CHAPTER III
REDRAWING IMAGES OF TERRITORIALITY

This chapter seeks to discern the narrative strategies employed by Leon Uris in his works, which serve to legitimize Jewish settlement in Palestine and the territorial expansion of the state since 1948. Many of the myths and accepted tenets of Zionist thought which serve to validate the Jewish occupation of Palestine and the systematic expulsion of Palestine’s indigenous Arab community find expression in the novels of Leon Uris. Incidentally, these have been identified as components of a “basic conquest myth” invoked by every European conquering regime (see for instance *The Question* 68-97, *Image and Reality* 88-95). The historian Francis Jennings has stated that the core component of this myth is the belief that the territory stated for conquest is a “virgin land” or “wilderness,” thinly populated by unsettled tribes whose aboriginal rights of tenure are at best tenuous since they have not worked the land (qtd. in *Image and Reality* 38). Further, the claim of a civilizing mission, the depiction of the use of force as a justifiable act of ‘self-defence’ against ‘aggression,’ and the strategy of invoking the colonialist rhetoric of a ‘divinely-ordained mission’ for the conquest enterprise may also be discerned in the writings of Uris.

For Uris, Palestine on the eve of Zionist settlement is a stagnant land—a land that had fallen into decay and desolation through centuries of Ottoman and Arab neglect—a place full of deep swamps and jungle growth and poisonous snakes, and ravaged by malaria and pestilence. It is to this squalid and unpromising land that Uris’ Yakov and Jossi Rabinsky arrive, fleeing from the Zhitomir ghetto in Russia in the 1880’s, following a pogrom. For Yakov and Jossi who reach Palestine after forty months of
trudging over two thousand miles across strange lands and fifteen thousand feet high mountain ranges, the land is a terrible disappointment. The brothers realize that “their Promised Land was not a land flowing with milk and honey, but a land of festering stagnated swamps and eroded hills and unfertile earth caused by a thousand years of Arab and Turkish neglect. It was a land denuded of its richness, a land that lay bleeding and fallow” (Exodus 216).

Through a series of descriptions Uris drives home the image of Palestine as a desolate and forsaken land impatiently waiting for its redeemers, thereby promoting the typical Zionist slogan formulated by Israel Zangwill, a close associate of Chaim Weizmann, the first President of Israel : “A land without people for a people without land” (see The Question 9). While offering a short history of Palestine in The Haj, Uris strikes the same note as he touches upon the impact of Ottoman rule on Palestine, “when a curtain of darkness was drawn over the region for four hundred years.” As Uris puts it, “Under the Ottomans, the Holy Land lay gasping, the rocks of her fields protruding like the baked bones of a monolithic mastodon … Palestine had been devalued to bastardy and orphanhood. It had no status except dim echoes of its past. And Jerusalem was reduced to sackcloth and ashes” (16). Turkish rule according to Uris was marked by total cruelty, corruption and pernicious feudalism. Uris also comments on the treachery of the Kabir family—an influential Palestinian Arab family—who collaborated with the Turks “in bleeding the land dry and fleecing the stone poor fellahin” (Haj 16). Uris maintains that neither the Ottomans nor the Kabirs put anything into the land for centuries—“neither schools nor roads, neither hospitals nor new farming methods” (16). Abandoning Palestinian residence for a life of luxury and gambling in Damascus, the Kabirs are said to have left Palestine to the mercy of the
Bedouin who, according to Uris was “thief, assassin and raider,” and to whom “hard labour was immoral” (17).

For Uris the Arabs and Ottomans are people who had “raped and abandoned the fields of Palestine,” and turned it into a “desolate, desperate land” (Haj 22). Uris strives to maintain that the Arabs of Palestine had forfeited whatever right they had to the land because they had neglected it, allowing it to become a desolate wasteland. This is made explicit through the words of Gideon Asch, a Palestinian Jew, to Haj Ibrahim, the mukhtar of Abu Yesha, an Arab village: “It’s not your land, Ibrahim. You’ve given up on it long ago. You’ve neither fought for it, nor worked for it, nor ever called it a country of its own” (Haj 56).

This image of a neglected and forsaken land of Palestine is drawn in his work, Jerusalem Song of Songs as well. By virtue of its being a quasi-historical work, the book has a far better claim to historicity than his fictions Exodus and The Haj. Though neither book is presented as a straight-out work of fiction, the author here virtually accepts the fictitious nature of the characters appearing in the novels even as they are interspersed with historical ones, and having scenes created around historical incidents (see Exodus vii). However his Jerusalem Song of Songs is by presumption, a ‘true’ representation of the past. In the same way as all nations have ‘history’ to validate their present actions and programmes, Uris finds in the above accounts, justifications for the contemporary political, religious and military actions of Israel. Here Uris is positioned even stronger to make judgements on the impact of Ottoman rule on Palestine and Arab “neglect” of the land. Uris here notes that Ottoman rule was “corrupt, cruel and cunning” and that “they reduced the holy land and the holy city to dust and ashes” (225). He goes on to provide several illustrations which explain the reasons for the ruin of farm lands under Ottoman rule. Commenting on the over-taxation of villages, Uris maintains
that when an exorbitant levy was not met, an entire village was often tumbled and the land fell to swamp and erosion. Similarly Bedouin goats ravaged the delicate balance as they dug the earth and tore up whatever vegetation was left. Bandits and Bedouin looters who preyed on the weak and undefended added to the woes of the peasants. To reinforce the image of neglect and ruin, Uris also makes emphatic use of quotations from Mark Twain’s *Innocents Abroad*:

> “Of all the lands there are for dismal scenery, I think Palestine must be the prince....Palestine sits in sackcloth and ashes. Over it broods the spell of a curse that has withered its fields and fettered its energies....Nazareth is forlorn...Jericho the accursed lies in moldering ruin...Bethlehem and Bethany, in their poverty and humiliation....renowned Jerusalem itself, ...has lost its ancient grandeur and is become a pauper village.” (232)

It may be noted that as Uris projects the image of a Palestine that has fallen into sloth and decay—a land that is in need of ‘cultivation, civilization and reconstitution,’ the imperialist perspectives on ‘natives’ and their territory here find their ready echo. Uris’ arguments bear close similarity to the 19th century colonialist view that divided the world’s territories into empty (though inhabited by nomads, and a low kind of society) and civilized. According to Edward Said, “imperialism was the theory, colonialism the practice of changing the uselessly unoccupied territories of the world into useful new versions of the European metropolitan society. Everything in those territories that suggested waste and disorder was to be converted into productivity and order” (The *Question 78*). Said further notes that in the ethnocentric rationale covering the whole project Zionism and European imperialism are coterminous in their attitudes towards “native” residents and their land. The string of images employed by Uris highlighting Arab and Ottoman ‘neglect’ and ‘decripitude’ serve to create the impression that
Palestinian land was there for Jewish exploitation, because the Jews understood the value of land in a way impossible for the native Arabs. Uris’ picturisation of the Arabs as belonging to a stationary, stagnant culture, incapable of appreciating the land they lived on, serves to validate their dislocation by an ‘advanced, enterprising, civilized’ immigrant Jewish population.

That these images of Arab neglect and ruin of Palestinian land are not found exclusively in the works of Leon Uris, but is a standard narrative, is well discernible in a work like Joan Peters’ From Time Immemorial: The Origins of the Arab-Israeli Conflict over Palestine, published in the same year as The Haj. This is how Peters puts it: “In the twelve and a half centuries between the Arab conquest of Palestine in the 7th century and the beginnings of Jewish return in the 1880’s, Palestine was laid waste. Its ancient canal and irrigation systems were destroyed and the wondrous fertility of which The Bible spoke vanished into desert and desolation” (157). Commenting on the state of Palestine at the turn of the 20th century, Peters notes that Palestine was no longer the land of milk and honey described in The Bible, but a poor Ottoman province, a semi-desert covered by more thorns than flowers, with the southern half of the country comprising mere sand and rare marshy plains which were fens of malaria (170).

In this context we may look into Jeremy Salt’s observations on the Middle Eastern novels of Uris. Salt challenges Uris’ image of a denuded and neglected Ottoman Palestine by providing citations from 19th century travel accounts by Europeans, many of them clergymen with no sympathy for Islam. Salt cites extracts from J M. Thompson, W F.Lynch, J L.Porter and John Lloyd Stephens which speak of the “soft and refreshing green” of the hills east of Jerusalem and the “immense fields of ripened wheat” on the Mediterranean seaboard, of the road into Lydda “lined with orchards,”
where orange, lemon, peach, pomegranate and carob trees were intermixed with palm, walnut and sycamore, of olive groves which stretched far out over the surrounding plain, heavy crops of wheat and barley harvested from the Plain of Huleh, and land “good and well cultivated, with abundance of grapes, vines and olives, as in the days when the spies sent by Moses entered it” (56-57). Salt observes that even though these travellers record instances of poverty and neglect, they also write of a beautiful, fertile and, in places intensively cultivated Palestinian land.

In both *Exodus* and *The Haj*, Uris talks at length about the selfless services of the Jewish pioneers of the early 20th century towards the redemption of the land that had been “haemorrhaging to death” (*Haj* 21). The author points out how the pioneers brought the festering malarial swamps, the unyielding rock and desert, and the denuded earth back to life. Jewish claims to Palestine are further underscored as Uris brings in biblical parallels while highlighting the achievements of the pioneers who “as in the time of Moses, had been the sons of the slaves of the Russian Pale,” “who plowed with one hand on the gun and one on the plowshare” (248).

Uris’ Jews are heroic pioneers who tame the wilderness through hard labour and ingenuity. The writer devotes considerable space in both *Exodus* and *The Haj* to relate the efforts made by the Jewish settlers from the 19th century to modern times to redeem the land and to make the desert bloom. For instance, in *The Haj* Uris draws a bleak picture of the Palestine of Ottoman days to highlight the change that this region had undergone with Jewish immigration. Uris paints graphic pictures of the efforts made by such Jewish groups as the poverty-stricken Hassidim fleeing centuries of terror and persecution at the hands of the Russians and Poles, ordinary Jews of a pioneering nature taking flight from the horrors of Christian Europe, and the ‘new breed of Jews’ who came out of the ghettos of East Europe at the turn of the 20th century in organized groups (see *Haj* 21-22).
Uris observes that the latter were intensely bound to the ideal that only through personal sacrifice and Jewish labour could Palestine be redeemed (22). The “useless acreage” that absentee Arab landlords had dumped on the Jews are said to give way to “carpets of green” with the coming of the Jews, and “the energy of building was heard, and millions of trees grew where none had grown for centuries” (22).

Uris attributes the transformations mentioned above to the innovation of two typical Jewish institutions and their superimposition on the barren/forsaken Palestinian soil—the kibbutz and the moshav. These are also portrayed as the vibrant demonstrations of Jewish enterprise in various sections of both The Haj and Exodus. The work of the Zion Settlement Society in such places as the Jezreel Valley, the Huleh Swamps and the Negev Desert may be pointed out as specific instances. Uris points out the efforts of the Jews of the Second Aliyah who worked with no thought of personal gain or profit or ambition. Chapter IX of Exodus describes the creation of Shoshanna, the first kibbutz in Israel. Under the leadership of Jossi and Yakov Rabinsky the marshes and swamps are rolled back foot by foot, eucalyptus trees planted to soak up the water, drainage ditches carved out by hand after a lot of back-breaking work, irrigation water brought in, first in water cans on donkey back—the system finally giving way to Arab water wheels, wells, irrigation ditches and finally a network of dams to trap the winter rains (Exodus 238).

Jewish efforts in making Yad El moshav in the Huleh swamps amid similar adverse conditions is also drawn graphically. Uris notes that no pioneers yet had faced a job so difficult. The point is illustrated as follows:

The Huleh swamp was deep and full of forbidding tangles of thickly matted unyielding brush and papyrus…The muck was alive with poisonous snakes, scorpions and rats and a hundred other creatures. Wild boars and wolves lurked around. Even
drinking and washing water had to be brought on mule back....

However the pioneers worked day after day in the scorching heat of summer, in hundred degree heat, in waist and neck-high water, slogging away the muck… Raving malaria and its chills and fevers and delirium which nearly killed them added to their woes. (*Exodus* 259)

Uris offers several accounts of the Jews building *moshavim* and *kibbutzim* across Palestine. This includes *Beth-Ha-Arava* or the “house in the wilderness,” built in “the hottest and lowest place on the earth.” Uris notes that when the Jews came to this place no living thing had grown in the alkaline soil in all of history. The Jewish settlers wash the soil down acre by acre to free it of its salts. By this painstaking process and through the creation of spillways, dams and cisterns to trap the rainfall, they build modern farms (*Exodus* 517).

In the concluding section of *Exodus*, Uris provides an extended picture of Israel’s progress in the days following the Declaration of Independence by providing a picturesque enumeration of the indices of development—new agricultural settlements, cities and towns which “seemed to spring up from the earth,” money poured into industry, advancement in the field of scientific, medical and agricultural research, “concrete and steel skylines pushed farther into the suburbs almost by the hour,” a national airline taking to the skies, a merchant marine flying the Star of David beginning to sail the corners of the earth, air strips and a network of highways spanning the nation laid down and “New Jerusalem,” the capital and educational centre of the new nation, “expanding into the hills,” “even while musicians, painters and writers put this dynamic new society into words, and on canvas and into melody” (*Exodus* 572).

However, even while citing instances highlighting Jewish ingenuity, Uris never fails to remind the reader of the sweat and labour involved in
making the desert bloom. The list of Israeli achievements is followed by a graphic image of the new nation’s struggles:

Yet life was brutally hard. Israel was a poor and unfertile country and every single advance was made with sweat. Workers laboured exhausting hours for little pay. Those out in the settlements fighting the soil toiled under nearly unbearable conditions. All the citizens were taxed to breaking point to pay for the new immigrants pouring in. Clawing, bleeding, conquering with their bodies and minds, they made the tiny nation live and grow. (572)

While referring to Israel’s redemption of the Negev Desert, Uris also employs strategies which serve to promote the “wilderness myth” fabricated by Zionism. Even while the author identifies its biblical association as “the wilderness of Paran and Zin, where Moses wandered in search of the Promised Land,” Uris makes it a point to reinforce the message that what Israel had been offered according to the UN Partition Plan was “an abortion of a state” (Exodus 448). According to Uris, the Negev Desert which composed half the area of Israel “was for the most part a wilderness with some areas which resembled the surface of the moon.” This is how Uris puts it: “It was a broiling mass of denuded desolation where the heat burned down to a hundred and twenty five degrees over the endless slate fields and deep gorges and canyons. Mile after mile of the rock plateau would not give life to so much as a single blade of grass. No living thing, not even a vulture dared penetrate” (572-73).

Thus it may be seen that even while discussing Israel’s post-partition enterprise, Uris seeks to drive home the Zionist claim that Palestine was virtually desert and that it had been redeemed by the Jews in fulfilment of a divine mandate. This is made further obvious as the author enumerates how the Israelis went down to the desert, “built settlements on
rock,” “brought water from the rocks as Moses had done,’’ discovered potash, iron and oil, and made possible the reality of skylines “springing up on the desert overnight” (573). The contrast between past neglect and present regeneration drawn by Uris throughout The Haj and Exodus serves to validate Jewish occupation of Arab lands, and the forceful establishment of settlements, towns and cities. The picture of courageous Jewish pioneering, taming of previously neglected and unproductive lands, economic development and modernisation, and introduction of political and social norms that equate with a civilizing mission projected by Uris, strike perfect chords with the orthodox Zionist versions of Jewish history.

On the other hand, critics like Edward Said have identified the parallels between Zionism and European Colonialism. The process of the creation of the State of Israel is here seen as part of the great European-American movement in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, whose aim was to settle new inhabitants among other people or to dominate them economically and politically. Said observes that among the supposed juridical distinctions between civilized and noncivilized peoples was an attitude towards land, almost a doxology of land which non-civilized people lacked. Thus it was believed that a ‘civilized’ man could cultivate the land because it meant something to him. On the other hand, for an uncivilized people, land was either farmed badly or it was left to rot. Said points out that

Zionism essentially saw Palestine as the European imperialist did, as an empty territory paradoxically ‘filled’ with ignoble natives…Zionism not only accepted the generic racial concepts of European culture, it also banked on the fact that Palestine was actually peopled not by an advanced but by a backward people over which it ought to be dominant. (Question of Palestine 81-82)
According to Uris, the Jewish immigrants brought “tenacity, vitality, and a love and longing for the Promised Land” (Haj 21). Uris’ language is shot through with the rhetoric of Zionism which has appropriated a great deal of the language of European colonialists attempting to deal with “native backwardness.” Uris’ claims clearly echo the pronouncements made by such Zionist leaders as Chaim Weizmann: “It seems as if God has covered the soil of Palestine with rocks and marshes and sand, so that its beauty can only be brought out by those who love it and will devote their lives to healing its wounds” (qtd in Question of Palestine 85).

Further, according to Uris, the Ottoman Court in Constantinople had looked with favour upon the settlement of Jews who were taking flight from the horrors of Christian Europe, because this meant an infusion of money—“more taxes to collect, and more bribes to elicit” (Haj 21). Thus both absentee Arab landlords dumping useless acreage on Jews for outrageous prices, as well as the Arabs of Palestine welcomed the return of the Jews—the former for the “Hebrew gold”, and the latter for the benefits of ‘civilization’ brought in by the Jews (Haj 22).

It is significant to note that detailed accounts of Jewish immigration, the difficulties involved in the establishment of settlements, confrontations with the Arab forces and so on are couched in the garb of disciplinary history, so as to create an air of authenticity. The vocabulary, schematization, principles and methods employed in historiography are made use of by Leon Uris as he proceeds with the presentation of themes associated with the Jewish occupation of Palestine. The barrier between fact and fiction is so slender in Uris’ fiction that the ordinary reader finds it difficult to distinguish between the two.

Images of swamps and deserts ‘redeemed’ by Jewish labour and ingenuity effectively convey the impression that lands occupied by the Jewish immigrants before Partition, and areas allocated to the Jewish state
after the UN Partition comprised solely of wasteland. Uris is highly critical of what he calls “the British betrayal,” because once the mandate for the Jewish homeland had included both sides of the Jordan River and what the British were now offering was but an iota of what had been promised earlier. Uris notes that according to the British recommendation, the Arabs were to get the lion’s share and the Jews, a strip of land from Tel Aviv to Haifa, and those parts of the Galilee they had reclaimed. Uris points out that while the Jews had decided to accept the proposal, “the Arabs wanted nothing more or less than that every Jew be thrown into the sea” (Exodus 277).

Uris deliberately seeks to sideline the efforts of the early Zionist settlers to displace the indigenous Arab population. On the other hand, Uris’ version shows entire Arab villages being evicted by the agents of absentee Arab landowners, and the land sold to the Jewish Land Fund at outrageous prices. According to Uris, Arab peasants who had been in their villages for generations, even centuries, were given just a few weeks to simply pack up and leave. This is how Uris puts it:

Even the chance for a marginal existence had been cut out from under them by their Arab brethren… A land boom was on because an unexpected vein of gold had been discovered by greedy men. It took no mental giant to figure out that a dunam of land sold to the Jews would bring more profit than if it were share cropped by the fellahin for fifty years. (Haj 38)

Uris draws several instances to illustrate the corruption and depravity of the Arab upper class who had sold their fellow Palestinians to enrich and empower themselves. According to Uris, the powerful effendi families who owned most of the land throughout Palestine charged the fellahin rent amounting to half to three-quarters of all their crops, and they did absolutely nothing for these poor miserable souls (Exodus 226).
Uris traces the root of the Palestinian refugee problem to the period of Ottoman rule. This is made evident in The Haj as well as in his work of non-fiction—Jerusalem Song of Songs. Uris comments on the severe taxation and forced recruitment of Palestinian Arabs into the Ottoman pasha’s army. The author notes that this resulted in a mass Arab exodus to the Trans-Jordan region leaving large tracts of land available to the immigrant Jews (Jerusalem 245). It is also stated that land was unloaded on the Jews by absentee Arab landlords whose greed displaced a number of Arab peasants. The story of Arab betrayal is underlined with the following comment: “Had the Arabs cared for their brethren in the same manner as the Jews did, the story of Palestine might have taken a different turn” (259). The Arabs, especially the Bedouin, are depicted as vandalizing, plundering the fruits of Jewish labour, and terrorizing the Jews. In The Haj, the Arab presence is even explained as a recent entry to exploit the economic opportunities that the Jews had created when they made the “desert bloom.” Uris observes that as the Jews developed the country at an astonishing rate and as investment opportunities abounded, tens of thousands of Arabs began to drift into Palestine from the neighbouring Syrian province and “the centuries’ old face of stagnation was lifted.” The author claims further that the bulk of the Palestinian-Arab population had immigrated to the country on the heels of Jewish migration (Haj 40).

Significantly, such images of Arab opportunism recur through Joan Peters’ From Time Immemorial as well. Peters notes that Arab labourers had flooded into the Jewish-settled areas of Palestine as they learned of the better wages and unparalleled opportunities there. According to Peters, “it was long after not before the Jews settled their new farms that the first claim of Palestinian Arab ‘identity’ and an ‘age-old’ tie with the land would be invented” (171). Such writings may be seen as part of a systematic Zionist agenda to rewrite the history of Palestine by writing the
Arabs and the Arab presence out, and thus to delegitimise the Palestinian Arabs’ ‘right of return’.

Both *The Haj* and *From Time Immemorial* convey clear political messages, especially considering the context of their publication. Edward Said in his review of *The Haj* comments thus, “Of this diseased work it can be said without fear of serious contradiction that in its hatred, fear and demented inability to deal with reality, it could only be the production of an American supporter of Israel, writing about the Muslim Arabs generally, the Palestinians in particular, at this moment” (*Politics of Dispossession* 98). What is implied in the statement of Edward Said is that Uris’ *The Haj* sought to perform the task of tilting the balance in favour of the Jews in the context of world opinion, even American public opinion, turning against Israel following its invasion of Lebanon in 1982 and the massacre of Palestinian refugees at Sabra and Shattila.

The narrative strategies employed by the author, which explain the Jewish acquisition of new locations and the outright use of aggression for the same, may also be examined in this context. Here the acquisition of new land is presented as an act of self-defence, without which the Jews would remain perpetually vulnerable. Jewish aggression is in this context articulated as self defence to counter Arab aggression. Incidentally, some of the narrative manoeuvres employed by Uris in this context are the very strategies generally observed in colonialist agenda.

For Uris, Zionism is not a movement of conquest but one committed to gaining Palestine by virtue of labour where force is used only when necessary in self-defence. Thus each onslaught against the Palestinians/Arabs is seen as a defensive reaction to Arab aggression. Besides, Uris draws graphic pictures of a vulnerable Israel surrounded by angry Arab hordes bent on destroying the nascent state. *Book IV of Exodus* beginning with an account of the UN Partition Vote describes the reactions
of various Arab heads of states and leaders of organizations. This includes personages such as Kuwatly, President of Syria, Jamil Mardam, Syrian Premier, Ibn Saud, king of Saudi Arabia, Sheik Hassan Al Bannah of the Moslem Brotherhood, Haj Amin El Husseini, Mufti of Jerusalem and Azzam Pasha, Secretary General of the Arab League. By putting words of indictment against the Jews into the mouths of historical Arab figures, Uris places a stamp of authenticity on such vindictive statements as; “There are fifty million Arabs. What does it matter if we lose ten million people to kill the Jews? The price is worth it,” “All Arabs shall arise and annihilate the Jews! We shall fill the sea with their corpses,” and “I declare a holy war, my Moslem brothers! Murder the Jews! Murder them all.” (Exodus 465-66). Uris’ presentation of “bloodcurdling announcements” over Arab radio made by Arab leaders in The Haj, also reinforces the same theme (see Haj 153-54).

Through the words of Gideon Asch, a Palestinian Jew speaking to Haj Ibrahim about his reasons for deciding to fight along with the Allies in World War II, Uris projects the same image of a vulnerable Jewish community in the Palestine of 1937.

Perhaps if we Jews weren’t overburdened all our lives with the fear of perishing….It dominates us! Always afraid of perishing. I’m fifty-three, Ibrahim. I’ve carried a gun since I was fourteen. Is it fair to know every minute of your life that forces out there want you dead and won’t end it until you’re dead… and no one hears your cry…. So I go to war because the Germans want us dead even more than you do. (Haj 84)

Uris makes it a point to establish that Jewish offensives, whether it be against the Palestinian Arabs or the surrounding Arab states, were always instances of reprisal against acts of Arab aggression. Arab offensives against Jewish kibbutzim, professions of Arab exploits by braggadocio
leaders, are all clothed in the garb of history as each account is preceded by dates and place names and includes such things as Communiqués by the Arab Army of Liberation, and descriptions of military manoeuvres by the Jewish and Arab armies. Jewish offensives are invariably played down while Arab atrocities are highlighted. For instance there is only a casual mention of an *Irgun* bomb which exploded in the Arab quarter of the city while the resultant Arab riot at the nearby oil refinery is brought more to the focus as the number of forty Jews massacred is highlighted (*Haj* 198). Uris also offers an account of the casualties inflicted on Jews by the Army of the Jihad under Abdul Kader Husseini and Kaukji’s men as “losses they could not sustain with their meagre reserves” (*Haj* 195). The list of bomb explosions in Jerusalem, “taking an awful toll of civilians” is followed by only a brief mention of Jewish retaliation (*Haj* 195). The image of a vulnerable Israel is made most poignant in Uris’ account of the agonised reaction of Ari Ben Canaan on hearing about the death of Karen Clement at the hands of marauder Arab *fedayeen* from Gaza.

All my life…I have watched them kill everyone I love…they are all gone now…all of them…. I have died with them…I have died a thousand times. I am empty inside…I have nothing left…. Why must we send children to live in these places? This precious girl …this angel… why… why did they have to kill her too…? Why must we fight for the right to live, over and over each time the sun rises? …. God! God! Why don’t they let us alone! *Why don’t they let us live.* (*Exodus* 597-98)

Uris’ Jews are men tormented by the violence they were ‘forced’ to inflict on the Arabs. Both fictional as well as historical characters including David Ben Gurion are shown as proclaiming emphatically regarding their determination to live in peace with the Arabs of Palestine—that they never
harbour any personal animus towards them. The ghastly murder of Arab civilians at Deir Yassin is dismissed as the inevitable result of the Arab forces using Arab villages as staging points against Jewish traffic. Deir Yassin, located on the edge of West Jerusalem, is described as one of the most hostile Arab villages and said to have been used as a staging point for the blockade of West Jerusalem. The entire blame for the massacre is placed on the Arabs as Uris explains how civilians were caught in a vicious cross fire when the Arab militia used them as cover against the Irgun (Haj 211). Uris exonerates the Hagannah of any culpability for the massacre when Gideon Asch is made to denounce the affair and proclaim that the Hagannah had nothing to do with it. The whole ghastly episode is dismissed as a mistake that will be “blown out of proportion by the Arabs” (Haj 212). Significantly, the Deir Yassin massacre is not even mentioned in Uris’ Exodus.

However, Uris devotes an entire chapter to the Deir Yassin massacre in his Jerusalem Song of Songs. But, as in his fiction, Uris here observes that the Jewish leadership of Palestine had immediately denounced the massacre, while the Irgun and Stern argued just as vehemently that they were only responding to armed resistance. However, Uris also adds:

Without intending to defend the indefensible, this kind of behaviour is not consistent with the Jewish character, or Jewish history. The PLO, by contrast, uses the murder of children and non-combatants as a matter of policy. By any accounting, Deir Yassin was a unique, isolated occurrence never sanctioned by the authorities. For decades the history of Palestine has been filled with Arab massacres and if one were to write a book called ‘The Massacres of Palestine,’ the Jews would be guilty of a single page in a large volume. (284-5)
While Uris presents the Deir Yassin massacre as an act of reprisal, others see the episode as an act of cold calculation. Cheryl A. Rubenberg observes that removing the indigenous Arab population from the area of Palestine allotted to the Jews had been an issue for Zionist leaders, who were concerned about the ethnic purity of the Jewish state. Rubenberg also notes that recent researches have revealed that of the 400,000 Palestinians who fled Palestine between November 29, 1947, and June 1, 1948, 70 percent fled because of Jewish military action. Citing Benny Morris, Rubenberg states that a report prepared by the Israeli Defense Forces Intelligence Branch in 1948 states that 55 percent of the Palestinians fled because of direct, hostile Hagannah operations against Arab settlements, while 15 percent fled because of the operations of the Irgun Z’vai Leumi and Lohamei Herut Yisrael. The Deir Yassin episode is seen as the most extreme act of the campaign, where Arabs including old men and children were mutilated and disembowelled, and women raped. It is further noted; “This single operation spread terror throughout Palestine and gave great momentum to the flight of the population” (Israel and American National Interest 46). Punyapriya Dasgupta also observes that the Deir Yassin massacre exemplified one of the ways in which the Zionist militias drove men, women and children from their homes by deliberate terror (71). It is further pointed out that Deir Yassin has ceased to be a part of geography. The place name has since then been erased and substituted by Givat Saul Beth and made a part of Jerusalem (72). The Zionist historians Jon and David Kimche have also made statements which contradict the Jewish reprisal theory. The authors note that not only had the village refused to allow Arab volunteers to use it as a base for operations, but that they had also co-operated with the Jewish Agency (qtd in Salt 60).

The role of the Deir Yassin massacre in the Arab exodus is summarily dismissed by Uris as he points out that the Arabs were already
abandoning villages and towns and cities with scarcely a shot being fired at them. According to Uris, the true cause behind the Arab flight was that their belief in their own infallibility had been deflated. “The bully’s bluff had been called and the bully suddenly came face to face with his own ineptness.” As in his fictive presentation, Uris also does not fail to remind the reader that none of the innumerable atrocities against the Jews had forced them to flee Palestine (285).

The Zionist version of the Deir Yassin massacre, put across in the works of Uris, finds its echo in other contemporary works of non-fiction such as The Revolt, written by Menachem Begin, former prime minister of Israel, who was part of the Irgun force which attacked this village. Begin writes that in the wake of Deir Yassin, Arabs throughout Palestine were seized with limitless panic and started to flee for their lives, and that this mass flight soon turned into a mad, uncontrollable stampede. Begin further maintains that the responsibility for the death of Arabs at Deir Yassin rests squarely upon the Arab soldiers whose duty it was—under any rule of war—to evacuate them the moment they turned the village into a fortress, long before the battle began. Begin also observes that the Jews never intended to hurt the population of the village, but were forced to do so, after they met enemy fire from the population which killed the Irgun Commander. According to Begin, before the actual battle of Deir Yassin which began with “a typical Arab subterfuge,” a warning had been broadcast in Arabic to civilian, non-combatant inhabitants to withdraw from the danger zone as an attack was imminent. Begin asserts that none of the two hundred villagers who came out were hurt or molested in the slightest and were transported to the Arab quarter of East Jerusalem (xix).

Such statements serve to put across the image of the Jews as civilized, sympathetic and peace-loving individuals who are tormented by the violence they are forced to inflict on the Arabs, and the resultant
corruption of the Jewish soul. Massacres by Arabs are seen as commonplace while those by Jews are seen as isolated instances. Reports and reactions about Deir Yassin are interspersed with reflections on earlier Arab massacres voiced by Colonel Brompton, a British soldier, and Gideon Asch. “All my life I’ve lived with massacres. Only this one is different. The Jews committed it…. I’m a Jew…I’m tormented that we’ve been driven to do such things to survive. I can forgive the Arabs for murdering our children. I can’t forgive them for forcing us to murder theirs” (Haj 212). That retaliation is the only option left for the Jews is made amply clear by Uris through the response of Colonel Brompton. Brompton observes that Jews could demand of themselves an ethereal set of standards only as long as they stayed in their synagogues, prayed and took their persecution in silence. Once independence is declared and once the Jews demand their own destiny, the purity of the Zionist dream is tainted with the ugliness of reality which involves “getting messy hands” (Haj 212).

Further the Hagannah, whose authority was accepted without question by the entire Yishuv even in the days of the British Mandate, is described by Uris as “an army of restraint” (Exodus 263). Uris notes that Avidan and the other Hagannah leaders were very careful to use their army only in self-defence, and that when the 1936 Arab riots broke out, Avidan had given the assurance that the Hagannah would not try to conquer the Palestinian Arabs. Instead Palestine was to be conquered by Jewish sweat (Exodus 268). Thus, according to Uris, the Jewish recourse to armed force becomes not aggression but rather the necessity of self-defence against the waves of Arab assault.

Following the UN Partition vote, the Hagannah is shown as giving orders to turn every kibbutz and moshav into a “miniature Tobruk.” The image of a Jewish community determined to fight with their backs to the wall is vividly brought out in the Hagannah commander Remez’s
recollected Jewish reactions to the Arab riots of 1929 and 1936 and the post-partition determination to stay put in the face of Arab aggression: “For years we ran and cowed in the old Turkish fort every time a loud noise came from the Arab section. We want to stay this time. We aren’t going to run again…This time they won’t have it easy, believe me…there is a limit to what can be asked of us” (Exodus 472). Even the outlawed Maccabees fighting against the British are shown as claiming to fight for their “natural and historical rights.” This is made clear through the words of Akiva Ben Canaan to Colonel Bradshaw: “since when has it been a crime for a soldier to fight for his country? We’re prisoners of war. You have no right to pass any sentence on us. We’re an occupied territory” (Exodus 414). Uris makes Akiva his mouthpiece to validate Jewish actions of terror, which are made out as a fighting back against the pain, degradation, betrayal and suffering inflicted on the Jews over the years. “Nothing we do, right or wrong, can ever compare to what has been done to the Jewish people. Nothing the Maccabees do can ever be considered an injustice in comparison to two thousand years of murder” (Exodus 271).

The intermingling of historical events and fictional material is certainly a powerful technique used by Uris for presenting Israeli aggression as a natural and justifiable response to Arab atrocities. Uris draws a list of the threats posed by the Arabs after the Israeli declaration of independence. These include the blocking of the Suez Canal by Egypt to Israeli ships, blockade of the Gulf of Aquaba to keep the Jews from operating a port at Eilat, Jordan denying access to the Jews to Old Jerusalem, Nasser “inflaming the world like a would-be Hitler,” and the Arab nations refusing to recognize the existence of Israel and swearing to destroy it. The report of Arab atrocities concludes with an account of the vicious moves of the fedayeen gangs from the Gaza Strip which includes killing Jews, burning their fields, cutting water pipe lines, bombing
children’s houses and so on. The account of Arab atrocities concludes with the author’s comment: “At last Israel had no choice but reprisal. Unfortunately reprisal seemed to be the only language that the Arabs understood, the only thing that might stop them” (*Exodus* 582).

To drive home the message that the Arab understood only the language of force, with greater effectiveness, Uris ascribes such statements to the historical figure, Captain Orde Wingate, the British soldier who was engaged in training the *Hagannah* in the latter days of the British Mandate. Wingate impresses upon the Jews the importance of the principle of retaliation, “massive retaliation—it is the key to controlling forces a hundred times the size of your own” (*Haj* 70). Wingate sees the Arabs as a mad society which the Jews have to learn how to control (74). The contrast between a vengeful Arab multitude and a peace-loving civilized Jewish community is vividly brought out by Uris through the response of Gideon Asch to Wingate’s statement: “It is so terribly against our nature” (74). Thus, according to Uris, Israel’s “defensive” actions are taken only when the choice is to live or to perish, to protect the national existence or to forfeit it for all time.

Uris speaks at length about the ordeals endured by Jewish youth groups sent to the borders to build combined farming and defensive settlements. They are said to virtually “build a wall of flesh” across Gaza which is described as “the toughest of the frontiers,” “the principal base and training ground of the Egyptian-sponsored *fedayeen*” where “the victimized Arab Palestinians were allowed to wallow in listlessness and become wards of world charity while they were pumped full of hatred by the Egyptians” (*Exodus* 583). These images of vulnerable border settlements surrounded by angry Arab hordes projected by Uris becomes significant in the context of Israel’s occupation of the Sinai and the Gaza Strip following the 1956 war, and American and Soviet pressures on Israel
to withdraw from the occupied territories. Uris totally sidelines Israel’s expansionist ambitions and presents the annexation of strategic locations as the Gaza Strip, the Negev and the Golan Heights as purely defensive measures. Uris comments on the vulnerability of the string of Jewish settlements along the Galilee easily exposed to Syrian tanks and artillery from the Golan Heights. According to Uris, Syrian artillery could sit on this mountain and simply rain down their fire. The Jews had no guns which could reach that far. As Uris notes, “It took no Saladin to figure out that the Jews would be driven underground by the barrage, after which Syrian tanks and infantry would merely have to sweep down and eradicate them” (Haj 162). Uris also observes how the Zion Settlement Society had purchased land on the Lebanese border at a point where Arab infiltration was taking place. According to Uris, this was the first time that the Jews had picked a spot for a kibbutz because of its strategic value (Exodus 278). This implied that new settlements selected for their strategic value were meant purely for choking off Arab aggression.

Uris’ images serve the purpose of validating Israel’s claims as a peace-loving state surrounded by vicious enemies who are out to exterminate the Jews. The rationale for the explicit use of the war machine against hostile enemies is hence not inconsistent with the ultimate and lasting objective of peace for Israel. To Uris, Israeli violence is nothing more than “retaliation” in “self defence.” Moreover Israeli Jews are accorded the status of a community that values human life. Thus the Israel presented in the works of Uris is the staunch upholder of Western values against “fundamentalist, terrorist” Islam.

The complexities associated with the mass exodus of Palestinians from their homeland and the occupation of these lands by the Jews receives detailed treatment in Exodus and The Haj. To Uris, the lands that the Jews
occupied were those abandoned by the fleeing Palestinians. There was no intimidation, nor was there any forceful eviction of Arabs by the Jews.

Both *Exodus* and *The Haj* echo the standard Zionist claim that the Arab leaders urged the Palestinians to flee in order to clear the field for the invading Arab armies. Uris further maintains that the Palestinian Arabs were misled by their leaders that once the war was over and the Jews destroyed, they could return in triumph, to share the spoils. The upshot of Uris’ argument is that the Arabs who were the aggressors must bear the brunt of the political and moral responsibility for the birth of the Palestinian refugee problem. Uris suggests that the primary responsibility for the original escalation of intercommunal hostilities in Palestine belongs to the Palestinian Arabs who intended to destroy the *Yishuv* and later on the state of Israel. The Arab resistance to the Partition Resolution is made clear by Uris through the vitriolic statements of leaders from all over the Arab world (see *Exodus* 465-66).

The message that Uris puts across in both *Exodus* and *The Haj* is the same. The simplistic explanation for the refugee crisis as given by Uris may be recapitulated here. The Arabs chose to evacuate. They ran without cause. They were consumed with fear that the Jews would do to them what they planned to do to the Jews, and their terror was played upon by their own leaders who urged them to flee in order to clear the way for their armies (*Haj* 199). Gideon Asch in his conversation with Ibrahim in the days following partition is shown stating emphatically that the Jews, intent on creating a state that exists in peace with its neighbours, have no policy to run the Arabs out of Palestine. The point is driven home with greater effectiveness as Uris makes the Haj himself denounce his fellow Arabs: “I was forced from my village and not by Jewish gunfire” (261). “It is the Arabs who are forcing me out” (210). Uris also draws a contrast between the Arabs and Jews as he comments upon the Jewish response to the
Hadassah convoy massacre wrought in vengeance for Deir Yassin. The author observes that unlike the Arabs, the Jews did not flee Jerusalem or elsewhere. On the other hand, instead of conceding the role of the Deir Yassin massacre and other similar incidents in the Arab exodus, Uris chooses to present the Hadassah convoy massacre as having a boomerang effect on the already frantic Arab population. This is how Uris puts it: “Having wrought vengeance, they now feared that the Jews would retaliate in kind and their fright began to rise to epidemic proportions” (214). Thus Haj Ibrahim, on reaching a point where he could no longer hold his people together, is shown as being forced to evacuate Tabah and the Valley of Ayalon.

According to Uris, the fall of Safed and the stampede of the population which followed opened a new and tragic chapter in the history of Palestine—it began the creation of Arab refugees. The Arab population of cities like Acre, Jaffa, Safed and the Jerusalem corridor are shown as stampeding for the Lebanese border with no Jew pursuing them. Uris presents Avidan, leader of the Hagannah, as disturbed over the prospect of destroying hostile Arab villages: “We’ve begged the Palestinian Arabs to stay out of this fight. No one wants to drive them from their homes. Those villages that have shown loyalty have been left alone. But the others have left us no choice” (Exodus 533). Avidan is a historical figure who is accorded great distinction as the commander of the Givati Brigade during the 1948 Arab-Israeli war and also as the commander of Operation Nachshon (Brittanica). Through the words of Avidan, Uris tries to give credence to the view that those Arab villages attacked by the Jews were the ones that had been used as arsenals and training camps, and as bases to attack Jewish convoys and starve Jewish settlements. Arguments for and against the destruction of Abu Yesha conclude with Avidan’s statement: “We have no choice but to kill or be killed” (533).
The decision to evacuate Abu Yesha in Uris’ *Exodus* is taken only as a means of preventing the use of the village as an Arab base. However, before firing upon the village, Ari Ben Canaan offers time for its inhabitants to evacuate. It is significant that the Jews in Uris’ fiction, before every such onslaught, give their enemies the option of evacuation before destruction. Uris’ version of the blast at King David Hotel also follows the same pattern. Here Uris maintains that though the Maccabees had warned the British to get out of the building, the latter had merely scoffed at the idea thinking that “they merely wanted to make fools of the British,” and that “they would not dare attack British headquarters” (*Exodus* 304). At the same time Uris makes it a point to underscore the argument that the Jews had never been given the same chance by the Nazis, the British, or the Arabs. Ari’s agonizing over orders to take Abu Yesha, the village of his childhood friend Taha, and the pain evoked on witnessing his lifelong friends trudging out of the village towards the hills of Lebanon, all put across the image of a benign, sympathetic Jew who recoils at the thought of the violence and destruction that have become inevitable for his very survival (see *Exodus* 536).

In both *Exodus* and *The Haj*, Uris exonerates the Jews of all responsibility for the Palestinian refugee crisis. On the other hand, Uris argues that the refugee crisis came about as a direct result of a war of aggression waged by the Arabs to destroy the people of Israel.

The account of the Arab-Israeli war in *Exodus* closes with a summary of the refugee situation. The account is authenticated by being presented in the form of a report submitted by Baraak Ben Canaan to the Government of Israel. Uris’ attempts to play down the enormity of the refugee situation and to exonerate the Jews of all responsibility for the crisis is well discernible here in the following arguments brought in favour of Israel.
(i) “The Arabs would have the world believe that the Palestinian Arab refugee is unique. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Every war man has waged has created refugees, homeless and displaced people” (553). It may be noted that Uris talks about the displacement of millions of people in Europe and Asia, as if the displacement of people and a consequent refugee crisis is normal in the event of any war. Further, the numbers of the dispossessed Palestinian Arabs is deliberately silenced. Nor does the author mention anything about the expansion of Israel’s borders since 1948 and Israeli designs for creating an exclusively Jewish state in all of Palestine.

(ii) “The refugees came as a direct result of a war of aggression waged by the Arabs to destroy the people of Israel” (552). It is quite obvious that details of terror tactics employed solely for expelling the Arabs from Palestine, the organized massacre of Arabs by the Irgun and Hagannah, are all deliberately played down by the author. Instead the report states that “despite wanton aggression the State of Israel, in its Declaration of Independence, held out its hand in friendship to its Arab neighbours even at the moment her borders were being violated” (552).

(iii) “Most of the Palestinian Arabs fled even before the invasion” (552). The report cites the instance of Jaffa, Haifa, and the Galilee which created most of the refugees while the fighting was comparatively light. Uris makes it a point to remind the reader that the Palestinian Arabs had been duped by the Arabs’ false propaganda about Jewish threats whereas those Arab villages which remained at peace with the Jews had been left unharmed. The same point is highlighted in The Haj also, through the words of Charles Maan, a Christian Arab:

The biggest lie of all was that the Jews would murder everyone who did not flee. What has happened to our brothers who stayed… in… Israel? Were they thrown into the sea as we
swore we would do to the Jews? Were they eaten? Were they sacrificed at the altar? Who were the fools, the ones who fled or the ones who stayed? (Haj 378)

In The Haj, Uris states further of the Jews’ willingness to return land to the Palestinians, provided that they do not make trouble. But the Palestinian refugee leaders of the novel, Haj Ibrahim, Sheikh Taji, and Charles Maan are shown as unwilling to take up the offer, fearing Arab outrage, and of being denounced as traitors. Even while proclaiming Israeli intentions of negotiating the return of Palestinian refugees, it is noted how Uris employs strategies which serve to delegitimise their right of return. For instance, in a discussion with fellow Palestinian refugee leaders, Ibrahim is shown pointing out the need for holding a convention of West Bank refugees. However, Ibrahim also adds the following: “I repeat, refugees only. Not the wealthy who fled” (388).

Bassam El Bassan, the Jaffa businessman, in his conversation with the Haj on the mass flight of the Arab population sees the beginning of the exodus thus: “It started two minutes after the partition vote, when our rich citizens bolted from Palestine to protect their comforts” (223). Uris notes that by late 1947 the cream of Arab Palestine had liquidated their holdings, withdrawn their savings and fled the country. The Arab community, according to Uris, was suddenly stripped of its doctors, lawyers, landowners, social leaders, politicians, intellectuals, writers and so on. This is how Uris puts it:

Within weeks of the partition plan, some thirty thousand families, representing over a hundred thousand people simply quit Palestine, opting to sit out the coming war in the more comfortable surroundings of Beirut, Cairo or the European continent… They had no feeling whatsoever for a Palestinian nation for there had never been one… Witnessing the desertion
of almost every prominent and respected person in the community, other families began to simply drift out of the country. This was the opening chapter of a ripple effect that exploded into universal flight, a flight that resulted in a refugee problem that was to consume the Palestinian Arab. (180-81)

Uris’ picturisation of David Ben Gurion, the first prime minister of Israel, as a tough but kindly statesman intent on leading Israel in its special mission, is well discernible in the following statement attributed to the latter: “There are so many things a Jewish state must accomplish, for we and our moral standards must be the light of mankind” (191). Uris presents the reader with a vivid image of Ben Gurion proclaiming, while smashing with his fist on the table, “Never will we adopt any policy to drive the Arabs from Palestine” (Exodus 192). However, it is added that the Jews would fight the Arabs with everything they have in those places that spell strategic life and death. Even in the midst of firm avowals of not forcing the Arabs out, he is seen to add, “If the Arabs choose to run, I will not beg them to stay… But when a man leaves his home during a war which he started, he cannot expect us to be responsible for his future” (192).

(iv) Baraak’s report states that the Arab leaders wanted the civilian population to leave Palestine so that they may be used as a political issue and as a military weapon, and that the politicians wanted to prove Jewish ‘inhumanity’ by pointing to the Arab refugees ‘forced’ from their homes. No apologies are made for the attack of those Arab villages ‘which fought against the state of Israel’. Israeli actions are validated with the conclusion:

No one can question Arab hostility toward Israel since the war. They have blockaded the Suez Canal in violation of international agreement, they have boycotted business…raided border settlements and constantly threatened to come back for a second attempt to destroy Israel. In the light of this it is
inconceivable that Israel could ever consider resettlement of a hostile minority, pledged to destroy the state…. If the Arabs of Palestine loved their land, they would not have been forced from it – much less run from it without real cause…. This is not the reaction of a man who loves his land. (Exodus 554)

Uris makes crystallise in the mind of the reader the idea that the real betrayal of the Palestinian Arabs was not at the hands of the Jews but at the hands of their more powerful Arab brethren. Uris relates instances to bring out the lack of solidarity among the Arabs—among the privileged elite and the peasants who become pawns in the schemes of their leaders plotting to carve up Palestine among themselves. A case in point is that of the effendi Kabir betraying Ibrahim by making a secret deal with his brother Farouk, promising the man Ibrahim’s riches if he succeeds in convincing his brother to evacuate Tabah. Also, readers are told that the Arab leaders had been planning the military action for months; that they had ordered the abandonment of villages for army use without making any provision whatsoever for its displaced inhabitants.

Uris here employs the justificatory ideology of the colonial settler that dehumanized the native population and allowed the colonial peoples to subordinate them to their hegemonic purposes. Uris’ downplaying of the ideological motivations behind Israel’s expulsion of the Palestinian Arabs serves to present the picture of a pacifist Israeli state wherein the Arabs would live in harmony with the Jews. This is opposed to the apparent Zionist stance that the Jewish state is alleged to have followed. Edward Said, in The Question of Palestine, notes how Israel effectively ‘Judaized’ territory along with ‘de-Arabizing’ it. Said notes that “Both the ideological and organizational preparations for the Zionist effort to win Palestine, as well as the military strategy adopted, envisioned taking over territory, and filling it with new inhabitants” (101). Citing the Zionist historians Jon and
David Kimche, it is stated that Israel sought “to capture strategic heights dominating the most likely lines of advance of the invading Arab armies, and to fill in the vacuum left by the departing British forces in such a way as to create a contiguous Jewish-held area extending from the north to the south” (qtd in *The Question* 101). Referring to the Zionist viewpoint that the Palestinians left because they were ordered to by their leaders, that the invading Arab armies were an unwarranted response to Israel’s declaration of independence, Said states categorically that “no one has produced any evidence of such orders sufficient to produce so vast and final an exodus” (101). Norman G Finkelstein also observes that

> The aim of the Zionist enterprise was to create a Jewish state in Palestine, a state that belonged to the Jewish people. The *sine qua non* of such a Jewish state was seen to be a permanent Jewish majority…. The compulsory transfer of the nascent Jewish state’s Arab population was thus pre-figured in the ideology of Zionism. (*Image and Reality* 84-85).

Statements made by leaders of the Zionist Movement right from the early days of Jewish immigration to Palestine, to the formation of the state of Israel have been cited as evidence of a Zionist consciousness that their state could only be built by driving away an entire people (see for instance Dasgupta 42). Elise Salem Manganaro also points out that even as early as 1940, Zionist leaders were calling for a nation without Arabs. Citing the words of Joseph Weitz, a Jewish official in charge of colonization, Manganaro notes that the Arabs were systematically “transferred” to allow for Israeli expansion by carefully planned military actions designed to terrify the local Palestinians. Manganaro states categorically that “Deir Yassin was no mistake; it was designed to cause a mass exodus and it succeeded” (10).
A point that Uris harps on repeatedly throughout The Haj is the Arab nations’ treatment of the Palestinian refugees, used as pawns in a game of Arab intrigue and rivalry. Uris’ depiction serves to explode “the myth of Arab hospitality.” The author puts forth various instances to project the impression that the Palestinian refugees were unwanted and much discriminated against in all the places of refuge. According to Uris, this discrimination is not confined to the refugees alone, but to the Arabs who remained within the “Zionist entity.” To prove his point, Uris states that the sole focus of the proceedings of the Committee for Democratic Unity held at Amman is to pass over a hundred resolutions establishing the principle of eternal war against the Jews. According to Uris it is decided that Arabs who remained within the “Zionist entity” should not be permitted to enter Arab nations, to make the haj to Mecca and Medina, are to be regarded as unfit to pray at the Al Aksa Mosque, and forbidden from reuniting with the members of their exiled families (Haj 367). Uris further notes that the Committee on Refugees merely put forth a glowing report on how well things were being run in the Jordanian camps, this being done with the intention of creating the illusion that life would get much better for everyone under the Jordanian national banner, when in reality “Jordan had not delivered on the jobs, land, rehabilitation or opportunities that had been promised” (367-68). The author states that the vital Armistice Line Committee had betrayed the Palestinian refugees by claiming that all claims had been resolved in favour of the refugees’ being able to regain their land “when not an inch of Arab land had been retrieved” (368). The image of Arab betrayal stands in sharp focus as Uris places before the reader the sum of the final report of the Committee. Instead of identifying ways of redeeming the plight of the Palestinian refugees, the conference, according to Uris, ends on a note of anticlimax—with the announcement that the Jordanian Parliament had passed a Bill of National Merger
validating King Abdullah’s annexation of the West Bank, and Arab designs for the establishment of a Greater Palestine (368).

It is significant that Uris uses Arab characters as his mouthpieces for vilifying Arab leaders, both fictional as well as historical. With Ishmael the son of Haj Ibrahim as his narrator, Uris offers the reader a picture of the Hashemite King Abdullah and his “insane ambitions” of becoming ruler of a Greater Arab Nation encompassing Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, Palestine and Saudi Arabia. According to Uris, King Abdullah’s granting of citizenship to the refugees and the appointment of elite Palestinians to high positions in the Jordanian government were carried out solely for the purpose of legitimizing his “creeping annexation of the West Bank” (356). The ministers representing the Arab nations at the International Arbitration Commission’s Convention in Zurich in the autumn of 1950 see the delegation of West Bank refugees as an unwanted presence since “Palestine is an Arab problem that can only be settled by the Greater Arab Nation” (Haj 411). Israel’s offers to “negotiate the repatriation” of a hundred thousand Palestinian refugees and to pay compensation for “abandoned Arab lands that were cultivated before the outbreak of the war,” are shown as being dismissed at the outset with the declaration, “We do not recognize the existence of the Zionist entity. Therefore we cannot speak to someone whose existence we do not recognize” (412). The report submitted by Monsignor Grenelli the Vatican observer at the Zurich Conference presented by Uris in The Haj, also speaks of Israel’s “sincere willingness to discuss all aspects of the situation,” whereas the Arab states had adopted a deliberate plan to keep the refugees locked up in their camps for the purpose of injecting them with hatred of the Jews (416). To authenticate the various proposals and to create the image of an Israel ever willing to negotiate with a die-hard, inimical Arab world, Uris brings in none other than Dr Ralph Bunche, the UN mediator, as presiding over the
scene. At the Conference each Arab state is seen to set its agenda—Egypt demands the Southern Negev Desert “for security reasons,” Syria demands the Western Galilee “as an integral part of its Ottoman history,” Jordan seeks to ratify its annexation of the West Bank, and Lebanon demands the annexation of the Eastern Galilee. However, no conclusions are reached regarding the boundaries of the Palestinian State. There is no unified position on the status of Jerusalem. Not a word is put in for the repatriation or compensation of the Palestinian refugees (411). By spelling out the territorial claims of the Arab neighbours on Palestinian land during the post-war deliberations, Uris creates the impression that Egypt, Syria, Lebanon and Jordan were interested only in carving up Palestinian territory among themselves.

Using Charles Maan, Sheikh Taji and the Haj as his spokesmen, Uris dwells at length on the Arab treatment of the Palestinian refugees—on the plight of a people sent into a war for which they were not prepared—of men forced into the dismal West Bank camps without employment or education facilities, where housing rents were raised to fifty percent—of refugees thrown into Syrian jails without charges and without trials—of camps with no sanitation, and no allotments of clothing, where the only food provided was that which came from international charity—of Lebanese camps no better than the Jordanian “dismal rat-breeders,” where Red Crescent supplies were black-marketeered, where children were employed in sweeping the streets, cleaning toilets, peddling, and washing dishes in cafes, but forbidden to attend schools. However, according to Uris, the treatment of the refugees in Syria, Jordan and Lebanon pales in comparison to the camps in the Gaza Strip under the control of the “almighty Egyptians.” This is made clear through the words of Charles Maan:
Do you know what it is like for a refugee to get a travel permit from Gaza to Egypt?...Our boys have been pulled out of the camps in the middle of the night and forced to serve in the Egyptian army, trained in abominable conditions and thrown into battle totally unprepared. We cannot even imagine the number of our people who have been pushed into prisons and tortured to death. Each day there are over a hundred new deaths from tuberculosis and dysentery and typhoid and cholera. (87)

In the course of depicting the deplorable condition of the dispossessed Palestinian Arab refugees, Uris also shatters the long prevailing legend of Arab hospitality. He describes instances of the Haj and his men being forced to face “the institutionalised snubs of brother Arabs.” Haj Ibrahim voices the same sentiments over and over as he is “greeted by locked doors” in Samaria, Nablus and several places across the neighbouring Arab states: “The deepest hurt of my life has been the manner in which we have been treated. Not a crust of bread, not a blanket has been offered us” (262).

A significant aspect of the novels’ discussion of the refugee crisis is the solution perceived by the author. Uris enables the reader to think of the “integration” and “resettlement” of the refugees in Arab lands, as he points out that the Arabs have the necessary resources including vast oil moneys and more jobs in the Gulf States than could be filled by all the Palestinians put together—all of which could easily dissolve the refugee problem. The “rich lands in the Euphrates Valley and the vast emptiness of Libya” are pointed out as the ideal spots for the resettlement of the Arab refugees (Haj 505). According to Nuri Mudhil, a Palestinian archaeologist, what stands in the way of this kind of integration is the lack of fellow-feeling among the Arabs, in sharp contrast to the love which the Jews have for one another: “The only thing we lack is the one thing the Jews have in abundance...the
Jews love one another. They will not tolerate fellow Jews living in such pestholes as Aqbat Jabar” (*Haj* 506). In his *Exodus* also Uris offers suggestions for the “resettlement” of the Palestinian refugees in the “lush, fertile, and empty land in the seven million square miles of the Arab world” (533). Uris points out through Baraak’s “Summary of the Arab Refugee Situation” in *Exodus* that the Tigris-Euphrates Valley which has some of the richest unused lands in the world, inhabited by a handful of Bedouins, alone could take in not only the half million, but ten million others as well. Baraak’s report states that not one penny of the UN resettlement money of 200 million dollars had been used. It is also pointed out that the Arabs “have cried crocodile tears over the great love the poor *fellaheen* have for their lost homes” (554-55). Israel’s responsibilities towards the repatriation of the Arab refugees are dismissed categorically through the following words:

The Arabs argue that the Palestinian refugees themselves do not want to be resettled but want their farms in Palestine back. This is sheer nonsense…. If the Arabs of Palestine loved their land, they could not have been forced from it—much less run from it without real cause…. This is not the reaction of a man who loves his land. A man who loves his land, as the Arabs profess, will stand and die for it. (553-54)

That the Arabs of Palestine were urged by their fellow Arabs to leave, to run for their lives while the invading Arab armies purged the land of the Jews, is a standard position maintained by Zionist propaganda. This is well evident in Joan Peters’ observation that the majority of the Arab refugees in 1948 were not expelled, and that 68 percent left without as much as seeing an Israeli soldier. Like Uris, Peters also makes claims of Jewish appeal to the Arabs not to bring tragedy upon themselves by unnecessary evacuation and “self imposed burdens” (*From Time Immemorial* 13). In
the same manner, Peters also makes suggestions of resolving the Palestinian refugee crisis through the exchange of the Arab population of Palestine with the Jewish population of the Arab countries. Peters also notes that the integration and resettlement of those who were refugees, when implemented by the community of Arab nations, would benefit not only the Arab refugees, but also the under-populated areas within the Arab world which needed additional labour forces to implement progress. Iraq and Syria are cited as areas ideal for the resettlement of the Arab refugees (19). Such observations regarding the exchange of populations may be seen to be in keeping with Zionist claims that there have been as many Jewish refugees who fled or were expelled from the Arab countries as there are Arab refugees from Israel. This would imply finding an easy solution to the refugee crisis through the fulfilment of an Arab obligation to accommodate the Palestinian refugees in their ‘under-populated’ territories.

The expulsion of Palestine’s indigenous Arab population from their homeland, for the accommodation of an immigrant Jewish community, is a stark reality viewed from the Arab point of view. Uris’ constant harping on Arab responsibility for the Palestinian exile, and Arab “indifference” to their plight, effectively overshadows Jewish machinations towards the deliberate expulsion of the Palestinian Arabs. Uris’ attempts at delegitimizing the Palestinian Arabs’ right of return in *The Haj* have to be viewed in the context of a wide range of events involving Israeli excesses such as the nation’s invasion of Lebanon, the massacre of Palestinian refugees at Sabra and Shattilla, the subsequent expulsion of the PLO from Lebanon, and international pressures on Israel to withdraw from the West Bank and Gaza, to make possible the establishment of a Palestinian State comprising those areas.

One can easily find close resemblances between the standard perception of the European civilising mission in the colonised terrain in
Orientalist discourse, and Uris’ claim of a Jewish civilising enterprise in Palestine. Uris plays down such issues as Zionism’s initial strategy of gradual settlement and its eventual resort to armed conquest, with the specific aim to transform Palestine into an exclusively Jewish state. Instead the writer’s focus is on the supposedly civilizing mission of Jewish settlement. Complimentary remarks hailing Jewish contributions to Palestine’s Arab community are voiced through Arab characters themselves, so as to give greater effectiveness to views regarding the civilizing mission of Jewish occupation. For instance, *Exodus* depicts enlightened Arabs like Kammal, *mukhtar* of Abu Yesha, acknowledging the contributions of the Jews:

> I have watched the Jews come back to perform miracles on the land. We have nothing in common in religion or language or outlook. Yet … the Jews are the only salvation for the Arab people. The Jews are the only ones in a thousand years who have brought light to this part of the world. (*Exodus* 258)

Sheikh Walid Aziz, though a sworn enemy of the Jews, is shown speaking in the same vein. The old man also sees the Jews as the only foreigners to come to Palestine without the aim of exploiting the Arab. Having done well by the land, the Jews he feels can be trusted more than anyone else, including the Syrians, the Jordanians, or the British (*The Haj* 101). The Jews are shown as capable of providing to the Arabs “a window to the world,” and of providing a better future planned for the Arab Palestinians than that offered by their “Arab brothers over the border” (210).

Uris brings in several instances of Jewish contribution towards improving the Palestinian Arabs’ standard of life. He speaks at length about the contributions of the *Yad El* Jews towards transforming the lives
of the Arabs of Abu Yesha. This includes the setting up of special schools for the Arabs to teach them sanitation, the use of heavy machinery and new farming methods, the extension of medical facilities, bringing tap water to Abu Yesha, making it the first Arab village in all of Palestine to have it, and providing electric irrigation pumps into their fields to demonstrate to the Arabs how to farm intensively through irrigation (see Exodus 261, 272). Gideon Asch’s advice to the Haj to get rid of the goats and try some of the cattle brought in by the Jews (The Haj 50), to send Arab children to their clinics so that “they don’t have to die of stomach or chest pain” or “go through life blind from trachoma” (56), as well as Gideon’s offer of electricity to the neighbouring Arab village of Tabah, and of running a wire to their café, so that a radio could be installed—all of which project the image of a Jewish community engaged in a mission of civilizing the “primitive” Arab. Uris takes the typical Orientalist stance that the Arabs and Islam exist only as “communities of interpretation,” essentially voiceless until represented by Western spokesmen, as he lists the “needs” of the Arabs with regard to leaders, in Barak’s ‘Summary of the Refugee Situation’ : not “desert sheiks who own thousands of slaves,” or “hate-filled religious fanatics,” or “men whose entire thinking is in the Dark Ages,” but “leaders with the courage to face the real problems of ignorance, illiteracy and disease” (554). Uris’ firm assertions regarding a Jewish civilizing mission are reiterated in the following statement: “Israel today stands as the greatest single instrument for bringing the Arab people out of the Dark Ages” (Exodus 554).

Uris brings up claims of a Jewish civilizing mission in his Jerusalem Song of Songs as well, as he gives an extended picture of the city’s progress in the early decades of the twentieth century following the arrival of the Jewish settlers. Uris notes that public health and education were then dramatically upgraded for the Arabs, who also enjoyed facilities like new
highways, bus lines and an upgraded waterworks which the Jews ran for their own (258).

Uris drives home the same point with intense sharpness through the words of Ari Ben Canaan, reminding his childhood friend Taha about the ‘benefits’ brought to his people by the Jews:

These stone houses in your village were designed and built by us. Your children can read and write because of us. You have sewers because of us and your young don’t die before the age of six because of us. We taught you how to farm properly and live decently. We have brought you things that your own people would not give you in a thousand years. (Exodus 344)

To reinforce this message Uris also comments on the ‘inability’ of the Arabs to govern themselves. Uris’ novels echo the typical colonialist notion that certain territories and people require and beseech domination. In The Haj Uris makes Clovis Bakhshir the mayor of Nablus his mouthpiece to state that the Arab Palestinians are utterly ignorant about the ways of organized community life, and totally incapable of self-government. “The Palestinian people have never ruled themselves, nor ever attempted to rule themselves. We have been content for a thousand years to let people outside of Palestine make all the decisions for us” (263). Uris also cites the authority of history and offers a list of the various powers who have ruled over Palestine, beginning with the Romans, followed by the Byzantine Christians, the Arabs from Arabia, the Crusaders, Saladin, the Mamelukes of Egypt, the Turks, the British and finally the Jews again (377-78). Uris also cites several instances where in the six years of independence, the Arab world “in its fledgling experiences with self-government had eradicated a considerable number of the men who had been charged to rule them” – from King Abdullah of Jordan to several noteworthy leaders from Yemen, Syria,
Egypt, Iraq, and Jordan, besides accounts of the exploits of reprobate kings, princes, and notables (Haj 450).

Further, the failure of the Jericho Project is attributed to the lack of teamwork, trust and honesty on the part of the Palestinian Arabs. Uris places a stamp of authenticity on this viewpoint by depicting Per Olsen, the UNRWA administrator himself expressing his disgust over “Arab deceit.” “The Jericho Project is officially dead… I cannot keep track of all the games being played here… It is beyond human reason or any man’s ability to bear. I am leaving” (Haj 466-67). The typical Orientalist images of a static, retrogressive and lethargic ‘Oriental Subject’ is found in both The Haj and Exodus. Uris’ prime narrational strategy in The Haj is to employ many voices, supposedly diverse, depicting the Arab and his “ways,” most of which are themselves Arab, thereby generating an air of authenticity about the Arab world portrayed by the author.

Probably the most powerful strategy employed in Uris’ Exodus is the use of The Bible as the grand narrative. Uris claims biblical or providential sanction for the Jewish occupation of Palestine. Jewish roots in the land of Palestine are here traced back to the biblical narrative; the exodus of Moses from Egypt, the trek through the desert to the ‘Promised Land’, the Israelite conquests under Joshua and the Judges, and the kingdom of Saul, David and Solomon. In beginning a story/history of modern Israel by returning to these ancient roots, the narrative adopts justifications derived from religious assertions that the land of Israel was given to the Jews—“God’s Chosen People” – as part of a covenant between God and the Jews. The idea that Uris seeks to put across is that the Jews’ ‘moral claim’ to the land supersedes any material claim by another people. Palestinian history is ignored and silenced in Uris’ vision of an ancient Israel conceived and presented as the taproot of Western civilization.
Further, the modern Jewish history is seen as the most recent chapter of a greater story of Jewish suffering and struggle. Attempts to ‘deprive’ them of their biblical rights to the land in the contemporary era are equated with their persecution, and the denial of their ‘rights’ during the last three millennia. Hence what is projected is not a story of the conquest of Palestine, but the march of divine will in the “return” of the “chosen people” to their homeland.

Events and episodes of the 20th century are presented as the unfolding of predictions and prophecies made in the Old Testament. No event in contemporary Jewish history is given visibility outside the referential field of the Old Testament. For instance, Uris employs strategies which serve to create the impression that the establishment of the state of Israel is nothing less than the working of divine will. Uris’ rendition of the events associated with the creation of the State of Israel, the exodus of the Jews from different parts of the earth, and the ‘spectacular’ achievements of the Jewish fighters struggling against innumerable odds, are done in such a way that they suggest the presence of an omnipotent force at work, continually aiding the Jews. A case in point is the author’s description of the voyage of the Karpathos, an Aegean tramp steamer used by the Mossad for illegal immigration to Palestine. Uris states that as the forty five year old Karpathos crammed with one thousand six hundred refugees hanging from every inch of her churned into action, “A fog bank enshrouded them as though God Himself were giving cover” (Exodus 87). The pilots of Operation Magic Carpet successfully airlifting Yemenite Jews to Israel on planes almost ready to come apart, also believe that the planes were being divinely sustained (570). Further, the “staggering victory” at Safed in the 1948 war, made possible in spite of the Jews’ vulnerable position, lack of arms and men is presented as the result of divine intervention as foretold in the Books of Job and Ezekiel (514). The Yemenites’ airlift to the newly
formed nation by Foster J. Mac Williams and his crew is also seen as the fulfilment of the age old prophecy of Isaiah: “Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God…. They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings as eagles” (*Exodus* 555). Further, the tower and stockade settlements built by the Jews in the context of the Arab riots of 1936 are cited as proof of Jewish ingenuity and co-operative effort. Uris notes that on the first day of a new settlement several hundred farmers and builders from all the neighbouring settlements would gather on the breaking grounds at sunrise, and by night a tower with searchlight facilities and generator and a small stockade around it would be completed. The new settlers would then be safely settled inside the stockade with a small guard of *Hagannah* men. Uris sees the expansion of the stockades into *kibbutzim* and full-fledged villages as the fulfilment of the Biblical story of the rebuilding of Jerusalem with one hand on the spear and one hand on the trowel. The following citation from the Book of Nehemiah: “half my servants wrought in the work and the other half held the spears,” is followed by the author’s comment: “And so it was that they worked their land and built their homes with a rifleman behind every plow and every carpenter” (*Exodus* 276). The same citation is evoked in the context of the author’s description of the building of Nahal Midbar, a border settlement – “One hand on the sword and one on the plow. That was the way they rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem” (*Exodus* 586). When Uris quotes The Bible as predicting the ‘rebirth’ of Israel and when these predictions appear to concur with specific instances mentioned in the novels, the author makes possible the legitimization of Israel’s sovereignty. Book Four of *Exodus* beginning with the Arab-Israeli war of 1948, echoes many of the heroic battle stories found in the Old Testament. The author’s repeated references to Biblical quests, the use of The Bible as supporting evidence and the invocation of God’s ‘promise’ to
the Jews as stated in the various books of the Old Testament, all underscore
Uris’ attempts to project the establishment of Israel as the fulfilment of a
divinely ordained mission.

As Uris offers a detailed account of Israel’s rout of the Egyptian
forces in the 1948 war, he relates the event to the biblical past by quoting
from the Book of Isaiah:

The Lord has mingled a spirit of perversiveness in the
midst of her, and they have caused Egypt to go astray in every
work thereof, as a drunken man staggereth in his vomit…. In
that day shall the Egyptians be like unto women, and they shall
tremble and fear because of the shaking of the hand of the Lord
of Hosts which he shaketh over them. (qtd in Exodus 550)

The biblical quote is immediately followed by the author’s
comment: “The words of Isaiah had come true.” Uris conveys the
impression that Israel’s successful campaign against the Arab forces is
nothing short of the result of divine intervention. The point is further
highlighted by providing descriptions of the rout of the Arab Legion which
when advancing towards a poorly equipped and outnumbered Jewish
company, was halted in its advance suddenly “as the heavens opened up in
an unexpected downpour,” and the field “turned into a deep and bogging
mud” within minutes. “The Arab charge,” writes Uris, “instead of gaining
momentum began to wallow just as the Canaanite chariots had done
against Deborah” (Exodus 487).

Several such instances may be cited from Exodus where episodes of
current history particularly those constituting Israel’s war against the Arab
forces, are made to appear like the re-enactment of events that occurred in
the past as narrated in the Old Testament. In effect, the present is made to
appear as the unfolding of divine will, the outcome of which cannot be
different from that of the biblical past. The line of continuity between Jewish sovereignty past and present is thus reinforced. Uris’ use of The Bible to underscore Jewish faith in divine intervention in their ceaseless wars against their enemies as promised in the scriptures, can be further exemplified through yet another instance. In *Exodus*, readers are told about the Arab blockade of Jerusalem and how reinforcements and supplies cannot reach the besieged city because the main highway from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem has been cut off by the Arabs. It is seen how David Ben Ami’s scholarship of The Bible and implicit faith in divine intervention urge him to unearth the path of a buried ancient highway to Jerusalem bypassing the Arab villages on the way, and thus help the Jews lift the siege of Jerusalem. The following quote from The Bible: “And a highway shall be there…no lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon…but the redeemed shall walk there…” is used by Uris to represent the finding of the highway and the lifting of the siege of Jerusalem as the inevitable fulfilment of this biblical prophecy (*Exodus* 544).

Narrative strategies that characterise the Jews as God’s chosen people, seen as a vital component in Uris’ novels, has been discussed in detail in an earlier chapter. A closely related idealisation that strengthens the above picturisation is the portrayal of the Jews as superhuman fighters possessing strange mystical powers. Uris drives home this idea through the character Kitty Fremont, an American nurse. Looking at the young *Palmach* fighters up on Mount Tabor, Kitty has the feeling that “they were invincible,” that they were “the soldiers of God.” Looking at the faces of Ari and his fighters, Kitty is “hit with the electrifying revelation” that “This was no army of mortals. These were the ancient Hebrews! These were the faces of Dan and Reuben and Judah and Ephraim! These were Samsons and Deborahs and Joabs and Sauls. It was the army of Israel, and no force on earth could stop them for the power of God was within them!” (357).
By employing a chain of metaphors, Uris equates the past of the Jews as laid down in The Bible, with their contemporary political and military experiences. This also effects an inseparable binding between the past, present and future of the Jews. In the process the author lays down the spiritual and ideational foundations for resurrecting the warrior tradition of the Jews for their self defence.

The Bible is also used in a number of other ways to legitimise the claim of a providential sanction for the Jewish occupation of Palestine. Each book section in *Exodus* has biblical motifs as its title such as ‘Beyond Jordan,’ ‘The Land is Mine,’ ‘An Eye for an Eye,’ ‘Awake in Glory’ and ‘With Wings as Eagles.’ Further each of these book sections is prefaced with verses from The Bible which correspond to the above motifs. Each book section is also provided with a map, indicating the real theatres of action. Thus we find each of the five books in *Exodus* prefixed by the maps of Cyprus and various locations of Israel. It is all the more significant that the verses prefacing the book sections are cited as if these are biblical promises given to the Jews. In short, the events that are taking place in the various map locations are presented as if they manifest the unfolding of divine will.

As the title itself suggests, the action in *Exodus* is made to appear as a re-enactment of the biblical exodus of the Jews from Egypt in search of the ‘Promised Land’. Uris presents the story of *Exodus* as if it were just another chapter in the long history of the fulfilment of God’s promise to the Jews as stated in the Old Testament. The Rabinsky brothers fleeing from the Zhitomir ghetto in Russia in the 1880’s are shown as beginning their long journey to Palestine, carried forward by God’s promise to Abraham as mentioned in the Book of Exodus, “Fear not for I am with thee. I will bring thy seed from the east and gather thee from the west… keep not back… bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends
of the earth” (qtd in Exodus 209). David Ben Ami, who is involved in the work of the Mossad Aliyah Bet, an organization devoted to the cause of making immigration to Palestine possible for the survivors of the holocaust, sees his mission thus: “I must never stop believing… that I am carrying on a new chapter of a story started four thousand years ago” (Exodus 25). According to Uris, it is this very same faith that helps the passengers on board the Exodus survive the trials faced before the ship’s departure from Cyprus. Portions from The Bible read out through characters, reiterate the Jewish conviction that their interests and safety are already guaranteed by God. This is very much highlighted in yet another context in Exodus. Book 2 of Exodus concludes with the Exodus leaving the shores of Cyprus and sailing for Palestine. David Ben Ami is here shown as quoting from The Bible a portion that echoes this divine guarantee: “He will not suffer thy foot to be moved; he that keepeth thee will not slumber”…. “Behold!.. he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep” (306). The very first book of Exodus opens with a verse from the Biblical book of Deuteronomy which speaks of God’s ‘assurance’ to Moses regarding the return of his people to “the land beyond Jordan” (1). Mark Parker’s interview with Ari Ben Canaan, a leader of the Mossad, closes with the latter quoting from the Book of Ezekiel which also speaks of the same ‘promise’ to “gather the House of Israel” from the “people among whom they are scattered” and to restore them in the ‘Promised Land’ (173).

Uris also employs strategies which serve to equate contemporary events presented in his Exodus with biblical incidents. Thus parallels are drawn between the Exodus affair and the biblical exodus of the Jews from Egypt. This is best exemplified in the words of warning given by Ari to the government of Great Britain: “I say the same thing to the Foreign Minister that a man said to another oppressor three thousand years ago—LET MY
PEOPLE GO” (178). Parallels are also drawn between the outbreak of a fatal typhoid epidemic in Yemen and the Ten Plagues which had struck the Pharaoh’s kingdom as he stood in the way of Moses and his men (Exodus 563). The long account of developments made possible in Palestine by Jewish labour also closes with a Biblical parallel: “The Israelis went down to the desert… built settlements on rock. They did as Moses had done. They brought water from the rocks and they made life grow” (Exodus 573).

The Biblical theme in Exodus is further underscored by the placement of key scenes in conjunction with Jewish holy days. For instance, the closing scene of the novel is set on the eve of Passover commemorating the liberation of the ancient Israelites from Egypt under the leadership of Moses. Uris’ description of the rituals associated with ancient Jewish festivals and holy days, carried down into the present, lends a sense of continuity, an unbroken connection between the biblical past and the present of the Jews. Further, as Uris presents a picture of the celebration of the festival of Purim at Gan Dafna, a gist of the Purim story is also offered alongside. The evil schemes of Haman the Amalekite to have the Jews annihilated, are touched upon as Queen Esther’s act of saving the Jews is recalled. According to the author, “the Purim story was a real thing to the children of Gan Dafna, for almost all of them had been victims of a later day Haman named Adolf Hitler” (372). Uris also offers the reader an extended picture of the celebration of Lag Ba Omer in memory of the contributions of the great Hebrew heroes of the past. The names and contributions of the various Hebrew warriors, sages, philosophers and rabbis are mentioned as the author relates how Gan Dafna pays homage to the ancient heroes at their places of burial in Tiberias, Safed, and Meron (Exodus 372). This linking of historical events to particular days within the calendar, or particular geographical sites would help reshape the meaning of the past. Past events are here used for
validating experiences of the present. Uris here also makes much claims of a Jewish proprietary right to Palestine, a claim made on the basis that since the ancient Hebrew forefathers of the Jewish people had lived and been buried in Palestine, only the Jews could establish an authentic connection with the land. In this context it may be noted how Anita Shapira in her work *Land and Power* points to the recurrent motif in Zionism of the “mysticism that links blood and soil”, the “cult of heroes, death and graves,” the belief that “graves are the source of the vital link with the land,” and that “they generate the loyalty of man to that soil” (qtd. in *Image and Reality* 100). Uris’ Zionist agenda is well discernible in the manner in which he seizes upon this sort of historical claim to the land to justify the occupation of Arab Palestine.

Besides, the specific spots and places that lie scattered in geographic space are linked to specific events narrated in the Old Testament, so as to make an inseparable association between the distant past of the Jews and their present. This kind of narrative makes possible the conception of the present occupation of these regions as the unfolding of divine will. For instance, Yakov and Jossi Rabinsky on their arrival at Mount Tabor are seen identifying the place as the spot where the biblical Deborah and Baraak hid with their armies and swooped down to crush the invading host of Canaanites (*Exodus* 216). Ari identifies Ein Dor as the place where Saul met the witch and the bald top of Mount Gilboa where Gideon was buried and where Saul and Jonathan fell in battle to the Philistines (*Exodus* 334). The spot chosen for the burial of Akiva Ben Canaan at Mount Carmel is pointed out as the place which held the altar of the Prophet Elijah—“the ground where Elijah had proved the power of God against Jezebel’s priests of Baal” (430). The young *Palmach* fighters in their struggles against Kawukji’s forces are seen to be inspired, to push forward undauntedly as they are reminded of the Biblical associations of the land they are fighting
for, and what Palestine means to the Jews. The various spots of their encounters with the Arabs are identified as the *wadi* where King David lived as a guerrilla fighter, the place where Samson was born, where Joshua made the sun stand still, the valley where David met Goliath, and the historic fighting ground of Armageddon. Uris also notes that at night The Bible was read to the exhausted warriors as a source of inspiration for the superhuman efforts the next day would call forth (*Exodus* 489). Through such instances Uris lends greater credence to claims regarding the Jews’ intimate bond with Palestine and its history.

Uris gives further strength to the immutability of the biblical overtures by bringing in even characters of non-Jewish descent, historical and fictitious alike, to uphold and testify the resurgence of the Jewish state. Uris’ portraiture of P P. Malcolm, the fervid pro-Zionist British Commander, in his *Exodus* is closely modelled on the historical British Commander Orde Wingate. Malcolm is shown as turning to The Bible for important military strategies. Uris points out how Malcolm makes detailed studies of the Biblical military campaigns, and of the tactics of Joshua, David and especially Gideon who was his personal idol. Malcolm is seen to make successful use of Gideon’s military strategy against the ancient Midianites in the Raider Unit’s offensive against the Arabs. It is noted that the biblical Gideon had known that the Midianites were an ignorant and superstitious people and that it was possible to play on their primitive fears of noise and of the night. Uris states that Malcolm was certain that it was in God’s scheme for the Jews to rise again and that his coming to Palestine had been divinely ordained—that he had been chosen by God himself to lead the children of Israel in their noble mission (282).

In *The Haj*, Uris brings the historical figure Orde Wingate himself into the picture. Like P P Malcolm of *Exodus*, Uris shows Orde Wingate as employing the strategies of Deborah and Baraak who had exploited the
illiteracy and superstition of the Canaanites and used the night and great noises as deadly weapons to effect a victory against them. The righteousness of the Jewish cause and the role of divine intervention in the path of Israel’s struggles for nationhood are all suitably vouched for by the author through Wingate’s such firm avowals as: “I am a dedicated Zionist. I believe this is Jewish land. I also believe that the ways of using these valleys and hills and deserts for defense have all been writ in The Bible. If there is ever to be a Jewish nation in Palestine, I feel destined to be a part of making it” (70).

Even more telling is the use of biblical passages as codes for Jewish operations both army and civilian. One such instance is the use of the code XI416 for Exodus: chapter 14, verse 16: “But lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand over the sea, and divide it: and the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea,” to signal the message that the orphans from Gan Dafna had been successfully transported down a cliff and out of harm’s way from Arab forces (Exodus 501-02). The completion of the highway to Jerusalem is signalled through yet another such coded message, “1358,” representing Isaiah 35: 8: “And a highway shall be there…no lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon…but the redeemed shall walk there” (Exodus 544). The code name for the operation involving the search for the ancient Roman road to Jerusalem is “Nahshon”—Nahshon being the name of the Israelite who was the first to respond to Moses’ call to jump into the sea as he led the tribes of Israel to the shores of the Red Sea (see Exodus 543). As Uris presents a report of Israel’s campaign against the Egyptians in the Negev, echoes of Samson’s offensive against the Philistines are brought in. As Uris gives a picture of new lightning jeep units with machine guns, called “Samson’s Foxes,” making fierce attacks on Egyptian supply lines and Arab villages, readers are also reminded about how the Biblical Samson
once set fire to the tails of a thousand foxes and turned them loose on the Philistine fields (Exodus 548). Ari’s operation to smuggle Jewish refugee children from the Caraolos camp also carries Biblical associations as is evident from the very name of the venture: “Operation Gideon.” As in the Biblical hero’s campaign against the Midianites, Ari picks three hundred to “go against the British” (Exodus 97).

Uris stretches the biblical associations further as he notes how many of the new kibbutzim and other settlements established by the Jews of the Third Aliyah in the 1920’s adopted the names of the Biblical sites they occupied. Besides it is also seen how almost all his major characters take on ancient Hebrew names from The Bible soon after they settle down in Palestine, as in the case of Jossi and Yakov Rabinsky who become Baraak and Akiva Ben Canaan. Uris repeatedly reminds the reader about the “miraculous” revival of Hebrew, a language that had been dead for almost two thousand years, re-emerging with Jewish immigration to Palestine in the twentieth century.

Uris’ invocation of The Bible as supporting evidence for validating Jewish use of violence may be seen in the prefixing of the biblical citation entitled “An Eye for an Eye” to Book Three of Exodus: “…thou shalt give life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burning for burning” (309). One such instance which may be cited from the Third Book of Uris’ Exodus is the vengeance wrought on Major Fred Caldwell a British Jew-baiter, for the murder of Ben Solomon, a young Jewish boy. After being abducted by the Maccabees, Major Caldwell is murdered, and the body left on Mount Zion at the Dung Gate of the Old City. Pinned to his body was a picture of Ben Solomon with a message scribbled across: “An eye for an eye.” Uris’ description of the event concludes with the author drawing a biblical parallel: “Major Fred Caldwell received the same fate that Sisera, the
Canaanite, met at the hands of Jael when he fled from the scene of his battle with Deborah and Barak” (401).

Another important strategy that Uris employs in his rendition of the events associated with the formation of Israel and the Arab-Israeli wars is the representation of Israel as a relatively defenceless and weak David pitted against a strong, odious Arab Goliath. The picture of Israel drawn by Uris is that of a small community trying to organize itself into a state, possessing nothing more than local defence volunteers, though outnumbered with regard to men, arms and ammunition, scoring a triumphant victory over the combined onslaught of seven Arab armies.

Through the words of Brigadier Bruce Sutherland in *Exodus*, Uris provides a comparative analysis of Jewish military power versus a much superior Arab might. It is stated that while the Arabs were able to raise an army of fifty thousand Palestinians along with twenty thousand Irregulars, combined with the fifty thousand men from the armies of Egypt and Iraq, twenty thousand from Syria and Lebanon as well as the crack soldiers of the Arab Legion possessing the latest arms, the Jews had a mere “four or five thousand *Palmach* troops, a paper army of fifty thousand in the *Hagannah* and a thousand from the Maccabees. Uris also comments on the Jews’ paucity of weapons which further reinforces the David and Goliath imagery. The assessment of their respective positions concludes with Sutherland’s comment: “The Jews are outnumbered in soldiers forty to one, in population a hundred to one, and in area five thousand to one” (*Exodus* 447). However, even while such questions as “could a half million ill-armed people hold back a flood of fifty million hate-crazed Arabs?” are asked, possibilities of a Jewish victory are not ruled out. This is made evident in Sutherland’s comment: “Everything I’ve learned in my life in the service tells me that the Jews cannot win. Yet when you see what they have done with this land you are not a realist if you do not believe in
miracles” (Exodus 447). In The Haj also Uris puts across the same picture of a Jewish force outnumbered with regard to men and arms—outmatched in firepower by the Arabs by a ratio of a hundred to one, possessing “no fighter planes, no bombers, no tanks, no artillery, and no vessels” (188). To create an air of authenticity, the author brings historical figures like David Ben Gurion, and Yigael Yadin, Chief of Operations into the discussions along with the fictitious Gideon Asch. The victory of Safed in the 1948 war, made possible with just a few hundred fighters and a weird weapon called the Little David, may also be cited as an instance of the author’s effort to put across images of Jewish ingenuity along with highlighting the David versus Goliath imagery (Exodus 513). Detailed reports of Jewish victories in such places as the Negev, Jerusalem, the Jerusalem Corridor, the Huleh Valley, Sharon, Tel Aviv, Western Galilee and the Triangle comprising the cities of Jenin, Tulkarm and Ramallah, are offered along with the author’s analysis of the situation. According to Uris, “Over the world military experts shook their heads in disbelief” because the Jews “had won out over fantastic odds.” The Jewish victory is attributed to “the ingenuity employed in place of guns,” and “the raw courage which made extraordinary heroism a commonplace.” However it is the image of an omnipotent force at work, aiding the Jews in their various campaigns that stands out at the end of the report. This is how Uris puts it: “Divine inspiration, the destiny foretold by the ancient prophets, the heritage of a people who had fought for their freedom before, the tradition of King David and Bar Giora and Bar Kochba, strength and faith from an unseen source—these too, stopped the Arabs” (Exodus 527). Uris’ portrayal of the Jew as being watched over and protected by a divine force is best exemplified in the prayer of Kitty Fremont the American nurse for Ari’s life, “Whoever this God is who watches Israel, keep Ari alive...please, let him be alive” (Exodus 435).
The standard Zionist account of the causes, character, and course of the Arab-Israeli conflict had remained unchallenged outside the Arab world for many years. However, since the last quarter of the 20th century, historians both in Israel and elsewhere have challenged the traditional historical accounts about the birth of the State of Israel and the first Arab-Israeli war. Avi Shlaim in *The Iron Wall*, giving an overview of fifty years of Israeli history, challenges the traditional Zionist account of the Arab-Israeli war as a classic case of a virtuous Jewish David prevailing over an odious Arab Goliath. Shlaim here provides statistics to state that “at each stage of the war, the Israeli Defence Forces significantly outnumbered all the Arab forces arrayed against it, and that by the final stage of the war its superiority ratio was nearly two to one.” Shlaim concludes that in this war, as in most wars, the stronger side ultimately prevailed (34-35).

To conclude, the picture of Palestine—before the period of Jewish settlement—presented in Uris’ novels, is that of a backward province in an even more backward empire. The transformation that has been done on such a geographical space would hence make imaginings possible about the existence of a spiritual bond between God and the Jews, and still further as the fulfilment of a covenant between the two where Israel is conceivable as an exclusive zone of Jewish habitation, and where the non-Jewish conglomerations have no place.