CHAPTER I
Chapter 1
FORMATIVE INFLUENCES ON THE INTERPLAY OF RELIGION AND POLITICS IN ISRAEL

Israeli political discourse is never without references to early Zionist theories—actually, to abstracted parts of them. Israelis speak of historic Zionists the way Americans speak of the Federalists, or Frenchmen speak of Rousseau and Voltaire.

-Bernard Avishai, The Tragedy of Zionism

This study seeks to understand the various dimensions of the relationship between Judaism and politics in the state of Israel from its inception to the 1990s. The interaction between Judaism and politics was governed by the Zionist movement that was to have ideological, political, and legal ramifications once the state of Israel came into being. Israeli politics continues to be determined by debates and resolutions of Yishuv i.e. the Jewish community in Palestine. This chapter will therefore address itself to the pre-independence patterns of "religion and state."

The subtitle of this thesis questions whether the interplay of religion and politics has led to the politicization of religion or brought about the undue influence of religious thought on Israeli politics. During such a consideration, this thesis will allude to the historical emphases of Zionist ideas as well as study the political response of religionists to the onset of modernity. This chapter will examine the existential profile of European Jewry, a majority of whom were observant Jews, and the intellectual matrix within which Zionism emerged.

Unlike any other nationalist movement, Zionism first evolved as an intellectual alternative to the Diaspora and gained ground through practical politics. As a commentator put it: "Indeed, there can hardly have been a practical revolutionary movement whose activists depended more on complex ideological claims—just because (at the outset) Zionist goals seemed so distant and the number of people who shared them so small."\(^1\) It will consider the contribution of Judaism and its representatives to the Zionist’s movement and

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the secularists response and religion's role in the institution building of the nascent Jewish state in Palestine, that was Hebraically termed as Yishuv.2

**European Jewry in the Nineteenth Century**

Through the millennia, Jewish history is a tale, among other things, of the various collective attempts to live up to the demands of a monotheistic God who claimed exclusive loyalty to his law known as the Torah. Jewish history has been characterized by a violent and yet reluctant struggle to cling to monotheism in a world predisposed to differing polytheistic traditions. Those very symbols and traditions of Judaism which provoked hostility provided succor in the face of persecution. The Jews have sustained their identity by maintaining the full skein of their religious and communal traditions ever since their expulsion from Palestine in the aftermath of the successive Jewish revolts against the Romans in 66 B.C. and 135 B.C. It is their intimate relation with Judaism that has to a large extent preserved their civilization. Interestingly, Jews have nearly always lived within the context of other civilizations and yet survived the cultural death of each of the civilization within which they dwelled.3 Remarkably enough the Jews survived three thousand years without a country of their own, yet preserved their ethnic identity among alien cultures and managed to articulate their ideas not only in their own language but in all major languages of the world.4

Even though Jews harnessed cultural resources that facilitated their survival they lived in arduous, precarious and often humiliating circumstances especially in Western Christendom. Till the 18th century, Jews in Western Europe were organized on the basis of 'corporate autonomy'.5 They lived in specifically designated encircled areas and

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2 Since the Jews comprise 83% of the population of Israel, while the minority religions such as Islam and Druse do not articulate religious concerns as part of their political demands in the avowedly Jewish state of Israel, the term "religion" and "Judaism" are used interchangeably.

3 Max Dimont notes that the Jews "dwelt among the Babylonians, lived in the Hellenic world, stood at the bier of the Roman Empire, flourished in the Mohammedan civilization, emerged from a twelve-hundred-year darkness known as the Middle Ages..." Max I. Dimont, Jews, God and History (New York: Signet, 1962), p. ix.

4 For a synoptic treatment of the response of Jewry to various challenges through time and assessment of various historical explanations about Jewish survival see ibid., pp. 14-22.

5 Corporativism, the division of society into separate and frequently autonomous corporations was a central characteristic of European medieval life wherein society was composed of corporate groups of European
periodically were denied access to various professions. The ghetto system vouched for the
grudging acceptance of Jewish obstinacy by European rulers and their failure to assimilate
this "nation within a nation." The Enlightenment which held sway over West European
thinking benefited the western Jews by bringing about legal emancipation at the behest of
Napoleon and extended itself to the reach of his empire. Except for the Habsburg empire,
the Jews of Central Europe and Western Europe were elevated to full citizenship by mid
nineteenth century and became deeply involved in the social and economic life of
respective countries, effectively ending the ghetto life.

Napoleon's conferment of citizenship, essentially assimilatory in intent, involved
the renunciation of nationhood, rendering Jewry to be merely a religious community. The
Jews in Western Europe numbered half a million in 1807 at the time of the Sanhedrin
announcement, and at most three-quarters of a million fifty years later. They prospered and
represented the aristocrats of Jewish life by participating in mainstream European life
professionally and culturally. In increasing numbers, they dropped the traditional allusion
to Zion in their ritual observances and spoke of the messianic age less in terms of return to
medieval life wherein society was composed of corporate groups of individuals with carefully delineated
rights and responsibilities.

6 The intellectual revolution called the Enlightenment began somewhere between 1470 (the beginning of the
Italian Renaissance) and 1700 signifying the birth of the modern world. In our opinion, somewhere between
1470 (the beginning of the Italian Renaissance) and 1700 (the start of the Enlightenment) the modern world
was born. In Reconstruction of Philosophy, John Dewey described the spirit of Enlightenment and modern
life in terms of four changes from the pre-modern period in Western history. Modernity, as it is called, is no
longer preoccupied with the supernatural, but rather delights in the natural, the this-worldly and the secular.
Instead of the medieval submission to ecclesiastical authorities "there is a growing belief in the power of
individual minds, guided by methods of observation, experience and reflection, to attain the truths needed
for guidance of life." The modern period is characterized by belief in progress. "The future rather than the
past dominates the imagination. The Golden Age lies ahead of us not behind us." Lastly, "the patient and
experimental study of nature, bearing fruit in inventions which control nature and subdue her forces to social
use, is the method by which progress is made." Dewey wrote that Western culture "is founded on human
autonomy. . the modern eschatological vision of human betterment is achieved solely by human

7 On the uneven nature of Emancipation see chapter "Emancipation in the West" in Howard M. Sachar's The

8 Napoleon summoned a revived Sanhedrin, a modern version of the council that had issued and enforced
the laws during the Jewish commonwealth of antiquity. Eighty notables, forty six of them rabbis, after being
asked twelve questions relating to Jewish loyalties in public and private life, granted unequivocal assurances
that rabbinical jurisdiction in civil and judicial matters would no longer exist, that the Jews would renounce
claims to nation-hood and no longer clamour for a return to Palestine.
the Land of Israel than of a miraculous "end of days", or of an era universal brotherhood. The Sanhedrin's acquiescence to Napoleon's agenda engendered a dynamic among Jews for assimilation which was to split Judaism first, and create the ideological basis for Zionism. Its "ultimate significance . . . was not its rejection of corporate Jewish autonomy, but rather the sanction it provided for some Western Jews to reject Jewish civilization in its wider ethnic and cultural implications."9

The Ferment in Eastern Europe

The situation in Eastern Europe could not have been more different. Seventy-five percent of world Jewry numbering around 3 million lived in Eastern Europe where they formed four percent of the Romanov Russian Empire. They endured the indignity of being cordoned off from integral Russia in a "Pale of Settlement." The enclosed environs were ideal for the transmission of religious tradition which regulated education; the judicial function of the community; social welfare and insulated the Jews from the "corrosive" influence of secular thought.10 The Jews administered their own laws, according to Talmudic precepts11, and adjudicated virtually all intra-communal disputes in their own courts with Jewish judges according to religious law.12 The Jews managed to insure the cohesiveness of the their various communities through a constant exegesis of divine law.

9 Sachar, n. 7, p. 63. The process of rejecting religious assumptions was to culminate in the movement of Reform Judaism by the middle of nineteenth century. Perceiving Judaism to be an evolutionary religion, Reform Judaism went on to introduce innovations in religious services like introducing prayers in German, the abolition of the cantillation, the use of the organ like those in Christian churches. This illustrates how far Zionist leaders moved away from the assimilationist trends in west Europe.

10 Thousands of Jewish children went to heder (religious private primary schools) progressed to Talmud Torah (secondary school) and some to Yeshivas (Talmudic seminary). By mid century there were six thousand such private schools in the Pale with some 15,000 teachers. See Sachar, n. 7, p. 154.

11 The Talmud ("study" or "learning") is a body of civil and religious law including commentaries on the Torah. The Talmud consists of a codification of laws called the Mishnah and a commentary on the Mishna called the Gemara. The material in the Talmud that concerns decision by scholars on disputed legal questions is known as the Halakah; the legends, anecdotes and sayings in the Talmud that are used to illustrate the traditional law are known as Haggada. Two compilations of the Talmud exist; the Palestinian Talmud called the Jerusalem Talmud and the Babylonian Talmud.

Will Durant comments on the necessity of the transmission of religious law through the creation of the Talmud especially for the community that experienced the loss of sovereignty.

Because the Law of the Pentateuch was written, it could not meet all the needs and circumstances of a Jerusalem without freedom, or a Judaism without Jerusalem, or a Jewry without Palestine. It was the function of the Sanhedrin teachers before the Dispersion, and of the rabbis after it, to interpret the legislation of Moses for the use and guidance of a new age or place. Their interpretations and discussions, with majority and minority opinions, were transmitted from one generation of teachers to another. . . To prevent any further threat to the survival of this body of law, the rabbis put down the Talmud which has . . . since the 6th century become the referent for Jewish religious legislation till now.13

This system was fast threatened by the scores of students attending universities in Western Europe and the numerous men of letters that the movement of Haskalah ("Enlightenment") produced. Roger Lundin says that:

At its core, the Enlightenment held to a bedrock of faith in the ability of the self to discover universal binding truths of science, politics and morality. Since it conceived of human nature as essentially rational, the Enlightenment could claim that every free individual would reach similar conclusions about the most crucial matters of civic, moral and intellectual life.14

In the Berlin of Frederick II the Great, young intellectuals from Poland and elsewhere, brought in as teachers, met representatives of the European Enlightenment; they came under the influence of Moses Mendelssohn (1729-1786) and also met some representatives of Italian and Dutch Hebrew cultures. Out of these contacts grew Haskalah, a tendency toward Westernization that venerated Hebrew and medieval Western Jewish literature. Among German Jews, then already in rapid process of Germanization, this Hebrew movement had no place. The Enlightenment was introduced in Galicia (Austrian Poland), a centre of Hasidism, by the Edict of Toleration (1781) of the Emperor Joseph II.

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Haskalah thinkers like Mendelssohn and Perez Smolenskin strained to bring out a synthesis of Jewish tradition and modern thought. The younger Jewish generation "yearned for the prestige of scientific rationalism and were looking for a way to combine its premises with the study of classical Hebrew texts, rabbinical literature, and what they took to be traditional ethics and aesthetics. They hoped to produce a "modern Judaism" . . . and "wanted an answer for Judaism, which . . . had been put on the defensive by more powerful ideas."15 Asher Ginsberg (1856-1927), also known as Ahad Ha'am, who left a mark on the cultural path of Zionism frame the contours of their struggle when he asked: "Can the Jewish people shake off the inertia of repressive legalism, regain direct contact with the actualities of life, and yet remain the Jewish people? Can one bring humanism into Jewish life without disturbing Jewish continuity?"16 The historian Simon Dubnow recounts in his Autobiography that the language of science and social theory with concepts such as cause and effect, senses, evidence, motion and progress replaced the language of Orthodoxy. Reading the works of Auguste Comte, Dubnow acknowledged that he had in his grasp for the first time "a complete system of scientific ideas to displace religious and metaphysical systems."17


16 Reared in Russia in a rigidly Orthodox Jewish family, he mastered rabbinic literature but soon was attracted to the rationalist school of medieval Jewish philosophy and to the writings of the Haskalah ("Enlightenment"), a liberal Jewish movement that attempted to integrate Judaism with modern Western thought. At the age of 22, Ahad Ha'am went to Odessa, the centre of the Jewish nationalist movement known as Hibbat Zion ("Love of Zion"). There he was influenced both by Jewish nationalism and by the materialistic philosophies of the Russian nihilist D.I. Pisarev and the English and French positivists. After joining the central committee of Hibbat Zion, he published his first essay, "Lo ze ha-derekh" (1889; "This Is Not the Way"), which emphasized the spiritual basis of Zionism. In 1897, after two visits to Palestine, he founded the periodical Ha-Shiloah, in which he severely criticized the political Zionism of Theodor Herzl, the foremost Jewish nationalist leader of the time. Ahad Ha'am remained outside the Zionist organization, believing that a Jewish state would be the end result of a Jewish spiritual renaissance rather than the beginning. He called for a renaissance of Hebrew-language culture, and to that end he did urge the creation of a Jewish national homeland in Palestine as the centre and model for Jewish life in the Diaspora (i.e., the settlements of Jews outside Palestine). Ahad Ha'am was an intimate adviser to the Zionist leader Chaim Weizmann during the time that Weizmann was playing a leading role in eliciting from the British government its Balfour Declaration of 1917, a document supporting a Jewish homeland in Palestine. While stressing the rational and moral character of Judaism, Ahad Ha'am believed that the goal of re-creating Jewish nationhood could not be achieved by purely political means but rather required spiritual rebirth. The clarity and precision of his essays made him a major Hebrew-language stylist and an influential force in modern Hebrew literature.

17 Quoted in Avishai, n. 1, p. 46.
Anti-Semitism put paid the promise of Haskalah provoking a collective resentment that was waiting to be tapped by the Zionist idea. The assassination of Czar Alexander II in 1881 launched fresh wave of pogroms in the Pale, thus setting forth alternative intellectual solutions to the Jewish condition such as the Jewish application of socialism, culminating in the formation of the political party, Bund, in Russia. "1881 served as formative trauma for Jewish nationalism, one that led to a resetting of . . . political and psychological boundaries."18 The reaction set off a torrent of emigration from the Pale.19 By then, the Haskalah had largely been undermining religion in the minds of hundreds of students who were largely influenced by the Marxian and socialists movement prevalent in Russia. Representative of such hostility was the opinion of Judah L. Gordon (1830-1892), poet, essayist, and novelist, the leading poet of Haskalah, whose use of biblical and post-biblical Hebrew resulted in a new and influential style of Hebrew-language poetry, questioned the irrelevance of ritual religion in the modern world.

Can we really continue the same way of life by the water of Europe and other countries that were led by the waters of Babylon? Are the philosophies and teachings of ancient times appropriate for the times we live in, and are they adapted to the present status of knowledge? The Talmud is dear to us as an ancient book, a precious chronicle of historical events, a source for encircling our language . . . It is important and valuable as a poultice on a wound. But if the Talmud, with its pedantry, with its overlapping additions and rabbinical commentaries becomes a guide for people . . . we will wander bewildered in the world. We shall be sealed forever in the desert without hope of returning to the world around us.

The secularization of Jewish life was epitomized by the manifest involvement of Jews in the Russian industrial workforce. Russian industrial proletariat increased more than sixfold between 1860 and 1913. Only eight or nine percent of the population were Jews, though a disproportionately large number of them joined -and led- proletarian movements. Fifty percent of the Russian work force in petty capitalism were Jews, most of them becoming more marginal to the industrializing cities where they sought to make a new life.20 The extent of Jewish political activism is evident by the fact that by 1900, some 30 percent of

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19 Avishai, n. 1, p. 18. Between 1881 and 1914, 2.5 million Jews emigrated from the Russian Empire. Of these 2 million settled in America while 30,000 made their way to Palestine.

20 ibid, p. 17
Zionist Ambivalences

Zionism was a manifestation of a psychic schism within certain thinkers and leaders whose impact in shaping the destiny of the Jews has drawn comparison with the artists of the Italian Renaissance, the writers of Elizabethan England, the philosophers of Eighteenth century France.\textsuperscript{22} Evidently, Zionism started as an idea inimical to Jewish Orthodoxy in a tangible sense since it conveyed the gradual loss of control of the rabbis on the traditional communities in the East. Indeed, many of the leaders displayed a disdain for Judaism and its structures since it represented the stoic fatalism that inured the Jews from political action. Many abhorred the Judaic precept that the exile from the Holy Land had divine sanction.

Classical Zionism, thus, was both a political revolt against the traditional order of the Jewish society and a cultural revolt against traditional Jewish culture. Most of the luminaries which have been revered as symbols by the Israeli state are those who had a disdain for religion. Theodor Herzl the progenitor of the 'Jewish state', Ahad Ha'am, writer and activist of cultural Zionism;\textsuperscript{23} Aaron David Gordon, the proponent of "religion of labor" who stressed and inspired the tilling of the land and provided support for the labor edifice to the Yishuv's politics; Nachman Syrkin, labor Zionism's principal theorist alongside Ber Borochov; Chaim Weizmann, head of the Jewish Agency and later President of Israel and singularly responsible for the passage of the Balfour Declaration, – all were wary of the stultifying effect of Jewish Orthodoxy on the masses.

In fact it has been observed that, of the 37 most influential Zionists, no less than 21 abandoned Judaism in their personal affirmations, including Moses Hess, Perez


\textsuperscript{23} Ahad Haam believed that a Jewish state would be the end result of a Jewish spiritual renaissance rather than the beginning. He called for a renaissance of Hebrew-language culture, and to that end he did urge the creation of a Jewish national homeland in Palestine as the centre and model for Jewish life in the Diaspora (i.e., the settlements of Jews outside Palestine).
Smolenskin, Leo Pinsker, Max Nordau, Ber Borochov and Israel's first Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion etc. What is striking is that thirteen of these twenty-one leaders studied were either sons or grandsons of rabbis or were students in Yeshiva schools or in their earlier years Talmudic scholars thus indicating both the loss of authority of religion and the lack of confidence in the religious representatives. Max Nordau who succeeded Herzl as the President of the World Zionist Organization, asked the Fifth Congress, "Why did we become Zionists? Perhaps because of a mystical yearning for Zion? Of that most of us are free." He referred to a talk of a special Jewish mission of God to the Gentiles as "claptrap" and "folly". Nordau wrote in 1901 that the Jewish masses were stultified by ignorance, Orthodox obscurantism, and Talmudic bigotry, maintaining that Jewish Orthodoxy was the "chief obstacle to culture, knowledge, emancipation," and "to the illumination of the socialist and national ideal."

That did not however deter these leaders from reaching out to the religious authorities given the purely voluntary nature of Zionism's plans of emigration to Palestine. Herzl realized the importance and potential of East European Jews for his Zionist design after he was rebuffed by the leaders and philanthropists of the West. In 1880, world Jewry numbered between 7.5 and 8 millions; of these the overwhelming majority (88.4%) were in Europe and at least 75% in Eastern Europe; in eastern Prussia, Austrian Galicia, Romania and the other Balkan states, and above all (approximately 4 million) in the Pale of Settlement.

24 Judah Leib Pinsker (1821-1891), a physician in Odessa who maintained a deep interest in Jewish community affairs, joined the Society for the Promotion of Culture Among the Jews of Russia, an assimilationist organization founded in 1863. He advocated secular education for Jews and the translation of the Bible and Hebrew prayer books into Russian. A pogrom in Odessa in 1871 shook but did not destroy his beliefs; in 1881, however, another severe pogrom broke out in Odessa, not only ignored but even abetted by the government and defended by the press. Hereon, Pinsker turned to Jewish nationalism. In 1882 Pinsker anonymously published in German an incisive, embittered, and impassioned pamphlet, "Self-Emancipation. A Warning Addressed to His Brethren. By a Russian Jew" (Auto-Emancipation, 1884), which provoked strong reactions, both critical and commendatory, from Jewish leaders. In the pamphlet he contended that the only restorative for Jewish dignity and spiritual health lay in a Jewish homeland.


26 David Vital, The Origins of Zionism (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), p. 30. Herzl's first important Zionist effort was an interview with Baron Maurice de Hirsch, a wealthy philanthropist who founded the Jewish Colonization Association with the aim of settling Jews from Russia and Romania in Argentina and other parts of the Americas. The meeting was not entirely successful. The conversation was notable for its effect on Herzl rather than on the Baron de Hirsch, who refused to hear him out. It led to Herzl's famous pamphlet The
The efforts of the early Zionists was made easier first by the nature of the social milieu of eastern Europe. The tradition bound communities retained a memory of the lost homeland of Palestine through the reiteration of the liturgy, the sequences of ritual, thus creating a strong attachment to the Land of Israel. One of the foundational beliefs of Judaism, as explicated in biblical prophecies is a return to Zion. The messianic strain was dimmed due to the failure of Jewish revolts in 70 A.D. and 132 A.D. but did not eliminate the hope for Zion. And unlike Christian messianism that is characterised by primarily by spiritual longing, its Jewish equivalent has always had a point of reference in the temporal history of the Jewish people. Historian Jacob Katz affirms the persistence of national memory.

A residue of the former national existence continued to play an active role in the cultural and mental life of every Jewish community. Acquaintance with the geographical scenes and contours of the homeland through constant reading of the Bible lent tangibility to the longings of return. More important perhaps was the fact that Jews continued to study and adhere to the laws of the Mishnah, which reflect the realities of life in the period of the Second Temple (when they were codified) but served long thereafter as a guide to important aspects of individual and communal conduct. The intellectual elite dedicated itself to the study of a body of law which, taken as a whole, would function once again when the nation was living under its own government in the projected messianic age. Various elements in the life of the community thus linked the memory of the past with the expectation of the future, keeping the vision of the messianic era in contact with historical reality.  

The nostalgic resonance was capably used by various Zionist mythologies for mobilizing the Jews the world over especially in eastern Europe. Howard Sachar portrays this 'Zionist' sub-consciousness:

Among the most cherished features of the Russian Jewish cultural heritage, surely was the memory of the ancestral homeland, the lost and lamented Zion that was enshrined in the religious question but a national question that could be solved only by making it "a political world question to be discussed and settled by the civilized nations of the world in council." Herzl's idea invited ridicule but the pamphlet won favourable response from eastern European Zionist societies. In June 1896, when Herzl waited for an audience for 11 days in Constantinople but failed to reach the Ottoman Sultan. For a review of Herzl's activities in mobilizing opinion among the rulers and masses of Europe see Howard M. Sachar A History of Israel, From the Rise of Zionism to Our Time (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1976), pp. 36-65 and Amos Elon's Herzl (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1975).

27Jacob Katz, "Israel and the Messiah." Commentary, January 1982, p. 35. The messianic impulse was so embedded in Jewish consciousness that the Jews who celebrated Emancipation in the 19th Century in Western Europe "instinctively described the event in terms drawn from the vocabulary of traditional Jewish messianism." p. 36.
ceremony and folklore of virtually every believing Jew. The truth was that throughout all the centuries of Jewish dispersion until modern times, Zion, hardly less than the Deity, functioned as a binding integument of the Jewish religious and social experience. Rabbinic and midrashic literature, the prayer book, medieval literary treatises, all displayed a uniform preoccupation with the Holy Land. Poets, philosophers, mystics, liturgists in Spain, North Africa, and Europe traditionally vied with one another in expressing the yearning of the People of Israel for the ravished cradle of its nationhood. In the West, to be sure, the memory of Zion was fading by the nineteenth century, was even being exorcised by reformers and secularists. But for the Russian Jews, distraught and quarantined under the Tsars, clinging fast to their accumulated sacred literature, the Holy Land was no mere featureless idyll, to be embellished in lullabies and fireside tales. The recollection of its loss was a visceral wound. On the ninth day of the Hebrew month of Av, commemorating the destruction of Solomon’s Temple, East European Jews fasted and mourned as they had been witnessed and victims of that ancient catastrophe. Three times a day they prayed for the restoration of Jerusalem. Their appeals for timely rains and harvests were phrased in terms evocative not of ice-bound Russia but of the sub-tropical Holy Land. Jewish festivities and holidays - Passover, Chanukah, Sukkoth, Shavuot,28 - all evoked and refined memories of the departed national hearth. In the manner, then, of other ethnic-religious Eastern communities - of the Greek and Armenians, for example - Russian Jews continued to nourish the vision of future apocalypse, the redemption of sacred soil.29

Albert Einstein, by no means an observant Jew, acknowledged this mysterious affection for Palestine:

Zionism (sprang) from an ever deeper motive than Jewish suffering. It is rooted in a Jewish spiritual tradition, whose maintenance and development are for Jews the raison d’etre of their continued existence ... the reestablishment of the Jewish nation.30

28 Passover, (Hebrew Pesah, Or Pesach) commemorates the Hebrews’ liberation from slavery in Egypt and the "passing over" of the forces of destruction, or the sparing of the firstborn of the Israelites, when the Lord "smote the land of Egypt" on the eve of the Exodus. The festival thus marks the first and most momentous event in Jewish history. Passover begins with the 15th and ends with the 21st (or, outside of Israel and among Reform Jews, the 22nd) day of the month of Nisan (March or April). Chanukah (Hebrew: "Dedication") also called Feast of Dedication is a Jewish observance commemorating the rededication (165 BC) of the Second Temple of Jerusalem after its desecration three years earlier by Antiochus IV Epiphanes. Sukkot ("Huts," or "Booths"), also Called Feast of Tabernacles, Or Feast Of Booths, a Jewish autumn festival of double thanksgiving (one of the three Pilgrim Festivals of the Old Testament) that begins on the 15th day of Tishri (in September or October), five days after Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. The Bible refers to hag ha-asif ("Feast of the Ingathering," Exodus 23:16), when grains and fruits were gathered at the harvest’s end, and to hag ha-Sukkot ("Feast of Booths," Leviticus 23:34), recalling the days when the Israelites lived in huts (Sukkot) during their years of wandering in the wilderness. Shavuot, also Called Pentecost, second of the three Pilgrim Festivals of the Jewish religious calendar. It was originally an agricultural festival, marking the beginning of the wheat harvest. During the Temple period, the first fruits of the harvest were brought to the Temple, and two loaves of bread made from the new wheat were offered. During rabbinic times the festival became associated with the giving of the Law at Mount Sinai, which is recounted in the Torah readings for the holiday.


Zionism tapped the regnant consciousness of exile among the Jews that remained and indeed intensified with the lengthy passage of time. Even the avowed atheistic theories of Ber Borochov, who rendered a strict Marxist interpretation of the Jewish condition, and the mystical strain of Aaron Gordon, who maintained the national revival of the Jewish depended on a return to agricultural labor, "centred upon the contention that the goal of could only be achieved in the Jewish homeland - a condition lacking a logical consistency and hence in the final analysis messianic."31

Religious Responses to Zionism

Herzl was not the first to conceive of a Jewish state. Orthodox Jews had traditionally invoked the return to Zion in their daily prayers. In 1799 Napoleon had thought of establishing a Jewish state in the ancient lands of Israel. The English statesman Benjamin Disraeli, a Jew, had written a Zionist novel, *Tancred*. Moses Hess32, declared in his *Rom und Jerusalem* (1862), that the restoration of a Jewish state was a necessity both for the Jews and for the rest of humanity.

Among the Jews of Russia and Eastern Europe, a number of groups were engaged in trying to settle emigrants in agricultural colonies in Palestine. After the Russian pogroms of 1881, Leo Pinsker had written a pamphlet, "Auto-Emanzipation," an appeal to western European Jews to assist in the establishment of colonies in Palestine. When Herzl read it some years later, he commented in his diary that, if he had known of it, he might never have written *The Jewish State*. The Jewish question, he wrote, was not a social or religious question but a national question that could be solved only by making it "a political world question to be discussed and settled by the civilized nations of the world in council."

In July 1882, Marcus Lehmann, the editor of *Israelit*, the organ of German Orthodoxy, convened a group of rabbinical and lay leaders of southern Germany to discuss how to assist Russian Jews who had left their country in the wake of the previous year's

31 Katz, n. 27, p. 39.

32 Hess, a socialist contemporary of Karl Marx, expressed such a yearning in his *Rome and Jerusalem*: "A thought which I believed to be forever buried in my heart has been revived in me anew. It is thought of my nationality which is inseparably connected with ancestral heritage and the memories of the Holy Land, the Eternal City, the birthplace of the belief in the divine unity of life, as well as in the hope in the future brotherhood of man." Quoted in Bernard Martin, *A History of the Jews Vol. II: Europe and the New World*, (New York: Basic Books, 1987), p. 328.
pogrom. Lehmann told the gathering, "It is a wonderful token of the time that a general yearning for the Holy Land has seized a countless multitude of our co-religionists especially in Russian . . . We must heed the hints of divine Providence and pave the way for a Jewish future of the most far-reaching consequences."33

Tenets of Orthodox belief, however, militated against Zionist activity. Judaism essentially rests on four pillars - the belief in one God, the belief that the Jews are His people, belief in the Messiah as God's messenger to be sent to redeem his people and all mankind, and belief in the return of the Jews to their native land.34 This position has been debated extensively since the rise of Reform Judaism. The debate between the Orthodoxy and the reformers in Judaism dates to the early days of post-biblical Judaism. Both sides claim biblical sanction for their views - one that stresses the choseness of Israel and the eventual return to Palestine as sign of the "end times" and the other that exalts the prophetic critique of Israeli religion and the Diaspora as ordained retribution for Jewish theological infidelity - that in turn works out as a blessing to the Gentiles. The Orthodox position has held sway among the majority.

This view affirms to the eschatology of the Old Testament as grounded in the identity of faith in God and hope in the future (Gen. 12:1ff.). It has its beginning in the promise of a "good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey" (Ex. 3:8). In the Pentateuch (first five books of the Old Testament) the promise is broadened to the increase of people and possessions, the blessing of God and the victorious presence of God (Gen. 49:8-12; Num. 23; Deut. 33:13-17; Num. 23:21). The history of the occupation of the land of Canaan (Palestine) and the victory of the Hebrews is to be understood as "realistic hope." Through the experiences of Israel's own disobedience to the laws and the will of God and defeats at the hands of its enemies, the concept of the "day of the Lord," which is to bring salvation and victory, came into existence. The happiness of the establishment of the Kingdom by David in the 10th century BC led to a hope in the future Messiah (Anointed One) of God from the house of David (II Sam. 7). Daniel's apocalypse--the imminent and supernatural intervention of God in man's history and the reversal of the heretofore irresistible progress of evil --might be added other characteristics that have proved to be

33 Katz, n. 27, p. 38.

influential. Numerology, mythological figures, and angelology, have continued to play such a large part in Jewish millennial movements as a result of the projections in the Book of Daniel. However, modern messianism tended to downplay temporal initiatives to bring about the redemption owing to the failure of pseudo-messianic uprisings since the 17th century.

However, a string of pseudo-messianic movements in the 17th century dimmed the enthusiasm for millenarian theology among the rabbis. Subsequently, the conventional assumption that the Diaspora is a necessary, foreordained precondition for a divine redemption gained acceptance within rabbinical circles. The rabbinical consensus tended to favor the opinion that "redemption would follow not upon any one particular religious or spiritual undertaking but upon the achievement of total religious perfection by the community at large." Any attempt to reverse the "Exile" or "forcing the end" (of times), as it was called, through human agency was frowned upon. Nahum Glatzer has characterised the transformation in Jewish messianism as a "transition from (an) activist and militant into passivist and peaceful; from an urgent expectation of change into a distant, quiet hope; from a history-centred doctrine to a meta-historical one.""You can't bring the Messiah any nearer," an aged rabbi told the youthful Chaim Weizmann, "one has to do much, learn much, know much, before one is even worthy of that."37

The Western European Jews, who were fast affirming to Reform Judaism, castigated Zionists for propounding heretical form of Judaism. The executive of the Union of Rabbis in Germany headed by Sigmund Maybaum, published a solemn pronunciamento in a Berlin newspaper, Berliner Tageblat, that denounced the First Zionist Congress (1897) as being contrary to the principles of Judaism, to the Messianic prophecies in the Holy Writ, and to the duty and loyalty to one's fatherland."38 The Chief Rabbi of English Jewry, Dr. Hermann Adler, at the same time stigmatized Zionism as an "egregious

35 Katz, n. 27, p. 36


37 Sachar, n. 29, p. 6.

Reform rabbis in America too were negative in their estimate of Zionist efforts. Rabbi Rudolf Grossman of New York stated his response in the following terms: "I see in it a fatal blow to the mission of the Jew in history. The destruction of the Temple and the dispersion of the Jews were no punishments, but rather an act of Divine Providence ... the Jews have a mission to spread their teachings." Rabbi Joseph Silverman said: "The fact is that the greatest blessing in disguise that ever happened to Israel was the overthrow of the Palestinian Kingdom, and the dispersion of Israel throughout the world. It gave Israel a religious mission."

The answer to the distrust for secular initiatives, or plans for a Jewish state can be traced to determining factors in Jewish tradition. Or there may be collateral reasons for rabbinical intolerance of political activity apart from fear of anti-Semitic reaction. It arises out of the biblical belief that only God is sovereign as the Supreme Law Giver. Religious law in Judaism covers the whole gamut of human life i.e. from societal relations to ritual to hygiene, and so the deference to temporal authority is weak in Jewish tradition and in the politics of Jews since the sovereign kingdom of King David around 1000 B.C. The monarch or any civil authority is in the final analysis subject to God and God's mandate is always relayed by the agency of the charismatic figure, be it the prophet, priest or king. As Russell Kirk explains it:

What chiefly distinguished the Israelites and their successors the Jews from the political order of the despotisms by which they were surrounded, however, was the existence of a partial check upon the civil authority. For before the Babylonian Captivity, the great prophets restrained the kings' ambitions, and during the Hellenistic and Roman overlordships, the people were protected by the Sanhedrin, or court of religious elders. Yet no one writes of the "political genius of the Jews" after the fashion in which historians praise the Greek and Roman contributions to worldly order. The Israelites almost might be called a non-political sort, and no enduring practical political institutions on a national scale, through their local communities, clan and town, outlasted their monarchy ... and outlasted alien dominations. Their one clear political principle was a religious doctrine. Jehovah is King, they declared, and true laws are Jehovah's laws.

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39 Cohen, n. 18, p. 149.


41 Russell Kirk, *The Roots of American Order* (Malibu, CA.: Pepperdine University Press, 1974) p. 19. Rabbi Judah L. Fishman, one of the founders of the Mizrahi, expounded the historical warrant for the supremacy of Jewish religious law in the future state. He set forth the theory that generally the state or the political system precede the law; in fact law is the creation of an organized state. For instance, the Romans evolved Roman
Roland de Vaux summarises the Jewish perception of the limits of civil authority:

The human rules of the people are chosen, accepted, or tolerated by God, but they remain subordinate to him and they are judged by the degree of their fidelity to the indissoluble covenant between Yahweh and his people. In their view of things the State, which in practice means the monarchy, is merely an accessory element; in actual fact Israel lived without it for the greater part of its history.42

Kirk adds:

This, then is the high contribution of Israel to modern social order: the understanding that God is the source of order and justice. But of practical political establishments in Israel or Judah or the later Jewish principalities, nothing remains.43

Zionism was a threat to the hold of the rabbis as it undermined the intellectual affirmations of religion being as it were led by secular "enlightened" leaders who were influenced by other secular movements of socialism and nationalism. The rabbis felt that the Zionist leaders affirmation of tradition only extended to the choice of geography. The attitude of leaders like Max Nordau, Ahad Ha'am who proposed the acculturation of immigrants on secular lines only confirmed their suspicions. The paradox of Zionism was that its dedication to the preservation of Jewish identity and cohesiveness was at the same time an expression of concern over the problem of assimilation and a reaction against the traditional basis of life and thought in favour of "normalization" along Western lines. Zionists merely seem to be aiming for assimilation in a non-Judaic sense in the traditional location of Palestine. For the religious anti-Zionists, Zionism, "by substituting history and sociology for theology and metaphysics and by concerning itself with man rather than with law in the course of centuries. The case of the Jewish people is however, quite different. The Law of the Hebrews preceded the Hebrew state. "The Hebrew is the product of the Hebrew law. Before Israel had a king, it had laws, and before there handed unto Moses on Mount Sinai ... It is for this reason that the Hebrew state was not monarchical in the full sense of the word ... for the King of Israel, absolute ruler as he was, was nevertheless subject to the Law."


43 Kirk, n. 41, p.20.
Providence was far worse than heretical; it was profoundly materialistic and unalterably profane.44

Notwithstanding the presence of a dissuading consensus, some "proto-Zionists" emerged mainly through their writings laid the theological groundwork for Zionism. Rabbi Judah Alkali cited rabbinical lore in his work Sh'ma Yisraa (Listen, Israel), to prove that Redemption would come by natural, human means without the advent of the Messiah. He called for a fund to be offered to the Turkish Sultan as rent for the Land of Israel. Rabbi Zvi Hirsch Kalischer, a renowned Talmudic scholar (1795-1874), put forth different views in his book Derishat Zion (Quest for Zion) published in 1861. He argued that the salvation of the Jews as foretold by the prophets could only come about in the natural way, by self-help, and did not need the advent of the Messiah. He, therefore, advocated immediate reclamation of the Holy Land and proposed the establishment of a Jewish Society for the Resettlement of Palestine. Somewhat prophetically, Kalischer said divine deliverance would begin by awakening support from among the philanthropists and gaining consent of the nations to the ingathering of the Jews into the Holy Land.45

These were going against the grain of Orthodox leaders' attitudes. For a section of religious Zionists who reckoned that the concern of secularists for the fate of the Jews and their insistence on a return to 'Zion' had to be God ordained, the problem was two-fold. They had to rationalize the barely veiled indifference by the secular leaders who were gaining popularity in their flock, and also counter the criticism of the ultra-Orthodox anti-Zionists who ridiculed the theological stance of the religious Zionists and at the same time had a powerful standing in the religious community.

Herzl and other leaders paid lip service to Orthodox values if only to defer to the importance of mobilising the masses through the rabbis. While he secured the support of Rabbi Shmuel Mohilever, an important leader of Hibat Zion which was one of the first groups to organize immigration, Herzl was wary of provoking the religious leaders. This was to become a pattern of Zionist and Israeli politics. Since they arose within the context of


45 Kalischer’s energetic lobbying ensured that the French Alliance Israelite Universelle (organized in 1860 to defend Jewish rights everywhere) opened the Mikveh Israel agricultural school in Israel, the first of its kind. For a review of early religious Zionist attitudes, activities and the reaction of the Haskalah intellectuals see Monty N. Penkower, "Religious Forerunners of Zionism," Judaism, vol. 131, no. 3 (Summer 1984), pp.289-295.
perceived anti-Semitism, immigration was the key issue for all groups. Hence unity and consensus building was not only essential but also emphasised at the expense of the development of individual rights and non-Zionist dissent as we shall see later.

In order to allay the apprehensions of the Orthodox, the Second Zionist Congress in 1898, at the behest of Herzl, adopted the following resolution: "Zionism aspires not only to a political and economic revival of the Jewish revival of the Jewish people, but to a spiritual revival as well, based on modern culture and its attainments. Zionism will not undertake anything contrary to the commandments of the Jewish religion."46 This was the staple utilitarian secularist posture which was to create friction at crucial junctures. Max Nordau who termed Jewish mission to the Gentiles as "claptrap", at the Fifth Congress while engaging in the debates regarding Zionist cultural efforts, asked the Second Congress when the Zionist Organization was in fledging phase: "The Zionists are not a party, they are Judaism itself . . . we must no longer speak of Zionism. What we are now called upon to realize is not Zionism but Judaism."47 Herzl himself did not personally affirm to such hallowed visions. He made his intentions regarding religion's role in his influential Der Judenstaat (Jewish State):

Shall we end up by having a theocracy? No, indeed. Faith unites us, knowledge gives us freedom. We shall therefore prevent any theocratic tendencies from coming to the fore on the part of our priesthood. We shall keep our priests within the confines of their temples, in the same way as we shall keep our professional army within the confines of their barracks. Army and priesthood shall receive honours as high as their valuable functions deserve, but they must not interfere in the administration of the state which confers distinction upon them, lest they conjure up difficulties without and within.48

Gershom Schocken summarizes the instrumental attitude of the secularists to traditional religion:

The founders looked upon the scriptures and halachic ordinances as free agents, regarding them first and foremost as historical documents, or as literary expression of the myths in which the people preserved the memory of its emergence in remote antiquity. They saw themselves as free to decide which of the ideas expressed in those writings, if any, were

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46 Abramov, n. 40, p. 66.

47 Cf. Jansen, n. 25, p. 27.

worth translating into laws of the state and they considered all the rest of being of purely historical interest. And if (David) Ben-Gurion cited part of Isaiah's verse he did so only as an embellishment, he had no intention to live according to the prescription of the Torah and the ordinances of the Halakah let alone submit to the yoke of the rabbis.49

The Struggle for the Soul of the Yishuv

Herzl, considering the resistance of the Western Jews to his plans, espoused the separation of religion and state while suggesting the appointment of a council of jurists to circumvent the imposition of Jewish religious law in the land. He suggested the appointment of a council of jurists to do preparatory work of legislation in order to circumvent the event of religious law imposition in the land. Such concessions were only rhetorical as Herzl found in his short span as President of the World Zionist Organization (WZO). Differences first emerged because of the initiates of the Democratic Faction led by Ahad Ha'am, Leo Motzkin, Martin Buber etc. If political Zionists such as Herzl and Nordau were persuaded that the Jews could never be assimilated, and thus focused their efforts at gaining an international charter, the cultural Zionists led by Ahad Ha'am were dismayed by the number of Jews who seemed willing to assimilate. Accordingly, the latter were keen on building the cultural attributes of a nation alongside the quest for sovereignty. Cultural Zionists were products of the Haskalah and displayed the contradictory impulses of being attracted to Enlightenment thought and the power of Jewish ethics and law.50

Cultural Zionists who were avowedly secular did not want "to preserve the many mystical allusions to the power of Eretz Israel that were implied by liturgical Hebrew, or preserve any of the other nuances implying messianic longing and fundamentalist faith in God."..."they viewed cultural renewal, not as something that stem from the power either of a great leader or a militant organization, but rather as the compounded action of creative individual -workers, scientists, and artists -in voluntary association.51 To this end, they proposed educational efforts to familiarize the populace with the themes of Jewish continuity and nationhood, albeit in a non-religious sense.


50Avishai, n. 1, p. 45.

51ibid, p. 49.
The rabbis resisting the atheistic strain of cultural production and spelled out their demands as conditions for further participation in the movement in 1898 soon after the First Congress. "They wanted a special rabbinical council set up independently under the highest rabbinical authority, and charged with supervising all Zionist cultural and propaganda activities. The freedom of the Zionist Actions Committee (ZAC) to act in the political and economic sphere would not impaired . . . But the ZAC might take no step in the sphere of culture and education that had not first been submitted to the rabbis for approval."52 (emphasis added)

Rabbi Leib Zirelson, while stating that the rabbis would leave the movement if their demands were not met, made it clear that though the rabbinical council would consult laymen it was expected that the ZAC would "obey our instructions." Zionism had to be founded on the religious law which is the original fount of nationalism. The rabbis drafted a resolution to this effect which was rejected at the Second Congress of the World Zionist Organization (WZO).

Evidently, the rabbis intended to control the ideological character of the Yishuv if they could, or insulate their own constituency from the influence of secular culture and gradually enhance the role of religion in public life. The rabbis, for sheer lack of alternative precedence, resorted to the ancient model to relate to the debate on public life in Palestine. Since the provisions of the Torah concerning civil and constitutional matters were rarely invoked in the Diaspora as they were subject to the law of the Land they lived in, the imminence of the a Jewish state or political autonomy automatically connoted the "reinstitution of the Torah as a single system of universal applicability and incontrovertible authority.

No solution was found to the Orthodox opposition to cultural issues till the Fifth Congress at Basle in 1902. In a preparatory conference at Minsk, a set of "remarkably coherent, radical, modernist" students from western universities, stated that "the introduction of religious into the argumentation for and the programme of Zionism is inconsistent with the national character of Zionism . . . The purpose of the liberation of the Jewish nation is the regeneration, the restoration of the Jewish people as an organic entity

52 Quoted in Vital, n. 26, p. 43.
which thus regenerated, should be enabled to unfold its authentic natural tendencies and to create cultural and social values of high quality." 53

In its program, the Faction enclosed the following clause: "Cultural work, including in particular the encouragement of the use of Hebrew and the study of Hebrew literature, must be vigorously prosecuted in the Diaspora and also in Palestine. There must be a campaign for the establishment of a Jewish university for both general and Jewish studies." 54 After an acrimonious debate in the Congress, a resolution declaring, "this Congress regards as a principal part of the Zionist program the raising of the cultural level by means of educating the Jewish people in the spirit of nationalism. . . . and it was the duty of all Zionists to contribute to it" was passed. 55

**Institutionalization of Ideological Conflict**

The resolution of 1902 was a blow to the Orthodox, as a result of which some left the Zionist organization; the majority, however, decided to stay within the movement, to fight the secularist tendencies. The questions for religious Zionists were: "Was compromise possible where matters of such fundamental principle were at issue. And if it was, what was its proper political expression? How should Orthodox Jews seek to function within the larger Zionist camp? For and against what should one strive? With whom might they ally themselves? What should be the sticking points? . . . " 56 The Orthodox could not relate to participating in an enterprise with those who did not observe the Law.

Resolution to those queries was provided by Rabbi Yitzhak Reines, one of the founder of the religious Zionist party, Mizrahi. He drew a distinction between a messianic redemption which implies the ingathering of all the Jews from the lands of dispersion, and Zionism's restricted compass which precluded it to ameliorative activity. Zionism's purposes are thus irrelevant to religious principle and belief, making any theological


54 Quoted in Abramov, n. 40, p. 67.

55 Rather interestingly, Zionists conducted these debates as if the Jewish state was imminent. In fact at such a time Zionists scarcely mentioned statehood so as not to alarm both the Turkish authorities for fear of a backlash or even the Western powers. The total Jewish population was about 50,000 and immigration was a trickle, demonstrating how much Zionism depended on theoretical formulations for mobilisation as much as practical politics.

judgement of Zionism misplaced. Deciding that the concerns of the rabbis should be
spiritual guidance towards obedience to the Law, the likes of Reines opted to rally around
the Zionists for purposes of immigration and at same time struggle for the soul of Palestine
Jews. Following the reversal at Basle, Reines called for a Zionist Orthodox conference at
Vilna in 1902, attended by seventy two delegates from some thirty cities, and included
twenty four rabbis. They founded the Mizrahi (an abbreviation of the two Hebrew words
Merkaz Ruhani [spiritual centre]; the full word incidentally means "Easterner" in Hebrew),
which gradually evolved into a worldwide organization of Orthodox Jews who were
Zionists. Mizrahi declared its aim of "organizing support for the return to Zion which will
serve as a focus for the ingathering of its spiritual forces and as a secure for our fortress for
our Torah and sanctity" adopting its motto as "(T)he Land of Israel for the people of Israel
according to the Torah of Israel."57

Mizrahi's formation scuttled the singular hold of secular leaders on the cultural
affairs of Palestine Jews. Chaim Weizmann recorded his feelings as he prepared for the
Sixth Congress in Minsk in 1903. "The rabbinical party is organizing itself in Jesuit fashion,
and I think of their machinations with disgust... (S)o many Mizrahi people will be
assembling, there will be so much ignorance, that in such a concentration, the putrefying
bacilli of reason and culture will not be able to survive."58 Mizrahi went on to withhold
support from the adoption of a compromise resolution at the Vth Congress which
recognized the existence of two streams of education with equal rights, the general and the
religious. Ahad Ha'am and Reines were coopted onto the committee that was to draft the
resolution on culture and education. Since Zionism depended on voluntary involvement,
education as a means of transmitting a group's particular tradition was pivotal.

Eventually a compromise was effected and it was decided to set up two distinct
cultural commissions, representing the religious and the purely national points of view.
This schism was to become a pattern in the Zionist politics. To ensure the unity of the
movement, the Orthodox was granted autonomy over its constituents, thus dissolving any

57 "Mizrahi Manifesto," in Paul R. Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz, The Jew in the Modern World, A
Messianism, Religious Zionism and Israeli Politics: The Impact of the Gush Emunim," Middle Eastern

emerging consensus regarding nation building and created the potential for disseminating anti-Zionist values. The decision did have significant results, in that it made coexistence of the Orthodox and the non-Orthodox possible, and laid down the proposition that within the Zionist organization there would be schools representing both views and that both would be the continuing concern and the responsibility of the Zionist movement.

Religion and Emerging Political System

As religion came to be significant component emerging political in the system, it is proper the chart the political conditions within which Judaism sought to alternately seek a place or secure its political niche. In the first decade of this century isolated groups calling themselves Poale Zion (workers of Zion, name suggests the influence of proletarian movements in Europe), the first Labor Zionist party in Palestine. Poale Zion delivered some 5,000 youth in the Second Aliya between 1905-1914, among the members of Poale Zion were David Ben-Gurion, the first Prime Minister, Yitzhak Ben-Zvi, the second President of the Israeli republic, etc. The composition and activities of successive waves of immigration were to determine the nature of political institutions. During the thirty years of British rule from 1918-48, a half- million Jews entered land, bringing their share of population in Palestine from one-tenth to one-third. Of the three principal waves of immigration of the period, the Third Aliya (1920-22) consisted chiefly of agricultural pioneers; the Fourth Aliya (1923-26) mainly of members of the urban middle class; and the Fifth Aliya (1932-39) largely refugees from Nazi persecution who went to both the cooperative settlements and the cities. From the beginning of 1933 until 1939 Palestine absorbed more than 60,000 refugees from Germany, and their contribution to the cultural and economic development of the National Home was inestimable.

The pioneers of the Third Aliya became a dominant element through their hand in shaping the ideological character of the National Home and the establishment of the Kibbutz movement. The youthful radicals, with a large proportion of university graduates in the Third Aliya were infused with the fervour of the October revolution with the aid of luminaries like Joseph Trumpeldor who initiated Halutzvultur the spirit of pioneering work on the land, which was meant to transform the Yishuv through establishing institutions

59 Avishai, n. 1, p. 70.
60 Cited in Abramov, n. 40, p. 103.
empowered to create a way of equitable and justiciable life. The cooperative settlement kibbutz conveyed the martial tradition in the Yishuv by operating as a base to provide recruits for self-defense and also clinch a familiarity with the socialist way of life because of which labor could be dominant party in the new state thereafter. The model of the workers' society was the kibbutz, and it was based on voluntary association. It was this voluntary aspect that characterised not only the great pioneering enterprise of reclaiming the inhospitable soil, but also the formation of the Haganah [from a Hebrew word meaning defense] and other organization of the Jewish National Home.

For the Orthodox, the Halutzim represented a threat because their secular zeal portrayed the image of a Jew they loathed. The fact that the youth graduates were a product of rationalist curriculums did not endear them either. "In the new kibbutzim religious observance and Kashrut (Jewish dietary laws) were ignored; the Sabbath was not observed; no synagogues were built, and to the extent that the festivals were celebrated at all, they were given a distinct national and social bent. Passover became the Spring Festival, and the traditional Haggadah was replaced by new versions, from which references to God were omitted. Shavuot (Pentecost) was celebrated as the Festival of the First Fruits, and Sukkoth (Tabernacles) as the Harvest Festival" thereby beginning the pattern of a long tradition of Israeli transvaluation of traditional symbols. In the kibbutz schools the Bible was taught as the outstanding literary and ethical expression of the Hebrew spirit, while all references to divinity were explained as ancient mythology. Contacts with the rabbinic authorities were avoided as much as possible, and common law marriage were the order of the day. Programmed secularism had its base in the kibbutzim and it soon informed the general climate of the Yishuv, where Halutzuit became for many a substitute for religion.62

Mizrahi, from the beginning of the century, conducted its struggle to preserve the remnants of religiosity through educational activity and pressing demands of symbolic religious issues like the imposition of the Sabbath as a holiday,63 observance of dietary laws

61 ibid, p. 103.

62 The following section on the activities of religious parties and interaction with the political system is abstracted from the definitive work on religion and politics in pre-state Israel i.e. Abramov, n. 40, especially the Chapter "The Problem of Religion in British-ruled Palestine, 1918-1948," pp. 83-124.

63 For the sequence of dealings with the Mandatory administration regarding the Jewish holidays see ibid, pp. 105-106.
etc. "As an organization Mizrahi was based on democratic rather than theocratic principles. Its leaders on the local, national, and international levels were democratically elected... the leadership included rabbis and laymen. At first Mizrahi admitted no women to its organization but it participated in the general Zionist institutions to which women were admitted."\(^6^4\) The Mizrahists fought stubbornly and consistently for their principles, but however great the provocation, they stayed within the fold of the WZO. The recognition of two parallel streams of education with funding of WZO enabled the Mizrahi to influence the values of the succeeding generation of immigrants. By 1920, Mizrahi had 25 schools with 2,000 pupils in an overall educational network of 272 institutions with 12,830 students.\(^6^5\)

This facility was in accordance with the millet system that was the structure created by the Turkish monarchy for the administration of the religion of the minority communities.\(^6^6\) In the heterogeneous Ottoman Empire (c.1300-1923), a millet was an autonomous self-governing religious community, each organized under its own laws and headed by a religious leader, who was responsible to the central government for the fulfilment of millet responsibilities and duties, particularly those of paying taxes and maintaining internal security. In addition, each millet assumed responsibility for social and administrative functions not provided by the state, conducting affairs through a communal council without intervention from outside. From 1856 on, a series of imperial reform edicts introduced secular law codes for all citizens, and much of the millets' administrative autonomy was lost.

The Balfour Declaration and the subsequent regime of the British Mandate after the World War I, galvanized the establishment of the institutions of Jewish self autonomy, which provided the avenue for the religious Zionists to entrench themselves in the politics. In this process, divisions between the Old Yishuv and the new Yishuv came to the fore. The Old Yishuv comprising the majority of, 50,000 Jews lived in Palestine before Zionist emigration began, settled on the holy cities of Jerusalem, Safed, Tiberias, etc. Zionist leaders

\(^6^4\) ibid, p.73.

\(^6^5\) Cohen, n. 18, p. 235.

\(^6^6\) Millet (Turkish: "religious community," or "people"), according to the Quran the religion professed by Abraham and other ancient prophets. In medieval Islamic states, the word was applied to certain non-Muslim minorities, mainly Christians and Jews.
through the aegis of the World Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency, demanded a framework to coordinate Jewish activities under Mandatory authority. This represented a threat to the hold of religious authorities in the Old Yishuv whose primacy within the Jewish community in Palestine was guaranteed by the Ottoman millet system. The ZO leaders desired to subvert this system which secured the hold of the Orthodoxy and in turn demanded for an Elected Assembly which enjoyed autonomy in matters of education, health, and social welfare, with adequate powers of taxation both nationally and locally. Given the pattern of immigration this national autonomy would expand into full-fledged sovereignty.

The Mandatory authorities had the dual compulsion of having to grant a measure of communal autonomy to the Jews without raising the nationalist impulses of the Arabs. They availed of the Ottoman solution of the millet system which categorised variant communities by their religious affiliations rather than a national criteria, ostensibly adopted by the Turkish sultans to transcend the differences between the Arabs and themselves being, as it were, in Islam a "community of believers." The nature of devolution was predetermined by the Old Yishuv objections to secular Zionist' procedure for an elected assembly to represent Jewish interests. Elections to the constituent assembly were to be direct, equal, and by secret ballot. However, the question of female suffrage ran aground due to the Jerusalem Orthodox objections on religious grounds. Despite appeals from Mizrahi leaders and the change of the assembly's name from Constituent to Assembly (Asefat HaNivharim) to deny it the force of constitutional decision, unity was elusive.

The Orthodox in Jerusalem began agitating in favour of forming a separate community unless the decision to grant female suffrage were rescinded. It was to no avail. The elections to Asefat HaNivrahim (Assembly of the Elected) were held throughout the country in April 1920 except in Jerusalem. Of the twenty-six thousand registered voters, some twenty thousand went to the polls. The orthodox in Jerusalem arranged their own polls from which women were excluded. The election rules provided that every eighty voters were entitled to one delegate at the Asefat HaNivrahim while the Orthodox claimed

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67 Abramov, n. 40, p. 87.

68 ibid, p. 89. Abramov states that the Jerusalem Orthodox, desirous of curbing Zionist ambitions, had established contacts to work with the agent of the Italian Foreign Office for internationalization rather mandating Great Britain.
a delegate for every forty voters, since women would not vote. As a result of this arrangement, two hundred and sixty three delegates were in the general polls, and fifty one in the social Orthodox polls; of the two hundred sixty delegates, the Zionist-oriented religious parties (Mizrahi, Young Mizrahi, and Progressive Orthodox) secured thirteen delegates, about five percent of the total votes cast. After the opening of the Assembly took place in October 7, 1920, 51 delegates elected in the separate polls in Jerusalem were admitted as full-fledged members to initiate unity. In response the latter proposed a new election for another assembly to be convened in six months, "based on the religious spirit and the ancient Jewish tradition." The motion was rejected. The Assembly elected an Executive Committee, the Va'ad Leumi (National Committee), to carry on the affairs of the Yishuv, requesting it "in consultation with rabbis and expert jurists" to draft proposals for the setting up of Jewish courts of law, for the consideration of the second session" which was to be held less than a year later.

The difficulties involved in securing a legal framework for the Yishuv sprang from two sources: lack of unity within the Jewish community, which was largely the result of differences of opinion between the ultra-Orthodox and the bulk of the Yishuv, and the insistence of the British government on treating the Jewish population as a religious rather than as a national entity. To this end, the British had fulfilled the terms of the Mandate as proposed the League of Nations. Several of the provisions coincided with Zionist agendas, such as Article 9 which dealt with respect for personal status and guarantee of religious interests. The Mandatory was inclined to retain the Turkish system of granting religious autonomy through the operation of religious courts. For the High Commissioner, the changed demographic profile of the Jewish community posed a problem. The Turkish system had a facility only for the Sephardim or Middle Eastern Jews. The Ashkenazic Jews had no ecclesiastical authority and their religious courts (Batei Din) had no official status. An appointed committee recommended the convening of an assembly (two-thirds rabbis and one-third laymen) to elect two Chief Rabbis, one Ashkenazic and one Sephardic, and a Rabbinical Council along with an appellate court. The rabbis contended that under Jewish religious law, the judgement of any religious court is final and not subject to appeal. When the government refused to give way, the rabbis of the Old Yishuv discontinued to

69 ibid, p. 90.
participate in the Elected Assembly. However, realizing that the government would not otherwise give recognition to any rabbinical court, the other rabbis agreed to the setting of a court of appellate jurisdiction. Official recognition was accorded to the Rabbinical council: "The Government of Palestine will recognize the Council and any Bet Din (religious court of law) sanctioned by it, as the sole authorities in matters of Jewish law." "It would execute through the civil courts judgements given by the Bet Din as a court of first instance and judgements given on appeal." As there was a lack of a written constitution for the Jewish community at that time in other areas, in an important legal sphere, the religious law became binding on Jews and the Rabbinical Council was made its sole authority. "By implication, the Jewish religion was equated by Orthodoxy, and Jewish religious law was to be interpreted by Orthodox rabbis." The scope of this jurisdiction was set out in Article 5 of the Palestine Order-in-Council, 1922, as follows: "The Rabbinical Courts of the Jewish Community shall have:

(a) Exclusive jurisdiction in matters of marriage and divorce, alimony and confirmation of wills of this community, other than foreigners.
(b) Jurisdiction in any other matters of personal status of such persons, where all the parties to the action consent to their jurisdiction.
(c) Exclusive jurisdiction over any case as to the continuation or internal administration of a Wakf or a religious endowment constituted before the Rabbinical Courts according to Jewish law.

As it subsequently transpired, the rabbinical council headed by the two Chief Rabbis played a minor role in the development of religious life in Palestine during the thirty years of British rule. The growing secularization of the Yishuv and the constant friction between the Ashkenazic and Sefardim undermined the credibility of the rabbinate. The first Rabbinical Council was elected for three years, but when it became impossible to reach agreement on procedures for the election of a new Rabbinical Council, the same rabbis stayed in office for over twelve years.

70 ibid, p. 95.
71 ibid, p. 95.
72 As per this law, the thousands of Jews who retained foreign nationality could contract marriages in consular offices which were recognized by civil courts.
73 Text given in Abramov, n. 40, p. 96.
the Chief Rabbinate to enhance the prestige of religious Zionism, and of the Old Yishuv. The leaders of the Old Yishuv from the early twenties regarded themselves as the Palestinian branch of the ultra-Orthodox World Agudah Israel, a breakaway non-Zionist party which strove to fight the secularists. They refused to accept the Rabbinical Council and established their own Bet Din. The Agudah Israel's political activity was to set the bounds for religion-politics interplay because of its hostile attitude to secularization, and because of its consistent opposition to "compromising stances" of Mizrahi.

**Politics of Agudah Israel**

Those that disagreed with Mizrahi's tolerance of secular Zionists, formed the Agudah Israel in 1912. Agudah Israel, a non-Zionist Orthodox political party declared as its aim "to unify the orthodox Jewry of Europe in its secular movements in Judaism-political Zionism on the one hand and the socialist non-Zionist bond on the other."

The driving force Agudah Israel came from Rabbi Salomon Breur of Frankfurt who arranged a meeting in 1909, in which Orthodox rabbis from Eastern Europe came to discuss ways and means of combating the emergence of secularism in Jewish life.

The cultural controversy of 1911, when the drive for separate schools and the imposition of Hebrew became a part of Palestine life, and the subsequent secession of some leaders from Mizrahi, spurred the drive for a worldwide organization. In 1912, a founding convention was held in Kattowitz (Silesia). With some 300 delegates present, the World Agudah Israel was officially established. It outlined its program, that stated: "The Jewish people stands outside the framework of the political peoples of the world, and differs essentially from them: the Sovereign of the Jewish people is the Almighty, the Torah is the Law that governs them, an the Holy Land has been at all times destined for the Jewish people. It is the Torah which determines all the actions of Agudah Israel." 75

Agudah was at first hampered by problem related to the diversity of its membership which differed in their cultural backgrounds and religious priorities. This was resolved by allowing each branch of Agudah to define its own policy for the country in

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75 Abramov, n. 40, p. 74. For a historical account of Agudah's origin and ambivalences see pp. 74-76.
which it operated. The ideology of Agudah was reflected in its organizational pattern, a stark contrast to the Mizrahi. For the Agudah, there was the Grand Assembly (Kenessiah Gedolah), consisting of delegates from different local groups. This assembly chose the central World Council, the Executive Committee, and finally the Council of Sages (Moetzet haTorah). It was the function of the Torah to determine whether any action of Agudah was at variance with religious law. The Council of Sages acted as a Supreme Court, which had the authority to invalidate all decision of the elected representatives. The relevance of Agudah to our study arise from its persistence opposition to the secularists, the selective involvement with the state of Israel and their influence on the behaviour of religious Zionists and the Chief Rabbinate. Cumulatively this determined the religion-politics interplay.

The Agudists, as they were called, rejected Zionism because it represented "forcing the hand of the Almighty". They also opposed the revival of Hebrew for it was the language of scripture and could not be used for temporal purposes. They considered the work of the Palestinian settlers as profanation of the Holy Land, while the Mizrahists argued that the holiness of the land lent such workers a degree of sanctity. The extent of the hostility to Zionist efforts produced unusual ventures. One Dr. Jacob De Hahn, a political secretary of the organization in the twenties, in his dispatches to European journals described the new settlers as Bolsheviks bent on imposing their will on the orthodox. He arranged meeting between Agudah representatives and King Abdullah of Transjordan to acquaint them with their opposition to Zionist efforts.

De Hahn was ultimately shot in Jerusalem admittedly by the Haganah (primarily the labor self defense force of the Yishuv) in 1924. That forced the Agudah to preclude itself to limit their activities to separatist tendencies both in creating neighbourhood, schools or politics. They continued to ignore Zionism till the onset of anti-Semitism in Europe in the early 1930s during which the leaders of the movement settled in Palestine creating

76 There were marked differences between the adherents of Agudah Israel in Russia, Poland and Lithuania on the one hand, and those in Germany on the other. the former opposed the teaching of general subjects in the schools, and retained their traditional garb; the latter meticulously observed the law, but adapted themselves to Western culture and dress, used the German language rather than Yiddish, and attended German universities. The early years witnessed German dominance, but after the World War I, the centre of the movement shifted to Poland where it became a movement of the masses, thereby moving to more extreme stances through the guidance of Hasidic dynasties. Hasidim, a trend in Jewish spirituality which is characterised by enthusiastic worship and the emphasis of feeling rather than its rival school Mitnagdim, which stresses the letter of the law.
resentment among their former clientele the Old Yishuv. That development saw the creation of an exclusive sect called the Naturei Karta (Guardians of the City) who practised extreme isolation which continues to survive to this day.

By 1923, the Agudah decided that the settlement of Eretz Israel in the spirit of Orthodox religious tradition was one of its aims and yet the debate raged. The Agudah rabbis also invoked a rule which states that religious obligations can be over-ruled to save a (Jewish) life to support Zionism during the world War II. The Peel Commission's (1937) recommendation for the partition of Palestine engulfed the Agudah in a furious debate which divided even the Council of Sages. The opponents were of two categories: those who rejected a Jewish state as being contrary to the divine scheme of Messianic redemption, and those who contended that giving up the larger part of the Holy Land was contrary to the Halakah. Ultimately the conference decided in favour of a Jewish state. That decision in 1937 was tragically late as by then Britain had grown wary of mass immigration because of Arab protests and violent riots and passed severe restrictions. This loss of European Jewry in the Holocaust greatly weakened its influence in Palestine. The only religious political party which prospered was the Mizrahi which actively participated in the development of the Yishuv as also its self-governing institutions. Judaism as a faith did not aggrandize itself in any tangible manner because there was scarcely any contribution of the leaders to the direction of Zionism since they were too busy consolidating on their limited gains to take on the juggernaut of Labor Zionism.

The Search for a Constitution

The quest for a constitution was intertwined with the struggle for national autonomy of the Yishuv. The Mandatory authority judged that the Jewish community had enough attributes of nationality to be trusted with autonomous institutions. "The White Paper of 1922, promulgated by the then Colonial Secretary, Winston Churchill, which set out guidelines for British policy in Palestine, confirmed that the term Jewish National Home implied a wide measure of self-government. It attempted to describe this term, which was without precedent in international law:"

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78 Orr, n. 74, p. 7.
This community has its own political organs: an elected assembly for the direction of its domestic concerns, elected councils in the towns, an organization for the control of schools. It has an elected Chief Rabbinate and a Rabbinical Council for the direction of its religious affairs. Its business is conducted in Hebrew as vernacular language, and a Hebrew press serves its needs. It has its distinctive intellectual life, and displays considerable economic activity. This community, then, with its town and country population, its political, religious an social organization, its own language its own life, has in fact "national" characteristics. When it is asked what is meant by the development of a Jewish national Home in Palestine, it may that it is . . . the further development of the existing Jewish community with the assistance of Jews in other parts of the world, in order that it may become a centre in which the Jewish people as a while may take, on grounds of religion and race, an interest and pride.79

To this end, the Vaad Leumi, embarked on the task of preparing a draft constitution. The difficulties in securing a legal framework for the community sprang from two sources. First from its ally, the Chief Rabbinate who agreed with the idea of the Constitution but was piqued that the constitution did not deal with the authority of the rabbinate, its budget, and it mode of elections. The National Committee maintained that these matters should be left to later decisions by the governing authority, a testament of its confidence in dealing with the demands of the "establishment" orthodox, and the latter's relative power in the community. Agudah Israel objected on conceptual grounds that the forthcoming governing authority of the Jews would enjoy statutory powers and would be the sole representative.80 The proposed constitution, Agudah pointed out, would give women the right to vote and would not recognize the formal supremacy of religion.

In turn, it demanded that it be allowed to organize a separate community, thereby seeking to scuttle any attempts for the Zionist hold on sovereignty. The Zionists seeking a monopoly on state sovereignty, demanded in the constitution that it be obligatory for every Jew to be a member of the community at the same time provide for the satisfaction of the religious and cultural requirements of minority groups. This did not placate either the British or Agudah as expected. The Agudists were also incensed by the Zionists demand in the draft constitution for the right to levy taxes to maintain the network of schools and social services. This was interpreted by the large sections of religious Jewry as an attempt to


80 On the debate within the community regarding the mode of communal autonomy between the National Committee, the Chief Rabbinate, Agudah Israel and the considerations and responses of the High Commissioners office see section "Struggle for National Autonomy," in Abramov, n. 40, pp. 106-115.
throttle the system of *chalukkah* (charity) on which the religious institutions depended. At the end of the deliberations, the Palestine government submitted to the Vaad Leumi, a draft proposal of its constitution, which conceived of the Yishuv as national entity in the sense that it would be self-governing and democratic, with the rabbinate being one of its institutions. It granted the ecclesiastical authority not only prominence but also powers which, in the opinion of the Yishuv, should belong to an Elected Assembly. The government draft provided only for those Jews who would voluntarily recognize the constituted community would be subject to its jurisdiction. The right of the community to levy taxes was denied, but it would be recognized as a legal personality. This draft was rejected by the Vaad Leumi.

The problem of female suffrage continued to beset the Yishuv in the twenties. A call for referendum was called off in November 1925 at the behest of the Mizrahi after the Agudah called on its supporters to boycott. The resolution of this issue was to mark the final break of the Yishuv including the religious Zionist Mizrahi with the Agudah Israel. After the issue was settled, voting to the second Elected Assembly was held on December 6, 1925. The Yishuv now had 64,764 voters. Of these, 57% exercised their franchise. Two hundred and twenty two deputies were elected; nineteen were Orthodox, including six who belonged to Torah Ve'Avodah (the Mizrahi's Labor wing).

However, the accession of the secular Zionist to unassailable dominance was somewhat impaired by the British who were keen not to project these self-governing structures as testaments of Jewish nationhood. After three years of further negotiations, a framework for the constitution was incorporated in an Enabling Act promulgated by the High Commissioner on February 15, 1926, under the title of "Religious Communities Organization Ordinance." The ordinance was preceded by a preamble that included the phrase, "... each Religious Community recognized by the government shall enjoy autonomy for the internal affairs of this Community, subject to the provisions of any Ordinance or Order issued by the High Commissioner for Palestine. Effectively, in the sight of the law the Yishuv was conceived of in terms of a religious community.81 After considering comments from the Vaad Leumi, the Rabbinical Council, the Executive of the

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81 The other religious communities recognized by the Palestine government were the Muslim Community, Roman Catholic and the Greek Orthodox, the Gregorian Armenian community, the Armenian Catholic, the Syrian Catholic, Greek Catholic, Chaldean, the Maronite, and the Syrian Orthodox Community. All these maintained ecclesiastical courts exercising jurisdiction in matters of the personal status of their members.
Zionist Organization, and Agudah Israel, the High Commissioner promulgated the "Jewish Community Rules," on January 1, 1928, establishing a recognizes "Community of the Jews in Palestine," known as Knesset Yisrael.

The Rules first dealt with the Rabbinical Council, as the central ecclesiastical authority, and the local ecclesiastical offices. Rather than leaving it to democratically elected organs of the Knesset Yisrael to determine the scope and authority of the rabbinate, the Rules invested the rabbinate with official power, and made its maintenance obligatory upon and the financial responsibility of the Yishuv. The recognition of the official rabbinate as the sole interpreter of the Jewish religion implied the recognition of Orthodox Judaism as the established religion of Palestinian Jewry, paving the way for the expanded role of Mizrahi and the corresponding isolation of Agudah Israel. Significantly, the electoral system adopted by the Jews in various Zionist organization were transplanted to the Community. There was to be a secret direct, universal ballot with a minimum voter age of twenty years. Representation was to be proportional, with the whole of Palestine declared as one electoral area, and voters would cast votes to party lists rather than individuals. This was probably the most pivotal of British concessions to religion which was to guarantee a critical, bargaining leverage for religion in political sweep stakes. The priority accorded to the rabbinate was to enhance the symbolic appeal of religion in the community consciousness.

Membership was voluntary and Agudah exercised this by urging their followers to organize themselves into a separate community and applied to the Commissioner for recognition as a separate community with powers to tax its members, which was eventually rejected. To put an end to this self-imposed isolation, the Vaad Leumi proceeded to draw up a register and invited all adult Jews. By March 1929, nearly ninety thousand adult registered, while the number of unregistered dissidents numbered five to six thousand, conveying the measure of popularity and consensus about Zionist aims and methods.

The political parties represented in the Elected Assembly were also represented in the Executive of the Jewish Agency which coordinated activities with the British and was crucial to the disbursement of funds. Mizrahi participated actively both in the World Zionist Organization and in governing organs of the Community of the Jews in Palestine. They participated in the elections to the Assembly and usually obtained between seven to ten percent of he votes. The Vaad Leumi, managed to create a strong governing structure
with its various departments like the political, health, social welfare and the budgets, and the religious party Mizrahi partook of valuable experience of dealing with the skeletal elements of an Israeli constitution since most of the laws concerning religion were carried over after 1948 owing to disagreement over the need and content of a written constitution as we shall see later.

Mizrahi, with its monopoly on the managing the religious trend of schools built a base for religious pedagogy which functioned as a base for political activism. Their path to the government was made smoother by Agudah's boycott and its own independent school set up. Its greatest successes were in the field of education despite the fierce competition from other trends. The General Trend which the children of the Labor Zionists attended held that "the spiritual content and the actual curriculum of a school must be above parties and classes, and above particularist aspiration, and must in addition be based on the spiritualist values shared by the entire people... It is the function of the school to mold the unity of the nation..." The secular tenor and the martial instincts of Labor Zionism were reflected in the justification of the curriculum.

The religious trend sponsored by the Mizrahi declared that, "Mizrahi education combines the traditional religious Jewish education prevalent in the advanced countries of Europe and America; thus the children will absorb Jewish religious values as the basis for their world outlook, will observe the religious commandment on the one hand, and on the other will acquire the knowledge and qualification which a citizen in a modern society requires... All teachers who instruct in the Mizrahi school in any subject whatsoever must be religious in their views and behaviour."82 This statement is entirely consistent with the religious modernism and the spirit of accommodation that they harboured towards secular thought and indeed the Labor Zionists. The Mizrahi had not yet been vulnerable to the pressure of the ultra-Orthodox.

The number of pupils rose from about 10,000 in 1919 to some 90,000 in 1947. "Within the General Trend, 40 percent of teaching time was devoted to Jewish studies, that is, to Hebrew language and literature and Bible and Jewish history, and 60 percent to general studies, including foreign languages and the sciences. In the Religious Trend the proportion was reversed, with sixty percent of the time being devoted to Jewish studies. In

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82 Abramov, n. 40, p. 114.
the Labor Trend thirty percent of the time being devoted to Jewish studies, and seventy percent for general studies, including crafts and agriculture. More than half the pupils attended the schools of the General Trend; the Religious Trend had less than a third of the total, while the Labor Trend catered to a small minority.83

Despite the official sanction for religious institutions by the British government, it could not usurp the leadership of Labor Zionist parties. This only underlines the secular basis of Zionism even though the movement borrowed traditional imagery and leadership to buttress its appeal. Their ascendance by 1948 was guaranteed by the relentless drive for immigration in the wake of opposition from without and within. Labor parties were also aided by the composition of the immigrants. Between 1919 and 1923, at a time of unrestricted immigration, 35,000 came to Palestine in the third Aliyah, the majority of these came from proletarian backgrounds in Russia. About a third of these had been members of Labor Zionist parties.

The sociological experiment of the settlement movement was to be the backbone of the Israeli socialism. Achdut Ha'Avodah, later to be called Mapai, quickly developed trade unions, Labor exchanges, workers kitchens, a sick fund, schools and a bureau of public works. Efforts to build a mass movement of workers culminated in the creation of the Histadrut (the General Federation of Jewish Labor in Palestine) by parties such as Ben-Gurion's Achdut Ha'Avodah (a Union of Labor), the premier socialist party, and other affiliate units. Histadrut became an incipient welfare apparatus for all Hebrew workers. Services such as sick funds, and marketing cooperatives, were supported from workers' dues, as in a big commune, and these went into a general fund which connected the individual worker more directly to the general workers body than to any particular trade union.84

83 ibid.
84 Ben-Gurion "proposed that the Histadrut itself invest in primary industries through a holding company, the Chevrat Ovdim. The body of shareholders would be . . . coextensive with the membership of the Histadrut. In a way, the Histadrut would constitute itself as an economic state within the larger Palestinian economy, and any Jewish worker who became a citizen would 'own' an equal part of the state's corporations. Meanwhile, the trade-union activities of the Histadrut, its strikes and economic demands, would shape the development of the private sector." Avishai, n. 1, p. 113. For an analysis of the ascendance of the Histadrut in the Yishuv see Avishai, pp. 111-119. By the 1980s, the Histadrut sustained its dominant role in the economy by having more than 1.5 million members that includes 80 percent of the entire Israeli workforce. On the role of the Histadrut in independent Israel see Asher Arian, Politics in Israel: The Second Generation (Chatham, N.J.: Chatham House Publishers, 1989), pp. 222-229.
The Histadrut, with its socialist organization did face competition from the 80,000 Jews who arrived from Central Europe between 1924 and 1929, mainly from Poland. The Polish settlers were different from their Russian predecessors; many had been small capitalists.\textsuperscript{85} However, they became insolvent following a depression in 1927, when Histadrut unions started demanding that private entrepreneurs employ only Jewish labor and proceeded to take over the failing private commercial enterprises. Thereafter, Histadrut's reputation as a trust-worthy welfare benefactor was sealed in the entire Yishuv. Histadrut was all along in the control of Ben-Gurion's Achdut Ha'Avodah.

The revisionists like Jabotinsky tried to break the hold of Labor parties and organized a rival workers movement. The affiliate membership told its own tale. By 1933 there were 60,000 members in the Histadrut, 7,000 in the National Labor Federation. Labor also enjoyed the control over immigration to Palestine. The British imposed restrictions because of Arab protest, and granted the Jewish Agency the right to issue permits at their own discretion, which ostensibly favoured Labor Zionist cadres.\textsuperscript{86}

Labor Zionism and Histadrut's success had its bearing on the religious parties. "The leadership of Mizrahi had realised that, in order to combat secularism effectively, it was essential to develop a following also among the working people, especially in view of the fact that organized Labor was gradually assuming a dominant position in the life of the Yishuv."\textsuperscript{87} At the behest of Samuel Haim Landau, a group of young followers of Mizrahi met in Warsaw in 1921 organized the movement of Tzerei Mizrahi and developed a theoretical grounding for the synthesis of religion and labor on the biblical basis on the Sabbath commandment: "Six days you shall labor and do all your work." and renouncing the Diaspora's downgrading of work. Landau rejected socialism and contended that the principles of social justice proclaimed by the prophets should serve as a basis for a new religion-oriented Jewish society in Palestine.

\textsuperscript{85} Between 35 and 45 percent of those arrived with funds they could invest and were keen to extend the market economy thus threatening the settlement movement. Between 1924 and 1926, more than 80 percent of the 12 million pounds invested came from private sources, and more land was purchased by private Polish and American real-estate corporations than by the Jewish National Fund.

\textsuperscript{86}sachar, n. 29, p. 145.

\textsuperscript{87}Abramov, n. 40, p. 118.
In 1922 HaPoel HaMizrahi (The Mizrahi Worker) was founded in Palestine in the spirit of the Tzerei Mizrahi. At first there was considerable antagonism between the new group and the Histadrut, but in the early thirties an agreement between the two was reached and HaPoel HaMizrahi agreed to follow a united trade union policy. HaPoel HaMizrahi movement is significant since it was a striking innovation in the religious community and precepts and practices of the movement was to have a lasting significance on religious thought and later in Israeli politics. The movement elevated pioneering to a religious duty projecting a new image of the Orthodoxy to the Zionists and the religious when it built agricultural settlements. Cooperatives, housing projects, credit banks, and various welfare services were created by Orthodox workers.

Summary

Certain features stood out in the political system of the Yishuv. Labor Zionism enjoyed dominance at the expense of every other ideology. Competing organizations and worldviews, nationalist and religious, adjusted themselves to the agenda set out by them, as Zionism indeed was taken over by them and given a socialist coloration. Political parties were a major factor, indicating a "multiaxial division of opinion." They also helped build agricultural settlements, industries, housing, schools, clinics; they had their own publishing houses, issued newspapers and periodicals; they established cultural centres and synagogues, and for these employed large permanent staffs, financed their own banks and credit institutions and so on. As a writer put it: "One can therefore say that whereas everywhere else societies gave birth to political parties and determined their character, in Israel it was the parties that gave birth to society and shaped its character."87 On the eve of independence, Israel had five Leftist parties - Palestine Communist Party, Mapam (Marxist), Achdut HaAvodah, HaPoel HaMizrahi and Poale Agudah Israel, and five on the Right - Progressive Party, the General Zionist, Herut, Mizrahi and Agudah Israel.

Secularism was a way of life in the Yishuv. That's why religious thought reacted to Zionism rather than the other way around. The religious parties and the rabbinate failed to enunciate modern applications of the law and had to settle for symbolic gains like Sabbath

holidays, dietary laws etc., and as such had no pervasive impact on cultural life. The constitutional debates provide a glimpse of the cultural contradictions within Zionism. The next chapter will analyse those debates and the reasons for the greater impact of religion in public life in the sixties.