CHAPTER IV
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FROM REDEMPTION TO ROUTINE: THE RELIGIOUS RIGHT TILL THE RABIN ASSASSINATION

The previous chapter had reviewed the infusion of religious symbols into Israel's civil religion, that created an within ambience in which religious radicalism could co-exist and flourish as part of Israeli society. Increasing cultural comfort with the language of Judaism, aided by the "recovery" of nationalist texts, was accompanied by the switching of political allegiance of the religious parties to the secular nationalist policies of Menachem Begin's Likud party. The National Religious Party (NRP), now controlled by those sympathetic to the Gush Emunim, became a part of the ruling coalition led by the Likud. Israeli politics is conducted within a highly charged atmosphere as it ruminates on the Arab-Israeli dispute that dominates any substantive policy consideration. Begin had come to power in 1977 less than four years after the traumatic Yom Kippur War, that defined the agenda of the country's collective pursuit of meaning. As the stereotypical portrayal of the modern, Westernized secular individual goes, secular Israelis were not likely to be vexed about issues of identity and Israel's future. And yet, they were led on by the religious right to reckon with realities as they defined them. The tumult over the liberation of Judea and Samaria and the subsequent ambivalences of the political elite concerning the occupied territories rendered a higher profile to the religious right led by the Gush Emunim that garnered attention because of its clear-cut nature of its vision and plans for the future.

Begin gained political power by inadvertently capitalizing on the national wave of mystical longing for the biblical lands and the support of Sephardic Jews. The switch to the right in Israeli politics was decisive, and by hindsight, quite surprising since only a couple of decades ago the society recoiled at the idea of ultranationalism and illiberalism owing to the experience of the Holocaust. As mentioned before, the cleavage within the right was created with the endorsement of the Arab-Israeli peace accords at Camp David. In the forthcoming sections we will see how divisions within the Right led to the formation of the radical right which was, for most part, a tacit alliance between secular nationalists and religious nationalists, a process already fleshed out expertly by the Gush Emunim. The
assumptions and the political clout of the radical right will be considered against the backdrop of increasing unrest in the occupied territories. This chapter will also consider the changing tenor of ultra-Orthodox politics which had a significant bearing on religious politics in the 1980s.

The Rise of the Radical Right

The radical right was born on September 17, 1978, the day Begin agreed to sign the Camp David accords that agreed to return all of Sinai to the Egyptians and to work towards Palestinian autonomy in Judea and Samaria. Begin was to eventually acknowledge the "legitimate rights" of the Palestinians. The territorial maximalists construed the autonomy clause in the accords as a precursor to a sovereign Palestinian state while the return of Sinai meant the destruction of the moshavim (cooperative settlements) that had sprung up in the area. The deal included an agreement to return the port-city of Yamit in the area known as Rafieh Salient.¹

The Land of Israel Movement (LIM), Gush Emunim, and Rabbi Meir Kahane's Kach, who had earlier saw Begin's accession as "leading to the political realization of their dreams," felt betrayed by the man who was expected to effect in mainstream politics what they had been clamoring from the fringe. Begin's conversion, however, did not come about overnight. He had initially not come out openly against Security Council 242, that called upon Israel to exchange territories for peace, and on occasion reminding the Jews of the liberal approach taken by his mentor Vladimir Jabotinsky towards the Arabs. Power provoked a kind of rhetorical continence in Begin that was missing when he was in opposition, and he veered towards the pragmatic approach to dealing with the Palestinians

¹Rafieh Salient is a strip of thirty miles stretching from El-Arish in the Gaza Strip through Rafieh in northern Sinai. The Israelis, led by strategists such as Moshe Dayan, believed that Israeli control of this strip was vital as it would serve as a territorial wedge between Gaza and the Sinai. In the previous wars, the Egyptians found easy access to Gaza because it held the Rafieh Salient. Ironically, Begin visited Yamit in September 1977 and wrote in the city's guest book, "Jerusalem blesses Yamit, which will built and become the joy of the nation and its pride." Visiting the moshavim in the area, Begin promised them that he would settle there and write his memoirs in their company. Ehud Sprinzak, The Ascendance of Israel's Radical Right (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 101.
exemplified by his Foreign Minister Moshe Dayan. In fact, the 1977 Likud platform did refer to the notion of exchanging territories for peace and granting autonomy to the Arabs.

The protests orchestrated prior to the signing of the agreement in 1979 brought together secular and religious nationalists, including labor settlement hawks, disgruntled Likud members and sympathizers, hard-liners from the NRP and activist-believers of the Gush Emunim. Soon after the accords were signed, an umbrella organization of several groups called Banai was formed on November 1, 1978. The composition of this group is a microcosm of the profile of the radical right in Israel. Apart from the LIM and the Gush, several smaller parties joined in. They included the Ein Vered Circle (labor settlement veterans), representatives of the settlers in Judea, Samara and the Rafieh Salient (northern Sinai), members of the La'am Party (a small nationalist component of Likud), a small student organization called False Peace, and several members of the Ben-Gurion's circle of the Labor Party.

In the run-up to the accords, the first fissures within the Likud was caused by those individuals who called themselves the “Upholders of Herut Principles” and some dissenters in the Herut group from Jerusalem led by Gershon Solomon. Many of the members of these groups were peers of Begin from the days of fighting the British mandatory regime through the underground outfit called Irgun. This circle gained considerable publicity for their dissenting efforts prompting the rise of Peace Now, a movement of reserve officers, concerned about the failure of Begin to effect peace.

Begin was greeted by supporters and a vociferous opposition that likened Camp David to Chamberlain’s agreement with Hitler that handed Czechoslovakia to Germany. Yuval Neeman, president of Tel Aviv University and Israel’s most famous physicist, cabled the speaker of the Knesset Yitzhak Shamir, “The surrender of Yamit, Ofira (Sharm el Sheikh), and other settlements of the Sinai implies Israel’s future return to the borders of

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4 Sprinzak, n. 1, p. 73.

5 ibid., pp. 73-74.
1948 and the surrender of Judea, Samaria, Gaza, the Golan Heights, and East Jerusalem."6 Banai limited itself to two strategies. One to lobby against Camp David among the members of the Knesset, which had a slim chance of succeeding given Begin's current popularity and secondly to organize an extra-parliamentary struggle. But creative though the protests were, they did not dent the support for peace and Carter, Sadat and Begin proceeded to sign the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty in Washington on March 29, 1979. The first stage of evacuation of Sinai was scheduled for April 1982.

The radical right realizing that the treaty could be theoretically scuttled by parliamentary initiative set about organizing itself for fresh elections that were due in November 1981. The vacuum for a anti-Camp David party was swiftly filled by the "conversion" of Neeman who gave a call for the formation of such a party. A renowned scientist, Neeman was never a registered member of the Land of Israel Movement or the Gush Emunim and in fact displayed no interest in the retention of the occupied territories. He was, however, radicalized by Camp David thus lending a credible fillip to secular ultranationalist forces.

Meanwhile, a schism was developing in religious Zionism as the Gush activists realized the need to look beyond the National Religious Party to express their territorial yearnings. Though the Young Guard had taken control of NRP, the Gush understood that the NRP was too preoccupied with maintaining its extensive range of services, and thus too institutionally involved to indulge itself in radical politics. This was particularly evident even by its participation in Begin's government. With the exception of Haim Druckman, a Gush Emunim leader and disciple of Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook, the rest of the party supported the Camp David accords. Gush activists like Hanan Porat, Eleazer Waldman felt betrayed by the NRP which was led by Youth faction leaders such as Zevulun Hammer and Yehuda Ben-Meir who were close to the Gush's leaders in age and manner of convictions. The NRP was only the political arm of the religious Zionism, and the Gush members had grown up within Bnei Akiva, the youth branch of the World Mizrahi movement and the NRP.

6 ibid. p. 74.
Rabbi Z.Y. Kook, the ideological godfather of the GE, brought the secular and religious nationalists together. Kook was reportedly enthusiastic about the idea of a political party to fight the accords, that was proposed to him by Gush Emunim's Porat and Waldman along with Geula Cohen, the most flamboyant female ultra-nationalist in Israeli history. Kook was sure that the holiness of Eretz Israel would transcend the differences between the secular and religious ultranationalists and capable of unifying all the groups. Kook's recommendation elicited full cooperation of the Gush, which resolved to support the new political party but remain officially aloof.

The Camp David accords led to the formation of a political party called Tehiya on October 8, 1979 by a group of secular and religious ultranationalists, that was also penetrated by members of the Gush. Those instrumental in its formation included Cohen and Moshe Shamir. Opposed to the Palestinian autonomy, Tehiya managed to recruit a number of conservative intellectuals. The party's manifesto charged the government with betraying the pristine goals of Zionism that included the building of the land and its settlement, the expulsion of the foreign rulers, the establishment of the state and its solidification, the liberation of Eretz Yisrael territories. The party's wish to live up to its official name, —ha-Tehiya Brit Ne'emanei Eretz Yisrael (The Renaissance Movement —The Covenant of the Upholders of the Land of Israel) by restoring the old values of Zionism. With two full years left for elections, MKs Cohen and Shamir enacted a well-publicized split from the Likud. Cohen's greatest parliamentary success was the approval of a rare Basic Law in 1980 that formally annexed Jerusalem and naming it the capital of Israel. That appeared to be the high noon for Tehiya which managed to get only three seats in the 1981 elections, being unable to stop Begin's consolidation of power who had no need of Tehiya for forming the government coalition.

The 1981 election itself was preceded by fierce infighting in the Cabinet involving Weizmann and Ariel Sharon, Yigal Yadin and Itzhak Modai. Begin's health suffered and he appeared to lose control over his Cabinet. Begin suddenly intensified his legendary rhetoric that deflected the attention away from his coalition's problem and made the crucial decision
to bomb Iraq's nuclear reactor in 1980 that skyrocketed his popularity. Camp David had no parliamentary obstacles thereafter.7

The accords provoked a crisis within the Gush Emunim whose members did not hide their admiration for Begin. And yet Israel was not ready to embrace the radical right since the country was caught with the euphoria of the accord that held an a priori legitimacy since they were endorsed by the arch nationalist Begin. However, developments in the early 1980s changed all that. "Israel's deteriorating relations with Egypt, the 1981 assassination of President Sadat, the fiasco in Lebanon, the high rate of inflation, Begin's failing health and mysterious resignation, all played into the hands of the radical right. These dedicated fundamentalists greatly extended their influence and involvements; by the middle of the decade (1980s), the radical right had become a significant force in the life of the nation."8

The Campaign in Yamit

Not cowed down by the electoral reversal in 1981, Tehiya was to spearhead a celebrated agitation against the withdrawal from Yamit as part of the Camp David accords in 1982 by harnessing the enthusiasm of the Gush Emunim and territorial maximalists of all shades. It managed to enact the most systematic illegalist venture, a feature that has since become a part of the nation's political culture as we shall see. All three Tehiya MKs, Neeman, Cohen and Shamir went to participate in the illegal struggle against the withdrawal from Sinai. Tehiya consolidated its grip on the disaffected section of the right by participating and leading the opposition to halt the implementation of the Sinai agreement in 1982. Composed of leaders from the Gush Emunim, Tehiya adopted the former's strategy of creating mayhem and settlements, as it were, in an effort to stop the evacuation from Yamit in the Sinai. The settlements of Rafieh Salient were floated by West Bank settlers who came in with their "families, rabbis, Yeshivoth and logistics."

7 Tehiya sponsored several motions of no-confidence in the Knesset to challenge Begin from the Right. However, Begin could not afford to ignore Tehiya's three seats for long as Likud enjoyed a majority of only one seat in the Knesset.

8 Sprinzak, n. 1, p. 73.
To complicate matters, the settlers armed themselves and dared the government to evacuate them forcibly. Ehud Sprinzak records the confrontation between the state and its dissidents:

Twenty thousand experienced soldiers were mobilized for the evacuation which only miraculously ended with no fatalities. Fierce struggles between soldiers and desperate settlers were conducted. Distinguished rabbis were beaten up badly. Laws, rules and formal regulations were systematically disregarded. The Israelis public witnessed the longest and most intense period of civil disobedience and organized extra-legalism in the history of the state. 9

Worse was still to follow. The followers of the extremist Rabbi Meir Kahane locked themselves in an underground shelter, full of gas masks and explosives and threatened to blow themselves up. At Begin's behest their rabbis was flown in from the US to convince his devotees to give in. 10 Camp David created a welter of protest organizations that added to the militancy of the aggrieved population. The Movement to Halt the Retreat in Sinai (MHRS) was formed in 1981 to fight the surrender of Yamit. The protests to halt evacuation was conducted through mobilizing Gush's cadres who waged pitched battles with the police and the army. Hundreds of religious settlers from the West Bank moved to the Yamit region. Others moved into the houses that were evacuated by the government. In the last stage of the movement's resistance, about 1,000 people managed to penetrate the areas cordoned off by the Army. "The style of the struggle followed the traditional methods of Gush Emunim. Armed settlers with dubonim (khakis used in the military), sleeping bags, talith (religious objects used in prayer), engaged in profound halakhic deliberations late into the night . . . and heated polemic speeches." 11 The MHRS was staged in classical Gush Emunim style with well-publicized protest campaign designed organize enough popular support to embarrass the government to renounce Camp David.

The significant aspect of the MHRS was the fact that it was financially not exclusively a private initiative as had been the case in previous settlement oriented protest

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10 ibid.

11 Sprinzak, n. 1, p. 103.
in the 1970s. Extensive support came from public officials in the government, heads and employees of government financed local and regional councils in Judea and Samaria.12

"Most of the money came directly from public sources, from the budgets of the regional councils allocated by Israel's ministries of education, religion, agriculture, construction, and internal affairs."13

The Tehiya went on to join the Likud coalition in the summer of 1982 following the invasion of Lebanon. Neeman was an advocate of Israeli initiative in Lebanon to destroy the PLO bases and therefore had no qualms in supporting the Likud. Clearly the Tehiya found other issues to devote itself to. Tehiya found it easy to coexist with the Likud as the individuals that brought about Camp David no longer controlled policy or the party. Both Moshe Dayan and Ezer Weizmann left the Likud and were replaced by two hawks, Moshe Arens and Yitzhak Shamir. Neeman was eventually made Israel's Minister for Science and Energy and head the powerful government settlement committee. During his tenure the settlements got 500 million shekels for new ventures in the West Bank.14

The Tehiya is a crucial interlude in the political passage of Israel. By virtue of being an umbrella unit for both the secular and the religious activists, it conferred legitimacy for the Gush and other religious Zionists and facilitated the accession of religious notions to a legitimate status in Israel's political square. It enabled the formation of an operative alliance between various groups far enough for it to be identified as part of the radical right. This included the more extreme elements of the National Religious Party, the Tehiya, Herut, Gush Emunim, Matzad (a new breakaway party from the NRP led by Rabbi Haim Druckman) and the settlement organizations. All these groups share a messianic ideology that is centered on two interwoven ideas: the realization of redemption through Zionism, and the right of the People of Israel to possess all of the ancient Land of Israel.15

12 ibid., pp. 103-104.


14 Sprinzak, n.1, p. 80.

More significantly, Tehiya served to remove the obscurantist sheen associated with religion, lending a new thrust to the religious claims for owning territory and create a climate wherein religious radicalism could thrive. Tehiya orchestrated, through organizing the protest against Yamit, the maturation of a culture which upheld lawlessness and whose loyalty to the state of Israel and the rule of law was suspect. As Sprinzak notes, Yamit represented, "the coming of age of a new political camp and culture, a conglomerate of activist whose loyalty to Israel's traditional foundation was limited significantly."  

Illegality in Israeli Political Culture

The drive to create an agenda that goes beyond juridical prescription has been termed as a culture of "illegality" by Sprinzak. He cites various instances to illustrate that "Israel's political culture contains a strong dimension of illegality, an instrumental orientation towards the law and the idea of law." Though Israel is formally established on the principle of the rule of law there is evidently a manifest streak of "behavioral illegality" in its political culture whose roots can be traced to the beginnings of Zionist polity.

The founders of Zionism originated from Eastern Europe whose countries possessed a fragile democratic ethos or a tradition of civil and traditional rights. In any case, the religious framework of diasporan life upheld the right of the collective at the expense of the individual making it infertile ground for individual expression. The differing orientation of those who emigrated to Palestine prevented the fostering of any true fealty to the rule of law. The religious Jews from the ghetto system upheld the Torah as the only governing corpus and coupled that with suspicions towards any liberalizing undercurrents by the gentilic law since it threatened the communal cohesion of Jewish society. Sprinzak suggests that the corresponding baksheesh culture within which Middle Eastern Jews lived entailed a dependence on the bribe and other forms of patronage as a method of getting around proper channels. Finally, the colonial politics surrounding emigration to Palestine

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16 Sprinzak, n. 9, p. 178.

too bred a contempt for accountability and the rule of law, especially after the White Paper of 1937 severely curtailed Jewish immigration to Palestine. This evoked a strong anti-British sentiment so strong "that a whole nomenclature of prestigious illegalism evolved: illegal immigration, illegal defense, illegal settlement."18

The political elite was thus socialized through a heroic illegalism for the sake of establishing a state and inevitably the state was unable to "change direction and embark on a full legalistic course." The lack of resolve to create a constitution is retrospectively a testimony of the same affinity. Israel, eventually neither had a bill of rights not a system of effective controls on the government. Other factors such as the system of political spoils and the resultant dispensation of favors, due in measure to Mapai's dominance, and the public acquiescence with the extent of public scandal all contributed to a lack of upholding and emphasizing the rule of law as a public norm. The Likud too was a victim of this milieu.

Attainment of statehood, therefore, meant a normalization and condoning of illegal activities. The revisionists with their history of rebellion against both the mandatory regime and Labor Zionists were absorbed and ultimately lay claim to co-dominance with the Labor Party. A society which got progressively inured to corruption; to the abuse of office for the sake of privilege; wherein extremist political protest was deemed heroic and legitimate, denied itself the capacity of evolving a moral consensus which could denounce and cast out radical extremists. The liberal foundation of the Jewish state was thus lain on a tenuous foundation. Gadi Wolfsfeld writes about the "politics of provocation," as a "cultural syndrome in which direct action becomes the predominant means by which ordinary citizens make demands on the political system. Partly due to their correct perception regarding the illegalism of their own leaders, and partly due to the unresponsiveness of the nation's parties and representative institutions to the citizens, Israelis often take to the streets to pretest" or what can be regarded as the theory of "blocked opportunities."19

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18 Sprinzak, "Illegalism in Israeli Political Culture," n. 17, pp. 81-82.

For the Orthodox such illegalism is perceived to be especially warranted since they do not recognize the validity of secular law insofar as it contradicts the Torah and the Halakah. Such a position is concurred in a famous religious commentary *Shulhan Arukh* which advises that "it is forbidden to be tried before idolatrous judges and their instances, even if they are judging in accordance with Jewish traditional laws, and even if all the parties concerned accepted their jurisdiction, and any person who comes to be tried before it is evil and it is as if he reproached, abused, or lifted a hand to Moses' Torah."20

That ideological facility is invoked in practical reality as justified by Rabbi Haim Pardes, a member of the Tel Aviv Rabbinical Tribunal:

Only one thing is the determining factor in my life - Torah and Halakah. Aside from that there is no other authority in the world. We have the Torah from the Sinai and not from legislators. Suddenly, a new generation has appeared and invented this thing called 'the legislature.' A bunch of clowns sit together at a party and so decide the law. Do you like living like this? Please - live with it. It's none of my business.21

In fact in the introduction to the Talmudic Encyclopedia the then Chief Rabbi Ben Zion Meir Hay wrote in 1944 concerning the superiority of Talmudic exegesis over secular law:

It makes no difference if the case is presented before a Gentile or a Jew, as the substantive law (secular law) is imaginary. The matter is even more disgraceful because the Torah law was exchanged for a vain law. If the people of the community agree with it (the secular law) their agreement is not really valid. If they reject this (reasoning), their jurisdiction is perverted and oppressive and they are striking at the law of Moses.22

Thus, a combination of Zionist political compulsions in the mandate and transcendent nature of religious law fostered weak commitments to the rule of law in Israel. The political history of the revisionists who roughly comprise 40 percent of the political spectrum indicates a preference for such activity. Revisionist history is steeped in its conflict with the

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21 ibid., p. 41.

22 Rabbi Ben Zion Meir Hay, *The Gates of Uziel* (Jerusalem: HaRav Kook Publications, vol. 1: 1944; vol. 2:1946), part 2, Introduction, p. 3. Cf. ibid., p. 42. The antagonism to state law by the Naturei Karta is well documented. One Rabbi Moshe Hirsch was prosecuted in a Jerusalem court in the 1980s for calling the national flag a "rag." The court found him guilty of the charge but acquitted him. The segregationist sect attempted to produce a special Naturei Karta passport as well. ibid., p. 98.
Mapai and the British Mandate. As the controversial Altalena Affair, where a ship carrying arms for the revisionists was sunk by the Ben-Gurion's Haganah in 1948, showed revisionists did not chafe at the prospect of using violence as a means of resolving differences with the Mapai.

Adding a section of hard-line Likudniks and hawkish labor veterans to religious extremists, a fairly coherent profile of the radical right can be mapped. This was suggested by the turn of events that facilitated the emergence of the ultra-Orthodox followers of Agudah Israel, the activist-believers of the Gush Emunim, and the revolutionary radicals of the Rabbi Kahane ilk. Thus "the radical right is presently a great deal more than the movements that are directly associated with it. It is a general climate of opinion and syndrome of political behavior. It crosses party lines, economic strata, and education . . . It pertains to 20-25 percent of the Jewish citizens of Israel and is felt everywhere in schools, in military camps, the markets and synagogues." Sprinzak reviewing the radical right as a socio-cultural phenomenon wrote at a later date:

As such, the radical right crosses lines of party, social origin, economic strata and education. Most of the hard-core members of the "pure" movements of the new camp are middle-class Ashkenazi Israelis, both religious and secular, but the movements include many Sefardi Jews from poor neighborhoods. . . . These people add populist chauvinism and crude anti-Arab sentiment to the ideological radicalism of the hard core. And both groups have contributed to a cult that combines extreme attitudes regarding the indivisibility of the Land of Israel, bitter hostility toward the Arabs and special expression implying never-ending war against the PLO, and a constant siege mentality along with enthusiastic utterances about religious redemption. *I would estimate that these attitudes are shared by about 20 to 25 percent of the Jewish citizens of Israel, in all areas: in schools, universities, military camps, markets, and synagogues* (emphasis added)

Sprinzak asserts that the radical right should not been seen as an isolated extremist faction, but rather as a "very influential school that has been pushing the entire Israeli right toward greater ultranationalism, greater extralegalism, greater militarism, greater ethnocentrism,

23 Sprinzak, n. 9, p. 178.

24 Sprinzak's estimate is avowedly conservative, opinion polls indicate a 8-12% support for the Tehiya, Tzomet, Meledet and Kach, a 10% support for the Sharon camp and other radicals in the Likud, and additional 3-5% support for the radical right within parties such as the NRP, Agudat Israel, Shas and the rightist elements in the Labor Party. See Sprinzak, n. 1, note 20 in page 32.
and greater religiosity.\textsuperscript{25} The core of the radical right is made up of true believers who are also pragmatic and politically skillful. They advance their cause through many sophisticated ways. "Their leaders are good communicators, excellent lobbyists, and when needed, skillful demonstrators and extraparliamentary activists. Several illustrious generals, scientists, and mainstream Zionist public figures who were converted to the cause of Eretz Israel . . . "\textsuperscript{26}

One of the great successes of the radical right has been its ability to penetrate the Likud and the National Religious Party. Thus approximately a quarter of the leaders and members of the Likud look at the world today through the ideological and symbolic prism of the radical right.\textsuperscript{27} In fact, between 1986 and 1988 the NRP underwent a quiet ideological reshuffle that drove it to the bosom of the radical right. Two of its top three Knesset members of the NRP are devoted radicals, and its political platform reads almost like a Gush Emunim pamphlet.\textsuperscript{28}

There are indices to support Sprinzak's assumption. One of them is the voting behavior of the Israeli army that has been observed to subscribe to the radical right's perspective owing to the testing conditions that it operates in and the influence of the dominant civil religion in Israel. In the 1984 election, 45 percent of the army vote went to the Likud or to Tehiya or Kach. Another 15 percent went to messianic-nationalist political parties, thus giving the "New Zionist Right" 60 percent of the armed forces vote. In 1988 over 50 percent of the army vote went to the Likud and parties of the right, and religious parties' share increased too.\textsuperscript{29}

Opinion polls indicate a shift towards greater territorial nationalism that essentially refers to the decreasing number of Israelis who are willing to surrender the occupied

\textsuperscript{25}Sprinzak, n. 1, p. 14.

\textsuperscript{26}ibid., p. 14.

\textsuperscript{27}ibid., p. 13.

\textsuperscript{28}ibid., p. 13.

territories. The percentage of the population expressing such a willingness declined from 40 percent in March 1983 to 31.4 percent in June 1984. According to Mina Zemach of the Dahaf Research Institute, ultranationalism expresses itself in hostile attitudes toward the Arabs in Israel among random samples of Israeli Jews. In the June 1984, Dahaf sample, 66 percent of the respondents reported they either justified or related with understanding to the group of Jews accused of conducting terrorist activities, including murder against the Arabs. A random sample of Jewish youth aged 15 to 18 were questioned in August 1984. Fifty five percent felt that Arabs in Israel should not be permitted to criticize the government, and almost half (47.6 percent) felt that Arabs should be prohibited from holding important public office. The Jerusalem Van Leer Foundation conducted three surveys of the political attitudes of Israel's high school generation (the fifteen-to-eighteen-year-olds). The September 1984 study found that 60 percent of the respondents thought the Arabs did not deserve full equality and 42 percent were in favor of restricting the political rights of non-Jews.

The Israeli public is not becoming religious as a whole despite these findings. In a random sample of 15-18 year olds, only 12.3 percent of the respondents defined themselves as religious, whereas 27.3 percent defined themselves as traditional and 59.5 percent as secular. In other words, the overwhelming majority of the respondents appeared to be secular rather than religious in their behavior and attitudes.

Approximately 15 percent of the Jewish population in 1984 defined themselves as religious while 28 percent (in 1984) reported that they observe the Jewish tradition in its entirety or to a large extent. Liebman. Many, probably, most of them harbor a feeling of

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32 Liebman n. 30, p. 90.

sympathy for the religious tradition. Indeed, when asked about their religious identification between 35 and 40 percent prefer to define themselves as "traditional" rather than "secular." This figure is not very different from that reported ten or fifteen years ago in somewhat comparable surveys. But surveys may be inadequate instruments to ascertain the proportion of religious Jews or the real distribution of attitudes about religion within the population. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the majority of Israelis are not "religious" in belief or behavior. "Many are distressed, though not to the point of doing much about it, by the increased ignorance of and alienation from religious rite and custom they find among their own children. But even this general mood is often accompanied by anti-clerical feeling." 

According to Zemach's study, the more religiously traditional the respondent, the less likely he or she was to favor the return of territory. While the time-frame of the attitudes is fairly narrow to understand the long-term evolution of attitudes, such a finding conveys the post 1973 War mood that probably indicates the radicalization of public opinion due to the mass campaign of organizations like the Gush. The more religious the respondent, the more likely he or she was to justify or relate with understanding to the accused terrorists. Once again ultranationalism was proportional to a person's religiosity.

**Kahane's Radicalism**

The possibilities of the radical right was exemplified by the person of Rabbi Meir Kahane whose rabid ideology came to be termed to be termed as Kahanism. It must be mentioned that Kahane has been termed as a quasi-fascist, and as such cannot be equated with secular nationalists who have distaste for his pronouncements. However, Kahane is a key figure for understanding the motivations of some sections of the radical right and is symptomatic figure in locating the rise of Jewish terrorism in the mid 1980s that was to reappear in Israeli life through the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in November 1995.

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34 ibid., p. 79.

35 ibid., p. 74.
Ordained as a rabbi and expelled by a seminary in the U.S. for "excessive religious zeal," Kahane joined the FBI as an agent; and left it to form the Jewish Defense League, a vigilante group that patrolled Jewish neighborhoods in the US that aggressively protected traditionally passive orthodox residents against harassment. After the assassination of eleven Israelis in the 1972 Munich Olympics, Kahane turned his attention to Israel and started "organizing large scale worldwide arms deal in order to "defend the Jews of the Diaspora against the Arabs."\(^{36}\)

Kahane's worldview represents a logical extension of the themes already popularized by religious Zionism and those values that are implicit in its civil religion namely the uniqueness of the Jewish people, namely the implacable hostility of the Gentilic world and the consequent call for Jewish revenge, a "catastrophic messianism" borne out a conviction that he was living in pre-Messianic era; the sanctity of Eretz Israel, the distaste towards Arabs; and pertinently his value-relative notions of democracy. Kahane is not accommodating like Zvi Yehuda Kook concerning the idea of cooperating with the secular Israelis. Religious Zionism placed Jewish chosenness at a premium and ignored the prophetic dimension in its 'theology of history', in that it glossed over the warnings of biblical prophecy who decreed punishment for the Jews for failing to fulfilling the Mosaic covenant. Kahane is forthright on the subject.

In Jewish history, from time immemorial, and in Jewish history today, that which will be is conditioned on one thing only: "If thou shall walk in My statutes," and "If you shall disdain My statutes." . . . The former guarantees peace and tranquillity and bliss and redemption. The latter assures tragedy and catastrophe. There is no escape from this immutable law of creation. But if one does, indeed walk in the footsteps of his Creator, then the Father of the Jewish people, the All-Mighty, has obligated Himself to give to His children the promised reward. This is the answer, this is the key to the Gate of redemption. One who understand it shall enter it. One who does not is doomed to be scattered as the chaff in the wind and G-d forbid, to take many of his brothers and sisters with him.\(^{37}\)

Kahane's attempt to read history as going all wrong and making "history right again." He felt that Israel is a country "crawling with Hellenism . . . (which) drives them to reject


\(^{37}\) Quoted from Rabbi Meir Kahane, *Forty Years* (Miami: Institute of the Jewish Idea, 1983), p.66.
Judaism and trample it underfoot... on the day that Judaism was separated from Zionism, the latter became just another form of ugly nationalism... Jews v Hellenists: that is the real battle."\(^{38}\) Therefore, the political elite is castigated for failing to sense the messianic moment and seize all the holy places.

We stood on the brink of a complete redemption. If we had only had the courage and the faith to keep it! If we had declared about the liberated territories: "These are ours and have just been returned"! If we had officially annexed them to the state of Israel; if we had taken the Gentile's abominations from the Temple Mount; if we had expelled our haters from the country; if we had made free Jewish settlement all over Eretz Yisrael mandatory... if we had done all these things without considering the reaction of the Goy, without fearing what he says or does, the Messiah would have come through the open door and brought us the redemption.\(^{39}\)

Kahane differs with the Gush Emunim, the extremist expression of religious Zionism, which believes that secular, irreligious Jews are legitimate participants in enhancing the process of Redemption through the acts of settlement. Kahane grants no such concessions to liberal Jews and instead labels them as "Hellenists," employing a traditional slur for the unbelievers dating back to the corrupting influence of Greek culture on Judaism which facilitated the rise of Christianity in the first century CE. In fact, Kahane intended to deal with the errant Jew in the same way as the hostile Arab:

How do we fight this urgently... The answer lies in ridding ourselves of the 'extremist' version of "love of Jews"... Indeed, the rabbis of the Talmud bring down the verse, and "thou shalt love thy fellow Jew as thyself," in order to explain why we must kill the Jew who is deserving of death in a just and humane way.\(^{40}\)

As a way to reform the errant Jewish society Kahane endorses total abrogation of relations with the Arabs. An undated Kach advertisement instructed Jewish women not to "defile" themselves by coming in contact with non-Jews.

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\(^{40}\) Ravitsky, n. 38, p. 99.
Daughter of Israel! You are the daughter of a large, chosen and extraordinary nation. Please do not defile yourself. Do not disgrace yourself. Do not go out with Arabs and other Gentiles. You need not be "religious" in order to understand how great and important it is to be a proud Jewish woman. You need not be "religious" to understand that your children, and theirs, must be the continuation of generations of the Jewish people. Beware of the Arab who wants to disgrace and insult you. Daughter of Israel, date only Sons of Israel! And Sons of Israel, you are being called upon to join the "protectors of the Jewish honor by helping. The protectors will take upon themselves the role of preventing the drowning and assimilation of Jews. The activities of the protectors will be legal and in accordance with the police. Join now ... 41

A measure of how prevalent Kahane's prescriptions are indicated in the vindication of this position by Rabbi Yitzhak Peretz, leader of Shas and Minister of Interior in Shimon Peres National Unity government. Peretz, while visiting a Bedouin tribe in the Negev, advised against the inter-mixing of Jews and Arabs.

It is written in the Torah that it is essential for each nation to preserve its character and breed. This is the guarantee for peace among nations. Intermixture leads to hatred, conflict and war. Since I would like to live in peace, I do not hold with excessively close association between Jewish and Arab youth. At a tender age meetings of this type give rise to love; love leads to marriage. This is neither good nor healthy.42

Kahane won the appreciation of Shas member Shimon Ben-Shlomo who, when asked his opinion of the rabbi said, "I value the courage of anyone who says what he believes, and is not afraid of anyone . . . in any event, that is how one should act." Kahane's sentiments are echoed by prominent religious leaders. Shlomo Aviner, a prominent Orthodox scholar, who advocates an "iron fist" against the Arab "hostile inhabitants" of Judea, Samaria and Gaza. He supports his demands by theological-halakhic reasoning based on Maimonides. He maintains that there is no obligation to obey secular law if it contravenes religious strictures.43


43 Huppert, n. 20, p. 200.
The Political Program of Rabbi Kahane

The content of his programmatic stance has been broadly summarized as: (a) a demand for the separation between Jews and non-Jews in residential areas, educational institutions, bathing etc. and the demand that sexual relations between Jews and non-Jews be prohibited by law; (b) the demand for the denial for the Israeli Arabs' civil rights, calls for their removal from the territory of Greater Israel; encouragement of violence and terrorist activity of Greater Israel; encouragement of violence and terrorist activity against them; (c) the negation of a democratic regime in a Jewish state; (d) the rejection of secular of secular, leftist or liberal Jews as partners in the process to Redemption.44

Kahane called for two transformations in Israel—a change in the status and conditions of the Arabs, and a transfiguration of Israeli Judaism. As regards the Arabs he posited two essential aims: either an expulsion of large numbers of disloyal Arabs or a legal derogation of the remaining loyal Arabs to second-class residents inside Israel. He offered numerous scenarios detailing the measure of Arab loyalty and the modus operandi of their imminent expulsion.45 Some of the provisions of a reorganized Jewish state included the strict separation between Jews and Gentiles, intermarriage or sexual intercourse between a Jew and a Gentile would be a capital crime and male'Arabs who court Jewish girls would be subject to 50 years in jail.46

Significantly, he represented a marked deviation from the Gush’s theology and its objectives. The Gush initially did not want to be violent towards the Palestinians or deport them. They want to annex Judea and Samaria and do not want to be violent towards the Palestinians or deport them. The Gush professed a belief that a peaceful, coexistent relationship with the Arabs was possible under Israeli rule.47 Kahane has no such inhibitions. For him,


45 For an elaboration of various expulsion scenarios see Sprinzak, n. 1, see pp. 231-233.

46 ibid., p. 232.

47 Sprinzak, n. 9, p. 170.
the Arabs represent a desecration on the Divine Name . . . their removal is therefore more than a political matter. It is a religious matter, a religious obligation, a commandment to do away with the Desecration of the Name . . . let us remove the Arabs from Israel's midst, so as to bring the Redemption.48

Even the Tehiya which includes the likes of Geula Cohen is not as besotted. Yuval Neeman has, in fact, asserted that the demographic ratio between Jews and Arabs in the occupied territories has not changed since 1967; an argument used in favor of annexing the territories as opposed to expelling the Arabs,49 which Kahane denounces as a "statistical fraud. Tehiya's position is paradoxical as it declared in 1980, that it would admit only Jewish members and at the same time envisions a state containing both Jews and Arabs.50 The Tehiya leaders believe that Kahane's fascistic positions give Israel a bad name worldwide and hence do not endorse expelling Arabs. They suggest that the Arabs be given a "foreign residency status or given citizenship provided they agree to abide by the values of the Jewish state"51—a rather remote possibility. Cohen believes that colonization of the territories through erecting settlements would bring peace as it prevents the possibility of a Palestinian state which inevitably means war.52 Mergui and Simonnot conclude in this regard: "What distinguishes . . . (Tehiya) from Kahane is that they believe the Arabs to be "colonizable" sooner or later whereas Kahane is convinced that they can never be colonized."53

One must not dismiss Kahane as a lone irrational charlatan who gained fame and notoriety because the media highlighted his rantings. Kahane was gaining prominence at a time when Israelis were living with the paradox of elation of the control of the holy places

48 Ravitsky, n. 38, p. 95.

49 Interview with Neeman, Mergui and Simmonot, n. 36, p. 48.


51 Mergui and Simmonot, n. 36, p. 153.

52 ibid., p. 162.

53 ibid., p. 101.
but very aware of dealing with Palestinians and the threat of terrorism. Kahane’s analysis of the Arab question in Israel was often prescient but was entirely inconsistent with his behavior on the streets. Kahane writings had an element of sober analysis but his public protests were often unruly with his inflammatory rhetoric often inspiring his supporters to acts of vandalism against Arab property.

He reasoned that Arabs were claiming all the jobs in the West Bank to the detriment of the average Jew and called for their expulsion, a policy prescription that was increasing aired even by mainstream politicians like Ariel Sharon. The feeling that Arabs were easing out Jews created widespread resentment in Israel, especially in the development towns that Kahane expertly exploited. In fact some analysts render a class analysis of Israeli territorial nationalism by stating that the settlement drive in the West Bank, as initiated by the various government and as demanded by the Gush Emunim, created a pattern of establishing facts on the land and with it an economy that needed to be sustained. Territorial concessions would inevitably result in economic dislocation, an insecurity that the Gush Emunim and Kahane capitalized on.

Jewish resentment towards the Arabs was exacerbated by the economic situation in the early 1980s. Kahane was proved right about the competition between Jews and Arabs in the job market especially in the low-paying segment. In 1980-81, Israel’s economy began to shrink and the outlying development towns felt the slowdown the most. High inflation rates destabilized pay scales, and many workers began to demand constant pay increases. Factories and shops that were unprepared for the new situation found Arabs to be inexpensive alternatives to Jewish labor. The Arabs from occupied territories were willing to work for the low paying jobs, creating a perception that they were competing for jobs previously held by Jews even though there was no hard evidence that such a competition existed. Arabs were perceived as people who “stole” Jews jobs while sporting a full-blown attachment to Palestinian nationalism.54

Kahane also tapped the resentment to the new found political expression of the Israeli Arabs who conducting strikes against land appropriation by the Israelis since the

mid 1970s. On March 30, 1976, on what was called Land Day, a general strike to protest unjust appropriations in the Lower Galilee region turned violent killing six Israeli Arabs and wounding 35 Israeli policemen. The extremism of Israeli Arabs was most visible in Israeli universities. An extremist group won the Arab student union at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem with a platform demanding that the Palestinian Covenant, calling for the destruction of Israel, be adopted as the student union's official creed. The platform included a demand that terrorism be recognized as a legitimate part of the Palestinian struggle for self-determination. Similar eruptions were witnessed at the universities in Haifa and Beersheba.

Kahane lent expression for Israeli fears and disdain for Palestinian extremism as early as 1973 when he wrote rather presciently:

Not only the Arab in the liberated territories sees himself as a "Palestinian" and believes that the Jews stole his land. The Arabs who live in the pre-June 1967 Eretz Yisrael . . . those who have had Israel citizenship since 1948, the Arab "with equal rights" who enjoy freedom in the Jewish state, think in the same way. He (the Arab) does not see himself as part of the state, for he is an Arab not a Jew, a Palestinian not an Israeli. He feels no loyalty to his government - for he does not see it as his government. He is hostile and is full of hate for the Jewish majority, for in his heart he is a "Palestinian" and an Arab nationalist . . . But since he suffers from a guilt feeling, for his Israeli citizenship, he is a much more dangerous enemy . . .

In the coming years we shall witness a growing number of Arab intellectuals whose nationalism will radicalize and become a great deal more extremist. We shall witness a growing number of Arabs who would not find any spiritual and intellectual satisfaction in the professions open to them, and of many other who will not find suitable jobs for their expectations. We shall witness a society whose main blue-collar workers would be Arabs and the others Jews. This situation would produce growing frustrations, tensions, demonstrations, strikes, violence, and attempts of subversion and revolution.55

Sprinzak reasons backward in identifying the fascist component of Kahane's political action and terms the rabbi as a 'quasi-fascist.'

Fascist movements are characterized by a combination of bitter anti-establishment sentiment, an appeal to insecure working-class and lower middle-class people, a broad use of extraparliamentary and extralegal action, and a systematic resort to street hooliganism, violence, and occasional terrorism. What distinguishes the quasi-fascist from the fascist movement is basically its ideology. The classical fascist ideology is secular, revolutionary, anti-religious, anti-liberal . . . It aspires to the establishment of a new order, which is antidemocratic, hostile to bourgeois decadent society, and oriented toward physical struggle.

55 Cf. Sprinzak, n. 1, p. 85.
A quasi-fascist movement, according to the present definition, does not have all these elements, but it has a strong behavioral similarity to the fascist movements.\textsuperscript{56}

Kahane displayed an intense desire for using terrorism as a tool for his illiberal ends. In 1974, Kahane broached the concept of T.N.T. (acronym for terror neged terror, i.e. Jewish terrorism against anti-terror terrorism). In the \textit{Jewish Idea}, he suggested that a "worldwide Jewish anti-terror group" be established. "This group must be organized and aided in \textit{exactly the same way as the terrorists are aided by the Arab governments.}" He wanted Israel to support the Jewish terror groups in the same fashion that Arab governments did. The vandalism of Kahane's devotees and the indiscriminate public conduct is well documented in the Israeli press.\textsuperscript{57}

Kahane's cool analysis was more pointed than many of his contemporaries and he would have managed a more long-lasting career had his behavior on the street matched the tenor of his writings. His analysis of the Arab situation was far more consistent than the suggestions of many of his political contemporaries. His forecasts were correct. His solution of evicting the Arabs was more politically feasible than the suggestions of many of his competitors. But the Kahane of the streets was an altogether different person from the analytic Kahane of the books - "a bundle of unrestrained emotions, violent eruptions, and an insatiable thirst for publicity. Apparently, those who might have voted for him needed, in addition to good analysis, a credible and legitimate communicator."\textsuperscript{58} However, the rhetoric of the Likud and the radicalism of Tehiya and the Gush Emunim made many of his opinions acceptable.\textsuperscript{59}

\textsuperscript{56} ibid., pp. 233-234.

\textsuperscript{57} One such incident is mentioned by Sprinzak, ibid., pp. 236-237.


\textsuperscript{59} In the May 1985 survey of the political attitudes of Israel's high school generation (the fifteen-to-eighteen-year-olds) conducted by the Jerusalem Van Leer Foundation, it was found that 40 percent of the youth agreed with Kahane's opinions. Fifty-nine percent of religious youth endorsed Kahane's ideas along with 50 percent of young people of Oriental origin. Sprinzak, n. 31, p. 490. On the popularity of Kahane among Jewish youth see Charles S. Liebman, "Jewish Ultra-Nationalism in Israel: Converging Strands," in William Frankel (ed.), \textit{Survey of Jewish Affairs} (London: Associated Universities Press, 1985), p. 42-46.
Why did Kahane thrive in a country that was proud of its liberal-democratic ethos that displayed a disdain towards revisionists tactics just a couple of decades ago? Sprinzak suggests that the sudden physical and mental collapse of Begin in August 1983, owing largely to the outcry over the excesses of the invasion on Lebanon, created a emotional and political vacuum in Israeli politics that suited Kahane manifestly. Kahane operated in a milieu getting increasingly comfortable with radicalist rhetoric exhibited in the rise of "nationalist-religious-ethnic-anti-Arab sentiment." His schema was in no way representative of the lunatic fringe as his Kach party ended up garnering 1.3 percent of the vote in the 1984 elections which gave him a seat in the Knesset. 26,000 Israelis voted for him; 2.5 percent of Israeli soldiers among them. Opinion polls after the elections gave him between 2.5 to 7 percent of the total vote.60

The Settlement Drive in the West Bank

However, Kahane was merely providing ideological cover for the settlement initiatives and anti-Arab policies that the Israeli government was surreptitiously enacting in the West Bank. To coordinate the settlements program, the government and the World Zionist Organization established a joint committee, after the signing of Camp David, headed by veteran Likud leader Matityahu Drobles. The committee report declared:

Settlement throughout the entire Land of Israel is for security and by right. A strip of settlements at strategic sites enhances both internal and external security, as well as making concrete and realizing our right to the Land of Israel. ... The disposition of the settlements must be carried out not only around the settlements of the minorities (indigenous Arabs) but also in between them. This is in accordance with the settlement program adopted in Galilee and in other parts of the country, with the objective of reducing to the minimum the possibility for the development of another Arab State in these regions.61 (emphasis added)

The intention was clear. The idea was to turn the entire West Bank (under 3,000 square miles), which was smaller than the circumference of greater Los Angeles, into a kind of

60 Sprinzak, n. 9, pp. 171-172.

theme park that was littered with settlements and bypass roads that would throttle any autonomous existence for the Arabs. Thus began Begin's "New Zionism." It divided the populated West Bank into smaller sectors; augmented the Israeli presence by purchase, eminent domain, exploitation of abandoned property, and redistribution of state land. The government pumped $100 million a year into a vast support program of infrastructure reconstruction, linked electricity grids, controlled water supplies and applied Israeli extraterritorial law.

Policies were designed to encourage Arab emigration. Regulations against the drilling of artesian wells without prior authorization, a flat ban on the drilling of wells close to the Green Line, limited permission for authorized drilling, and heavy penalties for overuse of water by the Arabs were all introduced. Approximately 32,000 dunams (8,000 acres) of land that had been owned by Jews prior to 1948 were reclaimed. All restrictions against private Jewish purchase of Arab land were dropped. One of the largest Jewish buyers, the Heymenuta Company, affiliated to the World Zionist Organization, was the owner of 73,000 dunams by 1980. By 1982, some 200,000 dunams had been transferred to Jewish ownership. The property of thousands of Arabs who fled West Bank since 1967 passed into the hands of the Israeli commissioner for abandoned private property. The commissioner acted as custodian and exercised the right to lease out land till the owners returned. By 1981 an additional 430,000 dunams of West Bank property were leased to Jewish settlements.\textsuperscript{62} The densely populated hill areas of Samaria and Judea became the focus of Jewish settlement. Some forty new communities were implanted: 24 in 1977-78, four in 1979, three in 1980, nine in 1981, thus trebling the Jewish population to 17,500. The Palestinians, some 350,000 of them, responded to this by simply departing. Between 1968 and 1981 the combined Arab population of Jerusalem and the West Bank remained frozen at 750,000. Had they returned to their land after the war they would have number 1.2 million.\textsuperscript{63}

Ariel Sharon, the Agriculture Minister, who proclaimed that he envisioned the settling of 300,000 Jews in Judea and Samaria, in order to attract non-ideological settlers

\textsuperscript{62} ibid., p. 97.

\textsuperscript{63} ibid., p.100.
started a program of suburbanization, building settlement zones called "conurbation" communities around Jewish populated areas in the West Bank. The intention was to settle at least 80,000 Jews in five years, a growth that would generate its own momentum. From early 1981, eighty-three percent of all public investment funds for the territories was directed to these conurbation projects surrounding Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. The inducements worked as large numbers moved into these areas owing to the incredibly low mortgage rates that were unheard of in integral Israel. The Israeli government underwrote the low prices and mortgages in the area which provoked controversy in domestic politics. The Minister of Finance Yigal Hurewitz insisted that the annual expenditure beyond the Green Line never exceeded beyond $100 million or 1.5 percent of the state's budget. However, former Deputy Mayor of Jerusalem Meron Benvenisti, in his path-breaking West Bank Data Project that was published in 1984 and after, estimated that direct government capital investment in the West Bank civilian programs since 1967 reached $1.5 billion — $750 million under Labor between 1967 and 1977, and $805 million from 1977 to 1983.

Benvenisti estimated that four-fifths of the money was then being diverted to West Bank housing through the Ministry of Housing. Sharon's dream of 300,000 Jews living on West Bank that appeared to be a distant dream seemed more and more proximate by December 1982 when no less than 103 settlements were operating on the West Bank, 70 of which were established under the Begin administration. Apart from the 25,000 who moved into these settlements, an additional 65,000 Jews had become residents of the sprawling East Jerusalem neighborhoods since 1967. "This was a dense enough growth to generate the exponential growth that Sharon had envisaged." Benvenisti estimated that a combination of Arab emigration and Jewish settlement would retain the prevalent demographic ratio of approximately two-thirds Jews and one-third Arabs in Palestine - at least well into the 1990s. It was expected that more than the ideological zealots, the new conurbanites would develop a deep economic stake in preserving Israel's hold on the occupied territories. "Each one of the 100,000 settlers beyond the Green Line had at least four relatives in Israel to support his foothold in the territories. The ensuing bloc of voters accordingly might be

64 ibid., p. 156.
enough to influence the election of ten or fifteen Knesset members, and thus ensure that proposals for withdrawal and uprooting would face grave legislative difficulty."65

**Jewish Settler Violence and Vigilantism**

The settlement drive and the rising militancy of Palestinian Arabs coincided with a wave of Jewish terrorism and increased vigilantism by religious settlers who were said to be influenced by the rabbi. Acts of Jewish terrorism in the early 1980s shocked the entire nation as it had not witnessed its kind since independence. There was an assassination attempt on Arab mayors of three West Bank cities in 1980.66 In April 1984, a plan to blow up five Arab buses full of passengers was thwarted following which twenty seven men were arrested for allegedly forming an anti-Arab terrorist network. Investigations revealed that these suspects were responsible for the deadly attack on the Islamic college in Hebron in 1983 which claimed three students’ lives and wounded thirty-three others.67

On March 10, 1983, Jerusalem police arrested four armed men from ascending the Temple Mount as they intended to perform a Passover sacrifice at the site of the Muslim holy places which is said to be built on the ruins of the ancient Jewish temple. Police arrested Rabbi Yisrael Ariel, who was a leader of the four armed men. After he was arrested, a cache of weapons, maps and diagrams of the Temple Mount were recovered from his apartment. Sporadic incidents of violence were not unknown at the Temple Mount but this was the first well-planned effort involving more than 40 people and linked to a specific goal.68

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65 ibid.

66 The essential plan to attack mayors of seven Arab towns as a retribution for murder of six Jewish settlers outside Beit Hadassah in Hebron. Three of the targeted mayors were deported before the plan could be put into effect. The second attack was successful after the first one had failed. The mayor of Nablus Bassam Shaka lost both legs and Ramallah Mayor Karim Khalaf one leg in two separate car bomb explosions. The mayor of El-Bireh escaped injury while an IDF Druze soldier was blinded while trying to defuse a bomb planted outside the mayor's garage.

67 Sprinzak, n. 9, p. 170.

68 Not surprisingly, Kahane justified such distasteful acts. He approved of the armed attacks on Arab mayors in 1980 and the killings of students at Hebron. In November 1984, one David Ben-Shimol fired a shell at an Arab bus - a deed promptly blessed by Rabbi Kahane who made him an honorary member of Kach. See Mergui and Simmonot, n. 36, p. 22. Such provocations forced the authorities to ban him from making
Disturbingly enough, most of these attacks were conducted by the relatively pacifist Gush Emunim activists. This happened despite the venerated Rabbi Kook's advocacy of a "fraternal relationship with the Arab population." Clearly, the self-indulgent propaganda initiated after the 1967 victory was taking its toll. The emphasis on settlement, the renaissance of the pioneering zeal, carried within its tenets the possibility of brushing aside forces, in this case the Palestinian Arabs, who stood in the way of transcendental objectives. Moderate rabbis are unable to neutralize this extremist theology as "traditional arbiters of the first rank are quoted by Kahane in support of his position."

Clashes between Palestinian and Jewish communities was inevitable given the nature of the settlement enterprise that involved the planting of settlements encircling Palestinian inhabitations. The settlers' brazen behavior, that we shall see shortly, was emboldened by the government's conscious drive to create facts that would come in handy when negotiating for eventual peace. This started a pattern of vigilantism and violence in Judea and Samaria on the part of the settlers. In the early 1980s, there was growing concern of the liberals about the growing alleged acts of violence perpetrated on the Arabs in the West Bank. The Karp Report, commissioned by the Attorney General, presented in 1982, was devastating in its findings. Apart from confirming the existence of vigilante violence, it found that of the 70 cases reviewed, involving killing, wounding, physical assaults, property damage, and the use of armed and unarmed threats—fifty-three were never prosecuted. "Of these fifty-three cases, forty-three were closed for lack of suspect identification, seven for lack of an official complaint, and three because there was not enough public interest to justify prosecution." Incidentally it was Kahane that introduced the culture of vigilante violence in Jewish settlers' dealing with the Arabs. The Gush Emunim, for all their inflammatory rhetoric, being composed of excitable, yet serious religious activists, was not inclined

speeches in schools. On the controversy of the Temple Mount see Aviad, n. 15, pp. 338-343. For a brief profile of the 11 persons arrested for belonging to the Jewish Underground see Sprinzak, n. 1, pp. 112-114.

69 Mergui and Simmonot, n. 36, p. 24.


71 Sprinzak, n. 1, pp. 87-88.
towards provoking the Arabs. The Gush's young rabbis did not intend to uproot the Arabs of Judea and Samaria and were willing to consider them as an "alien residents" who were to be treated humanely. The Arabs were expected to be loyal to the Zionist ideas and the early Gush's indications pointed to a willingness to coexist with the Arabs. The benevolent attitudes exercised a degree of restraint as long as the settler community was not too numerous in number. The Labor government of Yitzhak Rabin strictly forbade the usurpation of land in Samaria. These attitudes were transformed after the rise of Palestinian radicalism in the territories when the Gush activists started their brand of vigilantism.

The vigilante violence was facilitated by the grant of the settlers right to carry arms. Settlers were allowed to carry weapons since 1968 when PLO guerrilla and terror operations destabilized life in the West Bank. In 1978, Israel's chief of staff, General Rafael Eitan, assigned the settler community partial responsibility for securing the West Bank. "Hundreds of settlers were transferred from their regular army units to units in the West Bank, where they protected their own settlements and secured cultivated fields, roads, and commercial and general community facilities. Every settlement was required to have an assigned number of fit combatants, including officers. These were to perform their active duty on a part-time basis while leading civilian lives. Regional mobile forces equipped with armored personnel carriers helped police the Palestinian population."72 Large quantities of military equipment, including sophisticated weapons, have been stored in the settlements under complete control of the local commanders. Most of the members of the Yehuda Etzion group that attempted to blow up the Temple Mount complex in Jerusalem were part of this regional defense system.73

This practice was to produce many dubious uses of official arms. Benvenisti, in his West Bank Data Project, stated that many regional defense units in the Hebron mountains became notorious for brutally mistreating the local Arabs and noted that the officers of the military government in the West Bank were neither capable of dealing with the offenders nor were interested in doing so.74 A study revealed that 28 percent of the male settlers and

72 ibid., p. 78.

73 Sprinzak, n. 31, p. 475.

five percent of the female settlers admitted to having participated in some form of vigilante activity. While 13 percent of settlers disapproved of vigilantism, 65 percent of the five hundred respondents in Weisburd and Vinitsky’s poll agreed with the statement: "It is necessary for the settlers to respond quickly and independently to Arab harassment of settlers and settlements." The Jewish settlers got into the habit of bypassing legal channels of addressing Arab violence and harassment of Jewish individuals. Explaining this one settler said:

Our attitude has been that we cannot afford to allow any actions of hostility by the Arabs to go unanswered . . . . If during the day or night a rock was thrown by x amount of Arabs (at a car). We will go out and react. Now, what that reaction means depends on the situation. We sometimes go talk to the mukhtar (the village head) and warn him; sometimes we try and catch the kids or the people, whoever it was responsible for what was done. The general idea, as I have said, is that we found that if we don’t react the Arabs will translate it as a sign of weakness. And once we are in that situation, we really don’t have any point of strength to make sure this won’t happen again.

The fullest elaboration of the GE’s vigilante philosophy was made by Yehuda Etzion, who told a court about his participation in the attempted assassination of three Arab mayors in 1984, in retaliation for the murder of six yeshiva students in Hebron by Arab terrorists.

Planning and executing the attack on the murder of the chieftains took only one month of my life, one month that started with the assassination night of six boys in Hebron, and ended up in conducting this operation. I insist that this operation was right. So right in fact, that to the best of my understanding . . . . even the law that prevails in the State of Israel could recognize its justice or ought to have recognized it as a pure act of self-defense. . . . It is unquestionable that in our present reality . . . . the reality of the sovereign state of Israel . . . . the defense forces of the state had to take care of this matter, quickly, neatly, and effectively, so that nobody could have, in his right mind, questioned such an operation. Furthermore, I do not deny that it was a clear case of undue excessive force. But the situation at stake was a case in which the "policeman" responsible for the matter not only stepped aside, . . . not only ignored the gravity of the case and the fact that murderers were allowed to act freely . . . . but developed a friendly relationship with them . . . . This

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76 ibid., p. 82.
situation, sirs, was a case of no choice, a condition that created a need to act in the full sense of the word, for the sake of the preservation of life.77

The Intifada inevitably brought more and more Gush activists into the cycle of violence that was being increasingly sanctioned by the movement's rabbis on religious grounds. The most dramatic case involved Rabbi Moshe Levinger who had in 1968 initiated the first Gush settlement in the West Bank. In 1989 Levinger shot and killed an innocent Arab bystander in Hebron. In court he argued his was an act of self-defense but was nevertheless sent to five months in prison.78 Every act of Arab defiance and sabotage had to be responded to in kind, demonstrating thereby settler force and resolve. This was translated into action through settler raids on Arab villages suspected of hosting Arab saboteurs, through the breaking of windows of dozens of Arab cars whenever a Jewish car was attacked on the road, and on occasions through the killing of Arab civilians in response to previous acts of terrorism. The individuals participating in the raids were all highly trained officers and soldiers in reserve in the Israeli army. The vigilantism of the Gush has been tacitly tolerated by over 50 percent of the Israelis who vote for the religious parties and by the right.79

The vigilante mind never sees itself in conflict either with the government or with the prevailing concepts law but instead is characterized by the "profound conviction that the government and its agencies have failed to enforce the law or to establish order in a particular area. Backed by fundamental norm of self-defense and speaking in the name of the law of the land, vigilantes see themselves as enforcing the law and executing justice."80 Weisburd explained the vigilante impulse of the Gush Emunim well before the activities of the Jewish underground came to light.

77 Yehuda Etzioni, "I Felt an Obligation to Expurgate Temple Mount," Nekuda, No. 88 (June 24,1985), pp. 24-25. Cf. Sprinzak, n. 1, p. 93. Etzioni summoned and convinced a group of eight men destruction of the Temple Mount would hasten the coming of the Messiah. The removal of the shrine was designed to "spark a new light in the nation", which would trigger a "spiritual revolution" that would solve all the problems of the nation. He went on publish a booklet from jail in which the rationale of the entire operation was spelled out. Also see p. 96.

78 Sprinzak, n. 31, p. 476.

79 Ibid., p. 474.

80 Sprinzak, n. 1, p. 93.
The vigilantism of Gush Emunim settlers is part of an organized strategy of social control calculated to maintain order in the West Bank. Though a minority of settlers actually participates in vigilante acts, they are not isolated deviant figures in their settlement movement. Rather, those vigilantes are agents of the Gush Emunim community as a whole. They carry out a strategy of control that is broadly discussed and supported.81

The Temple Mount Controversy

Another area of concern for the Israeli Defense Forces has the obsessive Jewish radical interest to blow up the Muslim Dome of the Rock complex in the Old City of Jerusalem. There is a fervent hope in the Jewish religious tradition that messianic redemption would be preceded by the reconstruction of the Temple, that in turn necessitates a destruction of Muslim holy places since they were built in its stead. However, the interest in Temple Mount is of recent vintage in Jewish theology. Since the attainment of complete ritual purity to conduct sacrifices is considered virtually impossible, the rabbis have over the decades ruled that ascent to the Temple area is forbidden since impurity is said to have occurred invariably to Jews through direct or indirect contact with Jews.82 The eschatological revival indicated by attempts to blow up the mosque, is indicative of the influence of talmudic academies that have on religious youth and how radicalized that sector became after the 1973 War.83 However, owing to the numerous disappointments over the centuries, that hope has been transformed into a distant eschatological vision. This was evident in a statement made by Sephardic Chief Rabbi Nissim in 1967: "We have done all that human hands can accomplish. For (this is the teaching) we have received from our

81 Weisburd and Vinitsky, n. 75, p. 82. For details and profile of Jewish Underground see Sprinzak, n. 1, pp. 94-99.

82 Aviad, n. 15, p. 339.

83 This must partly be due to the proliferation of public-religious schools in Israel apart from the ideological content of their curriculum. At the level of higher education, the growth of state-supported yeshiva colleges (religious seminaries) has been phenomenal. In 1960 their enrollment constituted 30 percent of the graduates of public-religious schools. By 1970, this had swollen to 70 percent. Huppert maintains that The graduates of these yeshiva colleges are the elite of Zionist Orthodoxy, that foster a mindless suburban violence and inculcating the kind of sophisticated theological thinking that culminated in Jewish terrorism. Rabbi Meir Kahane and his Kach movement are on the margins of the Orthodox-Nationalist political map. Huppert, n. 20, p. 104, 106.
masters: the third Temple will be built by God himself.84 This was the prevailing consensus till extremist rabbis convinced their protégés otherwise.

Significantly the Gush Emunim and Bnei Akiva, the religious Zionist movement have become active on the issue of Temple Mount. In its 1984 annual conference, the Bnei Akiva produced this statement of principles on Temple Mount:

The Temple Mount, the place of the Temple, is holy to the Jewish people. The Conference looks upon the present situation, in which the rights of all religions except Judaism are safe-guarded, as grievous. The Conference calls upon the government of Israel to find a fit expression for Jewish sovereignty on the Temple Mount and a proper arrangement for Jewish prayer there according to the decisions of the Chief Rabbinate. Bnei Akiba will now include the subject of the Temple Mount on its agenda, out of a deep expectation that the Temple will be rebuilt (and) seen in our day. The Conference opposes illegal actions on the Temple Mount.85 (emphasis added)

Despite the moderation in the last sentence there was considerable activist ferment within religious circles who were keen to make it a political issue. In December 1982, the annual conference of the Faithful of the Temple Mount, usually attended by only a handful of members, attracted hundreds of participants. The conference featured the reaffirmation of the obligation to assert Jewish sovereignty over Temple Mount. Authoritative texts were cited to back the eschatological enterprise; archaeologists were summoned to "prove" that rebuilding of the Temple does not always mean the destruction of the mosque; and particular attention was paid to the activities of a Knesset committee whose aim was to reverse the 1967 law giving authorization over the Mount to the Islamic Waqf.

The religious right's increased interest in Temple Mount led to the founding of a yeshiva for the training of priests - the "Crown of the Priests" yeshiva in an old building in the Muslim Quarter of Jerusalem. Under the direction of a Rabbi Shlomo Aviner, 30 young men study the talmudic tractate on sacrifices on the Mount in the event of the building of the Temple Mount. "They are preparing themselves to serve as priests in the Temple, believing that they live in the aeon of redemption, and that its final stages are drawing

84 ibid.
85 ibid., p. 342.
nigh." During the Passover week of 1983, the Crown of the Priests yeshiva organized a well attended two-day conference which was attended by Rabbi Haim Druckman of the Gush Emunim and founder of the Matzad party.

The violent stream of the Gush Emunim found its logical conclusion in the plot to blow up the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem in 1984 with the hope of precipitating another World War and force the Messiah to intervene and redeem Israel. The group did earn the sympathy of a considerable portion of "activist-believers", as they are called. A scholarly simulation game conducted at Harvard Center for International Affairs analyzed the outcomes had it succeeded. Some experts believed that it might have triggered the World War III as the activists had hoped. The heads of the Underground foresaw that the bombing of the "abomination" would arouse the Muslims to jihad, sweeping all mankind into an ultimate confrontation. This they interpreted as the "War of Gog and Magog," as prophesied by the Hebrew prophets in the Bible with cosmic implications.

It is possible to argue that Gush Emunim activists created a milieu wherein vigilantism received sanction in some quarters and became representative of deviant behavior that a majority of Israelis were not prepared to combat, both in view of their sensibilities and because of the popular recoil to the Gush conflicted with their commitment to the issue of security. The Israeli government announced the arrests of suspects belonging to Machteret Yehudit (Jewish Underground) that was formed ostensibly to reverse the effects of Camp David Accords. The suspects were associated with a series of terrorist activists that took place in the West Bank since 1980 that included an assassination attempt on three Arab mayors, a murderous attack on the Muslim college of Hebron, and an attempt to blow up five Arab buses full of passengers.

The religious right fueled the controversy over the Lebanon war in 1982 that provoked considerable outrage within Israel over the army's acquiescence with the massacre of hundreds of Palestinian refugees by Lebanese Phalangist militias in Sabra and

86 Aviad, n. 15, p. 342.

Chatila camps that were under then under the control of the Israelis. The religious right showed its disdain for the findings of the Kahan Commission which pronounced unprecedented opprobrium on Sharon and the entire Operation Peace for the Galilee. Rabbi Yisrael Ariel, the rabbi of Yamit, published a pamphlet arguing that Lebanon was the very heart of the land of Israel.

Dovish rabbinical voices were increasingly heard. Rabbi Yehudah Amital, head of Yeshivat Etzion, one of the illustrious institutions of the religious Zionist movement, castigated territorial maximalists and their exhortations to conquer Lebanon as part of fulfilling God's promise to Abraham contending that Sidon and Tyre are as much part of historic Israel as Judea is. Note the acknowledgment that religious texts sanction such a venture: "It may be possible to say that Lebanon is our possession according to the divine promise . . . So what? Are we obligated to conquer every inch that was promised to Abraham, our father? Why should we be concerned about the Damascus-Beirut road when we have great problems within the Land of Israel." Amital quoted a statement from a religious journal at the time of the bombing of Beirut that said: "We must stay in the Land even at the price of war. More than that, we have to initiate war in order to conquer and free the Land. Without the Land of Israel we are not the People of Israel." Hanan Porat of the Gush Emunim and Member of the Knesset from Tehiya put it across Amital.

Even according to the minimalists, Southern Lebanon is part of the Land of Israel . . . The root of the mistake of Rabbi Amital lies in a basic misunderstanding of the value and centrality of the Land of Israel in the process of the redemption of Israel . . . The connection between the people and the land is analogous between the body and the soul.

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88 The outrage over the massacres resonated throughout Israel with demands for the expulsion of the chief of staff Rafael Eytan and Defense Minister Ariel Sharon. NRP's Minister of Education Zevulun Hammer joined other ministers in demanding an inquiry into the massacre while a Likud Minister Yitzchak Berman resigned from the cabinet. On September 24, 1982, a protest demonstration was organized by Peace Now, Soldiers Against Silence and Labor. Nearly a seventh of the country's Jewish population numbering 400,000 poured into Tel Aviv in what was termed as the greatest expression of public outrage in Israel's history.

89 Aviad, n. 15, p. 341.

90 Ibid.

91 Ibid.
Clearly disregard for international law and the traditional fealty to humanist values in Jewish tradition were being sacrificed for puerile territorial nationalism.

Religious Parties in the Eighties

The country-wide religious assertion lent a fillip to Likud's campaigning style which was only too eager to push the nation's agenda to the right. This was to create a stalemate between the left represented by Labor and its allies and the "national" camp comprising of the Likud, the religious parties and secular nationalist outfits like the Tzomet. The 1984 election which was held against a backdrop a costly and protracted war in Lebanon and a deepening economic crisis illustrate the deepening of the divide. It also highlights the relevance of an ideological campaign. The Likud attempted like the Labor to engage in "catch-all" tactics i.e. emphasizing issues affecting all segments of society without rallying on any one, but eventually took recourse to badgering Labor on its position on the occupied territories. The election was conducted amid a de-ideological political climate with no mainstream party expending the effort to spell out policy or principle regarding the occupied territories, thus leaving the field open for radicalist rhetoric that the religious right reveled in. The nationalist tenor of the campaign was grabbed by the radical parties prompting one commentator to say that "Israel's commitment to democracy has been tested before as it is now."92

Interestingly, all opinion polls showed a clear victory for the Labor Alignment. Dissensions in the major parties and their coalitions hampered the political will needed to wade through the economic crisis leaving the society vulnerable to negativist rhetoric. The Labor Alignment, formed in 1968 out of reconfiguration of the urban Mapai and kibbutz-based Marxist Mapam, was riven with factions. The Likud was no different. The left's ideological incohesion played into the hands of the Likud and the rest of the "national camp." As one commentator Professor Zeev Sternell said: "The Begin gang enjoys a decisive advantage - it has a clear ideology, whole and complete. It therefore is able to demonstrate

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vitality and win credibility." Many Labor leaders felt that the Alignment was veering far too much towards the left leaving it out of sync with the increasing traditionalized politics of the society. Elihu Spizer spoke out vehemently against the inert reactions of the party owing to factionalism.

The party must speak with one voice and not with a thousand voices and murmurings. The voters demand to know exactly whom they are voting for. They are sick and tired of a supermarket of opinions. We must get rid of (the Marxist) Mapam. It should become a party, and we another party, each consistent with itself. The Likud has shown the way, and we dare not hesitate.

Likud took advantage of the hawkish climate in the 1984 elections by emphasizing the threat that Labor's dovish policies posed to Israel's security. Likud's campaign included an advertisement picturing PLO leader Yasir Arafat with the caption, "He backs Labor. So does King Hussein, Ahmed Jibril (leader of an extremist group within the PLO) and Bruno Kreisky (the former Austrian President who was accused of collaborating with the Nazis). Shamir precipitated matters: "Where is Yossi Sarid (the most dovish of the Alignment MKs)? Where is Victor Shem-Tov (Mapam's leader)? Why don't we hear Abba Eban? Let them come out in the open and let us know what they think and what are their plans."

Deputy Prime Minister David Levy echoed the same, "Where are the Labor people hiding? Have they taken refuge in a Trappist monastery and taken vows of silence." Moshe Shahal, chairman of the Alignment Knesset caucus, replied: "We wont allow them to drag us down with them. We'll play in our own court, according to our own rules, and not let the Likud dictate the terms of the campaign. The Likud must really be in trouble if they have to mobilize Arafat and Jibril in this way."

The Likud concentrated on "unmasking" Labor intentions regarding the settlements and worked towards clinching the its identification with its traditional Sephardi vote base.


95 Mark Segal, "Some Like it Hot," The Jerusalem Post, June 22, 1984.
As a result, 20 percent of its net broadcasting time was spent on what it termed as its "social revolution" namely the gaining of self-respect and economic rehabilitation by the lower income strata of society.96

The hawkishness that was prevalent in Israeli politics after 1977, and the prominent role that traditional Judaism played in sustaining the strident climate, paradoxically splintered the religious party vote reducing its overall percentage. This was to weaken the NRP for most part of the decade. This was most evident from 1981 in the case of the NRP. In 1981 and 1984, the party, divided as it was between the doves and hawks, found that the nationalism card was usurped by the Likud, Tehiya, Morasha.97 The defection of its leaders like Porat, Waldman to the Tehiya splintered its vote halving the number of Knesset seats to six in 1981 from 12 in 1977. The NRP was adversely affected with the formation of TAMI, (Tradition of Israel Movement) led by Aharon Abuhatzeira, scion of an important Moroccan rabbinical family, who split from the NRP over the issue of ethnic representation and won three seats in 1981. TAMI was to win one seat in the 1984 election and fade thereafter but initiated a pattern of slicing into the NRP Sephardi vote bank. Abuhatzeira's TAMI, earned him 45,000 voters (2.6 percent of the total vote) in 1981, mainly from the North African sector. This meant not only a loss to NRP but also represented "the cleanest and most authentic expression of ethnic political organization to have appeared in (these) elections."98

The NRP bore the brunt of this Sephardi electoral assertion and the reordering of its political priorities. In 1977 the NRP did well as hawkish Jews relied on the Young Guard to halt the peace process. In 1981 the hawks, traditional or secular, voted for the Likud as it took over the reins of the maximalist program.99 It suffered the ire of the Sephardi voter who now voted either with the Likud, Shas, or Tehiya. Further, the NRP fell from 12 seats

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96 Mendilow, n. 93, p. 455.

97 Morasha was set up by Rabbi Haim Druckman, a former Knnesset member, and Hanan Porat, a former Tehiya Knnesset member, both Gush Emunim leaders. When they failed to form a joint list with the NRP in 1984, they formed one with Poalei Agudah Israel and won two seats.


in 1977 to six seats in 1981 to four in 1984, five seats in 1988 and six seats in 1992. As a group, religious parties have always won 12 to 15 percent of the vote. The percentage in 1981 was lower than usual because the TAMi split from the NRP evidently causing confusion, and the elections witnessed an unusually high level of voting for the bigger parties with Labor winning 47 and the Likud 48 seats.100

The NRP has recovered to an extent due to its shift to the right from 1988. The territorially hawkish faction of the NRP led by Rabbi Haim Druckman which left the party to form Morasha (a merger of Matzad and Poalei Agudat Israel) was back in the NRP fold in 1988. This helped the elevation of Prof. Avner Shaki as the leader of the party who is not only a Oriental Jew, but also a major supporter of the Gush Emunim and thus committed to retaining the territories.101 This has had a paradoxical effect on the NRP. Shaki’s leadership enabled the NRP to regain some non-Ashkenazi votes as the results testify but also drove the doves in the NRP to form their own Meimad Party.

Outworking of Orthodox Agendas

Realizing that continued militance on the territories would not guarantee domestic support as it saw three of its Knesset seats go to TAMi, the NRP revived the demand for the amendment to the Law of Return. Begin complied, and after the 1981 elections undertook to ground the government-owned El Al aircraft on the Sabbath and other Jewish holidays, and to "make every effort to assemble a Knesset majority" for amending the Law of Return. The amendment to the Law of Return was a litmus test for Begin’s reliability on religious issues. In 1970, the Supreme Court had ruled that a Jewish husband and his Gentile wife could register their children as Jews by nationality, rather than by religion. The decision touched off a spark of protest among the Orthodox. Ultimately they secured partial relief in the form of a Knesset amendment to the Law of Return. "The new rubric though violating secular sensibilities was not without its advantages to the secularists. It enabled the government to deny immigrants to questionable elements such as the Black Hebrews, a group of American

100 Arian, n. 98, p. 96.

blacks who claimed the right to settle in Israel under the law.\textsuperscript{102} However, the Law of Return posed problems since it rejected the Jewishness of Gentile spouses and their children. Though children of part-Gentile parentage were granted full citizenship rights, they were precluded from marrying "authentic" Jews and even denied the right of burial in Jewish cemeteries. The problem could theoretically be solved through conversion, which became a bone of contention. The NRP and the Agudah demanded an amendment to establish Orthodox Judaism's monopoly in Israel from the Likud after the Labor managed to evade for years.

If Orthodox conversions became the norm, they would serve to rupture Israel's relations with Diaspora communities especially with the American Jewry, a majority of whom belonged to the Reform Judaism denomination. Earlier governments procrastinated on the issues appointing committees to resolve the issue. But Begin's accession to power and his shaky return in 1981 fortified the joint demand of the NRP and the Agudah. The 1981 coalition document finally included the commitment to "make every effort" to achieve a Knesset majority in favor of the amendment. That did not materialize as Labor, whose participation was essential for the two-thirds majority needed to pass the motion. For practical purposes, however, the Ministry of Religious Affairs under Orthodox control "chose simply not to recognize as Jews those spouses or children who had been converted abroad under Orthodox auspices." In fact, "(F)or years, the ministry had been keeping "black lists" (provided by spies and informers overseas or in Israel) of some 10,000 immigrants whose Judaism was "suspect."\textsuperscript{103} While these people could not legally be denied entrance with the other "authentically" Jewish members of their families, their lives could be infinitely bedeviled in Israel. Rabbis would not perform marriages ceremonies for them, in some instances would not bury them. Indeed, the impact of this rabbinical inquisition was so chilling for thousands of Soviet Jewish immigrants that it was a major factor in their later defection to the West. As Shulamit Aloni, Israel's leading civil rights activist, observed in an interview in July 1979:

\textsuperscript{102} Sachar, n. 61, p. 139.

\textsuperscript{103} ibid.
The fact that a man from Holland who did not convert, married to a Jewish Israeli and the father of a girl, was rejected by the Jewish Agency and was not given the right to purchase a plot in a moshav (cooperative farm) if he does not convert - no longer makes an impression on anyone. The denials of rights to housing, insurance, advancement in the army, marriage, and burial, for reasons of religion and origin are now accepted norms. No one has the energy to get aroused by these subjects any longer.104

The religionists extracted much in the realm of security and economy. Under the previous Labor governments, Orthodox girls had been allowed to claim exemption from military service, provided they underwent strict investigation of their religious credentials, and compensated by contributing an equal period of national service in the civilian sector. Since Begin's first government the NRP and Agudah lobbied to extend the exemptions. Under the 1977 coalition agreement, girls invoking the religious loophole were obliged to make only a token appearance before a military review committee. The numbers of exemptees rose from 20 percent in 1976 to 32 percent in 1980.105 As mentioned before, in Begin's second term, the Likud 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 Yeshivoth, even teachers of religious subjects or men over thirty giving Torah lessons in state schools, were exempted, much to the chagrin of the secularists.106 As part of the settlement drive that went on during this time the Ministry of Education allotted some $14 million for the construction of a school in Ma'aleh Adumin, a high-tech industrial center, a ten-minute drive from east of Jerusalem into the West Bank. It also granted $22 million for a yeshiva in the Old City of Jerusalem, at a time when the education's ministry

104 ibid. p. 140

105 ibid.

106 ibid., pp. 141-142.
250

entire construction budget was barely $100 million, forcing Israeli schoolchildren to study in shifts owing to financial shortages.\textsuperscript{107}

During a Knesset debate, the chairman of the State Comptroller's Office revealed that the government allotted millions of shekels to religious-orthodox organizations following the coalition agreement. According to the Coalition Agreement of 1 August 1981 (para. 48), a total of 700 million shekels was to be channeled to the Orthodox religious educational institutions. In fact the Treasury revealed that in the fiscal year 1981, 240 million shekels were transferred to the Orthodox religious institutions while in 1982 the figure was 700 million NIS (New Israeli Shekel).\textsuperscript{108}

One of the more interesting phenomenon in Israeli religiosity was the \textit{baalei teshuvah} (returnees) movement heralding the \textit{return} of secular and lapsed religious Jews to the fold of traditional Judaism. This movement is a revivalist phenomenon, characterized by both personal and collective renewal, compared to the Christian notion of being "born-again."\textsuperscript{109} The baalei teshuvah are significant for being the most tangible expression of the widespread tumult over the liberation of Jewish holy places. They spawned a great interest in Judaism in Israel that had ideological and institutions ramifications.\textsuperscript{110} The number of returnees (to Judaism) by 1983 was 8200, not including families from other countries which accounted to around 5000.\textsuperscript{111} The returnees sustained, what can be called a Judaization industry, that includes 230 yeshivot, and in 1984 had 4400 returnees in them. As of 1984, there was a total of eighty organizations involved in recruiting returnees. Forty percent of the budget for these groups was provided by the Israeli government.

\textsuperscript{107} Cf. Meron Benvenisti, \textit{West Bank Data Project}, Sachar, n. 61, p. 155.

\textsuperscript{108} Huppert, n. 20, see note 30, p. 203.


\textsuperscript{110} In 1985, the Israeli Interior Minister, Yitzhak Peretz, a member of the ultra-orthodox Shas party, proposed a general pardon to all convicted criminal who had returned to Judaism. This proposal was not accepted by the government. However, in 1985, 300 inmates took part in what was called "religious rehabilitation": there were three yeshivot in Israeli prisons, each with twenty students. ibid., pp. 54-56. For an exhaustive account of the baalei teshuvah phenomenon see Janet Aviad, \textit{Return to Judaism: Religious Renewal in Israel} (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984).

\textsuperscript{111} Beit-Hallahmi, n. 109, p. 60.
The Political Assertion of the Ultra-Orthodoxy

The most important development in the religious sphere has the corresponding spectacular rise of the ultra-Orthodox parties at the expense of traditional religious Zionist parties like the NRP. They represent section of Jewry called haredim that has begun to integrate fitfully into the state of Israel.112 Haredim look to the religious tradition as the exclusive source of legitimacy and are at least nominally hostile to Zionism, which they view as an ideology that conceives of the Jews as a people defined by a nationals rather than a religious essence and that aspires to the normalization of Jewish life. As a social phenomenon, the haredim are not a homogenous social movement or a single theological school. They make up a whole Israeli social segment and a variegated subculture which bring together several ultra-Orthodox traditions, Hasidic courts, religious seminaries, and prominent rabbis and religious thinkers. While they are united by their lifestyle and several common beliefs, they are divided along theological interpretations, countries of origin and communal traditions.113 What does unite the Haredi is (1) an extremist interpretation of Jewish Orthodoxy which insists upon a strict observation of all injunctions of Jewish law; and (2) a theological negation of Zionism which is the guiding ideology of secular Israel.114

The haredim came of political age in the 1980s owing to their antipathy with religious Zionism. The haredim distinguish themselves from their co-religionists by way of their dress, attitudes, worldview, and the character of their religious life. They view the practice of their religion as part of an unbroken tradition that began with the biblical patriarchs that continued to the revelation of the Torah through Moses to the age of the prophets down to rabbinical age. "To these Jews the past is the great teacher: today is never as great as yesterday, and the best that tomorrow can promise is a return to the great days

112 The word Haredim is (haredi in the plural) is derived from Isaiah 66:5 that says: "Hear the word of the Lord, you who tremble (haredim) at His word," denoting those who are poor and contrite in spirit.


of yesteryear."\textsuperscript{115} Haredim constitute "the minority of a minority of a minority" i.e., approximately 30 percent of Orthodox Jewry which itself is only about 15 percent of the approximately 12 million members of world Jewry.\textsuperscript{116}

Agudah Israel and Degel HaTorah are acknowledged Haredi parties. Their constituents are predominantly Ashkenazic descent. The biggest success was Shas (Sephardi Torah Guardians), an ultra-Orthodox party formed at the behest of Rabbi Ovadiah Yosef, as a breakaway from the Ashkenazi dominated Agudah Israel. The religious Sephardis perceiving a lackadaisical approach to their issues on the part of the NRP who they hitherto supported, retaliated with a definitive political assertion; translating their majority status into political advantage. Shas is identified by the media as a haredi party and their constituents are overwhelmingly Sephardic. Most Shas voters are not haredi but leaders of all three parties, AI, DHT, and Shas are at least nominally anti-Zionist when the term "Zionism" is used in an ideological sense.\textsuperscript{117} Together these three won thirteen seats in 1988. Likud won 40 seats, while Labor won 39. Shas won six as compared to four in 1984.

Shas ran on a platform of restoring oriental culture to a place of eminence and emphasizing what were described as Sephardic values such as respect for the family, abhorrence of drug use and observance of Jewish traditions.\textsuperscript{118} Its stock rose from 4 seats in 1984 to 6 seats in 1988 and 5 seats in 1992. By 1988 Shas got a sizable chunk of the erstwhile Likud constituency when it won 16% of the vote in development towns that previously voted for Likud.\textsuperscript{119}

\begin{enumerate}
\item \textsuperscript{115} Heilman and Friedman, n. 113, p. 197.
\item \textsuperscript{116} ibid., p. 198.
\item \textsuperscript{117} Liebman, n. 31, p. 70.
\item \textsuperscript{118} Freedman, n. 101, p. 414.
\item \textsuperscript{119} The division of the Eleventh Knesset (1984) reflected every shade of Orthodox belief. It includes two representatives from Agudah Israel; four from NRP; one from TAMI; four from Shas; two from Morasha (Tradition Movement); one from Kach; and five from Tehiya that relies on the nationalist-religious bloc of voters.
\end{enumerate}
Because of its religious character, Shas portrayed an authentic ethnicity, which secular Sephardi ethnicity could not constitute.\textsuperscript{120} It represented a return to the historic roots of Sephardi Jewry. "Through its religious messages, Shas provided a Sephardi past, reminding the people of an identity of which they were not ashamed. The ethnic appeal included a recalling of the great rabbinical scholars and sages (Maimonides, Nahmanides, Alfasi, and Caro) that Sephardi Jewry had produced, and a suggestion that the situation in contemporary Israel in which 90 percent of the prison inmates were Sephardim could not be a reflection of Sephardi worth."\textsuperscript{121} Shas intensively used television as a medium of propaganda indicating that it was not devoting itself to the ultra-Orthodox clientele which is known to abhor the visual medium. Shas was thus attempting to take over the platform of cultural criticism. Shas has the added advantage of greater loyalty to its spiritual leader Ovadiah Yosef as compared to the Agudah Israel which is more pluralistic and divided among different rabbinical authorities.

The Labor party, led by the efforts of Shimon Peres attempted to wean away the Shas in the 1980s from the Likud camp by emphasizing that the settlement effort that was primarily manned by Ashkenazi settlers was made at the expense of the development towns that Sephardi Jews were located.

Shas ambivalence on the territories helped it fill the vacuum that existed between the ultra-Zionist NRP and the ultra-Orthodox Agudah Israel. This was the opportunity that Peres was looking for since Labor had been shut out of any dealings with the religious parties by the Likud from 1977 onward. Labor had realized that breaking the axis between the religious and right wing was a precondition for Labor's return to power. "Whereas Haredi rabbis . . . could not forget Labor's secularization of Jewish society and religious Zionism could not forgive Labor's betrayal of the Land of Israel, Shas was creating a substitute for the NRP with which Labor could cooperate."


Shas went on to provide six crucial votes in the Knesset after the 1992 elections. Rabin, though personally found an alliance with the religious parties distasteful as they had brought his government down in 1976, went along with the alliance with Shas knowing fully well that its principal leader Aryeh Deri might be indicted in corruption charges which he eventually was. Shas was provided with immense institutional benefits including the post of a Deputy Minister of Religion - the traditional habitat of the NRP. Funding for the religious institutions associated with Shas and Agudah Israel was increased. In return for such patronage, Rabin kept to himself the right to initiate foreign policy decisions.122

Bitter feuding within the religious parties did not deny them the loyalty of the followers at the hustings indicating the enduring submission to religious authority. Rabbi Eleazar Schach, who with the help of Rabbi Ovadiah Yosef engineered the split of Agudah to form the Shas party, himself left Agudah to form Degel HaTorah (Torah Flag). This was allegedly a part of his overall campaign to excise the influence of the leader of the Lubavitcher sect, Rabbi Menachem Schneerson who announced himself as the Messiah. Contrary to public opinion, Agudah, instead of being afflicted at the 1988 polls got five seats as opposed to two for Degel HaTorah.

The competition was bitter, with the Schneerson group organizing a massive campaign which promised the rabbinical blessing for those who voted for Agudah and cursed for those who voted otherwise. Rabbi Ovadiah Yosef, the spiritual leader of Shas, appeared on television to annul the vow made by some orthodox Jews who were afraid to change their minds and votes.123 Notwithstanding these conflicts, the ultra-Orthodox got 13 of the 18 seats which went to religious parties. The trend continued in 1992 with Shas getting 5 seats and United Torah Judaism (a new ultra-Orthodox alliance with Rabbi Schach as the spiritual head) claiming 4 seats.

The ultra-Orthodox have not really edified their faith through their activities. They maintain a dual attachment to enhance the role of the Torah in the country while being unscrupulous in their drive to obtain ministries and other benefits. In the course of

122 Increasingly, both Labor and Likud tried to woo the Middle Eastern voter by placing candidates from oriental origin high on their list. Of the members of the 1981 Knesset elected by the two parties, the Alignment had 14 Sephardim, the Likud nine seats. See Arian, n. 98, p. 157.

123 For the details of this campaign see Freedman, n. 101, pp. 414-415.
finalizing the 'national unity' government in 1988, the NRP and Shas were both vying for the Ministries of Religious Affairs and the Ministry of the Interior. Likud threatened to abandon the notion of national unity if its ally Shas was not favorably considered. A compromise was worked out whereby the NRP controlled the religious affairs portfolio along with 60 percent of the budget delineated for the operation of the religious councils, while Shas controlled the Interior ministry and 40 percent of the religious councils budget.124

In May 1994, Shas' Minister of the Interior resigned from the cabinet after the Supreme Court ruled that he and his colleagues be dismissed over corruption allegation. In June 1993, the Attorney General had submitted a charge-sheet to Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin accusing Deri of "taking bribes, fraud, violating the public trust, embezzlement and falsifying corporate documents."125 Raphael Pinhasi, Shas' Deputy Minister for Religious Affairs, was accused of falsifying corporated documents, false declarations and attempted fraud. Rabin was thereafter forced to woo the Shas to return to the coalition in order to lend credibility to the peace process by appointing a Sephardi Michael Ben-Yair as Attorney General.126

Assessment of Religious Influence in Israeli Life

This has not augured well for the secular majority who resent the imposition of the illiberal cultural agenda on public life. The clericalists socialize their constituency generationally through the religious school network whose curriculum upholds the idea of the Torah state and allegedly instructs the pupils that the authority of the rabbis extends even to the wishes of the rabbis. As a starting point, the ultra-Orthodox in 1984 forced the Likud to adopt a Knesset resolution which condemned cultural activities on the Sabbath and warned that such activity posed a danger to Jewish heritage.127 In 1981 an amendment


125 Cited in Keesing's Record of World Events, vol. 39, no. 5, p. 39485.

126 ibid.

127 Uri Huppert, "Quo Vadis Orthodoxy?," Jerusalem Quarterly, no. 36, summer 1985, p. 112.
to a Basic Law provides obliquely for the application of the principles of the Mosaic law (Torah) in state legislation. It states that "if a court encounters a legal question which requires a decision and cannot find guidance in legislation, in judgments passed previously by courts of law or by means of analogy, it should be decided in accordance with the principles of freedom, justice, fairness and peace of the Jewish heritage." The fact is that "Jewish heritage" is inextricably linked to Jewish religion as per the opinion of state law as noted in the case of 'Who is a Jew?' judgments. Schocken says that the lack of mention of the parameters of the "Jewish heritage" introduces the rule of the Halakah through the back door.

In 1988 the Supreme Court went on to rule that women should be appointed to the local religious council. These rulings are often interpreted as a form of secular intimidation and hence are not applied on one ground or the other. Although positions on religious council are theoretically open to all religious Jews, no Reform or Conservative affiliated Jew has ever been appointed to them. The Supreme Court has endorsed the right of the non-Orthodox to be nominated to the religious council, but that is yet to be effected. Reform and Conservative rabbis are not authorized to officiate at ceremonies for their own congregants. They can neither marry, nor divorce, nor bury them. They are not authorized to serve in their official capacity as chaplains in the Israel Defense Forces.

The influence of the ultra-Orthodox has been somewhat stultified by the reaction of the American Jewry to their renewed attempt in 1988 to pass an amendment to the Law of Return. The amendment intended on making traditional rabbinical law as a frame of reference for conversion, which would effectively mean of Orthodox Judaism's way. A vociferous reaction ensued from the American Jewry, 90 percent of which together follow Reform Judaism. Sensing the import of the attempts and the portent for the nature of future financial and political support from American Jewry, a majority of American orthodox Jews as represented by the Rabbinical Council of America called for the removal of the "Who is a Jew?" issue from the Israel's political agenda. Additionally 27 American Jewish


129 ibid., p. 50.

130 Huppert, n. 20, pp. 50-51.
organizations issued a statement rejecting any attempt to divide the Jewish people by legislative action in the Knesset. In any case, at the 31st Zionist Congress in December 1987, a broad coalition of American Jewish organizations backed by the United Jewish Appeal, responding to persistent ultra-Orthodox attempts and the secular parties lobbying, "warned the Israeli establishment that capitulation to the Orthodox establishment on the issue would cause a rift within the Diaspora and would torpedo fund-raising efforts for the Jewish Agency and the World Zionist Organization (WZO)."

The religious pronouncements on secular life, however, have provoked the secularists' ire. When 17 Petach Tikvah children died when their school-bus collided with a train, the leader of Shas, Rabbi Yitzhak Peretz, went on record that the accident was a punishment from God because of the desecration of the Sabbath in the town. Shas Knesset member Shimon Ben-Shlomo said during the peak of the conflict in Lebanon that prostitution in the IDF was the reason for the casualties. It was also that claimed that the high casualty rate in the Lebanon War in 1982 was because of the "immorality" of women serving as soldiers in the army. Secular Jews resent that the ultra-Orthodox who previously had displayed no interest in the State of Israel now take an active part in government without the requisite burden-sharing as a community of citizens (i.e. draft-dodging) and yet have no qualms in taking considerable grants from the very institution they deem as illegitimate.

The religious-secular conflict has shown ample evidence of turning violent especially from the ultra-Orthodox. Sprinzak writes that "not a day passes - certainly not a weekend - without a new press report of harassment of a secular citizen, Jewish or non-Jewish, by a group of excited yeshiva students or aggressive settlers in Jerusalem, Bnei Barak, Safad, Netania, Tiberias or a West Bank settlement." While certain element of


132 MacDowall, n. 29, p. 649.


135 Sprinzak, n. 31, pp. 462-463.
intolerance had punctuated relations all along —throwing rocks on the Sabbath, harassment of archaeologists, etc.,— new levels of violence was reached in the mid-eighties. It must be said that, most of the haredi violence is defensive in character. The Haredi merely seek to radically protest any secular incursions into the lives of their neighborhoods. They fear losing ground to the forces of secularization and see the Christian missions in Israel and Jewish secularists as their principal adversaries. Symbolic incursions into their society are opposed, such as an archaeological dig by the Israeli government that violates the rabbinical injunction against the "desecration of the dead"; the opening of a new road into or adjacent to an Orthodox neighborhood on Sabbath; the presence of "obscene" posters or advertisements. The secular Israelis are routinely equated with their traditional enemies such as the Canaanites, the Amalekites, the Inquisition and the Nazis. "While the siege mentality of most Israelis has to do with the Arabs and their security, the haredi have cultural and spiritual insecurities." 

Nonetheless, acts of violence and vandalism are a cause for concern since they threaten to bedevil the civic culture of Israeli in the long run. The most common type of haredi violence is enforcement violence aimed at enforcing haredi lifestyle over deviant individuals and groups that are suspected of harboring secular ideas. There are Miahmarot Hatzniut (Chastity Guards) whose job is to keep a check on sexual deviance in the community. The haredi community is known to have bitter conflict between rabbinical courts and religious seminaries, leading to "scuffles, fist-fights, thrashing . . . and property damage." Students of yeshivoth are known to raid "wrong-doers" who have had the temerity to offend their revered rabbis. One well-known incident involved the beating of member of the Knesset Menachem Porush in June 1984.

Fifty students of Hasidic yeshiva broke into Porush's synagogue and attacked MK, who was in his late sixties, "hitting his ribs, pulling his beard, breaking his eyeglasses, trampling his holiday dress and letting him bleed." The students proceeded to demolish the synagogue. Porush was rushed to the hospital and placed in intensive care for two weeks. Evidently, Porush had not only refused the injunction of the Rabbi of Gur who had asked him to resign from the Knesset but also had the nerve to tell a newspaper that the 86-year

136 ibid., p. 464.
old rabbi was no longer competent enough to tell him what to do in the Knesset. Porush paid the price for humiliating the leader of Israel’s largest Hasidic court with thousands of followers. Porush eventually chose not to press charges.

On March 10, 1984, a coffee shop was vandalized in Petach Tikva for opening on the Sabbath by prominent members of the ultra-Orthodox community including the Chief Rabbi. In 1986, ultra-Orthodox militants defaced and burned bus shelters for displaying advertisements picturing women in swimsuits. Incensed secularists countered by vandalizing a Tel Aviv synagogue whose rabbi had been involved in the bus shelter destruction.

Dr. Uzi Ritta, a lecturer at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem was stoned while driving with his daughter on one Sabbath in 1983. Ritta was hospitalized for a long time with suspected brain damage. One Rabbi Marvin Friedman responding to the incident said: Dr. Uzi Ritta of the Hebrew University is the infamous protagonist of the heretical theories of evolution. In keeping with his theories, he reverted to the primate state by deliberately crashing through the Shabbos Police barriers... indeed it was moral justice!” In April 1984, a soldier who had been wounded in the Lebanon war was subject to unruly protests, including the part-destruction of his private property for organizing a birthday party in one of Jerusalem’s oldest suburbs near Rehavia. The Orthodox also reportedly pressured the local grocer not to sell goods to the soldier Yitzhak Kiali. “Attacks on persons and property occur throughout Jerusalem—in the middle-class, mixed secular and modern Orthodox neighborhood of Rehavia and in the once predominantly Sephardic and traditional quarter of Mekor Baruch, as well as in the ultra-Orthodox bastions of Mea Shearim and Geula. The violence has also extended beyond Jerusalem, not only to the ultra-Orthodox enclave of

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137 ibid., pp. 465-466.


139 Freedman, n. 101, p. 410.

140 Cf. Rabbi Marvin Friedman, *Jewish Press* (New York), 13 May 1983. Quoted in Huppert, n. 20, p. 53. For a detailed catalogue of ultra-Orthodox excesses see chapter “Quo Vadis Orthodoxy” pp. 81-118. The following sections on ultra-Orthodox militance has been abstracted from this chapter.
B'nei Barak, but to other, less religious locations." Jerusalem mayor Teddy Kollek admitted that religious violence is not a "static" phenomenon but is a civil disobedience that gains strength as a result of the "authorities" silence. Prime Minister Shimon Peres admitted that the government lacks the tools to fight as a result of the political aspect of the violence.

The offices of Bank Leumi were vandalized and firebombed since it was financing a hotel in Tiberias that was allegedly being built on a Jewish graveside. A boycott was launched and cheques issued from the ultra-Orthodox were frequently stamped: "Not to be cashed at Bank Leumi."

In the Mea Shearim neighborhood a kiosk was burnt down for selling secular newspapers. In an eighteen-month period there were thirty-two cases of arson in Mea Shearim owing to the presence of "secular" merchandise. Observance of the Sabbath is a never-ending source of conflict as the Orthodox demand the closure of streets, cinemas, cafes irrespective of the wishes of the secularists. Even supposed liberals like Teddy Kollek submit to Orthodox dictat as was the case in 1987 when he ordered a criminal suit to be filed in a local court against the few cinema owners in Jerusalem who decided to open theaters on Friday evenings. During Kollek's twenty-year reign as mayor of Jerusalem, forty streets were closed to Sabbath traffic. In summer 1986 alone civil disobedience necessitated 2,400 workdays by Jerusalem police. Sabbath restrictions have led to quirky and yet costly solutions. The Hadassah Medical Association is forced to hire Gentile-driven vehicles to ferry essential employees to and from work on the Sabbath. An elaborate system

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141 ibid., p. 83.
143 Huppert, n. 20, p. 203.
144 ibid., p. 92.
145 ibid., p. 88.
146 ibid., p. 209.
of automatic Sabbath elevators have been developed at a great cost that result in the wastage of power.\textsuperscript{147}

Furious outcry followed the attempt to excavate the City of David site in the Old City of Jerusalem in 1983 by Yigal Shiloh of the Hebrew University. Attempts to stop Christian music concerts were not unknown. The non-Zionist orthodoxy opposed the construction of a campus by the Mormon Brigham Young University that had bought land on Mount Scopus in Jerusalem. Permission to build the campus was granted by the Council for Higher Education, the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as well as the local and district statutory bodies. The ultra-Orthodox waged protests, the university officials ran tapes on Israeli TV that contained threats against the Mormons. The Agudat Israel proposed a motion of no confidence in the government for its refusal to stop the construction of the Mormon University.\textsuperscript{148}

For the haredi parties, the most important defensive demand was the continuing assurance that \textit{yeshiva} students (students at schools for advanced religious study—which means virtually all haredi youth) would continue of benefit from draft exemption as long as they were enrolled in yeshivot. "A second type of demand included increased benefits, or public funding for haredi educational and philanthropic institutions equal to what the non-haredi sector receives. The haredi parties also called for greater housing benefits for young couples, and Shas was especially interested in government recognition of its schools as an independent, administratively autonomous system eligible for public funding. These demands, while marginally burdensome to the Israeli taxpayer, hardly presaged a major shift in relations between religion and state.\textsuperscript{149}

\textsuperscript{147} ibid., p. 83.

\textsuperscript{148} In an unprecedented turn of events in U.S.-Israel relations 154 members of the U.S. Congress, including 18 members of the Congressional Committee on Foreign Affairs, 11 members of the Subcommittee for European Middle Eastern Affairs, and 13 members of the Congressional Budget Committee signed a petition on 8 May 1986 addressed to Israeli parliamentarians that said: "We have become increasingly concerned by reports here in the United States concerning certain groups in Israel who have undertaken a campaign to halt the construction and use of the Brigham Young University Center for Near Eastern Studies currently under construction in Jerusalem." See Huppert, ibid., note 45, pp. 203-204.

\textsuperscript{149} Liebman, n. 33, p. 76.
The ultra-Orthodox parties have become increasingly strident in the 1980s. They are inconsistent on the issue of withdraw from Judea and Samaria. Rabbi Ovadiah Yosef, spiritual leader of Shas, over-ruled the wishes of the constituents and adopted a dovish position in the early 1990s. However, "what it lacks in territorial aggressiveness, it balances by ethnic xenophobia. Its television campaign in 1988 was critical of the Israeli government for not adopting harsher measures in the suppression of the Intifada. Agudah Israel's leaders are generally more hawkish." The Agudah, which was a non-Zionist party in the 1920s has veered to a territorial nationalist position owing to the fact that its greater involvement with Israeli establishment by way of receiving state funds for its institutions eventually militated against neutrality. Besides its followers were increasingly incapable of being in total isolation and inevitably acquired opinions that concern the state's security. Accordingly the head of its premier counseling body, the Council of Torah Sages, the Gerer rebbe, who is the charismatic authority for the most important faction within the Aguday, announced that no part of the Land of Israel could be transferred to foreign rule. Degel HaTorah's dovishness stems more from a fear of gentilic reaction to Israeli excesses rather than a concern for Palestinians.

Can a link be established between the high-profile role of religion and the increasing prevalence of ultranationalist attitudes? As regards the secular section of the population, one can only point to the role of Orthodoxy in perpetuating an edgy political climate concerning the Arabs and territories. However, opinion polls indicate that ultranationalism is proportional to a person's religiosity. The more religiously traditional the respondent, the less likely he or she was to favor the return of territory. While the timeframe of the attitudes is fairly narrow to understand the long-term evolution of attitudes, such a finding conveys that the post 1973 War mood that probably indicates the radicalization of public opinion due to the mass campaign of organizations like the Gush.


151 ibid.

152 Liebman, n. 30, p. 78.
The aggressive religious nationalism that has been transmitted through the public-religious school system, the religious youth movements and the mass media has not resulted in increased affirmation to religious tradition by the next generation. 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 schools benefited 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 1983.153 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.154

Nonetheless, those that are enrolled in religious schools displayed a greater propensity towards ultranationalism. It has also been noticed that ethnicity and religious nationalism tend to hand in hand. In a high school composed almost exclusively of Oriental Jews, 23 percent of the students said they supported Meir Kahane's party, Kach and 39 percent said they agreed with Kach's views which include expelling all Arabs.155 Liebman summarizes the findings of research into religious observance, ethnicity and nationalism.

A greater proportion of Israelis who define themselves as traditionalists espouse ultranationalist policies than do Israelis who define themselves as secularists, and more ultranationalists are found among those who observe some of the religious tradition than among those who observe none. This suggests that religious does have something to do with ultranationalism." To summarize (1) ultranationalism is related to religious commitment, at least up to a point, although very religious (haredi) Jews may be less extreme in their nationalist views than religious Zionists; (2) religious Jews are not always ultranationalists, nor were they the most nationalist segment in the population prior to 1967; (3) other population groups who favor ultranationalist policies are Oriental Jews and young people.156

153 ibid., p. 79.


156 Liebman, n. 30, p. 80.
Ethnicity and Nationalism

The last consideration, concerning the attitudes of Oriental Jews is of some significance for Israel's future given the fact that Sephardic Jews now compose the majority in Israel. As stated in the previous chapter, the identification of the Sephardim with the Likud has been construed to a linkage between Sephardi character and Likud's foreign policy. The Likud's victory is attributed to increased support by the younger Sephardi voters.\footnote{Lily Weissbrod quoting Shevah Weiss, a professor at Haifa University and Labor Party member in "Protest and Dissidence in Israel," in Myron Aronoff (ed.), \textit{Cross-Currents in Israeli Culture and Politics}, vol. IV (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1984), p. 103.} A study of the younger Sephardi voters for the Likud has shown that an inordinate number had low socio-economic status, possessed only an elementary certificate, and in fewer instances a high school education. These characteristics apply in general to the Sephardim. Research findings over the last 20 years have shown that the Sephardim have cast between 3 to 12 percent more votes than their Ashkenazi counterpart.\footnote{Maurice M. Roumani, "The Sephardi Factor in Israeli Politics," \textit{Middle East Journal}, vol. 42 (3), summer 1988, pp. 423-435.} In 1972, a study found that 56 percent of the total population were against giving up any of the West Bank; 92 percent were against returning the Golan Heights and Jerusalem. When these figures were broken down by ethnic group, 49 percent of the Ashkenazim and 70 percent of the Sephardim were against returning the West Bank. 90 percent of Sephardim and 95 percent of Ashkenazim were against returning the Golan and Jerusalem.\footnote{ibid., p. 425.}

A decade late in 1984, this trend persisted. Forty percent of the entire population supported a compromise on the territories and 53 percent supported annexation. Ethnically, 60 percent of the Sephardim favored annexation, with the percentage higher among second and third generation; in contrast, only 53 percent of the Ashkenazim approved of annexation.\footnote{ibid.} As regards attitudes towards Arabs, sociologist Yohanan Peres found that in 1971 that 91 percent of the Sephardim would refuse to rent a room to an Arab, as compared to 80 percent among Ashkenazim. As to the question of whether every Arab "hates" Jews, 83 percent of the Sephardim answered in the affirmative, compared to 76 percent of the
Ashkenazim.\textsuperscript{161} Similar figures were obtained from a study in 1980 on the question of granting rights to Palestinians in the occupied territories. With regard to restricting the rights of Palestinians in the occupied territories, 22 percent of the total population answered in the affirmative. The figure among Sephardim was 29 percent.\textsuperscript{162} Not all Ashkenazim were doves and not all Sephardim were extremists and yet the little differences in the increase of hawkishness as compared to the Ashkenazim has intrigued analysts.

This is surprising since the most flamboyant expression of territorial nationalism in the 1970s, the Gush Emunim, was almost exclusively an Ashkenazi phenomenon. Thus the vote for the Likud can be interpreted as a pragmatic gambit for a party that was rhetorically willing to make the Sephardim an equal partner in the Zionist enterprise. As one writer put it, "it is Begin the man, not the revisionist ideologue, who symbolizes in action the message of the Sephardi Jew. Begin, like his Sephardi followers, spent most of his life on the margins of society. Ridiculed by Labor, his lifelong devotion to Jewish customs and rituals stood in marked contrast to secular and materialistic lifeways of present Labor notables."\textsuperscript{163} Hence the vote for the Likud was part and parcel of the shift of the entire Israeli population towards the right and the disaffection of the Orientals to Ashkenazi ethnocentrism as expressed in the implementation of welfare policies since the 1950s. Significantly, each new generation of both Sephardim and Ashkenazim became more conservative.\textsuperscript{164}

The Sephardic animus towards the Arabs has been linked to the relative deprivation that the Orientals found themselves in and adopted the condescending European attitudes that they were subject after the 1967 War when Arabs started filling the blue collar jobs that were previously manned by the Orientals. In this context of generalized perception of relative deprivation, it would not be uncommon for Sephardim to displace or

\textsuperscript{161} Yohanan Peres, "Ethnic Relations in Israel," \textit{American Journal of Sociology}, vol. 76, no.6, 1971, pp. 1021-1047.


\textsuperscript{164} Arian, n. 98, pp. 137, 140.
take out their feelings of frustration and aggression on the Arabs.\textsuperscript{165} Ofira Selitkar points out that, "peripheral groups (Sephardim) use the Arabs as a marking-off group in order to bolster their Israeli identity."\textsuperscript{166} As Roumani explains:

This situation is particularly true among first generation Sephardi sabra who grew to be ambivalent toward Arab Jewish culture and who strongly resented being identified with the Arab stereotypes popular in Israeli society. As Sephardi family values and customs found no support in the Israeli school system, inter-generational tensions were exacerbated, resulting in the suppression of any Arab cultural identity, including the traditional Judaism that was the cornerstone of their parents' generation. In seeking acceptance, as fast as possible, by the dominant group, the Sephardi sabra embraced Western values and a form of patriotism that gave semblance to anti-Arab feelings. These feelings, however, were not so much based on an enmity towards the Arabs as on the negative view of Arabs by Israelis in the society. Whatever these feelings may be, the Sephardi Jew was in fact echoing the ethnocentrism expressed by the Ashkenazim towards him and which he then learned to transfer towards the Arabs in order to distance himself.\textsuperscript{167}

Roumani disagrees saying with the contention that Oriental hawkishness is related to the political culture of their countries of origin.\textsuperscript{168} He states stating that such interpretations lack historical evidence and merely assert the superiority of Ashkenazi political culture. "On the whole, the Sephardim were excluded from political life in their countries of origin and hence from Arab political culture," and over the centuries they evolved a network of democratic procedures that governed their daily and communal lives.\textsuperscript{169} In countries like Iraq, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco, Jews were elected to parliaments and participated in national liberation movements.

However, there are semblances of empathy with the lot of Palestinian Arabs than is normally acknowledged. Elie Eliachar, president of the Council of the Sephardi Community

\textsuperscript{165} Roumani, n. 158, p. 429.


\textsuperscript{167} Roumani, n. 158, pp. 430-431.

\textsuperscript{168} Selitkar, n. 166, p. 177.

\textsuperscript{169} See Shlomo Deshen, "The Judaism of Middle Eastern Immigrants," \textit{Jerusalem Quarterly}, no. 13, Fall 1979, p. 105.
in Jerusalem and a member of the Knesset in the 1950s and 1960s, wrote a book *To Live with Palestinians* in 1921 as part of his relentless 50 years crusade for greater tolerance towards the Palestinians. He maintained that Palestinians differed from Syrian, Egyptian, or other Arabs. He asked, "Why are we against the establishment of a Palestinian entity that with our help will be integrated with us into a federation?" and he spoke out against settlement in the West Bank, which he considered to be "contradicting our claims that we are seeking Peace."\(^{170}\) As to Jerusalem Eliachar advocated a "condominium," a joint capital with an Arab Palestinian state or with Jordan. Andre Choraqui, a writer and Algerian Jew, like Eliyachar took umbrage at the ridiculing of Arab culture by Israelis at large.

> I knew the Arab world very well and had grown up with my Arab friends. I loved Arab culture and history and admired the spiritual values which the Arab world transmitted to the nations. I knew of our common past and deep friendship which has always brought the Arabs and the Jews closer together throughout Dar-el-Islam for centuries.\(^{171}\)

The Sephardi elite has to an extent held on to the values of tolerance towards the Palestinians. In a recent study of their leadership, it was found that out of 24 Sephardi Knesset members who were interviewed, 68 percent were against annexation of the West Bank and 58 percent favored the Camp David Accords.\(^{172}\) Rabbi Ovadiah Yosef, formerly Sephardi chief rabbi and spiritual leader of Shas, said that the Halakah, the body of Jewish law, does not consider territories to be sacred and therefore he does not object returning them in exchange for peace. As a writer put it:

> Sephardic society, while more hierarchical and traditional, lacked the Ashkenazic penchant for religious fanaticism or radical politics, utopian fantasizing and factionalism - qualities that rent Jewish life in the villages of Eastern Europe and still plague Israeli politics. And because they know the Arabs, speak their language and view them more...

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realistically, the Sephardim, though nationalistic, are more likely to reach a workable accommodation with them.\textsuperscript{173}

The dilemma for the Sephardi Jews is that they are caught between a cultural heritage borne out of living for over a millennium in the Middle East and North Africa and attempting to be integrated in the Ashkenazi, Western dominated society of Israel. Indeed, that heritage probably needs to be tapped by the Israeli establishment as it seeks a solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict.\textsuperscript{174}

Relative Decline of the Gush Emunim

From the vantage of domestic politics alone the relative decline in the influence of the Gush Emunim must count as a factor that enabled the push towards a settlement with the Palestinians. To begin with the Gush was never, contrary to its public image, a monolithic group in terms of political attitudes. There was always a variety of opinion, for instance, on the appropriateness of lobbying through Tehiya and on the issues of cooperation between the secular and the religious in the same political party or the vexing issue of withdrawal of Sinai.\textsuperscript{175} Doctrinal ambivalence continued after the outbreak of Intifada with the movement being divided between its own hawks and doves. The withdrawal from Sinai and the evacuation from Yamit revealed the organizational weakness and internal divisions of the Gush rather than its strength and unity. The reactions to the involvement of some of its activities in the terrorist activities discovered in 1984 reflected differing views on central issues, such as relations with Arabs, attitude towards governmental institutions, and the use of violent and illegal means for the attainment of ideological goals. Aran summarizes the nature of theological conflicts:

The precedents retrieved from sacred history are largely viewed ahistorically, creating the basis for a rather flexible and selective interpretation, by which different authorities may


\textsuperscript{174} Roumani, n. 158, p. 434.

issue different instructions to the religious public. Consequently, the opinions of rabbis identified with the hawkish line espoused by Torah-centered settlers may clash with those of other religious authorities. The halakhic interpretations diverge and even contradict one another, primarily over the two basic issues underlying all Gush's endeavors. These issues have become especially acute since the outbreak of the Intifada: (1) considering the public controversy regarding the settlers' activities, does the integrity of the Land of Israel take precedence over the integrity of the Jewish people, or vice-versa. (2) as the maintenance of a stalwart hold on the Territories entails the sacrifice of human life - and may escalate violent international conflict - is the integrity of the Land of Israel superseded by the commandment to save lives, or is so important that it even justifies warfare?176

The Gush has been a victim of its own success in the sense that its clamor for territorial expansion end in evocation of a climate where Likud rose to power which in turn took over activities that were the preserve of the Gush. There is a perceptible organizational decline that is evident in GE. This was initiated in the early 1980s when there was a tendency of the movement’s leaders to conduct politico-settlement activities from beyond the bounds of the Gush as evinced in the emergence of the Tehiya and other splinter ultranationalist groups. Many of the Gush's central activists joined the newly formed Tehiya Party in 1981, leaving control of the Gush in the hands of secondary echelon leaders. Some leaders chose to retain their membership in the NRP while some chose to join Morasha.

Gershon Shafir asserts that the Gush Emunim failed to fulfill its central aims and implement its major policies. The main reason is the unwillingness of most Jews in Israel to follow the lead of the movement in joining the settlement enterprise in the West Bank. "Gush Emunim never succeeded in creating a mass movement of settlers' and it has failed to win the serious and sustained type (of support ) required in uprooting and moving to the West Bank."177 Eliezer Don-Yehiya disagrees with Shafir and states that a protest movement can scarcely expect the masses to join as activists. Instead the fact that the Gush managed to elicit public support for its aims and activities can be considered a measure of its success.178

176 Aran, n. 87, p. 287.


178 See p. 206 in the same volume.
There is no consensus in this issue of the extent of Gush's continuing influence in the territories. Liebman contends that though fewer than 20% of the estimated eighty thousand Jewish settlers in Judea, Samaria, and Gaza in 1990 were thought to be active supporters of the Gush, its sympathizers dominated the local and regional councils in the Territories as well as its cultural life. In 1989, GE enjoyed the deference of a group of thirty-one Knesset members calling itself the "Land of Israel Lobby," composed of both right wing and religious parties thus remaining the spearhead of opposition to any Israeli concessions to the Palestinians.

"The extent of GE's institutionalization over the past decade in clearly reflected in the administrative sphere (for example, the movement has a proper headquarters, with a permanent staff, representatives abroad, etc.) and in the political sphere: personalities identified with the movement can be found in various parliamentary factions, such as the NRP, Tehiya, and Morasha. (Examples: Rabbis Haim H. Druckman, Rabbi, Eleazer Waldman, Hanan Porat, Gershon Shafat); members of the GE executive and members of Knesset; Beni Katzover and Uri Elizur: heads of the settlement enterprise in Judea and Samaria who were accorded realistic places on the Tehiya and NRP Knesset lists etc. Movement leaders maintain regular close contact with factions in the major parties, such as the Likud.

In this new situation, there are some areas of partial overlap between movement institutions and those of the government itself, including such sensitive issues as finances and even security. The Inter-ministerial Committee for Settlement, headed by Ariel Sharon, and the Settlement Department of the Jewish Agency, headed by Herut functionary Matti Drobles—the well-financed and well-staffed bodies responsible for settlement of the Land of Israel, work in full cooperation with the Gush Emunim, so much so that the movement's cadres are often perceived as civil servants. The IDF has established organic unites of settlers, with their own arms and commands, who deal with their Palestinian neighbors both within and outside of the limits of their military authority. Sometimes it is difficult to

179 Liebman, n. 33, p. 73.

180 Aran, n. 87, p. 283.
distinguish between state affairs and the Gush's affairs. Even their rhetoric has begun to sound similar.

Nonetheless, the focus of activity in the area of settlement shifted from the Gush to specialized bodies such as Amana or Yesha—the council of settlements in Judea and Samaria. These changes in the nature of the Gush's activities are presented by Aronoff as processes of 'routinization, bureaucratization and diversification' of an ideological movement. Routinization and consolidation were expressed both within the settlements and the higher levels. The situation at the settlements was reflected in the luxurious villas which replaced the narrow, dilapidated caravans, inciting reproof of bourgeois values and decadence.

On the inter-settlement level, a wide-reaching network of sophisticated institutions developed. Above the local authorities, which functioned as municipalities in every respect, was the Council of Settlements, a body of delegates of all Jewish settlements in the Territories. In Hebrew, the council was called "Moetzet Yesha", the latter word both an acronym for "Judea, Samaria, and Gaza" and a term meaning "salvation." It is a rather democratic and pluralistic institutions comprising personalities and communities which are not necessarily identified with the Gush. The movement still considers itself as the moral authority which provides the council with guidance and decides certain issues, but the council is becoming more autonomous and is thus a potential rival to the Gush Emunim. As a sort of parliament of Jews in the Territories, the council functioned, and continues to function as a lobby in Israeli politics and as an administrative authority with a considerable degree of autonomy. It has developed diverse executive organs, such as an investment company and a newspaper, as well as systems of commerce, advertising, recreation, transportation, and the like. Many of the Gush leaders and activists can still be found on the government payroll as rabbis, teachers, students soldiers, Interior and Defense Ministry officials, and even as functionaries of the Ministry of Religious Affairs. "Ironically, in the

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182 Aran, n. 87, p. 282.

183 Aran, n. 87, p. 282.
new reality of the Territories, much of the anti-establishment activism is essentially financed by the government itself. - a situation regarded as scandalous by GE critics."\textsuperscript{184}

The Gush Emunim tried to perpetuate its own model settlement, the Amana, distinguished by homogeneity, intimacy, and strict social and moral control within the community. Amana settlements were to be characterized by political tension, a high level of involvement in the community, righteous behavioral patterns, and dedication to the cause of Greater Israel. It aims at combining the racial ideology of movement with an ecological improved quality of life, social exclusiveness and a high cultural level. This combination makes the settlements attractive, especially because the majority of settlers commute daily to jobs in central Israel, despite the high value attached to living in the Territories. Every family lives according to its taste and means as an economically and socially separate, independent unit.

By the early eighties, Robert Michels' Iron Law of Oligarchy seemed to affect the Gush Emunim. The "law" posits that true democracy is impossible in any organization since there is an inherent need to separate leadership and the masses even in a revolutionary movement. Since organization implies a division of labor and hierarchy of command, autocratic tendencies tend to creep in.\textsuperscript{185} Apart from this a pattern of routinization and consolidation were expressed both within the settlements and the higher levels. "The situation at the settlements was reflected in the luxurious villas which replaced the narrow, dilapidated caravans, inciting reproof of bourgeois values and decadence. On the inter-settlement level, a wide-reaching network of sophisticated institutions developed. Above the local authorities, which functioned as municipalities in every respect, was the Council of Settlements, a body of delegates of all Jewish settlements in the Territories."\textsuperscript{186}

A new type of leader, with a proclivity for both the radical and the prudent, has emerged within the GE as a result of the routinization of the movement. The likes of Uri Elizur, Pinhas Wallerstein, Uri Ariel, Israel Harel, and many more heads of local councils and other bureaucratic bodies, though expressing solidarity with the brazen methods of

\textsuperscript{184} ibid., p. 283.

\textsuperscript{185} On an elaboration of Michels' theory see Aran, n. 98, pp. 121-122.

\textsuperscript{186} Aran, n. 87, 282.
Moshe Levinger and Hanan Porat, have largely become the alternative for these illustrious founders "on the strength of their record of successful, pragmatic action based on a policy of accommodation with the government and other sectors of Israeli society."  

And yet there is no dearth for the dramatic in the movement. In the late eighties, the GE hard core, amid the Intifada, was noticed to becoming more obsessive in its aspiration to migrate from the territorial-demographic periphery into the heartland. Aran writes of one such manifestation:

In autumn 1989, I again observed Rabbi Levinger, still walking alone, sub-machine gun in hand, seeking provocations in the narrow, dark alleys of the Palestinian neighborhood whose residents know him well and focus all their hatred of Jews on him. He has become more involved than ever in incitement and riots, including the breaking of windows, the burning of shops, and even gunfire. Levinger was recently indicted for allegedly firing at close range, killing a local Arab shoe salesman and wounding his client. He was said to have then uttered stream of cries and curses as he ran amok through the marketplace, overturning vegetable carts. In the courtroom, Levinger denied the charges: "I didn't kill anyone. More precisely, I, a person who is considered to be a bearer of the flag of Israel, which I had been privileged to kill a son of Ishmael."  

Likewise, Hanan Porat, Levinger's partner in the Gush's leadership delivered a sermon in the late eighties at a settlement synagogue, citing the following biblical verses: O clap your hands, all ye peoples; shout unto God with the voice of triumph. For the Lord most high is terrible; he is a great king over all the earth. He shall subdue the people under us, and the nations under our feet." (Psalm 47: 1-4). He asked rhetorically: "What are the nations around us rejoicing about? Is this some kind of masochism? Our neighbors are rejoicing not only because of God's greatness but also because of the very fact that they have merited being subdued beneath our feet. Subjugation to the once and future kingdom of Israel causes happiness in the Whole Land of Israel."  

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187 ibid., p. 283.

188 During his trial Levinger changed his testimony and admitted having committing his act. He was found guilty of homicide due to negligence and received a relatively light prison sentence, causing an uproar in Israeli public opinion. As the left complained of overly favorable treatment for Jews, Hebron settlers held a solidarity, accompanying Levinger to the prison gates with a convoy of flag-decked vehicles. Cf. Aran, n 87, p. 338.

189 Aran, n. 87, p.293.
However, greater physical comfort in the territories and the quelling of the Palestinian radical threat led to an increasing number of non-Orthodox and not even particularly hawkish Israelis to move into settlements Judea and Samaria. A mass of settlers in emerging which cannot even be identified with GE. This is another of the unforeseen results of the movement's success.

The Road to Oslo

Nonetheless, a series of developments contributed to the undeniable fatigue accruing from retaining the occupied territories. The moral outrage at home and worldwide at the Israeli acquiescence with the massacre of Palestinians at the Sabra and Chatila camps in Lebanon, the inability to quell the Intifada whose brazen resistance was telecast into millions of televisions at home the world over, and the economic cost of sustaining the occupation was a cumulative yoke which Israel was finding difficult to bear. Israeli action in the territories eroded the support of American Jewry as they helped "blur the idealized view of the Jewish state" in the West. Israel heavy dependence on American Jewry's financial support and its lobbying power through the American-Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) made the latter's position on the conflict crucial to Israel's policymaking. Israel benefited from the US largesse during the Cold War due to its strategic role in "containing" Soviet influence in the Middle East as also mirroring American values by being the only liberal democracy in the region. The Jonathan Pollard Affair involving an American Jewish naval analyst who spied for Israel, raised a debate concerning the dual loyalties of Jews in America.

The disruption in the American Jewish consensus on Israel was evident since 1987 when the American Jewish Congress (AJC) expressed support for an international peace conference to break the deadlock on the Arab-Israeli conflict. The AJC's national governing council called for an end to permanent Israeli rule over the occupied territories, citing demographic findings which stated that possibility of Israel becoming a bi-national state if
status-quo continued. Other organizations like the American Jewish Committee and Union of American Hebrew Congregations adopted similar positions to that of the AJC.190

The most significant shift in American Jewish outlook towards Israel can be gauged by the debates between the AIPAC and other Jewish bodies. In October 1988, leaders of the American Jewish Committee, and the Anti-Defamation of B’nai Brith accused the AIPAC of "being out of step with the consensus of the organized Jewish community on a variety of key Middle East issues."191 They disagree with the AIPAC’s efforts to halt an arms deal to Kuwait and to shut down the PLO mission at the UN. A year later, tensions resurfaced when the AIPAC supported the Helms Amendment seeking to disable the US-PLO dialogue, while the AJC and other took a public stand against the Amendment which was eventually defeated in the US Senate. The debate around the Helms Amendment illustrated "the consensus view among most of the mainstream Jewish organizations which was to monitor the PLO actions closely, but not to challenge the substance of changing US policy under the Bush administration."192 In 1988, it was estimated that a two-thirds of American Jews favored a homeland for the Palestinian people in the occupied territories, an increase of about 30 percent since 1983.193

The Gulf War in 1991 in the post-Cold War scenario paved the way for the reorientation of American foreign policy. To placate the Arab regimes for their role in the war, the US administration was forced to make attempts at resolving the Palestinian issue at the expense of its "strategic ally." The Israeli populace too indicated their desire for peace if the 1992 election results are anything to go by. The Likud which had 40 seats in 1988 dropped to 32 while Labor’s stock increased from 39 to 44 seats. A combination of Shamir’s negative image, Likud’s disunity, David Levy’s ambiguous support to the Likud, economic dislocation especially in the Sephardi populated development towns and the deteriorating


191 ibid., p. 550.

192 ibid., p. 555.

193 MacDowall, n. 29, p. 649.
relationship between Israel and the U.S. had led to Likud’s defeat. Likud could not extract enough venom against Rabin on its patent security platform as the Labor leader was a distinguished war-time hero. Unemployment levels in April 1992 had reached 12 percent and the unemployed included one out of every two immigrants. Particularly damaging was the general perception in the country that the government had failed to deal with the issue of Russian immigration. Labor eventually got about 47 percent of the vote cast by them as against Likud’s 18 percent. Shamir ideological inflexibility went against the grain of popular thinking that indicated that 57 percent of Israelis were in favor a settlement freeze and that only 32 percent rejected it.

Meanwhile, Benjamin Netanyahu, the new leader of the Likud, laid the foundation for close cooperation between the Likud and other Right-Wing parties, such as Tsomet and Moledet.” It is important to note that although Likud itself declined in terms of its overall Knesset representation, the Right-Wing bloc came within two Knesset seats of being able to form the post-election new government with the help of religious parties. In brief, the shift between the Left and the Right was not as dramatic as that between Likud and Labor, a proof of Israel’s remarkable political and ideological stability. The desire for peace was indicated but the performance of Meretz (Vitality) alliance which secured 12 seats. An alliance of Ratz (Civil rights and Peace Movement), Shinui and United Workers Party, Meretz stands for Palestinian self-determination and separation of religion and state. It is essentially because of the Meretz that Labor was able to from the government.

Despite considerable opposition from the right the Knesset endorsed the Declaration of Principles (DoP) signed at Washington on September 1993, by a margin of 61 to 50 votes with eight abstentions including five members of Shas who campaigned for a referendum on the issue. Shas ostensibly abstained to placate the Sephardi hawks who vote for it. The 1993 agreement provoked the kind of extremist anger thus corrupting Israeli discourses resulting in stereotypical characterizations from both the left and the right. Rafael Eitan, the leader of Tsomet said the 1993 agreement with the Palestinians amounted


195 ibid., p. 149.
to "the destruction of the Third Temple." Rabin was called a Nazi on various occasions while extremist rabbis attempting to prove that theologically he was a traitor to the Jewish cause.

The charged atmosphere culminated in the assassination of Rabin on November 1995 by Yigal Amir, a religious radical associated with the extremist group Kahane Chai, believing he had divine sanction for his act. Asked where he got his ideas, Amir told magistrate Dan Arbel that he drew on the Halakah, the Jewish religious code. "According to the Halakah, you can kill the enemy," Amir said. "My whole life, I learned Halakah. When you kill in war, it is an act that is allowed." Asked whether he acted alone, Amir replied: "It was God." What shocked the average Israeli was the unrepentant attitude that Amir displayed during the trial, indicating the autistic universe that a section of religious Jews inhabit, oblivious of the obligations of living in civil society. Why that happened in a society manned by a secular majority has to be linked to the institutional and legal autonomy of the religious world and the official nurturing of the rhetorical link between nationalism, security and the tenets of Judaism.

196 ibid., p. 160.