

Monuments, Memorial Stones, and Commemorative Inscriptions

Monuments and memorial stones are a second form of Holocaust commemoration. Contemporary research considers monuments to be a system of symbols through which one can examine a society's culture and ideology. Some studies concentrate upon the history of a monument; others choose to analyze its artistic effect; a third group deals with its impact on the public. Monuments differ from memorial stones both in terms of location and in the commemorated subject. While monuments are found almost everywhere and can commemorate a person, an event or an ideology, most memorial tombstones are erected in cemeteries and commemorate only the dead.[19]

Here I shall deal with three forms of plastic commemoration – two on the communal level and one on the individual level: monuments and memorial stones erected by former and present-day communities in memory of Holocaust victims, and commemorative inscriptions on private tombstones. Just as the *landsmanschaften* created written Holocaust memorials, so they commemorated their dead by erecting memorial stones over their non-existent graves. Similarly, just as memorial literature attempted to expand the scope of commemoration ("let the historian read and know..."), memorial tombstones were meant to have an impact upon various groups – members of the *landsmanschaft*, who would become united by the collective effort of putting up a memorial stone. For example, participants at memorial services who viewed the monument as an aid to ritual and a sacred space and the onlookers for whom it was an educational tool for passing on the *Shtetl* tradition to future generations.[20]

The first communal tombstone in memory of Holocaust victims was erected in Tel-Aviv in 1947 by members of the former Polish–Jewish community of Zdonska-Wolla. Early that year the Zdonska-Wolla *landsmanschaft* in Tel-Aviv received a small bag of ashes from the Chelmno extermination camp in Poland where most of the community's members had been murdered. With a sense of holy mission, the organization's chairman approached the Tel-Aviv burial society to ask for guidance. In response, he received a free plot in the old Tel-Aviv cemetery in which to bury his community's remains. The burial ceremony – among the first of its kind after the Holocaust – was held under the auspices of the Chief Rabbis of Tel-Aviv and other important personages. Financed by the Zdonska-Wolla *landsmanschaft*, a small marble tombstone was later erected over the grave site.[21]

This began a tradition of erecting communal memorial stones in Israel. In 1950 three such stones were unveiled – two in the Nahalat Yitzhak cemetery in Tel-Aviv (for the martyrs of Mir and Treblinka) and one in the old Tel-Aviv cemetery (for the martyrs of Warsaw).[22] Three factors separated these early memorial stones from those built afterwards: the lack of bureaucracy surrounding their creation, their narrow definition of heroism and their unusual size. Until 1951 the Tel-Aviv burial society charged no fees to those wishing to bury "martyrs'" ashes and did not require them to fill out forms. Only in the mid 1950s was a bureaucratic process developed to govern the burial of ashes from the Holocaust. Furthermore, the memorial stones appeared to march in step with the prevalent Israeli statist culture of Holocaust and heroism. Two of them mentioned armed resistance – one explicitly (Mir) and one implicitly (Warsaw). This culture rarely expressed itself in the later memorial stones. Finally, as the early memorial stones were meant to be representative, they were several times larger than those built a decade later.[23]

Until the mid-1960s few communal memorial stones were erected in Israel. Only then did their numbers begin to grow, parallel to the rise in the number of *Yizkor* books. At the entrance to the three main Tel-Aviv cemeteries, long boulevards were created, lined with all shapes and sizes of communal memorial stones. Some took the form of a torch or gate; a few – such as the Kalish memorial stone fashioned as a surrealistic crematorium – bordered upon necrophilic kitsch. Almost no new memorial stones were unveiled in Israel after the late 1980s, marking a new stage of commemoration – the restoration and enlargement of pre-existing memorial stones.[24]

Three factors affected the timing behind this form of commemoration. The first was the *landsmanschaft's* ability to obtain "martyrs' ashes" from European death camps. These remains were brought to Israel from Poland, Germany and the Soviet Union – almost always

illegally. A second factor, also influencing the publication of *Yizkor* books was the *landsmanschaft* members' awareness of their own aging process. Memorial stones thus became a means of placing their stamp upon eternity. The final factor was economic. Many *landsmanschaften* had tried to erect memorial stones in the 1950s but were unable to cover the costs. The Nahalat Yitzhak cemetery offered a compromise solution by allowing them to memorialize their Holocaust victims on a commemorative wall. A similar solution had been preferred to *landsmanschaften* unable to obtain "martyr's ashes". Only in the early 1980s did a number of communal organizations obtain the necessary funds to erect memorial stones or to restore the small tombstones which they had unveiled two decades earlier.[25]

The financial aspect of this kind of commemoration is similar to that of the written form – communal monuments required significant sums to cover costs – in this case, of the plot and stone.[26] Some *landsmanschaften* covered the costs with dues and local donations; others asked for assistance from members abroad. As communal memorial stones were not erected in the United States – due to the high price of cemetery plots and the desire to bring the martyr's ashes to their final resting place in Israel – American *landsmanschaft* members usually answered their brethren's pleas and provided the necessary funds. Thus, the creation of a communal memorial stone became part of a series of efforts to cement the bond between *landsmanschaft* members in Israel and abroad by emphasizing their common culture – the popular culture of European immigrants.

Motifs

In her article on Holocaust commemoration in Israel, Esti Rein states in an aside that communal memorial stones are categorized somewhere between tombstones and monuments. The difficulty in categorizing them appears to stem from the dichotomy between their location and purpose as opposed to their size, form and particularly the motifs they bear. As in the case of *Yizkor* books, these motifs are a key to deciphering the commemorators' inner world in that they reflect the various cultures interacting within that group. My survey of over four hundred communal memorial stones has pinpointed eight recurring motifs:

- *A Synagogue*, representing the *Shtetl*'s central communal institution. Usually appearing at eye level, this motif initially draws the gaze, creating a natural historical progression in the community's history and bringing other motifs into cognitive order. The technique is reminiscent of the first section in most *Yizkor* books, describing the pre-war era.
- *A Community Scroll*, bridging past and present in an attempt to

commemorate that which was destroyed and not only the destruction process.

- *Scenes from the Holocaust*: Jews being led to the slaughter, barbed wire and trains. The Kalisz memorial, built like a ten-foot high red brick crematorium, is a radical realization of this motif.
- *Objects from the Shtetl*, such as stones from the local cemetery, expressing personal and communal loss. These "holy relics" invest the memorial site with a sense of sacred space.
- *The "Martyr's scroll"*, cemented into the memorial, listing all community members killed during the Holocaust. A second copy, kept at the *landsmanschaft* offices, is used at memorial services.[27]
- *A Memorial Date* for the community, usually commemorating the date of deportation, when services are held at the *landsmanschaft* offices or at the memorial site.
- *Biblical Phrases* expressing disaster, words of comfort or vengeance: few communities engraved "secular" phrases upon their memorial stones in accordance with the "statist" Zionist culture. It is difficult to determine whether this stemmed from a religious and historical conviction or from the desire to describe the culture of the commemorated and not that of the commemorators.[28]
- A final motif common to 98 per cent of the memorial stones, is striking in its absence, namely, that of physical heroism. Only eight of 426 memorials surveyed portray armed resistance during the Holocaust, even obliquely.[29]

The iconography of communal memorial stones in Israel reflects the various cultural patterns influencing the commemorators. One is the Israeli "cult of the fallen soldiers", as seen in over 900 monuments scattered throughout the country. These express a commemorative form which like communal Holocaust commemoration is personal, direct and of unusual scope. Both genres incorporate biblical phrases, a technique emphasizing the sense of sacred space. Consequently, both groups of memorials become "ritual altars" while indirectly acting as pedagogical instruments for educating the public.[30] Only upon analyzing their pedagogical messages can one clearly see the disparate roots from which the two commemorative forms grew. Unlike Israeli war memorials, communal Holocaust memorials rarely embody an ideological ethos whether Zionist, patriotic, religious, nationalist or socialist. Clear proof of this may be seen by the absence of a "physical heroism" motif, in spite of its being a central component of Israel's civil religion during the State's first decade.

Similar to the *Yizkor* books, communal memorial stones heavily reflect the influence of a European Jewish culture. The *Shtetl*'s history

from its heyday to its final destruction, the lists of victims, the relics brought from European graveyards – all belong to a commemorative form which is far removed from Israel's historic consciousness. Few attempt to seek comfort in the rebirth of Israel, instead they turn to biblical phrases mirroring a historical tradition of pogroms and anguish. None attempt to envelop the mourners in the heroic mantle of Tel-Hai. Instead they portray a willingness to wait until a greater force will extract the vengeance of "thy martyred servants' blood". The absence of a European Jewish parallel for communal memorial stones makes it difficult to point to a direct continuum of commemoration. However, the motifs of communal and martyr's scrolls are undoubtedly influenced by the previously mentioned European *memorbuch* tradition. Thus, it appears that while the form and scope of *landsmanschaft* Holocaust commemoration draws upon Israeli roots, its content is nourished by distinctly European Jewish ones.

Was this not to be expected in view of the fact that the commemorators were members of a historical community, a group whose common denominator was the popular European culture in which they were raised?[31] What happens when the commemorative community is united by a Zionist ethos and expresses a distinctly Israeli culture? These questions lead to the next pattern of Holocaust commemoration – that generated by present-day communities in Israel.

Commemorative Patterns in Present-Day Communities

Size and functional patterns were determining coordinates in selecting present-day communities for this study. By choosing to examine only small towns, moshavim and kibbutzim, its scope was narrowed to those settlements functioning as a single community, often with a common ideological denominator, whose inhabitants offer much input on communal issues such as commemoration.[32] What cultural meeting is reflected in the forms of Holocaust commemoration generated by these communities and how do they differ from those already discussed? Commemorative aims of both past and present communities are in fact identical: commemoration for its own sake, a ritual implement, creation of sacred space and an instrument for imparting educational messages. The commemorative form is also similar – memorial stones and monuments usually erected in or near the local cemetery. Differences between the commemorative patterns materialize in two areas – the subject and the essence of commemoration. *landsmanschaften* memorialized community members who had lived together for years before meeting their death together. Members of present-day communities commemorated family and not community members, who usually had no historical or geographical connection with each other prior to or even during the war. Consequently, their memorials

cannot describe the victims' common life, but rather their death at the hands of the same enemy. Moreover, unlike most of the *landsmanschaften*, present-day communities did not bury martyr's ashes beneath their memorials, thus allowing them to be placed outside of cemeteries and often giving them the nature of a monument.[33]

In principle, Holocaust commemoration in present-day communities parallels that charted in historical communities. Beginning in the early 1950s, the process reached its zenith in the mid-1970s for three reasons: a growing Holocaust awareness in Israel and abroad, the survivors' aging process and the financial feasibility of carrying out such projects. The monetary aspect was often a critical factor affecting the memorial's timing. While *landsmanschaften* concentrated their postwar efforts predominantly in the fields of welfare and commemoration, present-day communities had to fund commemoration out of their annual budget. Consequently, notwithstanding the desire to collectively commemorate the victims, its concrete realization was often delayed by many years.[34]

Local events were often instrumental in communal Holocaust commemoration. A Holocaust memorial wall was created in Kibbutz Ma'agan only after an 1954 airplane disaster in which close to twenty participants were killed at a commemorative ceremony held at the kibbutz. In 1950, a Holocaust memorial was erected at Kfar Ha-roeh, following a car accident in which several of the moshav's members were burned to death. At the entrance to the local cemetery, a small memorial stone states that the accident victims' remains were interred together with a small piece of soap made out the bodies of Holocaust victims. Without examining whether the Nazis actually manufactured soap out of their victims' bodies, this appears to be one of the few present-day community Holocaust memorials erected over a grave containing some of the "martyr's ashes".

Indeed, the fact that most of these memorials were cenotaphs (empty graves) made it possible to locate them anywhere within the community. Most were placed within or just outside of the cemetery wall; some were located in a special commemoratory building; other communities added a Holocaust corner to memorial rooms commemorating Israeli soldiers who had fallen in battle. This third commemorative form appears to stem from the dominant official culture which forged the connection between Holocaust and rebirth. Did it also influence the monument's contents? A great number of the memorials portray pictures from the Holocaust, lists of victims' names and candles – a traditional Jewish symbol of mourning. However, they also portray motifs connecting Holocaust and rebirth, such as illegal immigration ships and references to Israel's wars. Furthermore, many of these memorials – particularly those in left-wing kibbutzim – bear

phrases reflecting a secular-Zionist ethos. In this they differ from the historical community memorials which, as shown earlier, separate the European experience from the Israeli one.[35]

I have not found great differences in commemorative patterns between the different types of communities surveyed, such as the various kibbutz movements, moshavim and small settlements. Apart from the secular phrases which are usually more prominent on left-wing kibbutzim, the other motifs are almost identical. Many memorials are reminiscent of monuments, being both figurative and representative. As they address themselves to a different public than do the historical communities, most are free of the kitsch characterizing memorials such as the Kalisz crematorium. Present-day communal Holocaust memorials are usually simple and unpretentious, similar to the commemorative pattern found among Israeli war monuments. Nevertheless, few refer to physical heroism, possibly because only the victims' death, and not their life, is being commemorated. And yet, one can sense the influence of both the dominant and popular Israeli cultures much more than in the *landsmanschaft*'s memorials. This is understandable in view of the fact that many of these settlements epitomize a secular Israeli lifestyle, their members being united by a collective Zionist ethos.

Holocaust commemoration among geographical communities is not unique to Israel but is found in Jewish communities throughout the world. One example is the collective Holocaust memorial found at the Manchester Jewish cemetery, which bears names of camps side by side with those of Holocaust victims. Similar to memorials of Israeli geographical communities, the Manchester memorial landscape bears biblical phrases, candles, lists of victims and scenes from the Holocaust. But as might be expected of a diaspora Jewish community, there is no reference to Jewish national rebirth and all the phrases appearing on the memorial are biblical ones. This pattern, repeated in Jewish communal Holocaust memorials throughout the world, re-emphasizes the distinctly European roots of *landsmanschaft* Holocaust commemoration in Israel, as opposed to the mixed commemorative pattern found among geographical communities in that country.

INDIVIDUAL COMMEMORATION

How is the Holocaust commemorated in Israel on the individual level and what meeting of cultures does individual commemoration reflect? One prevalent commemorative form are the inscriptions in memory of Holocaust victims, added to individual tombstones. I have found no precedent for this custom prior to the Holocaust, possibly because

there was no modern precedent for large numbers of Jewish victims who remained unburied. Chronologically speaking, the phenomenon seems to have developed simultaneously both in Israel and abroad. One difficulty in determining when the pattern began stems from the fact that memorial inscriptions were often added long after the original tombstone was set. Indeed, I have even found memorial inscriptions on tombstones of persons buried before the outbreak of the Second World War.[36]

The growth of Holocaust awareness on both the individual and communal level appears to have been a major factor behind the dissemination of this commemorative form. As the level of Israeli Holocaust awareness grew, so did the scope of the phenomenon and the circle of people who became aware of and subsequently adopted the idea of commemorative inscriptions. Who in fact did adopt this commemorative pattern? Primarily survivors, their families and persons who had immigrated to Israel during the 1930s. This latter category differed from earlier immigrant groups to pre-State Israel as neither a chronological nor an ideological chasm separated them from their families who had remained in Europe. Many of them lost parents during the Holocaust, as opposed to immigrants of the previous generation who usually lost only siblings. This explains the large number of memorial inscriptions from the 1970s and 1980s, decades when Holocaust consciousness peaked just as the natural death rate among survivors and immigrants of the 1930s rose.[37]

How widespread is the phenomenon? In several settlements where many survivors were buried no commemorative inscriptions may be found. Two examples are Kibbutz Ein Ha-horesh and Yad Mordechai – home to large groups of survivors and their families. In both cases this absence stemmed from the nature of communal Holocaust commemoration adopted by the kibbutz. At Ein Ha-horesh, communal and written individual commemoration took the place of commemorative tombstone inscriptions. From its place at the edge of the tree-lined country cemetery, a large black communal Holocaust memorial towers over the tombstones of former partisans such as Abba Kovner and Rozhka Korchak. In addition, each family opened a kibbutz file listing the names of its martyred loved ones. In Kibbutz Yad Mordechai, where a twenty-foot grey granite block listing individual victims' names was dedicated at the kibbutz cemetery, detailed communal memorialization took the place of individual commemoration. There seems to have been no set pattern in this matter. Other settlements, for example, adopted all commemorative forms simultaneously.[38]

The phrasing of commemorative inscriptions often points to the image of the Holocaust adopted by the commemorators. Most employ a traditional Jewish form. Some commemorate the victims by name,

others by their relationship to the deceased. There are those who mention the place where the victims lived or dies. Others adopt the catch-all phrase "murdered during the Holocaust", or "denied a Jewish burial". Similar to the case of geographical communities, memorial inscriptions do not commemorate the victims' life but only their death.[39]

Patterns of Commemoration

Holocaust memorial panels in synagogues are a form of individual commemoration taking place within a communal setting. Side by side with the memorial panels commemorating the community's dead, one often finds an additional panel upon which community members can commemorate Holocaust victims. This custom, European in origin, probably began sometime during the 1950s, reaching its peak during the mid-1970s. The contents and form of the memorial inscriptions are similar to those added to individual tombstones.[40] Furthermore, one can even find entire prayer rooms and synagogues dedicated to the memory of Holocaust victims. This commemorative form, also European in origin, developed as a result of the same cognitive and economic factors influencing the commemorators which have already been discussed.[41]

All commemorative forms mentioned until now draw upon a well-spring of Jewish traditions. However, at least one form of communal commemoration feeds upon non-Jewish roots – that of memorial groves. During the Enlightenment, the Christian perception which viewed death as a cause for humility and remorse, gradually evolved into a concept that saw it as a means of emphasizing the soul's harmony with nature. Simultaneously, a growing aesthetic sensibility changed the form of Christian cemeteries, transforming them into peaceful wooded landscapes of groves and meadows. Here was the basis for creating the military "memorial park" in Rome or the "heroes' groves" planted in Germany and France after the First World War, all of which fulfilled a central role in the "cult of the fallen soldier". By planting a heroes' grove, not only could a native village truly honour its fallen; it turned them into an integral part of the cycle of nature with the trees fulfilling the role of symbolic graves. The choice of a natural, unique and personal symbol to commemorate fallen soldiers was also a stage in the struggle against the trivialization of death, a process epitomized by the wholesale creation of monuments manufactured from a uniform mould.[42]

Communal memorial groves were planted in pre-State Israel as early as the 1930s, such as that found on the outskirts of Kibbutz Gvat, in memory of the martyred Jews of Pinsk for whom the Kibbutz was named. However only after Israel's 1948 War of Independence did the

custom spread as an acceptable means for commemorating the dead, possibly because of its suitability to the Zionist ethos of "redeeming the land". Within a short time, gardens and groves in memory of Holocaust victims became an equally common sight. A prime example is the "Garden in memory of the Medziboz martyrs", planted during the early 1950s in the quiet moshav of Kfar Vitkin, many of whose founders came from Medziboz. Over the years, thousands of trees were planted in memory of Holocaust victims in numerous Jewish National Fund forests scattered throughout Israel. In addition, entire forests were dedicated to the memory of Holocaust martyrs such as that established in memory of Zaglembian Jewry during the early 1980s. Unlike the European concept of expressing harmony between nature and death, these memorial groves embodied a completely different ethos. Transplanting the non-existent graves of Holocaust martyrs from a European location to an Israeli one was a means of granting the victims symbolic roots and ensuring their spiritual rebirth on Israeli soil. Memorial groves are therefore the only individual or communal commemorative pattern which focuses almost completely upon finding consolation in Israel's rebirth. They connect the various cultural patterns, European and Israeli, affecting the lives of the commemorators.[43]

A number of additional individual or communal commemorative patterns have become widespread during the past decades and deserve further study. These include the naming of children in memory of Holocaust victims, observing a private "Purim" celebration to mark the day of deliverance (such as liberation from a camp), dedicating buildings in memory of Holocaust victims and establishing scholarships and grants in their name. These forms of commemoration are not unique to the Holocaust and are popular among Jews both in Israel and abroad.[44]

Were there any individual or communal commemorative forms proposed in Israel which the public did not adopt? Though no commemorative form was completely rejected, at least one accepted pattern has disappeared over the years – the Holocaust commemoration inserted in the Passover Haggadahs of the various kibbutz movements. As early as the 1940s, a number of kibbutzim spontaneously added memorial poems such as Abraham Shlonsky's "The Oath" and Holocaust poet Yitzhak Katznelson's "Lamentation for the Martyred Jewish People", to their Passover service. Eventually adopted at the kibbutz movement level, this commemorative form began to disappear as the custom of *Yom Ha-shoah* (Holocaust memorial day) ceremonies became more widespread. Thus a commemorative form which began spontaneously on the communal level became an established form on the movement level and disappeared after being replaced by a com-

memorative form on the national level.[45]

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

How do the patterns examined in this essay fit into the general commemorative culture of the State of Israel? What role do they play in creating the individual and collective memory of its citizens? In his book *Myth, Symbol and Culture* anthropologist Clifford Geertz claims that one can understand a given reality only after isolating the various cultural levels from which it is composed.[46] If this is the case, then the dynamics of communal and individual Israeli Holocaust commemoration can only be truly understood through the meeting of cultures which they reflect. The essence of these cultures, the fight for primacy or even exclusivity among them, whether in the field of commemoration or elsewhere, is one of the cultural litmus tests which Israeli society underwent in its metamorphosis from an immigrant ingathering to an independent community.

But it needs to be remembered that certain commemorative patterns which developed in pre-State Israel long before the Holocaust, appear to have influenced Israeli Holocaust memorialization. Plastic commemoration was ostensibly canonized in 1934 when the statue in memory of Zionist hero Joseph Trumpeldor was unveiled at Tel-Hai. Similarly, the Israeli *Yizkor* book pattern was determined by the first Zionist memorial book published in 1911. Other commemorative patterns – such as synagogue memorial tablets – developed out of what appears to be a symbiotic relationship within Holocaust memorialization. But, as we have seen, Israeli commemorative culture usually left its mark on the form of Holocaust commemoration while rarely influencing its content. An exception to this case were memorial groves, through which the individual or community attempted to express a national ethos within the framework of an individual commemorative pattern.

The dichotomy between the local as against European culture in Israeli Holocaust commemoration is particularly evident in the role of consolation in all the commemorative patterns that I have found. As a part of the mourning process which contributes to the dynamics of recuperation, the commemorative phenomenon always incorporates a search for consolation. In Israeli commemorative patterns, consolation is almost always an expression of the Zionist ethos of physical heroism, the nationalist ideal and a certain vision of the homeland. A similar ethos is expressed by Holocaust commemoration on the national, institutional and movement levels, linking the Holocaust and national rebirth, turning the partisans and resistance fighters into a living bridge between the Jews who were "there" and those who were "here". This

ethos is almost totally absent in individual and communal Holocaust commemoration which often sees the act of memorialization itself as a consolation. Alternatively, Jewish tradition turns the victim into a "holy martyr", a victim *par excellence* in the Jewish lexicon, making him a worthy candidate for divine justice and ensuring him a place of honour in the World to Come.[47]

The ritualization of communal and individual Holocaust commemoration is an additional demonstration of the impact of European immigrant culture upon the State of Israel. Most *landsmanschaften* unveiled their memorials on a date of personal and communal significance such as their community's memorial day and not on *Yom Ha-shoah*, the National Day of Holocaust Remembrance. The content of the *landsmanschaft*'s memorial services also hints at the dichotomy between national and communal Holocaust commemoration. While *Yom Ha-shoah* ceremonies emphasize the national ethos of heroism, memorial services held on the anniversary of the community's deportation are almost completely devoid of this motif, expressing the hope that the next generation will remember the tradition of their European forefathers. There are even *landsmanschaften*, such as the Organization of Jews from Hrubieszow, which distribute scholarships in memory of Holocaust victims during the annual memorial services. These monetary inducements are meant to encourage the younger generation's interest in European Jewish culture prior to the Holocaust.

Each commemorative pattern was created as a result of a communal or individual need and reflects the various cultural components influencing the commemorators. It took form through a combination of desires and resources including finding the people and the economic means to carry out the idea of commemoration. However, as Israeli society is a dynamic body, its needs also change with time. This leads to a shift in commemorative patterns, or a variation in the impact of their many components. Thus, the national attitude towards individual and communal patterns of Holocaust commemoration has more recently undergone a metamorphosis. One example is Yad Va-shem's latest extravagant project – the valley of destroyed communities. Situated halfway down the side of Jerusalem's *Har Ha-zikaron* (Memorial Hill), the site contains figurative tombstones for hundreds of communities annihilated during the Holocaust. The idea of forming an analogue to *landsmanschaft* memorial stones – a place for reflection and a substitute grave, without martyr's ashes – originally arose in the hope that community members and their children would donate large sums to the ever empty coffers of the Israel National Holocaust Memorial Authority. Yet the fact that this project was adopted by the vanguard of national Holocaust commemoration – a body which for years promoted the ethos of physical heroism in its memorials and

research projects – is proof of a conceptual transition occurring within Israeli society. There is today a greater willingness to grant legitimacy to a European immigrant culture, to recognize its vitality and to incorporate parts of it within national commemorative patterns. An additional example of this conceptual transition are the study tours which Israeli youth take to Poland, an enterprise which has recently become more of a cultural search for roots rather than a tool for strengthening a collective national ethos. Thus one can see how communal and individual Holocaust commemoration in Israel has become a public domain and reservoir for future generations, instead of disappearing forever with the death of the last survivor.

NOTES

1. *Webster's New World Dictionary*, Cleveland and New York 1958, p. 293.
2. Y.H. Yerushalmi, *Zachor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory*, Seattle and London, 1982, p. 103. J. Le Goff, *History and Memory*, New York, 1992, pp. 64–72.
3. C.Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth Century Miller*, New York, 1982, introduction. Cultural memory is a topic which has interested both historians and social scientists. See also: Le Goff, *History and Memory*, pp. 64–72; S. Kuchler & W. Melion, *Images of Memory On Remembering and Representation*, Washington and London, 1991; D. Locke, *Memory*, London, 1971; P. Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, Cambridge, 1989; B. Shwartz, "The Social Context of Commemoration: A Study in Collective Memory", *Social Forces*, Vol. 61, No. 2 (December 1982), pp. 374–402. A major pioneering study on this subject is M. Halbwachs, *La Mémoire Collective*, Paris, 1968, in spite of the recent opposition to his school of thought. The studies on cultural memory have given birth to an additional series which has concentrated on commemoration patterns in various countries. See P. Nora, *Le Lieux de Mémoire I: La République*, Paris, 1984; C. McIntyre, *Monuments of War: How to Read a War Memorial*, London, 1990; G.L. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars*, New York and Oxford 1990; E. Sivan, *Dor Tashah: Mytos, Profil, Ve-zikaron* (The 1948 Generation: Myth, Profile and Memory), Tel-Aviv, 1991; E. Levinger, *Memorials to the Fallen of Israel*, Tel-Aviv, 1991 & 1994 (Hebrew); M. Azaryahu, "War Memorials and the Commemoration of the Israeli War of Independence 1948–1956, *Studies in Zionism* 13 (1992), pp. 57–77; O. Almog, "War Memorials in Israel: A Semiotic Analysis", *Megamot* 34 (1991), pp. 179–210. A second group of studies deals with a more specific facet of the issue – the triangle of "commemoration", "memory" and "Holocaust" – S. Milton, *In Fitting Memory*, Detroit, 1991; J. Young, *The Texture of Memory*, New Haven and London, 1993; E. Rein, "Holocaust Memorials in Israel", *Gesher*, 126 (Winter 1993), pp. 70–81.
4. Young, *The Texture of Memory*, p. 2.
5. See E. Don-Yehiya, "Memory and Political Culture: Israeli Society and the Holocaust", *Studies in Contemporary Judaism: An Annual*, Vol. IX (1993), pp.139–162; Y. Weitz, "Yishuv, Diaspora, Holocaust: Myth and Reality", *Yahadut Zemanenu*, Vol. 6 (1990), pp. 133–150; C.S. Liebman and E. Don-Yehiya, *Civil Religion in Israel: Traditional Judaism and Political Culture in the Jewish State*, Berkeley, 1983.
6. These aspects of Holocaust commemoration are rarely mentioned in existing studies of Holocaust memory in the State of Israel, which prefer to concentrate upon national and institutional commemoration.
7. I will also not deal with commemorative activities of the Holocaust museum on Mount Zion, municipal monuments, prayers written by the Chief Rabbinate of Israel in memory of Holocaust victims, etc. Regarding the liturgical aspect of commemoration, see my book, *A Voice of Lament: The Holocaust and Prayer*, Ramat-Gan, 1992 (Hebrew).

8. Yerushalmi, *Zachor*, p. 22.
9. For example, Levinger's *Memorials to the Fallen of Israel*, and Z. Amishai-Maisels, *Depiction and Interpretation: The Influence of the Holocaust on the Visual Arts*, Oxford 1993.
10. A. Wieviorka, *Les Livres du Souvenir*, Paris, 1983; J. Kugelmass and D. Boyarin, *From a Ruined Garden: The Memorial Books of Polish Jewry*, New York, 1983; Sivan, *Dor Tashah*, pp. 172–173.
11. Sivan, ibid., pp. 167–177.
12. Moshe Bilavsky, *et al.*(eds.), *Yizkor Book for the Martyrs of Pshaitch*, Tel-Aviv, 1974 (Hebrew), introduction. These voluntary organizations, composed of members from a European city or town, were founded during the late 19th and early 20th century, first in the United States and later in pre–state Israel, as social welfare organizations. The society's members were connected by a common past, common culture and a common ethos stemming from their European roots. After the war they were joined by members of their town who had survived the Holocaust and reached Israel or the USA. The first of the *Yizkor* Books, *Lodzer Yizkor Buch*, was published in New York in 1943.
13. Kugelmass and Boyarin list 514 *Yizkor* books published between 1945 and 1982, only 60 of which (12 per cent) appeared outside Israel.
14. The *Yizkor* book survey is partially based on a study conducted by Penina Meizels during the 1980s: *Religious life During the Holocaust as seen through Community Yizkor Books*, Institute of Holocaust Research, Bar–Ilan University, Research Paper No. 3, June 1990. The survey covered 322 *Yizkor* books published since the end of the Second World War, 97 per cent of which appeared in Israel.
15. E. Estrin (ed.) *Sefer Dvaart*, Tel-Aviv, 1974.
16. See, for example, W.A. Yasni (ed.), *De Geschichtge fun Yiden in Lodz in di Yaren fun der Deitscher Yiden-Oisrettung*, Tel-Aviv, 1960.
17. Quoted in Kugelmass and Boyarin, *From A Ruined Garden*, pp. 164–190.
18. Wieviorka, *Les Livres*, p. 9.
19. A. Proust, "Les Monuments aux Morts: Culte républicain? Culte civique? Culte patriotique?", in P. Nora (ed.), *Les Lieux de Mémoire I: La République*, Paris, 1984, pp.195–225; B.R. Rubenstein, "The Shape of Memory: Some Problems in Modern Memorial Art", *Remembering for the Future, Vol. II: The Impact of the Holocaust on the Contemporary World*, Oxford, 1989, pp.1790–1798; V.I.Papov "Reminders of Glory: Soviet War Memorials", *Cultures*, Vol. 2 (1975), pp.135–143; K.S. Inglis, "A Sacred Place: The Making of the Australian War Memorial", *War and Society*, Vol 3, No. 2 (1985), pp. 99–126. See also the studies by Sivan, Young, Milton, Rein, Almog and Azaryahu.
20. Colin McIntyre claims that many war monuments were created out of a sense of guilt carried by the survivors. C. McIntyre, *Monuments of War: How to Read a War Memorial*, London, 1990, p. 19; Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers*, p. 153.
21. Letter from A. Frankel, Chairman of the Zdonska–Wolla *landsmanschaft* to the directors of the Tel-Aviv Burial Society, 17 May 1973, *Archives of the Tel-Aviv Burial Society* (henceforth cited: TABS), Zdonska–Wolla file.
22. Author's conversation with A. Singer, director of the TABS technical department, Tel–Aviv, 18 January 1994. The Warsaw martyrs' memorial was erected by an individual whose family had been killed in the Warsaw ghetto. In 1949, during a visit to Poland, he was taken to the Poniatowska forest where the last of the Warsaw ghetto resistance fighters had been killed. There he filled two sacks with ashes and bones which he found in the forest and these were secretly sent to Israel in a diplomatic lift. On 19 April 1950, the seventh anniversary of the Warsaw ghetto uprising, these remains were buried in the old Tel-Aviv cemetery in a grave dug near that of the Zdonska–Wolla martyrs. As the sacks had been removed from Poland illegally, it was decided to erect a common gravestone with that of the Zdonska-Wolla martyrs and to shroud the story in secrecy. Only in 1970, when the last person who had been involved in the enterprise left Poland, was the story made public. Letter of Y. Pizitiz to Rabbi O. Yosef, 28 June 1970, TABS, Zdonska-Wolla file.
23. I have not found any basis for Esti Rein's claim (Rein, "Holocaust Memorials", p. 79) that the Mir and Treblinka memorials were erected in the military section of the Nahalat Yitzhak cemetery in order to connect Holocaust with heroism. Mr. A. Singer of the TABS stated that the memorials were erected on the cemetery's central concourse so that all visitors would pass them. For the same reason, the cemetery's mili-

tary section was located nearby. Author's interview with A. Singer, 18 January 1994.

24. S. Friedländer, *Reflection of Nazism: An Essay on Kitsch and Death*, Bloomington, 1993. As of early 1994 there were 365 community memorials at the Holon cemetery, 27 at the Nahalat Yitzhak cemetery and 32 at the Kiryat Shaul cemetery. There were only two Holocaust memorials at the old Tel–Aviv cemetery on Trumpeldor street, those of the Warsaw and Zdonska-Wolla martyrs. A few such memorials were also erected in Haifa and Be'er-Sheva.
25. Letter, Hrubieszow communal organization to the TABS, 26 October 1966, TABS Archive, Hrubieszow file; M. Horowitz, *Ve-siparta* (And though Narrated), Tel-Aviv, 1989, p. 182. Letter, Organization of Jews from Jawozno to the TABS, 5 December 1974, stating that they received ashes from Auschwitz and Buchenwald. TABS Archive, Zamosz file.
26. According to one member of the TABS, the cost of a communal stone erected in the 1980s ran between $2,000 to $13,000, depending upon size and style.
27. A second copy of the scroll was often donated to Yad Va-shem's archives. Author's conversation with M. Gerster, secretary of the Khshanow Society, 28 December 1993; Letter chairman of the Lwow society to members of the board, 6 June 1969, TABS Archive, Lwow file.
28. Such as those found on the Mir, Praga and Korov memorial stones. The Lwow society originally wanted to inscribe their memorial stone with a secular phrase "Let the people of Israel Remember", instead of the traditional "May the Lord remember". However, after an internal debate it was decided to leave the matter to the discretion of the Tel-Aviv Burial Society. The Burial Society declined to interfere and a compromise was reached whereby only the word "Remember" was engraved on the stone. Letter Z. Zohar to A. Beker, Director of the TABS, 28 March 1969, TABS Archives, Lwow file.
29. Only one memorial stone – that of Maniewicz in Wohlyn – granted physical heroism a plastic expression. Six figures on the memorial hold rifles, axes and clubs. The following sentence appears beneath them: "They were destroyed along with the town but their children formed partisan units which valiantly fought the Nazi enemy and took vengeance upon the murderers 1941–1945".
30. T. Segev, "What Monuments Do At Night: A Travelogue", *Ha-aretz*, 27 April 1990. Twenty six per cent of the monuments erected in memory of fallen soldiers in Israel incorporate biblical phrases. Almog, "War Memorials", pp. 192, 203.
31. Sivan, *Dor Tashah*, p. 131. Several *landsmanschaft* even erected identical monuments in the cemeteries of their European hometown, to those which they had built in Israel.
32. This study does not analyze the kibbutz movements on the movement level but deals only with individual settlements. Neither the central bodies TAKAM (United Kibbutz Movement) nor those of Ha–kibbutz Ha–artzi have published instructions regarding commemoration through the use of memorial stones or monuments. Thus, my findings represent the situation on individual kibbutzim and not that of the movement level.
33. My findings are based on a survey conducted among nine hundred kibbutzim, moshavim and communal settlements throughout Israel on both sides of the pre–1967 border. Three hundred settlements, more than half of which contain memorial stones and monuments commemorating the Holocaust, were examined in depth.
34. A Holocaust memorial stone was only set at Kevutzat Kinneret during the 1980s when the cemetery keeper received a sum of money from a relative abroad and decided to donate it for this purpose. Author's conversation with S. Hada, Kevutzat Kinneret, 24 January 1994. A similar memorial was erected in Kfar Vitkin around the same time when the moshav member responsible for the cemetery's upkeep decided that budget difficulties were no excuse for putting off such a project. On that very day he rode up to the nearby Carmel Mountains, found a large suitable stone, brought it back to the Kfar Vitkin cemetery and had a local stonemason make up a marble memorial plaque out of leftover tombstone material. Author's conversation with A. Sanson, Kibbutz Sheluchot, 29 December 1993.
35. Secular phrases include "Each man has a name" (Kabri); "In memory of our parents, Israel will not fall again" (Hulata); "It should be a sign and testimony by which to remember our loved ones killed during the Holocaust 1939–1945 (Ha-ogen); "Remember my friends, do not forget" (Ein Ha-shofet); "May the name of our loved ones who were killed during the Holocaust and did not receive a Jewish burial be sanctified. May their memory be blessed" (Yad Mordechai).

36. My sample is based upon two kibbutzim of the left-wing Ha-kibbutz Ha-artzi (Yad Mordechai, Ein Ha-horesh), three kibbutzim of the TAKAM (Kinneret, Givat Haim Meuhad and Kevutzat Schiller), one of Ha-kibbutz Ha-dati (Religious Kibbutz Movement) (Kevutzat Yavne), two moshavim – one observant (Kfar Ha-roeh) and one secular (Kfar Vitkin), and two sections from different periods found in each of the following cemeteries: Nahalat Yitzhak, Kiryat Shaul and Holon – all in the Greater Tel-Aviv area. The survey covered over two thousand tombstones, most of which had been set from the late 1940s onwards. The earliest memorial inscription which I found was on a 1939 tombstone at Kfar Vitkin, to which a small memorial plaque had been added during the mid-1940s. The plaque states that it was set "in memory of the deceased's son who has been missing in Treblinka since 1942". At the Nahalat Yitzhak cemetery I found two early memorial inscriptions – one from 1947 and one from 1948 – engraved on tombstones as part of the original tombstone's wording.
37. This form of commemoration was uncommon among the members of the second and third *aliyot*, possibly because over twenty five years of geographical and chronological distance separated them from their families who had perished during the Holocaust. Furthermore, as the European experience did not play a central role in their lives, their children did not think of commemorating those distant relatives who had perished in the Holocaust upon their parents' tombstones. This becomes apparent after examining the cemetery at Kevutzat Kinneret, the "national pantheon", where members of the second and third *aliyot* are buried. Out of five hundred tombstones, only six commemorate the Holocaust. Five of them are of persons who immigrated to pre–State Israel after 1932. In Kibbutz Gvat, established in 1926 in memory of the martyrs of the 1919 Pinsk massacre, no tombstone bears a memorial inscription for Holocaust victims.
38. Author's conversation with Y. Rotbein (Rozhka Korchak's daughter), Ein Ha–horesh, 16 January 1994.
39. Furthermore, it appears that the custom of commemorative inscriptions for loved ones killed in disasters or those buried outside Israel, later became more widespread. As these inscriptions are usually found upon tombstones from the 1950s onwards, it appears that they were influenced by the custom of adding memorial inscriptions for Holocaust victims and not the other way around. One example may be found in the Kinneret cemetery where there is an inscription dating from 1975 in memory of a man killed in Vilna in 1919. Another is found at the Givat Haim Meuhad cemetery commemorating a members's sister, buried abroad in 1966.
40. In the two cities examined – Givatayim and Kiryat Tivon, a third of the Ashkenazi (European origin) synagogues have a memorial tablet for Holocaust victims. Other cities have memorial tablets divided in three parts. One part commemorates community members who died, a second commemorates Holocaust victims and a third commemorates fallen soldiers. Author's conversation with Y. Eigner, caretaker of the synagogue at Kfar Ha–roeh, 29 December 1993.
41. One of the first synagogues of this kind which I have found in Israel was created by Rumanian immigrants in Be'er Sheva in 1954 in memory of the victims of the Struma (illegal immigrant ship) disaster. Throughout the 1950s, plaques in memory of Holocaust victims were placed in synagogues throughout Israel, such as that in Kfar Vitkin. During the 1960s and 1970s it became common to name entire synagogues in memory of Holocaust victims such as the "Synagogue in Memory of Auschwitz Martyrs" in Be'er Sheva and the "Synagogue in Memory of Holocaust Martyrs" in Kiryat Tivon. In 1965, Kibbutz Sheluchot built a synagogue in memory of the Holocaust martyrs, with funds which kibbutz members had received from Germany as reparations. Author's conversation with secretary of the Be'er Sheva Religious Council, 29 December 1993; *Dedication Plan of the "Bet Avraham" Synagogue in Memory of the Struma Victims*, Be'er Sheva 1965. Author's conversation with A. Shalom, synagogue caretaker at Kfar Vitkin, 31 December 1993.
42. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers*, p. 50.
43. Sivan, *Dor Tashah*, p. 144.
44. The custom of celebrating private "Purim" days is common among observant survivors who mark their date of liberation with a festive meal imbued with religious significance. Among the scholarships established in memory of Holocaust victims are the Auschwitz–Buna scholarship fund, established in New York in 1960 to mark the fifteenth anniversary of the camp's liberation and the Blitzer Fund established at Bar-Ilan

University during the early 1980s, in memory of Holocaust victim Shoshana Blitzer. Similar prizes are distributed annually by Yad Va-shem.

45. The custom began at Kibbutz Ein Harod and Kibbutz Beit Ha-shita. See, for example, the 1964 Haggadah of Ha-kibbutz Ha-artzi. Author's conversation with A. Ben-Gurion, Holiday Archives director at Kibbutz Beit Ha-shita, 10 March 1994.
46. Clifford Geertz (ed.), *Myth, Symbol and Culture*, New York, 1971.
47. Sivan, *Dor Tashah*, p. 127.

Paradigms Sometimes Fit: The Haredi Response to the Yom Kippur War

CHARLES S. LIEBMAN

This essay is an effort to understand Jewish ultra-orthodox *Haredi* reaction to the 1973 Yom Kippur War. Attention is confined to the large central segment of Haredi society represented in the political arena by Agudat Israel – the only Haredi political party which existed in the period covered here.

The hypothesis which guided my research was that between 1973 and the elections of 1977, changes took place in Haredi conceptions of the state of Israel and the wider society which led Agudat Israel to join the government coalition. I have sought to explore this hypothesis by comparing Haredi responses to the Yom Kippur War with their reactions to the Six Day War of June 1967. I assumed that the striking victory of the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) in the Six Day War would pose serious problems for Haredim. The Six Day War superficially, at least, seemed to be a vindication of Zionism, of secular Israel and the capacity of human design. The Yom Kippur War, on the other hand, seemed to reflect the tentative and insecure status of Israel, its isolation from the world and the folly of Israel's leaders. It, more than any of Israel's wars, might help narrow the sense of alienation that Haredim heretofore have felt. The tragedy and trauma of the war and the deep scars it left in Israeli society would serve, so I anticipated, to evoke in Haredi eyes the age-old experience of the Jewish people since the destruction of the Temple. It would make it easier for the ultra-orthodox to view Israeli society and even the State of Israel as being within the rhythms of Jewish history. This feeling ought to further reinforce a sympathetic attitude on the part of Haredim towards Israeli society. As will be seen, reality is not so simple.

There are several distinct themes in the Haredi literature dealing with Israel's wars of 1967 and 1973. For purposes of presentation I have divided them into three categories: the first portrays Israeli society in a generally positive light, emphasizing the shared condition of

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Haredi and non-Haredi society. Themes in this category include the miracles of these wars, the new religious faith or a new potential for religious faith among secularists as a result of them, and other positive remarks about Israeli society. The second category includes items critical of Israeli society such as caution about raising redemptive hopes, doubts about the depth of religious renewal within Israeli society, criticism of Israeli leaders who refuse to recognize the miracles that G-d wrought in the wars and more general criticisms of Israeli society. The third category includes themes that, at least superficially, are neutral in assessing Israeli society. They include analyses or descriptions of the wars, their causes and lessons, their outcome and the feelings of depression which followed the Yom Kippur War.

THE POSITIVE ASSESSMENT OF ISRAELI SOCIETY

Frequent allusions to the miracle through which G-d saved the Jews of Israel in general and the Israeli army in particular strengthen the Haredi sense of identity with society and the feeling that G-d cares for the Jewish state. Stressing G-d's miracles does not diminish the accomplishments of the army or the state in Haredi eyes. First of all, miracles are not inconsistent with human accomplishment. Second, miracles point to G-d's sympathy for an undertaking. In the Haredi mind, this has a more positive value than human achievement. By associating Israeli achievements with miracles, Haredim are able to celebrate Israel's victories because they are legitimated within a religious context.

The theme of miracles plays a major role in the reports of both wars. Thus, for example, a front page editorial in *Ha-modi'a* (editorials are normally printed on the second page), responded to the first reports of the Six Day War victory in the following manner:

> A great miracle occurred here, that is the response on everyone's lips at this hour. There is no other explanation and there will not be any other explanation for the glorious victory of the IDF which is still taking place... this is no natural victory but a magnificent miraculous revelation as in the days of our exodus from Egypt.[1]

Miracles may be alluded to in a general way or more specifically as, for example, in *Ha-modia's* reference to a miracle that all airplanes returned from a mission heavily damaged by enemy shells but without any being shot down.[2] However, recounting specific miracles which happened to named individuals is rare.

Haredi writers feel that both wars, in part because of the suffering

they engendered, in part for reasons unexplained, generated religious belief among the non-religious. "It is no exaggeration to say that the strengthening of faith in the hearts of the sons of Israel that had taken place is greater than that which has been seen for countless generations...".[3] The Yom Kippur War, in particular, is viewed as leading to a loss of confidence by Israelis in their former leaders and their former values, a point to which I shall return. But the Six Day War also engendered religious enthusiasm among the non-religious. Almost two years after the Six Day War, an important ultra-orthodox scholar and ideologue wrote that:

> A major transformation of values is taking place among the masses of people. Hatred for religion and the "religious" has disappeared. Of greater importance, here and there one confronts interest in the life of Torah and even open sympathy...[4]

He also wrote of the effect of both wars as follows:

> I fully believe that the hand of G-d is guiding us [referring to Israeli society]; that the recent wars came to awaken, bring closer, turn [Israeli society] away from false values to the truth of the eternal people.[5]

Other kinds of articles and stories, also point, directly and indirectly, to the common bonds between Haredi and non-Haredi society. These include references to the hostile attitude of the world towards Israeli society,

> the wars of the Jewish people did not begin with the establishment of the state of Israel. They have existed for longer than 21 years.[6]

to the common fate of all Israelis,

> The forces of the invader in Sinai and in the Golan were not sent in order to liberate territories of occupied Palestine but to carry out genocide against the nation who resides in Zion. Like bloodthirsty animals they and their friends will rejoice in torturing and killing every Jew because he is a Jew...[7]

to the self-sacrifice of Israeli youth who were ready to give their lives for their country,

> ...the self-sacrifice that penetrated the hears of the youth and adults...[8]

who went off to battle "with pure hearts",[9]

> In order to defend and protect the millions of Jews living in our holy land from slaughter, their blood was spilled and... young lives surrendered because they are Jews and in order that the whole nation will remain alive.[10]

and to the courage that derives from basic Jewish commitment.

> [The enemy] thought they were falling upon a nation immersed in its fast, a weak and powerless nation. They did not know that from this fast the nation derives its strength and inner fortitude...[11]

NEGATIVE ASSESSMENTS OF ISRAELI SOCIETY

The first type of criticism I want to mention is not, strictly speaking, a negative assessment of Israeli society, but it is too significant to go unmentioned here. Haredim are cautioned that the outcome of the wars and the miracles that G-d wrought are not signals of imminent Redemption. I only found three such statements but all three were issued by very authoritative sources: the political head of Agudat Israel, I.M. Levin, an editorial in *Ha-modi'a*, Agudat Israel's daily newspaper, immediately following the Six Day War, and Rav Shach, the single most important spiritual personality among Haredim, following the Yom Kippur War.[12] All these statements were directed against ultra-nationalist elements within religious Zionism rather than against Israeli society at large. The fact that they were made by such authoritative voices hints at the presence of quasi-messianic currents, influenced without doubt by tendencies in religious Zionist circles, within the Haredi public as well.

A second type of criticism is directed at leaders of Israel rather than at society at large. Leaders are faulted for not acknowledging the miracles that took place in the wars. The periodical *Beth Jacob*, which tended to enthusiasm over the accomplishments of the Israeli army and was often sympathetic to Zionist leaders, nevertheless noted that whereas "secular idols" were destroyed in the Six Day War, some secular leaders lack the courage to admit that the victory was a miraculous one.[13] Similar accusations were made following the Yom Kippur War.[14]

A third theme is an expression of doubt about the depth or permanence of the religious renewal resulting from the wars. Just as the phenomenon of religious renewal among secular Israelis strengthens Haredi ties to the society, so a slackening of the renewal weakens those ties. The doubts about the renewal never appear immediately after a war. In other words, the sceptical writers do not challenge those who immediately after the war describe the wave of faith, belief and reli-

gious renewal that is sweeping the society. Scepticism arises some time later. In the case of the Six Day War, I found the first such article a year after the war and in the case of the Yom Kippur War two years later. For example, an editorial in *Ha-modi'a* observed that:

> ... as we distance ourselves from that great historic day so we distance ourselves from the chance that it could have become a basic turning point.[15]

The most serious criticism, however, one that recurs in virtually every evaluation of or reference to the wars, is the criticism of "my might and my power" ("*kohi v-otzem yadi*"), a phrase that comes from Deuteronomy, 8:17. In its original context, the phrase follows a description of the future condition of the children of Israel, who will cross the Jordan, settle the land of Israel, be freed of their enemies and prosper. G-d warns them against forgetting that He freed them from Egypt, guided them through the desert and bestowed these blessings upon them. The Bible cautions the Jews against declaring that "my might and my power has attained all this". There is hardly a Haredi writer who does not mention that trust, faith and belief that Israelis had in themselves and in their army (and by implication not in G-d), constitutes a sin of enormous proportions. They are the root cause of Israel's crises which the Deity himself evokes in order to teach the Jews that they have no source of security other than G-d. In one of the earliest responses to the Yom Kippur War, Rav Shach stated:

> Wars always had reasons. They were always the result of the behaviour of the people. When the people of Israel did evil in the eyes of G-d, enemies came upon them and when they repented, the wars ceased – and the cycle, G-d forbid, recurs... What are our evil deeds? We are certainly not free of evil deeds, but the worst of all is the idolatrous belief in "my might and my power". They (an unspecified "they"), accustomed the people to trust in the IDF, in the help of the United States and in the power of effective weapons... The present war came and totally uprooted this approach... We must know that only our prayers sustained us and only G-d saved us.[16]

NEUTRAL ASSESSMENTS OF ISRAELI SOCIETY

Under this category I have identified themes and articles that ostensibly undertake to explain or analyze phenomena associated with the Yom Kippur War. But these assessments and analyses also suggest certain assumptions or imply certain judgements concerning Israeli society and the proper relationship of Haredim to that society.

Most of *Ha-modi'a*'s front page is normally devoted to general news stories whose source is an Israeli or foreign wire service. Hence there is nothing especially Haredi about them except, perhaps, in the matter of selection. During each of the wars, these stories, including some written by the paper's own correspondents, focused on the war's progress; they often occupied most of the second page as well. Although the stories were interspersed with an occasional mention of miracles or editorial comment, most of the coverage was as matter-of-fact as any war coverage can be. Immediately following both wars, a great deal of the front and second pages were devoted to Israel's international position. Both the war and the international coverage could not help strengthening the readers' sense of identification with the Israeli army or the Israeli state, its achievements and its problems.

This is particularly true since Haredi society is portrayed, by implication in the case of the Six Day War and explicitly in the Yom Kippur War, as participating in the war.[17] It is true that three Haredi young men, serving in a small Haredi army unit (since disbanded) died in the Yom Kippur War and there probably were a number of ultra-orthodox soldiers who served in combat reserve units. But the tone of the Yom Kippur coverage rarely suggests that the vast majority of Haredi men of military age did not serve in the army or that most of those who served were religious functionaries or reservists in non-combatant roles in rear rather than front-line positions. For example, an article in *Ha-modi'a* urges teachers in Haredi schools to be particularly considerate of their pupils in this period, "especially when there is hardly a home without one of its members at the front".[18] When allusions are made to Haredim who are not in the army, they indicate total identification of the home front with the combatants. An editorial in *Ha-modi'a*, under the heading "The Gates of Prayer are not Sealed", notes that alongside the soldiers at the front are tens of thousands of others, "praying continuously for peace and victory of the warriors".[19]

This sense of identity is reinforced by many of the reasons offered for the origins of the war, its lessons or its outcome. (I include all of them here even though some repeat themes already mentioned). All except items seven and eight recur frequently. They are as follows:

1. G-d is reminding us that He is in our midst.
2. Since the war demonstrated that the whole world is against us, we must become spiritually independent of foreign sources.
3. Only G-d can help us and we must therefore reject the notion of "my might and my power".
4. The war demolishes Zionist pretensions of independence and self-reliance (a lesson barely distinguishable from the previous one except in so far as it specifically mentions Zionism).

5. A religious awakening is taking place in the wake of and as an outcome of the war.
6. Haredim are obliged to exploit this awakening by spreading their message among the non-religious.
7. It is possible that the return of the territories in the aftermath of the Yom Kippur War is proof we do not deserve them (this theme only appears once and in a book by a Haredi author of secondary rank).[20]
8. The peace agreement with Egypt is an outcome of the Yom Kippur War.

Another ostensibly neutral theme that attracted the attention of a number of Haredi authors involved observations about (sometimes accompanied by warnings against) a sense of depression after the Yom Kippur War. This and the last two reasons listed above are the only set of items peculiar to one war and not another. This depression is sometimes described as a malaise affecting all Israeli society, with no distinctions made between Haredim and non-Haredim. "We are tired of wars and deaths and tears and tragedies".[21] Sometimes there is simply a call to fight the bitter mood that has infected so many people,[22] and sometimes an author suggests that the despair leading to defeatism that pervades Israeli society is confined to the secular world.[23]

Virtually all references to the two wars in the ultra-orthodox media and in the ideological-halakhic literature note (most often by implication but sometimes explicitly) the common history and destiny of Haredi and non-Haredi Jews. They underline the relationship between Haredim and the rest of society. Whereas non-Haredi society has many faults, it is certainly not beyond redemption. Furthermore, the most serious sin of which secular society stands accused, the sin of "my might and my power", is one that Haredi society stands accused of as well. A lengthy editorial in *Niv Ha-moreh* (the journal of the association of teachers in Agudat Israel elementary schools) notes explicitly that religious Jews in particular were punished for the sin of:

> ...being swept up ideologically by the general current of relying, to a greater or lesser extent on material forces other than G-d...[24]

The most important ideological formulation of the Haredi response to the Yom Kippur War was an article by the leading ultra-orthodox ideologue, Moshe Schonfeld. Schonfeld's article, "The Twilight of the Gods", was first published in *Niv Ha-moreh* and reprinted twice in *Diglenu*, once in the Spring (Nisan) of 1974 and again in September (Tishrei) of 1975. Schonfeld notes that although the IDF is wonderful, Israeli opinion-makers were wrong to stress its courage in battle and its military feats instead of its spiritual virtues – its sense of fraternity,

its self-sacrifice and its humanitarian attitude to the enemy. He labels this "idol worship" and then adds that Haredim were guilty of this as well.

The themes identified in the category of negative assessments of Israeli society, therefore, do not necessarily include criticisms that distance the Haredi reader from non-Haredim. One group of articles was critical of a particular group of secularists, the leaders who failed to recognize the miracles of the war. This kind of criticism, by implication, vindicates the mass of Israelis who, at worst, were misled by the secular leaders of the society. A second criticism that does relate to the masses of Israelis is found in articles questioning the permanent nature or depth of their religious renewal. However, I identified only six such articles and they were very unequally distributed: five following the Six Day War and only one following the Yom Kippur War.

Almost all the neutral assessments, as is clear from the discussion above, reflect favourably on Israeli society and on relationships between Haredim and non-Haredim. In other words, two conclusions seem to me inescapable from studying the Haredi reaction to the Six Day and Yom Kippur wars. First, the response is one that strengthens their ties to Israeli society in general, including the fortunes of the state. Second, contrary to what I expected to find, there is little difference between responses to each of the wars except that Haredi authors were less likely to question the depth of religious renewal following the Yom Kippur War.

The image or paradigm of each war, as it emerges in the ultra-orthodox media, can be summarized as follows: wars, even one that ends as gloriously as the Six Day War and certainly the Yom Kippur War, are times of tears, trial and tragedy. They come as punishment for the sins of the Jews, the foremost being that of "my might and my power", namely, the excessive reliance on the state, the instruments of the state and human potential instead of belief and reliance on G-d. But if the sins of the Jews are the ultimate cause of wars, the immediate cause lies in the "eternal hatred" of Gentiles towards Jews and their desire to destroy them, whether or not they are Haredim. In the course of the wars, Israelis fought bravely, with pure heart and self-sacrifice against great odds. Special qualities are attributed to Israelis, to those who live in the Land of Israel.[25] But Israeli Jews emerged victorious because it was in accordance with G-d's wish. G-d saved the Jews through "revealed or open miracles" (*nisim niglim*). Many secular Jews saw these miracles. These and other experiences, including the insecurity of national existence revealed by Arab hostility and the wars against Israel, shattered their belief in Zionism understood as Jewish normalcy or hope for national independence. Hence these Jews are now open to the message of repentance and return. The wars and their

aftermath demonstrated that it was incumbent upon the Haredim to exploit the opportunity that this opening of the heart on the part of secular Jews affords them.

In a study of the attitudes of the Haredi press to secular Israelis, Amnon Levy noted that they perceive secular society in two distinct modes.[26] In one mode, secular Jews are perceived as a nation separate from the Haredim. Sometimes the former are labelled Israelis whereas Haredim are referred to as Jews. Levy cites an article in the weekly *Hamahaneh Ha-Haredi* (25 May 1988) contrasting the celebration of the holiday *Shavout* by different types of Israelis. The first are labelled "lost souls" who "wander around the polluted bathtub called the Sea of Galilee while Jews all over the country and all over the Jewish world sanctify the evening by study". The newspaper article concludes that:

> Two nations, foreign to one another and alienated from one another are emerging, one not even understanding the language of the other.

This mode of relationship stresses the deep and unbridgeable gulf separating the two communities.[27] However, another mode, more prevalent on some occasions, less prevalent on others, treats non-Haredim as brothers, innocent victims of their inadequate Jewish education: "children who were abducted" is the phrase most often employed.[28] Israel's wars, whose very reality locates Haredim within the larger camp of Israeli Jews, tends to bring out the second mode and to minimize the first. The first mode never disappears, however. Indeed, as the memory of the war recedes there is no intrinsic reason why it should not reappear as forcefully and persuasively as it did before. For it, too, is anchored in major Haredi myths about the exile and the unredeemed nature of the Jewish people.

I have noted that the same paradigm or "mythos" was applied to both the Six Day and Yom Kippur wars. I have not explored Haredi responses to other wars, but my guess is that they are no different. I am fairly confident that an examination of Haredi responses to the Israeli War of Independence would reveal a virtually identical paradigm which seems to be imposed on events without regard to its accuracy. For example, the day before the outbreak of the Six Day War, *Ha-modi'a* warned its readers against the sin of "my might and my power". According to the writer:

> The nation must cure itself of all thoughts of "my might and my power" and turn its heart more to G-d. This tragedy of undue confidence in our power turns the hearts of many away from an expectation for G-d's mercy. It is one of the great tragedies of our time...[29]

The references to "my might and my power" and "undue confidence in our power" were without foundation. Almost all Jews in Israel, including Haredim, waited in trepidation for what they feared was an impending holocaust. But following the striking victory of the Six Day War, Israeli society engaged in an orgy of self-adulation celebrating the accomplishments of its military leaders in particular. None the less, a Haredi periodical reported that the war had destroyed "secular idols".[30]

AGUDAT ISRAEL'S ENTRY INTO THE GOVERNMENT COALITION

The difference between the Yom Kippur War and all other Israeli wars was that for once the myth did fit reality. This helps explain why, following the Yom Kippur War rather than the Six Day War, Haredim were psychologically prepared to reverse their policy and join the ruling government coalition. Between 1953 and 1977 Haredi policy had been clear. Agudat Israel was enjoined from participating in any Israeli government, since this would make it responsible for all government policies, some of which were inconsistent with Jewish law.

Menachem Friedman is correct to attribute this reversal of policy in 1977 to growing pressures within Haredi society for greater access to public funds.[31] These pressures grew by virtue of their success in directing the male members of their community to spend more and more years in *yeshivot*. (Friedman estimates that most Haredim today remain in *yeshivot* until their late thirties). As a consequence, they leave the *yeshivot* without productive skills and are unable to earn more than a minimal wage. And by encouraging families of seven or eight children, the earning capacity of their wives is also restricted and the need for free or very low cost housing intensified. These pressures have brought Haredi society to the edge of a precipice, according to Friedman and only large-scale government funding can delay if not prevent its fall.

The political scientist, Ilan Greilsammer, rightly adds that the decision to join the government coalition in 1977 was connected to the overturning of the Labour party's hegemony. For the first time since the creation of the state, a centre-right party, led by Menachem Begin, ruled.[32] The political Right in Israel, as in Europe, has traditionally harboured greater sympathy than the Left towards religious symbols and values.[33] This change eased the decision by Haredi leaders to join the government coalition.

But it seems to me that even this would not have been sufficient if the ideological and psychological ground had not been prepared. Haredi society is built on a religious ideology. It demands material sacrifices of its sons and daughters based upon its principle, and its fore-

most religious leaders (though not its political representatives) live exemplary lives of material simplicity if not actual poverty out of the same commitment. It is far-fetched to explain basic policy shifts solely in terms of economic forces. None the less, one cannot explain the Haredi willingness to join the government coalition in 1977 simply in terms of ideological or religious preferences for parties of the Right. This preference is only relevant if one assumes that Haredi parties feel a measure of responsibility for Israeli society and confidence in the importance of state policies in achieving religious goals. In other words, distinctions about whether secular parties of the Right are more suitable partners than those of the Left makes sense only if joining the government coalition and assuming some responsibility for the direction of Israeli society is viewed in a positive light. It is only meaningful if the Haredi community perceives itself as an integral part of Israeli society. This perception, never entirely dimmed, became immeasurably stronger in the wake of the Yom Kippur War for two reasons. Haredi responses to both wars portrayed the ultra-orthodox as part of Israeli society, sharing its fate in physical as well as metaphysical terms, as well as participating in the traumatic events themselves. If the Yom Kippur War led Agudat Israel to join the government coalition and the Six Day War did not – the reason may lie in the much more prolonged and deeper soul-searching within Israeli society at large provoked by the trauma of 1973.

But I believe that qualitative differences also distinguish the two wars. If the Yom Kippur War strengthened ultra-orthodox ties to Israeli society thereby evoking certain political consequences it is also because this time Haredi society really believed its own mythos. The intensity of the response, the number of articles and the extended period over which they were written suggest to me that following the Yom Kippur War, Haredi authors not only proclaimed the standard paradigm but were convinced of its truth. The paradigm was confirmed because it reflected what Haredim thought they were experiencing (including the miracles) and because non-Haredim were repeating many if not all the components of the paradigm. In "The Twilight of the Gods", Schonfeld's major article explaining the Yom Kippur War, he insists that the Yom Kippur War demonstrated "that even in our sovereign state we are isolated, different, a nation that dwells alone, a ghetto among the nations... a ghetto in the framework of a state...".[34] In other words, the Yom Kippur War proved that the Haredi analyses of Zionism and the condition of Israel were correct. The result was to magnify Haredi self-confidence and this was certainly a precondition to the kind of co-operation with secular Jews that is required by a government coalition. Once Haredim truly believed that the secularists acknowledged the bankruptcy of Zionism, they had

much less to fear from them. Secularists could now be perceived as mistaken and misguided Jews who deserved to be shown the light, not opponents who were offering an alternative ideology.

The belief of the Haredim in their own mythos and their self-confidence was further reinforced by the growth in the number of *ba'alei t'shuva* (penitents or "born again" Jews). Their presence confirmed the justice of Haredi proclamations about the bankruptcy of Zionist ideology. Yoel Schwartz compared the Six Day and the Yom Kippur War and observed that whereas the Six Day War had mixed effects – *aliya* from the Soviet Union, a religious return and the creation of *yeshivot* for *ba'alei t'shuva* from abroad, it also led to "an intoxication with victory and success which blinded the leaders and the general public...".[35] The Yom Kippur War, on the other hand,

> ...opened a new period among our people, the war shattered various idols dominant in the Jewish street such as "my might and my power" and faith in the leaders ceased. Secular society was shaken...
> All this awakened in the public's heart the question of why all the suffering? Why does the Jew always suffer? What is the purpose of suffering? Little by little these thoughts led to the search for the [correct] path and [they] began, little by little to return to Judaism...[36]

An article on the new wave of *ba'alei t'shuva* published in 1976 notes that they are usually individuals of high status, well educated and materially comfortable.[37] In short, the word of G-d was now penetrating the highest reaches of Israeli society. In addition, the author notes, the Yom Kippur War brought a change of attitudes among Israelis towards "students of Torah" (*b'nei Torah*), that is, to the Haredim themselves.

But it did more than that. For the final conclusion of the paradigm, as noted earlier, is to impose obligations upon the Haredim themselves to spread Torah among the non-religious now that they are open to the message. The phenomenon of *ba'alei t'shuva* reinforced the belief that the paradigm was accurate and that a massive reawakening was possible. It led at least some writers to look to the state as a possible vehicle for the Haredi message. Calls to spread Torah among the secular Jews were also issued following the Six Day War. The difference is that within two or three years of that war, a number of writers were already expressing reservations about the depth or permanence of the renewal. Although similar reservations were expressed following the Yom Kippur War, they were far less frequent. More significantly, the charge to Haredim to intensify their efforts to spread Torah or Judaism

among the secular were now accompanied by calls to utilize the state for this purpose. One such call was issued on the pages of *Diglenu* in an article titled, "Let Us All Mobilise to Impose the Torah in Our Holy Land".

> Sometimes one begins to think, why did the Holy One Blessed Be He create the state, for what purpose, what does the State add to His honour, may He be blessed? Perhaps the Holy One Blessed Be He created the state in order to provide us with the opportunity to impose the Torah on the state and through it on all Jews.[38]

It was clear by 1976 that the issue of Haredi attitudes towards the state was on the agenda of ultra-orthodox concerns.[39] Articles on the topic reflected the sense of a new relationship towards the Israeli State, of new sentiments that had penetrated both the Haredi at street level and the attitudes of many Haredi leaders. This was a necessary though by no means sufficient condition, for the reversal of policy in 1977 which permitted Agudat Israel to join the government coalition.

NOTES

1. *Ha-modi'a*, 7 June 1967, p. 1.
2. Ibid., 13 June 1967, pp. 2, 5.
3. Ibid., 23 November 1973, p. 2.
4. Ibid., 22 April 1969. Reprinted in Shlomo Volva, *Between the Sixth and the Tenth: Lectures and Articles Between Two Wars*, Jerusalem, 1976, p. 148 (Hebrew).
5. *Ha-modi'a*, 22 April 1969, p. 9.
6. Ibid., 12 September 1969, pp. 3,4.
7. *Diglenu*, Heshvan, 1973, p. 4.
8. *Ha-modi'a*, 21 July, 1967, p. 2.
9. *Diglenu*, Heshvan, 1973, p. 4.
10. Ibid., p. 4.
11. *Ha-modi'a*, 12 October 1973, p. 3.
12. Ibid., 23 June 1967, p. 1 and 4 October 1967, p.2, and *Diglenu*. Rav Shach's statement which is first reported in *Diglenu* is repeated and its implications are elaborated upon in an article in *Yated Ne'eman*, 10 March 1990, p. 3. *Yated Ne'eman*, a daily newspaper totally faithful to Shach, did not begin publication until the 1980s.
13. *Beth Jacob*, Vol. 8, No. 97 (July 1967), p. 2.
14. See, for example, *Ha-modi'a*, 26 October 1973, p. 2.
15. Ibid., 26 May 1968, p. 2.
16. *Diglenu*, Heshvan, 1973, p. 2.
17. Thus, for example, the leader of the Aguda stated, without explaining himself, that his party had an important role in the victory of the Six Day War. He also observed that every third soldier was religious. Perhaps he was suggesting that his movement encouraged religious soldiers to serve in the army. His figure is without foundation nor did the Aguda encourage religious soldiers to serve. *Ha-modi'a*, 23 June, 1967, pp. 1, 2.
18. Ibid., 2 November 1973, p. 2.
19. Ibid., 12 October 1973, p. 2.
20. Yosef Schwartz, *Yemot Olam*, Jerusalem, 1980, p. 126.
21. *Ha-modi'a*, 2 November 1973, p. 3.
22. Ibid., 30 November 1973, p. 2.
23. *Niv Ha-moreh*, No. 46 (Kislev, 1974), pp. 3, 17.
24. Ibid., p. 3.
25. Thus, for example, in his article "The Twilight of the Gods", Moshe Schonfeld says that the surprise attack by the Arabs even fooled "the sons of Eretz Yisrael, who by

nature are much cleverer than the Jews of the diaspora...".

26. Amnon Levy,
27. In addition to Levy see Charles S. Liebman, "Relations Between Orthodox and Non-Orthodox in Israel", in Jonathan Sachs (ed.), *Orthodoxy Confronts Modernity*, New York, 1991, pp. 109-122.
28. On the use of this term (*tinokot she-nishbu*) see Tamar Elor, "The Perception of Secular Jews in the Ultra-Orthodox Community in Israel", *Megamot*, 34 (October 1991), pp. 104-121.
29. *Ha-modi'a*, 5 June 1967, p. 2.
30. *Beth Jacob*, Vol. 8, No. 97 (July 1967), p. 2.
31. Menachem Friedman, *The Haredi (Ultra-Orthodox) Society: Sources, Trends and Processes*, Jerusalem, 1991, p. 188 (Hebrew).
32. See Ilan Greilsammer, *Israel: Les Hommes En Noir*, Paris, 1990, p. 36.
33. On the historical antagonism of the Israeli Left to the religious tradition in comparison to parties of the Right, see Charles S. Leibman and Elizer Don-Yehiya, *Civil Religion in Israel*, Berkeley, 1983.
34. This particular quote is from page six of the Nisan 1974 reprint that appeared in *Diglenu*.
35. Schwartz, *Yemot Olam*, p.90.
36. Ibid.
37. *Ha-modi'a*, 1 October 1976, p. 3.
38. *Diglenu*, Sivan/Tamuz, 1975, p. 3.
39. Nothing is ever totally new, least of all in Haredi society. It is true that following the Six Day War a similar debate took place but its terms of reference were unlike those following the Yom Kippur War. In the 22 April 1969 issue of *Ha-modi'a*, the issue that preceded Israel's Independence Day, the paper's editor, Yisrael Spiegel, printed an essay of his titled "The State of Israel Demonstrates Anew: A People that Dwelleth Alone". The author, adopting a strategy that characterizes Haredi writers sympathetic to the state, distinguished between Zionism and the Israeli State. He then argued that whereas Zionism is to be condemned, it has already proved itself bankrupt and therefore by implication non-threatening. In so far as the state is concerned, whereas the great spiritual leaders of the generation (*g'dolei ha-dor*) objected to its establishment *ab initio* (*mila-thila*) they do not object to it a *posteriori* (*b'diavad*). Spiegel suggests that the State should be exploited as an instrument for the spread of Torah. However, alongside his own article, *Ha-modi'a* published a very critical rebuttal by the important Haredi scholar and ideologue, Shlomo Volva, "Is There a Distinction Between Zionism and the State?". (Each of the authors subsequently reprinted his article: Yisrael Spiegel, *Be-derekh Ha-melekh*, Jerusalem, 1982, pp. 234-240 and Shlomo Volva *Between the Sixth and the Tenth*, pp. 145-148).

Isaac Rebound: The Aqedah as a Paradigm in Modern Israeli Poetry

RUTH KARTUN-BLUM

Twentieth-century Jewish history has confronted the Hebrew literary imagination with an astonishing repetition of the biblical drama. The ingathering of the Jews in the modern state of Israel recalls the Biblical exodus from Egypt and the return to Zion of the Babylonian exiles; Israel's war of independence echoes the conquest of the land by Joshua and the Judges; the story of Hagar and Ishmael seems to anticipate the conflict with the Arabs; the revolt of Absalom against David might be seen as presaging some of the tensions between the founding fathers of Israel and the sons who came after; the present-day consolidation of the Jewish State has obvious analogies to the Solomonic Kingdom of Israel. Even the most tragic event of this century, the Holocaust, has been related to the story of the Aqedah (the binding of Isaac). Clearly the dialogue with the Bible is not the sole preserve of modern Hebrew literature – and from this point of view every Hebrew text is polyphonic – but what is distinctive to it is the inexorable feeling that history is repeating itself in a new guise, like a film that is being rerun. For this there is no true parallel in any other literature. Modern Greek, for example, makes use of its historical and mythological sources, as in the poetry of Cavafi and Seferis, but is not an actual witness to events which so vividly echo ancient events and which unfold in the very same physical and geographical settings. Mount Moriah, for example, is a real place and not merely a sacred notion and that in itself permits the modern poet to view the Aqedah in a light quite different from that of the mediaeval liturgical poet who composed his hymns in the Rhine valley. The modern Jew is reviving a text.

The relationship of the modern secular writer to the ancient text, which history has restaged, is extremely complicated. It is a relationship involving the extension of lines of similarity and opposition, quotation and distorted quotation, ascent to the sublime and descent to the ironic, the mocking sanctification of the profane and the profana-

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tion of the holy. The biblical echoes are used and abused; their powerful allusions are recorded and then subverted through irony. Above all there is always the unqualified admiration of the modern artist for the biblical text to whose literary heights he knows he can never soar. It is possible then to study modern Hebrew literature according to what I have called elsewhere the redramatization of biblical motifs.[1] Yet the Aqedah remains indisputably the most prominent of all these *topoi.*

Before turning to the Aqedah in modern literature let me say a few words about it in the context of archetypal myth. The archetype of the Aqedah evokes associations with two narratives in other cultures: the crucifixion of Jesus, and the sacrifice of Iphgenia. The position of each narrative is central within its own particular culture; it gathers and condenses into one matrix a variety of significant motifs: it sums up the past and shapes the future. The comparison of these few *topoi* or myths would tell us much about how each of the cultures perceived reality and how the narratives were to shape history. Certainly our understanding of the Aqedah would be greatly enriched by a look at these other focal narratives.

In this essay I wish to propose a methodology for examining ideological and poetical developments in modern Hebrew literature through the usage of a central biblical archetype. The binding of Isaac was a major metaphor in Jewish tradition, but what is surprising is that it remained central even in the completely secular Hebrew literature written in the twentieth century. In the nature of things, this secularization deprives modern Hebrew literature of two of the main traditional, theological motifs of the Aqedah: love for G-d and the exaltation of his covenant. Secularization has two principal ramifications: first, in the modern attitude towards the Aqedah the relationship between man and G-d is gradually replaced by the relationship between man, the nation and his socio-historical existence and then, later, by the relationship between man and his self, his existence, his fate. So the narrative of the Aqedah gradually becomes a reservoir of metaphors for interpreting reality, whether external or internal. The interpretation of the biblical story becomes a way of understanding the reality and the self. Admittedly, the response to contemporary events through the Aqedah is also characteristic of early works in the religious tradition, such as the liturgical poems written in reaction to the pogroms of Crusader times; yet the response here was subordinated completely to the dominant theme of the relationship between G-d and man – that is, covenant and martyrdom. Secondly, by making the Aqedah secular, the modern poet frees himself from following the details of the biblical story and is able to amplify the semantic play between words and concepts even when the play becomes macabre.

One of the principles of such play is the juxtaposing of biblical episodes and confronting one with the other in such a way that events here and now are combined inextricably with them. Playfulness increases in Israeli literature and the story of the Aqedah becomes a means by which the sublime is deflated by irony.

It needs to be emphasized that the theme of the Aqedah is no less central in modern literature than in previous ages of Hebrew culture. There is scarcely a poet who has not made use of the myth in his work. Indeed, a vast anthology of such poems could be compiled. Accordingly, I have chosen to use it as a test case for tracing the literary evolution of twentieth-century Hebrew poetry. I shall do so by examining the transformation of roles wrought upon the four dramatis personae of the story: the author of the command to sacrifice Isaac; he who does the binding; he who is bound; and the ultimate victim. I have chosen the term "transformation" (*hamarah*) because it also coincides with the canonical exegetical tradition of the Aqedah throughout the ages which recalls the substitution of the ram as a sacrifice in place of Isaac. The rabbis suggest this explanation, "Why Mount Moriah?" they ask. Because *temurah* – linked to Moriah – means "exchange".[2]

Let us look first at the author of the command. As a result of secularization, a transformation takes place with regard to the command to sacrifice Isaac. G-d is replaced by an entity less well defined which at the beginning is tantamount to Jewish history but over time is equated with utter emptiness. It is as if the Aqedah had not been enjoined at all but was a meaningless and thoroughly absurd action. In the first stage, history as the author of the command has two dimensions: that of the past which epitomizes the national experience of unending suffering and destruction and that of the future which suggests that the Jewish people seem fated to be sacrificed again and again. In this context two additional factors may be discerned: the impossibility for the Jew to deny his past and the yearnings for future redemption. The yearnings were primarily expressed in Zionism which, as a result of returning the Jews to their land, renewed their encounter with sacrifice, through the constant struggle for survival in a hostile geopolitical environment. The G-d who gives the command is thus replaced by two substitutes: national destiny and the idea of rebirth. The transformation did not take place at once and in the intermediate stage there was still a dialogue with G-d, the author of the command. But the religious motif of G-d's testing of Abraham, the very basis of the earlier literature of the Aqedah, is gradually disappearing.

My historical point of departure is the 1920s, when the centre of Hebrew literature moved from Europe to Jewish Palestine. Now the G-d who tests plays a lesser role and his place is increasingly taken by the prevailing sense of history and of Zionist commitment. We look

first at the poet Yitzhak Lamdan (1899-1954) – a central figure in the poetry of the third *Aliya*. Even in their names the modern Hebrew poets are linked with their biblical forefathers: Abraham Shlonsky identifies himself with his patriarchal namesake; and Yitzhak Lamdan identifies himself with Isaac. But not with a private Isaac: rather with a representative and collective Isaac. He writes:

> We are all bound here, and with our hands we brought the wood here.
> Don't ask if the sacrifice will be accepted!
> Just let us stretch our neck silently at the altar.[3]

Note the passive tense in "Don't ask if the sacrifice will be accepted": he is not sure whom to address. Yet all Lamdan's essentially pessimistic poetry is replete with patriotic self-sacrifice, the archetype of which is the collective suicide on Masada. The line "with our own hands we brought the wood" is to be taken literally. The reclaiming of the land and the planting of trees are now the referent of the command in the Aqedah. The wood is no longer fuel: it becomes an important part of reclaiming the land. By contrast to the biblical narrative, the victim here chooses his own fate and is wholly conscious of it. Thus, it is that until the 1950s and 1960s poems using the Aqedah myth echo an experience of a shared fate, a collective and mystical concept of Jewish destiny whose roots lie in the literature of the beginnings of the century (Berdichevsky, Yaacov Cohen and others).

The same collective experience is also dominant in the poetry of the generation of the War of Independence (known also as the PALMACH Generation) – the first native-born Israeli generation of 1948. The reader in the pre-state *yishuv* anticipated a plot based on the heroic ritual of sacrifice. This happened when the Jews of Palestine prepared for the War of Independence. Literature and the theatre created for their readers a cathartic situation which was to facilitate the ritual of sacrifice. A large number of the plots end with the death of the hero whose sacrificial actions enable society to go on living. Those rituals were to accompany Hebrew literature for a long time and the literary developments are reflected in the changing attitudes to the ritual.

Jewish destiny is given macabre expression in Haim Gouri's poem *Yerushah* ("Inheritance"):

> The ram came last of all.
> And Abraham did not know that it came
> To answer the boy's question -
> First of his strength when his day was on the wane.

The old man raised his head.
Seeing that it was no dream
And that the angel stood there -
The knife slipped from his hand.

The boy, released from his bonds,
Saw his father's back.

Isaac, as the story goes, was not sacrificed
He lived for many years,
Saw what pleasure had to offer, until his eyesight dimmed,

But he bequeathed that hour to his offspring.
They are born
With a knife in their hearts.[4]

Nothing happened to Isaac "but he bequeathed that hour to his descendants – they are born with a knife in their heart". So the trauma is an inheritance which a father leaves to his son and the commandment to carry it out is the destiny of the Jews. Here is the stage at which history issues the command. In that unbroken line of bindings there are gaps and there are those who manage to save their own skins as did Isaac himself. "Isaac, as the story goes, was not offered sacrificed/ he lived for many years/ saw what pleasure had to offer, until his eyesight dimmed." Yet he bequeaths the binding to his descendants, a sort of relay race with batons, which are knives in the heart. Here we encounter the typical modern reversal of the categorical, once-for-all character of the Aqedah in the traditional religious interpretations. The testing now is unending both in the national and personal contexts. It is a story of an unending trauma.

Gouri's lines form a dialogue with Nathan Alterman whose ethos influenced so profoundly the PALMACH Generation. In his poem *Hayeled Avram* ("The Boy Abraham"), it is a mother, with a knife in her heart, who bequeaths redemption to her son. G-d, as the author of the command, is for Alterman replaced by the vision of national independence. This poem, written during the Holocaust in 1943, reacts to a newspaper article about a child called Abraham who slept in a stairwell because he was afraid to return to his own bed despite the pleading of the shadows of his murdered parents. He replies to his mother:

Mummy, Mummy,
I won't sleep in bed like other boys,
because I saw you in bed;
Mummy, Mummy, you were sleeping – with a knife in your heart.[5]

As the ballad continues, a political mandate is phrased as the divine command: "Go forth, by knife and blood, to the land which I will show you". The boy is led from the knife of the Holocaust to Zionist redemption. Here is a prime example of intertextuality in modern Hebrew poetry. The literary model of Aqedah and the intertextual space created through it links the Holocaust and redemption, destruction and rebirth. I shall add in parenthesis that for the literary generation of the PALMACH, who were predominantly native-born Israelis, the reality of the Holocaust was an inconceivable horror far away; there was almost a taboo on the subject. In the very few cases in which the subject was treated it was only natural for such authors to choose a mythical archetype, like the Aqedah.

The poets of the 1948 generation are sensitive to the palimpsest nature of the language, to its synchronic quality. In *Mot Sara* ("The Death of Sarah"), Benjamin Galai uses brusque translations from biblical to Mishnaic and modern Hebrew.

And the life
Of Sara was
A hundred years. Twenty years. Seven years.

And she died -
She departed from the world in the Mount of Hebron.
To the pattering of the servants' feet
Whose names she even forgot.
All the friends of the family came to the funeral.

They shouldered her coffin.
The place of her last rest.
Its planks, a rumour fell there, were the thinnest of thin
The lightest of light.

And the life
Of Sara was
A hundred years. Twenty years. Seven years.
The years of Sara's life.

And she died –
But really,
The candle of her light went out many days, many before
Her last resting place was dust.
And the coffin she lay in was made of all the years,
The memory of wood broken on another mount,
On another mount, in the Land of Moriah.[6]

Galai is the only poet who is sensitive to the feminist point of view. He uses the Mishnaic method and exploits the juxtaposition in the Bible between the narrative of the Aqedah and the portion which follows, the story of Sarah's death. Rashi's commentary makes the same point: "The death of Sarah follows the binding of Isaac because by it, when her son seemed destined to be slaughtered, indeed was almost slaughtered, her soul flew away from her and died." But while for Rashi she is physically dead, for Galai, Sarah becomes every mother whose son has been exposed to mortal danger. The linguistic transitions are intentional and brusque – from the biblical through the Mishnaic register and then to contemporary speech. The poem begins with biblical diction (Hebrew); then the Mishnaic collocation serves to translate the biblical words (Hebrew) and suddenly modernity takes over in the shape of words from the slang of the Israeli army (Hebrew) (for example, *Kitfu – Shouldered*). The sharp linguistic contrasts facilitate the universal interpretation of the figure of Sarah. The use of multi-level language typifies the first generation of Israeli poets who are acutely aware of the palimpsest character of their language and of their own position in Jewish history.

The beginning of the 1950s witnessed the Aqedah as a metaphor for personal and individual experience. One thus encounters the first signs of development from collectivism to individualism. T. Carmi's poem *Pahad Yitzhak* ("The Fear of Isaac") is a good example:

THE SACRIFICE

Even though Isaac did not die, Scripture honours him as if he had died and his ashes had been scattered upon the altar.
(Midrash Haggadah)

Last night I dreamt that my son did not return.

He came to me and said:
When I was little and you were,
You would not tell me
The story of the binding of Isaac,
to frighten me with the knife, fire, and ram.

But now you've heard her voice.
She whispered, didn't even command -
(her hand full of voices, and she
said to your forehead and to your eyes:)
is it
so?

And already you ran to your hiding-place,
drew out the knife, fire, the ram
And in a flash
your son, your only one.

Last night I dreamt that my son did not return.
I waited for him to come back from school.
and he was late,
And when I told her,
she put her hand upon me,
and I saw all the voices
he had seen.[7]

The Aqedah moves here from the collective consciousness to the family unit; an act of divorce is seen in the light of the Aqedah. The ancient myth serves to elevate a personal experience. The poem shifts between dream and reality; between the biblical sacrifice and sacrifice as a symbol of guilt. Now it is the "other woman" who is the author of the command. Cosmic sacrifice is transformed into parental sacrifice. The interpretation of the myth becomes psychological. The varied use of allusions from sublime contests in the Bible, for example, "And I saw all the voices/ he had seen" (recalling the Israelites who "saw" the voices on Mount Sinai at the giving of the Torah) or "her hand full of voices" elevates the role of the woman and the importance of the personal experience of divorce. The syntactically incomplete sentences in the poem, like "when I was little and you were", also recall the biblical style while alluding consciously to the narrative gaps in the story. But in the Bible such gaps are not in the syntax nor within the sentences – rather they are between sentences in the narrative technique as demonstrated in Erich Auerbach's classic work, *Mimesis*, leaving to the reader the task of exegesis. The modern poem further complicates the role of the reader by leaving the sentences incomplete. The Hebrew title, literally translated as "the Fear of Isaac", has a long semantic history. In the Book of Genesis, the Deity is twice referred to as "the Fear of Isaac". Thus the title immediately places the poem in an intertextual discourse and the confrontation elevates the father's act and the fear of the "betrayed" son, to a loftier level. The fear of Isaac becomes the fear of Abraham. There is always, it would seem, a knife lurking in the "hiding place", hovering over the destiny of fathers and sons. The knife symbolizes the guilt feeling.

The psychological interpretation forms a link between the 1948 generation and that of the state. The perception of an endless Aqedah is demonstrated forcibly in Tuvia Rubner's "Voices":

I walk. Always I walk: whither
Do I walk? I am not here.

Where does this wood in my hand come from?
This fire? They are not mine. I am not mine. In vain
I walk in your footsteps, for naught...
I know, my son, I am the father.
I lead you. We two go together.

I do not sleep. I am not awake.
I sleep. My heart is awake.

A ram is caught in the black thicket.

A silent muttering goes mute among the boughs
Time entangled in its day and night...

Yes. Here am I.
No![8]

We find ourselves here in an entirely different atmosphere, a prolonged psychic reality where the binding is internalized without any dramatic event, history national destiny or moral commitment; it amounts to a sort of constant existential sleepwalking, lacking direction or meaning. Although it is accompanied by details from the story of the Aqedah, they do not even belong to the sleepwalker, for he does not belong to himself. This is the negation of the self in the cycle of time. So this poem introduces a later aspect of the modern Aqedah, one which is thoroughly existential; connected with the human condition in which fate is decreed from within the self. (For a moment it seems that the father is leading his son, "I lead you"; yet he immediately corrects himself: "We two go together".) Changes of subjects abound: we do not know who is speaking: only Isaac could ask, "Where does this wood in my hand come from?" But who says, "This fire?" and who says "Here am I?". Such constant shifts create the feeling of sleepwalking, which is evoked by the phrases from the Song of Songs: "I sleep. My heart is awake". A love text is used here to portray a nightmare. Both father and son are bound.

A major development took place when the immediate shock at the Holocaust began to fade. Only then was the pathos of the founding fathers' poetry and the still lofty tone of the 1948 generation replaced by the ironic tone of the post-state literary generation. Removed from the collective aspects of Zionism and Judaism, the Aqedah became a target for linguistic playfulness which exploits the contemporary

development of spoken Hebrew. Literature moves from ideology to poetics. As in the dreams using biblical archetypes written in the 1960s and 1970s, one of the methods of breaking norms is the representation of such themes in colloquial language. In the past, the dialogues in biblical drama were written in a literary language. So it has been with poetry. As for the role of G-d, author of the command to sacrifice, there is a gradual transition to the absence of any command; or at least to a command characterized by the absurd, indicating the strong influence of existentialism on modern Hebrew poetry.

The displacement can be observed in some existential poems of David Avidan, one of the prominent figures of the poetry written in the 1950s and 1960s, such as "Curriculum Vitae et Mortis".[9] This is a thoroughly Sartrean, existentialist poem. G-d does not exist and death is the author of the command to die; the biblical angel is now the angel of death who, as in Kafka's trial, advises the speaker "at the end of his years" not "to mix up contradictory factors", for it is a lost cause. What, then, remains to be done? A man must make the most of the hours at his disposal for it is still too soon to plead with death and certainly it would be no good to call to others for help. In other words, private existence is simultaneously both Aqedah and redemption from Aqedah; fear of death serves "as the correct moment" for the full sensation of existence. In Sartrean terms, being exists for itself. Man is free and responsible for his own existence. The past is denied but the freedom of being which is attained comes at the price of recognizing the nausea and terror of existential *angst* itself.

Shalom Spiegel points out that in the *midrash*, and especially in Christianity, Satan is identified with the angel of death ("He is Satan, he is the evil impulse and he is the angel of death"). In Christianity the victory over Satan is the victory over death – the resurrection. By virtue of that victory the believers will receive new life.[10] Such intertextual space opens the poem to further ironic levels of interpretation. In this atmosphere it is quite appropriate to consider Meir Wieseltier's *Ma'ase Be-Yitzhak* ("A Story About Isaac").[11] Here there is no longer any remnant of the mythical level. It is the story of the sexual molestation by a man with a weasel face of "a boy whose name is Isaac" beneath the picture of a Sephardi rabbi "heavy in beard and heavy in mien". The rabbi is the only hint of any religious essence remaining, as it were, in Hebrew poetry.

It is in this atmosphere of the replacement of the G-d who commands, by a being responsible only to itself, that we hear the voice of the poet Avot Yeshurun.

> We have a problem of a Sacrifice of Isaac.
> And yours, you're inclined to think, the sacrifice of Isaac.

For us it comes out as a father has mercy on children.
For you it comes out as a father has mercy on himself.[12]

Avot Yeshurun is the absolute modernist, and yet as a poet with a strong affinity with the *shtetl* and Jewish tradition, who cannot himself hold back from making a statement about the Aqedah.

Let us now turn to the other characters of the Aqedah: to the binder, the bound and the victim. The replacement of Isaac by a ram in the biblical story had long ago engaged the liturgical poets and commentators in the Hebrew tradition. In response to pogroms, they posed the question: why was that archetypal substitution not repeated anew, and why is the Jew the constant victim of violence and massacres? Reverberations of this protest can also be found in twentieth century Hebrew poetry, in its collective, idealistic phase full of pathos – as in the poem by Zalman Schneur *Aqedot* ("Bindings"), written during the War of Independence.

The angel did not appear
To hold back the hand of the slaughterers
And the ram was not caught by the horns in the thicket.

A very different use of the myth can by found in the poetry of the 1960s and the 1970s. *Ha-gibor Ha-amiti Shel Ha-Aqedah* ("The True Hero of the Aqedah") by Yehuda Amichai typifies many of the current trends of Israeli poetry:

The true hero of the binding is the ram
Who didn't know about the other people's conspiracy.
He sort of volunteered to die in Isaac's place.
I want to sing a song in his memory.
About the curly fleece and the human eyes.
About the horns that were so quiet in his living head.
And after he was slaughtered, they made shofars out of them
To sound the fanfare for their war
Or the fanfare of their coarse rejoicing.

I want to remember the last scene
Like a pretty picture in a tasteful fashion magazine:
The tanned, spoiled youth in his natty clothes
And by his side the angel in a long silk gown
At an official reception
And both of them with empty eyes
Looking at two empty places.
And behind them, in the colourful background, the ram,
Caught in the thicket before the slaughter.

And the thicket is his last friend.
The angel went home.
Isaac went home.
And Abraham and G-d have long since gone.

But the true hero of the binding
Is the ram.[13]

Amichai tries to retrieve something in the narrative that lies beyond the pile of words – the "true" victim. The poet places himself against "them". He completely demythologizes the biblical story through ridiculing the social rituals attached to it by the 1948 generation. He does it by a process of estrangement – for who has ever paid attention to the ram? From the point of view of the detached secular reader, Isaac is a spoiled brat. It is all conspiracy and delusion; the ram is the only victim. Everything is trivialised in the contrast between the lofty subject and the colloquial linguistic register. Everyday language, bordering on slang, creates the conceptual transition from the transcendent to a simple existential level which rejects any links to tradition or cultural heritage. Notice the implied renunciation of social rituals in: "To sound the fanfare for *their* war/ Or the fanfare of their coarse rejoicing", when it is the ram's horns which become the *shofars* of the fanfare. Only the ram is portrayed in the most lyrical manner (the curly fleece and the human eyes). Above all Amichai's playfulness is dominant here: not only does he claim that the story is fiction, but that everyone knew from the very beginning that it was a fake. This perception marks a distinct point of departure from the poetry of earlier generations. Amichai retells the biblical story, adding parts which were never in the original, rupturing the chain of causation so essential to the narrative. Previously poets were faithful to the Aristotelian principle that the author of a tragedy could use myth with limited freedom as long as he did not disrupt his audiences's concept of reality. Before the 1950s poets opened up the text but they did not change the basic causal structure. Amichai contracts and violates the ancient narrative. The entire story is recast in the mode of the new poetic conventions. The narrator steps into the fiction ("I want to sing a song in his memory"), thereby undermining the authority of the omniscient narrator of the original story.

Another model of inter-textuality is represented by Avidan's parody of the Christian interpretation of the Aqedah. Among the fathers of the Church the Aqedah prefigures the Crucifixion. Avidan mocks this whole Christology. The methodology of prefiguration is portrayed as a "dress rehearsal". The literary result is a Jewish-Christian Bacchanalia.

David binds the messiah
And delays redemption.

The binding of Isaac
a diversionary action,
early ignition.

The crucifixion,
a dress rehearsal
late ignition.
musical version.

Jesus super-double.[14]

The ironic effect is achieved by the sharp contrast between the registers of spoken Hebrew (army slang, psychological jargon and contemporary musicals) and the lofty original text. Both Amichai and Avidan provocatively trivialize the story by reducing the level of language.

Avidan is almost unique in alluding to the identification between the Aqedah and the crucifixion. Whereas Israeli plastic art uses this identification abundantly, Hebrew literature seldom alludes to this link. The reason may be that plastic art is a newcomer to Hebrew culture and its archetypes are drawn from the West, whereas poetry is more committed to Hebrew tradition by its very nature as a verbal medium. However, this is a phenomenon which deserves a deeper exploration than can be attempted here.

Another central theme in the myth of the Aqedah is the Janus face, turning both to father and to son, each of whom in modern Hebrew poetry places the other upon the altar. For example, the son, immigrating to the Land of Israel, abandons his father who will be obliterated in the Holocaust; or the father, immigrating to Israel, gives birth to his son only to sacrifice him on the altar of the nation. It is as though the Aqedah were a kind of inheritance that a father passes on to his son, as in Gouri's *Yerushah* and which the son passes on to his father. In an another example the binder and the victim are switched in the nightmare of the child in Amir Gilboa's *Yitzhak* written in response to the loss of his family in the Holocaust.

Daddy, daddy, quickly, rescue Isaac,
So no one will be missing at lunch.
I'm the slaughtered one, my son,
And the blood is already on the leaves.
Daddy's voice was choked, his face paled.[15]

The victim is now the father and the boy's childish fear becomes his

guilt feelings towards the father he abandoned. The Holocaust has reversed the roles in the nightmare of the Aqedah and makes the poet a modern Isaac whose father is bound. The juxtaposition of linguistic contrasts, the colloquial "daddy" and the higher imperative of rescue creates a feeling of full identification with the biblical scene but also one of ambivalence.

Like Carmi's *Pahad Yitzhak*, Gilboa's poem is also a projection between dream and reality, between biblical context and the memory of the Holocaust. Yet the slaughtered one is now the father, and the childish fear of the boy turns into guilt feelings towards the father. The Holocaust has reversed the roles in the Aqedah nightmare and placed the lyrical self as a modern Isaac whose father is bound. The combination of linguistic contraries, the colloquial "daddy" and the higher "rescue" (in Hebrew: "Hatsilu" gives a feeling of full identification with the biblical scene, but also one of ambivalence). The biblical subject is not as it was in the literary generation before Gilboa: here there is both identification and ambivalence.

From the normal biological point of view it is usually the son who accompanies his father to his death. An expression of that is found the *Aqedah* ("Binding") of Yehiel Mar, a contemporary of Nathan Alterman: the father and the son climb the mountain. The son is full of youthful strength, and even the landscape loves him and awaits his return, whereas the father is old, and his feet stumble. The boy's superiority, as one who supports and leads the old man, is felt throughout the poem, which ends with the lines:

> The boy but steps forward in silence,
> And the father does not yet let down his hand.
> Then he said – What did Isaac say to him
> To make Abram hide his face?[16]

The reader guesses: did the son say to his father that his end has come?

The most poignant expression of such role reversal, typical of contemporary Hebrew literature, is provided by Hanokh Levine, the most important of the active modernist dramatists in Israel today. Influenced by Harold Pinter's theatre of the absurd, Levine, too, combines grotesque forms with social criticism.

The poem from his play *Malkat Ha-ambatya* ("The Queen of the Bath") has sharp political implications and caused a public outcry when it was staged in the Cameri Theatre in Tel-Aviv in 1970. The dead Isaac addresses his father:

> My dear father, when you're standing at my graveside
> Old and very solitary
> And you see how they inter my body in the dust,

And you stand above me, father.
Don't stand there then so very proud,
And don't raise your head, father,
We're left now flesh against flesh
And now's the time to cry, father.

So let your eyes cry on my eyes,
And don't keep silent for the sake of my honour.
Something more important than honour
Is lying now at your feet, father.

And don't say that you made a sacrifice,
Because the one who made a sacrifice is me,
And don't talk high words any more,
Because I'm already lower than low, father.

My dear father, when you're standing at my graveside
Old and very solitary
And you see how they inter my body in the dust,
Just ask my forgiveness, father.[17]

Like Amichai, Levine also tries to seize something beyond the verbal screen of the myth. For Levine it is the idea of mourning. He challenges the current interpretations of the myth of the Aqedah and those of early Israeli literature. Abraham is emphatically *not* a hero; his only duty is to ask forgiveness of Isaac. The story is viewed from the point of view of the dead Isaac. All heroics have been removed, and the retelling of the story is determined by the ideological perspective. Two years after the Six Day War of 1967, Levine in direct dialogue lays bare primary urges, which in the daily life of the average middle-class family are expressed beneath the threshold of consciousness without being put into words.

Sh'demot (a journal of the Kibbutz movement) published a symposium on the subject: "The Binding of Isaac and Our Contemporaries". One of its central arguments was: "If we are honest with ourselves, we have to evaluate our lives and the lives of our friends from the point of view of the dead Isaac". Levine shatters the taboos: bereaved parents had hitherto been sacrosanct. Yet Levine insists that their values are not necessarily those of the young; wars are not always justified and it is the young who, paying the price, are the heroes. The pathos in Levine's poem is achieved through juxtaposition of colloquial syntax and elevated vocabulary. On the one hand there are elevated words, the rhetoric used in public ceremonies: "graveside", "to inter", "solitary", "flesh against flesh". Yet these words are served up in col-

loquial syntactical constructions: (Hebrew) "when you're standing", (Hebrew) "very solitary" (in Hebrew *me'od ariri* – note the place of the adverb before the adjective – very much a recent development in spoken Hebrew), "now's the time to cry", "the one who made a sacrifice is me". The presence of elevated diction and standard rhetoric in a colloquial syntax creates the irony of the son's complaint. Levine's lash also strikes backwards: Abraham is not the hero portrayed by the canonical exegesis of the Aqedah and by the poetry of earlier literary generations. In the 1970s, for the first time, Abraham is mocked as being concerned only for his personal welfare. Before Levine and Amichai, despite an earlier ironic attitude towards the biblical Abraham, no poet had ever trivialized him in this manner.

Writers had found it easier to clothe Isaac rather than Abraham with their new perceptions, since he is the paler figure in the biblical text. Hence Levine heralds a change of ethos. But his polemic is not directed against the biblical text nor against the intertextual tradition, but against the contemporary use of the myth of the Aqedah; against the interpretation of reality through the story. This change in ideological stance emerged after the Six Day War only in the works of writers who were considered marginal and represented the anti-norm. They drew nearer the centre after the Yom Kippur War (1973) and this style was very much in evidence in the protest poetry written during the war in Lebanon (1982). Thus the usage of the Aqedah can reflect literary evolution, the movement from norm to anti-norm; from the margins to the centre.

As in the biblical drama, fate intervenes and once more places centre-stage the spectacle of the cruel confrontation between the Hebrew settler in his land and the native inhabitants. This time, however, the natives are not the Canaanites but the sons of Ishmael and it adds fuel to the myth of the Aqedah. The collision between prophetic justice and that of Joshua's conquest of Canaan, between the justice of the modern settlers and the Jewish conscience of the Diaspora finds powerful expression in the poetry of Avot Yeshurun. "The Holocaust of European Jewry and the hatred of the Arabs in the Land of Israel is the same Holocaust of the Jewish people: together they stare us in the face."[18] From here to the exchange of Ishmael for the bound Isaac the way is short. Indeed, in his long poem , *Huna Mahatat* (an Arabic expression meaning, "here is the radio station"), a transformation of that kind takes place:

> Will the parched one be sacrificed?
> Ishmael is the son who was spared,
> He is the son – he is the promising angel,
> And the angel – to promise spares not.[19]

That is to say, the angel who promised that Ishmael would be the father of a nation did not spare him when he was bound on the altar. These lines provoke a dialogue in the memory of the reader with the earlier lines of Lamdan in *Ba-hamsin* ("Hot Spell", literally "fifty" in Arabic, from the notion that there are fifty scorching days every year), from *Masada*:

> Where is Sara, who will cry for her son Isaac,
> Who pinned all his hopes here
> On the dread of the wasteland?...
> And beneath an orphan bush in the desert-refuge
> Not the son of the Egyptian woman – was thrown here -
> And here Isaac will faint with thirst,
> The seed of Abraham and Sara![20]

Once again we confront Isaac and Ishmael in the land of the patriarchs, but in Lamdan's poem Isaac is sent out looking for a well and shade for his head. Avot Yeshurun and Isaac Lamdan – one leads Ishmael to the Aqedah, and one leads Isaac to the tortured desert of Ishmael: with the one Ishmael is "the son who was spared", and the other calls him: "the son of the Egyptian woman". These are the two basic conceptions of Zionism which accompany it all along the way. Like many of the ideological and emotional tensions mentioned above, they are sustained by the reservoir of metaphors from the Aqedah. The importance of the Aqedah in modern Hebrew poetry is not of course surprising given its centrality in Jewish religious tradition. Abraham was, after all, the first of the patriarchs, the founder of monotheism and of the Judaic faith. His personal choices were decisive for the destiny and existence of his descendants. Indeed, the very destiny of the Jewish people was bound up with the Aqedah. In binding Isaac, the future hope of Israel, the stars were bound in jeopardy. Moreover, beyond its historic and religious meaning, the Aqedah in its original form is a perfect artistic narrative. It is written like a tragedy and it challenges the literary imagination.

The abundant use of the Aqedah reveals two different directions in which modern Hebrew literature is developing. There is the current of protest against the political establishment as illustrated in the poem by Hanoch Levine. But the other direction is no less significant. The Six Day War and the Yom Kippur War confronted Israeli society with the spectre of total annihilation, creating a growing identity and identification between the fatality of the Holocaust and the Israeli experience.

Modern Israeli writers have increasingly rediscovered the ambivalence of Jewish existence and the enormous complexity of Jewish identity. The condition of the Jews may have changed but not the Jewish condition.

NOTES

1. See Ruth Kartun-Blum, preface, *Chant D'Israel, Anthologie de la poesie hebraique moderne*, Paris, 1984, pp. 11-50.
2. Shalom Spiegel, *The Last Trial: On the Legends and Lore of the Command to Abraham to Offer Isaac as a Sacrifice: The Aqedah*, trans Judah Goldin, New York, 1969.
3. "Al Ha-mizbeah" ("Upon the Altar"), in *Kol Shirei Yitzhak Lamdan* (The Complete Poems of Yitzhak Lamdan), ed. Simon Halkin, Jerusalem, 1982, p. 119.
4. Haim Gouri, *Shoshanat Ha-ruhot*, Tel-Aviv, 1972, p. 28. Translated by Ted Carmi in Hebrew Verse, edited and translated by Ted Carmi, London, 1981.
5. In the 1940s and 1950s, the concept of the Aqedah is the central metaphor for the Holocaust. Thus in the poem by Ezra Zusman, "Yasimu Be-yadkha Ha-maakhelet" ("They Will Place the Knife in Your Hand") the lyrical voice warns Isaac, "Push away and block the knife/Isaac, protect yourself." That is also the dominant theme in Uri Zvi Greenberg's *Rehovot Ha-nahar* (Streets of the River).
6. Benjamin Galai, *Mas'a Tzafona* (Northward Journey), Tel-Aviv, 1968, p. 46.
7. T. Carmi, *Davar Aher: Shirim, 1951-1969* (Another Thing: Poems), Tel-Aviv, 1974, p. 158. Translated by Stephen Mitchell in *Selected Poems, T. Carmi and Dan Pagis*, Harmondsworth, 1976, p. 14.
8. Tuvia Rubner, *Shirim Limtso' Et*, Tel-Aviv, 1961, p. 105.
9. David Avidan, *Mashehu Bi-shvil Mishehu* (Something for Someone), Tel-Aviv, 1964, p. 25.
10. Spiegel, *The Last Trial*, pp. 103-104.
11. Meir Wieseltier, *Kah*, Tel-Aviv, 1977, p. 46.
12. Avot Yeshurun, "Ha-shir al Ha-afrikot" ("The Poem on the Africas"), In *The Syrian-African Rift and Other Poems*, parallel text ed., trans. Harold Schimmel, Philadelphia, 1980, p. 33.
13. Yehudah Amichai, *Sha'at Hesed* (An Hour of Grace), Tel-Aviv, 1971, p. 21.
14. *Shirim Eqroniim Achshav*, Jerusalem, 1978, p. 46; trans. by the poet in David Avidan, *Cryptograms from a Telestar: Poems, Transmission, Documents*, Tel-Aviv, 1980, p. 26.
15. *Kehulim Ve-adumim* (Blues and Reds), Tel-Aviv, 1971, p. 213.
16. Yehiel Mar, *Qavim Le-ma'agal*, Jerusalem, 1957, p. 50.
17. Hanokh Levine, *Ma Ikhpat Li Tzipor*, Tel-Aviv, 1987, p. 92.
18. *Et Asher Baharti Ba-shira*, ed. Yona David, Tel-Aviv, 1987, p. 100.
19. Avot Yeshurun, *Re'em*, Tel-Aviv, 1961, pp. 119-130.
20. *Kol Shirei Yitzhak Lamdan*, p. 55.

Israel as a Post-Zionist Society

ERIK COHEN

Zionism is not a monolithic ideology. In fact, the divergencies between different conceptions of the Zionist idea and the policies based on them have largely determined the dynamics of Jewish settlement in Israel, particularly during the early period of statehood.[1] On a deeper level, however, two fundamental syntheses endow all the varieties of Zionism with a common basic physiognomy, despite all the differences:[2]

1) Secular Salvation: Zionism was essentially a secular ideology, though it has been embraced by large segments of religious Jewry and religious Zionist movements were eventually formed after considerable debate and soul-searching. Zionism's basic secularity is determined by the separation between the aims of national salvation and those of religious redemption – a separation condemned by many sectors in the Orthodox Jewish community. Religious Jews who joined the Zionist movement saw in Zionism mainly a means to resolve the urgent problems of Jewish existence in the modern world, without thereby forsaking the expectation and hope for an ultimate divine redemption. Only a minority of religious Zionists saw in Zionism a manifestation of "the beginning of Redemption" (at'halta d'geula), a theological position that at a later stage, took on a previously unsuspected importance.

However, despite its overall secular character, Zionism did seek national salvation, and the movement's soteriological notions resounded to an astonishing degree with mythological ideas and conceptions of divine redemption in Judaism. This parallelism can be seen not only in the ultimate aim of re-establishing the Jewish nation in its own land, but also in the originally religious concepts and metaphors – such as ge'ulat ha-aretz (redemption of the Land), aliya (immigration, literally ascent to the land) – which were induced into the Zionist vocabulary.

Zionism secularized the religious myth and thereby provided a synthesis of modern and traditional salvational ideas; these notions

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remained mutually unrelated in the various other attempts to resolve the problems of Jewish existence in the modern world, such as the idea of auto-emancipation[3] or the Uganda plan.[4]

2) Universalistic Particularism: When it was founded, Zionism was a nationalist ideology, based on universalistic principles. It demanded the right of the Jewish people to a state of their own, in accordance with the precept of the universal right of national self-determination and autonomy. Moreover, mainstream Zionist thinkers from Herzl onward stressed the enlightened character of the future Jewish state, which would extend equal rights to all its citizens.

Zionism thus sought to reconcile the particularistic national character of the Jewish state with universalistic civil equality. This conception was also enshrined in Israel's Declaration of Independence, which in the absence of a constitution has been widely considered as the most fundamental statement about the basic nature of the state. Although expressly proclaiming that in Israel there will be no discrimination on the basis of race, religion and gender, the Declaration significantly omits any statement about nationality. This omission points to the ambivalence of Israel's Founding Fathers as to the problem of the national status of Arab citizens in a Jewish state. This problem was to become one of the basic points of structural strain in Israeli society at a later stage.

This strain in the structure of the Israeli state, which strives to be simultaneously particularistic and universalistic as a nation-state, is not unique to Israel. It reflects a conflict between two basic principles in the idea of statehood: the liberal idea of the state as a political formation based on the voluntary consensus of its citizens and the nationalist idea of the state as the political expression of a primordial group. However, it could be argued, this strain is of singular significance in the Israeli case in that it reflects, in a modern, political form, a dilemma inherent in Jewish religious ethics: the Jewish claim to a particularistic primacy, notwithstanding the fact that the Jews, as the "chosen people", brought a universalistic ethic into the world.

The synthesis of universalistic particularism, thus also expresses deeply-grounded Jewish themes in a novel, political and secular guise. It should be remembered that the Zionist synthesis of secular salvation and universalistic particularism helped to overcome two basic dilemmas which faced the Western Jewry in the modern world.

The first problem was the growing unwillingness of secularized Western Jews to submit to the religious demand to postpone national liberation until the time of divine redemption – that is, until the "post-historical" time of the Messiah. By historicizing political liberation and separating it from religious salvation and at the same time preserving the Jewish identification of its adherents, Zionism had a unique moti-

vating and activating effect on Western Jewry. None of the other contemporaneous ideologies and movements, which had aimed at resolving the problem of modern Jewish existence in a different manner, has ever had such a profound impact.

The second problem was the need for an ideological separation of Zionist immigration and settlement in the Land of Israel from contemporaneous colonial settlement enterprises of Western nations in the underdeveloped world. This separation was emphasized despite, or perhaps because of, some ostensible similarities between the two processes. These ostensible similarities have, of course, received considerable attention from contemporary historians and commentators who are less sympathetic to Zionism than their predecessors.[5]

The two fundamental syntheses also played a crucial role in the realization of two major Zionist aims: the establishment of the State of Israel and its rapid recognition by the international community. As an ideology of secular salvation, Zionism was uniquely capable of mobilizing the internal energies of the Jewish people, for the creation of the state. As an ideology of universalistic particularism, Zionism succeeded in attracting for the Jewish state external recognition and legitimation. The image of Israel as an enlightened, "progressive" and modern country still has a powerful impact on the attitude of many people and governments in the world, towards the Jewish state. This impact is felt not only by Israel's supporters, but importantly, also by its detractors. Thus, Israel's conduct on the international scene and in the occupied territories is often judged harshly because of Western society's rather lofty conception of the ideals on which Israel has allegedly been based.

Whatever its original attractiveness and historical significance, Zionism like virtually all ideologies nurtured in the late nineteenth century such as socialism and communism, has gradually been eroded of much of its vitality and relevance. It has lost much of its earlier ability to provide constructive answers to new problems and to mobilize internal and external resources for the furthering of its goals. In view of Zionism's decline, one can presently argue that despite all appearances and official rhetoric, Israel is rapidly becoming a post-Zionist society.

THE ROUTE TO POST-ZIONISM

The two fundamental Zionist syntheses managed to stand the test of time in the period before and immediately following the establishment of the State of Israel. After the initial euphoria of independence and victory had subsided, the leadership of the new state focused on three specific goals of the original Zionist programme: the absorption of immigrants (klitat ha-aliya), integration of the Diasporas (mizug ha-

galuyot), and the settlement of the land (yishuv ha-aretz). The remarkable achievements of the first dynamic years of statehood were followed by a long period of gradual routinization. The various Zionist ideological movements were transformed into political parties fiercely contending with each other for positions and resources within the nascent Israeli political system.[6] Throughout the formative years of statehood there were virtually no important ideological developments or innovations within the Zionist fold. Of particular significance is the fact that the dominant ideological strain during this period, pioneering socialist Zionism, remained locked within its pre-state attitudes and positions. The concept of "statism" (mamlachtiut) rather than an ideological innovation,[7] was intended as a means for welding the various Zionist movements of pre-state Jewish Palestine into an integrated nation-state. It was the state which now had to take upon itself the tasks previously shouldered by those movements.

However, the attempted transfer to the state of the role that ideological movements had played in an earlier period, could not guarantee the realization of several major tasks that the state of Israel now had to shoulder. Thus, for example, the attempted transfer failed to bring about a comprehensive absorption of the mass waves of immigrants. The absorption process under state auspices stopped short of that complete transformation of the newcomers into "new Jews", as envisaged by traditional Zionist ideology. Though not fully absorbed, the immigrants were strongly encouraged to shed their old ways and traditions. This pressure was directed especially towards the immigrants from Africa and Asia, who thus found themselves suspended precariously between two worlds. Ultimately, "two Israels" emerged in the Jewish population. The "first" Israel was composed of the so-called socially and culturally "advanced" immigrants from Europe and America, while the "second" Israel consisted of the allegedly "backward" Asian and African immigrants.[8] Especially prominent between the mid-1950s and early 1970s, the division into two Israels became gradually attenuated by the late 1980s. However, new political and religious divisions, which were no less problematic in terms of the premises of the original Zionist ideology, soon emerged.

When the Jewish state was created, the position of Israeli Arabs was precarious and problematic. While they were formally guaranteed their personal civil rights, the members of the Arab community were precluded from giving political expression to their national aspirations. Moreover, even the ability of Israeli Arabs to realize their formally recognized civil and other rights met with a series of roadblocks, mostly in the form of various regulations and administrative directives. In most cases the restrictions imposed on Arab citizens were not overtly discriminatory, but were based on other grounds, and particularly on so-called "security considerations".[9]

The universalistic-particularistic synthesis of Zionism was thus impaired in two respects: the national unity envisaged by particularistically oriented Jewish nationalism was not fully realized owing to the emergence of "two Israels" within the Jewish population of Israel: while universalistic civil norms failed to be realized owing to the substantial limitations imposed upon its Arab citizens by the state.

While Zionism succeeded in creating a Jewish state, Israel failed to fulfil the maximalist territorial aspirations of some of the Zionist movements. In other words, Jewish sovereignty over all of the Biblical Land of Palestine was not established. Paradoxically, however, this very lack of completeness made it easier to uphold the secular-salvationist synthesis of Zionism. Fulfilment was not so complete as to conjure up images of religious redemption.

As the years passed, routinization progressed and the advancement of sectional interests took precedence over ideological goals in Israeli politics. Concomitantly, many of the utopian and innovative ideas of an earlier period also lost their vitality and the institutions embodying them gradually declined in national importance.

The principle example of that decline is the collective settlement, the kibbutz, which was stripped of much of its centrality in the new state. At the same time, the co-operative agricultural settlement, the moshav, failed to measure up to its intended role as a principal means of absorption for mass immigration. Even the economic viability of both these innovative forms of settlement is highly problematic at the present time.

No new utopian forms of settlement were developed during the period of statehood. As the emphasis shifted from rural to urban settlement, new urban forms emerged, collectively known as "development towns". Although these communities eventually achieved ideological legitimation,[10] they never became part of a broader utopian conception. Nor did any of the various new settlement forms that emerged after the Six Day War of June 1967 partake in any such conception.

It is difficult to guess the direction in which Israeli society would have developed had the Six Day War not broken out. Although the atmosphere in the country in the months prior to the war was one of economic and psychological depression, the danger and tension in the weeks preceding the war and the unexpectedly complete and speedy victory combined to utterly change that mood. The war's consequences opened previously undreamed-of possibilities and engendered novel problems, with which the ideological approaches of the pre-war period could not deal competently. No solutions to these problems were found during the years following the war. Then came the sudden "earthquake" of the Yom Kippur War of 1973, which totally under-

mined the self-confidence of the leading circles in Israeli society and disgraced the established political leadership of the country. Thus, in the aftermath of the 1967 and 1973 wars, the stage was set for the gradual demise of classical Zionism and for the transition of Israeli society into the post-Zionist period.

Ironically, the very prospect of the potential realization of maximalist Zionist aspirations, through the outcome of the war of 1967 (in which all of Western Mandatory Palestine came under Israeli control), significantly undermined the syntheses of classical Zionism and created the conditions for an existential and ideological crisis in Israeli society. The unification of Western Palestine under Israeli control could be interpreted, on the one hand, as virtually the last step in the Zionist territorial programme. On the other hand, the swift and complete victory leading to this territorial unification was perceived by many Israeli Jews as verging on the miraculous. Even for some non-religious Jews, these events seemed to reflect a hidden plan of divine Providence. The disengagement between secular salvation and divine redemption in Zionist ideology, a gulf that had heretofore been facilitated by the very incompleteness of the Zionist programme, now became much more difficult to maintain. Prior to 1967, the link between the Zionist enterprise and messianic aspirations had been promoted only by a small number of followers of Rabbi Abraham Yitzhak Ha-Cohen Kook, the late Chief Rabbi of Mandatory Palestine. In light of the dramatic turn of events, support for this linkage became more widely accepted. The dissonance caused by the traumatic experience of the Yom Kippur War gave a novel, political twist to such messianic hopes, resulting in the emergence of Gush Emunim (Bloc of the Faithful) as the most vital and active new ideological movement of the period of statehood. Gush Emunim's ideology of "Zionist religiosity",[11] integrating the Zionist idea into a wider redemptionist theology, contributed significantly to the weakening of the secular component in the original Zionist synthesis.

One of the consequences of this development was a gradual shift in the basic socio-political formation of the Jewish population of the state, from the earlier ethnic to a newly salient religious division. In other words, there was a widening of the gulf between secular Jews and those Jews who embraced the Jewish religion or religious traditions. There was only a partial overlap between the emerging division on religious grounds and the earlier ethnic gulf. Even if the overlap had been complete, however, the important point is that the symbols of division had changed. The ethnic division into "two Israels" was considered to be a failure of the Zionist enterprise, which had not yet succeeded in integrating all Jews into a unified nation. In any case, it was expected that this socio-cultural division would eventually vanish,

although the process might take a very long time. The religious division, however, could not be delegitimized, particularly since the new religious currents adopted and translated the Zionist national aspirations into religious terms. Any attempt by either the secular or the religious camp to raise the issue of the precise nature of Jewish identity in Israel, would lead to serious political consequences and invoke the spectre of a Kulturkampf, as the volatility surrounding the question of "Who is a Jew?" has repeatedly demonstrated. The secular-religious division, can thus be expected to remain a permanent feature of the Jewish community in Israel.

The religious community's interpretation of the state is likely to become an increasingly legitimate alternative to the classic Zionist conception, which had been accepted in an earlier period, even by the religious Zionists.

A phenomenon accompanying the revival of religion and Jewish religious customs is a renewed emphasis on Jewishness as traditionally defined, rather than on the Zionist ideal of the "new Jew". This change in emphasis has in turn put into question the validity of the second fundamental Zionist synthesis – that of universalistic particularism. Many Israeli Jews have embraced a neo-traditional Jewish nationalism, which stresses particularistic Jewish claims and goals in the Land of Israel. They display a marked disregard for the universalistic, civil or national rights and interests of the non-Jewish inhabitants of the country.[12] This narrowly particularistic orientation within the boundaries of the "green line" (1967 ceasefire line) is in marked contrast with the growing universalism of the state's bureaucratic apparatus, particularly the judicial system. Indeed, the courts in Israel have become in recent years the principal defenders of democratic values and civil rights in Israel. The frequent recourse to legal means to protect universalistic values and rights in the public domain attests to the pressure exerted upon these values and rights by the growing particularistic ambience. The full force of this atmosphere, however, is felt in the occupied territories, where civil rights are poorly established and the power of the Israeli legal system to defend them is restricted. Here, indeed, the agencies of the Israeli government, as well as of the Jewish settlers were until recently, permitted to give virtually unrestrained vent to their nationalist aspirations, with little regard for the need, desires and rights of the local Arab population.

Zionist settlement movements, it should be said played no major role in Jewish settlement efforts in the occupied territories. This enterprise was dominated by governmental agencies, primarily the Ministry of Housing and Construction under the Likud and by the new activist religious movements, spearheaded by *Gush Emunim*. In contrast with the traditional Zionist settlement movements, *Gush Emunim* not only

supplied much of the human resources and organization for the settlement enterprise, but also proposed a new ideological rationale and legitimation for it, linked to the Jewish messianic expectations. Within the context of these aspirations, Zionism, as an instrument for the realization of the divine plan, plays a merely subordinate role.[13]

As the emphasis changed, so did the semantics. The focus of political discourse in the pre-1967 period was on the "State of Israel" (Medinat Israel), while, in the political discourse of the post-1967 period, the concept of the "Land of Israel" (Eretz Israel) has gained ever more saliency.[14] The former term is basically a political concept, whereas the latter is more national and religious. The shift reflects the change from a collective identity based on Zionist political symbols to one based on traditional Jewish religious symbols.

Throughout the post-1967 period Zionism failed to respond creatively to the problems posed by Israel's occupation of the territories. Suspended between the dilemma of advocating both a Jewish and a democratic state, Zionist leaders failed to propose a viable solution to the problem of the occupation and the Palestinian question. No resolution that could be convincingly defended in terms of classic Zionist ideology was propounded. This ideological paralysis has contributed to the continuation of the unsettled status of the occupied territories, which in turn, has provoked the Palestinian uprising known as the Intifada. The inability of the established ideology to respond creatively to the problem has contributed to the decline of its relevance to the formation of Israeli public opinion. Hence, although many Israeli Jews remain nominal Zionists, Zionism has become largely irrelevant as an ideological context for their opinions and actions with regard to the most burning dilemmas that Israel faces. Nevertheless, even if Zionism has lost much of its practical relevance, for many people, few would openly admit that they have ceased to be Zionists. Such an admission, indeed, would be widely considered as close to treason or sacrilege. Zionism has thus remained a rhetorical belief,[15] important as a symbol in the formation of personal identity and in the formal definition of the Jewish political community in Israel. But much of its relevance and appropriateness to the contemporary Israeli situation has diminished.

Moreover, Zionism continues to serve many individuals, movements and organizations as a means for legitimizing claims to special benefits or privileges and for defending vested interests. As this activity has become one of the principal functions of Zionism, its nature has changed radically. Starting out as an "utopia", as a vision and blueprint for an ideal society in the future, Zionism has eventually turned into an "ideology", in the strict sense,[16] an instrument employed by the established dominant groups to defend both their interests and the status quo.

POST-ZIONISM

Israel is on the way to becoming a post-Zionist society. By this term, I wish to indicate that Zionism has ceased to be the moving force in many crucial areas of Israel's Jewish society. At the same time, Zionism has not yet been replaced by any other ideology or world-view that enjoys a similarly broad consensus or provides a widely accepted basis for the legitimation of the state. In this respect, the situation in Israel is similar to that in some other countries where powerful ideologies like socialism and communism have gradually lost their vitality and relevance. In contrast to these other cases, however, the depth of the ideological crisis has not yet gained wide recognition in Israel, owing to the strong social pressures to maintain a rhetorical allegiance to Zionism. Hence, there is little frank discussion of the fundamental premises of the ideology, despite fierce controversies on specific issues such as the place of religion in society and the future of the occupied territories. The unwillingness to propose novel solutions to these issues is related to the reluctance of participants in these controversies to discuss the fundamental premises of Zionism or to recognize that its classical assumptions have in fact disintegrated. The "post-Zionist" predicament is thus one of anomie: a lack of clear and agreed value-preferences and ideological injunctions, which could endow courageous and innovative decisions with general approval and legitimacy. Israel entered into a political deadlock, because the opposing camps of nearly equal strength paralysed any bold initiative for more than two decades. The prospects for change more recently opened up are not likely to be fully realized unless the deeper paralysis in the post-Zionist predicament is properly understood.

DIRECTIONS OF IDEOLOGICAL CHANGE

While Zionism is in crisis owing to the disintegration of its basic syntheses, several divergent trends of ideological change in contemporary Israel can be observed. These trends can be interpreted as new permutations between the discrete terms constituting the contrasting conceptual pairs on which the classic Zionist syntheses have been based: secular versus religious and universalistic versus particularistic. These permutations, and the corresponding emergent ideological alternatives that are presently vying for hegemony are as follows:

1. *Religious Nationalism*: This is a relatively recent ideological development, represented by such movements as Gush Emunim and the mainstream of the National Religious Party. Many adherents of other parties, such as Degel Ha-Torah and Shas, also embrace this outlook. This ideological orientation has de-secularized Zionism and thus

integrated the Jewish national aspirations into a wider religious, or even messianic, framework. In the process, this orientation has largely ignored the universalistic premises of classical Zionism, emphasizing exclusivist Jewish goals. In its extreme form, the new religious nationalist orientation aspires to the establishment in Israel of a Jewish theocracy.

2. *Secular Nationalism*: This was the prevailing ideological-political orientation in Israel in the 1980s, adhered to by the bulk of the Likud. Secular nationalism has its roots in the ideology of the Zionist Revisionist movement, which was established by Ze'ev Jabotinsky and which, like the other mainstream Zionist movements, has demonstrated little ideological vitality during the last fifty years. None the less, the contemporary permutation of secular nationalism is at considerable variance with classical revisionism. Secular nationalism advocated concrete nationalistic goals, similar to those of other nationalistic movements in the contemporary world, without endowing them with the halo of a universalistic justification. An extreme manifestation of secular nationalism would be the annexation of the occupied territories, but not of their population, by the State of Israel, thus creating a *Herrendemokratie* (overlord democracy), in which only Jews, but not the Palestinians, would have the right to citizenship or voting. Radical representatives of this orientation, such as the leaders of the tiny Moledet ("Motherland") party, would in fact expel ("transfer") the Palestinians from the territories.

3. *Religious Liberalism*: Reflecting some of the attitudes that have prevailed among religious Zionists in the past, this orientation is now embraced by only a minority of the leadership in the religious camp, although it may be fairly widespread among the rank-and-file religious public. Religious liberalism envisages a Jewish state based on universalistic Jewish values, which would ensure personal liberty and civil rights to all of its citizens, irrespective of creed or origins. In contrast to religious nationalism, this orientation distinguishes between Jewish political and religious goals and envisages Israel as both a Jewish and a democratic state that is not endowed with any eschatological or messianic meanings.

4. *Secular Liberalism*: This position, characteristic of a small but socially significant group of radical liberals, many of them intellectuals, maintains that Israel should become a more "normal" Western democracy. The state must be separated from religion and personal, rather than national goals be given priority. The state would thus become a de-mythologized secular democracy, in which Zionism may remain the ideology of particular parties or political movements, but would cease to supply the legitimizing framework for Israel's social and political system.

The general tenure of Israel's political life in the 1980s tended towards an increasingly particularistic and religious emphasis, favouring directions (1) and (2), namely secular and religious nationalism respectively. Indeed, the emergence of religious nationalism was by far the most important ideological development in Israel since the establishment of the state, offering a potential alternative basis for the legitimation of the state.[17] Directions (3) and (4), religious and secular liberalism, respectively, represent minority orientations, which find themselves presently in a relatively weak, defensive position towards the dominant nationalistic trend. Secular liberalism still constitutes a significant potential alternative to the prevailing current and seems to be gaining growing support among some of the disenchanted groups in the population, though at least for the moment, this ideology does not have a wide constituency.

POSTSCRIPT

This article was written in 1989, at a point when Israeli society and politics were in deadlock, with little apparent prospect of internally generated change. In the five years that passed since then, momentous events have wrought fundamental changes in the social and political landscape of the country: the Gulf War, massive Jewish immigration from the late Soviet Union, change of the government and, most importantly, the peace agreements with the PLO and Jordan and the establishment of a Palestinian autonomy. These events have had a far-reaching impact on the morale and outlook of Israelis and on the nature of the political conflicts in the country. The long-term ideological impact of these events, however, is still fairly obscure. We lack as yet the necessary distance and perspective to evaluate that impact. This article is therefore presented to the reader in its original version, in the hope that it may serve as a background for the future conceptualization and study of processes of ideological change in Israel.

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The Jewish-Arab Conflict In Recent Israeli Literature

LEON I. YUDKIN

Since the First Aliya in the 1880s, modern Zionist settlement in Palestine has been accompanied by a complex awareness of the presence of another people within the same territory, involving mixed feelings of self-righteousness, guilt and a stubborn determination to ensure Jewish presence in their ancestral homeland. During the past hundred years there have been several waves of massive Jewish immigration, resolved to settle the land by means of land purchases, backbreaking labour, political manoeuvring and, if worse came to worst, by military conquest. At various times, the Zionist presence has been weakened or strengthened according to the wavering tendencies of the ruling power, whether it was Ottoman, British, Jordanian or Israeli. As a result of the interaction of many social, economic and political factors, the Jewish community in Palestine was eventually transformed from a small minority into a substantial majority living in its own state.

Yet, in some essentials, the basic situation has not yet altered. Israel has still not been recognized as a legitimate State by all of its neighbours, though this may be on the point of changing. Both before and after the creation of the State of Israel in 1948, the Arab States denied to Israel the right to an independent, political existence, arguing, for example, that the Arabs had always constituted a majority in the Middle East generally and in Palestine in particular. In the eyes of most Arabs, especially the Palestinians, the so-called "Zionist entity" was imposed upon them in 1947-48 and never had any legitimacy. Hence Arabs could support a violent struggle to obstruct and undermine in every conceivable manner the existence of the "foreign" intrusion. Not surprisingly, there was no real peace in the wake of the War of Independence and the Arabs felt fully justified in closing the Straits of Tiran in 1956 and 1967. The Arab siege of Israel from without continued through the 1970s and 1980s. Only in the present decade have we seen signs of a fundamental breakthrough that might extend the Israeli peace treaty with Egypt (1979) to the rest of the Arab World.

In the 1980s a new factor emerged, namely that of the internal

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Palestinian uprising, or *Intifada*. For the first time, a sustained struggle was conducted by the local Palestinian Arab population against the Israeli regime in the occupied territories. There is general agreement that the beginning of this revolt can be precisely dated to 8 December 1987.[1] From that date began an organized programme of civil disobedience marked by demonstrations, strikes, terrorist attacks and systematic violence. This explosion of Palestinian discontent with Israeli rule has been a major factor in bringing about changes in Israeli government policy.

Even before this, some Israeli citizens dissociated themselves from the official line, occasionally even refusing to enlist in the Israeli army. How have these and other developments and shifts in the overall situation been reflected in recent Israeli literature? In Yigael Lev's *Nsikh Yerushalayim* (Prince of Jerusalem, 1989), the novel's hero – the artist Moti Gur – is very attached to his Arab friend Samir Mahmud, but as an immigrant he longs for total self-identification with the Israeli national mood, to feel that he truly belongs. In the course of the story, the situation is sharpened and the lines of division are highlighted. At a late stage in his life he achieves considerable recognition from the government – something that turns him into a kind of official artist, representing the Israeli State. The increasingly polarized situation is also embodied in Samir's son, who becomes a youth leader in the Palestinian struggle. What might have been conceivable in normal times – friendship between a marginal artist (albeit a Jewish Israeli) and a neutral Arab – turns into a dangerous relationship between an "official" artist and the father of a militant activist, against the background of a violent national conflict. Even at this late stage, at an advanced age in the lives of the two friends, no choice remains but to begin everything again. Both of them must recommence the building process, in both the metaphorical and the literal sense, since their houses have been blown up. The future prospects are fairly bleak, the implication being that everything achieved thus far is due for demolition. The fundamental assumptions of the widower Moti were based on the possibility of emotional warmth irrespective of the circumstances, a belief in the prospect of amelioration and in the fulfilment of human aspirations. However, aggravation of the crisis between Jews and Arabs sharpens the national conflict, presenting stark alternatives between political loyalty and normal human relationships. The space for private life no longer exists. Now everyone must enlist on one side or the other, without the compromise of intermediate positions.

Fima, the hero of *Ha-matsav Ha-shlishi* (The Third Position, 1991), by Amos Oz, is oppressed by conscientious doubts, although of a different nature than those expressed in *Prince of Jerusalem*. In opposition to his father, a fervent right-wing Zionist, he unreservedly con-

demns Israeli government policy and its attitude to the Arabs within Israel. He even goes so far as to compare in his own mind the stance of local Jewish extremists with that of the Nazis: "From the bus window on the way, in the area of Mahane Yehuda market, by the light of a street lamp, he saw a black placard with the words, 'Arabs, out', and he translated them into German switching Arabs with Jews, and was overwhelmed by fury."[2] But here it is not so much political doubts that bother him as the gap between thought and action. His own views are not translated into action. He remains a man relatively impotent and marginal to Israeli society as a whole. Following a promising start as a poet and writer in his youth, Fima has degenerated over the years and approaching old age, he has become a useless nuisance. He has also failed to achieve any personal satisfaction, remaining stuck in his position as a junior assistant to private doctors. There are many features in common here with the frustrated characters of Saul Bellow. For example, the attitude of the hero to the successful and dominating father in *Seize the Day* (although in the Israeli case the father is much more pleasant and helpful), and his obsessive need to keep constant contact with the whole world is reminiscent of Bellow's *Herzog*.

The spirit of the novel is very much that of the contemporary Israeli fiction, as well as resembling other works of Amos Oz. The motif of spiritual aspiration and the medical themes are found, for example, in *Ladaat Ishah* (To Know a Woman, 1989), and the compulsive obsession with bodily functions we can also find in A.B. Yehoshua's *Molkho* (1987). The principal character is an anti-hero – a helpless, dreamy, and frustrated individual – who imagines a popular uprising which he himself would gradually put together, but then comes to terms with his limitations, especially after the death of his father. He wants to understand his own insignificance, not in order to change the world or even to influence others, but simply to attain some control over himself: "To do what is good and to delimit as much as possible the power of evil."[3] Through this sense of self, he arrives at what he terms "the third position", between sleep and wakefulness, which both sustains and contains multiple possibilities.[4] Oz's main character struggles to rise above his environment in order to achieve a truer, more personal position in his life.[5]

In Yehoshua Sobol's 1985 play, *Ha-Palestinait* (The Palestinian Woman), there is a more multi-faceted approach to the Jewish-Arab conflict, which focuses – as the Hebrew title suggests – on the story of a Palestininian woman, called Samira. Within the play itself, the actors rehearse a framed play, *Magda*, in the presence of the person who serves as a model for the main character. Samira's function is to testify to another truth, not just that of the author, but to embody something of the internal world of an Arab woman, an experience transcending

the words of the play. Although her life takes place in a political framework, of attitudes and declarations, Samira falls in love with David, the nationalist Israeli who had been her interrogator, but who now learns to respect her as a proud Arab. But, on the other side, Ednan becomes attached to her and asks her to return to pure Islam, while the British playwright, Rodney, attempts in his own way to attract her to England. Thus, the Palestinian woman is pulled in three different directions.

The play is composed in the form of intersecting circles with identities held in doubt and even the characters themselves are left perplexed. The declared ideologies which stem from the position of the individuals, remain dependent on them, changing with the identity of those who make the declarations. All certainties break down and though the dramatis personae attempt to tell their story, they have not been able to change the world. After a full exploration of the possibilities inherent in the performance, words themselves come to an end and what remains is only an expressive dance.

As an expression of the Palestinian struggle, this play, which preceded the *Intifada*, opens up new possibilities of getting into the skin of the "other" and of seeing the "occupation" through Arab eyes. In the play, every character exists in its own right without explicatory intervention on the part of the narrator. The play within the play sheds new light on the main narrative, but also undermines the confidence of the reader/spectator in the reality of the previous situation. Finally, we are brought back to the basic situation, to the fact that the play exists in different versions and is only made up of words. Significantly, a great deal of Israeli literature confronting this type of inflammatory material plays with the invocation of different viewpoints to arrive at the truth of what is happening and to understand it by means of creative invention.

One of the identifying marks of the new writing in Israel is its liberation from more crystallized and defined patterns of expression. In Israeli-Arabic literature, too, the writer appears to feel freer in his depiction of reality. Emil Habibi, in his description of Haifa from the viewpiont of an Israeli Arab, invoking his own history, fuses different and changing forms in his novel, *Ha-opsismist* (The Optimist).[6] The title, in its combination of pessimist and optimist, reflects the author's ambivalence. The language adopts and possesses components of journalism, gossip and literature. The tone is satirical, deriding the attitude of the Israeli State to its Arab citizens, as seen by the Arab narrator. In what sense is the hero an optimist? He is not exactly like Candide, even if he be a simpleton. His optimism has the admixture of a rather bleak view of reality. In a later book, *Ahitiya*, Habibi's criticism is more up front, with his limited confidence "in the possibility of the existence of freedom of longing for this land, the freedom of longing for a Haifa

within Haifa". A sense of the absurd invades the life of every Israeli Arab, to such an extent that it becomes impossible any more to make a distinction between innocent and guilty. The novelist suggests that there is no Arab in Israel who is not invaded by the doubt that perhaps, within the depths of his soul, he is a "saboteur" and the sense of oppression is what makes him feel this way. In this Kafkaesque situation, an Arab who has not hitherto been a saboteur can turn into one. Habibi's hero observes and wonders at the absurdist universe in which he lives and whose nature continues to elude him.

Post-modernism has also reached the Israeli *Intifada* novel. In Itamar Levy's novel, *Otiyot Ha-shemesh, Otiyot Ha-yareah* (Letters of the Sun, Letters of the Moon, 1991), the narrator is not only an Arab but a believing Muslim. The story is told in Arabic alphabetic order, which the author attempts to master as holy writ. In the single, unique sacred work and in its exalted art he puts his total faith, declaring: "If I only had the Koran, I would open its pages, place a finger blind on any sentence and know from the first letter who of us is to die soon by a soldier's bullet".[7] He begins with the first letter: "I begins with alif, daddy with alif, lion with alif, my brother with alif, and Allah with alif. It is only for you, Allah, that I am learning to write, to read, to pray and to believe."[8] In this story, the hero himself embodies every possible aspect of the Palestinian struggle and the uprising syndrome: "The lads were waiting for me and checked who I was, I am the child, I am the lad, I am the villager, I am from the mountains, I am a saboteur, I am the PLO, I am a Palestinian, I have an erection, I am an ass, I am a spy."[9] Man is simply the sum of all the external qualities attributed to him, just as the *intifada* is made up of the totality of such phenomena as stone throwing, house demolition and words like "enemy", "flag" and "army of conquest".

The new fiction exploits many different methods in the execution of its narrative function. In an absurd world it also deploys the tools of the absurd. The story refuses to be bound by consecutive time or to adhere to the rules of cold logic. It is liberated from the chains of time and place and the characters are free to turn into the other. Language escapes the rules and conventions imposed on it to the extent that the represented world no longer fits into a logical picture.

Two basic questions emerge from this discussion: what is truth and how does one represent it? Habibi, in his introduction to *Ha-opsimist* argues that Western, unlike Arabic literature, is distinguished by its caution and understatement, as opposed to his own "wild Oriental imagination". To his surprise, he cannot find a suitable novel in the Arab canon, although that is the tradition he has adopted for his own purposes.

One is dealing here, of course, with historical material, albeit

within fiction. But historical truth is neither simple nor unambiguous. It involves explication, selection and probing questions concerning the origins of Israel, its nature and its attitude to the Arabs. How has its character changed, what is the image of the Israeli, does he blend into the "Oriental" landscape or is he a continuation of the Jewish people in exile? Answers to such questions depend not only on ideology and politics, but also on the social realities and the influences of myths.

One of the most potent of such myths in Israeli literature has been that of the *Sabra*, the epitome of the Israeli. Even if he is not actually native-born, the *Sabra* is assumed to be capable of divesting the non-Israeli layers in his being. There are those who have trained themselves to do just this. Dan Ben-Amotz, for example, who came to Israel at the age of 14, tried according to his own account to rid himself of every trace of "exile" (*Galut*). The object was to fit himself completely into the emerging Israeli reality. In an account of his life, he writes: "The whole educational system was based at that time on the creation of a new culture whose practical implication was separation from everything connected with diaspora life (a people being renewed on its land, a new man is born!)".[10] Once he began to forge his newly invented identity, he even came to believe in it: "....and when I began to be born in Tel-Aviv and to invent a new past for myself, I began to deny any connection with my actual past. The new identity that I had selected in time became my true identity".[11] As it emerges from his work, this identity selection was a conscious, long drawn-out process. Decisions such as this were indeed characteristic of the spirit that then pervaded the newly emergent state of Israel and it is conceivable that without it, no clearly defined Israeli identity would have developed at all.

The ethos of Israelism is relevant here, because it inevitably has produced its own antithesis and negation in more recent years. What is this Israelism in its most obvious manifestation? The open-necked shirt, the Kibbutz, the army? What is its content, its deepest layers? The play by Danny Horovitz, *Cherley Kacherley,*[12] creates a certain image of the *Sabra* and then deconstructs it. Within this work the speakers are taken as aspects of the overall portrait, which emerges as the mythological *Sabra*. He becomes a collective ideal, a fact which is both historical and meta-historical at the same time, a foundation myth of the Israeli nation.

One of the features of such a mythical picture is simplicity. The audience or readers of the play are requested to respond succinctly and briefly to such pronouncements as: "You can react to what I say as to an American questionnaire; just say 'true' or 'false'". Fateful decisions may be determined by such sharp, incontrovertible facts, as Jewishness, which during the Shoah became a death penalty for its bearers. What hits the eye is the overall picture which is clear, strident,

final. Any language games of speculative refinement would only blur this basic outline, which relies on crudeness of expression to clarify the data. In her introduction to the play, Ziva Ben-Porat argues that myth constitutes here a form of communication, a certain type of message in which the act of explication is completed by the receiver. The play and its representation of the *Sabra* type are, in the words of Ben-Porat: "a metaphorical identity within a synecdoche (part for the whole)".[13] The metaphorical totality of the *Sabra* is composed of parts which make up the type as a whole on a national, rather than, an individual plane. We have to build up this totality out of the separate elements of the deconstructed picture, in order that the dynamic myth of the *Sabra* can re-emerge. Out of these historical components arises an abstract image, basically antithetical to its counterpart, the learned Jew, passive, spiritual, mealy-mouthed, removed from physicality and any direct bodily awareness. Cherley Kacherley is the epitome of the *Sabra* myth in the play. But how does one preserve the simplicity of this "healthy", romantic image against the reality of destruction and death? This duality is grasped in the play, in a dialogue between the brides and grooms. The brides speak in the language of the biblical *Song of Songs*: "Come my beloved, come my beloved, let us go to the vineyards". But the grooms point out that: "Under every verdant tree we are in the trenches. We are always at attention in the trenches". It emerges that the Jews have merely exchanged the sewers of the Warsaw ghetto for the dusty dugouts of the Middle East. Romanticism and death come together here, but it is the latter that seems to be closer to reality as it is actually experienced.

This brings us back to the divided reality of "us" and "them", a situation sharpened since the Six Day War and the ensuing military occupation. The Arabs are no longer simply on the outside. Israeli society has had to confront a hostile Arab reality within its own sphere of existence. As a Jewish State it has not fully been able to accommodate the presence of a large Arab population, to absorb it or recognize its status as a full and equal part of the State. The *intifada* sharpened the sense of alienation and distancing on both sides, the mutual denial of the "other".

David Grossman raises such questions in his book, *Nokhahim Nifqadim* (Present, Absent), which relates to Israeli Arabs (in contrast to his earlier work, *Ha-zman Ha-tsahov*, *The Yellow Wind*, which dealt with Arabs in the territories). Choosing a journalistic, factual framework, the author is obliged to try and transmit reality as it is. On the other hand, pure, objective truth does not exist in itself and Grossman has his own agenda, which includes severe criticism of the Israeli government. The central issue here is what sort of place can there be for the Arabs in a Jewish State? From the Arab viewpiont, Israel is not

truly a State for all of its citizens, but rather for the Jews alone. How then can it become both a Jewish State and yet be pluralistic enough truly to accommodate Arab non-Jews? The author Sami Michael, originally from Iraq, whose words are reported here, admits that it is not easy to take account of the special position of the Arabs even in a democratic State, like Israel, that aspires to equality before the law. To a great extent, he argues, the Arab does not exist as a real entity for most Israelis and his existence has become increasingly vague and blurred: "...it can also be claimed without fear of being so very wrong that the Jewish majority in Israel relates to all Palestinian Arabs as absent presences".[14] The Arab is both present and absent at one and the same time, though the government of Israel has never deliberately negated the existence of the Arab people as such. The author embarks here on a search for Arab identity, its character and manner of expression: "And I was sure enough following a month of meetings and conversations that I would almost always get an unexpected answer, that the position of the Arab in Israel was so involved and complex that I had a priori to stop knowing and from that point on just to hear, to be exposed to this complexity, to try to clear a place for it, and to clear a place for it in us."[15] The author also interviews two writers, one Jewish, A.B. Yehoshua, and one Arab, Anton Shamas, not surprisingly discovering that their attitude to Israeli identity sharply differs. In Yehoshua's view, the Israeli State should express an inclusive Jewish totality, which would, of course, preclude Shamas from any sense of belonging. Within the framework of the book, David Grossman reaches no concrete conclusions. The Jewish-Arab imbroglio can only inspire wonder: "What a combination, I thought, a majority that does not feel itself a majority and a minority that does not feel itself a minority".[16]

The *intifada* has perhaps brought about a decisive turn in the development of relations between the two peoples, despite its depressing ugliness and blind violence. It has exposed the urgent need for new approaches and solutions, which have recently emerged with a dramatic and unforeseeable momentum. Hitherto, literature has been an important medium for expressing the complex nature of this conflict, since it is freer of the chains of conventional and rigid thought-patterns. Recent Israeli literature, with its inventiveness and originality, has managed to rise above many of the constraints of a turbulent social and political reality. In its imaginative aspiration to grasp the reality of the Arab "other", it could turn out to be the harbinger of a significant turn in the Israeli national consciousness.

NOTES

1. See Ze'ev Schiff and Ehud Yaari, *Intifada*, New York, 1990.
2. Amos Oz, *Ha-matsav Ha-shlishy*, p. 40.
3. Ibid., p. 154.
4. See W.R.Bion, *Second Thoughts*, London, 1967.
5. C.G.Jung, *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*, London and New York, 1993.
6. Emil Habibi, *Ha-opsimist*, Tel-Aviv, 1988. First published in 1985 and translated into Hebrew by Anton Shamas.
7. Itamar Levy's novel, *Otiyot Ha-shemesh, Otiyot Ha-yareah*, p. 7.
8. Ibid., p. 10.
9. Ibid., p. 122.
10. Dan Ben-Amotz, *Ziyunim Ze Lo Ha-kol* (Screwing Isn't Everything) Tel-Aviv, 1979, p. 115.
11. Ibid., p. 116.
12. Danny Horovitz, *Cherley Kacherley*, Tel-Aviv, 1992. The play was first staged in the Khan Theatre, Jerusalem, in December 1977.
13. Ibid., p. 17.
14. David Grossman, *Nokhahim Nifqadim*, p. 226.
15. Ibid., p. 18.
16. Ibid., p. 18.

Modernity and Charisma in Contemporary Israel: The Case of Baba Sali and Baba Baruch

YORAM BILU AND EYAL BEN-ARI

Rabbi Israel Abu-Hatzera ("Baba Sali"), a renowned and pious sage and scion of a most virtuous Jewish family from southern Morocco, passed away in January 1984 at the ripe old age of 94. In the years that have elapsed since his death, Baba Sali's grave-site, located in the southern development town of Netivot, has swiftly become a national monument and a major pilgrimage centre. The celebration on the rabbi's death anniversary (*hillula*) draws to Netivot between 100,000 and 150,000 followers. In a country like Israel, which is replete with holy sanctuaries and age-old pilgrimage traditions, the emergence of this celebration as the second most popular religious gathering in the country (second only to the congregation in Meiron) is at the very least impressive.

The *hillula* at Netivot represents one rather dramatic indicator of a much wider process by which Baba Sali was established as a *tsaddiq* (saint) for our time, the saint of Israel of the 1980s. In Judaism, in contrast to Catholicism,[1] saints have never undergone formal canonization. Despite this, the strength of popular sentiments clearly indicates that Baba Sali has been placed on the most exalted level in the Jewish pantheon of pious personages, reaching the stature of such charismatic sages as Rabbi Shimon Bar-Yohai and Rabbi Meir Baal Ha-ness. In almost any urban settlement one may find a street or a synagogue bearing his name. His picture appears in more Israeli houses than any other Jewish figure, and his portrait adorns a surprisingly wide selection of holy artifacts and mundane objects (from prayer books and calenders to clocks and key-holders).

While Baba Sali was already considered a virtuous figure during his lifetime, his son and successor, Rabbi Baruch ("Baba Baruch") was far removed from his father's lifestyle of learning, piety, and asceticism.

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Though raised and educated by his father in Erfud (in Tafillelt, southern Morocco), in his youth Baruch spent many years in Paris disengaged from the traditional ambience of his Moroccan hometown. Having followed his father to Israel in the mid-1960s, he decided to pursue a political career, and was soon elected to the post of deputy mayor in Ashkelon (another southern town in which Baba Sali lived before moving to Netivot). It was in this capacity that Baruch Abu-Hatzera was accused of corruption and bribery, found guilty and sentenced to a long term in prison. After being paroled (he received an early release after serving five years in prison) he joined his father and was with Baba Sali during the last three months of the saint's life.

Yet despite the stigma that seriously corroded his public image and the existence of other (perhaps more) worthy contenders for succession within the Abu-Hatzera family, Baba Baruch has managed to take his father's mantle and to step into his shoes (in both cases figuratively as well as literally). He took possession of his father's big house in Netivot and arranged for his burial in the local cemetery (about half a mile from the house). Baruch did this despite the fact that Baba Sali had apparently already secured himself a resting place in one of the holiest spots in the country: the cemetery on Mount of Olives in Jerusalem. In a relatively short time he transformed the informal network of his father's supporters and adherents in Israel and abroad into a very efficient organization through which the institutionalization of Baba Sali's charisma has been carried on. Relying on the generous contributions of these supporters and adherents, he has built in and around the burial site a magnificent sanctuary and an elaborate precinct to cater to future pilgrims. He has also proposed and begun an ambitious project in the area spanning the sanctuary and the house by erecting a religious campus and a residential quarter (modelled on the Jewish *mellahs* of Tafillelt). While Baba Baruch's public image is still controversial and, in any event, falls short of his father, it appears safe to say that he has established his hegemony over wide circles of Moroccan Jews as his father's legitimate successor and as the leading contemporary representative of the Abu-Hatzera family's specially blessed, powerful character.

In this essay we would like to discuss two sets of questions related to the manner by which Baba Sali and Baba Baruch have been transformed into "modern saints". The first set focuses on the mechanisms underlying the genesis of Baba Sali as the holiest figure in present-day Israel. The intriguing quality of this process lies its swiftness and pervasiveness more than its course and direction. Having been consensually viewed as a worthy carrier of the Abu-Hatzera family's glorious tradition, Baba Sali was already considered a sainted figure in his lifetime. Yet for a contemporary rabbi, virtuous and venerable as he may

have been, to transcend within half-a-decade the bounds of historical reality to become a legendary figure (challenging comparison with the most popular luminaries in the Jewish pantheon of sainted personages) appears quite extraordinary. Charismatization[2] or "mythologization" of such magnitude are usually lengthy historical processes which prefer "a remote and malleable past to a recent one, perhaps too painful or too well known".[3]

The second set of questions centre on the emergence of Baba Baruch as his father's successor: in a word, given his precarious personal background, how could his claims for the legitimacy of his position receive such wide support and validation. The combination of a most unfitting personal history (lack of formal religious education, secular-political orientation, alleged adultery, conviction for corrupt practices) and the presence of other family members, enjoying an impeccable public image, makes these questions all the more intriguing.

THE CHARISMATIZATION OF BABA SALI

Let us begin by making our analytical approach clear. In discussing the charismatization of Baba Sali we base our examination on a retrospective review of Baba Sali's life and sense of mission as these were presented and spread by his followers and particularly by his son. Needless to say, our interest lies in the "narrative truth" that produced the heavy mythological rearrangement of the late rabbi's life rather than in historically authentic life-events. We do not, however, assume that the transformation from mundane history to a mythologized story should be taken for granted. Rather, the very swiftness and pervasiveness of this transformation should be accounted for as a major factor in the process of charismatization.

Two important background factors appear to have been necessary conditions for Baba Sali's consecration to take place. First, it should be emphasized that the folk-veneration of saints was a major (if not *the* major) constituent in the collective identity of the Jews in North Africa.[4] Indeed as we have shown elsewhere,[5] these hagiolatric traditions have not been attenuated in Israel. For Moroccan-born Israelis and their descendants (now constituting the biggest single Jewish ethnic group in the country) the cultural idiom of saint worship is still viable, being ubiquitously employed to articulate a wide range of experiences. Second, within this "saint-fraught" ambience the Abu-Hatzeras stand out as the most virtuous of Jewish Moroccan families. Pious rabbis and sages adorn the family's genealogy through many generations and establish a strong sense of ascribed blessedness and divine grace (*zekhut avot*). As a living descendent of this holy family,

Baba Sali thus provided a focus for the amorphous hagiolatric sentiments which were previously directed towards other Jewish Moroccan saints, whose tombs had been left behind, and in a sense, "deserted" upon emigrating to Israel. These background conditions thus constituted a very advantageous starting point for both father's and son's quests for holiness. Yet, in the case of Baba Sali these factors cannot be cited as a satisfactory explanation for his meteoric ascent to saintly status. This is because his followers and believers include many people who are not first or second generation Moroccans living in Israel.

As we see it, Baba Sali's "lifestyle", as moulded and recreated by his son and by his adherents, has been turned into a public image marked by piety and sanctity. Baba Sali is depicted as an ascetic and, in a sense, passive figure, entirely devoid of mundane concerns. He is said to have seldom left his house, having his synagogue and ritual-bath located within its confines, and thus compelled his devotees to come to him. Having devoted much of his time to solitary praying and mystical learning, often accompanied by lengthy, almost week-long fasts, he radiated an image of humble self-sufficiency, constriction and contraction, inward orientedness and "invisibility"; when he participated in collective prayers in his house, he often did so, hidden in a small cell, adjacent to the synagogue. His external appearance reinforced this set of images, since Baba Sali, an exceptionally tall man in his youth, was very thin and seemed to shrink due to old age and excessive fasting. The traditional garments he wore covered his body completely, leaving only part of his face exposed. The basis of this image of asceticism, contraction, and resignation was clearly shaped by the rabbi's actual conduct during his lifetime. His withdrawn behaviour captured the imagination of the masses and produced a fertile matrix for mythologizing his figure.

For all this, however, for a private story to achieve the power of a national myth centred around the power of a unique individual, it has to "go public". Thus the details of what was hidden, invisible, and ineffable in Baba Sali's life, had to be highlighted and publicized. This was done primarily by Baba Baruch (and by his organization) through a coordinated effort to publish and spread information regarding the late rabbi's life and deeds. The painstaking promulgation of stories related to the major events of Baba Sali's life, together with the relentless manufacturing and marketing of artifacts bearing his portrait, began a process whereby the invisible was brought to the limelight and inscribed in the consciousness of the Israeli public. Though relying on primordial sentiments and promoting traditional values, this sophisticated and well-contrived undertaking has clearly taken advantage of the opportunities provided by modern technology, the media, and the state-apparatus. Thus the praise of the saint, his pious behaviour and

miraculous feats were written down and published in nicely decorated brochures and books (in Hebrew and French), which were marketed in Israel and abroad. The same aggressive and skilful marketing is characteristic of the numerous objects carrying Baba Sali's image or that of his shrine. All these objects are produced in modern factories which utilize advanced technologies. Indeed, among the products marketed all over the country are video-cassettes of the saint's *hillula*. Could one ask for more than these mass, machine-produced objects in which the saint's charisma has been "sedimented"?[6] Along these lines, we would suggest that despite the use of traditional idioms involved in promulgating the image of the *tsaddiq*, the use of modern means has been indispensable in successfully "selling the saint". In Ling's terms, what was created around Baba Sali was a "synthetic charisma" controlled and manipulated by the institutional interests of Baba Baruch.[7]

But the promulgation and marketing in themselves, necessary as they may appear, cannot fully account for the phenomenon under discussion. Even if the late rabbi's lifestyle is exposed and minutely described, the crucial question that remains is what meanings are ascribed to his solitude, asceticism, and mystical practices. The answer, superimposed on the rabbi's passive and reclusive image, is antithetical to this image, yet complementary to it at the same time. Each minor detail in the rabbi's most private behaviour assumes cosmic significance. The passivity and seclusion are thus portrayed by his followers as but misleading "surface" features, since any act of Baba Sali is said actually to transcend his individuality: to bear relevance for the State of Israel and for the Jewish People.

One striking example illustrating this causal link between private behaviour and public event was the rabbi's odd conduct before the Six-Day War in 1967. According to his son, during that tense period he closed himself up in his room, refused to eat in daylight and slept on a mat rather than in a bed. When these ascetic measures were questioned, he explained: "The People of Israel are in great trouble, so how can I eat or sleep in a bed". On the eve of 5 June he is said to have told his older son (Baruch's elder sibling now deceased): "Tomorrow morning the war will break out; I lock myself in the room. Don't let anybody knock on my door, or otherwise disturb me. You will come only to tell me that 400 enemy planes were destroyed". This example – "a well-known story", according to Baruch – accentuates the late rabbi's profound sense of responsibility for the Jewish people and its state.

Accordingly, every major event in Baba Sali's life was "mythologized" by rendering it meaningful on a mystical, other-worldly level and by linking it to a historical or meta-historical event from the Jewish collective heritage. Thus, the fact that he changed his place of residence many times in Morocco and in Israel was rationalized as a

deliberate attempt on his part to embody the collective experience of *galut* (exile) which entailed wandering from one place to another. His final settlement in Netivot was accounted for as an emulation of Abraham the Patriarch, who erected his tent in nearby Gerar more than three millennia ago. Likewise, in both oral accounts of his deeds and in his written biographies, he is often straightforwardly compared with the greatest luminaries in Jewish history, from Moses and Rabbi Shimon Bar-Yohai (with whom he was said to have had particular affinity) to the *Besht* (Israel Baal-Shem-Tov), the 18th-century founder of the Hasidic movement. This transcendence of historical bounds was facilitated by the fact that Baba Sali was a practising kabbalist, deeply immersed in Jewish mysticism.

Another factor which facilitated the linkage between apparent passivity, seclusion, and withdrawal on the one hand, and cosmic significance and responsibility on the other, was the Abu-Hatzera family's traditional image as communal leaders deeply involved in public affairs. This image was conducive to interpreting the rabbi's private activities as bearing a general, collectively orientated message. Moreover, the rabbi's stance towards the Zionist endeavour and the secular State of Israel was known to be essentially favourable, despite his uncompromising condemnation of anti-religious values and norms (for example, abortions and activities desecrating the Sabbath). Given this generally positive stance, it was not difficult to depict him as genuinely concerned about the welfare of the country and its inhabitants and to transform him into a patron-saint on a national level. By contrast it would be much more difficult to ascribe such an empathic responsibility to an ultra-orthodox Ashkenazi rabbi, pious as he may be, who is anti-Zionist and dissociated from the State.

THE LEGITIMATION OF BABA BARUCH

While Baba Sali's lifestyle lent itself quite easily to aggrandizement and mythologization, his son's notorious personal record as an ex-convict and an adulterer obviously was not the right stuff for sanctification. The intriguing question, then, is how could Baruch establish himself as his father's legitimate successor despite his problematic past. In what follows we seek to elucidate the reasons for this astonishing success.

Once again, the cultural assumptions underlying saint worship in the Maghreb should be taken as a favourable starting point in the search for legitimacy. The notions of *baraka* among Muslims[8] and of its Jewish counterpart, *zechut avot* (ancestral merit),[9] connote a strong sense of inherited blessedness and ascribed virtue. As mentioned earlier, the Abu-Hatzera family figured as a most important, if not prime, example of line ancestry in which such sanctity was ingrained. The

family's accumulated *zechut* could thus prove a fortuitous starting point for Baba Baruch's claims.

Yet even against the backdrop of the Maghrebi notion of inherited virtue, *zechut avot* should be viewed as a potentiality which, under certain adverse conditions, may not materialize. Given Baruch's criminal record, it might be even argued that his impressive family background was a mixed blessing for him: rather then serving to downplay his frailties, it might have, by way of contrast, accentuated and dramatized them. As a result, some effective techniques of neutralization[10] had to be employed in order to reconcile his moral weaknesses, too widely known to be ignored, with the seemingly incompatible familial aura of holiness.

Baruch has chosen to deal with his problematic past in a peculiar way. While continuing to claim innocence regarding the specific accusations of fraud, corruption and bribery for which he was sentenced to seven years in prison, he admits that his involvement with the "impure" world of politics (against his father's explicit will) was reprehensible and worthy of punishment. Moreover, he does not deny his other moral failings, such as a lengthy extra-marital affair and some religious negligence. However, the emphasis in Baruch's discourse about his past is less on sin than on punishment. He minutely portrays the ordeal and tribulations that were his share in the two prisons in which he had served his term.

It appears that there are three interrelated messages that Baba Baruch is attempting to convey by dwelling upon rather than disregarding the darker aspects of his life. First, by constantly emphasizing an idea of retribution, he stresses that he has paid fully for his misconduct. Second, having lived with killers, rapists, and drug addicts, Baruch presents himself as a person most fitting to deal with the wide scope of human misery addressed to him by those seeking his help. Time and again he plays up the idea that, following his prison experience, nothing human is foreign to him. Finally, he stresses the fact that his religious faith and moral commitment have been strengthened in prison rather than attenuated. According to his story, he was the prime agent responsible for a wave of religious revivalism there, having served as a ray of hope and comfort for the other inmates. Using a Biblical metaphor, he likens the prison to a furnace in which the drosses were separated from the gold and eliminated from his soul. By highlighting the moral integrity he demonstrated under the harsh prison conditions, Baruch seeks to make virtue out of his failings. Furthermore, the dire consequences of his short-lived political career are presented as a Heavenly trial, part of a mystical plan to test and purify him in order to transform him into the worthy heir of his sainted father. In this sense the prison served as a penitentiary in the literal sense of the word.

This articulation of the past appears to be informed by a model of conversion emphasizing self-reconstitution through a dramatic life transformation. Given his past reluctance to follow his father's footsteps into the world of learnedness and mystical piety, it is hardly surprising that Baruch espouses this model. Notwithstanding his personal characteristics, it might be speculated that as the younger son, he had never considered himself as his father's successor. Since Baba Sali's eldest son, Baba Meir, did seem to follow his father's path, having dutifully adopted his ascetic lifestyle and mystical learnings, young Baruch could find it quite natural to move in other directions. The dire aftermath of his political career could easily make this drift away from the family tradition irreparable. The drift could be countervailed, however, due to two events (also portrayed as part of the heavenly scheme to mould Baruch in the spiritual cast of his father): the premature death of Baba Meir and the clemency granted to Baruch by the President of Israel after some years in prison.

The death of his brother had left Baruch as Baba Sali's potential heir. Moreover, the old rabbi's despondency following the death of Baba Meir, that threatened to fatally aggravate his ailing condition, was mentioned by the President of Israel as the main reason for granting Baruch a parole. The timing of these events proved critical, since Baba Sali passed away three months after his son's release. It appears inconceivable that Baruch could stake a claim for his father's mantle while still in jail. Out of jail however, Baruch could stay by his father's side until the latter's last moments, and thereby strengthen his position within the inner circle of relatives and disciples in Netivot. He portrays that three-month period as one of the most critical in his life because of the special and intimate relationship he formed with his father. That intimate bond with the father had reached its climax with Baba Sali's death at age of 94. To further accentuate this bond, Baruch enshrouds it within a mystical aura by pointing out that he was released exactly 94 days before his father's death.

Baruch's ultimate transformation or symbolic rebirth, contingent upon Baba Sali's death, is articulated in terms of spirit possession. Implicitly using the mystical idiom of the transmigration of souls Baruch argues that his father's soul now inhabits his own body. Thus in an interview we held with him, Baba Baruch said, "...I felt that something new penetrated my body... I felt that I became an altogether different person that even my voice became his voice". For an audience well-acquainted with the cultural notions of inherited blessedness and transmigration of souls it is hard to conceive of a more impressive narrative to convey the idea that Baruch now possesses his father's spiritual gifts.

A number of factors appear to have facilitated the dissemination

and propagation of Baruch's new image as born-again, as reconstituted in his father's mould. First, the importance of the physical proximity between the burial site of the father and the residence of his son cannot be overstated, since it has enabled Baba Baruch to monopolize his father's "qualities" and to utilize the cultural-religious resources he embodied. The fact that Baruch could take possession of his father's house was a vital step in this direction, but more critical was his success in bringing him to eternal rest in Netivot rather than in the Mount of Olives cemetery in Jerusalem. Due to this physical proximity, Baruch exerts close control on the activities in and around the shrine. His strong presence is manifested all year long, and even the most minute changes in the site are initiated or endorsed by him. Needless to say, he monopolizes the sale of "sacred artifacts" related to Baba Sali.

The second factor conducive to the propagation of Baruch's image as his father's inheritor has to do with the cultural practice of visitational dreams. In the context of Jewish Moroccan hagiolatric traditions, this psycho-cultural mechanism has been deemed *the* vehicle for transmitting knowledge and instructions from deceased sainted figures.[11] Against this background, Baruch's claims that his father frequents his dreams, providing him with reassurances that he is his legitimate heir, cannot be dismissed by Baba Sali's adherents as a mere calculated fabrication. Indeed, Baruch has employed this psycho-cultural resource quite unparsimoniously. On various occasions he has stated that his father lavished on him four times more blessedness and prowess than he, the old patriarch himself, used to command during his lifetime.

The third factor is associated with the realization of the blessedness putatively promised in the dreams. The distinctive healing tradition of the family, based on uttering a special incantation over water which is thereby endowed with healing qualities, has long been one of the factors underlying their popularity and renown. As stated before, the reliance on personal charisma was essential to Baruch's plea for legitimation, since he did not possess other bases for piety and virtue. Particularly in the realm of healing, he could thus facilely adopt the family tradition without special preparations. Long-time devotees of the family have accepted this particular move uncritically, even with a sense of relief, since the death of Baba Sali, the great healer, threatened to create a vacuum that non-family alternatives, let alone medical agencies, could not fill.

Indeed, Baruch's first activities as his father's successor were in the role of a healer. Thus within the seven days of ritual mourning after his father's death, aptly dramatic and miraculously unexpected (for example, a paralytic rising from a wheelchair) stories of his power

began to spread by word of mouth and through newspaper reports. The unprecedented publicity gained by these first cures should be carefully noted. In part, this publicity may have reflected a genuine need to find an effective substitute for the legendary healer; but more pertinent to our these, it may be viewed as a manifestation of Baruch's skills in creating favourable public relations and manipulating the media.

The three factors mentioned above – the physical proximity between the house and the shrine, the cultural practice of visitational dreams and the adoption of the family's healing tradition – all emphasize the similarity and continuity between father and son. Indeed, we believe that for maintaining an image of piety and devotion, Baruch is critically dependent on this perceived similarity. As long as he is able to convince his followers that he is an "extension" of his father, his position is secured. Therefore he invests considerable efforts in spreading the notion that every move of his is inspired and closely monitored by his father (for example, through dreams). To give this notion visibility Baruch hastened to wear his father's mantle and he sports a beard just like that of his father. For the common believer this similarity in physical appearance, together with the adoption by Baruch of the title "Baba" (father), has a very strong impact further enhanced by the idea that Baba Sali's soul now inhabits his son.

THE ISRAELI CONTEXT

Yet while the importance of the bond between Baba Sali and his son cannot be overstated, the notion that Baruch seeks to become a replica of his father is oversimplified. We would like to argue that behind the painstakingly elaborated façade of similarity and identity, striking differences exist between the two. These differences amount to a set of contrasts which implicitly set up each of the two figures as a mirror-image of the other. In emphasizing differences we are no concerned with the obviously divergent careers that the late rabbi and his son have undertaken, but rather with divergent lifestyles. We assume that these contrasting lifestyles radiate distinct images of piety and virtuousness, each emanating from an altogether different socio-cultural context.

In analyzing Baba Sali's lifestyle, we emphasized constriction, humility, asceticism and invisibility as cardinal features in his perceived character. By contrast, Baba Baruch radiates expansion, dominance and activity. He is extroverted and assertive rather than inward-orientated and meek. Unlike the purely spiritual image of his father, fashioned by his repugnance for mundane concerns and his reluctance to leave his home, Baruch cultivates an image of a strong-willed entre-

preneur, always seeking to actively expand his territory. With a big entourage he travels up and down the country, participating in festive meals in which he aims to collect contributions for ongoing projects, or visiting the religious institutions bearing his father's name which he has already established in various towns. Every two or three months he goes abroad, touring the big communities of Moroccan Jews in the diaspora, from where most of the financial support for his undertakings is coming.

Ambitious, opinionated and overbearing, Baruch is deeply involved with matters clearly extending beyond the religious realm. His involvement with municipal and national politics, manifested through his short-lived liaison with Agudat Israel (an ultra-orthodox party) in the 1988 elections and his controversial preachings for talks with the PLO, are salient illustrations of these concerns. Unlike his father, then, who was the embodiment of the traditional image of sacredness, bespeaking of a pure, almost transparent spirituality, Baruch is mobile, visible and involved. Even though he is dressed like his father, he altogether lacks the ascetic appearance of Baba Sali. Full-bodied and unabashedly attracted to alcohol, good food, and imported cigarettes, he appears indulgent and self-gratifying even after his spiritual reawakening.

Baba Baruch's active and expansive style, so radically different from his father's, is curiously reminiscent of the pattern of "movement and energy", adopted by the traditional Moroccan monarchs seeking relentlessly to build and maintain their charisma under politically adverse conditions.[12] While the analogy with royal peregrinations, even in Morocco, should not be overemphasized, we find the terms employed by Geertz to be illuminating in one central respect. The compelling need to stress the connection between the symbolic value possessed by certain individuals and their relation to the active centres of the social order indicates that this connection is tenuous. In Geertz's analysis this potential fragility of charismatic authority is particularly salient in Morocco. Coming back to the Abu-Hatzera family, we assume that Baruch's style of "movement and energy" reflects, or rather disguises a basic problem from which his father, the exemplary personification of piety and virtuousness, was altogether exempted. Unable to emulate his father's spiritual lifestyle, passivity and withdrawal on his part might have proved destructive to his claims for legitimation. In other words, he must impress people through doing rather than being.

Yet viewing Baba Baruch's entrepreneurial and expansionist style as a defensive manoeuvre to make up for a preliminary inferior position in the pursuit of legitimation constitutes a cogent but still partial explanation. Such a thesis ignores the different social realities in which Baba Sali and his son emerged as sources of spiritual authority. Baba Sali's

image as a sainted figure germinated in the traditional Jewish society of southern Morocco and was sustained in Israel, frozen in time, as an exemplary model of a past lost and idealized. Baba Baruch's road to sacredness was paved in the modern setting of contemporary Israel. As a "child" of the Israeli political system, he seems to patently espouse and expertly employ "the rules of the game" – the values, norms and symbols – that govern public life in Israel. In focusing his attention on the Jewish Moroccan diaspora as a potential source of financial support, for example, he clearly moves in a path well trodden by most political figures in Israel. In relentlessly seeking to change the topography of Netivot and other places by erecting various institutions bearing his father's name, he utilizes the monies contributed from abroad in accord with the Zionist ethos. His excessive "doing" thus reflects a mode of assertion that makes perfect sense to a large following deeply rooted in present-day Israeli social reality.

In this essay we have focused on the processes that underlie the charismatization of two prominent members of the Abu-Hatzera family: Baba Sali and Baba Baruch. As we have shown, while the mythologization of Baba Sali has been only indirectly affected by the ongoing political and social trends in contemporary Israel, the manner by which Baba Baruch has sought to legitimize his position is firmly grounded in the present historical moment. Yet these two processes are not only interrelated, they are mutually reinforcing: the creation of Baba Sali's image as a "saint for our time" has been facilitated by the deliberate and sophisticated efforts of his son, whose own status and prestige have been, of course, steadily augmented by the father's continued popularity.

NOTES

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