JUDAISM AND ZIONISM IN THE FORMATION OF

THE ISRAELI IDENTITY

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

How to build a sense of nationalism in order to bind a group of people together is a question that has occupied the minds of modern nation-state builders for many centuries. In the past, populations had an allegiance to a local leader and piece of territory, not to a national figure and a collective identity. It is generally accepted that the political force of nationalism was a 19th century phenomenon, although looking at the modern nation-states of Europe it can be argued that the process began much earlier through the collective identity of religion. Monarchs derived their legitimacy from the concept of 'Divine Right' to rule. Modern states derive their power from the active participation of their citizenry. However, within the borders of modern states there are substantial minorities. Often these are the people who feel least represented by their nation-state or by the mainstream concept of that nation. These groups of people often aspire to establish their own state, either within the nation-state or separately, and are known as stateless national movements. Zionism was a 19th century example of such a movement. While Zionism is primarily considered a secular, nationalist philosophy its roots and its claim to the land of Israel are based on the ancient religious traditions of Judaism.

According to Jewish tradition and the Hebrew Bible, after forty one years of

wandering in the desert, the Israelites arrived at Canaan and conquered it under the command of Joshua, dividing the land among the twelve tribes. The Holy Land was later conquered and ruled by the Romans from 63 BCE to 330 CE and the Jewish people were forced into the Diaspora after the Jewish revolt in 70 CE. The Jews remained scattered for over 2000 years until the early 20th century, the rise of Zionism, and the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948. Despite international recognition, Israel's existance has remained tenuous for most of its history due to the continued threat from its neighboring Arab countries.

As a result of its unusual history Israel, while maintaining a Western style democracy, has also developed features unique to its own society. One of the most important features that differentiates it from other Western democracies is the influence of religion, not only within society, but also within the political process. The cohabitation of religion and the state has always been a contentious issue due to the question of what role religion should play in the political process. Today, many Israeli Jews claim they aren't religious and that Israel, as a democratic, modern country, should not impose religious rules on its citizens against their will. On the other hand, the religious Israeli Jewish community claims that the separation between state and religion will contribute to the end of Israel's Jewish identity. As a result, Israel has many organized religious parties, each aiming primarily to promote their communities' particular interests. These parties have a powerful influence on the policies of the ruling parties because their support is needed in coalition building and concessions are made in order to secure it.

Balancing religious and democratic institutions is like walking a tightrope. It is

extremely difficult to satisfy all communities and inevitably all are somewhat dissatisfied with the compromises. At Israel's founding agreements were made between the secular authorities and the religious community which have influenced Israeli government policy ever since. Today the continued enforcement of these agreements has resulted in conflict between the religious and the secular communities. There is also the question of Israeli settlement of the occupied territories. Settlement is generally supported by the religious community, but it enjoys far less support from the population at large. In addition to the legal and moral questions regarding settlement, the State of Israel also has to address the rights of its minority communities within the state, the vast majority of which are Arabs. The question then arises as to what their status and rights should be within a Jewish state which is in conflict with its Arab neighbors.

Beginning at the turn of the 20th century significant immigration from Europe began, mainly in response to the political persecution of the Jewish community there. Since the establishment of the State of Israel Jewish immigration has tended to come in waves, each of which has had a profound effect on such a small society, changing it in many unique ways. Initially, the early immigrants were the Ashkenazi, from Europe, and later the Sephardi and Mezrahi, from Northern Africa and the Middle East. More recently the Ethiopians, in the 1980's, and the Russians, in the early 1990's, followed. Each wave of immigrants have affected Israeli society and its turn towards increasing secularism.

Due to the fact that Israel is a nation of immigrants it was vitally important for the fledgling state to create a national identity separate from the immigrant's country of origin. Zionist philosophy created a sharp distinction between the homecoming and the

Diaspora, painting the latter as a dark period which turned the Jews into oppressed, submissive, weak, and fearful people. Zionism built a collective history and an Israeli national tradition by reshaping the stories of antiquity and creating national heroic stories of the settlement period. The Zionist leadership also understood the role of language and religion in shaping a national identity. The use of Hebrew as a common language successfully unified the new immigrants coming to Mandate Palestine at the turn of the 20th century, creating a common language and culture. In the case of religion, while the majority of Israelis are secular Jews, the religious community wields enormous influence on the culture and politics of the country. One reason may be that the majority of secular Israelis still clearly regard religion as an important aspect of their culture. While a large number consider themselves to be non-religious they still observe many traditional religious practices and holidays. Religion is a part of the Israeli identity, it holds the population together, and almost everyone has, more or less, some association with it. Despite being a secular state, religion is the glue that binds the people to the land and creates a sense of national identity for most Israelis. The development of nationalism and the formation of a national identity for all nations has been a long path. Balancing the competing demands of religion and democracy in a modern state has been, and continues to be, a challenge for all governing institutions in every country. However, the national identity of a people comes from its history, language, politics, culture, and religion. In order for a state to survive it has to successfully balance and exploit these ties and build a cohesive national identity that will bind its people together over time. A nation has to be able to feel a link to its past in order to move toward into its future.

CHAPTER II

NATIONALISM

1. Defining Nationalism

The starting point of modern nationalism is the existence of a nation. Nations are typically seen as entities with a long history: most nationalists do not believe a nation can be created artificially. Nationalist movements see themselves as the representative of an existing, centuries-old nation. However, some theories of nationalism imply the reverse order - that the nationalist movements created the sense of national identity, and then a political unit corresponding to it, or that an existing state promoted a national identity for itself. Nationalists see nations as an inclusive categorization of human beings - assigning every individual to one specific nation. Nations have national symbols that represent a national culture: music, literature, folklore, mythology, and in some cases a national religion. A result of which is that within a nation the population has shared values and a shared identity.

Nationalists define individual nations on the basis of certain criteria which distinguish one nation from another and determine who is a member of each nation. These criteria typically include a shared language, culture, and values which are predominantly represented within a specific ethnic group. National identity is not monolithic and can also be contested by many factors such as differences in region, class,

ethnicity, religion, and language or dialect. Nationalism also has a strong territorial component. For each nation, there is a territory which is uniquely associated with it, the national homeland. This is reflected in the geopolitical claims of nationalism, which orders the world as a series of nation-states, each based on the national homeland of its respective nation. Territorial claims characterize the politics of nationalist movements. Established nation-states also make an implicit territorial claim to secure their own continued existence.[1]

In the nationalist view, each nation has an entitlement to a sovereign state. The nation-state is intended to guarantee the existence of a nation, to preserve its distinct identity, and to provide a territory where the national culture is dominant. Nationalism sees a nation-state as a necessity for each nation. This specific view of the duties of the state influenced the introduction of national education systems, often teaching a standard curriculum, national cultural policy, and national language policy. In turn, nation-states appeal to a national historical culture to justify their existence, to confer political legitimacy, and the acquiescence of the population to the authority of the government.

2.   The Historical Significance of Nationalism

Implicit in the philosophy of nationalism is that there can be no "us" without defining a "them"; that is the founding principle of the modern state. In order to define who belongs, who as the right to be a citizen, then prior to that a state has to define who does not have that right. Today we think in terms of inclusionism and equal rights for all citizens, this is particularly true in the United States due to our diversity. However,

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[1] Kramer, Lloyd, *"Historical Narratives and the Meaning of Nationalism,"* Journal of the History of Ideas © 1997 University of Pennsylvania Press, p. 526

historically it can be argued that nationalism was built on exclusionism not inclusionism.

Nationalism was the most successful political force of the 19th century, but its origins go back much further. In the nineteenth century nationalism emerged from two main sources: the Romantic exaltation of "feeling" and "identity" and the Liberal requirement that a legitimate state be based on a people rather than on a dynasty, God, or imperial domination.[2] Both Romantic "identity nationalism" and Liberal "civic nationalism" were essentially middle class movements. There were two main paths: the French method of inclusion – essentially, anyone who accepted loyalty to the civil French state was a citizen. In practice this meant the enforcement of a considerable degree of uniformity, for instance, the destruction of regional languages. It can be argued that the U.S. eventually adopted this ideal of civic inclusive nationalism into its political culture. The second path was the German method, required by political circumstances at the time, defined the "nation" in ethnic terms. In practice ethnicity came down to speaking German and having a German name.

Recently historians have looked at the underlying issues, and above all the question of which came first, nations or nationalism. Nationalists see themselves as representing a pre-existing nation. They see nations, or at least ethnic groups, as a social reality dating back many thousand of years. Modern theories imply that until around 1800, almost no-one had more than local loyalties. National identity and unity were originally imposed from above by European states because it was necessary to modernize their economy and society. According to this theory, nationalist conflicts are an unintended side-effect. For example, Ernest Gellner argued that nations are a by-product of industrialization. Modernization theorists see such things as the printing press and

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[2] Von Herder, Johann Gottfried, *"Materials for the Philosophy of the History of Mankind,"* 1784

capitalism as necessary conditions for nationalism.[3] Anthony D. Smith created an approach to nationalism he called *ethnosymbolism*, a synthesis of modernist and traditional views on the subject. He argued that the preconditions for the formation of a nation are as follows: a fixed homeland (current or historical), high autonomy, hostile surroundings, memories of battles, sacred centers, languages and scripts, special customs, and historical records. Those preconditions may create a powerful common mythology. Therefore, the mythic homeland is in reality more important for the national identity than the actual territory occupied by the nation.[4] Smith also stated that nations were formed through the inclusion of the whole populace (not just elites), a constitution of legal and political institutions, nationalist ideology, international recognition and the drawing up of borders. However, in drawing borders substantial groups of outsiders were left within nation-states often leading to lingering conflicts.

Anthony W. Marx takes a different approach to the foundations of nationalism. In his book, *Faith in Nations; Exclusionary Origins of Nationalism*, Marx argues that European nationalism did not suddenly emerge in the 19th and 20th centuries but instead coalesced two to three centuries earlier as a form of mass political engagement based on religious conflict and exclusion; not the inclusion and movement toward modern democracies associated with nationalism in the last two hundred years. He presents the case that central rulers used religious intolerance and the exclusion of religious minorities as the glue to bind the population to the state rather than maintaining their allegiance to the local rulers. It is useful to examine this theory as a possible explanation of how

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[3] Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities*, p. 6. ISBN 0-86091-329-5
[4] Smith, Anthony D. 1986. The Ethnic Origins of Nations London: Basil Blackwell. pp 6–18. ISBN 0-631-15205-9

nationalism, by the mid-twentieth century, had been seemingly easily exploited by some to become synonymous with hatred and intolerance.

3. The Building of a National Identity

In Europe many of the nation-states that we know today began to coalesce around the sixteenth century. In 1492 Spain finally completed the re-conquest of the Iberian Peninsula from the Moors. The marriage of Ferdinand and Isabella thirty years prior had united the major Spanish kingdoms for the first time after many years of civil war. Only three months after driving out the Moors, Ferdinand and Isabella expelled the Jews of Spain. Fourteen years earlier, under Ferdinand and Isabella, the Inquisition had been given authority to root out all heretics (non-Catholics) in Spain. The principle behind these actions was to enforce a national cohesion through religious conformity. During that same year the first vernacular grammar book was printed in Spain, under Royal approval, employing another tool of national identity; a common language.

During this period in Western history large-scale states were being built upon smaller units in order to spread control, repel, or prevent invasions from earlier consolidated empires. "Wary of domestic or foreign challengers, monarchs pursued polices that centralized their rule. Local conflicts within emergent states had to be contained to ensure the spread of markets, direct rule, collection of revenues, and the provision of armed forces to protect those states and their markets. The development of vernacular printing would help spread cohesion and mass political engagement and religious differences had to be confronted if greater cohesion or unity of the populace was

to be achieved."[5] Spain differed from both France and England in that it was united

under the religious banner of Catholisism. While this unity excluded it from the violent

conflicts of England and France, it did not bring it political cohesion either.

While Spain pursued a policy of national cohesion from the top down France

engaged the masses in its pursuit to forge a national identity. During the early to mid-

sixteenth century France saw an explosion in the spread of Protestantism, which included

conversions in the upper ranks of French society. Despite efforts at conciliation,

competition for power and territory resulted in major battles being fought across France

from 1560-1572 between the Catholics and the Protestant Huguenot families. The scale

of the violence threatened the French monarchy because is was not a war of armies but

violence with a base in the masses. Elites had, "used religious propaganda to gain

popular support, but that propaganda had a powerful effect on the

masses who took the religious issues seriously."[6] This resulted in mass violence, the

most famous example of which is the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre. Now that the

masses had become engaged in the issues of statehood and religious intolerance the

events this engagement provoked spun out of elite control. Rather than support

nationalism it create a scism that threatened to destroy both the state and the French

monarchy.

Like France, England also pursued cohesion through religious affiliation. In 1533

King Henry VIII married Anne Boleyn, broke with the Vatican, and established himself

as the Supreme Head of the Church of England. As a result of this break England

became a Protestant country and established anti-Papism as a form of national identity.

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[5] Marx, Anthony W., *"Faith in Nations: Exclusionary Origins of Nationalism,"* New York: Oxford University Press, 2003, pg. 4

[6] Ibid, pg. 56

Unlike in Spain, where religious cohesion was enfored from the top down, and in France where the passions of the masses were aroused, England, with some exceptions, managed to both engage the masses but also control the ensuing violence that had plagued France. Henry VIII's break with Rome had more to do with establishing his absolute authority than with his religious principles. Also, the break with Rome was initially more a revolution from above and did little to build loyalty to the state among the masses. However, the pope was portrayed as interfering with the sovereignty of England and attempting to overthrow the monarch. The English state was able to use this as a successful nationalistic rallying cry and over time the masses turned against Rome. Under Elizabeth I, England was relatively tolerant regarding religion but intollerent of any challenges to secular authority. Also, during her reign, the methods used by Rome and Spain to try to force England back into the Catholic fold were particularly heavy handed and forced the population to choose between a religion and their popular sovereign. Therefore, through their actions, Rome and Spain unintentionally pushed England toward greater religious conformity under Protestantism. By the end of Elizabeth I's reign Catholicism was viewed as a foreign religion by most Englishmen.

4.   Modern Development of Nationalism and Democracy

The development of early nationalism was a form of religious nationalism in which the state derived political legitimacy as a consequence of a shared religion. Zionism is a modern example of this although many, if not most, forms of ethnic nationalism are in some ways religious nationalism. For example, Irish nationalism is associated with Catholicism, and Palestinian nationalism is associated with Islam. Sometimes however, religion is more of a marker of a group than the motivation for their

nationalism. For example although most Irish nationalist leaders of the last 100 years were Catholic, Irish nationalists were not fighting for theological distinctions or the primacy of the Pope. Rather they are fighting for an ideology that identifies the geographical island of Ireland and for a particular view of Irish culture. A similar distinction can be drawn for the Zionist movement. Many of its leaders were secular, but Judaism was the marker of a population and also its link to the land of Israel.

Civic nationalism is the form of nationalism in which the state derives political legitimacy from the active participation of its citizenry, in other words, "the will of the people". An invididual in such a nation must, in general believe that the state's actions somehow reflect his will, even when specific actions go against his will. Jean-Jacques Rousseau first developed this theory and devised the concept of the 'General Will'. Rousseau expounded on his theory in various writings, but most famously in his book, *On the Social Contract, Or Principles of Political Right* (1762). Rousseau wrote just prior to the French Revolution and many of his ideas were used as a justification for the rebellion against the theory of 'Divine Right.' Civic nationalism is one of the most important political theories behind the constitutional democracies of the United States and the modern democracies of Western Europe.

Hans Kohn, in his book *The Idea of Nationalism: A Study of its Origins and Background* (1944), describes nationalism as an intellectual response to the political, social, and cultural problems of integration and legitimacy in the 18th century transition to modernity. In his view the idea of nationalism grew out of the Enlightenment ideal of the "free individual" and clearly differs from the reactionary nationalism of the 20th century. Some writers have emphasized

the emergence of a national and international media as a possible explanation for enabling people to imagine themselves as part of the same community. Others have emphasized the economic transformation of 19th century Europe as being responsible for the development of a nationalist ideology. "Industrial societies require complex divisions of labor, educated work forces, mobile populations, and workers who can communicate across long distances. No modern economy can exit without large numbers of people who can read the same language, follow the same regulations, and manipulate the same technologies."[7] Nationalism and national identity provide the integrating structures required to create efficient, modern economies.

The mysteries that surround the founding of a nation have evolved into myth and legend. These myths and legends are viewed as objects of reverence similar to the mystery and reverence paid to religion. Because the origins of a nation, as with the origins of religion, are obscured by time, "forgetting the problematic, often brutal aspects of a nation's origins makes it possible to celebrate the virtues of its founding heroes and to generate a mysterious sense of solidarity that unites people in a feeling that sacrifices have been made in the past and will be required in the future...States appropriate sacred symbols (flags), sacred text (constitutions), sacred figures(founding fathers), sacred places (national monuments), and public rituals (national holidays) to create a sense of bonded 'nationhood'."[8] Nationalism is emotional and inspirational and all nationalist creeds praise an individual's willingness to make sacrifices for a higher cause and to affirm the nation in rituals of collective belief. The most powerful expression of

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[7] Kramer, Lloyd, *"Historical Narratives and the Meaning of Nationalism,"* Journal of the History of Ideas © 1997 University of Pennsylvania Press, p. 530

[8] Ibid, p. 533

nationalism is the fact that millions of people have been, and continue to be, willing to die to defend their nation during times of war.

Economic changes, increased social mobility, and greater personal freedoms were granted to many, beginning during the the 18th century period of the Enlightenment. These factors increased the expectations of historically repressed or marginalized groups. Nationalist movements have often attracted people who are either losing or gaining status from changing social patterns. These inconsistencies produce anxiety and insecurity in a people; nationalism produces an identity infused with pride and self-esteem. "Nationalism...becomes a modern, ideological expression of the perennial human quest for social recognition, and it appeals most to those people who feel least respected or included."[9] Therefore, it follows that the development of state nationalism will lead to the development of stateless nationalism movements.

5.   Stateless Nationalism and the Early Development of Zionism

Stateless nationalistic movements represent those people who feel least represented within their nation-state and within the mainstream conception of that nation. These groups of people usually aspire to establish their own state, either within the nation state, or a state of their own. These groups also subscribe to the belief that, "what defines a nation, stateless or otherwise, must be left to the people who comprise the community in question to determine the answer. If the people belonging to a community understand and believe it to be a nation, and act within it as a fitting social and cultural structure for their lives, then these individuals obviously deem that sufficient homogeneity and shared identity exists, in whatever form or proportion, to satisfy their

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[9] Ibid, p. 531

consciousness of unity and kinship. Such an idea of community assuredly qualifies as a nation. And if that nation is not constitutionally autonomous, but is situated within the territory and/or autonomy of an existing state, then undoubtedly it continues to qualify as a nation without a state."[10]

Zionism is an example of a stateless national movement but the ideology of a Jewish homeland did not spring full blown from a void with the creation of the Zionist movement in 1897. Following the French Revolution and the emancipation of European Jewry the vague spiritual bonds of the Jews to the Holy Land began to express themselves in more concrete ways. About 1808, groups of Lithuanian Jews, followers of the Vilna Gaon (a famous rabbi and opponent of Hasidism) arrived in Palestine and purchased land to begin an agricultural settlement. In 1836, Rabbi Zvi Hirsch Kalischer petitioned Anschel Rothschild to buy Palestine, or at least the Temple Mount, for the Jews. In 1839-1840, Sir Moses Montefiore visited Palestine and unsuccessfully tried to negotiate with the Khedive of Egypt to allow Jewish settlement and land purchase in Palestine. While European (Ashkenazi) Jews took the lead in organized Zionism for many years, Sephardic (Spanish) Jews and Jews in Arab lands maintained a closer practical tie with the Holy Land and with the Hebrew language than did Ashkenazi Jews.[11] Sarajevo-born Judah ben Solomon Hai Alkalai (1798-1878,) is considered one of the major precursors of modern Zionism. Alkalai believed that return to the land of Israel was a precondition for the redemption of the Jewish people. Alkalai's ideas greatly influenced

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[10] Guinernau, Montesserrat, *"Nations without a State: Political Communities in the Global Age,"* Michigan Journal of International Law, Vol.25, 2004

[11] MidEastWeb. 2005-2007. *"History of Zionism,"* Israeli Information Center. On-line. Available from Internet, http://www.zionism-israel.com/brief_zionism_history.htm, accessed 8 March, 2008

his Ashkenazi contemporary, Rabbi Zvi Hirsh Kalischer. Alkalai was also a friend of the

grandfather of Theodore Herzl, who is considered the founder of modern Zionism.[12]

Another important early Zionist was Moses Hess, a German Jew and socialist comrade of

Karl Marx. In his book, *Rome and Jerusalem* (published in 1862) Hess called for the

establishment of a Jewish socialist commonwealth in Palestine. He was one of the first

Jewish thinkers to believe emancipation would ultimately exacerbate anti-Semitism in

Europe. He concluded that the only solution to the Jewish problem was the establishment

of a national Jewish society managed by a Jewish proletariat. Although his synthesis of

socialism and Jewish nationalism would later become an integral part of the Labor

Zionist movement, during his lifetime the prosperity of European Jewry lessened the

appeal of his work.[13]

The first Jew to articulate a political Zionist platform was not a Western European

but a Russian physician residing in Odessa. A year after the 1881 pogroms, Leo Pinsker,

reflected the disappointment of other Jewish *maskalim* (Russian Jewish intellectuals), in

his pamphlet entitled "Auto-Emancipation". He stated that anti-Semitism was a modern

phenomenon, beyond the reach of any future triumphs of "humanity and enlightenment."

Therefore, Jews must organize themselves to find their own national home wherever

possible, not necessarily in their ancestral home in the Holy Land. Pinsker's work

attracted the attention of Hibbat Tziyyon (Lovers of Zion), an organization devoted to

Hebrew education and national revival. Ignoring Pinsker's indifference towards the Holy

Land, members of Hibbat Tziyyon took up his call for a territorial solution to the Jewish

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[12] Ibid

[13] Metz, Helen Chapin ed., 1998, *"Israel: A Country Study."* Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress, Online. Available from Internet, http://countrystudies.us/israel/8.htm, accessed 2 February, 2008

problem. Pinsker, who became leader of the movement, obtained funds from the wealthy

Jewish philanthropist, Baron Edmond de Rothschild - who was not a Zionist - to support

Jewish agricultural settlement in Palestine at Rishon LeZiyyon, south of Tel Aviv, and

Zikhron Yaaqov, south of Haifa. Although the numbers were meager - only 10,000

settlers by 1891 - especially when compared to the large number of Jews who immigrated

to the United States, the First Aliyah (1882-1903) was important because it established a

Jewish bridgehead which espoused political objectives in Palestine.[14] However,

Theodore Herzl was the leader who indisputably provided the impetus needed to found a

Zionist organization with specific goals.   Herzl published his solution to the Jewish

problem in the book, _Der Judenstaat (The Jewish State)_, in 1896. He called for the

establishment of a Jewish state in any available territory to which the majority of

European Jewry could immigrate. The new state would be modeled after a post-

emancipation European state. Thus, in Herzl's view, it would be secular in nature,

granting no special significance to the Hebrew language, Judaism, or to the ancient

Jewish homeland in Palestine.[15]

    While Zionism is considered a secular, nineteenth century nationalist philosophy

led by Jews, whose motivation was not religion, its claim to the land of Israel was

nevertheless based on the ancient religious traditions of Judaism. Therefore, it is

necessary to examine those beliefs which have provided the historical continuity and

legitimization for the modern state of Israel; how those beliefs contributed to the

founding of Israel; and how they continue to affect the modern political process.

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[14] Ibid
[15] Ibid

CHAPTER III

JUDAISM AND THE LAND OF ISRAEL

1. Judaism's historical tie to Eretz Israel

Early History

Traditionally, Jews claim descent mostly from the ancient Israelites who settled in

the land of Israel. The Book of Exodus details the emigration of the Israelites from Egypt

to Canaan led by the prophet Moses and marks the formation of the Israelites as a people.

According to Jewish tradition and the Hebrew Bible after forty one years of wandering in

the desert, the Israelites arrived at Canaan and conquered it under the command of

Joshua, dividing the land among the twelve tribes. For a period of time, the united twelve

tribes were led by a series of rulers known as Judges. After this period, an Israelite

monarchy was established under Saul, and continued under King David and Soloman.

King David conquered Jerusalem and made it his capital.

After Soloman's reign the nation split into two kingdoms, Israel, consisting of ten

of the tribes in the north, and Judah, consisting of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin in the

south. Israel was conquered by the Assyrian ruler Shalmaneser V in the 8th century BCE.

There is no commonly accepted historical record of those ten tribes, which are sometimes

referred to as the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel. In the early 6th century BCE the kingdom of

Judah was conquered by a Babylonian army. The Judahite elite was exiled to Babylon,

but later a part of them returned to their homeland, led by the prophets Ezra and

Nehemiah, after the conquest of Babylonia by the Persians. At this point the extreme

fragmentation among the Israelites was already apparent with the formation of political-

religious factions, the most important of which would later be called Sadduccees and

Pharisees.[16]

The Jerusalem Temple

The Temple in Jerusalem was located on the Temple Mount (Har HaBayit) in the

old city of Jerusalem. The First Temple, completed in seven years, was built by King

Solomon in 957 BCE and was the center of ancient Judaism. It was destroyed by the

Babylonians in 586 BCE, and the second temple was rebuilt seventy years later by Cyrus

the Great in 516 BCE. Centuries later, it was renovated by Herod, but it was subsequently

destroyed by the Romans in 70 CE. According to Judaism's religious texts, when the

legions of Titus destroyed the Temple, only a part of an outer court-yard "western wall"

remained standing. For Jews today it is the holiest site currently generally accessible for

prayer.[17]

The three most significant religious sects within the Jewish community before the

fall of the Second Temple were the Pharisees, the Sadducees and the Essenes. The

Pharisees were a group of devout Jews who were intent on keeping the law in its entirety.

Since the laws given to Moses were often vague, the Pharisees debated what was and was

not allowed if one was to keep the laws (these decisions are known as the oral law; the

written form of these oral traditions is known as the *Mishnah*). The Pharisees held very

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[16] American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise, 2008 "*Jewish Virtual Library: Ancient History,*" Availble form Internet, http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judaism/jewhist.html, accessed 10 October 2007
[17] Cohn-Sherbok, Lavinia and Dan, "Judaism: A Short History," Oxford: OneWorld, 1994

little political power until after the Jewish revolt that culminated in the destruction of the Temple in 70 C.E. The Sadducees were the priestly and aristocratic Jews whose main affiliation was with the Jerusalem Temple. They did not subscribe to the Pharisaic oral laws, and they only deemed the five books of Moses as authoritative. The Essenes were a separatist group who believed that the Pharisees were too lax in their religious observances, and the Sadducees were corrupt and had defiled the Temple. Some Essenes left Jerusalem and settled in the desert near the Dead Sea where a collection of their texts, known as the Dead Sea Scrolls, were discovered in 1947.[18]

After the death of Herod in 4 BCE his kingdom was divided between his sons. However, not long after his death the Romans exiled one of his sons and Judea became a Roman province. From that time on there was continual discontent among the population. Around 50 CE the region saw the rise of another group, known as the Zealots, who tried to take power. The Zealots were fanatical nationalists, dedicated to God and the Torah. "They believed that God had given the Land of Canaan to His chosen people and the presence of the heathen Romans in the Promised Land was defilement and a sacrilege."[19] Matters came to a head in CE 66 when a small Roman legion and a group of pro-Roman Jews were killed in an uprising led by the Zealots. The Romans marched on the region and by the end of September 70 CE Jerusalem was completely under Roman control. The Roman commander Titus ordered that the city be devastated and the Temple destroyed. Some of the rebels fled south to the fortress of Masada but the Romans pursued them and in 73 CE the last remaining group of Zealots chose to commit suicide there rather than face capture by the Romans.

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[18] Ehrman, Bart D, "A Brief Introduction to the New Testament," Oxford; Oxford University Press, 2004
[19] Ibid, pg 39

Diaspora

The destruction of the Temple was an unimaginable tragedy for the Jewish population of Palestine. Afterwards, many remained there but by the sixth century Jews were largely a Diaspora people. Without the Temple, sacrifices could no longer be performed and there was no central focus for the Jewish people. With its people spread throughout the world, the faith was only able to survive through the reinterpretation of the Mishnah and the rise of Rabbinic Judaism. The Diaspora lasted over two thousand years, until the foundation of Israel in 1948. During that 2000 years, Jews established significant communities in Western and Eastern Europe, Spain, North Africa and across the Middle East. By the time of the first Crusades in 11th CE, only a few thousand remained in Judea.[20]

As the Jews dispersed they also broke into separate groups. The two most well known are the Ashkenazim, who settled in Eastern and Western Europe, and the Sephardim, who migrated to Spain, North Africa and other areas of the Muslim world. While Jews in the Muslim world were subject to certain restrictions, they generally prospered both culturally and economically. However, Jews in Christian Europe were subjected to far more oppression, persecution, and sporadic expulsions, although there were periods of relative peace and prosperity in certain areas. Over the centuries Sephardic and Ashkenazi Jews developed different customs and somewhat different religious practices.

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[20] Kniesneyer, J and D. Brechner, 1995, *"Beyond the Pale: A History of Jews in Russia: The Jewish Diaspora and Israel,"* Available from Internet, <www.friends-partners.org/partners/beyond-the-pale/english/about.html> accessed 8 October 2005

Despite the long period of the Diaspora, Jews have always maintained their tie to the land of Israel through religious observance. Israel is the land given to the Jewish people according to the Bible. In the Book of Genesis the Land of Israel was promised by God as an everlasting possession to the descendants of the Jewish patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob making it the Promised Land. Although the term "Eretz Israel" is a holy term and vague as far as the exact boundaries of the territory are concerned it is generally believed that the Land of Israel encompasses the ancient kingdoms of Israel and Judea. In the Bible and elsewhere, the word 'Zion' originally meant the region around Jerusalem, but because of the importance of the city the term came to designate all of the biblical land.[21]

The term 'Zion' was adopted by the 19th century Zionist political movement to appeal to the religious tradition that linked the Jewish people to the land of Israel. While Zionism was certainly a secular movement, inspired by other nationalist movements of the period, it invoked both a historical and religious link in order to justify the Jewish people's claim to the land of their ancestors. Jews had been a Diaspora people for over 2000 years, but in the 20th century due to the Zionist movement, the commitment of its leadership, as well as the tragic events that were to unfold "Next year, Jerusalem" was to be transformed from an expression into a political reality.

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[21] Schweid, Eliezer; Deborah Greniman, translator, *"The Land of Israel: National Home Or Land of Destiny,"* Fairleigh Dickinson Univ Press, 1985, p.56.

CHAPTER IV

THE POLITICAL HISTORY OF THE JEWISH STATE

The new political awareness of Zionism stated that the Jews would never be

accepted in Western society and must create a society of their own in the promised land

of Palestine. In 1882 seven thousand Jews immigrated to Palestine in what became

known as the first Aliyah. They were partially successful but failed to establish the

hoped-for new agricultural society.

Still, through their efforts a nucleus was established that encourage further settlement.[22]

In 1904 fifteen to twenty thousand pioneers departed for Palestine in the second Aliyah.

Most of these men were socialist or heavily influenced by the *Bund* – a socialist

movement within Russian Judaism. Despite setbacks, they were able to establish

collective farms and found Hebrew schools with the financial assistance of the Jewish

National Fund. By 1914 there were approximately ninety thousand Jews in Palestine.[23]

1.   World War I and the British Mandate

In 1916 Britain and France signed the Sykes-Picot Agreement, a secret

understanding between the governments defining their respective spheres of post-World

War I influence and control in the Middle East. The agreement is seen by many as a

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[22] Israel Pocket Library, *"Zionism,"* Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House Ltd. 1973, pg. 122
[23] Ibid, pgs. 320-325

turning point in Western/Arab relations, because it reneged on the promises made to Arabs for a national Arab homeland in the area of and area know as Greater Syria (what is now Syria Lebanon, Palestine/Israel, Kuwait, portions of Iraq, the settled areas of Jordan and Sinai, and the Hatay Province in Turkey) in exchange for their siding with British forces against the Ottoman Empire in World War I.

In the aftermath of that war the British foreign secretary, Arthur Balfour wrote a letter to Lord Rothschild know as the Balfour Declaration. It was was a formal but classified statement of policy by the British government further clarifying the partitioning of the Ottoman Empire. It stated that the British government supported Zionist plans for a Jewish national home in Palestine, with the condition that nothing should be done which would impede the rights of existing communities there.

Jewish immigration grew slowly in the 1920s but it increased substantially in the 1930s, due to political turmoil in Europe and Nazi persecution. In 1939 Britain imposed restrictions on Jewish immigration in what became known as the White Paper. It capped Jewish immigration and abandoned the goals of the Balfour Declaration in favor of an independent Palestine governed jointly by Arabs and Jews, an idea both rejected. It was issued in response to increased violence which had resulted in the deaths of approximately one hundred settlers and fifty Arabs across what is now Israel and the West Bank.[24]

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[24] The Avalon Project at Yale Law School , 1996-2007. The Lillian Goldman Law Library, New Haven, Connecticut. Available from the Internet, www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/mideast/brwh1939.htm accessed 23 March 2007

2.   Post World War II

After the end of World War II and the near-extermination of European Jews by the Nazis, international support, particularly in the United States, for Jews seeking to settle in Palestine was strong. Two hundred and fifty thousand Jewish refugees were stranded in displaced persons camps in Europe and as a result the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry was established in 1946. It was a joint British and American attempt to find a policy to resolve the growing conflict between Jews and Arabs in the region. It eventually approved the American proposal that Palestine accept one hundred thousand Jewish refugees immediately. However, the British government refused to lift the ban on immigration and admit that many displaced persons to Palestine. As a result the Jewish underground forces united and carried out several attacks against the British. In 1946, the Irgun (a militant Zionist group) blew up the King David Hotel in Jerusalem, the headquarters of the British administration, killing 92 people. In 1947, seeing that the situation was quickly spiraling out of hand, the British announced their desire to terminate their mandate and to withdraw by May 1948.[25]

On 29 November, 1947 the United Nations Partition Plan for was approved by the United Nations General Assembly. The plan would have partitioned the territory of Palestine into Jewish and Arab states, with Jerusalem coming under international control. It was designed to end the Arab-Israeli conflict. David Ben-Gurion and other Jewish representatives tentatively agreed to the plan, but it was rejected by the Arab states. Due to the failure of the British government and the United Nations to implement this plan, and the Arab's rejection of it, war broke out in 1948.

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[25] Gilbert, Martin, *"Israel A History,"* New York; William Morrow and Co. Inc, 1998, p. 122

3.   War of Independence, 1948-1949

The Declaration of Independence of the State of Israel was publicly read in Tel

Aviv on May 14, 1948, before the expiration of the British Mandate of Palestine at

midnight. Eleven minutes after the Declaration at 18:00 (Washington, D.C. time), the

United States formally recognized the State of Israel, followed by Iran, Guatemala,

Nicaragua, and Uruguay. The Soviet Union recognized it on May 17, 1948, followed by

Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Ireland and South Africa. Over the next few days,

approximately one thousand Lebanese, five thousand Syrian, five thousand Iraqi, ten

thousand Egyptian troops, and four thousand Transjordanian troops invaded the newly-

established state. They were aided by corps of volunteers from Saudi Arabia, Libya and

Yemen. Israeli forces fought back, and captured significant amounts of territory which

has been designated for the Arab state, as well as part of Jerusalem.[26]

In 1949, after a five phase operation and two failed truce agreements, Israel

signed separate armistices with Egypt on 24 February, Lebanon on 23 March,

Transjordan on 3 April, and Syria on 20 July. Israel was generally able to create its own

borders, comprising seventy eight percent of Mandatory Palestine, fifty percent more

than the UN partition proposal allotted it. These cease-fire lines were known afterwards

as the Green Line. The Gaza Strip and the West Bank were occupied by Egypt and

Transjordan respectively. Israel lost about 1% of its population in the war: 6,373 of its

people, about 4,000 were soldiers and the rest were civilians. The exact number of Arab

losses is unknown. The war also caused a major demographic shift in the population of

the region with many Palestinians fleeing to neighboring Arab countries. Many Jews,

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[26] Ibid, 162-163

who had settled in Arab nations, feared reprisals and either fled to Israel, Europe or the United States.[27]

4.   Theoretical foundations of government

The Scroll of Independence was read on May 14, 1948. It is the Israeli Declaration of Independence and was the official announcement that a new Jewish state named the State of Israel had been formally established. The Scroll of Independence is a patriotic document that draws a direct line from Biblical times to the present and appeals to the Jewish people throughout the Diaspora to rally round the Jews of Eretz-Israel by immigrating and helping them to build a new state. What it doesn't do is lay out any specific rules for the governance of the new state.

The scroll of independence promised the constitution would be completed no later than October 1st, 1948. However, the gap between religious and secular interests proved too difficult to bridge and a full, unifying document was never produced. At the time, religious Jews opposed the idea of their nation having a document which the government would regard as nominally 'higher' in authority than religious texts. In 1949, the first Knesset came to what was called the Harari Decision. Rather than draft a full constitution immediately, they would postpone the work, charging the Knesset's Constitution, Law, and Justice Committee with drafting the document piecemeal. Each chapter would be called a Basic Law, and when all had been written they would be compiled into a complete constitution. The Basic Laws are various pieces of legislation that outline the nation's political structure. However, to this day an official constituation has never been completed. [28] Between 1958 and 1988 the Knesset passed nine Basic

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[27] *Facts on File Yearbook*; NY: Facts on File, Inc., 1948, p. 231

Laws, all of which pertained to the institutions of state. In 1992 it passed the first two

Basic Laws which related to rights. These are the Basic Law: Human Dignity and

Liberty, and the Basic Law: Freedom of Occupation. For all intents and purpose, the

Basic Laws now serve as the countries de facto constitution.[29]

5.   Israeli governance since 1949

Foreign Policy

Israeli foreign policy is chiefly influenced by Israel's strategic situation, the Arab-

Israeli conflict, and the rejection of Israel by most of the Arab states. The goals of Israeli

policy are therefore to overcome diplomatic isolation and to achieve recognition and

friendly relations with as many nations as possible, both in the Middle East and beyond.

Like many other states, throughout its history Israel has simultaneously practiced open

and secret diplomacy to further its main national goals. For example, it has engaged in

military procurement, the export of arms and military assistance, intelligence cooperation

with its allies, commercial trade, the importation of strategic raw materials, and prisoner-

of-war exchanges, and other arrangements for hostage releases. It has also sought to

foster increased Jewish immigration to Israel and to protect vulnerable Jewish

communities in the Diaspora. Despite the Arab-Israeli conflict, Israel has established

formal diplomatic relations with Egypt and maintained a de facto peaceful relationship

with Jordan. Israeli leaders have traveled to Morocco to discuss Israeli-Arab issues, and

Morocco has often served as an intermediary between Israel and the other Arab states. In

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[28] State of Israel, The Knesset, 2006, Available from Internet
www.knesset.gov.il/description/eng/eng_mimshal_yesod.htm, accessed 12 April 2007
[29] Appendix 3 - Basic Laws of Israel

1983 Israel signed a peace treaty with Lebanon, although it was quickly abrogated by the Lebanese as a result of Syrian pressure.[30]

The other major plank of Israeli foreign policy is to maintain its friendly relationship with the United States. The U.S. has a history of both diplomatic and military support for Israel and both countries support each other when faced with aggression, or international policy disagreements. The key points in a discussion of U.S-Israeli policy are that U.S. negotiated regional pacts are largely influenced by Israeli concerns; U.S. relations with Israel, more than with any other country, are highly influenced by domestic political considerations; and the special nature of the U.S.-Israel alliance has resulted in a great deal of U.S support for Israeli policies in international arenas.

As mentioned previously, the U.S. was the first country to recognize Israel. Also, Israel is the only country in the Middle East that is a democracy and resembles the US in its values, hence promoting an "understanding" between the two societies. The United Nations has not always been friendly to Israel but the U.S has historically supported it against attacks. In return Israel always votes with the U.S. on issues at the U.N. The U.S. has also given economic aid to Israel since 1949, although the amounts have fluctuated. Currently, Israel receives the largest amount of aid given to any country in the Middle East. For many years Israel received U.S. financial and military assistance in a combined total of about $3 billion, although as the Israeli economy grew the need for the aid package decreased. However, Israel still receives the most U.S. aid in the region,

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[30] Metz, Helen Chapin, ed. 1998, "*Israel: A Country Study, Foreign Relations,*" Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1988. Available from Internet, http://countrystudies.us/israel/106.htm

but much of that aid is for defense and the money is actually spent back with U.S. arms suppliers.[31]

Defense Policy

The State of Israel has always had a single defense goal - to ensure the continued existence of Israel and the security of its citizens. Therefore, Israel's defense policy has been to maintain a strong deterrent capacity in order to dissuade potential enemies from attacking. Israel's security doctrine dictates that Israel cannot lose a single war. If war breaks out, Israel must defeat the enemy quickly and decisively. Since it lacks strategic depth, Israel must prevent the enemy from entering its territory, and must try to quickly transfer the battle to enemy territory.[32]

However, over the last half century the nature of the military threats its defense planners must confront have changed dramatically. Territory is a problem for Israeli security. The small country has been surrounded by hostile neighbors for most of its sixty year history. Israel has its own defense industry and can take advantage of changes in military technology. Combining Israeli technology and American financing the country's arms industry has developed high-tech anti-missile systems. In the background - and still officially denied - is Israel's nuclear deterrent. In the past Israel had to send troops into enemy territory but today the military can use other weapons and more sophisticated means of intelligence gathering.[33]

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[31] Melman, Yossi and Dan Raviv, *"Friends in Deed: Inside the U S.-Israel Alliance,"* New York; Hyperion, 1994, p. 266
[32] Leyden, Joel, 2005 *"Israel Defense Forces: A Proud History,"* Israel News Agency , Available from Internet, http://www.israelnewsagency.com/israeldefenseforces120374.html, accessed 15 April 2007
[33] Ibid

Today the U.S. government is heavily involved in the funding of the Israeli

military with most foreign aid Israel receives from the U.S. being spent on military

supplies. However, American military involvement with Israel remained sporadic until

the Yom Kippur War after which, the United States quadrupled its foreign aid to Israel

and replaced France as Israel's largest arms supplier. During the Cold War the U.S. was

willing to support Israel because the Soviet Union was supplying the opposing Arab

states, particularly Egypt. Now cooperation has extended to programs for sharing

military technology and valuable intelligence; conducting joint military exercises;

researching and developing new weapons; establishing joint anti-terrorism strategies; and

pre-positioning material in Israel for use in the event the U.S. ever needs to respond

quickly to a future Middle East conflict.[34]

Political Structure and Parties

The politics of Israel takes place within a framework of a parliamentary

democracy. It is a multi-party system based on proportianal representation, with the

Prime Minister of Israel acting as head of government and the President in a largely

ceremonial role. Legislative power is vested in the the Knesset, and the judiciary is

independent of both the executive and the legislative branch.

The Knesset is Israel's unicameral parliament, whose 120 members are elected to

4-year terms. As the legislative branch of the Israeli government, the Knesset enacts laws

and supervises government activities. Since 1948, Israeli governments have always been

comprised of coalitions. As of 2006, there are 12 political parties represented in the

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[34]Metz, Helen Chapin, ed. 1998,"*Israel: A Country Study, Civil-Military Relations,*" Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1988. Available from Internet, http://www.country-data.com/cgi-bin/query/r-6860.html

Knesset, spanning both the political and religious spectra. Because of the proportional

representation system, there is a large number of political parties, many of whom run on

very specialized platforms advocating the interests of particular groups. The current

balance between the largest parties means that the smaller parties can have a

disproportionately strong influence relative to their size. They often use their power to act

as tie breakers in order to block legislation or promote their own agenda, even contrary to

the manifesto of the larger party in office.[35]

The most powerful office in Israeli politics is that of the Prime Minister. Since

independence there have been twelve people who have served in that capacity. The

current Prime Minister is Ehud Olmert of Kadima. The Prime Minister is a member of

the dominant party in the coalition government. Following an election, the President

nominates a Prime Minister after asking party leaders who they support for the position;

although between 1996 and 2001 the Prime Minister was elected in a separate election to

the rest of the Knesset. Since 1977 Likud (and recently Kadima) have won the vast

majority of the elections. In 2001 Ariel Sharon was elected Prime Minister taking 62.4%

of the vote. He was considered a right-wing candidate who favored Jewish settlement in

the occcupied territories and a military, rather than negotiated, settlement to the Israeli-

Palestinian conflict. However, later in his term he split with his party and pushed ahead

with his plan for disengagement. This outraged many in the conservative community

who had originally supported him. However, national polls showed a majority of Israelis

supported his plan. In January 2006 Sharon suffered a massive stroke and Ehud Olmert

became acting Prime Minister. His position was made permanent after the March 2006

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[35] State of Israel, The Knesset, 2006, Available from Internet,
http://www.knesset.gov.il/main/eng/home.asp, accessed 6 February 2008

elections but since the disappointment of Israel-Lebannon conflict in the summer of

2006, Olmert has become unpopular in Israel and probably does not enjoy the credibility

to be able to force any type of significant changes for the forseeable future.[36]

The Judicial branch is an independent branch of the government and includes

secular and religious courts. The secular court system consist of a three-tier system:

Magistrate Courts, which serve as the trial courts; District Courts, which generally serve

as the appellate courts, and the Supreme Courts, serving as appellate court of last appeal,

and in matters concerning the legality of decisions of state authorities. Due to a

compromise struck between religious and secular leader at the founding of Israel, the

state also maintains a religious court system. These courts deal with matters of family law

but are also bound to uphold the general law in their tribunals. These courts have specific

jurisdiction in five areas: Kashrut (dietary laws), Sabbath, Jewish burial, marital issues

(especially divorce), and the Jewish status of immigrants. However, except for

determining a person's marital status, all other marital issues may also be taken to secular

Family Courts who tend to have parallel jurisdiction in most matters.[37]

As the structure of the judicial branch of Israeli government clearly shows,

despite the secular nature of the Israeli nation-state there is a strong religious component

to its governance. As mentioned previously, one reason is that during the founding of the

state the religious community was granted concessions in exchange for their support.

However, another major factor is the power of the religious politcal parties in the modern

governing process. Because Israel has a parlimentary democracy with a proportional

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[36] Ibid

[37] Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2005, *"The Judiciary-The Court System,"* Israel- The State of, Available from Internet, http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Government/Branches%20of%20Government/Judicial/The%20Judiciary-%20The%20Court%20System, accessed 5April, 2007

representation system no party has ever had a clear majority to govern alone, as a result

the major parties always need coalition partners. This gives the minor parties,

particularly the religious parties, a great deal of negotiating power to influence policy and

control certain government institutions they consider important to their constituents.

CHAPTER V

THE RELIGIOUS PARTIES: CONSTITUENTS, POLICIES AND INFLUENCE

1. The Politics of Jewish Identity

There is an inherent contradiction within the Israeli state. That contradiction lies

within the terms Jewish and democratic. While it is not necessarily a contradiction in

terms, the varying interpretations of both can lead to either cohabitation or conflict, of

which the latter often seems more common. Section 1(A) of Israel's Basic Law: Human

Dignity and Liberty (1992) states that "the law's purpose is to protect human dignity and

liberty, in order to establish in a Basic Law the values of the state of Israel as a Jewish

state and democratic state."

The cohabitation of religion and the state has always been a contentious issue due

to the question of precisely what the role of Jewish religious tradition would be in the

new state. Initially that was settled with the agreement known as the *status quo* which

acknowledged the religious arrangements that were in place on the eve of independence.

As a direct result of the question of the role of religion, Israel has never passed a

constitution because all the religious parties feared that a constitution would endanger the

role they hoped religion would play in the new state. Other issues of state and religion

present at independence which continue to be a source of conflict are: army service for

the religious community, observance of the Sabbath and religious holidays, state control

over religious education, and the question of 'Who is a Jew?'. All of these issues have been readdressed time and again since independence but with little satisfactory progress. In Israel the agreement between state and religion remains an uneasy truce.[38]

Signs of the first challenge to the status quo came in 1977, with the fall of the Labor government that had ruled Israel since independence and the formation of a center-right coalition under Menachem Begin. Begin needed the Haredi members of the Knesset to form his coalition and offered more power and benefits to their community, including a lifting of the numerical limit on military exemptions. While at that time, secular Israelis began questioning whether a "status quo," based on the conditions of the 1940's and 1950's, was still relevant. They challenged Orthodox control of personal affairs such as marriage and divorce, resented the lack of entertainment and transportation options on the Sabbath, and questioned whether the burden of military service was being shared equally. No one was happy with the "status quo"; the Orthodox used their new-found political force to attempt to extend religious control, and the non-Orthodox sought to reduce or even eliminate it.

While for the most part Israeli government remains a secular institution, the power and participation of the religious political parties and their influnce over certain institutions of governance has grown. The participation of religion in government and its significance for the legitimacy of the state is vastly different from the role of religion in other democracies in Western Europe and the United States. In Israel there are many organized religious parties. However, they do not strive to capture the government, instead their aim is primarily to promote their particular interests. In fact, the function of

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[38] Cohen, Asher and Bernard Susser, "*Israel and the Politics of Jewish Identity: The Secular-Religious Impasse,*" Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000, p. 17-37

the Israeli religious parties is more akin to certain funtions of interest groups in other

countries. For example, each party does not develop a policy for the economy, a social

policy for the nation's poor, a foreign policy, or defense policy. However, they do tend

to have a broader focus than most interest groups, and most importantly, unlike interest

groups, they aspire to membership in governing coalitions. Through this membership

they hope to control or gain influence over certain government agencies which are

important to their interests, such as the interior ministry, and the ministry of construction

and housing. Because they don't have general policy goals they make desirable coaltion

partners and concessions are made in order to secure their support. As a result, religious

parties have a powerful influence on the ruling parties and once they are in a governing

coalition they can threaten to leave it if their demands are not met.

2.   The Religious Parties
Shas

Shas is a religious party primarily representing Ultra-orthadox Sephardi and

Mizrahi Jews - those Jews tracing their roots back to North Africa, the Arab lands, or the

Iberain Penninsula - and is currently the third largest party in Israel in terms of the

popular vote. Shas has, at various times, been able to exert disproportionate influence by

gaining control of the balance of power within the context of the traditionally narrow

margin between Israel's large parties, Labour and Likud (now joined by Kadima). In

1999 Shas was mired in scandal after the indictment, subsequent conviction, and

imprisonment of its former party leader, Aryeh Deri on corruption charges. However,

many Shas voters saw Deri as the victim of a discriminatory political witch-hunt and

continue to support him. Since 1999, several of Shas's MKs have been convicted of

offences including fraud and forgery. Following the recent 2006 election, Shas joined the Kadima's governing coalition and currently holds four cabinet posts.[39]

While Shas represents the Ultra-orthodox Eastern Jews, the majority of Shas voters are themselves not Ultra-orthodox. Many other conservative groups within Israeli society vote for Shas due to its promotion of an authentic Middle Eastern Israeli culture, which fits well with the traditional belief in a revival of the authentic Jewish culture of the region. Ideologically, Shas is a strong advocate of Halacha (the collective body of Jewish religious law) playing a pivotal role in the operation of the state and the Israeli national identity. In regard to the Arab-Israeli conflict Shas maintains relatively flexible policy towards Palestinians. This makes it possible for the party to become a coalition partner with whichever party is most powerful because the left-right political axis in Israel is largely determined based on one's stand on the Palestinian issue. While Shas is flexible in its foreign policy it has a socially conservative agenda and supports the expansion of religious legislation. However, it also advocates tax and economic initiatives to benefit the poor and middle classes, and it operates many community social-welfare projects. Shas is led by a council of Torah sages and supports continued army exemptions for religious scholars and amending the Law of Return to more accurately reflect Jewish Law regarding the question of "Who is a Jew?"

National Religious Party (NRP)

The National Religious Party is the party of religious Zionism. Formed in 1956, it is the second oldest surviving party in the country after Agudat Israel, and was part of every government coalition until 1992. Unlike other religious parties it has no qualms

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[39] Hoffman, Joel M. 2006, *"A Guide to Israel's Political Parties,"* Temple Shaaray Tef , Available from Internet, http://www.lashon.net/JMH/Resources/Israel2006-1.html#shas, accessed 5 March, 2008

about participting in secular government and "it alone of all the religious parties sees religious value in the Jewish state, symbolizing the beginning of redemption, the first sign portending the coming of the messiah. NRP's ideology tries to synthesize Judaism and modernity without changing Halakha: its adherents are fully integrated into all walks of Israeli society."[40]   Since the 1970's the NRP has been active in promoting the settlement projects in the West Bank and Gaza strip. It is also associated with Gush Emunim, the religious settlers' movement. Both the National Religious Party and Gush Emunim supporters believe that the coming of the Messiah can be hastened through Jewish settlement on land they believe God has allotted to the Jewish people as outlined in the Hebrew Bible.

The NRP's main ideological postion is that the party should contribute as much as it can to the State of Israel and influence its character to be more Jewish, as well as fighting for the protection of Israel and maintaining Israel's security. Unlike the Haredi parties (Shas and United Torah Judaism) the NRP does not promote the notion of a Halakhic state (a theocracy run according to Jewish law) but wants to retain Israel's democratic institutions. Another way in which the NRP differs from other religious parties is that it encourages all Haredi Jews to complete three years of mandatory military service. The party is a patron of most of the nationally supported religious schools, which teach both Judaism and general mandatory educational subjects, and besides funding and patronizing these schools, it also supports the Yeshiva schools and Beit Midrash; private religious schools for boys and girls, dedicated solely to Torah study.[41]

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[40] Ehrlich, Avishai, John Bunzi ed., "Islam, Judaism, and the Political Role of Religions in the Middle East," Gainesville, FL; University Press of Florida, 2004, pg. 171
[41] Hoffman, Joel M. 2006, *"A Guide to Israel's Political Parties,"* Temple Shaaray Tef, Available from Internet, http://www.lashon.net/JMH/Resources/Israel2006-1.html#nrp, accessed 5 March, 2008

The NRP believes that affairs of personal status (such as marriages, divorces, and burials) should be kept under the authority of Israel's rabbis (or other religious clerics for non-Jews).

The NRP also argues that the Jewish state must show respect for the Jewish religion by observing the Sabbath and serving Kosher food in its institutions and organizations. The party, along with the other Orthodox political parties in Israel, would like to see reforms to Israeli law so that converts to Judaism who wish to immigrate to Israel under the 'Law or Return' can only

be accepted if their conversions were conducted according to strict Orthodox standards.[42]

The party believes that the land of Israel is holy and belongs to the Jews on the basis of God's promise. They believe it is God's will to settle all the land of Israel. This principle has had a great impact on NRP policy towards the West Bank, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The NRP's views on the conflict can be summarized as:

- There will only be one state between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea – the State of Israel. No independent national Arab entity (such as a Palestinian state) will exist within these borders
- No part of Israel will be given over to a foreign government or authority.

However, the party does agree to giving the Palestinian Arabs self-governing autonomy, subject to Israel's authority, without the dismantling of the Jewish settlements. The party believes that Israel can stop Palestinian violence through the use of military force and uses mostly religious arguments to justify this position. They stress that Judea and Samaria were parts of the ancient kingdoms of Israel and Judah and hence rightfully belong to the modern State of Israel. Furthermore, the party views the Jewish settlements

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[42] Ehrlich, Avishai, John Bunzi ed., "Islam, Judaism, and the Political Role of Religions in the Middle East," Gainesville, FL; University Press of Florida, 2004, pg. 171

as upholding of the Mitzvah (commandment) of settling the land of Israel. In fact many of its supporters and its parliament members are settlers.[43]

The NRP was a member on the 2003 government led by Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and had two ministers in the cabinet. However, Sharon's unilateral disengagement plan of 2004 from the Gaza Strip, caused great controversy within the party. The NRP declared that it was resisting the plan and any removal of Jews living in the Gaza Strip but the party, together with Likud, failed to stop the disengagement plan. On September 13, 2004, the party voted on a choice between immediately resigning from the government, or leaving the government only when it approved an actual removal of settlements. The party decided it would stay in the government on the condition that the government held a general referendum, regarding the removal of the Israeli settlements, which would require a special majority before the issue could be brought to a decision in the Knesset. If such a referendum was not held, or if the government approved a de-facto removal of Israeli settlements, the party would resign from the government.[44]

On November 9, 2004, after Ariel Sharon declined the NRP's demand to hold a national referendum regarding the disengagement, the NRP resigned from the coalition vowing to pursue a general election in an effort to replace Sharon with another prime minister. After their resignation, Sharon had a minority coalition of 56 Knesset members out of 120. For the 2006 election the NRP, due to its weakened position, eventually decided to run on a joint list with the National Union Party. The joint list went under the title of 'National Union – NRP' and won nine seats, of which the NRP was awarded three.

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[43] Ibid, p. 171
[44] State of Israel, The Knesset, 2006, *"Parliamentary Groups,"* Available from Internet http://www.knesset.gov.il/faction/eng/FactionPage_eng.asp?PG=3, accessed 12 April 2007

The National Union Party (NUP)

The National Union Party was formed in 1999. In the 2003 election, after winning seven seats, the National Union party was included in Ariel Sharon's coalition alongside Likud, Shinui, the National Religious Party, and Israel BaAliya. However, the party left the coalition because of its opposition to the withdrawal from the Gaza Strip. At the last minute, during the 2006 election, the National Religious Party decided to join with National Union on a joint list with the condition that the NUP adopt more social policies. The joint list used the slogan "New Right Rising" and won nine seats.[45]

Aside from its current relationship with the NRP, the National Union Party consists of two other members, Moledet, and Tkuma. Moledet advocates the notion of voluntary transfer of the Arab population and, while other parties have also advocated transfer, Moledet is the party most associated with this idea due to the lack of almost any other element in its platform. The Tkuma party is most associated with religious Zionism and represents the Orthodox view. The National Union Party has a joint platform with these other parties, advocating the use of more military power in the war on terror, harsher measures against Palestinian terrorism, and support for the settlement of the biblical land of Israel. It rejects all current Oslo-based peace efforts, which they see as dangerous to Israel, and advocates voluntary transfer of the Arabs from the West Bank, although they have been vague as to how this could be implemented.[46]

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[45] Ibid

[46] National Right Party Website, 2008, Available on the Internet, http://www.leumi.org.il/english/, accessed 13 March, 2008

United Torah Judaism

The parties under the United Torah Judaism banner represent the Ashkenazi religious communities who are non or anti-Zionist. These parties do not see religious value in the State of Israel. Although they do participate, their members do not identify with the secular state. The communities these parties represent try to maintain a separate existence within Israeli society. Generally they live in closed communities and attend only Talmudic seminaries as their educational institutions. They are not inducted into the army and "try to live apart as much as pragmatically possible, governed by the rules laid down by their sages."[47]

The UTJ was formed in 1992 and was always a coalition of two factions: The Degel HaTorah ("Banner of the Torah") party, and the Agudat Israel ("Union of Israel") party. The Degel HaTorah is guided by the rabbinic heads of non-Hasidic Haredi (Ultra-orthodox) Ashkenazi Jewish educational institutions (usually the leading rosh yeshivas or "deans" of the Lithuanian yeshivas). The Agudat Israel ("Union of Israel") party is guided by the followers of Hasidism in Israel. Though United Torah Judaism has never elected more than a handful of members to the Knesset, it has often played crucial roles in the formation of Israel's coalition governments. When both parties joined the governing coalition of Ariel Sharon in 2004 the UTJ union broke down due to internal disputes. For the Israel legislative election of 2006 Agudat Israel and Degel HaTorah put their differences aside and officially revived their alliance in order to win the maximum number of seats in the 17th Knesset.[48] UTJ does not have a wide ranging political agenda.

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[47] Ehrlich, Avishai, John Bunzi ed., "Islam, Judaism, and the Political Role of Religions in the Middle East," Gainesville, FL; University Press of Florida, 2004, pg. 170

[48] State of Israel, The Knesset, 2006, *"Parliamentary Groups,"* Available from Internet http://www.knesset.gov.il/faction/eng/FactionPage_eng.asp?PG=3, accessed 12 April 2007

Its political leverage has been used to obtain funding for its yeshivas and community

institutions and to pass legislation enforcing observance of the Shabbat and kosher laws,

often to the irritation of secular Israelis. Both Agudat Israel and Degel HaTorah are

mainly focused on using the political process to protect their way of life and their

communities.[49]

The various political parties, be they religious or secular, have to make an effort

to achieve compromise in order to govern effectively. This reality is also reflected in the

general population who must achieve some type of understanding in order to make

cohabitation between the various populations possible. Today there is often conflict and

significant debates on which direction the Israeli state should take and how much

religious influence over a primarily secular society is appropriate.

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[49] Upstart Activist, 2005-06, *"Israel Votes, 2006"* Available from Internet
http://www.israelvotes.com/demo/platforms_united_torah.html, accessed 20 March 2008

CHAPTER VI

BALANCING RELIGIOUS AND DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

1. Religious Communities

While has been a Jewish presence in Jerusalem for thousands of years, around the turn of the century the Jewish population dramatically increased and has continued to grow through the Arab-Israeli war of 1948 and thereafter. Prior to Israeli independence and the establishment of a sovereign Israeli state the question of the compatibility of Judaism and democracy was an issue that was never necessary to addresss. Section 1(A) of Israel's Basic Law: Human Dignity and Liberty (1992) states that the law's purpose is "to protect human dignity and liberty, in order to establish in a Basic Law the values of the State of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state." As mentioned previously the two terms, Jewish and democratic, lead to a dizzying variety of interpretations as to their meanings and application. "This section (of the Basic Law) embodies the contradictions and difficulties arising form the idea of a Jewish state, within the framework of western democratic systems of government."[50] In the state's effort to achieve some type of understanding between the various interests there has sometimes been conflict and there continues to be arguments as to which direction the Israeli state should take.

Zionism originally arose from the nationalistic movements in 19th century Europe as a secular answer to anti-semitism. However, Zionism posed a problem for the Jewish

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[50] Ottolenghi, Emanuele, David Marquand and Ronald L. Nettler, ed., "Religion and Democracy," Oxford; Blackwell Publishers, 2000, pg. 39

religious community. "Traditionally, Judaism viewed exile and dispersion as a divine punishment. Hence, exile was viewed as the normal condition of Jewish life, whose end would come through divine intervention at the end of days. While Jews could contribute to the end of exile through prayer and good deeds, the notion that human action could bring the Jewish people back to the land, as a reconstituted independent commonwealth, was blasphemous."[51]

Judaism lacks a central religious authority which is entitled to give binding answers to theological questions. "Therefore, although a thorough search for answers to the pressing questions that a democratic state would pose to religion could be undertaken, no univocal solution might be reached."[52] From a purely religious standpoint, Zionism posed a theological problem in that it replaced divine intervention with human action. "Zionism was upsetting the basic eschatological vision of Judaism and its goal of collective salvation."[53] As a result, Zionism elicited two responses from the religious community. One was to reject the idea of a secular, democratic, Jewish state. This attitude was adopted by the Ultra-orthodox, who organized themselves into the political party of Agudath Israel. The other was to try to reconcile the two positions, resulting in a movement know as religious Zionism, later becoming the political party know as the National Religious Party in the 1950's. Religious Zionists viewed the establishment of Israel as the first step to the coming of the Messiah, unlike the Ultra-orthodox who viewed the establishment of a Jewish state as the culminating moment of redemption.

However, in the aftermath of the Holocaust, and the need for resettlement of the thousand of Jews in displaced person camps across Europe, the Ultra-orthodox position

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[51] Ibid, p. 39
[52] Ibid, p. 40
[53] Ibid, p. 40

softened toward the establishment of the Jewish state. In June of 1947 Agudath Israel

sought reassurance from the secular Zionist leadership that it would guarantee certain

religious demands. "For the sake of unity, these guarantees were met in a letter, which

was later to be referred to as the foundation of Israel's religious status quo."[54]

Specifically the religious community was concerned with four main issues:

- Jurisdictions over matters of marriage and divorce would stay with the religious courts;
- Religious education through their independent school systems would not be affected by the establishment of the state and would continue to function as previously;
- Religious holidays would be respected and adopted by the state as national holidays;
- Jewish dietary laws would be enforced in all public government catering.[55]

At the time these promises were made they were not legally binding because they were

not made by a sovereign government. Nevertheless, they have influenced Israeli

government policy ever since and are more or less in effect today. As a result of the

continued enforcement there has been continued conflict between the religious and the

secular communities.

2.   Settlement Issues

Jews have lived in Judea and Samaria (the West Bank) and the Gaza Strip

throughout recorded history but when we refer to Israeli settlements today we are

speaking of the communities inhabited by Israelis in territory that was captured during

the 1967 Six-Day War. Such settlements currently exist in the West Bank, which is

partially under Israeli military administration, and partially under the control of the

Palestinian National Authority, and in the Golan Heights, which is under Israeli civilian

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[54] Ibid, pg. 41
[55] Ibid, pg. 42

administration. An additional eighteen settlements formerly existed in the Sinai Peninsula, twenty-one in the Gaza Strip and four in the northern Samaria region of the West Bank. They were abandoned as part of Israeli withdrawals from these areas in 1982 (Sinai) and 2005.[56]

Israeli policies toward these settlements have ranged from active promotion, to removal of their inhabitants by force. Their continued existence and status since the 1970's is one of the most contentious issues in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. These settlements are considered to be illegal under international law by many international bodies including, the General Assembly and Security Council of the United Nations, the International Court of Justice, and the European Union, as well as by many International Human Rights organizations, such as Amnesty International, and Human Rights Watch. While some legal scholars disagree with this assessment, the issue remains one of the most debated in International Law.

On the other side of the issue are the religious Zionists. They were originally a faction within the Zionist movement who justified Zionist efforts to build a Jewish state on the basis of Jewish law. The main ideologue of modern religious Zionism was Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook (1865-1935), who saw Zionism as a part of a divine scheme which would result in the resettlement of the Jewish people in their homeland. This would bring salvation to Jews, and then to the entire world. After world harmony was achieved by the refoundation of the Jewish homeland the Messiah would come. Some religious Jews were not enthusiastic about Zionism prior to the establishment of the Israeli state. Many

[56] Symon, Fiona, 2001, "*Jerusalem: Crucible of the Conflict,*" BBC In Depth: Israel and the Palestinians, Available from Internet, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/in_depth/middle_east/2001/israel_and_the_palestinians/issues/1682594.stm, accessed 2 April 2008

religious organisations opposed it on the grounds that an attempt to re-establish Jewish

rule in Israel by human agency was blasphemous since only the Messiah can accomplish

this. In answer these arguments Rabbi Kook responded:

> "Zionism was not merely a political movement by secular Jews. It was actually a
> tool of God to promote His divine scheme and to initiate the return of the Jews to
> their homeland - the land He promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God wants
> the children of Israel to return to their home in order to establish a Jewish
> sovereign state in which Jews could live according to the laws of Torah and
> Halakha and commit the Mitzvot of Eretz Israel (the religious commandments
> which can be performed only in the land of Israel). Moreover, to cultivate the land
> of Israel was a Mitzvah by itself and it should be carried out. Therefore, settling
> Israel is an obligation of the religious Jews and helping Zionism is actually
> following God's will."[57]

A significant problem that many religious Jews originally had with Zionism was

that Zionists were largely secular Jews. The Zionists saw their movement as an effort to

build an advanced society in the land of Israel, while solving the anti-semitism problem

in Europe. In some cases the Zionists, particularly those from Russia, were socialists.

The Kibbutz is a good example of their efforts to establish a communal settlement in

order to fulfill national goals. However, at the time of the founding of the modern state

of Israel it was very important to the secular authorities to have the support of the

religious community and consessions were made in order to secure it.

Today religious Zionists are often called "Kippot Sruggot", which means knitted

Yarmulkes, because of the knitted skullcap worn by the men. Most religious Zionists are

politically very conservative and vote for the National Religious Party, Hazit, Likud, or

the National Union. Many settlers in the West Bank, and formally from the Gaza Strip,

are religious Zionists. Many other religious Zionists, who are not actually settlers, are

supporters of the pro-settlement movement Gush Emunim, an Israeli political movement

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[57] Samson, David; Tzvi Fishman (1991). *Torat Eretz Yisrael*. Jerusalem: Torat Eretz Yisrael Publications

which encourages settlement on all of the Biblical lands of Israel. Ideologically, Gush Emunim began after the Six-Day War, although it was not formally established as an organization until after the Yom Kippur War in 1974. Gush Emunim is closely associated, and highly influential in the National Religious Party (NRP). Its beliefs are based heavily on the teachings of Rabbi Kook; supporters believe that the coming of the Messiah can be hastened through Jewish settlement on land they believe God has allotted to the Jewish people as outlined in the Hebrew Bible. Recently, in light of the mass eviction of Jews from Gaza, the violent eviction of Jews from Amonah, and numerous other similar events on a smaller scale, many members of this community have had second thoughts about their ideology although there are still many true believers established in both authorized and unauthorized settlements in the West Bank.[58]

Aside from the religious justification for the settlements, the Israeli Foreign Ministry asserts that some settlements are legitimate, as they took shape when there was no operative diplomatic arrangement, and thus they did not violate any agreement.[59] Based on this the Israeli government argues that prior to the eruption of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the late eighties, even until the signing of the Israeli-Jordanian peace treaty in 1994, the settlements were of strategic and tactical importance to Israeli governments. The location of the settlements was primarily chosen based on the threat of an attack by the bordering hostile countries of Jordan, Syria, and Egypt and possible routes of advance into Israeli population areas. Therefore, these settlements contributed

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[58] Michman, Dan, "*A Historical Look at Religious Zionism*," Department of Jewish History, Bar-Ilan University December 12, 1999
[59] Helmreich, Jeffrey, "Diplomatic and Legal Aspects of the Settlement Issue," Institute for Contemporary Affairs, jcpa.org

to the peace and security of the state of Israel and were therefore legally justifiable.[60]

he Oslo Accords, signed in 1993, was an example of the the diplomatic theory of "land for peace". It provided for the creation of a Palestinian Authority and the withdrawal of Israeli forces from parts of the Gaza Strip and West Bank. While welcomed by the majority of the Israeli population, it was a stunning shock and defeat for the settlement movement. After a spike in violence by members of Hamas and Islamic Jihad, a number of settlers became radicalized in opposition to the Oslo Accords. "There can be no question that the Oslo Accords brought many Gush Emunim members, individuals obssessed with the redemption of Greater Israel and the coming of the Messiah, to a theological crisis."[61]

In 1994 Baruch Goldstein, an Israeli-American settler and off-duty IDF army reservist, walked into the Cave of the Patriarchs, a place of worship for both Muslims and Jews, and opened fire killing 29 people and injuring another 125. He was eventually overwhelmed by survivors and beaten to death. Goldstein's actions were immediately condemned by the Israeli government, the mainstream Israeli parties, and the Israeli populace in general. Spokespeople for all the organized denominations of Judaism denounced his act as immoral and as terrorism. The Kach movement, to which he belonged - a right-wing religious Zionist movement which believes Israel should be governed theocratically, should accord full citizenship exclusively to Jews, and that all others should be deported - was outlawed as a terrorist organization. The cabinet agreed

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[60] Settler Population Growth East and West or the Barrier, Foundation for Middle East Peace
[61] Sprinzak, Ehud, "Brother Against Brother; Violence and Extremism in Israeli Politics," New York: The Free Press, 1999, pg. 239

to take away the weapons of some right-wing extremists and put them in administrative

detention.[62] The Hebron massacre triggered reprisal attacks from radical Palestinian

groups. "Two Hamas car bombs in the cities of Afula and Hadera killed and wounded a

large number of Israeli civilians."[63] The ideology and attacks by both the radical

Palestinian and Israeli factions was an effort to stop the peace process through violence.

However, at the time both the Israeli political elite and the general population had no idea

how far this radicalization would soon go.

On November 4, 1995 Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin was assasinated by Yigal

Amir, a twenty-five year old law student who became involved in right-wing politics and

was supportive of the religious Zionist movement. After the 1993 Oslo Accords and in

the aftermath of the Hebron massacre it has been argued that, "the increasing aggression

of the extreme right, especially the intensifying use of verbal violence, culminated in the

assassination."[64] Amir's explanation of his motivation for the assassination was used as

evidence of this theory:

> "Without believing in God, I would never have had the power to do this. In the
> last three years I have understood that Rabin is not the leader who could lead the
> people...he did not care about Jews, he lied, he had a lust for power. He
> brainwashed the people and the media. He came up with ideas such as a
> Palestinian State. Together with Yasser Arafat, the murderer, he was awarded the
> Nobel Peace Prize, but he failed to address his people's problems. He divided the
> people. He marginalized the settlers and did not care about them. I had to save
> the people because the people failed to understand the real conditions, and this is
> why I acted. He used repeatedly the term "victims of peace." Soldiers had been
> killed in Lebanon and the government did not respond because there

[62] Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1994, *"General Yatom Press Conference,"* Israel- The State of, Available from Internet
http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Archive/Peace+Process/1994/GENERAL+YATOM+PRESS+CONFERENCE+-+27-Feb-94.htm, accessed 29 March, 2008
[63] Sprinzak, Ehud, "Brother Against Brother; Violence and Extremism in Israeli Politics," New York: The Free Press, 1999, pg. 243
[64] Ibid, p. 245

was a political process...If not for a Halakhic ruling of *din rodef,* made against Rabin by a few rabbis I know about, it would have been very difficult for me to murder. Such a murder must be backed up. If I did not get the backing and I had not been representing many more people, I would not have acted."[65]

Amir's justifications for the murder were a copy of the rhetoric used by the Israeli right.

Despite this they were genuinely shocked by what had happened. "The possiblility of a

Jew killing the nation's top leader, who was also the hero of the 1967 war...was

inconceivable to them."[66]

From the time of Rabin's assasination until now settlement activity has continued.

In 2005 Prime Minister Ariel Sharon unilaterally dismantled settlements and pulled

Israeli military forces out of the Gaza Strip. In a speech on June 24, 2002 President Bush

outlined the principles of a plan later called the "Road Map for Peace". It was proposed

by the United States, the European Union, Russia, and the United Nations. It resolves the

Israeli-Palestinian conflict by calling for an independent Palestinian state living side by

side with Israel in peace. In exchange for statehood, the Road Map requires the

Palestinian Authority to make democratic reforms and abandon the use of terrorism. In

turn, Israel must accept and support the emergence of a reformed Palestinian government

as the terrorist threat is removed, and end settlement activity in the West Bank.

However, Palestinian Prime Minister Abbas has failed to stop terrorist activity,

and in 2007 the terrorist group Hamas took control of the Gaza Strip and has allowed

rockets to be fired at Israeli towns from its territory. In October 2006, according to

Haaretz, Israel's oldest newspaper, rampant construction of settlements was ongoing in

the West Bank, contrary to Israeli promises to the United States to halt settlement

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[65] *Report: The State Investigation Commission in the Matter of the Murder of the Late Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin,* pg. 89

[66] Sprinzak, Ehud, "Brother Against Brother; Violence and Extremism in Israeli Politics," New York: The Free Press, 1999, pg. 276

construction.[67] According to the report, many of these settlements were built on private Palestinian property, including properties previously guaranteed by Israel.

In addition to the legal and moral questions regarding the settlement of the Palestinian territories, the State of Israel also has to address the rights of the minority communities within the state, the vast majority of which are Arabs. Of its 6.3 million citizens over one million are not Jewish. Almost all are Arab-Israelis, mainly residents from before the establishment of the State of Israel and their descendants. The question then arises as to what their status and rights should be within a Jewish state which has been in constant conflict with its Arab neighbors.

3. Indigenous Minority Communities

Defined collectively as Arab citizens of Israel, the Arab Israeli sector includes a number of different groups - primarily Arabic-speaking - each with its distinct identity. Muslim Arabs, the largest group, constitute three-quarters of the Arab Israeli sector and are mostly Sunni Muslims. Christian Arabs form the second largest group in the Arab Israeli sector. Although many denominations are nominally represented, the majority of the Christian Arabs are affiliated with the Greek Catholic, Greek Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches. Nearly one-tenth of Israel's Muslim Arabs are Bedouins, formerly nomadic shepherds. The Druze, some 100,000 Arabic-speakers living in 22 villages in northern Israel, is a separate cultural, social, and religious community. The Druze blend Islamic monotheism with Greek philosophy and Hindu influences. The community is generally closed to outsiders; however its members have been successful in Israeli

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[67] Harel, Amos. 2006. *"Settlements grow on Arab land, despite promises made to U.S.,"* Haaretz News, Available from Internet, http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/778767.html, accessed 28 February, 2008

society, attaining high-level positions in the political, public and military spheres of the

country.

Israeli Arabs
Legal and Political Status:

The political involvement of the Arab sector is manifested through both national

and municipal elections. Arab citizens run the political and administrative affairs of their

own municipalities and advance Arab interests through their elected representatives in the

Knesset. Currently, three political parties represent Arab interests: the United Arab List,

Hadash, and Balad. The *United Arab List* supports the creation of a Palestinian State

with East Jerusalem as its capital, and a solution of two states – one Jewish and one

Palestinian - for the conflict in the region. Its constituency consists mostly of religious or

nationalist Israeli Arabs, and it enjoys particular popularity among the Bedouin. *Hadash*

is a political party of the left and defines itself as a 'Jewish-Arab Party'. Most of its

voters and leaders are Israeli Arab citizens of Israel. The party supports evacuation of all

Israeli settlements, a complete withdrawal by Israel from all territories occupied as a

result of the Six-Day War, and the establishment of a Palestinian state in those territories.

It also supports the 'Right of Return,' or compensation for Palestinian refugees.[68] *Balad*

is an Arab nationalist political party, whose stated purpose is the creation of two states

based on pre-1967 borders, which would include the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and East

Jerusalem as part of a Palestinian State. Balad also wants to "transform Israel from a

Jewish state into a democratic state, a state with equality for all of its citizens, Jews and

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[68] Upstart Activist, 2005-06, *"Israel Votes, 2006"* Available from Internet
http://www.israelvotes.com/demo/platforms.html, accessed 20 March 2008

Arabs alike, and to eliminate all state institutions and laws which discriminate against

Arabs in Israel."[69]

Arab Israelis are citizens of Israel and officially have the same rights as all others.

Israel does not a have written constitution but the rights of citizens are guaranteed by its

Basic Laws. Although this set of laws does not explicitly include the term "right to

equality" the Israeli Supreme Court has consistently interpreted "Basic Law: Human

Dignity and Liberty" and "Basic Law: Freedom of Occupation (1994)" as guaranteeing

equal rights for all Israeli citizens.[70] However, many Arab citizens feel that the state, as

well as society at large, actively discriminates against them.[71] The Minorities at Risk

(MAR) 2004 report notes that Arabs citizens in Israel "suffer political discrimination

based on decades of social exclusion." They characterize Israel's system of governance

to be an "ethnic democracy" and further note that "the nationalism inherent in Israel's

foundation as a 'Jewish state' is at odds with its political basis of democratic governance

vis-à-vis the Arab minority." On the other hand, the group also states that despite such

factors, "Israeli Arabs are relatively much better off economically than neighboring

Arabs."[72]

An important political distinction between the Jewish and the Arab communities

is that since Israel's establishment, Arab citizens have been exempted from compulsory

service in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). Also, "in the public employment sphere, by

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[69] National Democratic Assembly-NDA Party Website, Available on Internet,
http://balad.org/index.php?id=138=5&sbSubContrassID=0&listSrc=Y, accessed 25 February 2008
[70] State of Israel, The Knesset, 2006, *"Basic Laws-Introduction,"* Available from Internet
http://www.knesset.gov.il/description/eng/eng_mimshal_yesod.htm, accessed 26 February 2008
[71] Nahmias, Roee, 2007 *"Stop treating Arab citizens like enemies,"* Ynet News, - Israeli News, Available
form Internet, http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3391545,00.html, accessed 1 March 2008
[72] Minorities At Risk Report, 2004. College Park, MD: University of Maryland, Center for International
Development and Conflict Management. Available from Internet, http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/mar/,
accessed 3 March 2008

the end of 2002, Arabs comprised 6.1% of the civil service workers in Israel; there is a total of 56,362 civil servants in Israel, only 3,440 of which were Arab."[73] Inequality in funding between Jewish and Arab towns, and widespread discrimination present significant hurdles for Arab citizens of Israel. According to the *2004 U.S. State Department's Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for Israel and the Occupied Territories,* the Israeli government "did little to reduce institutional, legal, and societal discrimination against the country's Arab citizens."[74]

Community Identity:

As a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, multi-religious, and multi-lingual society Israel has a high level of informal segregation patterns. While groups are not separated by official policy, a number of different sectors within the society do lead a segregated life-style maintaining their strong cultural, religious, ideological and/or ethnic identity. This is certainly the case with the Arab-Israeli community. Their separate existence is facilitated through the use of Arabic, Israel's second official language; a separate Arab/Druze school system; Arabic literature, theater, and mass media; and the maintenance of independent Muslim, Druze and Christian denominational courts which adjudicate matters of personal status. Also, the development of inter-group relations between Israel's Arabs and Jews has been hindered by their contentious history, deeply rooted differences in religion, values, and political beliefs.

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[73] Haider, Ali, 2003. *"Arab Representation in the Civil Service, in Government Corporations, and in the Court System,"* Jerusalem, Israel: Sikkuy: The Association for the Advancement of Civic Equality in Israel. Available form Internet, http://www.sikkuy.org.il/2003/english03/pdf/civilEn03.pdf, accessed 18 February 2008

[74] U.S. Department of State, 2004. *" Israel and the occupied territories,"* Country Reports on Human Rights, Available from Internet, http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2004/41723.htm, accessed 1 March, 2008

Arab population centers are spread throughout Israel, although Arab citizens of Israel form a majority of the population (52%) in Israel's Northern District. Nazareth is the largest Arab city, with a population of 65,000, roughly 40,000 of who are Muslim. Jerusalem is a mixed city, and has the largest overall Arab population. Arabs constitute 55% of the population of East Jerusalem and 33% of Jerusalem as a whole. The city of Haifa has an Arab population of 9%, concentrated in certain neighborhoods. However, most Arabs in the northern district live in the Wadi Ara region, located northwest of the Green Line. Ten percent of the country's Arab population resides in the Center District, primarily in the cities of Tayibe, Tira, and Qalansawe, located along or near the Green Line which separates Israel from the West Bank in an area known as the triangle.[75]

Education in the Arab community statistically lags behind that of the Jewish majority. While the number of children (both boys and girls) in school has risen among all sectors of the population, the high school drop-out rate for Arab citizens of Israel is twice as high as that of their Jewish counterparts (12 percent versus 6 percent).[76] Also, the percentage of Jews continuing to university is three times that of the Arab population. If Arabs do continue to university they often are unable to find jobs commensurate with their level of education. According to the *2004 U.S. State Department Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for Israel and the Occupied territories*, "Israeli Arabs were underrepresented in the student bodies and faculties of most universities and in higher professional and business ranks."

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[75] Central Bureau of Statistics-Israel, 1997-2008. Available from the Internet, http://www1.cbs.gov.il/reader/cw_usr_view_Folder?ID=141, accessed 5 March 2008

[76] Arab Sector: NIF Grantees Fight Discrimination in Arab Education. New Israel Fund, September 13, 2005

As a result of the educational discrepancy, the Arab population in Israel tends to earn less money than the Jewish population. Arabs earn approximately 60% of the yearly wage of Jews; however the cost of living is also lower among the Arab population. According to the New York Times (8 February 2007), "a recent report on poverty published last year by Israel's National Insurance Institute indicated that 53 percent of the impoverished families in Israel are Arabs."[77] According to the Central Bank of Israel, Statistics for 2003, "for those Arabs citizens who are employed, salary averages are 29% lower than salary averages for Jewish workers." Of the 40 towns in Israel with the highest unemployment rates, 36 are Arab towns. Difficulties in procuring employment have been attributed to a comparatively low level of education compared to their Jewish counterparts, insufficient employment opportunities in the vicinity of their towns, discrimination by Jewish employers, and competition from foreign workers in fields such as construction and agriculture.[78]

As of 2001, only 40% of Arab persons fifteen and older were part of the work force in Israel. On the other hand, Jews have 60% of their population participating in the labor force. One reason for the lower rate of Arab workers is the extremely low proportion of Arab women in the work force. Only fifteen percent of Arab women participate in the labor force, while 53% of Jewish women work. In both Jewish and Arab populations, younger women are more likely to work. Seventy-nine percent of

[77]Kershner, Isabel, 2007, *"Noted Arab Citizens Call on Israel to Shed Jewish Identity,"* New York Times, February 8. Available on Internet
http://www.nytimes.com/2007/02/08/world/middleeast/08israel.html?_r=1&pagewanted=2&oref=slogin, accessed 5 March 2008
[78] Professor (Emeritus) Shimon Shamir, September 19, 2005, PDF format at
http://www.dayan.org/kapjac/files/shamirEng.pdf). The Arabs in Israel – Two Years after The Or Commission Report. The Konrad Adenauer Program for Jewish-Arab Cooperation

Jewish women aged 25-34 are part of the work force, while the Arab percentage is twenty-two percent.[79]

Another important issue affecting the Arab community is their population growth rate. Due largely to improvements in health care the infant mortality rate for Arabs, as well as the rest of the population, has dropped and life expectancy has increased. Also over time, the fertility rate of the Arab population has also dropped. In the 1960's Arab Israeli families had on average more than nine children. By 1985, fertility had dropped to 4.7 children, and remained at that level for the next 15 years. Over the past five years, the decline resumed, with the fertility rate dropping from 4.74 children per Muslim woman in 2000 to 4.36 in 2004. During the same period, the fertility rate for Jewish women rose slightly, from 2.66 to 2.71.[80]

These numbers are significant because the phrase "demographic threat" (or demographic bomb) is used in Israeli politics to describe the perceived threat the growth of its Arab citizenry poses to the maintenance of the Jewish state. The demographic threat has been used as an excuse by certain political figures to advocate either expulsion or transferance of Israeli Arabs to neighboring states. However, a January 2006 study by the American-Israel Demographic Research Group rejects the "demographic time bomb" threat based on statistical data collected since 1995. The study noted shortcomings in earlier demographic predictions (for example, in the 1960s, predictions suggested that Arabs would be the majority in 1990). The study also demonstrated that Christian Arab and Druze birth rates were actually below those of Jewish birth rates in Israel. The study

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[79] Central Bureau of Statistics-Israel, 1997-2008. Available from the Internet http://www1.cbs.gov.il/reader/cw_usr_view_Folder?ID=141, accessed 8 March 2008
[80] Llan, Shahar, 2006. *"Fertility Rate Among Arab Women Declining,"* Haaretz, 16 June. Available from Internet, http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/pages/ShArt.jhtml?itemNo=727623, accessed 9 March 2008

used data from a Gallup poll to demonstrate that the desired family size for Arab and Jewish Israelis were the same. The study's population forecast for 2025 predicted that Arabs would comprise only 25.0% of the Israeli population.[81]

The Bedouin

The Bedouin population in Israel currently numbers approximately 170,000 persons, living in the following regions: 110,000 in the Negev, 10,000 in the central region, and 50,000 in the north.[82] The Bedouin population in the central region is made up of immigrants from the Negev while the population in the north is originally from the Syrian Desert area. The Negev Bedouins, which comprise the majority in Israel, are traditionally pastoral, semi-nomadic Arab tribes, indigenous to the Negev region, who hold close ties to the Bedouins of the Sinai. The Bedouins are represented in the Knesset by the Arab parties, although the United Arab List party enjoys particular popularity among them. This party operates in poor Arab towns, villages, and in Bedouin settlements, in order to mobilize voters. Political issues affecting the Bedouin community are: land rights, illegal building, livestock grazing, and the establishment of permanent towns.

The Bedouins of the Negev have survived on sheep and goat husbandry for centuries but the scarcity of water forced them to move constantly. This nomadic lifestyle did not suit the Israeli government's security needs, not to mention the desire of local Jewish farmers to protect what they considered private land from the Bedouin's

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[81] Zimmerman, Roberta Seid and Michael L. Wise: *Forecast for Israel and West Bank 2025*. Sixth Herzliya Conference, January 23, 2006

[82] Ben-David, Yosef, 1999. *"The Bedouin in Israel,"* Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Aviailable from Internet, http://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/mfaarchive/1990_1999/1999/7/the%20bedouin%20in%20israel, accessed 12 March 2008

grazing herds. The issue of land rights has been a contentious one and in the past has let to violent confrontations. As a result, this has led to the forced sedentism of the local Bedouin population. Today, around half the Negev Bedouins live in seven towns built for them by the government between 1979 and 1982. The largest Bedouin town in Israel is the city of Rahat, which has an approximate population of 40,000.[83]

There are two kinds of land offenses that make media headlines: illegal building and grazing in protected areas. Often tents and light structures (shacks and huts) built illegally are ignored. But construction of houses of stone or concrete without a building permit is considered an offense, since adequate infrastructure and services cannot be provided. Some 2,000 such locations are scattered over an area of about 1,000 square kilometers. Most of the livestock of the Bedouin in the Negev, who keep flocks of sheep and goats, are registered and approved by the Ministry of Agriculture which provides pasture land outside the Negev for six to seven months of the year, since the carrying capacity of the Negev is limited. Owners who, for reasons of tax evasion, have not registered their livestock and do not receive Ministry of Agriculture services, frequently trespass on nature reserves or populated areas. They are liable to be punished under the law but rarely are.[84]

During the 1948 war and afterward it was considered a priority by the fledgling Israeli state to establish control over the Negev and to open the land to Jewish migration. This desire resulted in mutual antagonism between the Bedouin and the government. On the Israeli government side the reasons for the antagonism were manifold: "The government, aiming for control of the land and its demographics, were concerned by the

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[83] Ibid
[84] Ibid

Bedouins' fertility rate - one of the highest in the world. Their semi-nomadic lifestyle made it all but impossible to contain their movement across territory and to monitor their political activities as the state kept watch over the sedentary Arab communities...The Negev, some two thirds of the new state's land mass, was viewed as a huge tract that could absorb future Jewish immigration. Finally, the desert's barren expanses, difficult to infiltrate or traverse unseen, were considered the ideal setting for military bases and sensitive operations."[85]

Ultimately, the conflict between the Bedouins and the government can be characterized as that between a modern society and a traditional indigenous culture. Similar conflicts over land and lifestyle can be found between the established governments and the Australia Aborigines, American Indians and Europe's Gypsies. The difference in the Israel case is the government's security concerns regarding its need to monitor its population, in particular its Arab population.

The Druze

The Druze community in Israel is officially recognized as a separate religious entity with its own educational system, and court system - with jurisdiction in matters of personal status such as marriage, divorce, and adoption. Their culture is Arab and their language Arabic but they opted against mainstream Arab nationalism in 1948 and have since served (first as volunteers, and later within the draft system) in the Israel Defense Forces and the Border Police. Worldwide there are probably about one million Druze

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[85] Cook, Jonathan, 2003, *"The Bedouin,"* Middle East Report Online. Available from Internet, http://www.merip.org/mero/mero051003.html, accessed 12 March 2008

living mainly in Syria and Lebanon, with 104,000 in Israel.[86] During the British Mandate over Palestine they refrained from taking part in the Arab-Jewish conflict, and during Israel's War of Independence (1948) became active participants on Israel's side.

The Druze consider their faith to be a new interpretation of the three monotheistic religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. For them, the traditional story of the Creation is a parable, which describes Adam not as the first human being, but as the first person to believe in one god. Since then the idea of monotheism has been disseminated by prophets, all reincarnations of the same monotheistic idea. "Although the Druze recognize all three monotheistic religions, they believe that rituals and ceremonies have caused Jews, Christians, and Muslims to turn aside from pure faith. They argue that individuals who believe that God will forgive them if they fast and pray, will commit transgressions in the expectation of being forgiven - and then repeat their sins. The Druze thus eliminated all elements of ritual and ceremony; there is no fixed daily liturgy, no defined holy days, and no pilgrimage obligations. The Druze perform their spiritual supplication to God at all times, and consequently need no special days of fasting or atonement."[87] The Druze religion is secret and closed to converts. From their theological perspective, the secrecy derives from the idea that the gates of the religion were open to new believers for the space of a generation when it was first revealed and everyone was invited to join. Since everyone alive today is the reincarnation of someone who lived at that time, there is no reason to allow them to join now.

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[86] Aridi, Naim Dr. 2008 *"The Druze,"* Jewish Virtual Library, Israeli Foreign Ministry. Available from Internet, http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Society_&_Culture/druze.html, accessed 12 March 2008

[87] Aridi, Naim Dr. 2002, *"The Druze in Israel,"* Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Available from Internet,
http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/MFAArchive/2000_2009/2002/12/Focus%20on%20Israel-%20The%20Druze%20in%20Israel, accessed 15 March 2008

Since the founding of Israel, the Druze educational system has flourished. In 1948-1949, only 981 Druze were enrolled in school - 881 boys and 100 girls. Some 30 years later, there were 18,729 Druze students. Today there are over 30,000 Druze students in the school system - some 2.3% of all pupils in Israel, although the rresentation of Druze in the general population is only 1.6%.[88] Israeli Druze also serve in the Israeli army, voluntarily during 1948-1956, and at the community leaders' request, compulsorily ever since. Their privileges and responsibilities are the same as those of Israeli Jews; thus, all Druze are drafted, but exemptions are given for religious students and for various other reasons, as in the majority Jewish population. Israeli Druze have achieved high positions of command in the Israeli military, far beyond their proportion in the general population of Israel. The relationship between Israeli Jews and Druze since 1948 is strong, partly because of the considerable number of Israeli Druze soldiers who have fallen in Israel's wars. The Druze are prominent not only in the military but also in politics, greatly surpassing their proportion of the general population. Currently, Majalli Wahabi, a Druze politician and member of the Kadima party, holds the positions of Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and Deputy Speaker of the Knesset. He briefly became Israel's Acting President in February 2007, making him the first non-Jew to act as Israel's head of state.[89]

The Arab, Bedouin, and Druze communites have all resided in the area long before the establishment of the State of Israel. Beginning at the turn of the 20th century,

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[88] Aridi, Naim Dr. 2008 *"The Druze,"* Jewish Virtual Library, Israeli Foreign Ministry. Available from Internet, http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Society_&_Culture/druze.html, accessed 12 March 2008

[89] Aridi, Naim Dr. 2002, *"The Druze in Israel,"* Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Available from Internet,
http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/MFAArchive/2000_2009/2002/12/Focus%20on%20Israel-%20The%20Druze%20in%20Israel, accessed 15 March 2008

their lives changed dramatically due to the immigration patterns from Europe, mainly in response to the political persecution of the Jewish community there. While at first the changes were gradual, with only a few Jewish communities able to establish themselves. However, later in the 20th century that trickle of immigrants became a flood which resulted in violence between the two communities. Since the establishment of the State of Israel Jewish immigration has tended to come in waves, each of which has had a profound impact on such a small society, changing it in unique ways.

CHAPTER VII

IMMIGRATION AND ITS EFFECTS ON INCREASING SECULARISM

1. **Early Immigrants**
   The Ashkenazi, Sephardi, and Mezrahi

Before proceeding with a discussion of Ashkenazi and Sephardic immigration

patterns and its effect on British Mandate and Israeli society it would be helpful to

establish who is considered an Ashkenazi and who is considered a Sephardic Jew. There

is currently a debate regarding 'Who is a Jew?' This makes it especially difficult to

define who is an Ashkenazi or Sephardic Jew because both groups have been defined

using one or more religious, cultural, or ethnic perspectives.

An Ashkenazi Jew, in an ethnic sense, is someone whose ancestry can be traced to

the Jews of Central and Eastern Europe. In a cultural sense, an Ashkenazi Jew can be

identified by the concept of *Yiddishkeit,* which literally means "a Jewish way of life," in

Yiddish. In particular, it is associated with the popular culture or folk practices of

Yiddish-speaking Jews such as: popular religious traditions, Eastern European Jewish

food, Yiddish humor, shtel life, and klezmer music, among other things. But with

secularization, *Yiddishkeit* has come to encompass not just traditional Jewish practices,

but a broad range of movements, ideologies, practices, and traditions. For religious Jews,

in addition to *Halakha*, or religious law, they have *Minhagim*, an accepted tradition or

group of traditions and customs. For them it is the differences in the European

Minhagim, not *Halakha*, that define an Ashkenazi as opposed to a Sephardic Jew.[90]

Similarly, it is now difficult to define who is a Sephardic Jew. By definition a

Sephardi is someone originating in the Iberian Peninsula, including the descendants of

those subject to expulsion from Spain by order of the Catholic Monarchs Ferdinand and

Isabella. A Mezrahi is someone of Arabic or Persian background. Currently, the term

Sephardim has come to include both Jews of Arabic and Persian backgrounds who have

no historical connection to Iberia except their use of a Sephardic style of liturgy. For

religious purposes, Jews of these communities are considered to be *Sephardim*, meaning

"Jews of the Spanish rite" in the same way *Ashkenazim* means "Jews of the German rite"

even if their families were not originally from Germany.[91] Accordingly, in the vernacular

of modern-day Israel, 'Sephardic' has come to be used as an umbrella term for any

Jewish person who is not Ashkenazi.

Since the overwhelming majority of Ashkenazi Jews no longer live in the closed

communities of Eastern Europe, and the overwhelming majority of Sephardic Jews no

longer live in the closed communities on the Iberian Peninsula or beyond, the isolation

that once favored a distinct religious tradition and culture has vanished. In Israel the term

Ashkenazi is now used in ways that have nothing to do with its original meaning. In

practice, the label Ashkenazi is often applied to all Jews of European background living

in Israel, including those whose ethnic background is actually Sephardic. Jews of any

[90] Schoenberg, Shira, 2008 *"Ashkenazim,"* Jewish Virtual Library, Amercian-Israeli Cooperative. Available from Internet, http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judaism/Ashkenazim.html, accessed 20 March 2008

[91] Weiner, Rebecca, 2008. *"Sephardim,"* Jewish Virtual Library, American-Israeli Cooperative. Available from Internet, http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judaism/Sephardim.html, accessed 20 March 2008

non-Ashkenazi background, including Mizrahi, Yemenite, Kurdish, and others having no

connection at all with the Iberian Peninsula, have similarly come to be lumped together

as Sephardic. Jews of mixed background are increasingly common, partly because of

intermarriage between Ashkenazi and non-Ashkenazi, and partly because some do not

see the historic markers of groups living in the Diaspora as relevant to their life

experiences as Jews living in modern Israel.

While many feel that such labels as Ashkenazi or Sephardic are not relevent to

them today they are helpful in tracing the early immigration patterns to the British

Mandate and later to the State of Israel and the effect these two distinct groups had on the

shaping of an independent Israeli state and society. Israel's Jewish population came in

several waves. The first wave of immigrants to present-day Israel began arriving in 1882

from Russia following two years of pogroms there. The Second Aliya, from 1904-1914,

was sparked by another rise in persecution of Russian Jews. Through the 1940s, the vast

majority of immigrants were from Europe, and so Ashkenazi traditions became important

shapers of future Israeli institutions. The Nazi threat brought hordes of German Jews to

Israel in the 1930s, and they left their mark on the state's future institutions. Israel's legal

code is based on Germany's, and the universities are also founded on the German model.

German immigrants founded orchestras, art museums, and populated entire

neighborhoods. Israel's socialist roots - seen in the kibbutz, its universal health-care, and

generous social-welfare programs - are tied to the large number of immigrants from

Russia (and later the Soviet Union), who were influenced by Communism.[92]

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[92] Kushner, Aviya, 2002. "*Israel's Vibrant Jewish Ethnic Mix,*" University of Iowa. Available from
Interntet,
http://jewishla.myjewishlearning.com/history_community/Israel/Israeli_Society/AskenaziSephardi.htm,
accessed 25 March 2008

After the War of Independence in 1948, over 700,000 Jews were expelled from Arab countries. Arriving on foot or through "Operation Magic Carpet," which airlifted tens of thousands to Israel; these Jews had darker skin, different songs, different foods, and a different cultural background. The arrival of these Sephardic Jews changed the dynamic in Israel from Russian and German, or German and Polish to Ashkenazi and Sephardic. Immigrants with a Judeo-Arab culture coming from the Islamic countries found themselves in this predominantly Western melting pot. Between 1948 and 1952 about 300,000 Sephardic immigrants came to Israel. Aside from 120,000 highly educated Iraqi Jews and 10,000 Egyptian Jews, the majority of new immigrants (55,000 Turkish Jews, 40,000 Iranian Jews, 55,000 Yemeni Jews, and thousands more from Jewish enclaves in Afghanistan, the Caucasus, and Cochin in southwest India) were poorly educated, impoverished, and culturally very different from the country's dominant European culture. They were religious Jews who had worked primarily in small businesses and trade, while the ruling Ashkenazim of the Labor Party were mostly secular socialists.[93]

In the late 1950s, a new flood of 400,000 mainly undereducated Moroccan, Algerian, Tunisian, and Egyptian Jews immigrated to Israel following Israel's Sinai Campaign. The total addition to Israel's population during the first twelve years of statehood was about 1.2 million, and at least two-thirds of the newcomers were of Sephardic extraction. By 1961 the Sephardic portion of the Jewish population was about 45 percent, or approximately 800,000 people. By the end of the first decade about four-fifths of the Sephardic population lived in the large towns and cities where they had become workers in an economy dominated by the Ashkenazim. Consequently, many

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[93] Ibid

Sephardim have complained of a cultural bias in favor of the Ashkenazi. For decades,

tension brewed between Ashkenazi Jews and Sephardic Jews in Israel. A marriage

between an Ashkenazi and a Sephardim was called one of the "*nisuei ta'arovet*," or

mixed marriage. The stereotype was that Sephardim were less intellectual, less wealthy,

and less educated than Ashkenazim.[94]

Over time, Sephardim and Ashkenazim have moved closer together and

Sephardic Jews have gained prominent positions within Israeli society. The Israeli army

has served as a melting pot for new immigrants who, while serving their new country,

can bond with others of different backgrounds. The large number of Arabic-speaking

Jews is a great asset to IDF military and intelligence efforts. While differences in

practice and tradition once divided Ashkenazim and Sephardim, today there are efforts to

have just one Chief Rabbi of Israel, instead of the two that are currently elected - one

catering to the Ashkenazi and the other to the Sephardic community. Tel Aviv already

has one rabbi making decisions for all its citizens.

Although relations have improved, most Israelis are aware of the history of ethnic

tension. During the first 40 years of statehood, the Ashkenazi-Sephardic divide was

particularly salient, posing a major political problem in trying to forge governments and

create a cohesive society. But, in the 1970's Menachem Begin came to power by

courting the Sephardic vote, and since then politicians and parties have tried to either

build their base by appealing to one group, or diversify their parties by courting both.

More recently the Shas party has been very successful, by not only courting the

Sephardic religious community, but also appealing to many others by its alignment with

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[94] Country Studies-Israel, 2001. *"Israel Ingathering of the Exiles,"* Library of Congress. Available from Internet, http://www.workmall.com/wfb2001/israel/israel_history_ingathering_of_the_exiles.html, accessed 28 March 2008

the promotion of Middle Eastern Israeli culture, which fits well with the traditional

Zionist beliefs of a revival of authentic Jewish culture. In fact, the majority of Shas

voters are not Ultra-orthodox; many of its voters are modern Orthodox, traditional

Mizrahi and Sephardi Jews, as well as some of the Druze community.

2. The Ethiopian Immigrants

Over the centuries, despite some oblique Biblical references to Jews from the

African kingdom of Cush and occasional rumors spread by merchants of a Jewish nation

in the Horn of Africa, the Ethiopian Jews, known as Beta Israel or the Falasha, had

virtually no contact with other Jews until sixteenth century Portuguese traders reported

their existence to the West. Though the traders told stories of the African's ancient

Biblical rituals, the Western Jewish community rejected the idea that the Beta Israel had

any real claim to Hebrew lineage. Nineteenth century Jewish scholar Joseph HaLevy and

his pupil, Jacques Faitlovitch, were almost alone in bringing the Beta Israel cause to the

Jewish community. Their unrelenting crusade to convince Orthodox Rabbinate to

recognize the Beta Israel community culminated in the 1973 decree by Israel's Sephardic

Chief Rabbi Ovadia Yossef that that the Falashas were descendants of the Tribe of Dan

and should be allowed to emigrate to Israel under the 'Law of Return,' Israel's

immigration statute that guarantees citizenship to any "verifiable" Jew. In 1975 his

Ashkenazi counterpart, Rabbi Shlomo Goren, concurred, and soon thereafter the Israeli

Parliament agreed. A few Beta Israel began to immigrate to Israel in the 1970s and early

1980s, but the real emigration wave came in the mid 1980's and again in the early

1990's.[95]

The first mass exodus of Ethiopian Jews began on November 18, 1984, and ended six weeks later on January 5, 1985. It was called 'Operation Moses' and in that time almost 8,000 people were rescued and brought to Israel. But the mission was not without problems, ending prematurely when Arab nations pressured the Sudanese government to prevent any more Jews from using Sudan to go to Israel. Thus, by the end of 'Operation Moses' in January 1985, almost two-thirds of the Beta Israel, approximately 15,000 Jews, remained in Ethiopia. They were comprised almost entirely of women, very young children, and the sick because only the strongest members of the community were encouraged to make the trek to Sudan where the airlift actually occurred. As Babu Yakov, a Beta Israel leader, summed up, "Those who could not flee are elderly, sick, and infants. Those least capable of defending themselves are now facing their enemies alone."[96]

Meanwhile, the Ethiopians who did escape during 'Operation Moses' attempted to adjust to a society very different from that which they left. The new arrivals spent between six months and two years in absorption centers learning Hebrew, being retrained for Israel's industrial society, and learning how to live in a modern society (most Ethiopian villages had no running water or electricity). Many people and over 1,600 children lived day to day separated from their families, not knowing the fate of their parents, brothers, sisters, and loved ones. In November 1990, Ethiopia and Israel reached an agreement that would allow Ethiopian Jews to move to Israel under the context of family reunification and that year saw an increased number of Ethiopians leave for Israel.

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[95] Parfitt, Tudor and Emanuela Trevisan, "*The Beta Israel in Ethiopia and Israel: Studies on the Ethiopian Jews,*" Journal of Religion in Africa, Vol. 30, Fasc. 1 (Feb., 2000), pp. 137-140
[96] Ibid

In early 1991, Eritrean and Tigrean rebels began a concerted attack on Ethiopian government forces and by late May rebels claimed control of the capital Addis Ababa. At that time the Likud government of Yitzhak Shamir authorized a special permit for the Israeli airline El Al to fly on the Jewish Sabbath. On Friday, May 24, 'Operation Solomon' began and continued non-stop for 36 hours. Thirty-four El Al jumbo jets flew a total of 14,324 Ethiopian Jews to Israel.[97]

Despite the hope when the Ethiopians first came to Israel the transition has been difficult. First of all, while the Israeli government recognized them as citizens with all the rights and privileges as such, their Jewish identity was questioned by the chief Rabbinate. Prior to 'Operation Moses' all Ethiopian Jews were required to undergo ritual immersion prior to marriage in Israel. Secondly, the economic transition has been hard. Currently, most of the Ethiopian community lives below the poverty line as defined by the Israeli government. A lot of the families with young children are headed by unemployed men in their late fifties and sixties. This combined with the high percentage of single mothers means that someone without independent income heads a very high percentage of Ethiopian households. However, even the elderly men and single mothers who do work have difficulty making enough money to support their families since they typically work for minimum wage, which is about $650-$900 per month.[98]

A major reason for this is that many of the Ethiopian immigrants lack any formal education. In Israel the older generation also spends a lot of time traveling to weddings and funerals across the country, trying to maintain the family and social ties that

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[97] Ibid
[98] Jewish Virtual Library, 2008. *"The Present Situation of Ethiopian Jews in Israel,"* American-Israeli Cooperative, Available on Internet, http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judaism/ejdesc.html, accessed 5 April 2008

sustained them in Ethiopia. A member of the older generation who grew to adulthood in Ethiopia is often judged by his peers not by how hard he works or by his ambitions, but by whether he pays proper attention to his social obligations. Thus cultural factors affect the priority that is given to such things as career and children's education, which the older people tend to leave to the government. Even if they wanted to intervene in the education of their children their limited ability to speak Hebrew, or sometimes even read or write in their own language hinders them. Thus the cycle of under education, resulting in poorly paid employment, continues in the second generation.[99]

Most families live in distressed neighborhoods in concentrated Ethiopian pockets. This situation resulted from special government programs aimed at getting people out of the absorption centers and caravan sites. These programs specified that they must buy apartments in the center of the country but only gave them enough financial assistance to buy in the least desirable neighborhoods. Juvenile delinquency has been growing among the young. In neighborhoods with a high concentration of Ethiopian immigrants Israeli criminals are often active in trying to recruit Ethiopian youths into drug sales or other criminal activities. Despite the enthusiasm around the ingathering of Ethiopian Jews, the situation remains bleak for many Ethiopian families. The need for education in the community is vital. Right now statistics show graduation rates for Ethiopian young people dramatically lag behind other communities in Israeli society.[100] Only through military service have most young Ethiopian Jews been able to increase their chances for better opportunities in the future.

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[99] Ibid
[100] UNESCO, 2002, *"Integrating Ethiopian Immigrants in Israel,"* Available from Internet, http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.php-RL_ID=5565&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html, accessed 6 April 2008

Despite facing many challenges, more Ethiopian-Israelis are now participating in Israeli political life. The Atid Ekhad party sees itself as the political representative of the community, though its membership does include non-Ethiopians. The party supports bringing to Israel the remaining Jews in Ethiopia and strengthening integration efforts for the community. In the 2006 election the party won 14,005 votes (0.45% of the total), not enough to cross the 2% threshold required to enter the Knesset. Also in 2006, Shas included Rabbi Mazor Bayana, leader of an Ethiopian community of 10,000 in Beersheba, on its list for the Knesset in a conscious attempt to represent diverse geographic and ethnic groups. Shas was not the only party attempting to appeal to the Ethiopian vote. Herut and Kadima both had Ethiopians on their lists, and Labour was the first party to have an Ethiopian-Israeli member serve in the Knesset.

3.   The Russian Immigrants

In the past twenty-five years another large wave of immigrants to have come to Israel are the Russians. In less than a decade, from 1985 to 1994, more than 750,000 Jews arrived in Israel from Russia so that by the mid-1990s they comprised almost 30 percent of Israel's Jewish population.[101] The scale and nature of this migration were such that it has changed Israel's official approach to immigration and even the ideology of the country. Two things in particular made this wave of immigrants different from the past. One is that they were overwhelmingly secular; moving to Israel for economic, not religious reasons. The second was that many were considered non-Jews by the Orthodox definition. Many religious leaders feared that the new immigrants would further secularize Israeli society. For example, in the last ten years more shops are now staying

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[101] Climo, Jacob, *"The Great Immigration: Russian Jews in Israel,"* Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies - Volume 20, Number 2, Winter 2001, pp. 136-138

open on Shabbat and more supermarkets and restaurants are selling and serving non-Kosher food. [102]

While the challenges that the Russian immigrants have faced are certainly different to those the Ethiopian immigrants faced, there have still been issues with their integration into Israeli society. One of the problems was that the Russian Jewish immigrants maintained their way of life, combining their own cultural values and norms with those learned and adopted in the process of interaction with Israelis. However, the Russian immigrants, on the whole, were well educated and came from an industrial society and were therefore able to make the economic transition fairly quickly.

The big immigration wave of Russians during the 1990's actually started in the late 1980's with the opening of the USSR's borders. However, most of the immigrants actually arrived in Israel at the start of the 1990s. Prior to the collapse of the Soviet government, immigrants who were given permission to leave were forced to pay money, cede their assets, and their Soviet nationality. After the establishment of democracy in Russia, and in other former Soviet republics, those laws were canceled and the immigrants who left after the fall of the communism were able to keep their citizenship and their assets.

Israel's Law of Return (1950) allows Jews, those with Jewish parents or grandparents, spouses of the aforementioned, and their children to settle in Israel and gain citizenship. A major issue for many of the Russian immigrants was that they were not considered Jewish by the Orthodox religious establishment who maintained that only a child born of a Jewish mother is Jewish. However, even if many of these new

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[102] Cohen, Asher, and Bernard Susser, "Israel and the Politics of Jewish Identity," Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000, pg 110

immigrants were not Jewish, they were closely related to others who were. The question

then arose, should the government continue to grant citizenship to people who claim to be

Jewish, but are not considered Jewish under religious law? Because of the shear number

of people affected by the marital, divorce, burial, and conversion laws the argument

moved from the theoretical to the practical and remains a bone of contention between the

secular authorities and the religious community. By the mid 1990's a compromise was

struck on burial laws and areas were set aside for secular cemeteries. However, Israel

still does not have the option of civil marriage available and those, "whose Jewishness is

halachically questionable are simply marooned and without recourse in Israel."[103]

Because, overwhelmingly, they are not Christians or Muslims, they cannot be married by

a priest or kadi. If they think of themselves as Jews and the prospective spouse is Jewish,

their only option is to go through the long process of Orthodox conversion. If this option

is not a possibility only marriage abroad, usually in Cyprus, is available to them.

The economic impact of such a large number of immigrants was initially

substantial, although the situation stabilized fairly quickly. From 1990 to 1997, over

710,000 Russians immigrated to Israel, increasing its working-age population by 15

percent. At the peak of the immigration influx in 1990 and 1991, over 330,000 Russian

Jews immigrated to Israel, increasing Israel's working-age population by eight percent in

two years. Average wages of native Israelis fell during the height of the influx in 1990

and 1991.[104] But by 1997 average wages had returned to pre-immigration levels.

Furthermore, despite the high educational levels of the Russian immigrants, the Russian

influx did not lower the skill-premium of native Israelis relative to employment. This was

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[103] Ibid, pg. 117

[104] Cohen, Sarit and Chang-Tai Hsieh, "*Macroeconomic and Labor Market Impact of Russian Immigration in Israel,*" Tel Aviv University and Princeton University, April 2000

because the Russian immigrants suffered from substantial occupational downgrading due to language and other integration issues in Israel.[105] Israeli society has had great difficulty absorbing immigrants within their professions. The main factor was the relatively small Israeli market and economy, which became oversaturated with such a large number of professionals. Even today, the human capital of the immigrants from the former Soviet Union is only partially utilized in the Israeli labor market. A relatively large portion of immigrants are employed in blue-collar jobs, including those with 16 years of schooling or more. Despite the occupational downgrade, by in large the Russian immigrants have made a successful transition to Israeli society. Their children have been very successful in the educational system with high school graduation rates and university attendance rates on par with the Israeli born population.[106]

The wave of Russian immigrants has also profoundly effected the political environment in Israel. Many issues between the secular government and the religious authorities which had simmered under the surface now have to be addressed. The religious community feared the impact that such a large number of secular voters could have because, "…it is unlikely that Russian Jews will be sympathetic to the Orthodox establishment that seeks to place all manner of obstacles and disqualifications in the path of their non-Jewish spouses, children, or friends."[107] While not religious, the new Russian immigrants do tend to be conservative. "Traditionally hawkish voters from the

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[105] Ibid
[106] Central Bureau of Statistics, 2002. *"Statistical Abstract of Israel 2002,"* State of Israel. Available from Internet,
http://www.cbs.gov.il/shnaton53/shnatone53.htm#7, accessed 7 April 2008
[107] Cohen, Asher, and Bernard Susser, "Israel and the Politics of Jewish Identity," Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000, pg 112

former Soviet republics - about 15% of the Israeli electorate - helped unseat former Prime

Minister Ehud Barak in elections in 2001, in favor of the right-wing Sharon

(himself the son of Russian immigrants)."[108]

The Russians have become the kingmakers in Israeli politics, with both the

governing and the opposition parties vying frantically for their votes. During the 1990's

the vote of the immigrants in the elections was always against the present government. In

fact the Russian immigrant vote played a considerable part in the falls of the governments

of Yitzhak Shamir, Shimon Peres, Benjamin Netanyahu, and Ehud Barak. The Russian

immigrants demanded political power which would comply with their unique needs.

This resulted in the growth of the Russian political parties. *Israel BaAliya* was the most

popular in the 1990's but was later replaced by *Yisrael Beiteninu* which, in later elections,

united with the right-wing National Union party. With the start of the Second Intifada,

a significant portion of the Soviet immigrants tended towards the right of the political

spectrum in their opinions concerning the Arab-Israeli peace talks and held hawkish

positions on the issues of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and counter-terrorism. Although

most of the Soviet immigrants supported liberal polices when it came to the intertwining

of religion and the state, they avoided supporting the Israeli parties of the left as a result

of their position in regard to the Palestinian question. During the election of 2001 Ariel

Sharon won the most votes of the Russian immigrant community, who were impressed by

his military record and supported his uncompromising political ideology.[109]

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[108] Berg, Raffi, 2002, *"Israel's Modern Immigrants,"* BBC News Online, 18 May, Available from Internet, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/1948883.stm, accessed 6 April 2008

[109] Lomsky-Feder, Edna and Tamar Rapoport *"Homecoming, Immigration, and the National Ethos: Russian-Jewish Homecomers Reading Zionism,"* Anthropological Quarterly, Vol. 74, No. 1 (Jan., 2001), pp. 1-14

The modern State of Israel is a country of immigrants, the largest groups of which are from Eastern and Western Europe, Northern Africa and the Middle East, Ethiopia, and Russia. An important question facing all immigrant states is how to instill a sense of nationalism and national identity into a diverse population with many languages, cultures, and customs. A population without a sense of nationhood and a personal attachment to a national identity dooms a nation-state to failure. In Europe this process took centuries to build, in Israel it has taken less than a century. While it certainly can be argued that the nation building process is on-going and changing, it is quite amazing that the Israeli nation-state has managed to instill in its people such a passionate attachment, and a willingness to sacrifice for their country in such a short time.

CHAPTER VIII

CREATING A NATIONAL IDENTITY

1.   Zionist Philosophy and the Creation of Nationalism

As mentioned previously, there can be no "us" without defining a "them"; that is the founding principle of the modern state. In order to define who belongs, who has the right to be a citizen, then a state has the right to define who does not have that privilege. This is a philosophy in opposition to Rousseau's social contract theory, a philosophy that was particularly popular in 19th century Europe. Rousseau argued that, "there exists only one legitimate political constitution, universally applicable to all countries, which we may call a 'social-contract state'. This is a political regime in which all individuals, regardless of the differences of nature and history that divide them, renounce these differences, so that all become equal under a state that obliges all equally on behalf of all; the only catch being that individuals unwilling to accept the new convention of equality are to be disposed of by exile or death."[110] At the beginning of his career Theodore Herzl, the man most closely associated with the Zionist movement, firmly believed in the promise of participation, equality, and full citizenship for Jews that a social contract in an enlightened European state promised.

Nationalism was the most successful political force of the 19th century. At that time there were two main paths toward inclusion in the nation-state: the French method –

[110] Hazony,Yoram, *"The Jewish State: The Struggle of Israel's Soul,"* New York: Basic Books, 2001, pp. 87-88

essentially, anyone who accepted loyalty to the civil French state was a citizen. In practice this meant the enforcement of a considerable degree of uniformity, for instance the destruction of regional languages: And the German method, required by political circumstances of the time, which was to define the nation in ethnic terms. Ethnicity in practice came down to speaking German and having a German name.

Both of these paths could be seen as problematic for the European Jewish communities, although at the same time both offered the community opportunities that were unavailable prior to this period. When Otto Van Bismarck united the German states in 1871 he declared a new German empire under a constitution that extended citizenship to minorities, including Jews. However, the story of Jewish emancipation began earlier in France with the revolution of 1789. In the days following the revolution Jews were asked to renounce, not their religion, which was now considered a private matter, but all other political loyalties and in exchange would be offered full and equal citizenship. "As the Compte de Clermont-Tonnere famously declared during the debate over the emancipation of the Jews in the French National Assembly in 1789, 'To the Jews as individuals we should grant everything. But to the Jews as a nation – nothing.'"[111]

This idea was instituted by Napoleon and spread throughout Europe by his military conquests. However it proved hard to institute, with fitful implementation followed by de-emancipation, going hand-in-hand with the political promise of equality. The Alliance Israelite Universelle, founded in Paris in 1860, and was the first association to pursue equal right for Jews everywhere. Within the next forty years similar associations were founded in England, Austria, Germany, and New York. However, these organizations did not pursue the idea of re-establishing a Jewish homeland. In fact,

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[111] Ibid, pp. 88

most were against this idea and believed it alienated Jews from the population of the countries in which they lived. At the end of the 19th century most politically active Jews were working toward equal rights within their respective states and not towards the idea of a restored Jewish state.

Although its origins are earlier, the Zionist movement was formally established by Theodore Herzl (1860-1904), an assimilated Jew born in Budapest to a wealthy Jewish-Hungarian family. He received a doctorate of law from the University of Vienna but quickly went into writing after he graduated, becoming an accomplished playwright and journalist in Paris. After several experiences with anti-Semitism, particularly after witnessing the Dreyfus Affair, Herzl became disillusioned with the idea of emancipation within the Diaspora.   In 1894 he wrote *The Ghetto*, a play about the Jewish experience in Europe in which assimilation and conversion are rejected as solutions. In 1894 Herzl wrote his most famous book, *Der Judenstaat-(*The Jewish State). The book outlined Herzl's idea that it was of practical importance for the Jewish people to have a state in which they would never again have to suffer from anti-Semitism. Ironically, Herzl never directly mentions Palestine as the necessary site for this state, although he goes into great detail about the practicalities of the Jewish state, such as the need of a congress, money, engineers and technicians. In Western Europe most Jews did not take his book seriously but in the east, particularly in Russia, the book was instantaneously and enthusiastically received. It was due to this reaction that Herzl changed the focus of the Zionist movement, from trying to appeal to elites, to trying to organize the masses.

As the population base for Zionism began to shift east so did the political power base. Herzl came from a western tradition and had a mostly secular ideology. In the east

Jews had lived separately from the population in Pale settlements. They were also very much under the influence of Asher Ginsberg (1856-1927), better known by his pen name Ahad HaAm. He established a counter movement to Political Zionism, known as Cultural Zionism. HaAm argued that it was necessary to establish Israel as a culture center for Jews before it would possible to establish it as a homeland. To Herzl the establishment of Hebrew as a national language was not important. To HaAm it was vitally important because of its religious significance for Jewish history and culture. HaAm advocated sending small groups of religious Jews to Palestine to establish settlements to revive Jewish spirit and culture through language, schools and religion. The question, of course, now arises as to how both of these philosophies blended to create the modern Jewish state and national identity of Israel.

Early Zionists were not moved by religion. On the contrary they were secular nationalists moved by social reform and often openly contemptuous of Judaism as a religious tradition. "Zionist ideology subsequently developed around the central mystique of 'Land and People'. Borrowing from the ethnic doctrines of European nationalism, the Zionists based their social philosophy on the concept of regeneration through settlement in Palestine. Though they used the images of traditional messianism, their thought was grounded in the popular idealism of the West."[112] Zionism was described as "Diaspora nationalism," its proponents regarded it as a national liberation movement whose aim was the self-determination of the Jewish people. At first one of

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[112] Taylor, Alan R., "*Zionism and Jewish History,*" *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 2. (Winter, 1972),
pp. 35-51. Available from Internet
Stable URL:
http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=037719X%28197224%291%3A2%3C35%3AZAJH%3E2.0.CO%3B2-K,
accessed 28 March 2008

several Jewish political movements offering alternative responses to the position of Jews in Europe, Zionism gradually gained more support, and after the Holocaust became the dominant Jewish political movement.[113]

The theoretical basis of Zionism sets it apart from many other modern political philosophies in that Herzl realized that a state is not necessarily just the land it claims but it is more importantly the idea that exists in the mind. Herzl wrote: "The foundation of a state lies in the will of the people for a state…Territory is only the material basis; the state, even when it posesses territory, is always something abstract."[114] It is this realization that allows Herzl to address seemingly unsolvable problems, the first of which is, "what would be the theoretical justification for constructing a Jewish state in the absence of a population, living on a given territory, which had agreed to the creation of such a state?"[115] This was a fundamental problem because there was an absence of a "social contract" and at that time there was also an absence of support from most of the Jewish community. The second fundamental problem was, "how sufficient political power could be mustered behind the idea of a Jewish state in order to defeat its opponents and cause it to arise in reality? The third, was how could the Jews themselves, their ideals and allegiances confused by emancipation, be brought to believe in the idea of the Jewish state so that they would be prepared to come to it in body and mind and render it permanent?"[116] Of course another obvious question is how could a people who had been in the Diaspora for over 2,000 years and had no living memory of governance over their

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[113] Taylor, A.R., I. Abu-Lughod ed., *"Vision and Intent in Zionist Thought in the Transformation of Palestine"*, 1971, ISBN 0-8101-0345-1, p. 10

[114] Magnes diary, August 30, 1942. Goren, *Dissenter*, p. 383

[115] Hazony,Yoram, *"The Jewish State: The Struggle for Israel's Soul,"* New York: Basic Books, 2001, p. 104

[116] Ibid, p. 104

own affairs, possibly amass the will, the power, and the practicalities to found and govern

a viable state of their own? In order to answer these questions Herzl, and later Zionists,

formulated a nation-building philosophy to transform the dream of a Jewish homeland

into a reality by conceptualizing a state in concrete terms.

Primarily, Herzl and later Zionists saw the Israeli state in terms of a "guardian

state" that would act on behalf of Jewish communities worldwide. "Considering the

political circumstances in Europe, it was clear to Herzl that if there were any people in

need of unilateral political action on their behalf, it was the Jews."[117] This concept freed

the early Zionists from the need of an established territory in order to found a nationalist

movement. Initially the Zionist Organization could fashion itself as the guardian of the

Jews without the need of a state structure. This concept of a guardian state also gave

Herzl the theory of state legitimacy that would enable him to go about trying to establish

a state for a dispersed people. This ideal is reflected today in the *Law of Return* which

guarantees the right of every Jew to immigrate to Israel and claim automatic citizenship.

"When it was passed unanimously by the Knesset in 1950, the framers of the law

understood themselves to be drawing on the entire range of Jewish and Zionist history –

from the biblical promise that the Jews would one day be able to return from the exile, to

Theodor Herzl's insistence that the Jewish state must be open to all Jews."[118] Ben-

Gurion stated at the time, "This is not a Jewish state merely because Jews are the

majority of its population. It is a state for Jews everywhere...The Law of

Return...embodies the central purpose of our state."

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[117] Ibid, p. 107
[118] Ibid , p. 56

During the early days of the Zionist movement there were very few Jewish settlements in Palestine and therefore an abstraction of the Jewish state had to be the basis for convincing the imperial powers. Herzl used the idea of the three centers: entrepreneurial, religious, and cultural. Herzl believed that in order to attract settlement Israel the state would have to provide an environment in which private enterprise was encouraged and ablities were freed as they hadn't been allowed to be in the Diaspora. The second area which Herzl focused on was religion. He recognized that religion had been indispensible in keeping a connection to the ancient homeland and believed it would be essential in the future. He believed that the most important expression of religion in the Jewish state should be the establishment of holy places where Jews could go on pilgrimages, "which would ignite the imagination of the people, inspiring in them an attachment to their Jewish past and their common destiny."[119]   As to the third area of culture, Herzl does not expand much on any ideas, although it is clear from other writings that he did believe these intitutions to be important. The institutionalization of culture, such as the modernization of Hebrew, the establishment of universities, and the making of a national cultural tradition would be left to later generations.

2.   Building a Collective National History and an Israeli National Tradition

Israel is a society of immigrants, people collected from many corners of the world and replanted in an ancestoral homeland. The only thread that tied them together was an ancient religion that was interpreteted and practiced differently depending on the region, or in some cases, not practiced at all by some of the immigrants. In order to form a collective identity it was vital that the society engage in constructing a distinct national

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[119] Herzl, Theodore, "*The Jewish State,*" Vienna: M. Breitenstein, 1896, p. 88

identity and culture, recreating its roots in the past in order to legitimize its place in the present. In this situation a society relies not only on both history and tradition but on a highly selective reading and interpretation of that history and tradition. In other words, it selects stories that exemplify what that society is trying to teach itself and sometimes ignores or alters facts of the historical narrative which do not fit with the particular ideology its leadership is aiming to promote. "Each act of commemoration reproduces a *commemorative narrative,* a story about a particular past that accounts for this ritualized remembrance and provides a moral message for the group members…these commemorations together contribute to the formation of a *master commemorative narrative* that structures collective memory."[120]

This concept of a national narrative creates a storyline that is constructed and provides the group members with a general notion of their shared past. It is interesting to look at three events in Israeli history, two ancient; the fall of Masada and the Bar Kokhba revolt, and one modern; the defense of the Tel Hai settlement. None of these events occupied a major place in traditional Jewish memory yet each have emerged as major turning points in the master commemorative narrative of Israeli society. They are Zionist constructions of the past, as formed during the early settlement period and following the foundation of the State of Israel. "The Zionist views of the past first emerged as countermemory to traditional Jewish memory in Europe."[121] Each story was inspired by the nationalist ideology that called for a revival of Jewish national culture and life in the Jewish homeland of antiquity. It is interesting to examine why each story has been

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[120] Zerubavel, Yael, "*Recovered Roots: Collective Memory and the Making of Israeli National Tradition,*" Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995, p. 6
[121] Ibid, p. 12

chosen, and which parts have either been emphasized or ignored in order to enforce the pre-existing ideological thrust of the 20th century Zionist movement.

Zionism originally emerged as a stateless nationalist movement as a reaction against Exile. Therefore, Zionism painted the period of the Diaspora as a long, dark time of suffering and persecution. This negative perception of the Exile among the early settlers often turned from a repudiation of living in exile, to a repudiation of those who still lived in exile. "According to this view, life in exile turned the Jews into oppressed, submissive, weak, and fearful people who passively accepted their fate, hoping to be saved either by God or by Gentiles' help."[122] In the Zionists' view, exile represented a hole between the two national periods of antiquity and revival. While exile is painted as a dark period, antiquity represented a golden age, a time to which Zionists wished to return and rediscover their national roots. "In Zionist memory the ancient Hebews formed a proud nation, rooted in its land; they cultivated its soil and knew its nature, they were ready to fight for their national freedom and, if necessary, to die for it."[123] In order to draw the thread between the period of antiquity and the national rebirth it was necessary to create a symbolic continuity. The battle of Tel Hai provided that commemorative marker of a new beginning combined with the ancient imagery of a people willing to fight and die for their nation.

In March 1920 news that eight Zionist settlers had died in defense of a small settlement named Tel Hai in Upper Galilee shook Jewish society in Palestine. This confrontation with the local Arab population was the first to be considered as a full-fledged battle in which Zionist pioneers stood up to defend a new settlement. Among

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[122] Ibid, p. 19
[123] Ibid, p. 23

those killed was Yosef Trumpeldor, a Zionist activist, and a well-know military hero

during the Russian-Japanese War and World War I. As the story was told, "Trumpeldor,

who was in charge of the defense of Tel Hai, was serverely wounded early in the battle.

According to eyewitness accounts, in spite of the great pain he must have suffered, he

uttered no complaint during the battle but tried to encourage his comrades. When the

settlers left Tel Hai in the evening, they carried him with them, and on the way to Kfar

Giladi Trumpeldor died. A few minutes before he died, when the doctor asked him how

he was feeling, he reportedly said, 'never mind, it is worth dying for the country.'"[124]

Soon after, the *Yishuv* (settlement community) began to annually commemorate

the defense of Tel Hai and within a short time a new national memorial day was added to

the Hebrew calendar. The establishment of this new memorial day provided an occasion

to reinforce the memory of the battle and its meaning to the community at large. During

the pre-state period Tel Hai gave the new society a modern national myth and

Trumpeldor was the first national hero. "Tel Hai provided Israeli society with a myth of

origin, a point in time that symbolized the rebirth of the nation and the beginning of a

new era."[125] Although the idea and the action of self- sacrifice was not a new one, Tel

Hai provided a dramatic event with which the Zionists could identify as a recovery of the

national spirit and its heroism. In turn this event could be linkied to the Zionist National

Revival which now could point to a specific event as a symbolic departure from exile.

In the Zionist commemorative narrative two ancient events of Israeli history have

become symbols of the fighting spirt of the Hebrew people of the past: the Bar Kokhba

revolt, and the fall of Masada. About sixty years after the defeat of the Jews' Great

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[124] Ibid, p. 41
[125] Ibid, p. 43

Revolt against the Romans and the destruction of the second temple Judea rebelled

against the Romans again under the leadership of Bar Kokhba. This revolt started in 132

A.D. and lasted three years, with the rebels initially succeeding in liberating parts of the

country. Coins and letters from that period are evidence that they were successful in

establishing their own government and administrative structures for a short period. But

when Rome mobilized additional troups the rebellion was eventually supressed and the

rebels were finally defeated in the mountain town of Betar. This historical event was

important to the Zionists because, for the purposes of a commemorative narrative, the Bar

Kokhba revolt symbolized the nation's last expression of patriotism and the last struggle

for freedom during the period of Antiquity.

While the Bar Kokhba revolt is also commemorated in Jewish tradition, the image

of Bar Kokhba himself is portrayed more negatively in the religious sources. The

rabbinical stories reveal admiration for Bar Kokhba's heroism but put a stronger

emphasis on his personal shortcomings. In fact, early and medieval Jewish source refer

to Bar Kokhba as *Bar Koziba*, a name derived from the Hebrew word *kazav* (lie).[126] The

Zionist search for roots in the ancient national past clearly led to the enhancement of Bar

Kokhba's image. He became a symbol of the ancient national soul and the readiness to

fight for freedom. "The invisible link between Bar Kokhba's men and the new Zionist

pioneers was very much part of the attempt to construct historical continuity between

Antiquity and the Zionist National Revival."[127] In fact, after the establishment of the

state of Israel, Prime Minister Ben-Burion used the story to establish a link between the

army of Antiquity and the modern Israeli soldiers: "The chain that was broken in the

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[126] Ibid, p. 50-51
[127] Ibid, p. 52-53

days of Shinmon Bar Kokhba and Akiba ben Yosef was reinforced in our day, and the

Israeli army is again ready for the battle in its own land, to fight for the freedom of the

nation and the homeland." Various strategies were used to diminish the significance of

the eventual defeat; to show that the Romans' victory was short-lived from a historical

perspective, and to demonstrate that the Romans also suffered heavy losses in the war.

Where as the traditional sources highlight the outcome of the war and provide details of

the destruction that ensued, Zionist celebration of the event shifts the focus to the initial

successes and enhances the importance of the uprising. This switch is rather obviously

made in order to inspire the new settlers by providing a historic hero with a historic

tradition of a willingness to fight for a homeland.

The next historic commemorative narative is the most famous: the fall of

Masada. This event occurred in 73 A.D. following the fall of Jerusalem, when a small

group of Zealots, led by Elazar ben Yair, chose to committed suicide rather than face

defeat and capture by the Romans. The story is related by Josephus, a Jewish historian

who was a contemporary of the people he described. Therefore, the story was a part of

Jewish Antiquity but did not play a major role in Jewish collective memory during the

Exile. "Three aspects of Masada contributed to its emergence as one of the most

prominent national myths of Israeli society: a powerful story, a challenging site, and

interesting archeolgical remains."[128] Masada is an historic event that has provided

modern Israeli society with an ancient symbol of Jewish heroism. "For Jewish settlers in

Palestine and especially for the first generation of new Hebrews, Masada was not simply

a geographical site nor a mere episode from Antiquity. For them it represented a highly

symbolic event that captures the essence of the ancient Hebrew ethos and helped define

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[128] Ibid, p. 64

their own mission of national revival."[129] Masada established the myth of fighting to the

bitter end and highlights the courage of the defenders in rebellign against the Romans and

in sustaining their resistance long after the rest of Judaea had been defeated. The national

myth of Masada doesn't dwell on the final suicide but instead stresses the heroic spirit,

devotion and readiness to fight. In fact, even today certain IDF units still take their oath

of office standing on Masada.

All nationalist movements typically attempt to create a master commemorative

narrative that highlights their members' common past and legitimizes their aspirations for

a shared destiny. This was particularly important for the Zionists to do. The Jews were a

people dispersed for over 2000 years and Zionism was a stateless nationalist movement.

The only tie was religion and Zionism was a secular movement. It was of the greatest

necessity to create a link to the past in order to legitimize their claim to the "historic

homeland of the Jews". Once there were settlements it was vitally important to provide

that new society with a foundation both in the past and in the present in order for them to

psychologically depart from life in exile . "The Zionist collective memory elevated the

period of Antiquity as the Hebrew nation's heroic past and enhanced its commemorative

density."[130] However, recent debates on the meaning of the myths reflect the weakening

of the orginal narrative. While at the beginning Zionism could provide a narrative that

bound the people together, now there are deeper cleavages in contemporary Israeli

society. Various groups within the country challenge the authority of the secular national

commemorative narratives constructed by European settlers and demand a greater

representation of their own views of the past. These different interpretations of the past

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[129] Ibid, p. 68
[130] Ibid, p. 215

can sometimes coexist and at other times cause intense debate. "The strength of the

national Hebrew culture of the prestate period lay in its successful produciton of new

commemorative narratives and rituals that were easily accepted as traditional."[131] Today

the growing diversity in society has challenged the hegemony of those narratives burned

into the conscience of the nation during the pre-state period. "It should not come as a

surprise that a society divided over the conflict with the Palestinians and neighboring

Arab states, and strained by the mass immigration of Ethiopian and Russian Jews, the

religious-secular conflict, and ethnic tensions, would generate more than one version of

the past."[132]

3. The Roles of Religion and Language, in the Building of an Israeli Identity

Nations are a recent creation, much younger than their official histories would

imply. "No nation in the modern, political sense of the word existed before the

ideological revolution that began in the 18th century conferring political power on 'the

people'. Nation-states were literally invented and, once invented they were consolidated

by founding myths. From that time on, the nation was conceived as a broad community

united by a link different in nature both from allegiance to the same monarch and from

membership of the same religion or social estate."[133] This powerful concept opened the

way for the age of democracy; but if democracy were to succeed, the future had to be

justified in terms of loyalty to the past.

The building of a collective memory and a national historic tradition are vitally

important to any new nation, but it is nevertheless only part of the picture of national

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[131] Ibid, p. 232
[132] Ibid, p. 235
[133] Thiesse, Anne-Marie, "Inventing National Identity," Le Monde Diplomatique: June 1999

identity. The duel roles of language and religion cannot be overlooked either as
fundamental pillars of society; this is particularly true in the case of Israel. The use of
Hebrew as a common language successfully unified the new immigrants coming to
Mandate Palestine at the turn of the 20th century, creating a common language and
culture. If language has unifed the new immigrants, then religion has given them a sense
of rootedness in Israel. While the majority of Israelis are secular Jews, the religious
Jewish community wields enormous influence in the culture, politics, and in the national
dialogue of the country.

The revival of Hebrew language as a mother tongue was initiated by the efforts of
Eliezer Ben-Yehuda (1858-1992). After immigrating to Palestine in 1881 he became
motivated by the surrounding ideals of renovation and a rejection of the Diaspora
lifestyle. He believed Yiddish, the second language, in addition to the national language,
spoken by most European Jews, was the language of poverty, oppression, and of exile.
He began to develop tools for making the literary and liturgical language of Hebew into a
spoken language. At that time Hebrew was used only as a holy language and many saw
his work as strange or even blasphemous. However, it became apparent that there was a
need for a common language amongst Jews of the Palestine Mandate who at the turn of
the 20th century were arriving in large numbers from many countries and many linguistic
backgrounds.

While Hebrew had been used intermittently prior to the rise of Zionism, it was
Zionism, whose aim was to return to the land of Zion and experience life as a nation with
its own institutions and its own language that spurred the development of modern
Hebrew. Early on Hebrew was used as a way of promoting and maintaining the Zionist

ideology for the Jewish settlers. However, tremendous work had to be done to take an ancient language, used only as either a written language or a holy language and turn it into a modern, spoken tongue. The language had to be adapted to the needs of modern life, encompassing a society's linguistic needs from childhood, through university and professional usage.

When the British took control of Palestine, Hebrew was recognized as one of the three official languages. The British did so only because Jewish community leaders argued that the Jewish community of Palestine could not be unified if Jews continued speaking the scores of languages of the Diaspora. When Israel was established Hebrew became the official language and its status and quality was protected, and its development was promoted. "The official arbiters of the Hebrew language – from Eliezer Ben-Yehuda to present members of the Hebrew Language Academy – when coining words leaned heavily on Biblical, Aramaic, and other Semitic sources in order to recomfirm both the Israeli cultural connection to the old land of Israel, and the modern polity's legitimate place in the Middle East."[134] For if the language used by the Jewish settlers had been a Western language, the Arabs may have been able to assert a more legitimate claim to the land than the Jews. Once the state was established Hebrew became a major tool in the creation of an Israeli nation.

The revival of Hebrew provides a good example of language, ideology, and state building. As a revived language, Hebrew has helped immigrants to Israel shed their previous identities and embrace Israeli nationalism. Thus, modern Hebrew "linked to the past and ripe for nationalist myth-making, has played an important role in the national

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[134] Safran, William, *"Language, Ideology, and State Building: A Comparison of Policies in France, Israel, and the Soviet Union,"* International Political Science Review, Vol. 13, No. 4, Resolving Ethnic Conflicts, Oct. 1992, p. 407

identity for Israel that Yiddish, with its ties to a more recent, internationalist past would

not have done. Modern Hebrew takes its place in the State of Israel as one of the main

pillars upon which the State rests, one of the most important factors in the national

consciousness."[135] It is one of the most

important bonds which tie Jews from all backgrounds together as one nation.

Language is certainly not the only aspect of culture that binds a nation together.

Arguably the most influential factor in history used to bind people together is religion.

While Zionism was a secular movement it used religion as the basis to legitimize its

claim to the land of Israel. Later, in order to attract devout Jews to support the new State

of Israel, David Ben-Gurion, the first prime-minister, included religious leaders alongside

secular Jews in his government, granting rabbis a powerful role in society. For almost 60

years now, the secular and the religious have been at odds over how much control the

minority religious community should exercise over lives of the non-religious majority.

This clash of cultures over how to define the national identity is omnipresent in Israeli

society, and there seems to be no consensus in sight.

Today, rabbis also control a sprawling inspection system that monitors

compliance with dietary laws at kosher hotels and restaurants. Kosher food is mandatory

at army and government cafeterias - despite the majority of Israelis being nonreligious.

Many Israelis are upset about young ultra-orthodox Jews being exempted from military

service if they devote their energies entirely to Talmudic studies. The religious

communities also have their own state-funded educational system and only recently has

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[135] Kutscher, Edward Yeheskeel, *"The Role of Modern Hebrew in the Development of Jewish-Israeli National Consciousness," PMLA*, Vol. 72, No. 2. (Apr., 1957), p. 41

the government tried to force the introduction of mathematics, English, history, and even Hebrew into these schools.

This problem is particularly acute now with the influx of so many secular, and in many cases non-Jewish, Russian immigrants. The Orthodox believe that in Eretz Israel they have finally found the true place to live in accordance with God's commandments. In deference to religious Jews, no public bus services run in Israel from approximately sundown on Friday to sundown on Saturday; and aircraft operated by El Al remain grounded. During Passover, foods containing grain have to be cleared from the supermarket. Many secular minded Israelis feel constrained by religious strictures. They see freedom as one of the Jewish state's key achievements, one that differentiates it from its neighbors. They aspire to the kind of lifestyle people enjoy in industrial countries; for example, being allowed to drive cars, eat in restaurants or go to the movies on Shabbat. However, in reality now there are very few constraints placed on the Israeli population, particularly in cities like Tel Aviv. Even in Jerusalem it is now possible to find entertainment options open on Shabbat.

Another interesting way in which religion affects state functions is in the area of law. Like Islam, Judaism contains a complete legal code. However, in exile only the laws governing relations between Jewish individuals were observed and updated. When Israel was established it retained a particular mixture of civil and religious law. There is no complete separation of church and state; religious institutions are legally recognized and financed by the state. Also, there is no civil marriage or civil burial and religious courts have jurisdiction over matrimonial law, although their verdicts can be appealed to civil courts. Other laws directly affected by religious considerations are: the prohibition

to sell pork, the ban on public transport on the Sabbath, and restrictions on entertainment options on the Sabbath (although this restriction is not really enforced in many parts of the country anymore). Part of this influence can be explained by the power of the religious parties as governing coalition partners. Religious laws are passed in order to gain compliance from these parties on economic and foreign policy issues. However, this is an insufficient explanation for the continued use of religious symbols, messages, and the pervasive thread of Jewish identity that runs through Israeli society.

Perhaps one of the reasons for this continued influence is that Judaism is not only considered a religion but also a nationality. While someone may not be observantly religious, they will always be ethnically Jewish. The dichotomy between the need for the Israeli state to secularize its institutions and the inability to define Israeli nationality in completely secular terms has not been resolved. "The secular state of Israel has not managed to separate this unity of religious and ethnic identity. (According to the Law of Return), the right of citizenship rests on (Jewish) religious affiliation which is largely determined by the religious courts."[136] Another reason may be that the majority of secular Israelis still clearly regard religion as an important aspect of their culture. While a large number consider themselves to be non-religious they still observe many traditional religious practices and holidays. Religion is a part of the Israeli identity and almost everyone has some association with it. Zionism, while trying to separate Jewish identity from Israeli identity, at the same time used religion to justify it when they argued that God had promised the Jews the Land of Israel. The State of Israel also defines itself through its many religious symbols, for example the flag, which resemble a prayer shawl,

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[136] Weissbrod, Lilly, *"Religion as National Identity in a Secular Society,"* Review of Religious Research, Vol. 24, No. 3, March 1983, p. 196

and the national coat of arms with the menorah. Therefore, it is possible for national

identity to be based on religious, as well as on secular values. In Israel's case the bond

between religion and state, Jewish heritage and Israeli identity, is indissoluble because

religion and religious identity, whether it is observant or secular, is the state's reason for

existing as a sovereign entity.

The Israeli case demonstrates the difficulties in secularizing a national identity

originally based on a religious identity and values. However, a social order and the

political center which maintains it enjoy legitimacy if they represent and implement the

core values of their society. While core values is a rather vague term and difficult to

define, a society reacts if a government oversteps its boundaries. In Israel it can be

argued that the core values of the society are based on the religious values found in its

Jewish history and scripture. "In many secular societies, religious motifs constitute an

underpinning – values so much taken for granted that their religious origin is not

consciously perceived."[137] In times of crisis the religious aspect of core national values

are more obvious and the society, whether consciously or not, leans on the values

provided by religion. Providing a national identity is not necessarily the function of

religion in contemporary societies, but it is not uncommon either.

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[137] Ibid, p. 202

CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSION

Nationalism and national identity bind a population together. In order for a modern nation-state to survive, its people must feel an identity with that state in order for it to enjoy legitimacy. Two of the primary tools leaders have used to in order to create a national identity are religion, and a national narrative, stories of an ancient past which link a modern society to its roots. For centuries in Europe monarchs derived their legitimacy from the concept of 'Divine Right' to rule. Modern states derive their power from the active participation of their citizenry. However, within the borders of modern states there are substantial minorities who, in the past, were often suppressed and persecuted. Today these are the people who feel least represented within the national culture. In the past this was the situation for the Jewish communities of Europe. In the 19th century they organized into an international movement known as Zionism in order to demand a homeland of their own. While Zionism is primarily considered a secular nationalist philosophy, its roots and its claim to the land of Israel are based on the ancient religious traditions of Judaism, hence linking the Diaspora peoples together through a religious identity.

Today Israel, while maintaining a Western style democracy, has also developed features unique to its own society as a result of its unusual history. One of the most important features which differentiates it from other Western democracies is the

influence of religion, not only within society, but also within the political process. The relationship of religion and the state has always been a difficult issue due to the question of what the role of religious law would be in the legal structure of the state. Currently, Israel has many religious political parties several of which have participated in governing coalitions. In fact Shas, the party with represents the Orthodox Sephardic community, has enjoyed increased popular appeal in recent elections and is now, in terms of votes, is the third most powerful party in Israel. The major difference between the regular and religious parties is that the religious parties do not attempt to govern. They aspire to gain membership in governing coalitions through which they are able to control or gain influence over certain government agencies. Currently Israeli society maintains a somewhat uneasy truce between both the religious and secular communities in order to maintain a viable governing structure and a united country.

Within the state of Israel there is a large minority community predominantly composed of Arabs whose families lived in the region prior to the establishment of the State of Israel. The Israeli government must provide for the rights of these individuals. Legally speaking, they are citizens of Israel with all the rights and privileges that status grants. On a practical level, the Arab community lives in separate communities which, for the most part, compare unfavorably in terms of economic opportunities to the Jewish community. Also, the Jewish religious community, which existed in Jerusalem prior to independence, demands that the government protect what they see as their right to live by the ancient laws in their own communities. Fairly addressing the needs of all its citizens is a challenge which currently continues to create controversy and has yet to be satisfactorily resolved.

Events in Europe at the beginning of the 20th century changed the destiny and the
lives of the indigenous communities in this region forever. Jewish immigrants, first from
Europe and later from North Africa and the Middle East began to flood in. Since the
establishment of the State of Israel Jewish immigration has come in waves, each of which
has had a profound effect on the state and society. The Ashkenazi were the original
Zionists and this community was responsible for the success of the original settlements,
and subsequently established the state and its governing institutions. After the 1948 war,
Jewish communities from North Africa and the Middle East began to immigrate to Israel.
The Sephardic community experienced some difficulty adjusting to a country which was
essentially modeled after Western European society and primarily controlled by the
Ashkenazi. Today, while there are still some differences, both communities have moved
closer together and Jews of mixed background are increasingly common. This is because
of intermarriage, and also because many do not see these historic labels as relevant to
their life as Jews living in modern Israel.

More recently large wave of immigrants have come in the 1980's and 1990's
from Ethiopia, and very large numbers from the former Soviet Union. Each of these
communities have faced difficulties in integrating into Israeli society but for differing
reasons. The Ethiopians came from a pastoral society into an industrial society. They
lacked the experience and the education required to successfully function in a modern
economy. As a result many Ethiopian families still live below poverty line and have
access only to the lowest level jobs. The Russian immigrants have integrated more
successfully, but two things have made them distinctive from past immigrants. One is
that they were overwhelmingly secular; moving to Israel for economic, not religious

reasons, and secondly, many were considered non-Jews by the Orthodox definition.

Despite the majority being quite well educated the Russians have experienced an

occupational downgrade due to the language barrier, and also because of the large

number of new immigrants competing for jobs in the comparatively small economy of

Israel.

While Zionism certainly envisioned an ingathering of Exiles it probably could not

anticipate the inherent problems that such a vast undertaking would entail. Zionism

created a national identity but in doing so it glossed over some of the problems of

religion, indigenous communities, and the divisions between the various Jewish

communities. Zionists envisioned the State of Israel as a nation of immigrants bound

together by their Jewish identity but separated from the laws of Judaism. The Zionist

leadership recognized that in order to achieve their goals it was vitally important for the

fledgling state to create a separate and distinct national identity. Zionism built a

collective history and an Israeli national tradition by reshaping the stories of antiquity,

such as the fall of Masada and the Bar Kokhba revolt, and creating national heroic stories

of the settlement period such as the defense of the Tel Hai settlement. The Zionists also

understood the role of language and religion in shaping a distinct national identity.

Ancient Hebrew was revived and updated into a new, functional, modern language.

Religion, while still a contentious issue in terms of its political role, is indisputably part

of the Israeli identity. It binds the population together, and almost everyone has, at some

level, an association with it. Without the three pillars of society; religion, language, and

shared history, a sense of national identity would never be able to exist and without that

no nation-state could survive.

APPENDIX I

Immigration to Israel

- FSU 38%
- Middle East 26%
- N America 3.8%
- Argentina 2%
- Ethiopia 2%
- France 2%
- S Africa 0.7%
- Others 25.5%
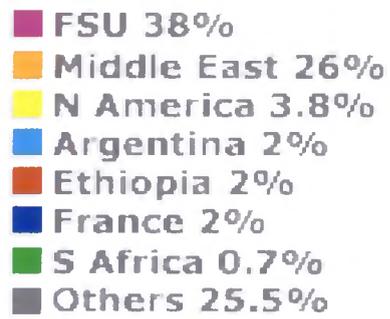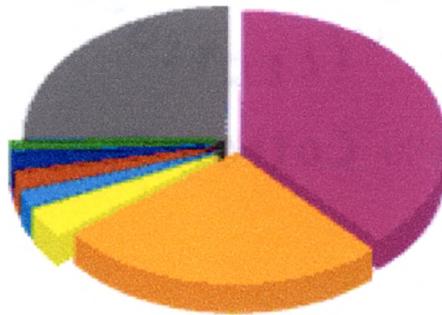
source: Jewish Agency

APPENDIX 3

Year Passed	Basic Law	Description
1958	The Knesset	States legislative functions of the house of representatives of the state.
1960	The People's Land	Ensures state lands remain national property.
1964	The President of the State	Deals with status, election, qualifications, powers, and procedures of work of the President of the State
1968	The Government	(Replaced by the 1992 law)
1975	The State Economy	Regulates payments made by and to the State. Authority to mint currency.
1976	The Army	Upholds constitutional and legal basis for the operation of the Israel Defense Forces. Subordinates military forces to the government, deals with enlistment, and states that no extra-legal armed force outside the Israel Defense Forces may be set up or maintained.
1980	Jerusalem, Capital of Israel	Establishes status of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, secures integrity and unity of Jerusalem, deals with holy places, secures rights of members of all religions, grants special preference with regards to development.
1984	The Judiciary	Deals with authority, institutions, principle of independence, openness, appointment, qualifications, and powers of judiciary.
1988	The State Comptroller	Deals with the powers, tasks, and duties of supervisor of government bodies, ministries, institutions, authorities, agencies, persons, and bodies operating on behalf of the state.
1992	Human Dignity and Liberty	Declares basic human rights in Israel are based on the recognition of the value of man, the sanctity of his life and the fact that he is free. Defines human freedom as right to leave and enter country, privacy- including speech, writings, and notes-, intimacy, and protection from unlawful searches of one's person or property. This law includes instruction regarding its own permanence and protection from changes by means of emergency regulations.
1992	Government	Provides for direct election of Prime Minister at time of Knesset elections. Deals with principles of service of Prime Minister, formation and function of government, qualifications for ministers. (Amended by the 2001 law)
1992	Freedom of Occupation	The law lays down the right of "every citizen or inhabitant to engage in any occupation, profession or trade" unless "a law which corresponds with the values of the State of Israel, and which was designed for a worthy end" determines otherwise. (Replaced by the 1994 law)
1994	Freedom of Occupation	Guarantees every Israel national or resident's "right to engage in any occupation, profession or trade". Any violation of this right shall be "by a law befitting the values of the State of Israel, enacted for a proper purpose, and to an extent no greater than is required."
2001	The Government	Restricts enactment of legislation proposed by a minister who has subsequently been charge with a crime and the government will be dispersed if a budget is not adopted within three month of its proposal.[1]

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[1] German Const. Art. 3 (2), translated in A. Tschentscher (ed.), International Constitutional Law (last modified June 5th, 2003) <http: //www.oefre.unibe.ch/ law/ icl/> (F.R.G.).

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