Chapter 2

NATION-BUILDING AND POLITICAL DISCOURSE

This chapter would entail to study the role of Hebrew language in nation building. Historically, Jews have been multi-lingual but with the coming of the Zionist movement, Jews accepted the dominance of Hebrew in their individual, social and national life. Language choice and place of other languages have deeper connotations and touch upon the legitimacy of the national culture and ideology upon which the political system is based. The Zionist leadership formulated the national culture, gave new meaning and dimensions to the existing Jewish symbols. A process of Hebrewization was taken up to forge a new identity of the Jews that was supposed to be different from their Diasporic life. The state, after its establishment in 1948 and its machinery was put to use to promote Hebrew and through it create a national identity. All the Zionist streams contributed generously in uniting the diverse Jewish population with nationalistic sentiments and building up a Hebrew nation in Israel.

Language Ideology and State-Building

Before the age of nationalism, states were based not on ethnicity and common ethnic languages but on dynastic loyalties and religion. Mass political participation was non-existent. Policies were top-down. In such situation neither the state, its head nor the ordinary citizen/subject is concerned about the language of the bureaucracy or the streets as the interaction between the two is minimal. But as political systems modernized and societies secularized and democratized, social mobility and political participation made it desirable for the languages spoken by the masses to be congruent with those of the dominant elites.

This provides a permanent place to language in the political discourse of the state. Although the birth of a language is slow and obscure, its growth, survival and revival is closely tied to the political fortunes of its speakers. The ideal propounded two centuries ago by Johann Gottfried Herder and the advocates of self-determination in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries of a congruence between a language
community and a sociopolitical community, i.e., between nation and state, may not always obtain a real life: people speaking the same language may be loyal citizens of different states (such as Britain, Ireland and the US), while, conversely, citizens of a single state may be divided in terms of language (Belgium, Switzerland and Canada). Nevertheless, language has been crucial in shaping the political consciousness of a community, elevating it and transforming it in the interest of the state.

In a multi-ethnic or multi-lingual state the task of streamlining the language needs on the streets and the corridors of power becomes quite difficult. Theoretically it could be done in several different ways like the abandonment of the ethnic minority idiom and the folklore and values that it expresses in favor of the language of the dominant group and the “high culture” with which it was associated; or by improving the status of the ethnic minority idiom to one of dominance or at least equality and this could at least be achieved theoretically through legislation and judiciary; or by the formation of a new polity on the basis of the minority language. This could generally be possible if the speakers of the minority language are in minority in numerical terms but strong in political, economic or historical terms. There is also a fourth option: a functional differentiation of the majority and minority languages – and the use of the latter for purely particularistic and “sub-cultural” purposes. This option provides a temporary arrangement wherein the dominant group wins over the other gradually by several means. Eventually this option becomes increasingly unrealistic with progressive “integration”, namely, the nationalization, governmentalization, and standardization of education and other activities once associated with the family and the local community.

Language choice, the place of minority languages, and whether it should be maintained or discouraged go beyond the matter of mere political integration and touch upon the legitimacy of the national culture and the ideology upon which the political system is based. Language has been used in many countries around the world for this end including France, Israel and Soviet Union. The countries that have used language for an extra-linguistic goals have deliberated the use of the dominant language as a tool of state-building and as a vehicle for political socialization and ideological diffusion; ensured active involvement of the public authorities in the standardization and dissemination of that language; and a widely shared belief on the part of the political and cultural elite that the toleration of competing languages would serve to undermine national unity.
Language has a very strong ethnic affinity. It carries a strong identity tag. It creates several stereotypes and generates a divide of ‘us’ and ‘them’. For the user of a language it gives a sense of belonging and cohesion while to the other it gives a sense of divide and insecurity. According to B. Akzin a well known scholar of nationalism (Akzin, 1966: 100-101), hostility towards ethnic minority languages has manifested itself mostly in “very young nation states, whose leaders are still so taken up with the newly discovered joys of sovereignty and perhaps, do not feel yet quite secure about the solidarity of their national cohesion.”

Similar is the case of Hebrew which was to become the language of the new state Israel. The revival of Hebrew provides a good illustration of the connection between language, ideology, and state building. Hebrew is not the only language that was revived and whose modernization was associated with the revival of nationalism. But the causal sequence was unique: unlike Czech or Irish Gaelic, for example, the revival of Hebrew was undertaken by intellectuals who lived outside the physical community of (potential) speakers, which was yet to be constructed. The initial task of reconstructing Hebrew was undertaken by Europeans, and hence it was strongly influenced by European mostly Slavic (Wexler, 1990) and Germanic morphological, syntactical, phonetic and idiomatic elements.

Till the start of the Zionist movement Yiddish was the language of the Jews, which expressed their ethno-national collective consciousness. However such consciousness had no clear political implications because it was not oriented towards state-building. Those who reflected such a consciousness saw the solution of the Jewish problem in socialism, and they looked upon the revival of Hebrew as a clericalist plot or, at best, a romantic folly (Zionism. Israel Pocket Library, 1973: 73). The East European intellectuals who resuscitated biblical and medieval Hebrew for modern use were not all Zionists in the political sense; to some, Hebrew seemed more genuinely to embody the Jewish cultural tradition than did Yiddish; to cultural Zionists, such as Ahad Ha’am, a renewed Hebrew was intended for use in a revived Jewish community in Palestine, but that community was not necessarily to be reflected in an independent state; and still others such as Hertzl believed that the revival of Hebrew was not necessary for the reestablishment of Jewish polity in Palestine or anywhere else. Nevertheless, it is difficult to dissociate the development of the modern Jewish national consciousness (Zionism) and the subsequent building of the Israeli polity from the Hebrew language.
It took Hebrew sometime to make a place for itself. Initially many of the efforts at creating and disseminating Zionist ideology and creating an infrastructure for a future political system were not pursued in Hebrew. Herzl did not know Hebrew. Hebrew couldn’t make a special place for itself in his scheme of things. He wrote his Zionist tracts in German. The Jewish masses of East Europe who collected money to purchase tracts of land in Palestine solicited the money in Yiddish. The invitations to the first half-dozen Zionist world congresses were issued in Hebrew, the working language of the congresses was neither Hebrew nor Yiddish, but a peculiar German idiom (*Kongressdeutsch*), and their minutes were published in standard German (Willian, 1992: 11).

The little use of Hebrew at this stage was due to practical reasons. Many socialist Zionists continued to use both Hebrew and Yiddish. A significant number of Jewish writers, including Bialik, the foremost Modern Hebrew “national” poet, wrote in both languages. But on ideological level the shift in favour of Hebrew had already started, though it was not a smooth process. In the closing decades of the nineteenth century and early decades of the twentieth century the correct pronunciation of Hebrew was debated, not only in Eastern Europe but in Palestine as well, where the first school to teach all subjects in Hebrew was founded in 1888. Although by 1914 a network of Hebrew-language public schools existed, a fight broke out when German-Jewish sponsors of a technical high school – today the Haifa Technion – recommended that the language of instruction be German. The “language war”, which involved thousands of students and teachers in strikes and demonstrations, was settled in favour of Hebrew. This was a deciding event for the future success of Hebrew as a tool of nation building.

Hebrew still was not deeply rooted that could nurture on its own. When the British took over mandatory control of Palestine, they recognized Hebrew as one of the three official languages. They did so in response to an appeal from the Jewish establishment, which argued that “a National Home for the People of Israel in the Land of Israel is not possible unless the People of Israel are completely and definitely unified. However, such unity is not possible as long as in the Land of Israel there are Jews speaking the scores of languages of the Diaspora... The Hebrew language alone makes the authentic Hebrew creativity of the future possible” (Saulson, 1979: 63). When Israel was established, Hebrew became the major official language. The status and quality of Hebrew was protected, and its development was promoted by Hebrew
Language Academy, formed in 1953 as the successor of the Hebrew Language Council, which was formed in 1890 (Woods, 1985: 65-74).

Once the state was established, Hebrew language became a major tool in the creation of an Israeli nation (Rabin, 1971: 3-20). The language of the majority of immigrants was Yiddish; but that language was not understood by Sephardic Jews, whose language of daily use was Ladino (Judeo-Spanish) or Arabic. Moreover, Yiddish had to be fought, not only because it was a constant reminder of an oppressed Diaspora condition but also because secular Yiddishism was often associated with a deliberately “diasporist” (and anti-Zionist) ideology.

A large part of the integrative task in which Hebrew played a major role was that of bringing close the Ashkenazic and Sephardic communities. The goal is now greatly accomplished with different sectors contributing immensely to it and Hebrew had a special role in each of these sectors. Yiddish is no longer a credible threat because the number of Yiddish speakers has declined steeply. However, Yiddish continued to be taught in Israeli universities and in a number of secondary schools. Occasionally it has proved its usefulness like cultivating the emotional ties between the Euro-, American- and Israeli-Jewish communities – as during the Six-Day and Yom Kippur wars. At this point of time numerous Yiddish programmes were broadcast on the Israeli and Jewish radio. Zionism is now so fully established as the national political ideology that Hebrew is no longer required to set the political inertia. Conversely, many Israelis whose language is Hebrew are no longer Zionist in the old-fashioned sense and are revisiting the past.

Initially, Hebrew was needed for the purpose of promoting a kind of downward social mobility: to turn bourgeois central Europeans and Eastern European shtelt (small town) dwellers into peasants (unlike the situation in France, where French was used to turn “peasants into Frenchmen”) (William, 1992: 11); but today, peasants (for example, kibbutzniks) no longer constitute the mainstay of Israeli society. The society is increasingly urban and industrialized one in which the language of science and modernity is English as much as Hebrew. Some people argue that it was unfortunate that Hebrew was revived for general and “high culture” use at a time when the Jewish community in Palestine was built on agriculture, and that by the time industrialization occurred and the Israeli economy shifted to high technology – and the virtues of English were discovered – Hebrew was already firmly established. But others downplay this argument by saying that if the dominant
language of the Jewish settlers had been English or some other Western language, the Arabs would have been able to assert more legitimate claims to the land than have the Jews.

At one time, Hebrew was artificial and therefore had to be nursed along by public agencies; but today, the language is so thoroughly established, rather, indigenized, that Zionism is no longer needed to justify it. The authoritative arbiters of Modern Hebrew – from Eliezer Ben-Yehuda to the present members of the Hebrew Language Academy – when coining words, leaned heavily on Biblical, Aramaic, and other Semitic sources in order to reconfirm both the Israeli culture's connection to the old Land of Israel and the modern polity's legitimate place in West Asia. But that is now accomplished, and the masses of Hebrew speakers are not much bothered by the fact that Hebrew has become a hybrid language (Ben-Amotz, and Ben-Yehuda, 1972; Lewin-Epstein: 1982; Gold, 1981: 11-56).

Hebrewization of Names: Forming a New Identity

The word “Hebrew” is very symbolic in itself. It refers not only to the language but also to the people who had a glorious history as well. The reference generates nostalgic feelings among the Jews urging them to go back to that era of glory and splendor. This was one of the reasons that the pioneers of the Zionist movement often called themselves Hebrews and not Jews. Particularly during the 1930s and early 1940s, most settlers campaigned not for a Jewish, but for a Hebrew state (Amos. 1981: 329). Specific steps were taken to disassociate the new Hebrews from the galut (Diaspora) (The World Book Encyclopedia, J-K Vol.11, 1987: 98-103) which represent divide and subjugation.

This sudden breakup from the past into a new future is termed as davkaism in Israel. Excursions and exploration of the land were encouraged and undertaken for the purpose of giving a new meaning to the past. People seek their own family roots in Eretz Israel, and those who had none were encouraged to redefine themselves, through symbolic means, with the emerging nation. In addition, the new immigrants were encouraged to break all relations with the immediate past. The pioneers were quite particular about this and in practice got all new immigrants to change their names. This symbolic step of changing the galut names into Hebrew ones has become, since the second aliyah, a cherished practice. The practice got further
encouragement after Ben-Gurion became the prime minister. Ben Gurion himself changed his name (formerly Gryn) and used his authority and influences to effect a massive conversion of names in the political and military establishment\(^2\). He believed that this symbolic step of acquiring a Hebrew name constituted an explicit declaration of disassociation with the humiliating past. By converting one’s name one attached oneself to the land of the Bible that was reemerging from its past. Thus acquiring new identity and symbolically announcing one’s association with the Hebrew-Israeli collective. The new Hebrew name signified an act of rebirth (Dahn Ben-Amotz, 1979:116).

The same line of *davkaism* (dissociation from *galut*) guided parents in deciding names for their children. The Hebrew names came to say that “we are something different.” Typical Jewish names that had *galut* connotations such as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moshe, Aaron, Sarah, Rivka, Rachel, and Leah became rare. In their place were names Diasporan Jews never used or rarely resorted to such as Tamar, Amos, Yoram, Nimrod, Uri, Uzi, Amnon\(^3\).

A similar motivation of creating a genuine Hebrew identity guided the establishment in deciding to change the names of public places and introducing the public calendar. Both decisions were made in reaction to the *galut*, and are characteristic of *davkaism*. Thus, places were named by their biblical names so as to connect the present with the days when Jews were distinct, independent national entity, before their *galut* days. The introduction of the Hebrew calendar came to denote discontinuity, an antitheses to the past. Zionism is not the only revolution that resorted to such method in creating a new identity. In France after 1789 and Cambodia after the Khemer Rouge revolution, the governments started counting the dates beginning with the date of their revolutions.

Thus, there was a need and desire to connect to the past; past of the Biblical times but not to the diasporic times. Even the Biblical elements that were common during the diasporic times, like the names of individuals were avoided. This was an

\(^{1}\) The wave of name changing receded during the 1960s. Today, the inclination of many is to cling to the names of the ayarah, the lives in Europe before their destruction by the Nazis.

\(^{2}\) The reading of Yigal Mossenson’s *Hasamba* – arguably the most popular series of books – reveals what names were fashionable, that is, compatible with the Sabra image. The only traditional name of a *Hasamba* member was Menashe, emphasizing his origin by frequently referring to him as “*Menashe Ha’teimani*” (from Yemen). The edot (ethnic affiliation) of the other members were not mentioned in this explicit way.
effort to divorce the emerging nation from the notion of *galut* and to create a new common Jewish-Israeli culture. This new culture was to represent the Biblical Hebrew and the modern Zionist Israeli culture at the same time. All were expected to take part in this enterprise and to forego traditional values conceived to be incompatible with the values of the desired society. The establishment wanted the new culture to replace the strong attachments of West Asian Jews to their particular religious patterns of living. Israel tried to curtail the legitimacy of one of its subcultures and did not hesitate to promote certain ideas and to fight against others.

**Place Names and the Zionist Ideology**

The desire of the Jews which was represented by *davkaism* gradually got implemented by the Zionist leadership. Not only did they change the name of individuals but also of the geographical locations they lived in. This became a part of the larger nation building project. The leadership had the dual task of making the state as well as a Jewish nation, as the Israeli population was composed of more than one nation. The leadership experienced major difficulties in elevating the state above the nation. The friction between the state and the nation was reflected in symbolic manifestations (Waterman, 1979: 171-81) like choice of Sephardic or Ashkenazic pronunciation. This was also reflected in naming or changing place names and the themes that the names would reflect (Cohen and Kliot, 1992: 653-680).

Thus, the task of naming the place was not easy and due consideration and deliberations were made. The Zionist ideology adjusted and accommodated itself in different situations and these changes were reflected in the change in the political and socioeconomic environments. The prevailing ideology in a given time influenced the choice of place name. The term “Zionism” itself is derived from a place-name. Mount Zion in Jerusalem has from the time of King David been synonymous both with the Holy city and the Holy Land. The choice of the name “Israel” to supplant “Palestine” as the name of the new state was an expression of Zionist place-name philosophy.

During the pre-state period, name choice reflected the ideals, ideology, myths and emotions of a century of Zionist striving. The naming of the new state, Israel, represented unity of a people and continuity with the past. Historically Israel was the federation of the twelve Jewish tribes. This tribal federation preceded the establishment of the Israelite kingdom in Canaan. When the federation split, the
southern part became Judea with Jerusalem as its capital and the northern continued to be called Israel. Throughout, Israelite has been used to refer to the Jewish people within and outside the specific land.

At the time of the establishment of the state in 1948, the Jewish community of Palestine consisted of 302 farming communities and 28 urban communities. Between 1949 and 1952, 687,000 Jewish immigrants arrived in Israel. Many were settled in 289 new villages and towns, often located on or near old sites of Arab villages (Bein, 1976). Thus in less than ten years, there was an explosion of new Hebrew names for towns and settlements, as well as of streets, buildings and parks.

In Israel it is difficult to draw the boundary between the ancient and the modern, between purely religious expressions and the secular goals of modern nationalism. Religious symbols in Jerusalem such as the Wailing Wall and the Temple Mount evoke identification and ceremonial behaviour from both the religious population as well as from the Zionist secular population (Schnall, 1985: 13-26). Thus Biblical and Talmudic sites with religious meaning became loci of symbolic national expression as in the case of paratroopers taking the military oath in Masada, the site of the last battle of the Jewish revolt against the Romans. For the largely secular Zionist community in general, Biblical and post-Biblical archaeological sites have become loci of symbolic identification with Jewish nationhood because they bring the past into the present and create a bond of continuity between landscape and society.

The religious/secular ambiguity applies to place-names as well. One-third of the place-names of Israeli settlements within the pre-1967 borders, mostly secular communities, were given Biblical and Talmudic names, a reflection of the trend to recreate continuity in the political landscape of Israel (Cohen and Kliot, 1981). But this was not a reflection of religious fervor or religious nationalism. In many cases the sacredness of the religious element was toned down and was given a more national meaning to which both the religious and the seculars could identify with. Overall, the role of religion in “inventing traditions” has been modest in the shaping of modern Zionist national identity (Shilhav, 1985: 111-24).

Since the process of naming places was intended to contribute to the recreation of a Biblical ancient homeland and a Zionist one, there was little room for external influences. Only a few ultra-orthodox communities, some of them Hassidic, transferred their East European “shtetl” (small town) place-name to their new homeland. These are mostly neighborhoods, not independent town or cities like
Qiryat Viznitz in Haifa and Qiryat Telz Stone and Qiryat Matersdorf in Jerusalem. Small neighborhoods in Tel-Aviv are named after Hassidic communities like Belz, Bratzlav, Gor, Lublin or Ponibaz. These communities live their lives in Israel in a very similar way to their life-style during hundreds of years of “exile” and their place-names reflect continuity with religious and cultural life in the Diaspora.

Otherwise, the place-names are organized according to the following categories: Ancient (Biblical/Talmudic), Natural/Rural, Nationalist/Zionist, Abstract, Arab-Language Origin, Military Heroism, and other (Cohen and Kliot, 1981).

Table 2.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Total Before 1967 No. (%)</th>
<th>Within old Borders No. (%)</th>
<th>Within Administered Territories (Judea, Samaria, Gaza and Golan) No. (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ancient Biblical/Talmudic</td>
<td>234 (30.4)</td>
<td>18 (19.6)</td>
<td>63 (36.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural/Rural</td>
<td>130 (16.9)</td>
<td>36 (39.1)</td>
<td>36 (20.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nationalist/Zionist</td>
<td>146 (19.0)</td>
<td>8 (8.7)</td>
<td>12 (6.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>118 (15.3)</td>
<td>25 (27.1)</td>
<td>38 (21.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arabic origin</td>
<td>73 (9.4)</td>
<td>3 (3.3)</td>
<td>15 (8.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military Heroism</td>
<td>53 (6.9)</td>
<td>2 (2.2)</td>
<td>10 (5.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>16 (2.1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>770 (100)</td>
<td>92 (100)</td>
<td>174 (100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Though changing of place name is not a simple and smooth task, the Zionist leadership decided in its favour. Change of place name attracts resistance and criticism. This is one of the reasons why the number of name changes is relatively small (Goff, 1984: 435-42) and once changed, it usually continues in use for some time. The name change is symbolically significant and ideologically and politically charged. If the change is made by political revolutionary events, it almost necessarily requires a public display of sudden break from the immediate past. Shifts in the
political regime like those in Iran after the revolution or the 1917 Russian revolution were accompanied by a rapid and mass place-name change in order to better represent the new political message (Lewis, 1982: 99-102; Peterson, 1977: 428-34).

The increased proportion of Biblical names is motivated by the ideological zeal and governmental policies. For the Zionists the bond between the Jews and the Land of Israel is sanctified and Hebrew becomes the reference point. Thus Torah, the law of God, is to be followed by the Jews and the lives of the Jews is tied to the land (Davies, 1974; Davies, 1984).

Nearly all of the settlements in Gaza are religious, despite the fact that this region played a minor role in ancient Israelite history. Another striking thing about these settlements is that though the settlements are religious, it has only two ancient biblical names. Northern Samaria (between Qalqilya and Jenin) is also devoid of such names because it was lightly settled by Israelites. In contrast to this, the mainly secular settlements of Golan have six ancient/biblical names out of 35. These six names can be attributed to a strong Jewish historic presence in the area during the Roman era. Some Biblical names with no identified geographical location were also adopted like Dimona, Nahalal etc. The uncertainties regarding their exact location in history still remain. In the West Bank, Noama, Eilon Hadasha are such names. They stand as symbols for the return to the Land of Israel and accuracy of location is hardly needed. There are Biblical names whose sites have been recently identified but the names were already adopted by some other location in the present Israel. Beit Shemesh in the Biblical Galilee became the new Beit Shemesh near Jerusalem. Shamir near Nablus gave its name to a kibbutz in the northern Hula valley (Aharoni, 1963).

In some cases the name is the Hebrew form of a nearby Arabic place-name. Alternatively, the Hebrew name may be the transliteration of an Arabic name. Thus, Ginat is the Hebrew form of the Arab town of Jenin, and Qochav Hashahar is a translation of the nearby Chirbet-A-Najma.

Zionist names are meant to impress the landscape with the Jewish national ideology and patriotism. The naming also reflected the dominant ideology of the time and of the leadership. The major difference between post and pre-1967 settlement naming has been determined by the party in control of the government. From 1880-1956 personalities of minor importance in the Zionist national revival were so honored due to the influence of the Jewish National Fund. With the concept of
"Momlachtiat" (Statism) a policy promoted by Ben-Gurion primacy was given to the state rather than sectarian forces. As a result only 7 percent (12 settlements) were named after Zionist and political leaders, as compared to 19 percent (146 settlements) in pre-1967 Israel.

The Hebrewization of names had great symbolic importance. With the ongoing political conflict with the Palestinians, the emphasis on Biblical ties and Biblical redemption has been strongest in Judea and Samaria on the West Bank. Immediately after the Likud election victory in 1977, the term Judea and Samaria was formally adopted as official usage instead of the West Bank. This was a political symbol which meant to link territory and people and depicted continuity (Deutsch, 1955: 23-54) unlike the other terms “West Bank” “Occupied Territories” used for it. This decision also established Israel as a powerful reference point ending the colonial reference point. At the same time it also unified the Jews in Israel and abroad by giving the impression that it is their property, as given to them by the Lord and they are fulfilling the sacred commandment of settling the land as ordered by the Lord. The Biblical Hebrew place-names were the centerpiece of this process.

Hebrew place-naming in Israel’s pre-1967 borders and in the Administered Territories is a symbolic instrumentality that stirs deep emotions and impressions among both Arabs and Jews. As Geertz (Geertz, 1973) pointed out, place-names are symbols that carry significant messages of essentialism, epochalism, or both. Essentialism is expressed through names that sustain the thread of continuity between Jews and the Holy land and is reflected in the Ancient/Biblical names. Epochalism connotes modernity, revolution and new ideas. For Jews, national Zionism emphasizing dynamism and contemporaneity is an important vehicle in the creative making of place-names. Zionist nationalist or military heroism names cater to this category. The nationalists continued to promote their agenda through Hebrew naming of places (Zelinsky, 1984: 277-86).

In Israel too after the establishment of the new state change of place name was carried out with utmost care. Only 73 out of 889 Hebrew/Jewish place-names retained their origin (Cohen and Kliot, 1981: 227-46). This does not include the Arabic names of the Arab populated settlements that remained in Israel at war’s end. Approximately 400 disappeared when the sites with which they were identified were destroyed during 1948-49 war. Many Jewish communities with new names were established on or close to the sites of the former Arab villages. This place-name landscape transformation has
still not been accepted by the Palestinian Arabs outside Israel, though Israeli Arabs, most of whom have been born and brought up within the Jewish state, use the new Hebrew names for Israeli settlements within the pre 1967 borders. In the Administered Territories, the Arabs use the Arab name even though it has changed to a Hebrew one. They use the Hebrew place-name only in the absence of an Arabic expression.

At one time, Hebrew claimed a preferred position as its speakers were in the vanguard of state-building and reflected the dominant ideology of the state. But after several decades of independence and the establishment of the state of Israel, the old conviction about the miseries of the Diaspora are put to question in view of the freedom and prosperity of Jews living in Western pluralistic society.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, with the arrival of Zionism, Hebrew literature stopped trying to induce the Jews to assimilate themselves with the native country’s culture as envisioned during the Haskala. Now, on the contrary, Hebrew literature became nationalistic. Zionism, by no means is a return to Judaism, as it was prior to the rise of Haskala or Enlightenment. Far from it, it is a nationalistic movement, where the role of religion does not play any conspicuous part. Its main aim is return to Zion and life on the soil, life as a nation like any other nation in the world, with its own institutions and of course with a language of its own (Kutscher, 1957: 41).

Through tremendous efforts, Hebrew was revived, taken out of its sacred domain and made a secular language. It began to be spoken and adapted to the needs of modern everyday life, encompassing all walks of life, some of them very far from previous Jewish occupations like, engineering, technology etc. All these linguistic difficulties have by now been overcome, and so 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.

The different waves of Jewish aliya to Israel from all over the world brought with it different political and economic problems to Israel and the new state had to deal with it. They came with their own languages, life style, culture, outlook, manners and customs. Some of these immigrants had a sudden jump from middle ages into the 20th century. The most important bond which ties these different Jews together was the bond of the newly acquired language, Hebrew. Thus, (modern) Hebrew which started its career by combating the national consciousness of the Jews, has now become a keystone of their national consciousness (Kutscher, 1957: 42) and identity.
Most of the Israelis do not consider the Jewish religion the main factor in shaping their lives. Before the Zionist enterprise, religion was an important ingredient of the Jewish identity. Nationalism, with land and language as its important ingredient define the Israeli identity; secular and religious alike. Even the secular culture of Israel has strong elements of religious nature which is expressed and understood through the common language, Hebrew.

Language Policy and Political Development

Language is an important ingredient of politics. Change in political scenario incurs change in language goal and policy. Language policy reorients itself changing its goal and emphasis to adjust to the political needs of the time. Thus language policy had varied functions in the society throughout history. Israel is a special case with a long Jewish history of multi-lingualism. Apart from that, the new society in its formative days had immigrants of different background and different age groups. So the language planning was complex and needed extra care.

The most salient feature concerning the revival of Hebrew in the late 19th and early 20th centuries was the intention to resuscitate a language which had not been spoken, in daily use, for centuries. The entire effort was an imaginative goal of Zionism, the national movement, to provide yet another uniting factor for Jews. The Zionist pioneers avoided controversial issues that would divide the Jews and believed that focusing on the language of their forefathers in their ancient land, to which the Zionist movement strived to gather them would work as mobilizer amongst the Diaspora population and as a cohesive between different Jewish communities. The key figure in this language revival was Eliezer Ben-Yehuda (1858-1922), a Lithuanian-born Jew, who immigrated to Palestine in 1881 and settled in Jerusalem. Since then, he devoted his entire life in propagating the everyday use of spoken Hebrew – by personal example, articles in the Hebrew press (including newspapers which he edited and published); establishing a “Hebrew Language Committee” (Va’ad ha-Lashon ha-ivrit) in 1890 to coin new words and terms; and preparing a historical dictionary of Hebrew of which he could finish only five volumes during his lifetime; the rest twelve volume work, based on his efforts and research, were published after his death (Chomsky, 1969: 232). A second idea, which he propounded with equal zeal, was to introduce Hebrew as the language of instruction in all Jewish
schools in Palestine. This, he believed would forge a new identity and its manifestation in public sphere through speech would shape a common bond and identity.

The uphill struggle continued as the Jews strove to establish the status of Hebrew and promote its daily use in the Babel of languages in Ottoman Palestine (Landau, 1979, Introduction) and then under the British administration. In 1922, the British recognized Hebrew as one of the three official languages of Mandate Palestine; the measure of self-rule accorded to the Jewish community assured the central place of Hebrew in its educational, cultural and public life. The establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 rendered Hebrew the main language of the state in public use and education, though Arabic was also maintained as its official languages out of deference to Israel's Arab minority (Landau, 1987). In 1949, an "Academy for the Hebrew Language" (ha-Aqademiyyya la-Lashon ha-Itvrit) was set-up and four years later, a law, passed in the Parliament in 1953, charged the Academy with continuing the work of the former Hebrew Language Committee (The Supreme Institute of the Hebrew Language Act, 5713 – 1953, passed in Knesset on 27 August, 1953; Fellman, 1974).

The Hebrew Language Committee had over a period arrived at certain goals and objectives. By 1912 the language policy of the committee had already taken certain definitive shape. The core of these goals and objectives continue till date with some adjustments here and there. These goals and objectives are indicative of the scope of language policy and its role in the Jewish society. The goals and objectives of the committee are as follows (ha-Aqademiyyya la-Lashon ha-Itvrit, 1970, 31ff.; Fellman, 1973: 82-83):

a) to institute employment of Hebrew as a spoken language in all aspects of life at home, at school, in public life, commerce, industry and crafts, the humanities and sciences;

b) to preserve the Oriental character of the language and its specific forms required for expressing human thought to its fullest extent;

c) to publish works unknown to the public from the earliest Hebrew literature to the present day;

d) to fill the vacuum in the language by coining new words;

e) to encourage Oriental pronunciation of the language;
f) to establish definite patterns of spelling and regulation for punctuation and to correct errors in speech and style;

g) to examine the entire corpus of Hebrew literature for all Hebrew words – avoiding non-Semitic words unless they have acquired a Hebrew form or are in current use;

h) to create necessary words, following the rules of grammar and linguistic analogy, preferably derived from Hebrew roots and otherwise from Arabic (as a first choice), Aramaic, Canaanite or Egyptian ones;

i) to coin words which are not only grammatically correct but also morphologically sound and harmonious.

These goals underwent certain transformation over the years particularly when a law, passed in the Parliament, in 1954, stipulated the aims and organization of the Academy for the Hebrew Language (ha-Aqademiyya la-Lishon ha- Ivrit 1970, 71 ff):

a) to compile a thesaurus of the entire Hebrew language throughout all its periods and strata;

b) to study the structure of the Hebrew language, its history and manifestations;

c) to guide the development of Hebrew language according to its nature, needs and possibilities in every domain of theory and practice – in vocabulary, grammar, writing, spelling and orthography.

While the basic goals have remained unchanged, the 1954 law requires the Academy not to restrict itself to language research but “to guide the development of the Hebrew language” – a role befitting its newly acquired official status in a nation which had recently attained statehood.

These goals of the Academy directly or indirectly worked as a cohesive force in unifying the new Israeli society. The uniformity and standardization of speech created an “us” amongst the Jewish population which was the core requirement for building a nation.

**Hebrew Language Academy**

The functional role of the Academy was thus governed by its goals and objectives. Its functions primarily centered around purification, revival, reform, standardization and lexical modernization. Although all of these functions were considered important but
for practical reasons, one such function was usually emphasized as the most immediate. Emphasis shifted over time, according to the change in circumstances or ideology, but the primary focus generally was limited to any one major function. These major functions are not always clearly delineated by public agencies and are consequently open to interpretation.

Based upon the functions and emphasis laid upon by the Academy or other institutions or individuals before the formal establishment of the Academy, Hebrew language policy may be divided into three main periods (dates are approximate):

1. 1890 to 1920, that is, from the establishment of the first Hebrew Language Committee to the end of Ottoman rule. The revival of spoken Hebrew was then a major aim, as a common language was needed for local Jews and new immigrants. As no single language was spoken by a majority of the Jews in Palestine, Hebrew had a good chance of becoming the language of communication among them, due to its traditional status. Hebrew had other advantages as well. During this period, emphasis was placed on Semitic roots because of both a nationalist approach and the proximity of Arabic cognates. Hebrew was then promoted as the language of instruction in the Jewish schools of Palestine; its most significant victory was its having supplanted German at the Polytechnic Institute in Haifa in 1913 (Eisenstadt, 1967).

2. 1928 to 1948, that is, the duration of the British Mandate in Palestine. By now Hebrew had secured its place and that the revival had been achieved successfully, emphasis shifted to standardization, that is, rendering Hebrew more efficient, rational and generally applicable. The Hebrew Language Committee, supported by the agencies of the largely autonomous Jewish population, insisted on the standardization of pronunciation and spelling, as well as the dissemination of Hebrew in public and cultural life – in administration, schools, the Hebrew university (established in 1925), the press and theater. This period was characterized by adoption and acceptance of non-Semitic words and the publication of word lists in many domains for standard use.

3. 1948 to the present, that is since the establishment of the State of Israel. Hebrew, revived and standardized, was the official language of the land and was in general use in all aspects of life. Lexical modernization now became paramount as the final stage of language revival. The Hebrew Language Committee set itself up as an Academy for the Hebrew Language and was institutionalized by law.
It has consistently grappled with the need to provide new words and terms for the expanding education and technology of a modernizing state, with new organs such as the media, the government, bureaucracy, police and military forces. In the late 1960s, in newspaper reporting in Hebrew, about 60 to 70 percent of the words used in Hebrew newspaper reports were found to be Biblical, 15 to 20 percent Mishnaic, and the remainder medieval, newly created or the loan words (Rabin, 1970a: 304-346). It stands to reason that over the 20-odd years since this observation was made, the share of newly coined words has increased. The Academy’s work is aided by the parallel compiling of a historical dictionary, which aims at listing all entries of Hebrew words over the past 3000 years (over 1.5 million entries are already made) (Tur-Sinai, 1957). Many of the new terms have been imparted to the masses of Jewish immigrants by various means including the extremely successful direct-method of ulpan courses.

Since Israel achieved independence, determination of language policy is being shared by the Academy and other state authorities, especially the Ministry of Education, which determined and implemented policies regarding the teaching of Hebrew and other languages (Landau, 1970: 725). Another objective assumed by the Academy during this period is standardization, especially regarding spelling. In Hebrew as in Arabic, all the short vowels are not written in the same line as the consonants, but above or below it. In actual practice, printers omit these vowels (except in classical texts, poetry and children books), which are to be surmised based on one’s linguistic expertise. For the hundreds of thousands of new immigrants, keen on learning Hebrew rapidly and well, this practice constituted an additional major obstacle. Consequently, the Academy for Hebrew Language had to devise a new spelling system, in which these vowels were inserted in between the consonants. The new system was introduced methodically since 1968. This was faced with opposition by the traditional-minded Jews and the pursuits of purification had never been a major function in the reform of Hebrew – especially not during this period. This "plene" system was then advertised in the media and has been accepted by the press, contemporary prose literature, and government publications; many companies and individuals have been using the new spelling in everyday correspondence as well.

The development in all these three periods have been guided by some universal principles tuned to the local needs in Palestine and later Israel. The language planning for the upcoming Jewish state was based on information, formulation,
experimentation, determination and implementation (Bowen, 1967: vi). Each of these stages was crucial and lead to the other stage and special care was taken to suit to the local needs. The pioneers of language planning were not language experts and had already undertaken the mega-project of establishing a Jewish state and hence went slow on language issue so as to get optimal organized solution (Cooper, 1979: 26).

**Information:** Adequate and correct information is the key to correct planning. Such informations and not educated guesses help in correct evaluation of the situation and increase the chances of success and minimize the risk of error. In the pre-state era relevant information regarding language planning and the expertise of the people involved in the planning seemed to be lacking. Similar information from other parts of the world where similar task have been undertaken seemed to be irrelevant in the Israeli case. The Hebrew Language Committee devoted little attention to scrutinize informations of similar activities undertaken in other parts of the world, although several members knew of the attempts at language revival in Lithuania and Ireland. They chose to ignore this as they considered the Jewish case unique.

The policy makers of Israel were aware of local situations in Israel but did not invest considerable efforts in those early years in collecting and investigating all the pertinent relevant data. Several censuses were published annually ever since 1949, when the State of Israel was established. There is little evidence to indicate that this information was closely evaluated and used by language policy makers.

**Formulation:** This stage is generally perceived as pinpointing the main problems, drawing up the options to be considered and solutions to be weighed, as well as tentative selection of the preferred direction. In pre-statehood years, the Hebrew Language Committee did not consider formulating its objectives, which were simply the revival of Hebrew as a spoken language and its diffusion among the Jewish population and schools. The debates focused on the ways and means to achieve results efficiently and speedily. It was a period that focused on expansion. After 1948, discussions regarding formulation of language policy evidently lacked careful consideration of the issues and options. Confident of the revival efforts the formulation focused on consolidation.

**Experimentation:** This stage follows formulation of the selected policy and consists of examination of its feasibility and acceptance. In Israel, in 1949, an intensive *Ulpan* for teaching Hebrew to new immigrants was setup in Jerusalem and
then to this pilot project others were added. Once this five month’s crash course completed its first term and appropriate conclusions were drawn, similar courses were offered on a nationwide scale to new immigrants (Kodesh, 40-47).

**Determination:** Determination of language planning follows careful formulation and pilot experimentation of a preferred option. Only after due deliberation by experts and public authorities desirable changes in the original formulation, directions, and emphases, are made. This stage requires equal participation from language experts and policy makers. The Hebrew Language Council and later the Academy of Hebrew Language took such decisions. Although they lacked thorough consideration of the various options and were not preceded by any real experimentation; on the contrary, the general use of Hebrew throughout all Jewish schools in Palestine was encouraged despite the dearth of teachers and textbooks.

Language planning in Israel, in at least one major area – bilingualism – exhibited similar disregard of careful determination. During the early days of the new state, it was resolved to retain both Hebrew and Arabic as official languages and to translate this decision into everyday use. This implied the employment of both languages in Parliament, courts, laws, stamps, currency and paper money. In education, Arabic was to be used as the medium of instruction and an Arabic core curriculum was to be instituted in all Arab schools; Hebrew was taught in these schools as a first foreign language (Landau, 1969: 39-41). The decision was taken within a conceptual framework of cultural pluralism in state and society, with the openly declared intention of allowing and even encouraging the Arab minority in Israel to preserve their own cultural heritage. However no serious research or experimentation was carried out in this crucial matter and no thorough consideration was given to employ Hebrew as the medium of instruction, thereby preparing them for functioning as full members of the Israeli polity. The conceptual position couldn’t get the political backing due to the political situation on the ground and the determination couldn’t be implemented.

**Implementation:** The judicious application of a policy by various governmental agencies, such as the Ministry of Education, is of course its ultimate test, leading towards success or failure, excellence or mediocrity (Gaeilge, 1974: 527-553). Hebrew has achieved striking advances in the coinage of new words, language diffusion (via the media, government offices, etc) and language teaching (to both
children and adults in schools, special courses, the military etc.). Despite the absence of a clearly drawn-up language plan, Hebrew shows a remarkable success of implementation of the broad ideas. Enthusiasm, however, is no adequate substitute for a well-reasoned, determined language policy, but this is what best explains the case of Hebrew. The pioneers of Israel were aware of the sine-qua-non importance of language policy and involved themselves in its implementation. David Ben-Gurion was less directly involved in language planning, although he frequently recommended, both privately and in public, the revival of Hebrew and its popular diffusion. In a speech, delivered on January 3, 1949, at a preliminary meeting preceding the establishment of the Academy for the Hebrew Language, he called for disseminating Hebrew throughout the whole of Israel’s population, including the newcomers, pleading for enrichment of the language not merely with new words of Hebrew origin and form, but also with cultural content (Va’ad ha-Lashon ha-Ivrit, 1949: 5-7).

The Role of Army in Hebrew Teaching

Language and culture go hand in hand. The emerging new Jewish state expected contribution from all quarters; individuals and organizations. The role of Israeli Army that recruited individuals from all segments of the society was nothing but significant. Though army plays different roles, one significant role that it plays is symbolic in nature. It symbolizes the epitome of national interest. This sanctifies all the activities undertaken by it. In Israel, too, the army not only defends the border (which is not yet defined) but it defends the nation as well. This paves the way for the coveted defence personnel to take up high offices in the political sphere. The Israeli army has very strong connection with the society and their interaction with the civil society is quite high. The army uses its exclusive position to consolidate and promote different facets of nationalism and nation building. Language and social cohesion is one such facet.

In the realm of language policies and practices, the Israeli Defense Forces has an impact in three major areas: in the teaching of Hebrew to those who do not speak it, in the teaching of Arabic, and in the attempt to provide wide proportion of the population with basic mother tongue skills.

Israel adopted the policy of universal military service for all Jewish citizens. This facilitated the Israeli Army in influencing the language behavior of its conscripts.
The compulsory conscription begins at the age of 18 years and the period of service for men varies from two to three years and for women between 18 months and two years. The political arrangement in the early days of the state exempted the yeshiva (religious) students and women from the military conscription. The religious Jews volunteer in the army for civilian and religious services. Apart from the compulsory service, every conscript, men and women has to serve one month of service duty each year till the age of fifty years or so. One part of the series of test that all recruits undergo is meant to determine their physical profile, which is taken into account in assigning them to different units. Another series of tests is concerned with general intelligence and school achievement. This helps determine qualification for advanced training, and courses for non-commissioned and commissioned officers. A key part of the educational achievement test is a straightforward test of Hebrew proficiency. The recruits are called on to read and explain a passage that is written in academic Hebrew, with lexicon and syntax to probe knowledge. The sentences of the chosen passage are comparatively simple for native speakers of Hebrew with a successful 12 years of education, but it can quickly distinguish non-native speakers and those recruits who have missed or failed to benefit from schooling.

The army undertakes the responsibility of training the educationally weak recruits. Though for the army it might be more efficient and economical to assign unskilled tasks to such recruits but there has been a general acceptance, from the beginning of the Israeli Defence Forces to play constructive civilian role as part of their social responsibility. The Army does not just defend the country but also actively participate in the socially relevant tasks. One such task was settlement; for many years, Nachal (an acronym for Fighting Pioneering Youth) was a high-prestige army unit that combined army services in infantry or parachute units with the establishment of new agricultural settlements or, recently, also with social work in towns. Another such task was education. The Israeli army accepted as a general mission that all recruits, by the end of their compulsory service, should have completed at least the level of basic elementary education, and that those who had not completed high school should have a chance to reach the level of Grade 12 education.

The army basic education programme intends to bring up the level of Israeli born soldiers who for some reason couldn’t acquire the expected level at the elementary schools. The Army established courses, fitted at various stages into recruit training, at which these soldiers could be brought up to the level of basic education.
The programmes take full advantage of the available resources. The teachers are themselves recruits, generally young women with good high school education, who were given intensive training to be basic education teachers, promoted to non-commissioned rank to give them authority over their usually male soldier-pupils, and set to work more or less independently with a dozen or so illiterates. The training of these neophyte teachers is carried out commonly by lectures from teachers training colleges who do this as their reserve duty. The programme is economical, minimizing the cost, but of course still using up resources that armies would otherwise prefer to use for more militaristic activities.

There are currently five kinds of courses in general education offered by the Army. The first is a Hebrew course for native born recruits whose Hebrew scores on a test were lower than required for Army services. There is a 200-hour course developed to teach practical Hebrew literacy. Classes are usually limited to 10 recruits, and they include Druze and Bedouin soldiers. Each class has two soldier-teachers, who divide up the 11 hours of daily intensive instruction.

The second programme consists of basic education course for soldiers whose tested level is not equal to that expected after nine years of education. The programme, developed by the Army and approved by the Ministry of Education, includes 90 hours of Hebrew classes in small batches.

A third programme offers more advanced course for soldiers whose level is lower than Grade 11. The programme is based on the Ministry of Education’s Grade 11 programme, and uses Ministry tests.

There are two programmes at the high school leaving level. One is a certificate programme, for soldiers in the permanent Army who did not complete 12 years of high school. It follows the Ministry programme and examinations for Grade 12. The other offers courses for soldiers who wish to study for Bagrut examination.

Over the years, the programme has had mixed effects. One source of dissatisfaction was that the intensive basic education course did not lead to changed performance on the Army’s standard method of testing Hebrew proficiency. As a result, in 1981 three Israeli education linguists were assigned as their reserve duty the task of developing a literacy test that would show the changes in performance. The three were Rafael Nir and Robert Cooper of the Hebrew University and Bernard Spolsky of Bar-Ilan University. The first was a sergeant in the reserves, the other two privates. Observation of teaching in the field soon showed the nature of the problem.
The soldier-teachers were working very hard – they were up with their soldier-pupils for a first parade at 6 a.m., taught and supervised them all day and worked until the small hours of the evening preparing the next day’s lessons. Their approaches to teaching literacy however were based on their lecturer’s experience in training elementary school teachers and their own recollections of how they themselves had learned. As a result, 18 years old recruit were being presented with material and taught by methods more suitable for six-year-olds. The programme as a whole was insensitive to the needs of functional literacy.

Cooper, Nir and Spolsky therefore decided to write a test that would not just show what had been acquired but would also be readily translatable to a statement of functional goals, and that would hopefully have impact on the approach of the teachers. The test developed was strictly and obviously functional, starting with the simple literacy tasks a recruit might face – reading a leave pass, checking a receipt from the quartermaster, dealing with a bus timetable – and moving to more advanced literacy tasks of a citizen – advertisement, newspaper headlines, short texts from newspapers.

Two other effects of the Army on Hebrew language policy and practice might be mentioned, both concerned with corpus planning. One concerns terminological innovation. The Army training programmes in various fields are usually careful in following Hebrew Language Academy decisions on new words. Allony Fainberg (Fainberg, 1983: 9-40) found some evidence of the success of this in the area of terminology for parts of the automobile. Young men whose introduction to the automobile had been through Army drivers courses were more likely to know the Academy terminology than were others. A second concerns spelling. The Army elected one of the three current systems, ketiv maleh – the ‘full’ orthography which inserts some extra consonants to mark some missing vowels, as standard for army letters and reports.

In short Army has been making an attempt in filling up the gaps in literacy education and standardization that have been missed by the regular educational system.
Kibbutz, Hebrew and Nation-Building

Kibbutz is another very important institute that played very crucial role in Zionist-Israeli nation-building process. From the founding days of the first Kibbutz in 1910 in Dagania till today, through the establishment of the state in 1948, kibbutz continues to contribute to the Zionist enterprise. The kibbutz was in the forefront of Zionist pioneering: in ‘legal’ and ‘illegal’ immigration to Palestine; in agricultural-rural frontier settlement ("Hityashvut"); in the Haganah and the Palmach (the ‘illegal’ defense and strike forces of the Yishuv during British Mandate); in adopting the revitalized Hebrew language in everyday life; in fostering modern Hebrew literature and secular Jewish culture etc.

The year 1989/1990 was seen as “The year of Hebrew Language” to commemorate the century of the founding of the Hebrew Language Committee (Va’ad Halashon) which in 1950s became The Academy of the Hebrew Language. The most significant contribution has been the commitment to learn and to use Hebrew in all the spheres of everyday life constituting the ‘pioneer ethos’. Kibbutzim played very active role in the embodiment of this ethos. This ethos included the achievement of the Socialist-Zionist goals through personal sacrifice and example. According to this ethos of “Hagshamah atzmit” one could not and may not preach commitment of physical labor without being ready personally, to immigrate to Eretz Israel and then work on land. Similar was the approach to Hebrew. The choice of national language wouldn’t mean anything unless the pioneers and in this case the member of the kibbutzim were ready personally to make efforts to acquire Hebrew as the language of daily use and for every purpose. This ideological position was expressed in a resolution of the first council of the various branches of Hahalutz in 1918: “every haver (member) is obliged to acquire as early as possible the skill of using the Hebrew language in Eretz Israel” (Eisentadt, 1972: 9).

The political elite was helped by the language profile of the nation it was building by both bridging the gap between the different sections of the society and at the same time it distanced itself with the conflicting parties and in this case the Palestinians creating an ‘us and them’ kind of situation. The creation of ‘them’ was equally important for the cohesion in ‘us.’ The dominant group with its ideological baggage subtly helped in:
1) the rapid displacement of the minority language by the majority language in the interests of political communication and upward mobility;

2) the acceptance by the minority nationality of the “inferior” status and nature of their language;

3) a functional differentiation of the majority and minority languages, and the use of the latter for purely particularistic and “subcultural” purposes; and

4) the rejection of the values and orientations associated with the minority language.

Thus the choice of Hebrew language had a double edge: it alienated the Arabic speaking dominant population in Palestine and at the same time the dominant Yiddish language amongst the Jewish Diaspora was to be abandoned in favor of Hebrew as a gesture of rejecting the association with the life of humility in Diaspora. The success of Hebrew as nation building is also associated with Zionism which is based on a biblical-religious ideology (though secularized) that largely transmitted in Hebrew and focused on Palestine. Hebrew was a divinely inspired language serving not only the spread of the word of God but also tied together far-flung diasporas.

Place of Hebrew in Zionist Ideology

Language policy, it’s planning and implementation cannot take place overnight. It requires a continued and persistent effort on the part of leadership. The Jewish leadership too realized this and from the pre-state period debated the issue of language. All the Jewish factions had some or the other position on the language aspect of the up-coming Jewish state. It becomes important to know their ideological position viz-a-viz language. It was the same very leadership that was going to give shape to the new state. Hence their position on language carries great significance.

Theodor Herzl a prominent personality in Modern Jewish history. He established the World Zionist Organization in 1897. A Journalist by profession, he knew the power of language. But during his lifetime his priorities were different. Theodor Herzl published his “Judenstaat” (A Jewish State) in 1896. This launched the foundation of the Zionist Movement and the Jewish-Zionist nation building. Despite his understanding of the position of language, Herzl contended that Hebrew could not
be the common language of Jews gathering from the various diasporas. Even Yiddish had not evolved to be a modern language by this time. This might be the reason for Hertzl’s contention in his “Judenstaat” that in this state will probably develop a “pluralism of languages” like Switzerland. “Every one will use the language he is used to, and which is the cherished homeland of his thoughts” (Bein, 1977: 134). Hertzl failed to understand the crucial importance of Hebrew as the language of “the Great Tradition” in the Zionist enterprise, and this made him alien to the “Zion-Zionists”4 and to cultural Zionist personalities as Ahad Ha’am. Hertzl tried and tried again to learn Hebrew and he also hired a teacher of Hebrew for his children (Bein, 1977: 329). The foremost Zionist organization, WZO, declared Modern Hebrew as its official language only after his death in 1904. It was in the 8th Zionist Congress (1907) in Hague that Modern Hebrew was made the official language of the World Zionist Organization.

Elizer Ben-Yehuda fomented the ideology of the revival of Hebrew by his article “She’ela Lohetet” (A Burning Question) published in Vienna. This article was published seventeen years before the publication of Hertzl’s Judenstaat in a Hebrew periodical in 1879. Ben-Yehuda, as is reflected in his other articles, believed that there is strong connection between nationality and national language.

Ben-Yehuda’s conception of the role of Hebrew in Jewish nationality developed in two stages. In the first stage, Ben-Yehuda considered the role of Hebrew as a second language in a diglossic situation, some sort of ‘lingua franca’ that might bridge the linguistic gap between Jewish diaspora communities speaking the language of the host nation or one of the ‘post-exile’ Jewish languages as their first language. Only in the second stage, Ben-Yehuda changed his mind in favour of Hebrew as the daily first language (Mandel, 1981). Ben-Yehuda envisioned that the study of Hebrew traditional writings might eventually prevent split between the various Jewish diasporas that spoke language of their host nation as their first language (Mandel, 1981: 33).

Dr. Shemeryahu Levin was another Zionist personality and thinker who dealt in his works with the problem of the national language. His writings are characteristics of the language dilemma that prevailed during his time. He too oscillated between

4 Zion-Zionists are members and supporters of the Zionist Movement who stood for the establishment of a Jewish state only in “Zion” i.e. in Palestine.
Yiddish and Hebrew. Like other Zionists of East-European origin, he had an emotional attachment with Yiddish, the popular vernacular of the Jewish masses in East Europe. On the other hand he had a rational persuasion on the importance of Hebrew in the Zionist enterprise (Shur, 1996: 171). He felt the threat that Yiddish might pose to Hebrew particularly when Yiddish kept on developing and evolving as a modern language. Keeping this in mind he flouted the idea of the place of Yiddish in the Jewish society. Keeping in line with the thoughts of H.N. Bailik he anticipated that Yiddish would act as a ‘fence’; fulfill an important role in guarding the Hebrew language. The priority of Hebrew in Jewish nationalism stems, according to Levin, from the trinity of: people, land and language. Language is not only a means to convey a message but the message itself (Shur, 1996: 170).

There was a small period of lull for the Hebrew language around the death of Herzl. The Zionist Movement itself felt a big jolt with his death. Suddenly, the readers of Hebrew of the elder generation who supported the Hebrew journals and writings morally and materially disappeared. The Hebrew journals “Hatzeitirah” and “Hashiloah” seized to appear. In Berl Katznelson’s (Katznelson, 1986) words “there showed up a total despair concerning Hebrew” and its revival. The despair, which of course was temporary, concerning Hebrew opened up a wide opportunity for the flourishing of Yiddish.

Berl Katznelson, like Levin, too had a dilemma regarding the national language. It was a Hebrew literary journal “Hamoerer” (The Awakener) brought out by Josef Haim Brenner that changed his mind in favor of Hebrew as the national language of the Zionist Movement. His choice for Hebrew was a rational one as he understood that one cannot separate between the two ingredients of the Zionist idea: 1) the attachment of the Jewish people to that of Eretz Israel i.e. Palestine and 2) Hebrew which binds the Jewish nation to their traditional culture. Katznelson’s choice of the Land of Israel for a Jewish state and Hebrew as its language was based on his belief that Jews would not be able to establish a state of their own without the use of its reserves of culture and tradition (Shur, 1995: 117-139). Talking about culture, Katznelson was clear about the prevalence of Hebrew across all sections of the society and particularly the labour class. “Introducing Hebrew language is one of the most important ways in order to raise their value, to prepare the working class for life in the Land, and for its contribution as an independent force, in the creation of future life....
‘Avodah Atzmit’ (self work i.e. work by Jews) and the Hebrew language are the pillars of the future Hebrew culture in the Land of Israel (Shur, 1995: 126).

David Ben-Gurion also held similar ideas however; he was more clear about the choice of Hebrew as the language of the Jews. He claims to have a natural bend towards Hebrew which of course was contributed by his grandfather who used to teach him Bible and Hebrew when he was too young (Ben-Gurion, 1971). As a pioneer of the Zionist enterprise he had no doubts that Hebrew should be the official language of the Zionist Movement and the language of the Yishuv in the land of Israel. It was his efforts that the Poaley-Zion party (Zion-Labor party) in the Land of Israel gave up Yiddish as its official language and adopted Hebrew in its day to day activities and publications.

Though Ben-Gurion had no formal education but he demonstrated great intellectual and leadership qualities. He was an assertive politician who first appeared in a meeting of the Palestine branch of the Poaley-Zion party at its foundation conference on 4-6 October 1906. At this conference Ben-Gurion’s party and Israel Shohat’s Nationalists followers confronted the Marxist ‘Rostoviar’ group. The Rostovians stood for a trade union common to both Jewish and Arab workers and resisted to acknowledge Hebrew the official language of the party. Ben-Gurion and Shohat group demanded to include into the party programme an absolute attachment to Hebrew as one of the aims of the Zionist Movement. Ben-Gurion was elected chairperson of the conference, spoke Hebrew and did not agree to translate his speech into Yiddish or Russian (Tevet, 46-47).

In spite of his strong attachment to Hebrew, Ben-Gurion was not against the use of Yiddish in Diaspora and in other contexts than the Palestinian, he supported a compromise between the two languages (Yiddish and the host country’s language). However, his clear and absolute support of Hebrew in the context of the Yishuv was based on both principal and pragmatic considerations: Hebrew as the language of the ancient Jewish independence, the language of “the Great Tradition”, the language of the Bible; and the pragmatic reason was that he too felt that Hebrew is the only language apt to unite the various parts of the Jewish people arriving from so many different countries and speaking their various languages.
In Ben-Gurion’s thought, Hebrew language and literature would liberate the people from the ‘misery of deafness’ from foreign cultural satisfactions, borrowed and artificial and from phenomena rooted in Diaspora (Donitz, 1988: 112).

Without the achievement of our work being done entirely by ourselves, there will be no national independence, and we will remain rootless, weak and powerless and no cultural or literary activity will have roots or existence. But, our rooting in our homeland, in the soil and in work will not be complete if it is not complemented by the renaissance of the language and the literature.

This also reflects Ben-Gurion’s deep attachment to Hebrew which also arises from his ideological premises concerning the ‘negation of the *galut* (Diaspora)’ and his perception of Zionism as a revolutionary movement in its aims. “Our Zionism is composed of national ideology, of the feeling of love for the Land, of striving for political independence, and of the will and necessity to settle in the Land of Israel”.

**Nahman Shyrkin**, a theorist and considered a forerunner of Katznelson and Ben-Gurion who are the two outstanding representatives of the Zionist-Socialist Labor movement. His work “The Jewish Problem and the Socialist Jewish State” has influenced the Zionist pioneers. Katznelson writes about Shyrkin’s attitude towards the Great Tradition of Judaism that Shyrkin heralded the revival of Hebrew because of its essence as an outstanding social phenomenon in the history of mankind, and as testimony of the originality of the people of Israel (Katznelson, 1986: 37). According to Shyrkin, the use of Hebrew by the ‘*Haskala*’ movement was a product of the Jewish “bourgeoisie”, who had no other language but Hebrew to absorb European ideas. But contrary to the goal of the *Haskala*, Hebrew became the national goal, instead of a means for assimilation. However, without the existence of the Zionist movement, which adopted Hebrew as its national language, Hebrew would have disappeared, not unlike the disappearance of Hebrew literature in Germany in the process of increasing assimilation of Jews there (Katznelson, 1986: 51).

**Vladamir-Zeev Jabotinsky** is another Zionist pioneer, the political rival of the Socialist-Zionist Labor movement of Ben-Gurion. He was the founder and leader of the Revisionist-Zionist party (the forerunner of Menahem Begin’s Herut and Likud party). The earlier phase of Jabotinsky ideology emphasized on the content of education but in the later phase the emphasis shifted to Hebrew as the preferred language of Jewish education (Haramati, 1981: 1). This shift of emphasis in the first stage of Jabotinsky’s thought stemmed from his persuasion that Jewish education
should be revolutionized. While in the era of Haskala the emphasis in education was on general humanism, but, in the period of crisis of Jewish education, the emphasis should be on national education, “the correction needed now is much deeper than the change of the language of instruction – the language is something alien.” Thus his conclusion: “the study of Judaism must be in the center of Jewish learning” and traditionally Judaism can be taught in any language (Haramati, 1981: 2-3).

The transfer of emphasis from the contents of instruction to the language seemingly occurred after Jabotinsky’s first visit to Palestine in 1908. He was very impressed by the Hebrew speech of the native youth, and of other young people, and concluded that a ‘strong will’ can change the situation and Hebrew can become the language of instruction and even as a vernacular among Jews in the Diaspora too (Haramati, 1981: 5). His new attitude concerning the role of Modern Hebrew for realization of the ends of Zionism became clear from his speech at the conference of Zionists of Russia held in Vienna in the summer of 1913. Jabotinsky revealed his opinion: “In national education what counts is the language and the content is only a shell... The bond that withstands every challenge and changes of time, the necessary bond between the individual and the nation, is the language: the language in which the individual is used to thinking and feeling (Haramati, 1981: 10). At the conference Jabotinsky also proposed three practical steps in this direction: a) to establish ‘whole’ Hebrew schools; b) to find suitable teachers; and c) to translate classics from world literature into Hebrew.

Jabotinsky rejected the contention of Yiddishists that the mere use of a language in speech is a test of nationality “because if we established schools on the basis of the popular vernacular, (which varies from place to place) we would have to build our schools using various languages spoken by our people, not only in different countries but even in the same country and even in the same city. This means that we would not have a national school at all (Haramati, 1981: 19). Jabotinsky also thought that because of the weakening of the attachment to religion, Hebrew would substitute, becoming the sole bond among all parts of the nation, a force to strengthen Jewish existence and survival.

As a part of Jabotinsky’s theory of “Kulah Sheli” (theory of wholeness), Modern Hebrew was considered important as a medium of instruction in education. In Hebrew national schools every subject must be taught in Hebrew, except foreign
languages. Only thus it would be possible to make Hebrew the language of everyday speech and the language of thought and ideas.

**Spiritual-Cultural School of Zionism**

**Asher Ginzburg** popularly known as Ahad Ha’am was the main figure of the spiritual-cultural school of Zionism which ran parallel to the main stream political Zionism. Ahad Ha’am detached himself from the religious-hassidic worldview of his parents and became increasingly enthralled by the ideas of the *Haskala*, the Hebrew enlightenment movement. He was mostly influenced by Itzhak Ber Levinsohn. Levinsohn and his spiritual friends observed religion from a rational point of view, stood for radical change of Jewish traditional life and also favored the revival of the Hebrew language and its grammar as a primary condition for the revival of Jewish culture (Goldstein, 1992: 44).

Another person who influenced Ahad Ha’am, was Herbert Spencer. According to his view of nationhood, the nation is “an independent entity characterized by its common historic past and its collective behavior,” and it possesses “a national ‘ego’ eager to survive by its memories and hopes”. Adopting this view to the reality of the Jewish people, Ahad Ha’am concluded that the calamity of the Jewish people is in its lack of national life. Therefore, “the revival of the hearts” (*tehiyat ha’evavot*), i.e. spiritual-cultural work must precede practical and political activities (Goldstein, 1992: 89-90). This means the “revival of Jewish nationalism”; and this in turn necessitates the revival of the Hebrew language. The importance of Hebrew language in the national revival was also emphasized in “Kaveret” a new journal founded and edited by Ahad Ha’am (Goldstein, 1992: 112).

Although Ahad Ha’am and his followers were united in their view on the role of Hebrew; they were divided as to the ways of its development and diffusion in public. Ahad Ha’am together with Mendele Moher Sefarim and Ravnicki, saw the best way to it in the education of the younger generation and not in the founding of various associations. Ahad Ha’am was accused of criticizing Eliezer Ben-Yehuda and his society “*Safa Berura*” “the living and clear language” to which he denied (Goldstein, 1992: 114). The Hebrew language was also a vital part of Ahad Ha’am’s conception of the formation of a “spiritual center” in Eretz Israel (Goldstein, 1992: 341). He believed
that national revival should also include the revival of national literature including especially belles letters.

S.Y. Agnon was another intellectual who contributed to Jewish nationalism and Hebrew language revival. His writings centered around revival of Hebrew language (Bar-Adon., 1977: 11). The love of the Torah and of Hohmat Yisrael (Judaic Studies) in general, the love of Eretz Israel and of Lashon haKodesh (the Holy language), are one unit and this is reflected again and again in Agnon’s writing. The central idea that he emphasized was that Hebrew was a cornerstone in the life of the Jewish people, in Zionist ideology and in the revival enterprise in Eretz Israel. The basic assumption behind this was:

It is the language in which the Torah was given, in which the Almighty created his world, and praise Him the angels, in which he wants the prayers of Yisrael... and in the Lashon Kodesh he might rebuild Jerusalem and bring back to it its diasporas... (Bar-Adon., 1977: 84).

Agnon had great appreciation for people who spoke Hebrew, especially the workers, because they united in their person the two main principles of the Zionist revival - pioneering labor in the Land of Israel and Hebrew speech. His view is loudly expressed in his panoramic work of fiction on the Second Aliya period - “Tmol Shilshom” (Yesterday, Before Yesterday). Agnon had a ‘cold’ attitude towards Yiddish language as an alternative to Hebrew as a national language. Ideologically he was totally against Yiddishism.

Hebrew in Religious Zionism

The conflict between the religious Jews and the secular Jews is manifested in all the aspects of Jewish life and has continued over the ages. The idea of religious Zionism was based on the belief of the unity of nation and religion. The idea was expressed in the thoughts of Rabbi Y.A. Cook: In Judaism the conception of God and the idea of nationalism are so tightly knit that the mutual influence is recognizable in both elements. While three out of five elements of Judaism, namely God, the people of Israel and the Torah were observed even in the Diaspora, the remaining two, the holy language and the Land of Israel were observed only partially. The language was partially observed in prayers and in holy studies and the Land of Israel became the object of prayers and dreams (Tirosh, 1975: 15-17). The meaning of national revival
was not the formation of a new nation with a new culture, but the renaissance of an ancient people and an ancient culture of a historic community. This was accomplished by merging the sacred and the profane. The revival of Hebrew was made possible by the synthesis between the usage of the language for religious purposes and for the secular domain. The credit for preserving the language for ages (Sapira, p.116) must be given to the religion and its rituals that had been practiced and transferred to the next generation.

According to religious Zionism, the complete return to Hebrew or the revival of Hebrew in the sense of accommodating the language to the needs of a modern society was not sufficient. Hebrew in itself was not the ‘message’ if it was not filled by the content of Judaism. Hebrew education was vitally connected with the tradition of the generations, which was overwhelmingly religious (Harshav, 1990: 22).

**Political Struggles to Ensure the Dominant Status of Hebrew**

There was a kind of unanimity among the political leaders that the process of revival of Hebrew should also be seen as a part of political activity launched by the Zionist movement (Blanc, 1968: 237-240). The best known and most cited political struggle concerning the Hebrew revival is the “language war” of 1913/14 (Rinnot, 1971). The issue was regarding the language of instruction in the institutions in Israel particularly in the ‘Ezra’ Teachers’ college and the Technion institute in Haifa. The Association of Hebrew Teachers played a vital role in this war. Dr. Hantke, one of the supporters of it in the Zionist leadership, wrote in a letter to Dr. Ruppin: “No doubt, the language war is the greatest event that ever happened to the Zionist Association. Victory in this struggle will prove that the period of experiments in Eretz Yisrael has ended, and it will preserve Jewish national life in the future” (Rinnot, 1971: 218-19). The Teachers Association despite the lack of formal authority and many other weaknesses became some sort of “ministry of education” for the *Yishuv*, a central body influencing the direction of the national education (Elboim-Dror, 1986: 206). The growing awareness of the political role of national language and the role of the Teachers Association in the language war ultimately led to the transfer of the control of the Hebrew Zionist educational system in the country to the political institutions of the movement (Elboim-Dror, 1986: 310).
Hebrew played an important role in the nation building of the new society in Israel. One of the greatest achievements of the political struggles in favor of Modern Hebrew was in its declaration as the official language of the World Zionist Organization at the 8th Zionist Congress held at the Hague in 1907. With this the language war largely settled in favor of Hebrew. The dilemma within the political parties gradually settled in favor of Hebrew. The Youth Labor party (HaPoaley Hatzair) had initially soul-searching over the choice between Yiddish and Hebrew. But it settled in favor of Hebrew much easily and at a quite early stage.

The Zion Labor party (Poaley Zion) had a difficult time in settling the issue. This party was a local branch of the worldwide Zion in which Yiddish prevailed. Those in favor of Yiddish held that the majority of the new Jewish immigrants to Palestine did not know Hebrew, so they would not be accessible to the party propaganda. In the formative period of the party the Yiddishists prevailed, and the first journal of Poaley Zion in the Land of Israel was published in Yiddish and named “Der Unfang” (The Beginning). However, those in the party in favor of Hebrew in principle and for practical reasons did not concede; they continued their fight, and prevailed in the end. In 1910 the new journal of Poaley Zion appeared in Hebrew and was named Ha’ahdut (the Unity).

Zionism as the ‘nationalism of the emigrating minority’ was forced to function under various political pressures, including one of language choice. Two external forces were active in the region and exerted their influence in the language sphere as well for promoting their political interest. The Germans did so through the educational establishment of the Ezra Society founded by the German Jews; and the French through the philanthropic and educational establishment of Alliance Israélite Universelle, founded the French Jews.

When the Ezra Society launched its activities in Palestine, it treated the aspiration of the Yishuv with respect and Hebrew was introduced as the language of instruction in at least the elementary schools which Ezra opened and administered. However, in the second decade of the twentieth century the pressures in favor German language by the foreign office of the German Empire grew and Ezra as a German establishment yielded (Alpert, 1982). Dr. Shemeryahu Levin headed the great diplomatic combat against the German-Jewish “Ezra” society and against the political and diplomatic pressures of the imperial German Foreign Office. This effort was supported by the American-Jewish members of Technion board (Shur, 1996).
Building a National Identity through Hebrew

If political development is perceived as the capability of a political system to solve the problems arising from modernization, language planning has a substantial share in this process. Language planning is often used to help solve problems of political development such as identity crisis as an issue of nation building, popular participation, distribution of benefits, penetration of the administration, integration of specialized functions, professional differentiation or secularization of political culture. As language is the primary means of political communication, its planning is frequently considered by such agents of political development as the state leadership, political parties, the military, the intelligentsia, the bureaucracy and organized labor – which seek to influence their respective political systems. Their language choices nearly always have political consequences (Weinstein, 1983).

It is extremely difficult to draw an overall model of the relevance of language planning in political development as political development proceeds differently in different countries with its own local needs and requirements. However, language policy is frequently an indication of political development: the language policy selected reflects not only the prevailing level of political development but also has an impact on its future character. This relationship is evident in an assessment of the priorities of language policy and planning in Hebrew and its impact on the political development, especially the main aspects thereof, such as forging a new identity as part of nation building; promoting the course of modernization; increasing popular participation in politics; and secularizing political culture.

Forging a New Identity as Part of Nation Building

Creation of a national identity is frequently a top-priority task for the political leadership of peoples on their way to statehood or in recently-established states. A realistic view appreciates that political power can be used to bring about language change, while language change can be used to redistribute political power (Pool, 1990: 241). The proponents of national political regimes often believe that there are linguistic prerequisites to the achievement of their political goals. They also believe that a national political regime is impossible without the existence of a nation (supremely legitimate and territorially dominant community (Pool, 1990. 242)) and that a nation, in turn is impossible without a language that the members of the
community are all competent in and use exclusively in communication with one another.

The Jews in Palestine, now Israel, are no exception. The pioneers of the state, who planned the revival, standardization and lexical expansion of Hebrew thought that spoken Hebrew, employed by old-timers and newcomers alike and taught at all levels in schools, was precondition for nationhood and statehood. They also argued that modern Hebrew, while maintaining existing grammatical structures, should draw chiefly on Biblical and Mishnaic sources representing the language of their forefathers, who had lived in the same land long ago.

**Promoting Modernization:** A modernizing political regime might be defined as one that promotes cultural, economic, and political changes that emulate what are considered advanced societies. Parallel to beliefs about “national” regimes, it is commonly argued that a modernizing political regime cannot come into existence without a modern language regime.

The Jewish elites in Palestine/Israel appreciated modernization. After all, Jews had emigrated to Palestine from countries that were already highly modernized. This element was much stronger in Kemalist Turkey but modernization as a national goal appears to have carried somewhat less weight in the Jewish community of Palestine/Israel; the Jews refrained from changing the Hebraic script, although they, too, planned and implemented lexical modernization and introduced foreign language teaching in their schools. Hebrew also carried symbolic values that were missing in other languages like Yiddish. Yiddish symbolized diasporic and subordinate life where as Hebrew with new lexical inputs was a modern language and everyone needed to learn it to build up a new nation.

**Increasing Popular Participation in Politics:** The significance of Hebrew language in both quantitative and qualitative participation in politics was clear in the minds of the Jewish leadership. The fluency in Hebrew was obviously required for political participation in current politics, such as party life, as well as national and local elections. In Israel the basic approach to language planning was accommodationist. Language policy was expressed by an attempt at conflict management, which resulted in the language issue having little or no impact on Jewish-Arab tensions within the State of Israel. Nearly all Arabs in Israel now know Hebrew as the language of commerce, industry and the military forces, but they are
even more fluent in Arabic, which is not only the second official language, but also the language of their own press, theater and schooling (Landau, 1969: 108-155). The political participation of the Arabs in Israel is quite high and this is credited among other things to fewer political exploitation of linguistic cleavage.

**Secularizing Political Culture:** The political culture of a state is generally designed by the political elite of that country. Though Israel is a Jewish state, the question of Jewish identity is still a big debate. The secular and the religious groups have lots of friction but still they co-exist and have provided the state with several successive coalition cabinets. The secular elite of Israel set about reviving the Hebrew language, and not surprisingly, traditional circles vehemently opposed it. Eliezer Ben-Yehuda was ridiculed by ultra-orthodox Jewish circles in Palestine and attacked in their newspapers for profaning the holy language by its daily use; later he was even excommunicated by them. Even today, some of the newspapers still maintain the pre-reform language style like ha-Qol [The Voice] and ha-Modi’a [The Informant] in Israel.

**Berlin Haskala in Nation-Building**

Berlin *Haskala*, the enlightenment movement in Europe, particularly Germany, put a new life and impetus to Hebrew. The fathers of the Berlin *Haskala* revived the Hebrew language and created the Modern Hebrew literature. The Jewish national renaissance took up several tasks and projects to bring their people closer to the nations of Europe by means of Hebrew. Hebrew was chosen as a vehicle to introduce the Jews to the world of foreign values; to spread through it, the gospel of rationalism that discarded nationality and thus discarded racial individuality to the Jewish people (Spiegel, 1930: 20). Hebrew was revived by the fathers of the enlightenment for the sake of a holy war against religion but the same language led towards the revival of Jewish religious values.

The fathers of the Berlin *Haskala* revived the Hebrew language and created the modern literature. If they were to start up from their graves and see what has happened to the work of their hands, they would be overcome by the utter uselessness of man’s conscious striving, especially when he struggles against his own blood. Inevitably, history has played them a memorable prank (Spiegel, 1930: 20).

For the orthodox it further sanctifies its holiness (Spiegel, 1930: 24).
If anything be capable of providing the inward genuineness of the Jewish national renaissance, it is the rebirth of the Hebrew language of our day. This event alone has borne witness to the truth of life; to the truth of nature in our national revival.... There is no phenomena to be achieved by wishing or straining. There is in this process something of the mystery of birth, of the wonder of natural growth, a gift of God (Spiegel, 1930: 19-20).

Through Hebrew they wanted Jews to come closer to other languages and finally pave the way, through Hebrew, for assimilation and absorption. Hebrew for them was not an end in itself, but a means to an end, an implement that, when it had served the purpose, could be thrown away (Spiegel, 1930: 21). The champions of Haskala had no better choice to reach their people. They used Hebrew to decoy their people into the foreign world and the foreign language. But once in use Hebrew decided its own destiny.

In the Haskala generation, Hebrew called upon young forces to revolt against the yoke of tradition, which hindered young blood from creative utterances. But at the end, Hebrew language awakened national aspirations within them (Spiegel, 1930: 22). Hebrew revived old, forgotten yearnings for the motherland, and impelled the first pioneers to go up to Palestine to live the Hebrew life. They understood that unless there was a Hebrew Palestine, unless the language took root naturally in a home land, where the primary and only language of thought and emotion is Hebrew, the language in Galuth wouldn't mean much.

After the revival of Hebrew as a spoken language, it was felt necessary to connect the language with the soil and land. Hebrew thought and speech and Hebrew labour were encouraged and to facilitate it the Hebrew university on Mount Scopus in Jerusalem was established. Hebrew villages were created in Palestine. Hebrew became the vehicle of the whole Jewish rebirth and the creation of national values and Hebrew culture.

**Hebrew Speech Revival and Nation-Building**

The revival of Hebrew speech was very intelligently used by the political groups towards their Zionist goals. It was primarily seen in the political manipulation of the Hebrew language-performance of the new immigrants. Hebrew came in very handy for building a new society particularly when the immigrants came with different background culturally and linguistically. S.N. Eisenstadt points to two features of crucial importance of this new society. Firstly the relation of the cultural orientations to
the Jewish religion and secondly the renaissance of the Hebrew language (Eisenstadt, 1985: 34-35).

He further elaborates the utility of Hebrew speech “the adaptation of Hebrew to Western problems and life succeeded in a relatively short time. This meant that a crucial medium of communication was created, which far from remaining merely on the level of national symbolism, became fully integrated into the life of the people… That proved to be an immensely powerful instrument of national unification from early period of Yishuv but even more so since the establishment of the state and the influx of new immigrants. It was probably also the most important contribution to ethnic unification, with the different ethnic symbols and tensions expressed in Hebrew… It prevented or at least minimized the development of a rift between modernity and tradition that is so often found in other societies… Thus whatever social, cultural and political riffs developed in the Yishuv, they were expressed in a common tongue…. Moreover, Hebrew became the language of all strata of society and of all levels of communication…” (Eisenstadt, 1985: 34-35).

It also helped in minimizing the tension within the society. As the new immigrants came from different socio-political backgrounds and their economic standing also varied the society had a tension between tradition and modernity. … “the fact that this “religious” and “traditional” language became the national vernacular and the means of communication in a modern society reduced … the possibilities first that difference between “traditionalists” and “modernists” would center around different linguistic identities and that at the same time, that there could develop cultural dependence on foreign countries as major exclusive sources of broader cultural innovation and creativity…” (Eisenstadt, 1985: 89-90).

National Identity

Jewish emancipation in modern times posed new choices both of identity and of language. The enlightenment of western European invited assimilation and conformity to alien, non-Jewish values and parallel rejection of both Hebrew and Jewish languages. This may be exemplified by the development of the reform movement in the nineteenth century. German was to be the language in which Jews expressed their religious identity. Their differences from gentiles were to be theological but not linguistic or cultural. The use of the co-territorial language in the
synagogue marked an attempt at building a new identity. In Eastern Europe, similarly it was widely assumed that once Jews began to speak Russian, they would move completely into the modern secular world and become like any one else (Tobias, 1969: 19-38).

Emancipation offered to European Jews was a chance to try to be like their non-Jewish neighbors, except in certain unexceptionable religious tenets and practices. Their adoption of the standard language was to be badge of this new identity. Carried further, it offered a promise of complete naturalization. But this promise was not fulfilled, for nineteenth century notions of linguistic determinism and national character were used to argue that racially different Jews could never attain control of the national language. The rise of nationalism in 19th century Europe made easy assimilation difficult or impossible for many Jews as outsiders, racially barred from participation in national character. Expressing this idea, Gide in 1914 remarked that Jews could master only the mechanics and not the ‘soul’ of the French language, so that they could never be considered French writers (Weinberg, 1995: 488-94). The response to this shaped the development of modern Jewish national identity.

For those who rejected assimilation, the alternative models of Jewish identity were expressed in a significant way in their choices of language. At the same time, all choices involved, to a greater or lesser extent a move that began with the enlightenment from traditional Jewish multilingualism to a new ideological monolingualism, whether it was expressed in a non-Jewish language or in a secularized Hebrew or in a standardized Yiddish (Bartal, 1993: 141-50).

There were two distinct varieties of Jewish national identity offered as alternatives to acceptance of the Gentile language and identity, each that adopted its own language. The first was the ultimately territorialist version of modern Jewish nationalism, called Zionism. Although Theodre Hertzl himself seems not to have thought about the issue of language, and seems to have assumed that German could be the language of the new Jewish state, the revitalization of Hebrew became a central component of Zionism. The second was a more culturally oriented version that adopted the standardization of the Jewish vernacular, Yiddish as its main goal. Socio-linguistically, each had a different task, for Hebrew was a language for daily life, and Yiddish was a language of daily life needing recognition of its potential for culture.
The Zionist movement of the late nineteenth century was ideologically focused on the rejection of the artificiality of Jewish life in Diaspora. For Jews to regain their national identity, they needed the same thing that other nations possessed—a land of their own, and their own language. The attempts at language revitalization and at resettlement began independently (Spolsky and Shohamy, 1999: 67). There were Jews who started to write and even speak Hebrew in Europe, and the early settlers in Palestine continued to use Yiddish for many years. But the process of Hebrew language revitalization took place in Palestinian settlement where the Zionist pioneers were returning to the land as farmers and in the new Hebrew towns built in Palestine. Mandel (Mandel, 1993: 193-207) argues plausibly that Ben-Yehuda himself only started proclaiming the importance of spoken Hebrew after he arrived in Palestine, fearing that if it were not adopted as a language of instruction, French or German might come to be the main language of its students. The process of revitalization itself depended on the children of those who had adopted the new identity of Hebrew—farmers and townspeople in their historical land. Their use of the revived language marked their own new identity.

An alternative path was chosen by the proponents of Yiddish language. Fishman (Fishman, 1980: 43-73) whose studies of language and identity have been seminal has shown the importance of the 1907 Tshernovits conference in the development of the Yiddish nationalist movement. There were contradictory ideological winds blowing at the meeting. The conference resolution, for instance, satisfied itself with proclaiming Yiddish as a Jewish national language alongside Hebrew. One of the key organizers, Nathan Birnbaum, was a few years later to found what became the leading anti-Zionist religious party, Agudat Israel. Many of the people at the conference wrote in Hebrew as well as Yiddish. But the central theme was the value of developing a secular, non-territorial but decidedly Jewish cultural identity, to be expressed in Yiddish.

The strength of this fear of other language was apparent from the start, when the first Hebrew teacher’s organization (the Asefat Morim, which lasted from 1893 – 1897) refused to admit teachers who used any other language even as textual sources. Sapir himself also a teacher of Arabic, finally managed to persuade the group to consider individual cases and admit members who had good knowledge of Hebrew.
and whose experience in teaching other languages might be of use to those developing the new national Hebrew schools (Karmi, 1997: 97). The early Jewish settlers in Palestine gradually narrowed down to two tasks that they had to perform. The first task was to bring in Jews from Diaspora. Religious symbolism played a crucial role in it. Once in the land of Israel, Judaism took a back seat. The goal was a modern secular society and here Hebrew played a great cohesive role unifying different Diasporic communities.

**Conclusion**

Language is very intricately intertwined with politics particularly in modern statecraft where people are sovereign. The ruler and the ruled are very closely linked. Political power can be used to bring about language change, while language change can be used to redistribute political power. In a modern democratic set-up, social mobility and political participation of the masses elevates the role of language. For a fruitful communication between different hierarchies it is desirable that the language of the mass and that of the elite be congruent. Language has been crucial in shaping the political consciousness of a community, elevating it and transforming it in the interest of the state.

The Jewish community for most part of its history has been multilingual. Their diasporic history reveals that they learned the language of their host countries and were quite comfortable in the regional language. The long history of Jewish multilingualism changed to Jewish monolingualism in a very short span of time. This could not have been made possible without a systematic scheme of things. From conceptualization, formulation to implementation all required support and patronage from the elite particularly political elite.

This was the case with Hebrew which very easily and quickly could win over this patronage. Irrespective of the political position, the Zionist pioneers realized the importance of Hebrew language in the larger Zionist project. The political Zionists, spiritual-cultural Zionists or the religious Zionist alike had a special place for Hebrew language though for a different reason. For the political Zionists who were secular in their outlook and approach, Hebrew symbolized continuity and the prime Hebrew text – Bible – was not necessarily a religious text for them. It was foremost a historical document loaded with authenticity. The revival of the language meant the continuity
From the antiquity to the present and would justify their legitimacy over the space they were struggling for. The two most important ingredients of the Zionist enterprise was land and culture and Jewish culture with Hebrew is unimaginable. They favoured Hebrew culture across all sections of the society.

For the spiritual-cultural Zionist the cultural aspect was more important than the political Zionist. The political Zionist for them would not sustain itself unless there is strong cultural base of Jews and that could only be achieved through Hebrew, The religious Zionist considered Hebrew a holy language. This is why they used other languages to express themselves including religious interpretations. Rabbi Cook, a revered religious personality, realized the role Hebrew can play in a new set-up and how Judaism can benefit out of Hebrew revival. Deciding in favour of larger Jewish interest he favoured the synthesis of the sacred and the profane. In other words he allowed the use of Hebrew language in non-religious domain which was a major departure from the established traditions.

The conceptual basis was a vital requirement for nation building as well as for state building. Hebrew became a vital tool for forging a new identity amongst the new immigrants. It superimposed the other identities that the immigrants came along with. The immigrants gave up, at least initially the language that they were used to and learned the new language Hebrew that was still not fully developed. Both the immigrants as well as Hebrew adopted itself very smoothly in the changing times. A whole process of Hebrewization took place. People changed their names irrespective of their age to a new Hebrew name. Place names were changed after the establishment of the state of Israel. Places were given a Hebrew name that was very symbolic in nature. For the local Palestinians population the Hebrewization of place name was a break despite continuity and for the Jewish population it was continuity despite a break. The Jewish population could identify themselves with the geographical location strengthening the cohesion between the land and the people.

Till the start of the Zionist movement Yiddish was the language of the Jews which expressed their ethno-national collective consciousness. But the consciousness had no clear political implications as it was not oriented towards state-building.

Initially, Hebrew was also needed for the purpose of promoting a kind of downward social mobility. Unlike France, where French was used to turn ‘peasants into Frenchmen’, Hebrew in Palestine/Israel was used to turn bourgeois central European and east European dwellers into peasants. Language was used to connect the new
immigrants with the land. Once this was established both became independent of each other. In the process Hebrew established itself and flourished on its own. It didn’t need much external support.

A strong element of the Zionist ideology was a break away from the near past and associate itself with the ancient past, a past of golden era and glory. In the immediate past the dream home land of the Jews was not in their possession and ruled by non-Jews. They pledged to come back to Jerusalem on every possible occasion. So, soon after the establishment of the state of Israel, the task of Hebrewization was taken up. It was an effort to dissociate with the past and move into the future and is generally termed as davkaism. The names of places and cities were changed and new names in Hebrew were given to them. Even individuals changed their names irrespective of their age when they immigrated to Israel. In taking up new Hebrew names the common Hebrew names from the immediate past – a period of Jewish subjugation – was avoided. The acquiring of the new names was a symbolic step in explicitly declaring dissociation with the humiliating past and at the same time acquiring of a new identity. The new place names are meant to impress the landscape with the Jewish national ideology and patriotism.

Hebrew, it can be summed up, was a double edged sword that brought together different factions of religious, secular and political groups and consolidated them as one nation. At the same time it marked the divide with the Palestinians. The association of Hebrew with the Great Tradition gave it the legitimacy and authority to shape the new society in Israel. It gave new meaning and dimension to the traditional elements of Jewish identity. It was thus crucial in the political discourse and helped in nation building. The Zionist pioneers too used it as a tool to achieve their goals.

Hebrew, it can be summed up, was a double edged sword that brought together different factions of religious, secular and political groups and consolidated them as one nation. At the same time it marked the divide with the Palestinians. The association of Hebrew with the Great Tradition gave it the legitimacy and authority to shape the new society in Israel. It gave new meaning and dimension to the traditional elements of Jewish identity. Even religion and Hebrew helped the secular achieve its political goals. Hebrew was effectively used by the Zionist pioneers as a tool to achieve their political goals.