CHAPTER III
Chapter III

1967 AND AFTER: THE POLITICS OF REDEMPTION

To organize the collective memory, to turn history into an instrument of the government whose role is to legitimize whoever is in power . . . is a temptation inherent in all authority.

-Maria Vargas Lhosa

He who controls the past controls the future; he who controls the present controls the past.

-George Orwell

Buy land son, they don't make it any more.

-Mark Twain

Euphoria in Israel and Ferment in the Religious World

1967 was a watershed year for Israeli politics. The Six Day War's results of administering the hostile occupied territories were to have definite consequences on Israel's mass psychology, and the nation's political behavior. The ecstatic response of the religionists; the gush of theological reflection resulting from the religious significance of conquering the Biblical lands of "Judea and Samaria," coincided with considerable ferment in the country's political life. This chapter will observe the eventful aftermath of the war, the religionists response, the governing Labor Party's reaction or the lack of it, to religious Zionism's revival. It will also analyze the phenomenon of the Gush Emunim, the settler movement, which has a major impact on the country's politics with an exposition of its religious thought to illustrate the potentialities of Jewish fundamentalism. The ideological evolution of the Jewish state in the context of the religious assertion in the 1970s will be

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1 The Israeli air force in a pre-emptive strike destroyed Egyptian planes before they left the ground and in six days of fighting (June 5-10) the Israeli army overran the Sinai, the West Bank of the Jordan including the Old City of Jerusalem, and the strategic Golan Heights in Syria. The UN Security Council arranged a cease-fire and passed Resolution 242, calling for a withdrawal from all occupied regions. The Israelis insisted on Arab recognition of the right of Israel to exist and firm guarantees against future attack. The so-called front-line Arab states were neither able (for domestic reasons) nor willing to give such guarantees and instead courted Soviet and Third World support against "U.S.-Israeli imperialism." Hence Israel remained both greatly enlarged and possessed of shorter, more defensible borders, although it did acquire the problem of administering more than a million Arabs in Gaza and the West Bank.
constant refrain of the chapter. It will also evaluate the nature and role of Israel's "civil religion" and its relationship with Judaism. The factors responsible for Likud's formation of government in 1977 along with mechanics of Likud's alliance with the religious nationalists from the 1970s onward will be looked into.

To comprehend the welter of political change following the war, it is necessary to recapture the social and political setting that underwent such an upheaval soon after. In domestic politics, the Labor party, by the mid 1960s, was undergoing a process of charismatic decline, in that its dominance at the level of ideas was increasingly under threat. Organizationally, it still had the control of the huge state sector, controlling the Histadrut, the insurance, banking, army and commanding the intellectual power centers in the universities which it helped establish. However, the magnitude of infighting within the Mapai saw David Ben-Gurion splitting the party in 1965 to from his own Rafi Party, manned by his protégés like Moshe Dayan and Shimon Peres. The attenuation of the organized left was corresponded by the reversal of fortunes of their adversaries. Menachem Begin's scrupulous nationalism, expressing itself within the matrix of parliamentary politics, helped the revisionist Herut to gain ground as the principal competitor emerging from the infamy that Ben-Gurion inflicted on it a decade earlier.2

The defeat of the Arabs in the Six Day War witnessed a spurt of political activism by the hitherto docile religious Zionist sector. Religious Zionist thought, exemplified by the NRP's political stance, had tended to focus on religious revival among the Jews rather than to attributing any importance to foreign relations as such. This strategy of enhancing religious autonomy by extracting concessions from the secularists had a deprecatory effect on the confidence of religious Jews. 1967 offered an opportunity for the charismatic religious leaders to emerge from the fringe of Israeli society into the mainstream. This served to allay much of the frustration that the religious Zionists experienced in independent Israel. Religious Zionism which acknowledged manifestations of the divine in establishment of the state of Israel, continued to cooperate with the secularists in the face of criticism by their ultra-Orthodox peers in the hope that the Zionists would return to

2 Ben-Gurion would go the extent of not referring to Menachem Begin by name and would instead identify him in Knesset proceedings in relation to the person sitting next to Begin!
traditional Judaism. That did not quite happen as the secularists continued to hold sway in Israeli life at the manifest level even though the religionists preserved their domain through legislation. The mode of participation by religious Zionists in the first decades of statehood has been called a form of "segmented pluralism."³

The domination of the secularists was evident right from 1920 till 1977. "(R)eligious Jews were conscious of their status as outsiders. However, they were represented in decision-making forums, and on occasion even over-represented. But they sat in such forums because the nature of the political arrangements in Israeli society dictated their presence, not because Israel's real leaders or Israeli insiders had any regard for their opinions."⁴ The relative status of religious Jews can be gauged from Ben-Gurion's 1949 invitation to Israeli cultural and intellectual leaders, in which he asked these leaders to meet with him to plan "the shape of the spiritual image of the nation. Since the meetings were informal, Ben-Gurion saw no need to invite any religious intellectuals. For, although it was evident to those present that religious tradition was an important component in "shaping the spiritual image of the nation," it was also clear that religious Jews would have nothing to contribute to such a discussion. Even during the deliberations preceding the creation of the Supreme Council on Culture in 1952 many a religious figure were not invited and those present were not heeded to.⁵

Thus the dormant frustration of religious Zionists rendered them vulnerable to ultranationalist projections following the success in the war. As Charles Liebman attests that those who harbored a desire to participate, shape and lead the cultural life of the country, they had an elective affinity for ultranationalists pronouncements phrased in religious terminology.⁶ The popular enthusiasm for the liberation of the territories


facilitated the entry of the religious into the mainstream. Critic Boas Evron writes: "Beyond all else, the religious circles, even the Zionists among them, seemed to the secularists to be a continuation of the same abhorred exilic caste-community existence, which the secular public wished to erase from its memory... [But] underground pressures were at work even before that. In the late fifties, traditional Zionism began to lose its meaning, and the conquest in 1967 of large territories aroused religious and mystical sentiments even among circles that until then had considered themselves secular. *In certain religious Zionist circles, mainly in the Bnei Akiva, this atmosphere provided a fertile ground for the release of suppressed states of mind that originated in eschatological conceptions of Zionism.*" 7 The lack of fulfillment was pronounced among the Bnei Akiva, the religious youth movement and the religious seminaries that were both influenced by the NRP.

The manner of Israel's victory offered an opportunity for a reassessment of religious Zionist theology in terms of the new political realities and sparked a wave of euphoria among religious Jews that was to be eventually channeled into ultranationalism. "The juxtaposition of terrifying period of siege and depression in May 1967, (prior to the war), with a lightning military victory and the dramatic, emotionally, exhilarating reunion with the Old City of Jerusalem, Hebron, Bethel, and other location of Biblical importance triggered an upsurge of romantic Zionist and religious sentiment." 8 Rabbi Harold Fisch, an ultra-nationalist compared the Six Day War to the Israelite crossing of the Red Sea on the way out of Egypt around 1300 BC. The War was "truly a religious moment," containing "the sudden experience of sudden illumination. It was a triumph by which Jews were not only delivered from mortal peril but also restored to Jerusalem and to cities of "Judah." 9 The ambivalence of the ultra-Orthodox Agudah Israel regarding the State of Israel was truly overwhelmed by the popular identification with religious Zionism's assessment that the victory was divinely ordained and that it had messianic significance. 10

9 ibid., p. 87.
Abba Eban, the former foreign minister, commenting on the messianic mood after June War in the context of Gush’s settlement drive said that 1967 which was a military salvation, with enormous political gains . . . was a total psychological failure because the victory was interpreted providentially and messianically. Once it became a messianic thing, the government and the parliament were no longer sovereign . . . we lost sight of the fact that the Arab regimes, while defeated were still intact, our victory was total. All of our statements, though, were in the imperative. "We shall, we will, we demand."11

Rabbi Haim Druckman, a leading figure in the NRP spoke on the redemptive significance of the 1967 War

I could come up with . . . plenty of quotations from authoritative sources, according to which we are living in an era of redemption, but I prefer to observe reality. After two thousand years Jews return to their homeland; the desolate land is being continuously built; there is a unique process of the ingathering of the exiles; we have won independence and sovereignty which we did not have even during the era of the Second Temple. What would you call this reality if not a reality of redemption.12

Rabbi Zvi Yehudah Kook’s religious thought and the activism of his disciples responded to religious Zionism’s need to reinvigorate itself in the light of its extant reality of organizational strength and Israel’s spiritual vacuity. For an idealistic, yet unfulfilled, youthful religious elite like Rabbis Haim Druckman, Zevulun Hammer, Eleazer Waldman, Kook provided "charismatic leadership and authoritative imperatives linking specific political events (like the Six Day War and the Yom Kippur War) and concrete political programs, (Jewish settlements) and the incorporation of occupied territories to the divine plan for final redemption."13 The deference paid by politicians to Kook had an empowering


11 Thomas L. Friedman, From Beirut to Jerusalem, One Man’s Middle Eastern Odyssey (London: Fontana, 1990), p. 263.


13 Quoted in Lustick, n. 8, p. 41.
effect on the quiescent religious Zionists who comprised the majority among the Orthodox. It granted them a measure of legitimacy within Zionist circles that they yearned for that was missing from their ultra-Orthodox world. One student at the Merkaz Harav yeshiva describes an audience granted by Kook to Menachem Begin soon after the latter emerged victorious in the 1977 parliamentary elections.

When Begin was chosen as Prime Minister he came to visit Zvi Yehuda. He came as if to Canossa, as if this man Zvi Yehuda, was God's representative. Suddenly the Prime Minister kneels and bows before Zvi Yehuda. Imagine for yourself what all the students standing there and watching this surrealistic scene were thinking. I'll never forget it. I felt that my heart was bursting within me. What greater empirical proof could there be that this fantasies and imaginings were indeed reality? You could see for yourself that instead of treating him as if he were crazy, people looked upon him as upon something holy. And everything he said or did became something holy as well.14

This was to signal the nationalization of religion and radicalize religious Zionism, placing an accent on temporal realities to the arguable exclusion of the observance of the Torah.

Kookist Thought and the New Religio-political Elite

The religious thought of Abraham Isaac Kook, the first Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of Palestine, and that of his son Rabbi Zvi Yehudah Kook bears a definite relation to Israel's swing to the right in the 1970s, as it impelled a generation of religious Zionists towards territorial nationalism and so incited the mainstream parties to endorse it as well. The Kooks share a messianic theology that has a strong emphasis on the unique and holy nature of the Jewish people and the sanctity of the land.15 The Kooks enabled religious Zionists to make the transition from extremist politics to the mainstream.

A. I. Kook felt that "the external trappings of the nations' life," including language, political consciousness, and practical work, only set the stage for "a new surge of Divine inspiration."

14 Cf. Lustick, n. 8, p. 37.

He welcomed a return to the culture of labor and working on the land even if it meant the contravening of the Torah:

In times of redemption insolence is on the increase ... They rebel against everything ... they break and they discard; they seek their nourishment in alien pastures, embracing alien ideals and desecrating everything hallowed ... These passionate souls reveal their strength so that no fence can hold them back ... Truly heroic spirits know (however) that this force is one of the phenomena needed for the perfection of the world. 16

He was indulgent towards the ways of the secular Jews who faced recriminations from other rabbis, facilitating both a conciliatory attitudes towards the secular regime and fostering a veneratory attitude towards the state of Israel among the religious Zionists. Kook contended that "the spirit of Israel is so closely linked to the spirit of God that the Jewish nationalist, no matter how secularist his intention may be, must despite himself affirm the divine." 17 Kook said:

To reject those children who have strayed from the ways of the Torah and religious faith, having been carried away by the raging currents of the times - "I say unhesitatingly that this is not the way God wants" ... The inner essence of Jewish holiness remains hidden in their hearts. 18

Kook provided the theological rationale for the interaction of religious Zionists with labor Zionists by suggesting that constant interaction between each other will bring, to borrow Christian terminology, a kind of a "born again experience" through an awakening to the redemptive nature of their own settling enterprise.

Resolute in body and spirit, and stirred by a deep and living passion, the young Israelite of the future, in viewing the renaissance of his people and his land, will speak proudly of the Holy Land, and glory in the God of Israel. A spiritual force of intense vitality will strike the dry bones that drew their sustenance from cold logic, lifeless metaphysics, and the decadence of skepticism. Then will be fulfilled the prophecy. 19

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16 See Lustick, n. 8, pp. 30-31.


18 Quoted in Lustick, n. 8, p. 30.

19 Quoted in Lustick, n. 8, p. 32.
His thought assumed an inherent sanctity of the Jewish people.

God has determined, once and forever, that we are a holy people, a reality of holy souls, holy bodies, part of the souls of the entirety of Israel which is entirely holy. There is a reality of a holy land which God chose—"because God chose Zion." This is a land "whose fruit is holy" and the working of the land is equivalent to the command of putting on phylacteries . . . Thus have things been determined: This is a holy land and this is a holy people.20

Kook ascribed to the unique qualities of the Land of Israel and the mystical significance of renewed contact between Jews and their land.

Eretz Israel [the Land of Israel] is part of the very essence of our nationhood; it is bound organically to its very life and inner being. Human reason, even at its most sublime, cannot begin to understand the unique holiness of Eretz Israel . . . The hope for the Redemption is the force that sustains Judaism in the Diaspora; the Judaism of Eretz Israel is the very Redemption. We are commanded to bite deeply into the delightful sweetness of the land of Israel's glorious, invigorating holiness. "That ye may suck, and be satisfied with the breast of her consolations; that ye may drink deeply with delight of the abundance of her glory." (Isaiah 66:11) And we must announce to the entire world, and to those who languish pitifully in the dark exile, that the channel through which courses the full life, the abundance light and the pleasant holiness of our lively land has begun to open up.21

Zvi Yehuda Kook elaborated on the teachings of his father A.I. Kook. He translated and applied this father's theoretical concepts to the level of operative attitudes in a radical manner as largely to transcend or transform their original meaning or intent. The Kooks share a messianic theology that emphasizes the uniqueness of the Jewish people and the sanctity of the land.22 Zvi Yehudah Kook used his father's metaphysic to form a core group of messianic followers from the NRP-controlled religious youth movement Bnei Akiva. A secretive, exclusive fraternity of idealistic young men calling itself Gahelet (Embers; the Hebrew is the acronym for Nucleus of Torah Learning Pioneers) existed under the tutelage


22 For a review of Zvi Kook's theology see Don-Yehiya, n. 15, pp. 225-228.
of the younger Kook from the 1950s. *Gahelet* contained a very large proportion of the future leaders of Gush Emunim, including large proportion of the future leaders of the settler movement Gush Emunim, including Rabbis Druckman, Moshe Levinger, and Eleaer Waldman. "Gahelet members, rebuffed in 1964 at their first effort to exert influence within the National Religious Party itself, gravitated toward Rav Zvi Yehuda Kook."  

This was to be a portentous development for the evolution of religious thought in Israel since the Gahelet members, by virtue of their successful political career, catapulted their rabbi into public prominence. "By adopting Rabbi Kook the Younger as their spiritual leader, members of Gahelet propelled him from the status of a forgotten, ridiculed figure at the margins of the Torah and Zionist worlds into an outstanding Israeli personality with a magnetic influence on a broad circle. Gush Emunim (religious settler movement that rose into prominence in the decade) thus had its beginnings in the work of about a dozen fourteen-year olds, every one of them has a position in the gallery of spiritual authorities of the radical Jewish-Zionist movement."  

For Kook Jr. redemption involved three stages. First, was the return of Diaspora Jews to the Land of Israel initiated by the fear of the physical danger in the Diaspora. The second stage comprised the national reconstruction between the people and the Land of Israel, is made possible by the reunion of the Jewish people with the biblical heartland of Judea and Samaria. It entails the "complete resettlement in the Land and the revival of Israel in it . . . [and], the actual fulfillment of our inheriting the Land, of its being in our possession and not in that of any other of the nations nor in a state of desolation." The third stage will require a "repentance of love," in which Jews whose spiritual health has been enlivened by their contact with the whole Land of Israel turn toward God and the observance of his commandments.

23 Lustick, n. 8, p. 34.


Employing powerful rhetoric, Rabbi Kook expounded a series of fundamentals, including his "incontestable" claim that redemption is already underway, its manifestation being in the national-political but not yet necessarily religious-ethical realm. "The realization of messianism," he continued, "is not a function of a return to explicit faith in God and to fulfillment of Halakah precepts, but rather a phenomenon which precedes and conditions such return." Hence, the establishment of the State of Israel becomes a vital signpost in bringing about the messianic advent and the work of the Israeli Army in establishing divinely promised borders thus becomes a spiritual and religious matter, —"at least equivalent to glorifying the Torah by increasing the number of yeshivas." This exhortation goes to explain the mass entry of Orthodox youth in enrolling in the army after the "messianic signs."

Kook received prophetic acclaim because of his unexplained outburst some three weeks before Six-Day War commemorating the Israel Independence. The fact that he chose to intone on the national day of Israel is itself testifies to the close association of Zionism and Judaism in the minds of the religious Zionists.

Nineteen years ago, on the very night that the decision of the United Nations to create the State of Israel was handed down, as the entire people rejoiced . . . I was unable to join in their happiness. I sat alone - quiet and depressed. In those very first hours I was not able to accept what had been done, that terrible news, that indeed, "my land they have divided" had occurred! Yes, where is our Hebron? - Have we forgotten it? And Where is our Shechem and our Jericho, where - Will we forget them? And all of the Transjordan - it is ours, every single clod of earth- which belongs to the Land of God - is it our power to concede even one millimeter of it?"28

On another occasion when asked whether it was permissible for the religious students to view the scheduled military parade in Jerusalem, he said. "Of course, know that this army of Israel will liberate the land of Israel." He placed added emphasis on settling in the Land of Israel as a prerequisite for messianic deliverance, and deduced that "the land was chosen

26 This upturns the Christian theology of history which believes that a worldwide spiritual repentance i.e. acceptance of Jesus Christ as God and Savior, and the subsequent atonement of sinners will naturally align the forces of good and evil against each other and then bring out the Armageddon. Aran, n. 24, p. 268.

27 ibid.

28 Lustick, n. 8, p. 36.
before the people." Kook felt: "The chosen Land and the chosen people comprise one completed divine unity joined together at the creation of the world and the creation of history. They comprise one vital and integral unity."

Kookist charisma and his thought served another purpose. Just as he allowed for a renewed consonance between Judaism and Zionism for the Orthodoxy, he facilitated the appropriation of Judaic symbols for the Israeli regime that needed a reference to legitimize its hold on the occupied territories. Kook's formulations helped to justify the vacillation and the eventual occupation of the "liberated territory" when the ruling Labor could ill-afford to declare those brazen objectives to the international community. Judaism, which had until now been identified by the average Israeli to be the modern remnant of religious obscurantism, was suddenly found to be a worthy referent of Jewish identity. Mystical allusions were increasingly resorted to by the secular leaders to rationalize the policies on the territories. This was inevitable given the range of choices confronting the Israelis since 1967. The dilemmas go so far to explain the hamstrung approach of the secular parties and the corresponding rhetorical assurance of Jewish fundamentalism. Thomas Friedman sums up the alternatives for the ruling Labor party:

One choice was to keep all land of Israel, including the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and to remain a Jewish State, but this could be done only by curtailing Israeli democracy. The only way Israel could only permanently control the Palestinian inhabitants of the West Bank and Gaza Strip would be by physically suppressing them and ensuring that they were never given political rights.

The second option for Israel was to annex the West Bank and Gaza and remain a democracy, but this could be done only by giving up the Jewish character of the state, because if one million plus Palestinian Arabs then residing in the occupied territories, were allowed to vote, along with the 500,000 Arabs, by early twenty-first century they would outnumber the Jews, if the same birth and emigration trends continued.

The third option was for Israel to remain a Jewish and democratic state, but this could be done only by either getting rid of large number of West Bankers and Gazans, in order to guarantee a Jewish majority well into the next century. Since the world would never tolerate a forced transfer by Israel of Palestinians from the occupied territories, this option really came down to relinquishing territory. . . . Who were they? A nation of Jews living in the Land of Israel but not democratic? A democratic nation in all land of Israel but not Jewish? Or a Jewish democratic, nation but not in all of the land of Israel.30

29 Lustick, n. 8, p. 83.

Kook Jr., meanwhile, inspired a generation of young rabbis who were ready to impart these values to the scores of students who were enrolled in religious schools. As mentioned in the previous chapter, religious Zionism had built a formidable organizational base which earned the loyalty of a large number of religious Jews to the NRP by building patron-client networks. Kook and his religio-nationalist protégés brought a change in their tenor of expression which, in the climate of nation-wide euphoria became a political dynamic in itself.

The relevance of civil religion

The fact that a reawakening of a dormant religious/traditional impulse associated with the mystique of the Land ever took place has never been seriously doubted as a review of post-1967 religious activism will show. Whether that schismatic reaction had merely to do with the June War is a pertinent question. Analysts believe that an effective ordering of religious tradition to suit political needs depends on the nature of the state's "civil religion." This analytic construct, devised by American sociologist Robert Bellah to explain the rise of the radical right in the United States, has been adapted to the Israeli situation, in what is considered a seminal work, by Charles S. Liebman and Eliezer Don-Yehiya. The authors have, by their copious set of illustrations, demonstrated that the Israeli leadership made skillful use of traditional religion for various purposes thereby garnering popular currency for Judaic concepts that were later manipulated by religious nationalism in the 1970s. For them, civil religion is the sum of the ceremonials, the myths, and creeds which legitimize the social order, unite the population, and mobilize the society's members in pursuit of its dominant political goals.

Civil religion is a useful device to comprehend the plethora of jargon infused by political science in the post-War era. It is an important tool to analyze the narratives through which a society perceive and interprets its past and present and how it faces the future. A notion like civil religion has assumed importance owing to influence of

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32 ibid., p. ix.
philosophical developments like postmodernism that have debated the existence of an objective reality that human beings have access to. Political science has unconsciously reflected the philosophical assumptions of the postmodern mind that posits no correspondence between a reality "out there" apart from the way humans represent reality in our "concepts, language and discourse."33

As philosopher Richard Rorty put it, we never encounter reality "except under a chosen construction," we are denied the luxury or pretense of claiming naïve, immediate access to the world. We can never get outside our knowledge to check its accuracy against "objective" reality.34 Our access is always mediated by our own linguistic and conceptual constructions.

This is reminiscent of the philosophy of deconstruction as propounded by French philosopher Jacques Derrida, who contests the realism of the dominant Western intellectual tradition i.e., a "metaphysics of presence."35 In this tradition, what is assumed to be present in our conceptual systems of truth is seen as a real given which exists prior to language and thought and which we have adequately grasped by our language and thought. That is, the Western intellectual tradition, and especially Western modernity, claims to reflect and represent reality so accurately that it simply mirrors the way things really are. It is this mimetic (i.e. imitative) theory of truth, with its assumption of a substantial convergence between reality and our description of reality, that Derrida and other deconstructionists attack. It is a central deconstructionist theme that we can never get to a pre-linguistic or pre-conceptual "reality." Instead, deconstructionism insistently attempts to shows that what is claimed to be present is really absent and that the given is itself a construction of human discourse.

Such theories have been buttressed by the understanding of different cultures through developments in anthropology. Clifford Geertz, a symbolic anthropologist, gives

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34 Ibid.

prime attention to the role of "symbols" in society. Symbols guide action. Culture, according to Geertz, is "a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life." The function of culture is to impose meaning on the world and make it understandable. Such formulations, concerning the role of symbols and myths, when transplanted to the field of political science, lend authority to constructs such as civil religion.

Civil religion is an indicator of the influence of attitudes in politics and is a theoretical adumbration of the dominant concepts in a society's intellectual formulations. This study will, in the forthcoming section, review the Charles Liebman-Eliezer Don Yehiya thesis which states that Israel has had essentially two dominant elements in its civil religion since the polity's inception. The scholars demonstrate that labor Zionism and traditional Judaism have struggled for supremacy over determining the symbols and myths by which Israelis live. Liebman and Don-Yehiya state that the dominance of labor Zionism has given way to a greater role for traditional Judaism in the popular consciousness of the Israelis which has been effected through the pedagogy of the state.

If political culture as defined by Almond and Powell is "the pattern of . . . attitudes and orientations towards politics among the members of a political system," then for Liebman and Don-Yehiya, civil religion is that which is most holy and sacred in the political culture. Civil religion has assumed importance to explain the role of nationalism and the accession of the nation-state to the position of pervasive dominance in the life of individuals in modern societies. Exegetically, civil religion has to do with that which binds the collective for the word 'religion' originates from the Latin word *religare* which means to bind. As the Enlightenment has barred traditional religion from the public realm culminating in the "separation of religion and state," the nation-state has assumed the role

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36 Myron Aronoff while examining the sources of Israeli political culture by focusing on the analysis of selected symbols, myths and rituals of the emerging state acknowledges the analysis of four major versions of the Zionist vision, particularly as they relative to traditional religion, done by Charles Liebman and Eliezer Don-Yehiya and hails their work as the "foundation for all future work done on the subject." See, Myron Aronoff "The Origins of Israeli Political Culture," in Larry Diamond and Ehud Sprinzak eds., *Israeli Democracy Under Stress* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1993) pp. 47-64.
of traditional institutions. It has sought to create the kind of symbol system which expects the kind of devotion that traditional religion has able been to command.

Indeed, at the same time that religion in the West was gradually disengaging from politics owing to its declining authority, secular nationalism was becoming more religious clothed in romantic and xenophobic imagery that would have startled its forebearers. For instance, The French Revolution "took on the trappings church religion in the priestly power meted out to its demagogic leaders and in the slavish devotion to what it called the temple of reason."37 According to Alexis de Tocqueville, the French Revolution "assumed many of the aspects of a religious revolution."38 The American Revolution also had a religious side: many of its leaders had been influenced by eighteenth century deism, a religion of science and natural law that was "devoted to exposing (Church) religion to the light of knowledge."39 "As in France, American nationalism developed its own religious characteristics, blending the ideals of secular nationalism and the symbols of Christianity into a civil religion.40

There is a measure of consensus on the assumption that secular nationalism has taken the place of religion which expects a similar intensity of faith, a devotion to ritual, the deference to representatives, and a disposition towards martyrdom etc. It has been likened to a doctrine of destiny with the characteristics of a faith. Ninian Smart states that the claims of the secular state possess characteristics that make it akin to a certain kind of religion.41 Employing six criteria to define the term, he concludes that secular nationalism meets all the measure on all counts: it includes doctrine, myth, ethics, ritual, experience, and social organization.


40 Juergensmeyer, n. 37, p. 28.

Smart reckons that patriotism has the dimension of religion: having a mythic or narrative dimension, an ethical, a ritual, an experiential, an organizational and a material dimension. History as taught in high school textbooks sums up much of the myth of the nation... the national ethos is presented through civics and in the inculcation of the values of the good citizen. The experiential dimension is expressed through the flag, the national anthem, state ceremonies, television presentations on solemn occasions, tours of national movements etc. The organizational dimension is woven into the development of ritual. The national dimension is found in the movements, the land itself.

Juergensmeyer contends that both traditional faith and the secular state serve the ethical function of providing an overarching framework of moral order, a framework that commands ultimate loyalty from those who subscribe to it. Benedict Anderson observes that the rise of secular nationalism has been an extension of "the large cultural systems that preceded it, out of which —as well against which —it came into being." For that reason, secular nationalism can be said to be a kind of cultural nationalism. In the Israeli situation, traditional Judaism is the cultural system which preceded the Enlightenment and therefore Zionism, as we have seen in Chapter One is laden with religious motifs.

Civil Religion, hereon CR, by implication of Anderson's analysis bears a definite relation to traditional religion. Civil religion is corpus of ritual, myth and symbol around which the state legitimates itself. It "embodies characteristics of traditional religion—it projects a meaning system, expressed with symbols—but at its core stands a corporate entity rather than a transcendent power, even if it also refers to a transcendent reality or a supernatural power."

Civil religion unlike some traditional religions deals primarily with the collective. Judaism is a significant exception insofar as its religious narratives claim its origin to a communal covenant with God on Mount Sinai and as such the Bible and Talmudic literature is characterized by its preoccupation with the spiritual status of the

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44 Liebman and Don-Yehiya, n. 31, p. 4.
collective as opposed to an emphasis on individual piety that is largely a result of Enlightenment's influence.\(^4\)

Hence, Judaism has prepossessing characteristics of a civil religion. It is this civil religious characteristic of Judaism which renders the relationship of religious Jews to Israel's civil religion problematic occasionally. However, Judaism has since the First Century shifted the focus from the collective to the individual by emphasizing the idea that God is an active force in the universe, rewarding virtue and punishing evil, bearing within it the seeds of privatization of religion. This is particularly so in the absence of political sovereignty.

This has since changed with the creation of the state of Israel wherein traditional religion can revive dormant elements in its tradition that have a definite interest in temporal matters as dictated by divine law. It is in the nature of civil religion that it stands in competition with traditional religion, since the latter, having God as its focus, demands the total obedience of the individual, thereby having a domain larger than that of the civil religion which has to do with the objectives of the collectivity alone. "Civil religion can only order the environment and shape experiences for those whose personal identities are merged with their common, communal identity."

The restrictive compass of civil religion, as mentioned before, is attributed to the fact of it being a product of modern-day secular nationalism. In that light, it can be assumed that civil religion attempts to either borrow or transcend the values of traditional religion for political purposes. In case of Israel, civil religion can scarcely transcend traditional religion if the fractious nature of Jewish society throughout history is anything to go by. In other words, the transfer of ultimate authority from God to society means that civil religion can neither provide the individual with the ultimate meaning nor evoke from him the intensity of commitment which traditional region can.

The objective of civil religion is, therefore, merely the sanctification of the state's goals as perceived by the ruling regime. Liebman and Don-Yehiya focus their study of on

\(^4\) One must remember that in the Exodus narrative the Ten Commandments have an individual tenor but were addressed to the entire Israelite community that had gathered at Mount Sinai. See chapter 19 and 20 of the Book of Exodus, *The Holy Bible* [including the Old & New Testaments], (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1984) [New International Version].
what they believe to be the three main expressions and aims of civil religion. (1) integration [uniting the society by involving its members in a set of common ceremonies and myths, which are themselves integrative and in turn express a sense of common destiny on the part of the participants]; (2) legitimation [transmitting the sense of an inherent justness or rightness in the nature of the social order and in giving the goals pursued by the society]; (3) mobilization [galvanizing the efforts and energies of society's members on behalf of socially approved tasks and responsibilities].

To begin with, one can recall reflections of a writer in the 1960s on the metaphysical stance of the average Israeli as a clue to the society's perception of religion as a factor in its construction of its identity.

Just as there is no homogenous religious community, in the same way it is impossible to generalize about a 'secular community'. There is no such comprehensive and distinct body within Israeli society. Not only is there is no organized secular community, but there is also no community of this kind that is homogenous from a sociological point of view. With a regard to believers, there is, in my view, a decisive majority of believers in Israeli society. In the Oriental communities, for example, even that section which is completely unobservant of practical commandments, still believes and has a connection with tradition. Even in the European middle-class strata, both old and young, one can find very many who keep up some kind of tradition, either as an inheritance from the parental home or for the sake of their small children. But even if we speak of avowedly secular circles, then even those who are counted as enemies - enemies and not just opponents - there, too, there are two social layers; one layer consists of men with a 'pure' anti-religious 'consciousness', with a complex of zeal for unbelief and uprooting -these are the old people who came from small乡镇ships in Poland and Russia at the beginning of the century and have not yet forgotten the revolutionary anti-religious spirit of that period which taught that religion and progress and socialism were anti-thetical and that religion is opium. They are few in number but one finds them in Mapai, Unity of Labor, Hashomer Hatzair, and also in bourgeois circles, and it is they who have a hold on all branches of life in the State - social, cultural, and economic. The other layer among the anti-religious has no complex of custom, since their parents, of the second or third wave of immigration, had come from the above-mentioned townships and brought them up to hate and despise 'exilism', of which religion is apparently a distinguishing sign; and, moreover, their hatred was nourished - and a perverted image of Torah and tradition which they inherited from their inherited 'enlightened' parents. Meanwhile, a third generation of European and non-European youth has grown up, who are entirely empty, with neither a complex nor an 'inheritance'. Their characteristics are estrangement and ignorance and all that derives from them. Yet,

46 Liebman and Don-Yehiya, n. 31, p. 5.

47 The term tradition has been much rather loosely to conjure up any clarity. It has been used to indicate the "warmth attainable from personal observance of a convenient selection of ancestral rites despite indifference to their theology." Emile Marmorstein, Heaven at Bay, The Jewish Kulturkampf in the Holy Land, (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. vii.
particularly among them, as among many of their parents, there is a readiness to listen to a
new message that warms the heart, in order to quench the thirst that comes from vacuity
and emptiness - just as there is a sober awakening among many of their educators who
seek a way of imparting 'Jewish consciousness' and feel that they can no longer stop half-
way. 48

As the writer acknowledges, there was a growing interest in religious tradition but the
majority were ostensibly secular. The ambivalence towards religion is demonstrated in the
statistical studies on Israeli religiosity. A survey based on a sample of 1,530 adults living in
urban areas in the 1980s, provided data both on the observance of a wide range of specific
practices and on belief in a number of religious doctrines. 49 It was found that there was no
clear cut dichotomy between religious and non-religious Jews in Israel, but a continuum of
religiosity. The survey found complete observance among 14.3 percent of the population,
19.5 percent were largely observant, 41.3 percent observed some religious ritual while 24.5
percent were completely non-observant.

Certain practices were observed by a small minority, such as putting on tefillin
(phylacteries) everyday by men (14%), and going regularly to the mikveh (ritual bath) by
women (14%). About half the population observed dietary laws such as separation of milk
and meat and utensils (44%) and lighting candles with a blessing on the Sabbath (53%).
Some practices were observed by the majority, such as lighting Hanukkah candles (88%) and
participating in the Seder night Passover meal (99%). 50

The percentage of respondents who acknowledged belief in central religious
doctrines demonstrate that observance of the most "popular" mitzvoth is by no means
dependent on religious belief. The distribution of respondents with respect to beliefs was
much narrower than the distribution of religious practice. The most widespread belief was
belief in God, but even here a substantial minority were disbelievers: 64 percent said that
they believed in God, 56 percent believed that God gave the Torah to Moses on Mount


49 Yehuda Ben-Meir and Peri Kedem, "Index of religiosity of the Jewish population of Israel" [Hebrew], 1979,
Sharot provides a review of the finding of three opinion polls on Israeli religiosity.

50 ibid., p. 22.
Sinai, 36 percent believe in the coming of the Messiah, and 29 percent believed that the spirit continues after death. Fifty-seven percent believe in the chosenness of the Jewish people; 11 percent cover their heads at all times, 14 percent lay phylacteries and 22 percent do not drive on Saturdays. Interestingly 74 percent claim to fast on the Day of Atonement, 88 percent light Hanukkah candles, 99 percent take part in the Passover meal while merely 64 percent believe in the existence of God. It would appear that many Israelis observe at least a number of practices, not because of a belief in their divine origins or obligation, but because they are conforming to common practices that express a Jewish-Israeli identity.

Zionism's use of religious symbols in its ideological justifications bear witness to the role of religion in the evolution of its civil religion as many Israelis acknowledge that the primary cultural resource that is able to evoke loyalty and awe is the passage of Israeli history as described in the Bible. As a political endeavor Zionism sought to harness Judaism's emotional appeal by providing ample opportunity for spokesman of religious Zionism to participate in its activity and thus making their rabbinical formulations a part of the legitimate Zionist discourse. Religion also gained institutional cover from the mandatory regime as noted in the previous chapter. The revival of Hebrew culture with its stress on the Hebrew language, the development of Jewish studies in Israeli universities continuously highlighted religion as a cultural frame of reference.

To determine the existence and measure the intensity of the prevailing civil religion, Liebman and Don-Yehiya conducted a survey among 2,000 Israeli Jews who represented a random sample of the population aged eighteen and above. The results showed that the underlying assumption of Israel's civil religion is its Jewishness. Among Israeli Jews, the terms Israeli and Jew are synonymous. Ninety-three percent of the Jewish population believes that Israel ought to be a Jewish state. To a vast majority of them, it means a state which is predominantly Jewish (83%), which lives in accordance with the values of Judaism (64%) and whose public image is in accord with the Jewish tradition (62%).


52 ibid.
Seventy seven percent feel that there ought to be some relationship between religion and state in Israel. In other words, Jewishness contains religious overtones for the vast majority of Israeli Jews, and they seek a reflection of this content in the conduct of the state. Being Jewish is the ascriptive characteristic most Israelis share. Virtually every Israeli Jew celebrates some aspect of the religious tradition. Therefore, it is only natural that symbols were officially systematized to reinforce the link between the Jewish tradition and what most Jews believe Israel ought to be. This is the common core of the varieties of Israeli civil religion in the different periods we will discuss.

The role of civil religion is somewhat different in societies from whose reality the notion has been gleaned. In the United States and many countries of Western Europe the majority of the population and its political elite no longer associate religious affiliation with national identity. In these lands religious affirmation tends to be personal and is divorced from national exclusivity. However, as regards Judaism and Islam in the Middle East, religion "even more language dictates national identification." The historian Bernard Lewis, writing about the persuasiveness of Arab nationalism, stresses the unifying metaphor of Islam. Lewis notes that as Arab regimes draw closer to the masses, "even if their verbiage is left-wing and ideological, they become more Islamic," since Islam is the "most effective form of consensus in Muslim countries." It is important to note that Islam evokes a far more pervasive sense of identity than Western Christianity does from most of its adherents. "It ought not to surprise us, therefore, that Jews who label themselves as atheists or totally non-religious continue to call themselves Jews insist that Israel must be a Jewish state." But why is there a need to create a civil religion when traditional religion exists? The motivation to create a civil religion when a traditional religion is already a justifiable purveyor of tradition are many. The idea of Israel as a Jewish state must create a civil religion since God is the sole source of authority and focus of commitment in traditional Judaism, and not the state, not the collectivity and thus is a potential competitor for those


54 Liebman and Don-Yehiya, n. 31, p. 14. The literature concerned with the debate over the essence of Judaism - whether it is a religion, a people, a nation, an ethnic group, a race a civilization is a voluminous one. See David Vital, The Origins of Zionism (London: Oxford University Press, 1975); and Jacob Katz ed., The Role of Religion in Modern Jewish History (Cambridge: Association for Jewish Studies, 1975).
who are not religiously observant. The potential for conflict here threatens the stability of the nation-state unless state leaders are to assume the authority to interpret the religious tradition i.e. unless Israel is to become a theocracy. Rendering traditional Judaism into the civil religion of the state would be to create two religions, since Judaism in its civil transformation could not serve the needs of Diaspora Jews. "Traditional Judaism's overall symbol system is attractive to, but does not command obedience from a majority of Jews. Traditional Judaism expresses itself primarily through a system of law which the vast majority of Israeli Jews do not feel obligated to observe and a series of myths which many, if not most, find credible. Hence traditional Judaism alone cannot serve to integrate, legitimate, and mobilize contemporary Israeli society, not even the Jewish majority."55

Realizing the import of this metaphysical view of the majority of Israelis, the intellectual regime has sought to reconcile Judaism and Israeliness with the manipulation of religious symbols for the purpose of the state.

Liebman and Don-Yehiya state that a civil religion establishes itself by either confronting and rejecting traditional symbols; dissolving traditional symbols, meaning that the civil religion chooses to selectively affirm or ignore certain symbols, and finally a strategy of reinterpretation, wherein a traditional symbol manages to penetrate and imposes its own values while interpreting the symbol, depending on the dominant values in society. Liebman and Don-Yehiya delineate the methods of the main civil religions that have attempted to entrench themselves in the state of Israel, beginning with Zionist-socialism.

Political theorists believe that the values and sets of values associated with the political myths of a society constitute a core element of its political culture. However for these values to be assimilated, the political system requires a common political language and that, according to Itzhak Galnoor, has been provided by Judaism as the subsequent analysis of some civil religions show. Galnoor writes that

in order to move from cultural communication and social interactions to organized collective efforts i.e. to politics, a cluster of people must agree on certain meanings, such as symbols of power. The basis for the functioning of a political system is the emergence of

55 Liebman and Don-Yehiya, n. 31, p. 16.
links among the various parts of the society. Those links are rooted in culture and society, but in order to become the basis for achieving collective goals, they must also acquire political meanings.  

Civil religion of Labor Zionism  

The secular Zionist socialists were keen to impart their version of the civil religion considering the diversity of belief systems that confronted them in the form of immigrants from all over the world. Zionist-socialism, the dominant civil religion of the Yishuv, adopted a dissolution and reinterpretation approach i.e. selecting secularist-nationalist elements from within the tradition and dissociating them from their historical and religious context.

Enlightenment had already set the trend within Jewry toward a modification of traditional beliefs in reconciling Judaic values with those of modernity. Since they lacked a territorial base for their cultural assertion, such reconciling attempts were shorn of nationalistic features. Zionism, which attempted to overturn the metaphysical and political basis of Jewish life, transformed pietiest, inward looking facets of Judaism to create a "new Jew" who had renounced the passivity of the Exile—which the Orthodox believed was divinely ordained.

To preempt the waiting for divine redemption, both the nationalist and reformers secularized the Jewish messianic conception making it attuned to natural means rather than supernatural intervention. "The labor movement was divided into two wings —left and right, which split over loyalty to the values and symbols of socialism and over attitudes toward traditional Judaism. The religious camp was divided into the Zionist and the non-Zionist camp, both of whom sought legitimacy from the symbols of traditional Judaism and their interpretation of the religious tradition."  

The radical secularism of the labor movement led it to absorb the symbols and values of the tradition selectively and to reformulate the tradition in its own spirit. A manifesto to Jewish youth composed by Nachman Syrkin (1868-1924), leader and first ideologist of Zionist-socialism stated that: "Zionist Socialism sees, in the applied Jewish

57 Liebman and Don-Yehiya, n. 31, p. 28.
religion, which is not a religion but a tragedy, the major impediment confronting the Jewish nation on the road to culture, science and freedom." The much espoused notion of the halutz (pioneer) which the labor emphasized to garner support for settling efforts in the inhospitable land was borrowed originated from the Bible. (Numbers 32:20) The Halutzim led the Israelite camp in the name of God but the socialist pioneers did not depend on God but also undertook a purely national mission.

The powerful religious dimension in the conception of labor was acknowledged in the very term religion of labor which was associated with A.D. Gordon (1856-1922). Using religious language Gordon attached a religious and mystical value to the Land of Israel and demanded that people must choose between God and paganism. The choice was either in adopting productive labor, working with one's hands or living a parasitic life which is exilic even in the land of Israel.

A recurrent metaphor in the Zionist-socialist literature was the plant that returns to the soil of the homeland, strikes roots and blossoms anew. Others were the son returning to his mother and lovers reuniting after long separation. Interestingly, many of the metaphors can be found in biblical proverbs and rabbinical homilies. But in the traditional sources the relationship between the Jews and their land derived its sanctity from God, or was actualized because of God. The reverence Zionist-socialism manifested toward the land, nature and physical communion between man and nature is far more evocative of paganism than of Judaism.

To rationalize the severe conditions on the land, asceticism too was prevalent. Yonina Talmon-Gerber noted that working for the advancement of the kibbutz became in part, "a secular worship of God - a sort of holy work - the devotion to work through frugality became a ritualistic and symbolic expression of loyalty to values." The values of Zionist-socialism were: halutzut; labor; redeeming the land; asceticism and equality; military heroism; nationalism and class consciousness; exile and redemption and linguistic secularization. Zionist socialism in invoking these values borrowed from traditional Judaism and sought to dissolve or transvalue them.

58 ibid., p. 36.
59 ibid., p. 33.

One of Zionist-socialism's significant ventures to transform Judaism's value was in confronting the value of Exile and Redemption which had embedded itself in Jewish religious consciousness which the secular Zionists attempted to dislodge. The exilic mentality' displayed in passive acceptance of the afflictions of the Diaspora, which, in the opinion of the Zionist socialists, was characterized by cowardice, dependency, excessive spirituality, non-productive labor, flawed social relationships, separation from nature, art, lack of pride etc. The anti-exilic attitude, or the negation of the Diaspora was expressed through the use of traditional symbols. The secular Zionist accomplished this by emphasizing instead Jewish vitality and recalling the litany of conquests associated with the Davidic kingdoms mentioned in the Bible and the Temple period, rather than the rabbinical tradition which had a more resigned attitude toward history. Redemption, meaning attainment of both individual and national freedom by individual and collective effort of the Jewish people soon, in juxtaposition to exilic Judaism that tended to look forward to God's manifest intervention in history through the arrival of the messiah.

Zionist-socialism consciously excised God from its symbol system. Nation and Land were frequently substituted for God, but sometimes the working class, even humanity became the source of values and obligations, the focus of identity and loyalty, the objects of ritual and ceremony. Typical in this regard is the transformation of biblical verses deeply embedded in folk usage. For example, the traditional phrase, 'who can retell the glories of God' was transformed into the opening phrase of one of the most popular of all Hanukkah songs: 'Who can retell the glories of Israel.' Even the most sacred of all passages Shema Israel—which is the Jewish equivalent of the affirmation of the Christian Nicene Creed recited from the Hebrew Bible, "Hear O Israel, The Lord our God, the Lord is One" — was transformed in one kibbutz haggadah: "Hear O Israel, Israel is our destiny, Israel is one."

As mentioned elsewhere, part of the success for the relatively calm absorption process of the immigrants lay in the revival of the Hebrew language. Ben-Gurion was aware that the appeal of the ancient language would override the objections of the secularists, and overcome any protest over its imposition in the Yishuv. Accompanying this

61 Liebman and Don-Yehiya, n. 31, p. 38.
was a process of linguistic secularization designed to impart ideological substance and also
to deny the rabbis the exclusive hold of traditional symbols which needed to be used for
nation-building. The socialists took care to transform the use of idioms, phrases derived
from traditional Judaism but dissociate from its contexts within which those arose.

Liebman and Don-Yehiya write that as "adherents of civil religion transform sacred
idioms and phrases, they are sacralizing the values and concepts they seek to express with
these traditional symbols . . . [causing] a process of sacralization as well as secularization . . . "
This is evident in the constant use Zionist-socialism made of such traditional religious terms
as kedusha (holiness), mitzvah (commandment), Torah (written and oral religious law), brit
(covenant), and korban (sacrifice).62

In traditional religious language, Torah may refer to the entire Bible, the written
and oral law. For the secular labor Zionists, Torah meant the ideology of Zionist-socialism.
In a travesty of a Mishnaic tracts, Zalman Shazar, Israel's third President wrote: "Syrkin
received the Torah from Hess (Moses Hess, 1812-1875, a German socialist, one of the
precursors of Zionism), and passed it on to Berl Katznelson, (1887-1944, the leading socialist
ideologue for the period), and Katznelson created with it the Great Assembly of the men of
the second Aliya." Zionist socialism talked about the new covenant with the land and
nature to replace the old covenant with God of Israel. "Now we have arisen to throw off the
yoke of exile and to make for ourselves a new land and a new sky with a strong hand and
faithful arm . . . and to renew our covenant with this land and with the plants that grow."

The Zionist-socialists made use not only of mitzvah, but also of the 613 mitzvoth
that are delineate for the religious man to observe.63 For example: "There is a limit to
compromise. The Histadrut has 613 commandments that it observes."64

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62 ibid.

63 Mitzvah (Hebrew: "commandment"), plural mitzvoth, any commandment, ordinance, law, or statute
contained in the Torah (first five books of the Bible) and, for that reason, to be observed by all practicing
Jews. The Talmud mentions 613 such mitzvoth, 248 mandatory and 365 prohibitive. Many more (some
virtually equated with divine law) have been added throughout the ages on the authority of outstanding
rabbinical leaders, such as reciting of psalms at prescribed times, reading the Book of Esther on Purim,
washing the hands before meals, and lighting candles on certain festivals. Though nonobservance of a
mitzvah constitutes a transgression, it is understood that not all mitzvoth are of equal importance;
circumcision, for instance, is a direct response to a divine command, while the wearing of a skullcap
(yarmulke) in public is not. In a broader context, Jews consider all good deeds as the fulfillment of mitzvoth,
for such actions express God's will.
Dealing with traditional myths

Like other civil religions, Zionist socialism transformed and created myths of its own.

The myth is a story that both expresses and reinforces beliefs and values about the relevant past, and hence about one's self and the present; it explains and gives meaning to reality; it acts as a guideline to the individual and the group; and it may be an agent for social catharsis, enabling societal dilemmas and ambivalences to be expressed in symbolic form. It serves to legitimate the social order and contributes to social integration and mobilization.65

The biblical story of the Exodus, featuring an omnipotent God who intervenes in history on behalf of the helpless Hebrews, is transvalued into a kibbutz story wherein a people took fate into their own hands, throwing off the yoke of their oppressors, and about a leader, Moses, who transformed a horde of slaves into a force into a free and united people. Also the Maccabean revolt in the second century BCE (Before the Common Era) which is commemorated on the holiday of Hanukkah.66 The religious tradition emphasizes the miracle of the flask of oil as the central motif of Hanukkah, generally de-emphasizing the heroic deeds of the Maccabees. Convention viewed the Maccabees not as fighters for religious freedom but as patriots rebelling against national subjugation. The new theme of Hanukkah was self-redemption; the active struggle for national liberation without reliance on outside powers, natural and super-natural. The new pioneers, halutzim, were presented as the new Maccabees and significantly those who opposed them were labeled Hellenists. This is traditionally the term used by religious authorities, ancient and modern, those guilty of heresy. The Zionist mythology tells a story of struggle for national freedom and political sovereignty won by the military prowess and courage of the Maccabees.

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64 Liebman and Don-Yehiya, n. 31, p. 39.

65 ibid., p. 9.

66 Maccabees, also spelled Machabees (fl. 2nd century BCE, Palestine), were a priestly family of Jews who organized a successful rebellion against the Seleucid ruler Antiochus IV and reconsecrated the defiled Temple of Jerusalem. See Eliezer Don-Yehiya, “Hanukkah and the Myth of the Maccabees in Ideology and in Society,” in Shlomo Deshen, Charles S. Liebman, Moshe Shokeid (eds.), n. 49, pp. 305-321.
The Masada Myth is a very strongly used myth even though it is proscribed in the religious tradition. Masada, a mountain fortress, was the last Jewish stronghold to fall to the Romans in 70 CE and is hallowed in Zionist thought because the Jewish zealots preferred mass suicide to surrender. The early socialist pioneers transformed it into a sacred story symbolizing commendable martial valor. Today troops of the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) swear by the oath, "Masada will not fall again." This is another example of the efforts of secularists to create myths which in the final analysis disavowed pietiest values. Masada complex, as it is sometimes called, denotes that by an act of will, Jews can cease to be the objects of history and become its subjects.

The central political myth of Zionist-socialism was the story of the death of Yosef Trumpledor who died fighting the Arabs in a settlement with the attributed words: "It is good to die for our country." Zionist-socialism highlighted this event to be a symbol of the heroism and valor of the pioneers. The sacrifice of Trumpledor and his followers established a new basis for the sanctification of the land and the right of the Jewish people to that land. Ben-Gurion was to declare that "for this generation" —those to whom he referred as "the comrades of Trumpledor" —"this land is more than for the tens of generations of Jews who believed in its historical and religious sanctity; for it has been sanctified by our sweat, our work, and our blood."

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67 Masada, ancient mountain-top fortress in southeast Israel off the Dead Sea, is the site of the Jews' last stand against the Romans in AD 70. Following the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple (AD 70), the Masada garrison led by Jewish Zealots - the last remnant of Jewish rule in Palestine - refused to surrender to the Romans. It took the Roman army of almost 15,000, fighting a defending force of less than 1,000, including women and children, survived, almost two years to subdue the fortress. The besiegers built a sloping ramp to attack the stronghold, which fell only after the Romans fired the defenders' wooden walls. The Zealots, however, preferred death to enslavement, and the Romans found that the Zealots had taken their own lives (April 15, AD 73). Only seven women and children. A general survey of the ruins was made by Israeli archaeologists in 1955-56, and the entire mountain-top was excavated by Yigael Yadin in 1963-65. The descriptions of the Roman-Jewish historian Josephus, until then the only detailed source of Masada's history, were found to be extremely accurate; the palaces, storehouses, defense works, and Roman camps and siege works were all revealed and cleared. A synagogue and ritual bath discovered there are the earliest yet found in Palestine. Among the most interesting discoveries is a group of potsherds inscribed with Hebrew personal names. These may be lots cast by the last defenders to determine who should die first. In the 20th century Masada has become a symbol of Jewish national heroism, and the difficult ascent is regularly performed by Israeli youth groups.

68 Liebman and Don-Yehiya, n. 31, pp. 40-41.

69 ibid., pp. 43-44.
The most successful myths are those associated with specific places around which ceremonials and rituals can be organized. More importantly, the leaders of labor Zionism recognized the importance of traditional ceremonies and holidays. According to Berl Katznelson "the Jewish year is full of days whose depth of meaning is nowhere surpassed. Is it in the interest of the Jewish labor movement to squander the forces latent in them." Traditional symbols and ceremonies were transvalued to conform with the values of Zionist-socialism and transformed by changes in the ritual. We have already mentioned the transformation of the Passover. Shavuot, the festival of weeks, which commemorates the time of the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai has been re-interpreted to suit the new civil religion. Traditional prayers and rituals give little emphasis to the agricultural origins of the holiday implied in the verse of the Bible, "thou shalt observe the feast of weeks, of the first fruits of the wheat harvest." In Zionist-socialism, Shavuot was represented as holiday of nature and agriculture. The new rituals also expressed the nationalist motif in the ceremonial redemption of the land. The first fruits of the agricultural produce were dedicated to the Jewish National Fund instead of being presented to the Temple. They were brought in a festive procession by representatives of the different agricultural sectors of the settlement much like those mentioned in the biblical narrative. These ceremonies were also introduced into schools, where the children, when presenting the bikkurim, (the produce) to the Jewish National Fund (JNF) representative said: "We have brought of the first fruits of the land as an offering for the redemption of Israel" (instead of as a holy offering).

The day of Tisha B'Av, a religious occasion, which commemorates the destruction of the Temple presented a problem to the secularists. Since rituals on the Western Wall, the remnant of the ancient Jewish Temple, ran counter to Zionist exaltation of the human will while the commemoration of Tisha B'Av symbolized religious passivity. Hence, the secular socialists used the occasion to reiterate the futility of the religious response to the Jewish condition. Liebman and Don-Yehiya cite a presentation of a play to children who had survived the Holocaust. One group in the play portrayed Jews mourning the destruction of the temple, while a second group portrayed Halutzim who declared, "the House of Israel will be rebuilt with bricks, not with prayers and mourning."70

70 On the transvaluation of religious symbols and festivals see ibid., pp. 47-54.
The Zionist-socialists, soon after the establishment of the state, inaugurated several new days of remembrance and new holidays. The most important and sometimes controversial holiday devised was the labor holiday of May Day. Ber Borochov, one of the first Zionist theoreticians to break away from Russian socialism in favor of Zionism, argued that May Day and its signification of human labor proved that man could free himself from his dependence on divine powers and manage to endow his life with meaning and content. He felt that the liberation from religion must be completed not only in the daily life of Jews but also

in the realm of pure science, ... in our great longings and ideals, ... In abolishing religious belief ... we did not strip man of his lighter feelings ... and we did not impoverish the meaning of beauty ... We found within ourselves enough inspiration to create new celebrations, to form new ideals.\(^\text{71}\)

Proletarian holidays express the change that has occurred in man's relation to the divine, according to Borochov, for they undermine the distinction "between heavenly and mundane, between sacred and secular" on which traditional holidays are based. Borochov implied that socialism provides an alternative to traditional religion. Socialism, for him, was a total worldview that provides for the most profound gropings and quests of man's spirit ... and the foremost advantage and strength of socialism lies in the fact that it puts an end to all religious quests. For through human, worldly means, it fulfills all those spiritual needs whose fulfillment religious faith sought to find in God.\(^\text{72}\)

Borochov thereby claimed that only socialism can successfully abolish religion. May Day celebrations, with its internationalist flavor of parades, slogans, proclamations, the singing of the International made nationalists and religious camps uncomfortable. They felt that the other holidays led to national integration of sectors, May Day served to integrate the Zionist-socialist sub-community alone. The failure of May Day to provide the degree of integration expected provides a glimpse of the inherent vacuity of symbols grafted from outside of Jewish tradition. It has been argued that the very motivation by the secularists to provide a comprehensive symbol system is itself a product of a religious mindset that is

\(^{71}\text{Ber Borochov, }\textit{Writings} (\text{in Hebrew}) \text{ quoted in Liebman and Don-Yehiya, ibid., p. 56.}\)

\(^{72}\text{ibid.}\)
soaked with a messianic streak. Even the Jacob Katz states that 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, "centered upon the contention that the goal of could only be achieved in the Jewish homeland - a condition lacking logical consistency and hence in the final analysis messianic."73

Civil Religion of Revisionism

The fact that revisionists of the Vladimir Jabotinsky variety and labor Zionism fought over the interpretation of the symbols is a measure of the importance of symbols for rearing differing metaphysical postures of Jews, but also an indicator of ideological competition in the Yishuv. It also underlines the reckoning that Zionism was an epistemic breakthrough in relation to the Jewish condition. Zionism served as the dominant paradigm for all Israeli thought. The nature and aims of the Zionist movement is what the contention was mainly over both in the pre-state and thereafter. The revisionists used religious imagery as much as the labor Zionists did. Since their political method was subordinated to the expansion of territory and extolled martial values, their use of religious imagery was devoted to martial themes in the religious tradition. This was to be a pivotal rhetorical precursor for religious nationalism in the 1970s and 1980s. The revisionists also used the term "God" in many ways, so as to eventually shorn it of any religious significance, thus contributing to the trivialization of the most sacred notion of Judaism.

Along with labor, they stressed the importance of Jewish statehood, differed with the former on the importance of agricultural labor, which was a means to a larger Zionist fulfillment. Militarism was one of revisionism's lasting legacy, sustained no doubt by the extenuating circumstances that Israel lived alongside the acquiescence of labor movement. The revelations of the Holocaust only clinched this manifest collective desire. Militarism was expressed in Jabotinsky's call to Jewish youth

\[\text{to learn a new alphabet of military training ... The alphabet is simple ... Our youth should learn to fight ... The recognition that a people in our situation must know the new}\]

alphabet, the psychology of fighting, the longing to fight - all these are important... This is a healthy instinct of a people in a situation such as ours... What is better: to conquer the land with arms and with sacrifice or is it better that the Englishman should do the sordid work... and then allow us, tranquil and clear, to come and settle on it.74

One of revisionism leaders Abba Ahimeir (1898-1962) found Judaism as an ideal preparing ground for the values he sought in followers, that of discipline and obedience to the leader. "Judaism did not stand for freedom of speech but for discipline," he reckoned.

In an atheistic society, people demand "freedom." A religious society, that is a society centered around a single (religious) idea, does not require that... which is known as freedom... A healthy, harmonious religious society is not aware of a lack of freedom (so to speak), just as a healthy man is not aware of the air which surrounds him... A truly religious people does not favor unrestricted freedom of speech.75

The goal which unified all warring revisionists groups was the establishment of Jewish political sovereignty over all the Land of Israel, including both the sides of the Jordan river. Paraphrasing the psalmist oath, "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its cunning," Jabotinsky said, "Let my traitorous right hand forget its cunning if I forget the left bank of Jordan."76 The revisionist leader used biblical symbols to a large extent, since they, unlike the labor movement, could not draw up an alternative symbol system. As mentioned elsewhere, they also lacked the organizational breadth to necessitate and create such a symbolic universe. The labor movement, in its quest for the "normalization" of Jewish existence, confined its ideological motifs only as it served its territorial and political aspirations, while revisionists were more interested in a larger attempt to express their national-cultural identity for which they fell back on traditional Judaism.

The Statist Interlude

Aronoff suggests that "Zionism has constituted the dominant paradigm of Israeli political culture since its inception in the early Yishuv. It aims to establish the legitimacy of

74 David Niv, Battles of the Irgun, (in Hebrew), quoted by Liebman and Don-Yehiya, n. 31, p. 63.
75 Abba Ahimeir, Revolutionary Zionism, (in Hebrew), quoted by Liebman and Don-Yehiya, ibid., p. 64.
76 ibid., p. 66.
the contemporary state by creating a credible claim to continuity with the biblical past."\(^7\)

The idea of settlement in Palestine too is a distillation of an intellectual legacy tracing back to biblical history. The developments soon after independence precipitated a return to religious tradition as the locus of Jewish identity. After 1948, Ben-Gurion sought to transcend the particularism of belief systems in Israel, which he believed would impinge on the loyalty to the nation-state, by announcing a policy of *mamlakhtiyyut*\(^8\) or statism whereby party's interests, symbols, would now be absorbed into the state. This tendency is indeed indicative of the theory and practice of socialism at the time that exalted the role of the state and implicitly created structure where the dominant party would be indistinguishable from the state.

Similarities have been identified between statism and what David Apter terms the *political religions of new states*. Among them are: representation of the state as a sacred value; the tendency of the state to provide direction in a variety of social and cultural realms; the demand for absolute loyalty from the citizenry to the state and its institutions; the mobilizations of the citizens on behalf of state objectives; the identification of the state interests as superior to individual or subgroup interests, the demand for national unity; the emphasis on values of modernization (including industrialization and economic development); the tendency to charismatic leadership, and the effort to instill meaning and purpose into the lives of individuals by virtue of their identification with the state and its objectives.\(^7\)

To illustrate his intent about the universal bent of statism, Ben-Gurion began by de-emphasizing the moral claims on the recipients of the Histadrut largesse, hitherto the single largest stronghold of the Mapai. Ben-Gurion declared in 1956 at the eighth Histadrut convention that "every service which is required by the citizens as a whole - the state must perform it . . . Everything that was essentially a general state need dealt with by the

\(^7\) Aronoff, n. 36, p. 48.

\(^8\) Statism is the affirmation of centrality of state interests and the centralization of power at the expense of non-governmental institutions.

Histadrut before the establishment of the state... should no longer be carried out by the Histadrut, but must be handed over to the authority of the state." As noted earlier, Israel was really a composite of diverse communities united by the single idea of settlement effected via the agency of political parties. Ben-Gurion realizing the fissiparous tendencies of differing worldviews in Jewish history sought to transcend them with the notion of statism. He tried to effect a dissolution of the partisan character of institutions and integrated the Mapai-controlled education system into a general trend of education, no doubt expecting that the religious schools will follow in return. The religious parties, already peeved at the war of ideologies being waged in the immigrant camps in the early 1950s, spurned the offer of integrating into the statist system. This eventually put paid any hopes of statism shaping the ideological character of the state. State schools and ceremonies followed.

Not only did statism fail to establish its civil religion but the period it was attempted coincided with a popular euphoria concerning the rediscovery of the roots of Jewish people through the welter of archaeological discoveries in the 1950s, the considerable number of Bible competitions, hiking to religious site and so on. Sachar writes that the "national passion bespoke a consensus, shared by all the state's political factions. Orthodox, centrist, and Mapam (Marxist) alike, that the Bible must remain the bedrock of Jewish culture and education." In late 1950, the Ministry of Education added to the secular curriculum, a program of Jewish consciousness which contained a limited content of religious tradition including the blessings, customs, and holidays. Sachar notes that "the

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80 David Ben-Gurion, The Eight Convention of the Histadrut, 18-20 March 1956 (Tel Aviv: Ha'vaad Ha'poel), p. 73. Cf. Raphael Cohen-Almagor, "Cultural Pluralism and the Israeli Nation-Building Ideology," International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies, Vol. 27, (1995), pp. 461-484. The ideological ineffectitude did not impinge on statism capacity to build extensive patronage networks and enlarge the role of the state in society affairs as the largest employer in the land. In 1986 79.3 percent of the population were salaried owing to the government wage policy. Estimates state that the wage policy directly affected 430,000 of the country's 1,125,000 workers in 1981. In other words, a third of the nation's employed people worked in jobs for which the government was either the direct or indirect employer, including the armed forces, teachers, employees of municipalities and local authorities, the Jewish Agency, workers of governmental corporations, Kupat Holim, and civil servants. See Chapter "Political Economy" in Asher Arian, Politics in Israel, The Second Generation (Chatham, NJ: Chatham House Publishers, 1989), pp. 30-53.

introduction of this program reflected a broad if tacit understanding that Judaism had served as an instrument of survival throughout the 1900 years of Jewish exile and might continue to fulfill an identical purpose in the years ahead.\textsuperscript{82}

One must not conclude that the role of religion is over-stated since Israel is a small country with a population of little over 3 million in the sixties, that exists with the self-image of being surrounded by hostile Arabs, and thus was feverishly going about excavating reasons for survival in such conditions. The perceived peril is partly to contribute to the prominence of traditional symbols in national conversation. It is not only in the infusion of religious content in curriculum that the key to the resilience of religious tradition in Israeli consciousness lay. The inclusion of religious symbols into the iconography of the state was another avenue. Symbols "help to maintain the duality of continuity and change: some symbols sustain the sense of evolution, others are introduced to divorce the collective from the past and bring about new notions with which it can identify. In Israel, the reconstruction of Jewish tradition through the use of symbols served to maintain continuity and to define the collective. . . The common denominator of being Jewish was outlined by making the Sabbath the resting day and by making the Jewish holidays the public holidays."\textsuperscript{63} (emphasis added)

The confirmation of the Jewish identity of the Israeli polity required symbols drawn from traditional Jewish culture and capable of expressing and promoting the historic and contemporary links between Judaism, the Jewish people, and the Israeli polity. The emblem of the state is a menorah (the seven-branched candelabrum used in the Temple), the national flag is made of the same colors as the tallit, Jewish prayer shawl, the stars on the flag is the Star of David, a Jewish symbol of renewal and return in the Diaspora, and the national anthem is called Ha-Tikva (I Hope) which contains religious allusions to the Land of Zion, Jerusalem, Jewish fate etc.

The opening statement of the Declaration of Independence attests to such an affinity as well when it points out that the "Jewish people gave to the world the eternal

\textsuperscript{82} ibid., pp. 598-599.

\textsuperscript{63} Cohen-Almagor, n. 80, p. 469.
Archaeological findings from biblical stamps appear in the state emblem, stamps and coins. Commercial trademarks of companies use biblical names and symbols. A booklet published by the government’s Information Division casually picks up history where the Bible left off, and, in an obvious attempt at continuity, refers to the present state of Israel as the third period of Jewish independence, following the two periods of ancient First and Second Temple Commonwealths. This reference represents a concerted drive to inculcate a sense of historical continuity and to impress the validity of holding on to the territory wherein they created a modern state. In the same vein, the term for the parliament, Knesset as well as the number of members (120) is derived from the historical gatherings of the elders during the Second Temple period.

Paul Johnson explains this “recovery” of the past in terms of archaeology and the biblical heritage. He reckons that as the Jewish genius for writing history lapsed from the time of Josephus in the first century to the nineteenth century, the only history to recover was the past which is biblical and therefore “the Zionist state expressed itself not merely in history but above all in archaeology.”

However, just as the secular elite sought to reinterpret the religious tradition while attempting a semblance of linkage to the past, change was just as crucial if it directed toward a disavowal of exilic values. One of the ways to renounce that mentality was to renounce the names accorded by the goyim and rename themselves. Ben-Gurion himself, who changed his name from Gryn, believed that the symbolic step of acquiring a Hebrew name constituted an explicit declaration of dissociation with the humiliating past. So typical Jewish names that had galut (exilic) connotations, which also happened to be accepted by Christian peoples, like Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moshe, Aaron, Sarah, Rivka, Rachel, and

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84 This statement is another illustration of reinterpreting the tradition to suit the needs of the governing elite. The Bible does not state that the Jewish people created the Book of the Books but rather that it is written with the explicit dictation of God at certain times and that it bears divine inspiration throughout. Whether Ben-Gurion, who was the prime author of the document, in penning such a line was appealing to the conscience of Western powers for the recognition of the state or was betraying his understanding of Jewish experience as a manifestation of History is difficult to guess.

85 Galnoor, n. 56, p. 71.

86 ibid., p. 76.

Leah "became rare." In their place were names Diasporan Jews never used or rarely resorted to: Tamar, Amos, Yoram, Nimrod, Uri, Uzi, Amnon. A similar motivation extended itself to renaming places. Thus there was a definite trend in Israeli society wherein the bases for making traditional religion the dominant element in its civil religion was being created starting from the early pioneers. We will hereon observe the role of politics in perpetuating a trend wherein religious concepts, discourses and arguments permeated the national consciousness.

Statism, while vouching for the superiority of the state, did not intend to become authoritarian but left ample scope for the exercise of free expression in Israel, thus amplifying the fact of its own inadequacy. "The state did not, could not, impose a uniform, rigid, carefully controlled system of values on the schools, nor could it establish ideological criteria for the employment of teachers. The result was a value vacuum in some places, a plurality of values in others, depending on the teacher, the principal, the textbook, and so on." 89

The symbol system of statism could not evoke the measure of loyalty as its political elite might have liked. The gap between the image of the ideal state that statism advertised and the conditions of the country bred a lack of enthusiasm. The 1950s was characterized by ideological fatigue and as Israelis "carried on with their lives" the appeal of statism waned. "The desire for economic efficiency and development creates a need to diffuse authority, thus weakening the attachment to transcendent values and symbols." 90

"Prophetic statements lose the power of prophecy and 'young pioneers' are simply trying to get ahead like everyone else . . . If revolt against church religion is iconoclastic, the revolt against political religion tends to be cynical." 91 The immigration of a majority of Sephardis also spelled the end for statism, as the statist elite's attempts to refashion the worldviews of the immigrants provoked opposition and resentment. Statism sought to undermine

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88 Such a trend to renounce the past is colloquially referred to as davkaism, denoting something done to negate the past. See Cohen-Almagor, n. 80, p. 464, 470.

89 Liebman and Don-Yehiya, n. 31, p. 127.

90 Apter, n. 79, pp. 57-104.

91 ibid., p. 96.
traditional beliefs but failed to provide a cohesive symbol system that ordered meaning into the lives of the immigrants. The ideological inadequacies of Statism and the political realities after the June War gave rise to a new civil religion that legitimated and clinched the values that pervaded Israeli society after the conquering of the territories, a facet that we will review later.

**Religious Politics within a Religious Sub-culture**

One must note that the secularists attempt to transvalue and transform religious tradition paradoxically helped maintain the continuity with the past. Archaeology being a national hobby, the prevalence of bible quizzes and the nature of the school curriculum ensured that Israelis were never far removed from recognizing the origin of the transvalued or transformed myths which in propitious conditions could be mobilized for political purposes. Given such a nationwide background of familiarity with religious themes and Judaism's eschatology of history it was evident that the religious authorities and their followers to take advantage of the religious revival after the June War.

Their religious schools proved to be ideal training ground for political activists and functioned as perennial workshops for Jewish nationalism in contrast to the trends in other school trends. While the general trend of schools were apparently initiating their wards into a socialist-humanist outlook, the religious schools were engaged in infusing nationalist attitudes which were skillfully employed in the diplomatic wrangle and the tangible pursuit of facts in the territories in the late 1970s and the early 1980s.

The religious revival was facilitated by the maintenance of the pristine character of the religious sector and the corresponding dilution of Labor Zionism. The 1950s and the 1960s witnessed a process whereby the Labor Zionist education system which was nationalized lost its normative character, whereas the autonomy of the Religious Zionist school system enabled it to perpetuate and transmit religious tradition to the subsequent generation. Thus, the religious Zionist sector "was spared the general decline that beset the country's secular educational systems. Around that educational system, totalistic life patterns were created for an entire public which reinforced its religious life not only at
home and in the synagogue, but also in the neighborhood, kindergarten, in the Ulpanah (religious academy for girls) or the Yeshiva."92

Gideon Aran recalls the change in religious education:

The most important upheaval in the realm of Zionist neo-orthodoxy took place within its educational system, which grew in size and stature. The system was based on yeshiva high schools -hybrid, elitist boarding schools which combine high academic standards with equally high ethical demands and ambitious religious studies, primarily concentrating on the Talmud. The result is an exclusive total institution, within which the authority of the rabbis is unchallenged and Halakah is exempt from questions of practical applicability. The counterpart to this system is the national-religious movement, Bnei Akiva, which displayed extraordinary moral momentum during a period of general decline in ideological tension. This movement has over 30 educational institutions and some 150 branches all over the country. Like the national-religious camp in general (NRP and Hapoel HaMizrachi), Bnei Akiva had tended to educate students for a religious and political middle ground by promoting a humanist-socialist outlook in the style of its "historical allies," the Labor parties. However, after 1967, Bnei Akiva youth gravitated toward right-wing parties and toward higher yeshiva education and de-emphasized pioneer objectives in a kibbutz - which had been until then the pinnacle of the educational path of this movement.93

There were other intellectual groupings which reinforced the religious subculture created in Israel which was a useful lever in holding on to the territories. One of them was the Land of Israel Movement (LIM), which included an unlikely cross-section of intellectuals and party members from every section of national life. It was formed around the mystique of the land and primarily an intellectual trend, comprising of a limited circle of poets, professors, journalists and retired politicians and military officers. In their manifesto released in September 1967, the LIM leaders argued that no Israeli government had the right to hand back land won in battle, and that the economic development of the conquered territories should begin at once. They demanded that just as the Jewish Nazareth was built alongside Arab Nazareth, Jewish enclaves should be constructed beside Nablus, Hebron, Jericho, and so on. The LIM drew heavily on the support of the Orthodox which was a precursor to the

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93 Aran, n. 24, p. 274. At the level of higher education, the growth of state-supported yeshiva colleges (religious seminaries) has been significant. In 1960 their enrollment constituted 30 percent of the graduates of public-religious schools. By 1970, this had swollen to 70 percent. See Uri Huppert, Back to the Ghetto: Zionism in Retreat (Buffalo, New York: Prometheus Books, 1988), p. 104.
collusion of the Orthodox and ultranationalists in the 1970s. Harold Fisch, rector of the Bar-Ilan University, one of the most articulate religious spokesmen of the LIM, was to become a leading ideologue of the Gush Emunim. He wrote that "there is only one nation to whom the land belongs in trust and by covenant, and that is the Jewish people. No temporary demographic changes can alter this basic fact which is one of the principles of our faith. Just as one wife does not have two husbands, so one land does not have two sovereign nations in possession of it."94

Though committed and articulate, the people lacked the temperament and the logistical acumen and the penchant for tactical activity necessary for the mobilization of the masses. The LIM's historical role, in retrospect, was that it imparted a measure of legitimacy to the Gush Emunim, religious settler movement, because its membership included establishment figures and celebrities. This association also enabled the Gush Emunim to unite the followers of different political camps.95

The radicalization had its affects on intra-NRP affairs. The 1960s saw the rise of a disaffected Youth faction within the party that sought to increase their share of power and offices which the NRP, as the consistent partner in the government, had the clout to confer. The conflict over the spoils conducted between the Youth faction and the East European veteran leadership translated into a debate concerning the integrity and the puritanical resolve of the party’s leadership. The Youth faction led by Hammer, Druckman, Hanan Porat who possessed ultranationalist visions of Israel, including the incorporation of Judea and Samaria (West Bank), accused the leadership of compromising the dictates of the faith in its interest of power and patronage.

The Youth gained ascendancy in the struggle after the death of Moshe Shapira in 1970, whose successor Yosef Burg waged a two-pronged battle against those who opposed the leadership among the veterans and from the Youth. Towards mid 1970s, the Youth faction had gained control of the NRP, with Hammer garnering a Cabinet portfolio in November 1975. The June War and the forces unleashed by the war thus had a decisive impact on the NRP, altering the basic factional balance, policy positions and ultimately, the

94 See Sachar, n. 81, pp. 708-709.
95 Aran, n. 24, p. 273.
party's political alignment." The Youth torpedoed the moderate veterans by stressing the divine stricture of retaining Judah and Samaria. The veterans already uncomfortable with the allegations of complicity by the ultra-Orthodox could not resist the Youth assault which was buttressed by the Kook brand of religious Zionism. The religious Zionist party's tactic of employing the rhetoric of the sanctity of the land of Israel was to used by the mainstream party by the end of the 1970s.

The machinations of the Youth had tangible effects on Israel's foreign policy. Its pressures led to the adoption of resolutions at the 1969 party convention committing the NRP to the implementation of "our historic religious rights over the Promised Land," and "the extensive agriculture, and urban settlement in the liberated territories." The 1973 Yom Kippur War that cost about 3,000 Israeli lives put paid any meaningful resistance towards radicalism within the NRP. The 1973 NRP convention's resolution signaled a hardening of the party's stance and thereby the enhancement of the Youth Guard's political leverage. It resolved that the NRP would reign from any government which south to cede any part of the "inheritance of the patriarchs."

Jewish Fundamentalism Charted

Fundamentalism carries within its tenets the imperatives of disregarding temporal authority if its goals are in conflict with the transcendent. One of the ways extra-constitutional initiatives received sanction was through the initiatives of religious nationalists, who raised the kind of issues that resonated with symbolism and slackened the popular commitment to civil liberty. The Labor government's indecisiveness, its structural

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97 ibid., p. 60.

98 Fighting started on the Syrian and Egyptian fronts on October 6 -for the Jews, Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the year, and for the Muslims, the 10th day of Ramadan, the anniversary of a crucial battle fought by the Prophet Mohammed. Despite initial setbacks, the Israel Defense Forces, once fully mobilized, assumed the offensive. As Israeli forces crossed the Suez Canal and moved to surround the Egyptian Third Army, the United States and the Soviet Union entered into a grave crisis that threatened to lead to a nuclear world war. A compromise was worked out between the two superpowers, and a UN-monitored cease-fire took effect on October 24. On the Syrian front a similar cease-fire arrangement finally became fully effective only in May 1974. During the October fighting, Israel gained additional territory along the Suez Canal (Egyptian armed forces were present on both sides of the canal as well), and Israel took more land from Syria beyond the cease-fire lines of 1967, coming closer to Damascus.
vulnerability on the territorial issue was revealed as early as April 4, 1968. The bone of contention in Hebron, 90 percent of whom are Palestinian, is the Cave of the Patriarchs, the traditional burial site of the Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and their wives, that is regarded as the second holiest place for the Jews. The site has been a Muslim mosque for generations. The Israeli government did not wish to change the status quo, but made special arrangements to secure Jewish access to the site who were now allowed to worship there for a few hours. But the Jewish extremists led by Moshe Levinger laid claim to the whole site and started to regularly enact provocative demonstrations.

Rabbi Levinger and his followers sought to achieve their goal of controlling the shrine by stages, without causing an open confrontation with the military government. They would refuse, for example, to leave on Friday in time to let Muslim worshippers come in. Or they would leave the halls but block the main entrance. When the settlers' demands on prayer were fulfilled, they started to push for Kiddush in the cave - the rite of taking wine after services on Sabbath and other occasions.99

They also demanded that the Israeli flag shrine be flown over the shrine on Israel's independence day. A hand-grenade was thrown at Jewish visitors in 1968 and demonstrations followed when a Kiryat Arba, the Jewish settlement just outside Hebron, stole Quranic scriptures from the mosque. Arabs proceeded to expel worshippers and set the Jewish scrolls and ceremonial objects on fire. The Jewish settlers ostensibly wished to reverse the bitter memories of the 1929 riots in Hebron in which the entire Jewish community of the city was destroyed.100 Hence, a pattern of illegalism, worthy of being emulated began in Israel.

This caught the government by surprise as Hebron was without any strategic value. In addition to religionists of the Levinger stripe, supporters of the Hebron group included members of labor, even of kibbutz movements. "Reports that Jews were returning to this ancient Palestinian town evidently kindled a dormant spark of half-forgotten memories. Here after all, the forefather Abraham bought his first piece of land in Canaan,.

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100 Sixty-seven Jews were killed in the riots while the rest of the community escaped. The settlers cited the existence of Jewish property dating to that time to lay claim to their rights in Hebron. ibid.
the field of Ephron the Hittite, and later buried his wife in the Cave of Macpelah. If ever there were *terra irredenta* for mystics and romantics, Hebron fitted that profile."\(^{101}\)

The Levi Eshkol cabinet was taken aback for the popular support for the Levinger group decided not to risk a forceful eviction, and instead devised a compromise under which Levinger and his group would be moved to an Israeli army compound in Hebron. But when the squatters disobeyed military orders by conducting aggressive prayer sessions at the Tome of Patriarchs - a Moslem holy place, too - five of them were ordered out. Here again a political storm was touched off. And again the government backed down, countermanding the eviction order. Whereupon Levinger and his retinue launched into the construction of a settlement, "Kiryat Arba," on the outskirts of Hebron. With time the number of settlers and homes continued to grow. "Far from merely tolerating a Jewish community that had no imprimatur in Israeli law or military purpose, the government between 1969 and 1973 spent over $10 million making Kiryat Arba viable (fifteen years later the town's population approached 2,000). A pattern of defiance was set. The Hebron squatters had created 'facts.'"\(^{102}\)

The activists established a pattern of creating facts on the ground and then bargained with the political elite who either implicitly endorsed the agenda since they in the guise of religion were achieving what liberal democratic regime could not openly do, or were unwilling to run counter to the expansive consensus prevailing in the country because of the miraculous triumph in 1967 of the hallowed biblical lands. The settlers were mollified by the offer of land to build the settlement of Kiryat Arba near Hebron.

The Labor Alignment could not prevent the occurrence, even though the NRP was not electorally in a position to topple the government. In any case, the National Unity government (1967-70), included the Herut whose ideologues were known for their 'maximalist' demands for Israeli sovereignty on both sides of the Jordan river. In fact, Begin's Herut withdrew from the government when Labor decided to consider the

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\(^{102}\) Sachar, n. 101, p. 16.
proposals of the US Secretary of State William Rogers for peace settlement in 1970. The peace plan envisaged a return of occupied territories by Israel in return for a binding peace treaty with the Arabs. This evisceration of Labor's political power and its ideological atrophy, as exemplified in its hamstrung dealing with religious nationalists, was merely the tip of the iceberg in the Israeli political landscape.

Factors Behind Likud's 1977 Victory

The political equilibrium of the country, which even the revisionists adhered to going by Menachem Begin's "conversion" from being a leader of an underground militant group to become a staunch parliamentarian for nearly thirty years, was disturbed partly due to the xenophobic air created by the religious euphoria and the corresponding loss of authority by the Labor government. The lack of a vision to deal with new diplomatic realities caused by military conquest unsettled the bureaucratic rhythm of the Labor establishment. The early 1970s saw the erosion of Mapai's support base for several reasons. For one, the Labor government's hold on the economy was no more secure than its vision concerning the territories.

The 1973 War forced the government to double its security budget. Tens of thousands of Israelis were pulled out of the economy for extended military service. The share of defense in Israel's GNP soon more than doubled, from 21 percent in 1972 to 47 percent in 1976. The escalating cost of oil, following the 1973 OPEC crisis, added to the national budget deficit of over $4 billion. Deficit financing caused an inflationary spiral rising by 30 percent in 1973, 40 percent in 1974, and again 40 percent in 1975. If such austerity tested the government's skill, then financial scandal ran its popularity aground. Tax evasion seemed to be a national malaise. Absence of integrity allegedly was a feature of public life. A particularly notorious scandal, revealed in 1975, involved the transfer of millions by the managing director of Israel Corporation established by Jewish investors throughout the world. A year later, the director of customs was indicted for having amassed extensive pay-offs from a businessman whose imports had been allowed in duty-free. In March 1976, the deputy director of the Bank of Israel's examiner of banks

103 Arian, n. 80, p. 85.
department was arrested for having used his portion to speculate and earn vast profits in bonds. A manager of an Israeli-operated oil wells firm in occupied Sinai, was sentenced to prison for having privately operated oil-drilling equipment he had bought with public funds. A minister of housing was placed under investigation on suspicion of having illegally dispensed funds to the Labor party. The Kupat Holim (national health insurance) director Asher Yadlin was convicted for corruption and Prime Minister Rabin was forced to admit that his wife maintained a meager, yet illegal bank account in Washington.104

The religious parties precipitated a break with a weak Labor government. In December 1976 attended an airport welcoming ceremony for the newly arrived jet fighter aircraft from the U.S. which happened to intrude on the Sabbath. The Agudah incensed at this official "desecration" introduced a routine motion of no-confidence which was easily defeated. However, Rabin piqued at the violation of coalition unity by the members of the NRP who abstained in the motion, tendered his cabinet's resignation and advanced the 1977 elections from November to May of that year.

The electoral campaign of 1977 gave every appearance of following earlier precedents, of essentially distilling into a contest between two major blocs. The largest bloc, the Labor-dominated "Alignment," was established in 1968, and comprised a reunited Labor party (itself a consolidation of the old Mapai, Achdut HaAvodah, and Rafi parties) functioning in alliance with the Leftist Mapam. By the spring of 1977, the political temperature began to heat up. Labor warned that a vote for the Right would meant the end of a chance for peace while threatening democracy and workers' rights. Likud countered by suggesting that a Labor victory would mean the renunciation of the hallowed Land of Israel.

Political assertion of ethnicity: The case of Sephardi Jews

Meanwhile, the Israeli political system was simmering with discontent that was to eclipse the hold of Labor on political power and eventually change the political landscape. Labor suffered much due to the disaffection of the Afro-Asian Jews who resented the

absorption policies of the Ashkenazi elite which apparently sought to assimilate them into their Europhile culture without actually enhancing their socio-economic profile or allowing any legitimate expression of their Middle Eastern heritage. Ironically, it was the Labor, the party of workers and socialism, which was perceived as the party of the establishment by the Orientals who then responded favorably to the Likud's hawkish stance on the territories and the promises of economic reform.\footnote{Dan Horowitz and Moshe Lissak, *Trouble in Utopia: The Overburdened Polity of Israel* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), p. 184.}

The psychological dislocation of the Middle Eastern Jews, who now comprise over 50 percent of the population, because of a series of blatant paternalist policies of the Ashkenazi elite and the political consequences of such disaffection has become the focus of many academic inquiry.\footnote{Ashkenazim, who are still the majority among world Jewry, comprise less than half of the population of Israel in 1981, 47.5 percent while the Oriental Jews constitute 52 percent of the population. Shlomo Swirski, "The Oriental Jews in Israel," *Dissent*, Winter 1984, pp. 78-79.} Raphael Cohen-Almagor has written a compelling review of Ashkenazi condescension after 1948.\footnote{Cohen-Almagor, n. 80, pp. 461-484.} Between May 1948 and December 1960, a total of 981,000 immigrants arrived in Israel, 53 percent from Europe, America, and Oceania, and 47 percent from Asia and Africa. Secular Zionists like Ben-Gurion harped on the need to forge an authentic Israeli culture which will be a synthesis of many influences. As Ben-Gurion declared that, "[W]e shall not shut ourselves up in our shell. We shall be open to take in all the cultures of the world, all the conquests of the spirit."\footnote{Ben-Gurion, *Rebirth and Destiny* (London: Thomas Yoseloff, 1959), p. 339.} But in practice some cultures were rejected during the formative years.

Pluralism denotes, the multiplicity of approaches to perceive reality and deal with it. It signifies an inherent acknowledgment of imperfection of any social hierarchy or system of governance. In the sense, pluralism conveys the inadequacy of "absolute" and "objective" ideas in dealing with the variety of the human cultural experience. Cohen-Almagor argues that "perfectionist interventionist elements" as opposed to pluralist elements were built into the ideology of the state. He refers to the identification of Israel as a Jewish state, a fact that puts non-Jewish minorities in an uncomfortable position. Scholars
refer to the extremely adverse conditions in which Israeli leadership had to establish the state to gloss over the rough-shoddding of certain sub-cultures in the ‘national interest.’ Cohen-Almagor contends that the ruling, predominantly Ashkenazi elite displayed an element of snobbery towards the Middle Eastern Jew and sought to "civilize" him. They presumed that the Middle Easterner was already embarrassed of his cultural baggage and therefore sought acculturation into the chic Westernized Israeliness. The enunciated view of the ruling elite was that "we were benevolent people who brought the Middle Easterners to a higher stage of development and that it was to their own advantage." 109

Sustained efforts are made to define and sanction the collective and stigmatize the other in terms that were consistent with the Ashkenazi heritage. This was natural since the bulk of the Yishuv comprised of the Ashkenazi. A majority of those who immigrated to Palestine before 1948 were Europeans, —they constituted 87.5 percent of all Jewish immigrants in the period from 1919 to May 1948. 110 Favorable social conditions in the land of their origin and the absence of an organized effort to recruit them accounted for the absence of emigration of Oriental Jews. The destruction of European Jewry in the Holocaust awakened the need for Oriental Jewry resulting in the mass emigration from 1948 to 1956 wherein a total of 450,000 Jews arrived in Israel from Asia and Africa, compared to 360,000 from Europe and America.

Thereafter, the values of modernism and technology, the ideas of progress with allusions to Judaism were thrust upon the consciousness of the Middle Eastern immigrant. The scientological preoccupation of the elite inevitably ran counter to the sensitivities of tradition-bound societies from which the majority of immigrants sprang from.

The nation-building perspective viewed the aliyah from Middle Eastern countries in terms of absorption and modernization. "The immigrants were required to cast away their folk narratives, their popular legends, and their convictions. They had to accommodate themselves to a relatively modern society. They had to hide their culture,

109 For a detailed treatment see Cohen-Almagor, n. 80, pp. 463-66.

their songs, their music, their origin, and their religion. The policy was not one of "absorption through acceptance," but rather of "absorption through rejection."

Cultural pluralism was not encouraged. Ben-Gurion asserted that "we do not want to freeze the Yemenite way of life. Rather, we want it to adapt to the Israeli way of life, to Israeli liberty, to Israeli equality, to Israeli heroism, to Israeli culture and society . . . We want to erase any unnecessary distinction between the Yemenite Jews and other Jews." Therefore, side-curls of young boys were cut, sometimes forcefully, and attempts were made not to allow them to pray. Young women were encouraged to leave their older husbands.

The idea was to create one nation and one heritage, but behind the ideals of "one people" and the neutralization of ethnicity, were the glaring realities of superiority and paternalism, of arrogance and ethnocentrism. Some leaders thought that, with time, the Middle Easterners would "see the light" and then thank them for asking them to change their culture. Golda Meir, as the Minister of Labor, was quoted as saying that "we shall bring them the immigrants to Israel and make them human beings." Shoshana Persich, member of the Knesset from the General Zionist Party admitted that (they) "have no common language with the immigrants; our cultural level does not suit theirs; their way of life belongs to the Middle Ages." The General Zionists claimed to be committed to liberal values and called for minimum state intervention in society's matters. Ben-Gurion, summarized the achievements of the state in 1967: "We converted the human dust which gathered here from all the corners of the earth, we converted them into a sovereign nation which occupies an honorable place in the family of nations." Popular stereotypes of the

111 Cohen-Almagor, n. 80, pp. 470-471.
113 ibid., p. 472.
114 Yediot Aharonoth (Hebrew daily), 12 February 1988, 6 (Political Supplement), Cf. Cohen-Almagor, ibid.
116 ibid.
Middle Eastern behavior abounded within the establishment. Ben-Gurion in the 1960s was quoted as saying:

Those from Morocco had no education. Their customs are those of Arabs. They love their wives, but beat them ... Maybe in the third generation something will appear from the Oriental Jew that is a little different. But I do not see it yet. The Moroccan Jew took a lot from the Moroccan Arabs. The culture of Morocco I would not like to have it here. And I do not see what contribution the present Persians have to make.\textsuperscript{117}

Shlomo Swirksi argues that stereotypes about the cultural baggage of the Oriental Jew perpetuate false assumptions of the state of Israeli society into which they emigrated.\textsuperscript{118} Two assumptions underlie attempts to explain the persistence in the socio-economic inequality that is evident between the Ashkenazim and the Sephardi Jews. First, that having come from culturally and economically backward societies, the Orientals could not fit into a modern Western context as Israel; thus they entered the lower echelons of the absorbing societies. Secondly, many of the problems that the Orientals had to encounter had to do with the fact that the mass immigration presented an overwhelming burden for the absorbing society which had just emerged from a bloody war of independence. Swirski contends that these assumptions, which were accepted by both the communities, are countered by the wealth of evidence which fails to sustain them.

Incidentally, the Orientals who emigrated to the West fared better than those who immigrated to Israel. It has been observed that of the limited resources available at the state's disposal in the early 1950s, European immigrants got a larger share than their Oriental counterparts.\textsuperscript{119}

Swirski argues that the pattern of discrimination was evident right from the start of mass immigration and from the nature of the Oriental participation in the Israeli development process. The contention that Orientals emigrated from backward societies to a modern one is not only a gross stereotypical generalization about all of North Africa and


\textsuperscript{118} Swirski, n. 106, pp. 77-91.

\textsuperscript{119} ibid., p. 79.
Middle East, but severely exaggerates the state of the Israeli economy at the time of independence. It is a known fact that by 1948, the Yishuv was primarily an agrarian experiment, with some 40 percent of the capital outlay of the Jewish communal organizations was spent on the purchase of land and agricultural settlement. Swirski asserts: "The large-scale economic development that turned Israel into a highly industrialized society, with a modern, sophisticated managerial apparatus, supported by a relatively large scientific-technological structure, took place only after 1948 —that is, after the Orientals arrived. "Modernity," then, is not something the Orientals met as a finished process, but rather "something in whose creation they took part."120

In the participation in modernity, the Orientals were systematically denied parity with the Ashkenazim to the extent that the latter was transformed into the governing, managerial, and commanding class while the Orientals became the industrial and white-collar Jewish proletariat of Israel. The Orientals experienced a hurried evacuation and had come without any preparation. They lacked an effective organization capable of articulating visions of development that was consistent with their situation and capacities, thus facilitating their mutation into a relatively cheap, mobile and manipulable labor force that was put to use in agriculture, the construction industry and labor intensive industries such as textiles, diamonds and metals.

They were over-represented in agricultural settlements, where the Orientals constituted 65 percent of the population of the moshavim. The population of the moshavim was ethnically homogeneous and "received fewer means of production from the authorities and consequently had lower income than the veteran —and mostly Ashkenazic — moshavim. Oriental immigrants were found in higher proportion than the Ashkenazic immigrants in all branches of agricultural production where intensive, non-mechanized and non-skilled labor was required.121 Almost all the owners of the agricultural means of production were Ashkenazim. This pattern repeated itself in the construction industry that experienced a boom in the 1950s. Here too, the Orientals were over-represented, their wages though higher than that of agriculture was less compared to the profits that they

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120 ibid., p.80.

121 ibid., p. 81.
were churning out for the Ashkenazim managers and owners. Textile plants became a major factor in the life of the "development towns," whose populations are mostly Oriental. Many towns —such as Dimona, Kiryat Shimona, Beit She'an, Ofakim or Afula —became "company towns." Most of these textile firms were owned and controlled by the Ashkenazim.

While Orientals were experiencing a process of proletarianization, large numbers of Ashkenazim were correspondingly entering public services, that were undergoing a significant expansion. In 1961, 28.3 percent of employed foreign-born Ashkenazim and 37.3 percent of employed Israeli-born Ashkenazim worked in public services —in the bureaucracies, in education, and in the welfare services. In 1960, Ashkenazim constituted 80 percent of all civil servants; in some ministries, such as commerce and industry, foreign affairs, defense, education, and agriculture, the figure was 90 percent. In 1960, only 35 of the 497 officers in the police force were Orientals. In 1981, one out of every two Israeli-born Ashkenazim had an academic, professional, or managerial job, as compared with one out of every six Israeli-born Orientals. In contrast, 34.7 percent of the Israeli-born Orientals are employed as blue-collar workers -as compared with only 14.0 percent of the Israeli born Ashkenazim.122

Apart from the litany of patronizing abuse, the economic profile of these communities told its own story. In 1951, 19,340 Ashkenazi families received help from the social welfare office as compared to 42,991 families of Middle Eastern origin. In 1953, some 40,000 pupils studied in high schools and in professional and agricultural schools. Among them there were only 2,000 pupils of Oriental origin. This was at a time when Orientals constituted 42 percent of the total population. Sammy Smooha reported that in 1954, 19.8 percent of the Middle Easterners and 42.9 percent of the Ashkenazim were engaged in white-collar occupations, whereas 45.6 percent of the Middle Easterners and 39.4 percent of the Ashkenazim held blue-collar jobs. He also indicated that between October 1956 and April 1958, 22.5 percent of Polish immigrants, as compared with only 8.5 percent of North African immigrants were assigned to the coastal strip. Many of the immigrants were assigned to transit camps. Bernard Avishai maintained that between 1956 and 1958, over 60

percent of the Oriental immigrants had been percolated through the decrepit transit camps (ma'abarot) to development towns; only 30 percent of the European immigrants had ever endured either.\textsuperscript{123}

The differences in the quality of housing became a permanent feature of the differentiation between the Orientals and the Ashkenazim. The former's were normally located in outlying areas which was unacceptable to veteran settlers. For practical purposes housing is ethnically segregated in Israel. Ashkenazim and Oriental live in separate cities, town, neighborhoods and quarters. Apart from the moshavim which are ethnically homogeneous, development towns seem to have specific ethnic character. "Ashkenazim live mainly in the northern and "better neighborhoods, while Orientals are mainly concentrated in the southern ones."\textsuperscript{124}

In the education sector, throughout the 1950s, Ashkenazim constituted more than 90 percent of the teaching.\textsuperscript{125} Schools in Ashkenazic neighborhoods are known to have better teachers, facilities and higher status than their Oriental counterparts. "On the high-school level, Oriental students constitute a majority in the vocational schools, while Ashkenazim study mainly in schools with an academic orientation.\textsuperscript{126} At the universities, Orientals constitute less than 20 percent of the student body.

Oriental students study in elementary schools designated by the Ministry of Education as schools for the teunie tipuah (culturally deprived). "These schools have specialized programs and many special teachers, and they are paraded as a sign of the government's great concern for cultural upgrading of the Orientals."\textsuperscript{127} Swirski takes issue with the establishment for the \textit{a priori} assumption of equating cultural differences with intellectual inequality with the effect of lowering achievement expectations of Oriental children and their parents. Ben-Gurion emphasized the notion of Ashkenazi cultural superiority when he talked of the Orientals' experience in Israel:

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{124} Swirski, n. 106, p. 83.
\textsuperscript{125} ibid., p. 81.
\textsuperscript{127} ibid. p. 84
\end{quote}
many of these immigrants come to us without the most elementary knowledge, without a trace of Jewish or human education. There are two reasons for this. First, they are the product of a period of destruction, a period of world wars, a period of material and spiritual deterioration caused by a shake-up in all human institutions. Second, they come from dark, oppressed, and exploited countries.\(^{128}\) (emphasis added)

The alienation, if not the distrust, between the communities is indicated by the levels of intermarriage. Though the incidence of intermarriages has increased between the Ashkenazim and the Orientals from nine percent in 1952 to about 20 percent in the early 1980s, the class conflict and the ecological separation between the two communities militate against greater integration via matrimony.\(^{129}\)

A study of four development centers was carried out in 1959, showing that 33 percent of the Europeans, 33 percent of the North Africans and 37 percent of people of Middle Eastern origin dislike having North Africans as neighbors. In addition, 60 percent of the Ashkenazi pupils in 1965 and 43 percent of the adults in 1967-68 viewed marriage with Middle Easterners with disfavor.\(^{130}\) "The reasoning is founded on prejudice and ethnocentrism, conceiving the European tradition as superior to the Oriental."\(^{131}\) Israel even succeeded in making the Western culture of Ashkenazi veteran settlers the dominant one. . . As late as the mid 1960s, the Israeli school syllabus emphasized Ashkenazi history, with extensive courses in European Jewish history and literature.\(^{132}\)

Swirski notes that even prominent sociologists like S.N. Eisenstadt and his students, using regnant theories of development and modernization, provided the ideological apparatus that denigrated the cultural foundations of the Orientals. They stated that Orientals have to undergo a process of "desocialization" —that is the erasure of their cultural heritage and of "resocialization" amounting to an acceptance of the Ashkenazic

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128 Swirksi, n. 106, p. 84.

129 ibid.

130 Smooha, n. 117, p. 477.

131 ibid., p. 195.

132 Cohen-Almagor, n. 80, p. 477.
A former IDF Chief of Staff Mordechai Gur once opined that Orientals cannot be entrusted with top military posts, because, given their "special" (that is backward) mentality, they would not know how to handle a sophisticated Western organizational and technological machine. Hence, residential segregation, the predominance of intra-group marriages, the segregated and unequal school system, and the ideological apparatus that portrays the Orientals as culturally deprived or backward—all work to reproduce the ethnic division of labor that emerged in Israel during the 1950's and early '60s.

Amos Oz satirized the ambivalences of the Sephardi Jews towards the Israeli elite and the Arabs as late as 1981:

What did you bring my parents to Israel for? Wasn't it to do dirty work? You didn't have Arabs then, so you needed our parents to do your cleaning and be your servants and your laborers . . . . You brought our parents to be your Arabs. But now I'm a supervisor. And he's a contractor, self-employed. And that guy there has a transport business . . . . If [you] give back the territories, the Arabs will stop coming to work, and then and there you'll put us back into the deadened jobs . . . Look at my daughter: she works in a bank now, and every evening an Arab comes to clean the building. All you want is to dump her from the bank into some textile factory, or have her wash the floors instead of the Arab. The way my mother used to clean for you.

The living conditions were poor, cultural activities were lacking and also held as "cheap, disregarded, and despised" by the establishment. For many of the Easterners, the term "equality" had an ironic tinge to it, as their weight in numbers, votes, and labor was not reflected in their share of the national income and in social status. In fact by the end of the 1970s, "about four-fifths of the Middle Eastern population lived in large towns an cities, where they became workers in an economy dominated by the Europeans; they became waitresses, cashiers, and petty clerks. About 80 percent were wage-earning workers."

The worldview of secular Labor Zionism was far removed from Middle Eastern life. They were required to change their occupation, get used to agricultural work, and live in secluded in development towns while being robbed of their cultural autonomy or the

133 Swirski, n. 106, p. 84.

134 ibid., p. 85.

135 Cf. Schar, n. 101, p. 25.

136 Cohen-Almagor, n. 80, p. 476.
preservation of their religious heritage." Middle Easterners and Ashkenazim were taught to believe that religious beliefs, deference to traditional authority, and patriarchal patterns were incompatible with Sabra (Palestine born Israelis) traits such as secularity and independence.\(^{137}\)

The vote of the majority of Orientals for the Likud in 1977 has been attributed not only the resentment over the nature of their assimilation but their hostility towards the Arabs who were said to provoke a self-hate within the Oriental Jews. The hostility of Afro-Asian Jews towards the Ashkenazi Labor elite and the Arabs alike has been attributed to the dynamics arising from their economic deprivation and socio-cultural influences. "Middle Eastern and North African culture tends to conceive society as divided primarily along ascriptive lines as family, clan, community or nationality while the social class divisions are seen as secondary." Analysts like Cohen-Almagor state that "the immigrants hostile attitude to the Arabs thus reflects an attempt to rid themselves of their 'Arab-like' image, which is rooted in their physical appearances, patterns of behavior and cultural tastes." The assumption underlying this explanation is that the Afro-Asian to desire to be fully integrated in the majority culture of Israeli society has led to a demonstrative rejection of the Arabs.\(^{138}\) Besides, renewed contact with the thousands of Arab workers in the West Bank following the June War revived memories of suffering under Arab regimes for the oriental Jews. Prepossessing an "elective affinity" for ultra-nationalism nudged them in the Likud's direction.

Swirski inveighs against this assumption saying that it is borne more out of stereotypes rather than fact.\(^{139}\) He says that perspective overlooks the fact that up to the late 1960s and early '70s, the Orientals voted en masse for the liberal-socialist Labor Party

\(^{137}\) ibid.

\(^{138}\) On the attitudes of the Sephardic Jews to the prevailing political practices see Horowitz and Lissak, n. 105, pp. 185-188.

\(^{139}\) Critics point out the frenzied reception of the Oriental Jewish masses to Begin as a testimony to the "traditionalistic predilection for charismatic leadership" that is supposedly a facet of their "cultural backwardness. Swirski counters by saying that those who cite such instances to prove the distinction between the authoritarian heritage of the Orientals as opposed to the "Western democratic" Ashkenazim, fail to remember the reception that Herzl got when he toured Lithuania when he throngs crowded the narrow streets hailing him as their King.
conjecturing why nobody sought an explanation for that in their cultural background. Instead, Orientals have for long been disinclined to form ethnic associations in order not to fracture the Zionist dream of unifying the nation. The specter of "splitting up the nation" forestalled any ethnic mobilization. They chose to believe in the dominant Israeli ideology that attempted to convince that Oriental problems can be treated effectively through the social welfare apparatus. To this end, articulation of protest has been conducted, by ethnic politicians, through the mainstream parties rather than form separate ethnic lists, that doubtless were assured to do well given the system of proportional representation.

Hence the shift of the Oriental Jews to the Likud can be traced to economic disaffection and cultural dislocation, rather than any endemic hostility towards the Arabs. Around two-thirds of Oriental Jews, who constituted over a half of the Jewish state, cast their votes in favor of Likud in 1977. In fact, the parties on the right garnered 46 percent of the Sephardic votes in 1977 as compared to 26 percent in 1969. Correspondingly, Labor’s share of the vote had decreased from 55 percent in 1969 to 38 percent in 1973. Therefore, "a feeling of common fate was formed between those who were the political outcasts and those who felt themselves to be the social outcasts." Significantly, the sabra generation tended to vote for the right in that 51 percent of those under twenty five years of age voted for the Likud. This pattern persisted through the eighties and lent a radical twist to Israel's domestic politics.

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140 Swirski, n. 106, p. 89.

141 For instance, TAMI, a party formed by Orientals who split from the NRP, won only three seats in the 1981 elections that was disproportionate to the size of the Oriental electorate.

142 In any case, polls taken during the 1981 elections also indicate that 36 percent of the foreign born Ashkenazim and 45 percent of Israeli-born Ashkenazim also opted for the Likud.

143 Tessler, n. 104, p. 25.

144 Sachar, n. 101, p. 23.

145 Tessler, n. 104, p. 25.
Begin and Judaism

So a mixture of disaffection of the Sephardic Jews for the Labor Party, the infighting within Mapai, and the harnessing of the territorial sentiment by the Gush Emunim prepared the way for the capture of power by the rightist Likud. The 1977 poll results were so astounding that political scientists refer to it as the "earthquake." Likud increased its Knesset representation from 39 to 43 seats. The NRP similarly accrued an enhanced 12 seats from its previous tally of 10 while the Agudists remained at 5 seats. The shock of the election was not so much the performance of the right as the dismal show of the left. The Labor Alignment humiliatingly lost a third of its representation as its tally tumbled from 51 seats to 32. This was surprising, to say the least, as the Labor's traditional control of the institutions of power could not prevent the country's surge to the political right. The results were a wash for other leftists as well. The Independent liberal, formerly the "progressive" wing of the Liberal party, lost three of their four seats in 1977. Civil libertarian Shulamit Aloni's egalitarian Citizen's Rights Movement lost two of its three places. Shell, an intensely dovish faction, lost three of its five seats. Altogether, between the elections of 1973 and 1977, about half of the nation's voters changed their political allegiance. Never before in Israel's history had there been such a shift away from the mainstream Left.

The biggest surprise was the emergence of the Democratic Movement for Change (DMC) led by leading by Amnon Rubinstein, dean of the Tel Aviv University Law School, and Prof. Yigal Yadin, the acclaimed archaeologist. The DMC got 15 Knesset seats largely capturing the vote of the hitherto establishment left voter. The DMC, though lacking in organizational structure to sustain it for the future, aired the right issues, calling for the transformation of the party system, a depoliticization of the military establishment, the economy, and the bureaucracy.

146 A post-election survey revealed that two-thirds of the DMC's votes came from Israelis who had supported the Labor Alignment in 1973. See Sachar, n. 101, p. 23.

147 During its tenure at the Knesset, the DMC concentrated on domestic issues such as inflation, labor unrest, social inequalities, and government corruption. Above all the DMC distinguished itself stressing the urgent need for electoral reform, with constituency districts to replace the anachronistic party lists and oligarchical party central committees. Since the focus of its activities was devoted to electoral reform far removed from the debates raging in the day pertaining to Israel's security as also the fact that it was led primarily by the intellectuals the DMC popular base was never established eventually leading to its political obliteration in the eighties. Sachar, ibid.
Once the results were declared, the Young Guard in the NRP engineered the defection of the party from Labor to support a Likud-led government. The groundwork for the defection was laid in December 1976 when it proposed a no-confidence motion against the ruling Labor following an inadvertent Sabbath breaking official ceremony to receive the new F-15 fighter aircrafts from the US. The NRP aware that Begin was likely to grant significant concessions in order to form the first-ever non-Labor government extracted many demands in the coalition agreement. NRP made sure that it got three ministries — Religious Affairs, Culture & Education, and the Interior. The share of the state-run religious schools in the education’s ministry’s budget increased by a third between 1977 and 1981. The ministry of religions, with its vast bureaucracy, had been consigned as a matter of routine to the chairman of the NRP after coalition negotiations. The status quo provisions remained in place since 1948. The religionists had, however, failed repeatedly to ground the national airline, El Al on the Sabbath; to win recognition of Torah studies as a central feature of the state curriculum; to reject as Jews (under the Law of Return) former Gentiles converted abroad by non-Orthodox rabbis.

The revisionists were historically not known to be sympathetic to the rabbis' demands as Jabotinsky identified the loathsome Jewish fatalism to originate in religion. Thirty years in the political wilderness had taught Begin the futility of such pristine revisionism. For the sake of political expediency, Begin began a symbolic reconciliation with the Orthodoxy by resorting to frequent declamations from scripture, his respectful visits to rabbis, is donning of a skull cap etc. Recognizing the commonality of ‘territorial

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148 This pattern continued well into Begin's second term starting in 1981. Begin was obliged to devote 50 of the coalition 83 clauses to commitments on religious matters. The Agudists were granted 12 percent of the government's total allotment for education and culture. In 1982, the Ministry of Religious Affairs won a budgetary increase of 390 percent in real terms at a time when budgets for other ministries were frozen or reduced. Begin acceded to a long term Agudah demand concerning military service for religious Jews. From 1981 on, yeshiva students received government stipends and were placed in the lowest tax bracket, regardless of their actual income. In earlier years, only full time yeshiva students were exempted from military service. After the 1981 election, teachers at Yeshivot, even teachers of religious subjects or men over thirty giving Torah lessons in state schools, were exempted to the chagrin of the secularists. Sachar, ibid., pp. 141-142.

149 ibid., p. 137.

maximalism' even if for two very different motivations, Begin made overtures to the most concrete expression of religious fundamentalism—the Gush Emunim.

But Begin was taking no chances with his political leverage. On June 20, 1977, the new cabinet was sworn in with the Likud coalition numbering 62 Knesset seats—one more than the 61 needed for the majority. Not content with this wafer thin majority, Begin opened talks with DMC which after five months of negotiations capitulated on the issue of electoral reform in return for cabinet participation. Yadin was named Deputy Prime Minister while his DMC colleagues were awarded the ministries of justice, transport, communication, and labor. The campaign for electoral reform foundered in return for privilege in Israeli politics.151

Having the measure of political security he desired, Begin initiated policies to promote Jewish settlements in the occupied territories, which he referred to not just as Judea and Samaria but as "liberated" rather than "occupied." The cause of territorial settlement received a fillip when Ariel Sharon, a war-hero in the 1973 War, became the Minister of Agriculture and head of the Israel Lands Administration. In September 1977, Sharon announced a plan to settle more than one million Jews in the West Bank within twenty years. Sharon let it be known that he "launched an energetic offensive to stem the hold of foreigners on state lands." His use of the term "foreigners" to describe the Arab citizens of Israel, and of the phrase Yehud HaGalil (Judaization of the Galilee), evinced a distrust more cold-blooded than at any time since the abolition of the military administration in 1964. Sharon's "offensive" was devoted at first to the prohibition of "illegal" construction outside Arab villages. At a time when the growing Arab population was creating serious congestion, their villagers now were forbidden to purchase land or build new homes.154

151 Sachar, n. 101, p. 29.


153 Lustick, n. 8, pp. 46-47.

The Likud cabinet went beyond a mere refusal of Arab building permits. By 1981 Sharon had constructed thirty miniature settlements on hills overlooking Arab villages. Although only small numbers of Jews inhabited these Galilee outposts, they established a Jewish foothold, in the manner of the pioneering Zionist settlements of mandatory times, and they blocked the growth of adjacent Arab communities. Between 1979 and mid 1981, the Likud government spent $400 million in the West Bank and Gaza, built twenty settlements in areas considered off-limits by previous government and increased the number of settlers.155 During the Begin's first administration in 1978, Gush Emunim was allowed to establish AMANA, an official state sponsored settlement movement. By this very act it obtained the same legal status as those of prestigious kibbutzim and moshavim movements in Israel. A civil legislation of Gush settlements as rural and regional Israeli localities followed suit. The movements most talented leaders who previously excelled as law-breakers, became municipal and district officials overnight. They and their councils were now entitled to state budgets and to allocations from the funds of the World Zionist Organization.156

In its drive to excise Labor's influence in the administrative apparatus, the Likud conferred patronage on the Gush. Key ministries and other governmental and non-governmental organizations connected to settlements and land acquisition were placed under the control of individuals strongly sympathetic to Gush's objectives.157 The political ascendancy of the "revisionists," thus provided Jewish fundamentalism with the status, the self confidence and large-scale economic resources the movement needed to further its aims. The Gush, unmindful of the secular vein of ultranationalism, closely associated itself with the Likud fully cognizant that it would take considerable political will to weed out settlements once they were erected. Notwithstanding the motivations, the Likud-religious Zionism partnership initiated new trend in the conduct of Israeli politics. Militant Jewish nationalism became the instrument of realizing the Redemption. Thereby "the relationship

155 Lustick, n. 8, p. 40.


157 Lustick, n. 8, p. 40.
between religion and policy became more intimate policy as the implementation of religious commandments.\textsuperscript{158}

**Organizing religious nationalism: Gush Emunim as a Fundamentalist phenomenon**

The most important tool that the religious right created which translated the national euphoria into political momentum for the revisionists was the establishment of Gush Emunim (Bloc of the Faithful), the religious settler movement that came into prominence in the early '70s. A review of its beliefs and practices clearly merits its classification as a fundamentalist movement, characterized by the attributes listed in the preceding section.

After the 1973 War, the Youth faction of the NRP created the Gush Emunim, a powerful, independent instrument to realize its ultranationalist objectives and also to bring about the desired impact on the intra-NRP politics. The Gush Emunim, hereafter, the Gush, was established in the spring of 1974, described itself as a "non-partisan extra-parliamentary organization whose purpose was to advance the 'Zionism of Redemption'. This religious settler movement which was endorsed by Rabbi Kook was led by Levinger, Hammer, Waldman etc., aspired to build settlements and "create facts" in order to incorporate the occupied territories into Israel. Gush's success evident to all within a matter of years was an incredible combination of organizational ingenuity, widespread tacit support within the political spectrum, and a redoubtable doctrine which responded perfectly to a confused mindset concerning the territorial limits of Israel within both the ruling elite and the average Israeli. Although within Israel a wide variety of organizations, political parties, prominent individuals, vigilante groups, institutes, and personal networks make up what is referred to as Jewish fundamentalism, the clearest and strongest expression of fundamentalist tendencies in Israeli society has been concentrated in the Gush. David Schnall comments on the phenomenal impact on Israeli society, that

A series of factors contributed to Gush's manifest success. First, was the critical timing of its creation that coincided with air of pessimism within the religious Zionists camp. A pattern of sacralizing territory occurred soon after the 1973 War which is termed as the débâcle where Israel suffered around 3,000 casualties. In an atmosphere of dampened enthusiasm, the religious nationalists seized this melancholic mood by rendering a religious interpretation that believed that Israel as a nation did not recognize God's impetus in giving the land in 1967 and thus were paying the price for not proceeding to conquer the rest of the Territories.

One must take into account the economic crisis that Israel was experiencing that compounded an air of pessimism after the Yom Kippur War. The Labor government's hold on the economy was very tenuous. The 1973 War forced the government to double its security budget. Tens of thousands of Israelis were pulled out of the economy for extended military service. The share of defense in Israel's GNP more than doubled, from 21 percent in 1972 to 47 percent in 1976. The escalating cost of oil, following the 1973 oil crisis, added to the national budget deficit of over $4 billion. Deficit financing meant caused an inflationary spiral rising by 30 percent in 1973, 40 percent in 1974, and again 40 percent in 1975. If such austerity tested the government's skill, then financial scandal ran its popularity aground. Tax evasion seemed to be a national malaise.160

Israelis suffered far more casualties in the October War than in any previous Arab-Israeli conflict. This did not deter the religious enthusiasm for the event. Gideon Aran writes concerning this paradoxical development.


160 Sachar n. 101, p. 18.
Ironically a
event which otherwise signaled retreat of the messianic mood led instead to a surge of the messianic movement. The Yom Kippur War resulted in the loss of certain additional territories considered part of the whole Land of Israel. Simple logic suggested that these developments would create an insurmountable problem of interpretation for religious activists, contradicting their formula that Israel’s territorial, military, and political achievements reflect and serve cosmic progress. Messianic fulfillment was long considered an absolute certainty based on the linking of the messianic phase with specific geopolitical signs. Now there was an unambiguous change on the historical side of the equation, hence one could expect a parallel change on the spiritual side. However, the opposite result occurred. Instead of feeling disappointment and abandoning their messianic strategies, the activist believers now appeared to have even greater confidence in their Kookist method and proceeded to apply it without compromise... Was the famous law of cognitive dissonance at work here?

At a particular level, Evron contends that the inferiority complex of the religious Zionist turned into superiority complex thanks to the events leading up to the 1973 War. The Bnei Akiva, we must recall, perpetuated the ghetto lifestyle by avoiding army service and devoting themselves to study of the Torah. Though they rejoiced over Israel’s victory in 1967, it took the relative debacle of 1973 to galvanize the messianic stirrings of the younger generation of religious Zionists. “These young people conceived of this war not as the contradiction but the confirmation of the messianic idea, as a purification by suffering, as the labor pains of the messianic revelation. Israel’s feelings of isolation, deepened by the War, received a compensatory theological interpretation: ‘The war of the gentiles is a war against God, and since they cannot fight against God directly, they fight against Israel.”

Religious Zionists came to be convinced in their minds that the war was proof that God was really on their side. Likewise, the Gush leaders went on to place themselves at the center of Jewish history. They felt that secular Zionists were unable to grasp the measure of tumult in their time or comprehend God’s plan for the salvation of Jewry, that was revealed only to the leaders of the Gush. Convinced that Judaism is the central meaning of the world and that the arrival of the messiah is the key to world history, the religious nationalists

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161 Gideon Aran draws a historical parallel by suggesting that “[T]his social-psychological paradigm has been employed to explain other paradoxes in the history of messianism: the momentum which transformed Christianity from just another marginal sect to a universal religion gathered only in the wake of the Crucifixion; similarly, the incarceration and conversion to Islam of Shabbatai Zevi, the Jewish messiah in the seventeenth century.” See Aran, n. 24, pp. 275-276.

considered themselves as entrusted with the execution of the central course of world history, the summit toward which history has striven since creation. "In this manner, the inferiority complex of religious Zionism was solved. The solution, however, was typically neurotic - it converted an inferiority complex into a superiority complex, thereby sealing itself ever more hermetically in a cell completely divorced from reality." \(^{163}\)

For were it not for this Gush's belief, were it not for the self-importance it provides to religious Zionist by helping them to conceive themselves as fulfilling a leading role in the historical processes undergone by the Jewish people and the state, they would have reverted to their previous, true state, one of a shaky, undignified compromise between the secular political forces and antipolitical, anti-Zionist orthodoxy. The messianic ideology and the structure of divine plan of redemption were precisely tailored to the psychological needs of religious Zionism at this historical juncture. Therefore, Gush thinkers constantly posit the hatred of anything non-Jewish. It expresses a drive for an incessant, limitless expansion, for it envisage a future of endless struggle between Israel and the surrounding world, the inevitable cost of ignoring the rights of others and expansion at their expense. That is why the Gush constantly talks of the "illusion" of peace between Jews and the Arabs.

The 1973 Yom Kippur war was significant as it was the first major conflict in which substantial numbers of Orthodox Jews participated within regular combat units from Yeshivoth Heder (academies combining military training with religious study). As Lustick suggests: "Through this participation, young religious Jews felt empowered to offer their own analysis of Israel's predicament. Their solution was a spiritual rejuvenation of society whose most important expression whose most important expression and communion with the greater, liberated Land of Israel." \(^{164}\) The Yom Kippur War that cost 3,000 Israeli lives caused a deep rift in Israelis arousing doubts over the validity of the price to hold on West Bank and Gaza. Secular Israelis did not fail to notice the zeal with which religious Zionist greeted the results of the war that was dubbed as a tragedy. A professor of psychology stated: "Every research study that I know from the present period finds basic differences between the religious youth and the secular youth. Religious youth are possessed of a far

\(^{163}\) ibid.

\(^{164}\) Lustick, n. 8, p. 44.
deeper and wider recognition of the significance of our presence here, greater identification with Israeli society as their society, and greater commitment to national objectives." 165 Interviews of 11 field officers of the rank of colonel and above in 1974 revealed that all of them indicated a willingness to do everything within their power to get religious officers assigned to their command. Four of the officers felt that it was necessary to incorporate religious education in the public educational system since faith was perceived to produce quality soldiers and a willingness to serve. 166

It is plausible that the Gush's success can be attributed to the gradual traditionalization of Israel's civil religion as noted earlier in this chapter. 1967 meant that Israel could not reconcile the victory and the plight of the Palestinians except by explaining the event through traditional imagery which is implicitly religious in Jewish history. No other worldview would legitimize the retention of those territories and the majority of Israel tended to go along with the activist spirit of the Gush. In other words, the secular parties did not possess any other ideological vision to stand against the Gush's brazen attitude. Although religious Zionists, among whom the Kookist youth were prominent, were subject to the amazement and confusion affecting all Israelis, they had at their disposal a unique theology and a consequent outlook which enabled them to interpret the extraordinary experience rapidly and effectively. A flush of religious conferences and Bible studies ensued after the June War to glean the meaning of the "liberation of the Patriarchs legacy," causing a flurry of publications which were innovative in style and content. These publications attest to a transition of the group from a period of emotional personal confessions sparked by a powerful trauma to a period marked by a relatively stable mood and a well-ordered dogma. Hence the central ideas and values of the Gush Emunim were formulated about eight years before the movement consolidated and made a public impact. The ideas and values were expressed in "a pastiche of realpolitik analyses, Zionist clichés, moral preachings and biblical injunctions, and citations from the Talmud and later rabbinical authorities." 167 The two major themes linking these sundry sources together were

165 Liebman and Don-Yehiya, n. 31, p. 131.
166 ibid.
167 Aran, n. 24, pp. 271-271.
the Messiah and the boundaries of the Land of Israel. A new Jewish-Zionist language emerged, focusing on redemption and territory and leading to unprecedented religio-political behavior. Crucial to the nation's political conduct was the effect of the religious sub-culture on the popular mindset. The euphoria over the June War was partly engineered by trends already in place in Israel experiencing a wave of what could be called "Judaization" (apart from the sense of consciously infusing civil religion) after nearly a century of Zionism. This reaction hinged on a number of factors, including demographic growth in the proportion of traditionally minded Jews (especially immigrants of Middle Eastern origin); a popular surge in the feelings of guilt and remorse upon realizing the dimensions and significance of the Holocaust, and of course the symbolic significance of the military victory. Aran gives an insightful explanation of the effect of the influence of Holocaust revelations coupled with the popularity of religious explanations concerning the redemptive significance of the June war.

Evoking in one sense the historical memory of the destruction of European Jewry or Jerusalem's destruction and in another sense the meta-historical eschatology of redemption, the war forced Israelis to re-confront their relationship with Jewish peoplehood and Judaism itself. This meant rediscovering a positive relationship with both the past of the Jewish people and the present-day Jews of the Diaspora. Terms as "eternal unity," "common fate," and "destiny" were revived in the process. Nationalism and statehood, permeated by the values of modernism and secularity, were suddenly placed in a new proximity and sympathy with the values of religion and tradition. This in turn led to a renewed identification between the two value systems but also a heightened consciousness. . . . The return to the Land of Israel, or more specifically, to the Territories severed from the state at its establishment in 1948 and considered to be the cradle of religion and nationhood, brought secular Zionism closer to Judaism. In the land of the Bible the Israelis have met the Israelites. The return to cherished landmarks and longed for vistas, pregnant with rich cultural associations, reawakened a long dormant impulse associated with the mystique of the land. The famous photograph of a weeping paratrooper kissing the stones of the Western Wall is a symbol of unforeseen emergence of religious motifs in contemporary Israel. (emphasis added) 168

The Gush clearly was aspiring to inherit the mantle of the Zionist leadership from the left, which in its eyes, had betrayed its mandate by disavowing the role of religion. In this endeavor it was manifestly helped by the associations it cultivated. The Gush was to receive the endorsement of young religious radicals from the religious school system, secular neo-traditionalists and even Labor's hawkish veterans. Many Labor veterans

168 ibid., p. 273.
especially from the kibbutzim and moshavim were impressed by Gush's settling zeal reminiscent of the their own formative experiences. Yearning for the lost spirit of Zionist pioneering and charmed by the new mystique over the land created by the Gush, these predominantly secular veterans were unmindful of the import of the Gush politico-religious message.169

The core of the religious nationalists fought against this defeatist strain prevalent in the country by regular sit-ins at the Prime Minister's home. There the original Gush Emunim core group met its future periphery, primarily members and former members of the religious Zionists youth movement Bnei Akiva. "Also among the protesters were the future allies of GE, the Land of Israel Movement (LIM) loyalists, most of whom were secular veterans of the right-wing underground of the pre-state period (the Irgun and the Stern Group) and representatives of the activist faction of the Labor movement hailing from veteran cooperative settlements and kibbutzim, which inherited the legacy of the Palmach (the elite troops of the Haganah, the militia which became the core of the Israeli Defense Forces after independence). In this milieu the core of the Gush Emunim discovered its affinities with other groups and seized upon the opportunity to form coalitions. The Gush also realized its public appeal for the first time and became captivated by the charm of what it called "flirtation" with the secular Zionists." In fact, the protest at the site was started by the LIM by taken over by the Gush owing to its numbers and sustained enthusiasm.170

The eventual capitulation of the secular fundamentalists was to become a feature of the political conduct of the political right in Israel. Revisionism always ran the risk of being absorbed in religious revivalism because of its lip-service to religious tradition. That section of the right, which did not formally align with any party but voted for the Likud, could not muster the numbers needed for the unilateral initiatives on settlement which was Gush mien. The absence of an organizational base like the religious educational network was to haunt the secular revisionists.

Subsequently, secular-ultranationalists like Geula Cohen, Israel Eldad, Eliyakim Haetzni, former army chief of staff, Rafael Eitan, famous physicist Yuval Neeman, Hebrew


170 Aran, n. 24, pp. 268-269.
University professor Eliezer Schweid, Moshe Shamir etc. made a reluctant, tenuous peace with the Gush. They ensured that the Gush capitalized on their respectability in the political spectrum while aggrandizing their own agenda on the mass movement that the Gush managed to create. This group saw in Zvi Yehuda Kook, a leader whose emphasis on the Land of Israel and settlement, as opposed to religious observance, created valuable opportunities to harness the efforts and devotion of thousands of religious Jews in support of their maximalist but essentially secular program. In fact, the formation and success of Tehiya in the 1981 elections after the withdrawal from Sinai was largely the effort of this group, achieved by the endorsement of Rabbi Kook.\textsuperscript{171}

The secular worldview perceives the Bible as the product of Jewish historical genius and hopes that the present state of Israel would bring a kind of salvation through its social, cultural and technological accomplishments. A staple attempt to dissolve differences over the religious and non-religious motivations of ultranationalism is provided in an interview with Ephraim Ben Haim, a kibbutz member and participant in the Movement for the Whole Land of Israel.

\textit{Question:} Doesn't all the talk of divine promises and messianic redemption bother you?  
\textit{Ephraim Ben Haim:} I'll tell you how I deal with all that. For me the Bible is the holy thing. In my eyes it is more holy than in those of a religious man. Because it is the fruit of the Jewish genius. Perhaps the word "holy" is not correct, but I don't know how to express this any better. 
Regarding the promised borders: I don't believe that God said anything to Abraham. I see in the promised borders the geopolitical mission of the people of Israel for its generation... it doesn't bother me that they (the religious) believe their source is divine. 
Now, the matter of redemption: first of all you should know... some of the religious, the enlightened ones, such as Akiva, rejected the idea that only the angels could bring redemption... That is to say the days of the Messiah are not a mystical thing, abstract... I certainly think that we are living in a special period. If someone sees it as a messianic period, and if in his heart of hearts has some mystical feeling about it, that doesn't bother me.\textsuperscript{172}

\textsuperscript{171} The lack of religiosity among these secular luminaries divided the religious segment, and the corresponding religious pressure on political activity of the secularists threatened the unity of GE, prompting Haim Druckman to establish his own party Matzad as an alternative to Tehiya and Hanan Porat's decision to abandon Tehiya in favor of a more religious oriented framework. See Lustick, n. 8, p. 99.

\textsuperscript{172} ibid., pp. 103-104.
Followers of the Herut-Gahal factions which were to merge and form the Likud, the second largest Knesset component since 1959, were also supporting since Gush aimed to claim and settle in God's Promised Land coincided with the revisionist dream of having a Jewish state on both sides of the Jordan river. It was possible to detect in the secular maximalism of the Likud a kind of "a secular neo-fundamentalism, a doctrine that approves of Gush Emunim's theology from a non-Orthodox angle." Indeed a large measure of its success has been due to the symbiotic relationship it has forged with the Likud. It's territorial zeal compensated Likud's lack of a systematic ideological doctrine capable of justifying sacrifices or coordinating sustained implementation of its annexationist ventures. "Fundamentalist thinking also provided a systematic and evocative symbol system for rising Likud politicians, such as Ariel Sharon, to endow their ambitions with an aura of Jewish authenticity and Zionist idealism." 

Gush Emunim exploited its proximity with the Likud just as the latter jumped on the former's ideological bandwagon. The friendly ties with various Likud leaders enabled the Gush to exploit differences and placed enormous financial resources for the Gush settlement projects. The main proposition of the neo-fundamentalist school was that Zionism, though secular, was never devoid of deeply seated religious beliefs. "The theologians of the Gush Emunim... had discovered according to the neo-fundamentalist thinking, the correct formula for future political Zionism. Arguing that secular Zionists are legitimate partners in the process of Redemption as Orthodox Jews, they made it possible for Orthodox and non-Orthodox Jews to ally and strive together for national grandeur." To this end, the Gush, bolstered by the success of the Levinger group in Kiryat Arba near Hebron in 1968 started settlement activity beginning with Elon Moreh in 1973. They launched a vigorous information campaign to motivate people to populate settlements;


174 Lustick, n. 8, p. 9.


they organized protests and demonstrations against the brokering of peace and conducted high profile activities in Judea and Samaria to underscore Jewish attachment towards them. The Gush frequently undertook direct action to establish and populate new settlements, arguing that it must lead rather than follow the government in this regard. It pressurized Palestinian Arabs to sell their lands or accept Jewish settlements or resort to extra legal methods to advance its aims.

A particularly flagrant Gush challenge to the "Labor confederacy" occurred in June 1974. The site was a tract near the West Bank city of Nablus, a hotbed of Arab nationalism. Here some twenty young Israeli families ensconced themselves on a plot near the ruins of ancient Sebastia and proclaimed their own settlement to be revived biblical community of Elon Moreh. The army promptly ordered them out. The settlers ignore the order. Soon the roads to Sebastia were crowded with thousand Gush Emunim members and supporters. Here the government again split into two camps. Foreign Minister Yigal Allon insisted upon the immediate and unflinching eviction of the squatters. Rabin counseled restraint. So did Peres. Finally, in January 1975, after months of indecision, the government came up with a apparent compromise. If the settlers agreed to depart Sebastia, they would be transferred to a nearby camp outside the Arab village of Qadum until the fate of their project was decided. Yet when the group accepted the "compromise" as the victory it was, Allon angrily demanded that the agreement be repudiated; and Rabin, taken aback by their reaction from his closest political ally, compounded his earlier indecision by declaring that the settlers would be evacuated from Qadum within a few weeks. But they were not. The weeks passed, then months and years, and there was no evacuation. Again, a Gush settlement had become a fait accompli, the government had been exposed as spineless.

Aran writes that the Sebastia initiatives were "considered to be the sacred heart of the Promised Land as well as a bridgehead for penetration into the heart of the Palestinian population. It is the Gush Emunim's counterpart to the storming of the Bastille in 1789 and Khomeini's landing at the airport of Mehrabad in 1979 . . . " In other words, Sebastia

177 Tessler, n. 104, p. 33.
178 Incident related in Sachar n. 101, p. 17.
179 Aran, n. 24, p. 269.
signified the effectiveness of direct action in the face of effective resistance from the establishment. From then on, the Gush moved on from settlement to settlement in following the example of Sebastia. By early 1977, there would be five Gush Emunim settlements on the West Bank.

The high-profile activity of the Gush had a uplifting effect on the psyche of both the religious and secular. An expression of collective will in favor of national goals at the expense of "the Other" emboldened a society despairing about the number of dead first in the war of attrition in 1969-70 and then in Sadat-led assault in 1973. Young people licked war wounds even as Israel was facing international isolation over its continued hold over the occupied territories culminating in the UN's "Zionism as Racism" resolution in 1975.

Gush prospered with the tacit and open support of the Labor and the Likud leadership respectively. Even dovish Rabin and Peres patronized the Gush while vying for the leadership. Each kept a prominent Gush advocate in his ministry. Rabin had Ariel Sharon while Peres had the secular ultranationalist and renowned physicist Yuval Neeman. "At Peres's behest, (the then Defense Minister, 1974-77), army bases provided electrical and water utilities for the Gush Emunim settlers. Rabin although revolted, similarly found it useful to express admiration for their pioneering zeal."180

In fact, before the Likud came to power, most of the settlements beyond the Green Line had been set up under the Labor government; strung along the river Jordan valley operating simultaneously as agricultural settlements and military outposts. "[Rabbi] Moshe Levinger, (Gush's most prominent leader) was able to exploit personal rivalries within the Labor Party in order to achieve this goal, which was to create his own settlements. At Kiryat Arba, he was able to counter the opposition of Moshe Dayan by mobilizing Yigal Allon in his support, his first supporter (being) a Leftist. At Ophra, he played Rabin off against Peres, and at Qadum Qedumin, Peres against Rabin ..."181 However, Gush success rate was bolstered by the victory and subsequent active patronage of Begin's Likud.

How could the Gush succeed in imposing its aims on successive Israeli governments, the majority of whose members, whether Left or Right, have always

180 Sachar, n. 101, p. 77.
considered themselves secular Zionists whose aim is normalization? The reasons should take into account that the Gush appropriated Zionist phraseology skillfully like "settlement on the land", "redemption of the soil" etc. The Gush thus rode on the prestige that the term Zionism enjoys and pursued its essential anti-Zionist aims. However "the stirrings of the movement preceded its formation by decades." 226 The normalization project of Zionism failed as Mapai led by Ben-Gurion failed to evolve a common non-religious denominator of all Jewish population element that had immigrated to Palestine. This failure accentuated the recourse to religion as the source of national identity. As historian Jacob Katz, put its: "The Jewish national tradition is stamped with religion. Anyone who resorts to Jewish symbols, almost involuntarily links the affinity to religion with the national identification."

Boas Evron explains the nature of values disseminated through the narration of the Holocaust: "In addition, the ongoing educational emphasis on the lessons of the Holocaust was designed to inculcate in the younger generation the axiom about the Jewish "community of fate" at all times and at all places, thus nullifying the traditional Zionist doctrine that the normalization of the Jews will put and end to this community of fate and turn the Jews into a normal nation and not preferred targets of hostility.

This inculcation of Holocaust lessons, to the extent that for non-religious Jews they have become the central content of Jewish consciousness and identity, is really tantamount to a deliberate breeding of paranoia. These lessons are not accompanied by any positive humanistic message, such as participation in a worldwide struggle of all peoples against dehumanization and genocide." Instead the meaning of Nazi genocide is portrayed as reconfirmation of the hostility of gentiles, the exacerbation of the divide between the "circumcised" and the "uncircumcised", to the denial of the application of exterminating policies to non-Jews like the Gypsies. "Thus, instead of cultivating universal human values of a fight against the evil that can befall all and which should unite all against it, a ghettolike, exclusivist mentality is bred."182

This mentality perpetuates a mythology that "all peoples corroborated with the Nazis in the destruction of Jewry" breeding a hostility to the political framework within which international relations are conducted. Its no wonder that religious extremists do not

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chafe from violating world opinion since they believe in the doctrine of eternal enmity between Jew and gentile and implacable alienation between Jewish fate and gentilic attitudes. The conduct of the Eichmann trial demonstrated the transmission of such values in Israel. Hence there is an implicit awareness in both religious and secular circles that Zionism has not brought about the normalization or succeeded in eradicating "the common fate" it promised. Confronted with the limits of Zionism's explanatory framework, religion has been easily portrayed as the prism through which to perceive reality. Evron argues that as Zionism has had such diverse, diffused perspectives on the manner of achieving Zionist aims, it has become easy for the Gush to appeal to timeless notions such as "the ageless Jewish people" since the Israeli parliament does not possess the requisite authority as it contains non-Jewish Arab members.183

The political importance of the settlement enterprise in the West Bank cannot be measured by the actual number of settlers. We must also consider the significant public support for this enterprise, which may well render very difficult any attempt at a political solution that would entail the evacuation of Jewish settlements in the West Bank. "It can be said that the dedication and self-sacrifice of the first Gush Emunim settlers, based on their deep ideological convictions, played a vital role in creating conditions which, at a later stage, could provide non-ideological motivations for a different type of settler."184

Gush Emunim exerts a profound impact on the settlement debate in the occupied territories. Chaim Waxman says that majority of the settlers were not primarily motivated by ideological factors. Rather they were primarily motivated by associational and/or other economic factors. Waxman confirms Shafir's proposition that the Jewish settlement of the territories was primarily the consequence of the policies of the Israeli government rather than the ideology and activities of GE185 indicating the legitimating utility of the settler movement.

183 ibid.
184 Don-Yehiya, n. 15, p. 218.
The significance of Gush's ideology should not be judged solely by the practical consequences of its ideology in the spheres of settlement and politics. The impact of the Gush must also be judged by its ability to influence or even transform Israeli political culture through its ideology.\textsuperscript{186} David Newman speaks of the Gush Emunim role in "bringing to life an ideology which existed, but had been dormant within the national religious society."\textsuperscript{187} Lily Weisbrod presents Gush's ideas as a "revolutionary ideology, which have become the "New Zionism" of the Jewish people in Israel."\textsuperscript{188} Ehud Sprinzak argues that while the influence of the Gush has been felt in most segments of Israeli society, the movement has deep roots in the Jewish-religious subculture, which explains its remarkable political success. "It is the support of this subculture which made Gush Emunim so effective and irresistible."\textsuperscript{189}

Boas Evron contends that radicalism espoused by the Gush was part of the Zionist language of redemption that Israelis as a nation are reared in and thus is no surprise that they are not too revolted by its extremism.\textsuperscript{190} The Gush just consolidated the Zionist assumptions of the popular mind. Israelis have a developed consciousness of the Jewish character of their state. As mentioned previously in this chapter, opinion polls indicate that 93 percent of the Jewish population affirmed that the State of Israel must be a Jewish state. 83 percent understood the meaning of the statement as denoting the majoritarian Jewish character of the state. 62 percent believed that it means a state whose public image conformed to the Jewish tradition, while 18 percent demurred from this perception. The Jewish content of the state is presupposed by the fact that 91 percent of the Jewish population was unwilling to give up the option of \textit{aliya} (immigration) in exchange for peace with the Arabs. As the term Israeli invariably connotes Jewish identity, not surprising

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{186} ibid., p. 219.
\textsuperscript{187} ibid.
\textsuperscript{188} Lilly Weissbrod, "Core-Values and Revolutionary Change, in Newman, n. 159, p. 72.
\textsuperscript{189} Ehud Sprinzak, "The Iceberg Model of Political Extremism," in Newman, n. 159, p. 27.
\textsuperscript{190} Evron, n. 7, p. 230.
\end{flushleft}
a link between religion and state was espoused by the majority of the community (76 percent). 191

Evron notes the outcome of Zionism's paradox that aimed at the "normalization of the Jewish people" while yet framing the need for a Zionist homeland in exclusivist terms. Normalization as a nation implies a change in the Israeli populace from a religious community to a national commonwealth, a separation from the Jewish Diaspora. "The spiritual genealogy of this approach contains luminaries from various currents of Jewish thought including Martin Buber, Abraham Joshua Heschel, Joseph B. Soloveitchik, and Moshe Unna. All of them have rejected the term nation in describing the Jewish people, claiming that the Jews are a unique phenomenon, partaking in a sanctity beyond rational definition. The same goes for the relationship between the people and its Promised Land, a relationship that differs in essence from that of normal nations." 192 The emphasis on the uniqueness of the Jews was inherently capable of scuttling the normalization project. The aims and the activities of the Gush and its partners in the radical right exposed the contradictions within the Zionist vision and conducted a politics that placed on Jewish distinctiveness in history.

Therefore, the Gush did not duly upset democratic sensibilities of the secular public since the nature of its activity had an a priori legitimation since it emulated the Zionism of force that Israelis valued. The tough-minded pragmatism of the Gush "has always been prevalent among the settlement movements of labor Zionism, as well as in business and administration, suiting as it does the Israeli national ethos, characterized by initiative and aggressiveness." 193 He continues:

In short, the Gush has remained what religious Zionism has always been: a parasitic hanger-on to the body of pragmatic, secular Zionism. Its expropriatory settlements are a nightmarish caricature of the raison d'être of Zionist settlement, the melting away of an ideology that has lost all meaning and functions in a vacuum. The emptiness of the settlements stage setting is but a reflection of the inner emptiness of the messianic movement and its secular adherents. It is a movement without any social or moral vision.

191 Liebman and Don-Yehiya, n. 31. pp. 133-134.

192 Evron, n. 7, p. 230.

193 ibid., p. 228.
All of its contents are Judaic, but it is a Judaism bereft of any value or content except the mechanical keeping of the Halakah (unless one defines chauvinist muscle-flexing as a value).¹⁹⁴

Evron caustically traces the roots of Gush's self-confidence:

Whence this calm confidence of the Gush? The only explanation seems to be that this calm is the result of the protected position of the Gush within the Israeli system. It was the secularists who founded Zionism. It was they who established the physical framework of Israel's existence, fought its wars, were forced to compromise with its enemies and friends. It was they who came in contact with the real external world. Religious Zionists, many of whom have never served or fought in the army, who have always been generously subsidized by world Jewry and the Israeli establishment, live in a protected, illusive world in which the IDF is omnipotent, in which there are always funds available for expropriatory settlements in the occupied territories, in which one never feels the price that the state, the people, and the army must pay for such a messianic policy. Within this protected bubble, Gush thinkers and members can spin their eschatological schemes and speak calmly about "eternal warfare" and about the desirable aspect of the hatred of the goyim. Thus Gush members continue in effect their traditional parasitism on the secular establishment... Essentially, the anti-gentile policy of the Gush is a regression to the xenophobic, non-historical existence of the ghetto, though now seemingly from the opposite side. The ghetto shrank into itself in fear of the external world. Messianism aims at fighting and overcoming that world. Both approaches desist from a negation of the external world.¹⁹⁵

Evron links the influence of the Gush over Israeli society to the structural constraints that the kibbutz and the moshav movements were experiencing. This is plausible when bearing in mind that the Gush felt that its natural allies were to be found in the labor movement, to the extent of imitating the labor movements methods of rapid settlement (the "stockade and tower" settlements of the thirties and forties). Evron argues that by the late 1950s and the early sixties, the country's agricultural deployment had reached its peak within the existing borders. The agricultural system supplied all domestic demand or, alternatively, developed crops export of fruit and flowers in exchange for grain. By then, "there was no longer any need for a significant increase of agriculture and hidden unemployment began to spread in the kibbutzim and moshavim, alleviated in the kibbutzim by turning increasingly to

¹⁹⁴ ibid., p. 241.

industrial development." The conquest of territories in West Bank, Gaza Strip, Golan Heights and Sinai Peninsula lent a new lease of life to agricultural settlement especially when that sector was near saturation. Though it is difficult to attribute any conscious opportunism on the part of the agricultural labor movements, "it is impossible to ignore the structural interests that coincided with the settlement drive" that made the Gush a natural ally of even the secular movements in the agricultural sector. Furthermore, some sections of the kibbutz movement felt that the renewal of the settlement drive might revive the flagging pioneering spirit among the youth.

Defining Fundamentalism

Before considering the theology of the Gush, a theoretical review of a fundamentalism is undertaken since the Gush fits the taxonomy that research on fundamentalism has devised. A movement is described as fundamentalist "insofar as its adherents regard its tenets as uncompromisable and direct transcendental imperatives to political action oriented toward the rapid and comprehensive reconstruction of society." (emphasis added) A comparative study of ten fundamentalist movements has understood fundamentalism as implying "a view of the universe and a discourse about the nature of truth . . . (that) encompasses and transcends the religious domain. For that reason, every movement or cause is potentially fundamentalist."

The editors of the wide-ranging University of Chicago series "The Fundamentalism Project" have avoided an essentialist definition and chose to speak in terms of "family resemblances" rather than inherent characteristics in their first volume entitled Fundamentalisms Observed. Martin Marty and Scott Appleby assert that when we speak of fundamentalists we usually imply religious groups which arise in response to crises that they perceive as threatening to the identity of the group; (2) see themselves as engaged in struggle against various "others" including secularizers,

196 ibid., p. 233.
197 Lustick, n. 8, pp. 6-7.
modernists, secular nationalists, and the established authorities of their own religious community whom they perceive to compromise with modernity and secularization; (3) tend to mythologize/demonize 'others'; (4) view historical events as part of a cosmic, often eschatological pattern; (5) reject historical consciousness; (6) establish rigid socio-cultural boundaries to protect themselves from contamination by outsiders; and (7) follow male, charismatic leaders whom they consider to be the authorized interpreters of traditional sacred texts.199

A review of the Gush’s doctrines and practices demonstrate that it exhibits all the characteristics as enlisted by Marty and Appleby. They go on to describe fundamentalism as

a tendency, a habit of mind found within religious communities and paradigmatically embodied in certain representative individuals and movements, which manifests itself as a strategy, or set of strategies, by which beleaguered believers attempt to preserve their distinctive identity as a people or group . . . Feeling this identity to be at risk in the contemporary era, they fortify it by a selective retrieval of doctrines, beliefs, and practices from a sacred past. These retrieved fundamentals are refined, modified, and sanctioned in a spirit of shrewd pragmatism: they are to serve as a bulwark against the encroachment of outsiders who threaten to draw the believers into a syncretistic, areligious, or irreligious cultural milieu.200

Bruce Lawrence finds that fundamentalism is best described as a religious ideology, indicative of the fact that it "connotes a fixed and unquestioned set of beliefs, views, and assumptions that constitute the general framework within which all other questions take place."201 Giving particular emphasis to the combative, oppositional minority character of fundamentalist groups, Lawrence maintains that, "the single most consistent common denominator is opposition to all those individuals or institutions that advocate Enlightenment values and wave the banner of secularism or modernism." He believes fundamentalist movements share a number of other characteristics in common: (1) they are comprised of "secondary-level male elites," led by charismatic figures (2) they utilize a


201 Bruce B. Lawrence, Defenders of God: The Fundamentalist Revolt against the Modern Age (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1989), p. 95.
technical vocabulary or discourse, such as the Jewish *Halakah* or Islamic *sharia*; (3) they profess totalistic, unquestioning allegiance to sacred scripture; and (4) they relegate the authority to determine scriptural meaning to a select group of leaders.

James Davison Hunter believes that a crisis of identity resulting from the confrontation of religious groups with modernity provides the context for the emergence of many fundamentalist movements. Fundamentalists are engaged in a struggle for "control over the mechanisms of cultural reproduction." Hava Lazarus-Yafeh finds that fundamentalists movements, as oppositional communities, can be characterized by the common things they oppose, including modernity, secular Western values, and the established religious authorities within their own communities. Moreover, fundamentalists share a contempt for all outsiders or "others"—including "others" of their own historic community.

Silberstein suggests fundamentalists infused with an apocalyptic mood, "see themselves as living in a period of immanent redemption. Treating sacred scripture as textbooks through which they can understand the present and predict the future, fundamentalists believe that they are able to circumvent the hermeneutic processes and gaining direct access to the meaning of Scripture. Privileging the authority of their own leaders, they willingly subordinate democratic values and processes to this authority. For Lustick, fundamentalism refers to kind of political style in which "political action dedicated toward rapid and comprehensive transformation of society, is seen to express uncompromisable, cosmically ordained, and more or less directly received imperatives."
This fundamentalism is distinctly different from Orthodoxy. Orthodoxy is a cultural system represented by what is called a "consensus through time" or a consensus based upon the ancient rules and precepts derived from divine revelation. Its authority and this legitimacy derive from an unaltering continuity with truth as originally revealed. "Fundamentalism is orthodoxy in confrontation with modernity." Other religious traditions in Jewish history have either adopted a strategy of withdrawal from engagement with society, or have adapted or assimilated into secularizing tendencies, or chosen a strategy of confronting modernity. In Israel there are proponents of these three methods with the Hasidic Jews practicing minimal involvement with surrounding society. The second option is exercised by the religious Zionists who affirm to modern technology, participate in democratic government willing to serve under a secular regime, while endeavoring to uphold religious law within the space afforded by the secular regime. Fundamentalism has its antecedents in second approach but adopts a posture of militancy towards the secular order. This arises out of an innate conviction that history has gone awry. "What went wrong with history is modernity in its various guises. The calling of the fundamentalist, therefore, is to make history right again." The nature of Jewish fundamentalism involving the Gush and other movements in the 1980s (to be discussed in the next chapter) encompass most of the characteristics elucidated by the analysts above.

Continuing adherence to religious belief is intimately related to the nature and origin of religious truth has a potential for justification in realms that the secular worldview does not; which is probably the reason for strident nature of its political expression. Secular Israelis are of course children of the Enlightenment, which introduces rationalism, and intends to deduce moral and factual propositions without recourse to divine authority. Inasmuch as rationalism contributed to the fostering of science, democracy, and rights, it

205 The Gush differ from the ultra-Orthodox in that the latter are characterized by their seventeenth century garb, their self-segregated neighborhoods, obsessive ritualism, and indifference or opposition to Zionism reflects commitments to isolate their way of life from the state of Israel. In contrast to the Haredim, the national religious, or Mizrahi, from which the Gush Emunim sprang, seek to integrate relatively strict observance of the Halakah with full participation in a modern, Zionist society. Its state-supported education 25-30 percent of Israeli Jewish children.

has its problems. The philosopher Jeffrey Stout, in analyzing the continuing appeal of
religion in the face of competing authority states that if God is not available as an epistemic
justification for Knowledge, through the fact and value distinction of the Enlightenment,
then nothing else is either. Stephen L. Carter summarizes his position: "After all, a rule for
how knowledge is justified is knowledge too, and it, too, must be justified—as must its
justification, and so on. Thus, Stout is worried about the possibility of an infinite regress of
justification needing justification, an epistemology that finally swallows itself."207 Theistic
apologists have capitalized on the philosophical weakness of liberal assumptions and insist
that God has to be the origin and referent of any affirmation, the ‘ground of all being’
thereby possessing the dimension of experiential relevance that secular philosophies lack.

Gush's Schema for Jewish History

The following sections would deal with an analysis of Gush Emunim's thought as
an adumbration of the kind of the Jewish fundamentalism that became more commonplace
in the 1980s. The ideologues of the movement saw the settlement activity as a precursor to a
spiritual rejuvenation of Jewry at large. This is merely one of the facets of its theology. A
review of the movement's spokesmen is undertaken here to illustrate the measure of
consensus in the religious right and to indicate the limits of political tolerance of these
intolerant tendencies with the system. The aims and objectives of the movement were laid
out over a period of time though a semblance of manifesto existed in the formative stages.
These ideals were arrived as a result of furious debates in the settlements which helped
seize the rhetorical high-ground vis-à-vis Labor Zionists.

The Gush's ideology mirrored the popular aspirations of Israelis still troubled by
the legacy of the Holocaust as it influenced their perceptions of physical well-being. The
Gush's debates took for granted the divine ordination of the conquest of the Land and
catched the imagination of the Israelis for a period of time at the least. Between and during

207 Jeffrey Stout, The Flight from Authority: Religion, Morality and the Quest for Autonomy, (South Bend:
University of Notre Dame Press, 1981) For a perspective on the problem of justification of religious and
secular knowledge see Stephen L. Carter, The Culture of Disbelief: How American Law and Politics Trivialize
campaigns, movement leaders met in innumerable conferences, engaging in soul-searching and heated debates on a vast spectrum of operative questions and guiding principles.

Shall we encourage members to refrain from striking Jewish policemen? Is it permissible to insult IDF generals? Shall we condemn our comrades who toyed with the notion of assassinating Secretary of State Kissinger? Shall we go as far as suicide in applying the precept of "devoting one's life" to the land and the people? Do we welcome delegations of well-wishers and supporters from kibbutzim, even if they travel to us on the Sabbath? Shall we cooperate closely with personalities and groups of questionable moral fiber for purposes of settling the Territories? Shall we temporarily suspend our sharp differences of opinion with the prime minister and express solidarity with him as he faces the president of the United States and the nations of the world? Is the "brook of Egypt" which the Bible delineates as the southern boundary of Israel, Wadi El-Arish in the central of the Sinai peninsula, or is the Nile, far to the west? . . . 208

It is felt that though the movement is extra-establishment or anti-establishment, it essentially exposes the innermost impulses and inclinations of the establishment itself, itself constituting a cross-section of Israel's central complex of ideas and values. This is particularly relevant to establishment's attempt a traditional apologetic for its territorial aggrandizement. The Gush Emunim has rarely published a "manifesto" since it has numerous divisions concerning the final aim of the movement bound by the amorphous entity called the Land of Israel. It has mostly been content to popularize slogans laden with religious symbolism and coinciding the regnant wave of territorial maximalism. The closest it has come to a concrete program is an "amateurish position paper" released during its early years. Some of the excerpts include:

**Aims:** To bring about a great awakening of the Jewish people towards full implementation of the Zionist vision, realizing that this vision originates in Israel's Jewish heritage, and that its objective is the full redemption of Israel and of the entire world.

**Background:** The Jewish people is now engaged in a fierce struggle for survival in its land and for its right to full sovereignty therein. Yet we are witnessing a process of decline and retreat from realization of the Zionist ideal, in word and deed. Four related factors are responsible for this crisis: mental weariness and frustration induced by the extended conflict; the lack of challenge; preference for selfish goals over national objectives; the attenuation of Jewish faith. The latter is the key to understanding the uniqueness of destiny of the people and its land.

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208 Aran, n. 24, p. 278.
Principles of Action:
(a) Education and publicity (a link with Torah and Jewish ethics; love of the Jewish people and the Land of Israel; Zionist consciousness and the vision of redemption; national missions and fulfillment). (b) Love of Israel. (c) Aliyah [Jewish immigration to Israel]. (d) Settlement throughout the Land of Israel. (e) An assertive foreign policy. "Let us be strong on behalf of our people and the cities of our God, and the good Lord will do what is best. [2 Sam 10:12].209

Ian Lustick has used textual analysis of the writings of various Gush thinkers to illustrate the internal dynamics of the movement. An exegetical approach is also helpful in discovering whether the movement is an intellectual monolith or whether it is has diverse approaches beneath a minimalist consensus.

Lustick first examines the views of Rabbi Menachem Kasher, renowned scholar and author of numerous messianic tracts, and of Harold Fisch, formerly the rector of Israel's sole religious university Bar-Ilan, and whose has published the only systematic presentation of the fundamentalist worldview, to discover the ideological formulations of Jewish fundamentalists especially of the nationalist variety. He used this method both to glean the breadth of consensus and also reveal the range of disagreement within the hawkish religious Zionist camp. The heading under which he categorizes their beliefs are reminiscent of other analysts in their dealings with fundamentalism. Fundamentalism as a genus has certain pervasive characteristics of which conflict with modernity, the corrective for history and the implacable hostility of the "other" are common denominators. In that sense, the Gush Emunim attempts to maintain continuity with mainstream Jewish thought while using selective traditions to justify its territorial agenda. Some of the salient postulates are reviewed here.210

The Abnormality of the Jewish People. Gush Emunim reiterates the structural predisposition towards anti-Semitism of the gentiles made famous by secular thinkers like Herzl, Leo Pinsker etc., and roots such sentiments within religious tradition by the skillful and selective use of the Hebrew Bible narratives. In typical Kookist style, Kasher attributes the annexation of the Land as an natural consequence of divine election by citing the

209 ibid., p. 290.

210 The following section is abstracted from the chapter "The Worldview of Jewish Fundamentalism: The Breadth of Consensus," in Lustick n. 8, pp. 72-90.
biblical verse: "And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after
thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God to thee and to thy seed
after thee. And I will give to thee and thy seed after thee the land in which thou dost
sojourn, all the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God."

The logical and practical implication of such chosenness in temporal reality is very
quickly assumed. Evidently it frees them from the moral laws that other nations are joined
to keep by virtue of their non-election. Lustick quotes an article entitled "Messianic
Realism" by Shlomo Aviner who explains that Jewish values are
not an autonomous scale of values, the product of human reason, but rather an
heteronomous or, more correctly, theonomous scale rooted in the will of the Divine
architect of the universe and its moral order. From the point of view of mankind's
humanistic morality we were in the wrong in (taking the land) from the Canaanites. There
is only one catch. The command of God ordered us to be the people of the Land of Israel.211

Fisch repudiates the attempts of labor Zionism to normalize Jewish existence by reaching a
measure of understanding with the gentilic world. Fisch believes that "the idea that the
Jewish nation is a normal nation and ought to be treated as such by the so-called
international community... is the original delusion of secular Zionism."

The Futility of Arab Opposition: Gush Emunim views the conflict with the Arabs as the
latest episode in Israel's battle to overcome the forces of evil. In fact, Israeli wars are
interpreted as furthering the cause of Redemption. Fisch dismisses the Palestinians as the
exact opposite of the Jewish people. While the Jews are authorized by God to enjoy
inalienable rights to the land of Israel, the Palestinians have no legitimate claims to nation-
hood, and indeed the land will disgorge them as it was mentioned of those in the Old
Testament who contested the right of the Jews to the promised land. The Palestinians are
said to be fulfilling their "deathwish" or displaying suicidal tendencies by opposing God's
mandate concerning Israel. Gush rabbis and ideologues regularly refer to the local Arabs as
"Canaanites" or "Ishmaelites" both of whom have proscribed status in the Hebrew
scriptures. The land was stripped from the Canaanites and given over to the Hebrews by
God and Ishmael happened to be the illegitimate son of Abraham who was expelled from
his household at the behest of his wife Sarah. Thus Kook Jr. cites the medieval authority

211 ibid., p. 76.
Maimonides to the effect that the Canaanites had three choices — to flee, to accept Jewish rule, or to fight. From this general principle Hanan Porat infers that it is a duty to wage a merciless war against the Arabs in the Land of Israel who reject Jewish sovereignty. This is the notion of abnormality of the Jewish condition adjusted to the reality of the state of Israel. Shlomo Aviner writing of the irrevocable divide between the Jews and the goyim (gentiles).

We experienced the opposition of the goyim to the state of Israel even before it was established. The enmity which the peoples of the world show toward the Jewish people has been present throughout history. Its like has not been shown to any other people . . . it goes beyond all historical or rational explanations. Various economic, sociological, explanations have even been advanced to explain the European holocaust. We don't deny them, but they certainly do not suffice. It simply must be recognized that there is an inner instinctual enmity on the part of the nations of the world toward the Jewish people . . . Hitler, may his name be blotted out, expressed openly this essential enmity that he felt toward the Jewish people, an enmity that went beyond any rational explanation. Said the despised one: "The Jewish people and I cannot exist in the same world." The source of this kind of enmity is that in the final analysis our moral values contradict the basis upon which the peoples of the world build their lives. In our essence we negate their values. If we are right, that means the foundations of their lives are shattered. We have no intention of harming them, but we do not negate their way of life, and this fact causes them to be our enemies.

Consistent with this view is also the assumption that true peace is not a viable option. Religious nationalists believe that any peace which is mediate and enforced by international power politics is bound to fail. The true peace is that which will accompany the coming of the Messiah. Kook decried Camp David arrangements. Probably the most important tenet in the fundamentalist worldview is its attachment to the land. To the extent that critics accuse the Gush of having an idolatrous fixation to territory. However, this feature is what has lately united Orthodoxy of all hues. Fisch claims that the covenant between God and the Jewish people is actually a contract with three partners.

The Covenant rests on a triad of relationships: God, land, and people. The land is holy only because God chooses to dwell in it and chooses that we should dwell in it with him. Take away the theological dimensions and Zionism itself turns to ashes.
Aran summarizes an amalgam of Gush's views on the Land:

The Land of Israel within its biblical borders has a lofty internal quality. Every bit of territory, every clump of earth, is the holy of holies, as the Torah declares. This holiness is also derived from the nature of redemption. Redemption means sovereignty over the entire Promised Land. Therefore, any declaration or deed by any government in the world, including that of Israel, which contests our hold on the Territories liberated in the holy war, has no validity and is considered null and void. In contrast, all weapons of the army which conquers and defends our land are of spiritual value and are as precious as religious articles. An IDF rifle and tank have the same value as the prayer shawl and phylacteries; soldiers are as important as Talmudic scholars, and settlers are a particularly saintly group. (emphasis added)

To this end, one of the movement’s principal strategies is the biblicization of Territories which are easily accessible to Israelis, just as across the former border, only a few minutes from their homes. The area includes Shechem (Nablus), Hebron, Anatot, Shiloh, Beit-El (Bethel), and other well-known sites mentioned in the Holy Scriptures which denote the ancient land of the biblical Patriarchs. The adverse international reaction to Intifada did not deter the Gush from rekindling the torch of faith by stressing the religious significance of the Territories.

Given the divine mandate for the territory, there need be no more moral compunctions restraining the Gush in reclaiming the Land. The Gush perceives settlement in Judea and Samaria not only as restoration of the Zionist spirit but also as tikkun—the kabbalistic (a style of Jewish mysticism) concept of healing, repairing, and transforming the entire universe. Consequently, the movement’s activism on the national level is an axis for a cosmic revolution, with universal implications. This formula solves the inherent paradox in GE’s message, as reflected in a claim by Moshe Levinger.

Settlement of the entire Land of Israel by the Jewish People is a blessing for all mankind, including the Arabs. Jewish settlements in the midst of local population centers are motivated by feelings of respect and concern for the Palestinians’ future. Consequently if we meet the Arabs’ demand for withdrawal, we will only encourage their degeneration and moral decline, whereas enforcing the Israeli national will on the Arabs will foster a religious revival among them, eventually to be expressed in their spontaneous desire to join in the reconstruction of the Third [Jewish] Temple. We [the Israelis] must penetrate the
Casbahs of cities in Judea and Samaria and drive our stakes therein for the good of the Arabs themselves.217

For the likes of Porat, there is no need for an incremental approach to the land or for the formulation of any security oriented apologetic.

There is no moral blemish in our declaration, once and for all, that the land of the Jewish people by virtue of God's command engraved in iron and blood, as Rabbi Kook of blessed memory has said.218

Rabbi Haim Druckman, an member of the Knesset, from Tehiya used similar imagery when railing against the withdrawal from Sinai.

Who does not feel the shock that has gripped every settlement in the land of Israel, every family on the land, and every true pioneer? Who has not heard their cries, the cry of the land, over the sons that are about to be separated from her? . . . the uprooting of settlements in the Land of Israel is the severing of the limb from a living body. These settlements are the essence of our existence and flesh of our flesh. We shall not accept the amputation of our living flesh.219

Another critical feature of the fundamentalist mind-set is the attempt to view current history as the unfolding of the redemption process. Like any religious system, especially in the Semitic mold, which believes in the inerrancy of the word, adherents to a faith believe in the direct access to transcendental events and perceive temporal events as metaphors of symbolic narratives on a transcendental level. In other words, current realities are mere shadows of a cosmic drama leading to a definite end as foreseen by religious scriptures. Political trends, events are understood to be signs of confirmation or censure or taken as divinely ordained. Eliezer Schweid, one of GE's erudite apologists and on the faculty of Hebrew University says that:

The weight of the opinion of those who know the truth about the burgeoning of Redemption, a truth discerned through the study of the Torah, is greater than the weight

217 ibid., p. 292.

218 Quoted in Lustick, n. 8, p. 84.

219 ibid., p. 85.
of the opinions of leaders who do not see anything but what exists in the present and can only guess at the future.\textsuperscript{220}

The empowering reality of the state of Israel has enabled the religious nationalists to interpret the holocaust in Europe in ultra-orthodox terms but with the proviso that, that interpretation will impel the Jews to obey God's call concerning the land. Harold Fisch reckons that the Holocaust was God's tragic reminder to the Jews, that their future does not lie in the promise of secular enlightenment and assimilation but in the foreordained fulfillment of their covenant with the land of Israel. The Holocaust is seen as God's way of guiding them to the holy land. Kasher has argued, in a sleight of 'theomastics' (a numerical interpretation of theology) that the fact that the Holocaust has claimed more Jewish lives than the previous catastrophes like the destruction of the First and Second Temple, adumbrates "the birthpangs of the Messianic Age . . . and thus opened the way to the redemption."\textsuperscript{221}

GE thinkers dissolve by associating ancient myths and values with current events. The wars of 1967 and 1973 show that it is not "only in darkness and disaster that the God of Israel speaks, demanding an answer. He speaks also though the great acts of deliverance. Thus Rabbi Harold Fisch, compared the Six Day War to the Israelite crossing of the Red Sea on the way out of Egypt around 1300 B.C. The War was "truly a religious moment," containing "the sudden experience of sudden illumination. It was a triumph by which Jews were not only delivered from mortal peril but also restored to Jerusalem and to cities of "Judah." He also interprets the 1973 war as God's admonition to his people to reconcile themselves to the abnormality of their condition. Emphasizing the date of the attack - on Yom Kippur War, the Day of Judgment or the Day of Atonement - the prevalent worldwide isolation of Israel that attended the oil embargo, the genocidal intent of the "Arab onslaught," and the UN General Assembly resolution equating Zionism with racism, Fisch interprets as signs of the unimpeachable contradiction between the Arabs and the Israelis.

\textsuperscript{220} ibid., p. 85.

\textsuperscript{221} ibid., p. 86.
Launched on Yom Kippur, at the most sacred hour of the Jewish year, it was a challenge to the Jewish calendar and all that it stood for, namely, the whole historical pilgrimage of the Jewish people, this covenant destiny. A metaphysical shudder, as it were, passed though the body of Israel. No longer was it possible to affirm with any confidence that we were engaged in a normal conflict with a normal enemy.

Porat claimed that "working in a settlement is a spiritual uplift, an antidote to the materialism and permissiveness which have swept the country." Waldman polemicizes:

In 1967, God gave us a unique opportunity. But the Israelis did not seize it. They did not colonize the newly conquered Land. They left all the options open. It is as if they had refused the offer of the Almighty while thanking him. Therefore, God inflicted upon Israel the sufferings of the Yom Kippur war.

Inasmuch as the Gush has a God-intensive theology they are not fatalists. They believe that they have been chosen as instruments of God to work out his redemption of the world through the exemplary obedience of the commandments by the Jews. The settling effort just happens to be the most important mitzvah (commandment) at this juncture of history. No Jewish leader has been clearer about the decisiveness of Jewish action and belief, and the need to resist any gentile influence on the formulation or implementation of Jewish national policy, than Zvi Yehuda Kook.

There is no reason to pay attention to all the confusion of mankind produced by the transient nations of the world. Such petty confusions- who takes account of them? Think not of what happens outside, only put ourselves and our land in order, hearkening to the word of God and of his prophets. No state nor council of state has any right or authority whatsoever to interfere in the internal affairs of our state or in our settlement of our land. Our State has armed forces praised and admired throughout the world; neither do we depend on aid or intervention by any foreign power. Our wonderful army is ready to fulfill its mission and sure of the success of all our efforts to strike roots in the land, to settle in all parts of the land of our fathers, the sovereign state of which our prophets, with no intervention by any other government in the military and political arrangements which we establish across the breadth of our land. And the Lord of hosts, the God of Jacob, will be with us and protect us.

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222 ibid., p. 87-88.

223 Mergui and Simonnot, n. 181, p. 126.

224 ibid., p. 114.

225 Quoted in Lustick, n. 8, p. 90.
A fluid political situation is a ripe situation for extremist politics, and therefore, the Gush's formulation created a niche in Israeli discourse and pushed the Orthodoxy, along with its political machinery, into the fold of nationalism. This not only pushed the nation's agenda on to the right because of the alliance with the Likud but also radicalized religious establishment and the dissident ultra-orthodox world. "In according the Territories a mystical-messianic value, the Gush has pushed both conventional nationalism and normative religion in this direction. The movement embodies a Jewish revivalism conducted in the manner of ultra-Zionist activism: a genuine religious movement which adheres to an extreme politics of ethno-nationalism, the Gush calls for and militantly implements a Zionist renaissance. It thus signifies a Zionist and Jewish revolution and implies an revolution within Zionism and within Judaism. Behind the innovation in nationalism lurks an innovation in Judaism: Gush Emunim introduces a novel religious conception which transcends and confronts Orthodoxy. As such, it challenges Israeli identity no less than it threatens Palestinian being.226

The appeal of the Gush goes beyond the novelty of its political posturing with its combination of settlement drives, clarion calls intended to embarrass the religious and political leadership, and intense political lobbying. It has to do with the reinterpretation of religious tradition suitably adapted to modern conditions in order to remove the archaic veneer that Judaism suffers from because of its legalistic motivations in the eyes of the secular world. In other words, the Gush imparted a measure of psychological empowerment to the religious Jews vis-à-vis the secular Israelis. By wresting the political initiative in the field of territorial demands, religious Jews cold now believe that the rest of the realms of Israeli experience lay open to capture as well.

This it achieved by holding on to its identity as a religious phenomenon. The Gush by self-definition is a religious movement of professed practicing believers who are religious teachers, clerics, or students and their families. "To gain a full understanding of the moment's structure and dynamics, political science in its narrow sense will not suffice. Derived from energies released by an experience reminiscent of Hasidic worship, Gush's

226 Aran, n. 24, p. 294.
activism is structured on a ceremonial paradigm shaped during the genesis of the movement, while its logic was more expressive than instrumental. This activism is rationalized in terms of an esoteric kabbalistic (a form of Jewish mysticism) dialectic, while in this constraints, it adheres to rabbinical decisions grounded in halakhic law. After all, as the activist-believers themselves claim, hunger strikes before the Knesset building and even lobbying among minor apparatchiks in the Knesset cafeteria are tantamount to prayer and study of the Torah. Therefore the Gush is in Hebrew lexicon a kind of a teshuva (return) movement which marks the return of many Jews to religion.

Thus we have seen that is distinctive for its animus to the Arabs in its search for the fulfillment of the divine territorial mandate, it seeks to impose its agenda on the secular sphere, it has adopted the Zionist and logically extended its assumption by placing the latter's credibility as being dependent on religious tradition. This is crucial because in the final analysis, because of its political influence (as has been seen and more will be seen) it has indeed given a fresh perspective to Zionism. As the cliché has it, Zionism has never been the same after the rise of the Gush.

The simultaneous attack on the theory and practice of secular Zionism and Judaism has helped the Gush to gain precedence over both. For the Gush shares the popular perception that Judaism is based on three foundations, namely the Torah of Israel, the People of Israel, and the Land of Israel. Haredim (the ultra-Orthodox) and secular Jews agree that the Gush accords too much importance to the Land; the former claim that it supplants emphasis on the Torah, whereas the latter assert that it takes precedence over the people. The activist-believers are obviously capable of countering such accusations. They stress love of the Land of Israel obviously incorporates love of the people and the Torah in it. Then the "Gush Emunim adherents proceed to a counterattack, decrying the Haredim for focusing on Torah at the expense of the people and the land and denouncing the secular for concentrating on the people and the land at the expense of the Torah."228

The progress of the Gush represents a shift in Israel from a situation where the main focus of the religious representatives was to engage in "religious politics" to a

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227 ibid., p. 295.

228 ibid., p. 309.
condition where the condition of the faith may be described as "political religion." The end result for the Israeli polity is that because of the alliance between religion and nationalism and the kind of rhetoric that the political spectrum has been prone to since the June War, Judaism has emerged as being the central component of Israel's new civil religion to which we now turn. A review of the new civil religion will demonstrate the influence of religious nationalism on the Israeli establishment that cause a mutation in the values of the civil religion.

**The New Civil Religion**

The major attitudinal impact of the religious sector was its self-conviction that the liberation of the territories was divinely ordained. If the secular public did not view it with the same fervor, the religious enthusiasm made it easier to live with the moral dilemmas posed by it. In other words, the mystical reawakening took the sting of out of the embarrassment that secularized Israelis felt witnessing the situation of the territories. Celebrated writer and critic Amos Oz acknowledged the weakness of the secularist worldview when he said that "the Zionism of a man without religious belief must necessarily have rifts in its structure of principles." He conceded that the secularist must acknowledge that the Jews returned to Palestine was because of its resonance "with the belief in the promise and the promiser, the redeemer and the Messiah."  

This legitimating utility of religion rubbed off the political elite that was looking for canons of justification as regards its policies in the territories. In 1975 a special subcommittee of the Knesset's education committee was appointed to make recommendations to the Knesset on Israeli information abroad. The committee, that had two members of the Labor Party, noted in its draft conclusions: "The Bible must occupy a central place in Israeli information campaigns which must stress the right of the Jewish people to the Land of Israel and the basic principles of the Zionist idea."  

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230 *Ha'aretz*, 15 April 1975, in Hebrew, Cf. Liebman and Don-Yehiya, ibid., p. 130.
The need to justify the occupation in traditional terms was inevitable as the people were tiring of the scale of demands that the state was placing on them at the same time failing in providing them the symbol system that made the sacrifices worth it. The Israelis lend more tangible deference to the state than probably any other western democracy in terms of taxes and military service. "Traditional Judaism now appeared as an important foundation for Israel's legitimacy, especially since Israelis were being asked to make sacrifices for the sake of historical rights. Historical rights, in the case of Israel, necessarily evoke associations with the religious tradition of the Jewish people."231

Thus, "the new civil religion seeks to integrate and mobilize Israeli Jewish society and legitimate the primary values of the political system by grounding them in a transcendent order of which the Jewish people and the Jewish tradition are basic components."232 There are many indicators that traditional Judaism has penetrated the civil religion going by the emphases on the values derived from the interpretation of predominant myths of the society and evolving meaning of the ceremonials sanctioned by the state. This section will also look into the content of religious tradition within the instruments of socialization, namely the mass media, the army and the nation's political leaders.

The increased importance of the Jewish tradition is expressed in the increased use of religious symbols. Significantly, religious symbols penetrate the civil religion in their traditional formulation and not as transvalued or transformed version as was the case in the previous civil religions. Though, Israelis are being exposed to the traditional notions of religion by various neutral instruments of socialization, they are not getting more religious. The declining number in religious elementary schools suggest that the number of Israelis who define themselves as religious is declining.

One possible indicator of generational religiosity is to measure the proportion of school-age children in religious schools. Significantly, the proportion has continued to decline over the last 15 years. It continued to even decline between 1977 and 1984, when a representative of the NRP served as Minister of Education and religious school benefited

231 Liebman and Don-Yehiya, n. 31, p. 130.

232 ibid., p. 131.
from particularly favorable conditions. For example, the percentage of children in religious schools in grades 1 to 6 fell from 27.6 in 1977 to 25.0 in 1983.\textsuperscript{233} On the contrary, there is evidence that the off-spring of the non-religious are totally indifferent to the Jewish religious tradition in their private lives and appallingly ignorant of its foundations.\textsuperscript{234}

Unlike the previous civil religion like statism that articulated its myths and symbols within an implicit expectation of deference to the state, the new civil religion with its Judaic character expects no such affirmation to religious tradition. This is inevitable since new civil religion is serving a population that is not religious in the traditional sense. "The new civil religion affirms the importance of traditional Judaism as a component of Jewish identity and Jewish history, but it does not demand detailed religious practice, nor does it limit its own concerns to those of traditional Judaism."\textsuperscript{235} Thus the new civil religion essentially creates an ambience of tradition within which political life may be conducted.

The Bar Kokhba Controversy

One of Israel's civil religion's attempts has been to establish a historical continuity between the current Zionist state and ancient Palestine. The controversy over Bar Kokhba (d. AD 135), a Jewish messianic leader who led a bitter but unsuccessful revolt (AD 132-135) against Roman dominion in Palestine that cost around Jewish 580,000 lives, indicated the regime's resolve to establish such a link in the popular mindset.\textsuperscript{236}

The Jews revolted in 132 AD, led by Kokhba after the Roman Emperor Hadrian decided upon a policy of Hellenization to integrate the Jews into the empire. Circumcision was proscribed, a Roman colony (Aelia) was founded in Jerusalem, and a temple to the Roman deity Jupiter Capitolinus was erected over the ruins of the Jewish Temple.

\textsuperscript{233} Liebman, n. 3, p. 79.

\textsuperscript{234} On the interaction between secular and religious Israelis see Ephraim Tabory, "Living in a Mixed Neighborhood," in Charles S. Liebman, Religious and Secular: Conflict & Accommodation Between Jews in Israel (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 1990), pp. 113-129.

\textsuperscript{235} Liebman and Don-Yehiya, n. 31, p. 135.

\textsuperscript{236} The popularity and appeal of Kokhba's campaign is evident in the fact that the Revisionist Zionist youth movement started by Vladimir Jabotinsky, and later popularized by the leadership of Menachem Begin, was named Betar which was Kokhba's mountain-top fortification near Jerusalem.
Reputedly of Davidic descent, Kokhba was hailed as the Messiah by the greatest rabbi of the time, Akiva ben Yosef, who also gave him the title Bar Kokhba ("Son of the Star"), a messianic allusion. Bar Kokhba took the title of nasi ("prince") and struck his own coins, with the legend "Year 1 of the liberty of Jerusalem." Kokhba was killed at Betar in southwest Jerusalem. In 1952 and 1960-61 a number of Bar Kokhba's letters to his lieutenants were discovered in the Judean desert by the famed archaeologist and later Deputy Prime Minister Yigal Yadin.

The manipulation of Kokhba's letters to legitimize Israeli ideology and the values of conflict derived from his life drew criticism from Yehoshofat Harkabi, a former head of Military Intelligence and subsequently professor of international relations at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.237 The archaeological findings of the Jewish revolt were greeted with such fanfare that they were presented to the President of Israel Yitzhak Navon by Yadin with the words: "Your Excellency, I am honored to be able to tell you that we have discovered fifteen dispatches written or dictated by the last president of ancient Israel 1800 years ago."238 (emphasis added)

Harkabi disputed the attempt of the Israeli establishment to seize the myth and use it as an instrument of extreme nationalism. He contended that Bar Kokhba ought to be held up as a dread example to be shunned at all cost, as an object of terror, as an embodiment of a collective death wish, as a prime case of the false messianism usually dormant but always immanent within the Jewish collective consciousness. Harkabi argued that the prevalent Israeli trend to hold on to the territories despite an antagonistic Palestinian population, not to mention the perpetual hostility of the surrounding Arab regimes, is as foolhardy a strategy as the Bar Kokhba rebellion who took an immensely powerful war machine such as the Roman Empire.

Harkabi counsels on the wisdom of territorial concessions as opposed to a drift in the Arab-Israeli dispute that threatens the moral and intellectual fiber of Israeli society. Harkabi says the preoccupation with land, settlement, that was sanctioned by recourse to

237 For a review of the controversy see Jonathan Frankel, "Bar Kokhba and All That," Dissent, Winter 1984, pp. 192-202

238 ibid., p. 194.
mystical significance was leading to "the primitivization of political thinking among a large section of the Jewish population (in Israel)." Significantly, Bar Kokhba has been rediscovered by Israeli 'spin-doctors' to suit the canons of nationalism, overlooking the fact that rebellion and its leader are referred to infamously in Jewish religious tradition.

Harkabi lamented the fact that an extraordinary amount of time was given over to the Bible, which is taught to children a few days of the week throughout their 11 years of their schooling. Unlike the founding fathers of Israel who were reared through a many-sided curriculum, with a combination of Jewish tradition and social democratic thought, no concerted attempt is there to ensure that kind of balance in Israeli schools.

Certainly, very little time in Israeli schools is devoted to the study of the democratic system and the history of democracy, or to the Israeli declaration of independence. There is no concerted effort to depict modern Israel for what it is ... the product of Jewish history in both ancient Palestine and in the Diaspora, of both national tradition and Western modernity, of both the rebellion against Greece and Rome and of the Greco-Roman civilization.

The primitivization of political thinking has been initiated through the perpetration of a myth that considers Joshua and King David as more meaningful symbols than any liberal thinkers like John Stuart Mill or Alexia de Tocqueville. Harkabi's wager was disputed heatedly in journalistic and academic circles that was led primarily by Israel Eldad who authored a small Hebrew volume on the subject, *A Controversy: Our Perceptions on the Destruction of the Second Temple and of Bar Kokhba's Revolt*. Eldad's essential counter was that Harkabi's repudiation of the nation's heroes amounts to a spiritual self-mutilation that does not account for the historical relevance of fighting the odds. He pointed out that the Zionist movement itself was considered a dangerous fantasy.

Harkabi's critics state that there is not a modern nationalism that has not taken recourse to myth and thus derive the value that a movement like Zionism emerged under such trying conditions that myths were necessary to elicit total dedication to the idea of national liberation. The Bar Kokhba myth is not merely to indicate the role of courage but

239 ibid., p. 200.

exalt his motives of attaining sovereignty and thus is a model for those seeking to establish a continuity between the Second Temple Commonwealth and the current state of Israel. Eldad asked whether it is "possible to conceive of Italian or Greek nationalism divorced from the largely unsubstantiated theories of continuity between the modern and the classical age? Or can one imagine the German nationalist movement without the idealization of the Teutonic resistance to Rome..." 241

Changing Understanding of Political Myths

In similar vein, the growing importance of traditional Judaism and Jewishness is associated with the centrality of the Holocaust as the primary political myth of Israeli society. The understanding of the Holocaust as transmitted to the average Israeli tends to govern attitudes to Jewish-gentile relationships. The traditional Jewish view of Jewish-gentile relations is symbolically expressed in the phrase, "Esau hates Jacob," wherein Esau is the symbol of the non-Jew, Jacob a symbol of the Jew. A rabbinical tradition interpreting this passage from Genesis 33 that deals with the union of two estranged brothers, states that the kiss of Jacob by Esau is not a whole-hearted one. The principle of deceptive embrace is said to underlie any Jewish-gentile commerce. "Within religious tradition one of the sharpest antagonism to gentiles is found in the haggadah. After the grace is recited, the Jew is enjoined to rise, hold up his ceremonial cup of wine and pronounce four verses that begin, "Pour out Thy wrath upon the nations who know Thee not." 242 The tragedy of the Holocaust is not perceived in philosophical terms concerning the nature of human evil, but primarily localized to renew the belief that the tragedy is another indicator of the unremitting anti-Semitic impulse of the gentilic world.

Secular Zionism, aware of this tradition, attributed the gentilic antipathy to the homelessness of the Jews and assumed that it would disappear with political sovereignty. Zionists espoused the ideals of universalistic-humanism that were meant to be appropriated by the Israelis. However, the failure of secularism to forge a coherent symbol system consistent with the realities of independent Israel forced the Israelis to revert to the


242 Liebman and Don-Yehiya, n. 31, p. 139.
religious understanding of Jewish-gentile relations especially as the country was forced to reckon with the dastardly revelations of the Holocaust in the 1950s and 1960s.

Symbols not only serve to internalize values and ideology but also function as prisms through which events are perceived and recorded. There can be recalled to resonate mobilizing values, particularly in period of tense relations with Arabs. For instance, as an explanation to a Israeli raid on a terrorist base in Lebanon, one commanding officer said

I believe in one thing; that Esau hates Jacob. That is a given form that did not change and still exists today. And if it is given, its implications are that we must indeed defend borders. To defend ourselves every day. And in order to do it properly, one has to enter within, and strike the terrorists. everyone must see in this a holy service, a service to the Jewish people. For whoever enters the battle on its behalf is one of its servants.242

It is simplistic to believe that religious symbols by themselves evoke negative attitudes. They need to ally with circumstances. (The Israeli politico-military elite did not glean those values from religious tradition when the state was perceived as secure. Indeed, a measure of liberalism flourished was nurtured by leftist intellectuals manning the universities and the corridors of power.) The reality of the Holocaust, reinforced by the Six Day War and the Yom Kippur War, evoked an older, more traditional symbol system, which seemed to more adequately express Israeli condition.

There are many ways to relate to the Holocaust; as an expression of evil, as a reminder of the dangers of Nazism, about the world’s indifference to mass slaughter of the Jews, or of the inadequacy of delayed opposition to totalitarianism. Many of these perspectives are expressed in Israeli Holocaust literature, but the greater propensity is to view the Holocaust in terms of Israel against the Nations. This was evident by the widespread reaction to the 1973 War that resulted in the brokering of an agreement by the United States and the Soviet Union. American support to Israel was glossed over and construed as self-interest while the support of the European peoples, in opposition to the stance of their governments, was not perceived by most Israelis. "Widespread acceptance of the hostile world image is neither an elitist trick, nor the result of manipulation. It finds

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242 Maariv, 22 August 1980, Cf. ibid.
acceptance, however, partly because it is consistent with symbols deeply embedded into the culture of the people.\textsuperscript{244}

Respondents to an opinion poll were asked what, in their opinion, was the most important lesson to be learned from the Holocaust. 58 percent of the sample felt the major lesson was either that all the Jews in the Diaspora should come to Israel, or that there was a need for a strong and established, sovereign state. An additional nine percent felt that it meant that there was no security in the Diaspora. Only 25 percent put the lesson of the Holocaust in general Jewish terms without mentioning Israel (the need for Jewish unity, self-defense, and self-reliance, or the need to be attentive to any evidence of anti-Semitism), and only 4 percent in universalist terms (the need to fight against antidemocratic tendencies etc.). In other words, the Holocaust signified the insecurity of the Jewish life in the Diaspora and the need for a Jewish state.\textsuperscript{245}

The symbol that relates the Holocaust to Israel's self-perception, and to the Jewish tradition's perception of Judaism's eternal condition, is the biblical phrase "a people that dwells alone (Numbers 23:9)." Yosef Tikoah, former Israeli ambassador to the United Nations, announced that Israel "should not be influenced by what\textit{ New York Times} or any other paper writes." In reply to the Soviet Ambassador who commented on how isolated Israel was, Tikoah replied, "You the ambassador of the Soviet Union have never read our history. We have always been a small and isolated nation, different and apart. It has not deterred us from our life and our destiny."\textsuperscript{246}

The infusion of religion into civil religion is also witnessed in the portrayal of the Masada myth. Esau hates Jacob is reiterated in this myth. Statism preferred to infer the values of courage and valor and instituted the event as a symbol by making it a site of pilgrimage for Israeli students. The recruits of the Israeli Armed Corps swear their oath of allegiance with the words: "Masada shall not fall again." Masada represents the realization

\textsuperscript{244} Liebman and Don-Yehiya, n. 31, p. 143.

\textsuperscript{245} ibid., p. 145.

\textsuperscript{246}\textit{Jerusalem Post}, 12 January 1976.
of the threat presented throughout Jewish history, being a symbol of pogroms and of the Holocaust.

The Celebrations of the Civil Religion: Holocaust Day

The emphasis in this section will be on how the symbols of traditional Judaism and Jewish peoplehood have penetrated the celebrations of the new civil religion. The important of the Holocaust in the socialization of Israeli youth and as an instrument of introduction to Israeli life is the importance accorded to Yad Vashem, the country most famous Holocaust memorial and museum located in Jerusalem. "It is maintained as a religious location. Visitors are expected to cover their heads in accordance with religious custom. . . . Israeli schools devote much attention to the Holocaust, and classes visit Yad Vashem as well as other places dedicated to the memory of the civilization that the Nazis destroyed."247

Major events commemorating the Holocaust occur on Heroes and Martyrs Remembrance Day. All places of amusement are closed. Schools and the army have their own commemorative occasions; regular television shows are preempted and special programs devoted to the Holocaust are shown. A siren is sound throughout the country that is observed by a two-minute silence by all Jews in memory of the six million who perished in the Shoah. "The Holocaust is so laden with religious symbolism and association that it evokes and strengthens a sensitivity to the religious tradition and the Jewish people. Death naturally evokes religious associations and there is hardly any way to celebrate the memory of the dead without utilizing some religious symbols."248 Since Israelis are used to the Zionist imagery that Jews died defenseless in the Shoah, the image that conceivably arises out of a reference to the Holocaust must be that of a religious Jew and not that of a socialist fighter.

Religious symbols have permeated other national holidays such as Independence Day. "The evolving civil religion in Israel seeks to sacralize expressions of Jewish moralistic nationalism connected with the state and to infuse into those expressions traditional


248 Liebman and Don-Yehiya, n. 31, p. 153.
religious forms."249 There was always a degree of this, even when the most secularist halutzim took Jewish festivals and reinterpreted them along lines that gave expression to the values of Zionist revival. In recent years, celebrations that once were entirely secular when they relied upon adaptations of traditional Jewish forms are being infused with Jewish religious symbolism and modes of behavior. For example, Israeli Independence Day has increasingly taken on the elements of a national holiday. It is expected that the president of the state and the prime minister will go to evening and morning religious services on that day that include recitation of traditional prayers of praise and thanksgiving for Israel's independence.250 Those services, parts of the regular daily prayer cycle, now include recitation of traditional prayers of praise and thanksgiving for Israel's independence. Since 1963, one of the major events has been the Bible quiz, which involves high school competitors from throughout Israel and the Diaspora. The final competition on Independence Day is televised.

Significantly, religious holidays are being invested with national meaning. "The penetration of traditional religious symbols into the culture of Israeli society and their incorporation into the civil religion is nowhere more pronounced than in the kibbutzim. One observer has said, "If secular Judaism has in Israel one outstanding civilian institution to witness to its character and the nature of its achievement, it is the collective agricultural settlement, the kibbutz."251

The kibbutzim were known for the transvaluation of religious symbols from early days of the Yishuv. For instance, Shavuot, the festival of weeks, which commemorates the giving of the Torah in traditional Judaism was celebrated as a harvest festival in the kibbutzim. Kibbutzim were known to enact dances and rituals emphasizing the produce of the land. By the late 1960s, kibbutzim were observed to observe the festival with a more traditionalist bent involving a rabbinical speech and so on.


250 Elazar, n. 249, p. 104.

An analysis of the bulletins that are published by each kibbutz from 1948 to 1972 revealed that the percentage of religious material in the bulletins increased from zero in 1948 to around 40 percent in 1956, then remained fairly constant until the 1970s, when it jumped to 47 percent in 1971 and 53 percent in 1972. One kibbutz member lamented the lack of a symbol system that facilitated the reintegration of religion into secular Zionist discourse.

We wanted to create in the Land of Israel, a free Jewish nation, a nation whose culture is original, a worker's culture ... and when we look back over forty years and we ask ourselves, as the kibbutz movement, and the State in general, succeeded in creating a different original culture that could stand against the religious culture based on the tradition and the faith – I think that with some isolated exceptions the answer is no ... I think in the present situation there is no alternative but a serious return to the tradition.

The Western Wall

The Western Wall has emerged as the most sacred symbol of Israel's civil religion. The Western wall in Jerusalem is the last remnant of the ancient Jewish temple and evokes national and religious glory of the past. It was a symbol of Jewish yearning in the Diaspora. Before 1948, the Arabs evidently harassed Jews by scattering broken glass through the alleys, dumping garbage and human excrement on the way to the site thus making the site a symbol of Jewish degradation by their enemies. Jordan, which controlled the Old City of Jerusalem till 1967, constantly violated the agreement to permit access to Jews for worship. The whole nation celebrated its liberation in 1967 with a photograph of a paratrooper weeping at the Wall capturing its imagination and clinching the sanctity of the site in the minds of Israelis.

The Wall, being the remnant of a temple evokes religious association and the rules of conduct expected at the site are religious in character. Men and women have separate entrances, men wear a yarmulke or a hat and women are asked to cover their hair. There is a library adjacent with religious books that individual borrow to recite and pray. Paper

252 Liebman and Don-Yehiya, n. 31, p. 157.


In pieces containing prayer requests to God are tucked between the stones. Elite army units after taking their oath in Masada reaffirm their oath at the Wall renewing the close association between nation and religion.

Transmission of Civil Religion

The civil religion is in some sense a folk religion. It finds its wellsprings in the hearts and minds of a majority of Israelis, and the people expect those public institutions that transmit the culture to transmit the essential tenets of the civil religion. "To a great extent, the symbols of which we spoke, the rituals, ceremonials, myths, and holy places associated with the civil religion, serve the function of socialization." There are however neutral instruments of socialization that serve to transmit the civil religion without necessarily partaking of it.

The Mass Media

Israeli papers have increased their religious content over the years. The articles of two leading Hebrew dailies Maariv and Ha’Aretz during the period 1950-1974 were analyzed and classified as religious and non-religious by a student of the Bar-Ilan University. Religious articles were considered to be those which presented religious tradition in positive light and non-religious as those that treated religion in value neutral terms, considering its historical or psychological aspects. Between 1950 and 1958, 60 percent of the articles were religious; from 1959 to 1966, 73 percent were religious and from 1967 to 1974 the figure was 80 percent. Words bearing religious connotations were counted in Davar, a pro-government newspaper, and Maariv during two months period in 1967 (prior to the war), 1968, 1972, and 1974. The words and expressions considered as religious in character included God, holy, Messiah, shofar, land of the fathers, promised land, yeshiva, belief, Jewish destiny, eternity, Land of Israel, or religious experience. The number of such words increased in both papers from year to year. In 1967 the total was 61; in 1968, 100; in 1972, 131; and in 1974, 356. There was more coverage of religious soldiers in the mass media.

25 Leibman and Don-Yehiya, n. 31, p.167.
in the early seventies after their zeal caught the attention of the army commanders and the public.256

The Education System

There is a widespread agreement in Israel that the schools have failed to instill in the youth either sufficient knowledge of, or necessary commitment to, the Jewish people, the Jewish tradition or to the State of Israel itself in the state-run schools. This is rather surprising since the government instituted the Jewish Consciousness Program in schools in 1957 establishing guidelines stressing the importance "of rooting the youth in the nation's past and in its historical inheritance and increasing their moral attachment to world Jewry. Schools were instructed to intensify studies of the Jewish tradition, Jewish history, and Diaspora Jewry. This policy was not implemented satisfactory even though the Knesset established a unified public education system in 1953 that abolished the older system that had labor, general and religious trends existed side by side.257

The Jewish Consciousness Program, in the opinion of Zalmane Aranne, the Minister of education and culture, as essential for "the national education of the Hebrew nation" in view of the surge of new immigration, the prosaic image of the state, the lack of experienced teachers, the sacrifices the youth might be called to upon to make. Note the fact that religion was viewed as a legitimating factor for the survival of the state well before the 1967 War. The additions to the schools' curriculum was debated intensely with various guidelines being circulated to the schools with the result that the Program emphasized the Bible in the perspective of the Jewish tradition.258 The number of hours devoted to the Talmud was increased. Apart from the enhanced religious content in the curriculum, visits to memorials and observance of holidays reflected the emphases of the Program. The Program has succeeded to the extent that it has facilitated the consensus among the youth that Israel ought to be a Jewish state.

256 ibid., p. 168.

257 Defending the new law, the Minister of Education and Culture, Ben-Zion Dinur, described the trend system as an "ideological civil war organized by the state." ibid., p. 171.

258 For the debate over the efficacy of religious content in Israeli schools see ibid., pp. 171-174.
But the antipathy of the teachers led to a lack of awareness of religious tradition. Younger teachers were found to be sympathetic to the program whereas older teachers, socialized to different values were antagonistic. An indifferent pedagogy as regards religion, denies the authenticity of religion thus reducing the program to one about religion without transmitting any emotional response to Judaism and Jewish heritage.

The Army

The Israeli army is a conscript army. Most of its soldiers in peacetime are eighteen-to-twenty-one-year old citizens undergoing compulsory military service. The measure of religious education that the youth might miss out in schooling is compensated when serving in the army. The values of the new civil religion are transmitted through speeches by top officers, commanders' discussions with their men, lectures with outside speakers, special army chaplaincy campaigns. The emphases of army education is conveyed by *Information Guidelines to the Commander* that is distributed to all commanders. The publication itself reflects the new civil religion. For instance, in the issue devoted to the Holocaust Memorial Day, the commander is told to emphasize three points in the course of his discussion with his recruits.

1. The Zionist solution establishing the State of Israel was intended to provide an answer to the problem of the existence of the Jewish people, in view of the fact that all other solutions had failed. The Holocaust proved, in all its horror, that in the twentieth century, the survival of Jews is not assured as long as they are not masters of their fate and as long as they do not have the power to defend their survival.

2. A strong State of Israel means a state possessed of military, diplomatic, social, and economic strength, and moral character which can respond properly to every threat from outside and provide assistance to every persecuted Jew wherever he is. The consciousness of the Holocaust is one of the central forces which stand behind our constant striving to reach this strength and behind the solidarity and deep tie with Diaspora Jewry.

3. The bravery of the Jewish people in the Holocaust cannot be examined only through the question: did they fight? The examination contains within it a prior question: what is bravery? This must be explored in the light of the conditions under which Jews lived in World War II. Despite these conditions we are witness to Jewish rebellion and revolt when it was possible. Together with this, bravery was revealed in unfurling the banner of communal institutions, mutual help, education of the children, maintenance of the customs of Israel and its holidays, and in fostering the values of culture. By standing up under these conditions and refusing to surrender to despair the Jews made possible the continuation of the long chain of the Jewish people even in the inferno of the Holocaust and thereby helped in the creation of the State of Israel.
The stance of the Jews in the Holocaust reflects the moral and spiritual power which provides the basis for our stance in the continued conflict.259 (emphasis added)

The commander is subsequently reminded that "the destruction of the traditional community of Eastern Europe reduced the proportion of religious Jews among the Jewish people." During the 1970s, the officers' training course included lectures on the following topics: What is Judaism? The uniqueness of the Jewish people. The people and the land in a Jewish perspective. War and army in a Jewish perspective. The meaning of Jewish holidays in contemporary times. What is Kiddush HaShem?260 Is Judaism a religion, a way of life, or a constitution? The identity of the Jewish people.

All holidays observed by the army are inaugurated with candle lighting as enjoined by religious law, with special meals, a reading of the Bible and lectures appropriate to the holiday. In the 1970s, time was set apart for strengthening the officers' emotional attachment to Jerusalem, a traditional symbol for all the Land of Israel. The officers used to meet with students of Yeshivat Merkaz Harav, an advanced talmudic academy led by Zvi Yehudah Kook, the ideological progenitor of the Gush Emunim. The cadets all visited Yad Vashem as they do today. "The Jewish religion is incorporated into army life to a remarkable degree. The army has its own rabbinate, and its chief rabbi holds the rank of general. Religious equipment, such as prayer book, a Bible, a shawl, and even tephillin are distributed upon request."261

Statements by Political Leaders

The nation's political leaders are increasingly reflecting the values of the new civil religion in their pronouncements. Amos Elon noticed the recent "revival among secular politicians, socialists, and liberals of a curious quasi-religious piety. A kind of a sentimental religiosity has seized the former rebels against orthodox religion and talmudic observance. They do no necessarily return to the orthodox fold ... Their newly religiosity is of an

259 Information Guidelines to the Commander (April 1980), Cf. Liebman and Don-Yehiya, n. 31, p. 178.

260 A traditional term for public acts, including martyrdom, committed to sanctify the name of God. Israeli soldiers who die in battle are assumed to have died for Kiddush HaShem.

261 Liebman and Don-Yehiya, n. 31, p. 179.
atavistic, sentimental, almost mystical character." There seems of "a conscious effort to use tradition and traditional symbols to buttress the social order; to associate the symbols and the emotional resonance evoked by the religious tradition, Jewish history, and the Jewish people with the state; and to utilize Israelis' most precious associations with the state; and to utilize their commitments to the Jewish tradition and the Jewish people."  

This is well evident from the statement by President Ephraim Katzir: "The revelations of bravery and courage of Israeli soldiers in the Yom Kippur War stemmed from the spiritual inspiration of the religious tradition and moral and eternal values of the Jewish Bible." Prime Minister Rabin, who was perceived to be an agnostic, once told a religious audience:

I belong to those who were forced from an early age to engage more in matters of the sword than matters of the Book, but as the years passed I understand more and more the distinctive role in Jewish survival of study of the sources of the Talmud . . . . It is my impression that the Eternity of Israel has come from the spirit of two supreme values . . . study of Torah for its own sake . . . and the concept of talmid hacham [a master of sacred texts - a concept containing the notion of authority acquired by knowledge associated with ethical behavior].

The former chief of staff, Mordechai Gur, said:

Why is it so important to the Israeli army to extract fully and completely all the spiritual power inherent in the soul of the religious warrior? . . . The fact that for the religious warrior the Jewish people and the Land of Israel are supreme values in this world - this is what prevents any shadow of a doubt with respect to our right to live in this land in accordance with our tradition, in accordance with our moral values without excessive philosophizing and exaggerated and tasteless doubts. The obligation to belong to the Jewish people and this land strengthens the ties between the Israeli army and the Jewish people in the Land of Israel and between all the Jewish world . . . . For the religious soldier this is not only a way of religious command but a holy war. The readiness to fight is first and foremost an expression of the desire to live a full Jewish life. All this provides the religious soldier with much greater readiness to combine the sanctification of God in life with sanctification of God in death.


263 Liebman and Don-Yehiya, n. 31, p. 181.

264 ibid., p. 182.

265 ibid.

266 ibid., p. 183.
The civil religion that is emerging in Israel is said to be essentially Sadducean in character. At the time of the Second Jewish Commonwealth, the Jewish society was divided into three camps: Sadducees, Pharisees and Essenes. The former were the party of Jewish statehood in the sense that their Jewishness was principally expressed through the political institutions of the state and those religious institutions (such as the Temple and its priesthood) that were bound up with statehood. The Pharisees preferred individual piety and provided a system of religious behavior that could function without the existence of political sovereignty while the Essenes were an excluvist puritanical sect not given to subtleties of dealing with political forms. In contemporary Israel, religious forms are designed to bolster ties with the state and its institutions rather than treating the state and its institutions as handmaidens of the Jewish religious vision bringing it closer to the Sadducean model.

Fissures in the Right

The common goals could not, however, transcend all the differences amongst the right. The Gush Emunim's fanatics and zeal did not always acquiesce with the NRP and Likud realized that a party in power cannot implement all that it demanded when it was in the opposition. Ideally, the accession of the Likud to power in May 1977 was to be a fillip to the Gush Emunim. This did appear to be the case in the initial stages. The honeymoon soured as Begin, who admired the Gush, "insisted on maintaining the initiative, control, and credit for himself." The Gush, in turn, complained, but realized that it could not hope for a more convenient administration where indulgence over unilateral initiatives towards settlement was concerned. On the one hand, the government gave to the movement generously and encouraged it, while the other admonished it. In turn, the Gush acknowledged the government but violated its instructions and provoked and criticized it.

During these years the Gush did face reversals on their territorial expansions. The establishment of a settlement on a site near Rujeib village overlooking Nablus was a Gush

267 Elazar, n. 249, p.119.

Emunim response to the disclosure of plans for autonomy for the Arabs in the Territories as a preparation for Camp David accords. The Gush perceived these ventures as opening the door for a Palestinian state in Judea and Samaria. The Supreme Court, in October 1979, responding to the appeal of the local Arabs ruled that the settlement violated the appellant's rights and ruled that the land be returned to the owners.

In response to the Court's ruling the movement threatened violent opposition to evacuation and exerted pressure on the government, with the tacit approval of some Cabinet ministers. In the end, however, faced with the a determined stand by Prime Minister Begin and with increasing disapproval by the general public, the Elon Moreh settlement group left quietly, but not without exacting a price, namely, a government promise to reinforce settlement in the Territories and remove any remaining legal obstacles. When the government dragged its feet on the promise, settlement leaders began a well-publicized hunger strike in front of the Knesset. The government responded with a public declaration of a "settlement offensive" and massive appropriation of Arab-owned land, thus temporarily stilling settlers demands.

The incident reflected the Gush's animosity toward the Israeli legal system, which they perceive as a manifestations of all that is negative in secular Zionism. The Supreme Court is considered by the Gush to epitomize the liberal-universalistic worldview and seen as engaging in a petty and superficial legalism under the pretense of enlightenment. Gush Emunim's own illegalism, is presented as legitimate because it is motivated by utter loyalty to the nation and a deep understanding of its "genuine" needs.

The NRP's Young Guard, too, reconciled to the necessary discrepancy between rhetoric and reality, and the imperative of expanding its constituency as it moved to a central position in the party. Hammer having become Minister of Education and Culture, moderated his views. He consented to the peace process, conceded Egyptian sovereignty over all Sinai and emphasized the desirability of strengthened rather than establishing new ones.\(^{269}\) Ostensibly, the Youth faction apprehended that the Gush served its purpose of having the desired impact on intra NRP politics and that time had come for some realism. NRP's role in the government compelled it to maintain political realism and thereby

\(^{269}\) Roberts, n. 96, pp. 59-60.
disapprove of the Gush's modus operandi, whereas Gush Emunim being a religious movement and dictated by the imperatives of faith was not always inclined to defer to temporal considerations.

Hence Begin's participation in the peace process leading to Camp David with the approval of the NRP, caused fissures within the right and crystallized the distinction between the pragmatists and idealists in both the secular and religious camps. Yet there is no doubt that Begin contributed the traditionalization of Israel's civil religion. Begin's coalition fostered a kind of Jewishness in the Jewish state, which is quite different from the secular socialist Zionism of the labor camp. As critic Daniel Elazar wrote: "In this respect, Begin has become the embodiment of the official expression of Israel's civil religion and the transformation of that civil religion into one that draws heavily upon Jewish religious expression in its traditional form." 270

The next chapter will examine the dynamics of a relationship that soured and its impact on the course of Jewish fundamentalism and Israeli politics from the 1980s till the Rabin's assassination.

270 Elazar, n. 249, p. 115.