Chapter 2

Time and Space – An Existential Construct

For a very long time Arabs, Israelis and outside observers mistook this conflict for an ethnic clash between two communities within one society; or for a religious war; or for a struggle for de-colonization; in short, for some kind of civil war. At last, both parties are beginning to see it for what it is – an international conflict, a clash between two different nations each claiming the same piece of land for itself. In a word, a dispute over a real estate, albeit steeped in historic traumas and wounded feelings on both sides. … ‘wherever right clashes with right, a value higher than right ought to prevail – and this value is life itself’

- Oz (Peace xi)

The present chapter attempts to bring a structure to the concept of time and space as an existential construct. Since temporality and spacelessness have become a key-factor in the life of Jews, it is found essential to handle the significance of time and space in detail. The Oxford English Dictionary defines time as, “The space of a specified period of time” and space as “Time which is free or available for doing something; leisure; opportunity. The amount of time contained in a specified period”. These circular definitions demonstrate the congruity between time and space as corresponding concepts.

Time, as defined in the Oxford Dictionary, is understood as an, “indefinite progress of past, present, and future events etc. regarded as a whole”. It is also defined as, “more or less a definite portion of historical or other period”. With regard to Jews,
their time is obviously traced back from the biblical era, starting form their forefather Abraham. Their history is packed with exiles, wanderings, Holocaust, wars, displacement, multiple diaspora and racial and religious commotions. Therefore, the aspect of time in the life of Jews is clearly special, turbulent and non-linear which makes the presence of time in the life of Jews, existential. Amidst all such turmoil and uproar, Jews struggle hard to find an existence. This has ultimately brought in the necessity to seek peace and reconciliation for the sake of their survival in the world.

Julian Thomas, a British archaeologist, in his *Time, Culture and Identity: An Interpretative Archaeology* defines time as:

> Time can … be conceived of as a series of dateable ‘nows’ clicking past like the pages of a flick-book. This kind of time, however, can only be constructed because we have a more fundamental, existential time to base it upon. According to Heidegger, where we go wrong is in believing that we can understand time in a fundamental way. (44)

As the argument of Heidegger goes, it becomes an impossible task to understand time in a fundamental way. Therefore, the researcher attempts to understand time in an existential point of view. Martin Adams, a lecturer and psychotherapist, in his *A Concise Introduction to Existential Counselling*, elucidates existential time. He states:

> There is ‘existential time’, in which our perpetually changing present contains all that has happened and all that can happen. The present is the moving meeting point between the past and the future. The past is not gone – it is the past-in-the-present, and the future is not to come – it is the future-in-the-present. Although the past, present and future are equally important, if anything, the future is existentially the most
important because all our current decisions are made in the light of what we want to happen in the future before we die. (18-19)

Since history has time as its major factor, dealing with time ultimately ends up in an analysis on the history of the place. In turn, place is thus, a fusion of human and natural order. Dealing with place, consequently results in the study of the geography. Thereby, the study of time and place in Jerusalem brings out an examination of Jewish history and geography from an existential point of view. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, a French phenomenological philosopher, in his *Phenomenology of Perception*, explains, “The space could be to the place what the word becomes when it is spoken: grasped in the ambiguity of being accomplished, changed into a term stemming from multiple conventions, uttered as the act of one present (or one time), and modified by the transformations resulting from successive influences” (173). In the same way, Martin Heidegger, a German philosopher, in his 1954 essay, “Building, Dwelling, Thinking”, argues that the phenomenological essence of space only appears in the act of dwelling in a certain definite place. Jeff Malpas, an Australian philosopher, in his *Heidegger's Topology*, substantiates his argument quoting Heidegger. Malpas states, “Space is in essence that for which room has been made, that which is let into its bounds” (45). According to Heideggerian analysis of the human being, human beings are spatial with regard to their “being-in-the-world”. Space is, thus, not merely an objective, geometric space to be measured quantitatively. Rather, existential spatiality constitutes a notion of space which is immediately linked to human beings and their historical time.

In this regard, Geocriticism is a method of literary analysis and literary theory that incorporates the study of geographic space. The term designates a number of different critical practices. Anna Teresa Tymieniecka, a contemporary
phenomenologist, in her *Art, Literature, and Passions of the Skies*, defines existential space. She states, “The element of distance is, however, essential to the experience: the feeling of having to be separated, at a distance, from a beloved milieu. At the same time, the concept of idealism would remain intact – and hopes and dreams could inhale, breathe in the existential space” (133). Norberg-Schulz, an architectural historian and theorist, defines existential space, in her *Existence, Space and Architecture*. She comments that:

> Existential space is the space of experience. The experience of space consists of the tension between one’s immediate situation and existential space. When our immediate location coincides with the centre of our experience space, we experience ‘being at home’. If not we are either ‘on our way’, ‘somewhere else’, or we are ‘lost’. (87)

This evidently proves that people do not live in an objective world of matter and facts, as commonplace naive realism assumes. The human mode of existence takes place in the worlds of possibilities, moulded by one’s capacity of fantasy and imagination. As people find comforts in their world of fantasy and dreams, in which the reality and imagination, the experienced, desired and aspired life completely fuse into each other. In such a state of living, the existential space becomes the space of lived or shared experiences of the individual.

Moreover, while defining the existential time and space, it is also vital to define the relationship between both of them. The saptio-temporal relationship is termed as chronotope. M. M. Bakhtin, a Russian philosopher and literary critic, in his *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, defines the term Chronotope. He defines:

> We will give the name chronotope (literally, "time space") to the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are
artistically expressed in literature. This term [space-time] is employed in mathematics, and was introduced as part of Einstein's Theory of Relativity. The special meaning it has in relativity theory is not important for our purposes; we are borrowing it for literary criticism almost as a metaphor (almost, but not entirely). What counts for us is the fact that it expresses the inseparability of space and time (time as the fourth dimension of space). We understand the chronotope as a formally constitutive category of literature; we will not deal with the chronotope in other areas of culture.' In the literary artistic chronotope, spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out, concrete whole. Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history. This intersection of axes and fusion of indicators characterizes the artistic chronotope.

The chronotope in literature has an intrinsic generic significance. It can even be said that it is precisely the chronotope that defines genre and generic distinctions, for in literature the primary category in the chronotope is time. The chronotope as a formally constitutive category determines to a significant degree the image of man in literature as well. The image of man is always intrinsically chronotopic. (84)

With this analysis of Bakhtin, the study of space and time as a unified concept is made authentic. After a detailed scrutiny of time and space, and its role in the literary study, the researcher crams Oz’ works from spatio-temporal perspective. The
works of Oz reflects the intense emotions caused by the spatio-temporal struggle experienced by Jews. He uses his characters to reveal the agonizing experiences of individuals in Jewish communities. One of the most important reasons for all such hurting experiences is caused due to the political turmoil. The socio-political struggles lead to frustration and hopelessness about the place, Jerusalem. Oz has verbally expressed the tormenting emotions in the life of Jews, through the dialogues of his characters in all his works. Oz’ works are located only in Jerusalem and its suburbs, and the characters created can be genuinely studied from the spatio-temporal perspective as an essential chronotope.

Oz, as a contemporary Jewish existential author, in his works, attempts to delineate the pain and sufferings of Jews. Jews live in constant fear and anxiety. These emotions are caused by the political turmoil, social disorder, physical disarray and psychological perplexity. Since everything around their existence is highly threatening, the pain has always been too much for them to bear. They have learned either to live life with the pain or to ignore the pain that is caused due to various reasons.

Oz’ Hill, the magnum opus on Jewish political history and imagination has three long interrelated stories. In these stories, Oz brings out the history during the days of British mandate before the creation of Israel. Living through the agonizing experiences, Oz’ protagonist, Old Mr. Nehamkin, the Jewish poet who appears in the second story, “Mr. Levy” in Hill, expresses the pathetic condition of Jews. Oz, through the conversation of his characters, expresses the experiences of Jewish political turmoil and Jews’ inability to have hope for a better future. Old Mr. Nehamkin has dreams that below Jerusalem there is a hidden green sea. He tells his son Ephraim in an apprehensive tone that, “You must never use the word ‘tomorrow’
lightly. It is impossible to know what the day may bring forth. And particularly in
days such as these” (*Hill* 96). When Uriel, the boy who guards Mr. Nehamkin, asks
about the upcoming days of Jerusalem, Mr. Nehamkin affirms quite practically and
consciously hopes, “We shall continue to suffer and to wait, Uriel. I am very sorry for
us all. To outward appearance we are fearlessly made, but in truth we are consumed
by our afflictions. Do not weep, young Uriel; surely we have shed tears enough
already in our long years of exile” (*Hill* 97).

The last story, “Longing”, in *Hill*, is an epistolary narrative. The story revolves
around the state of existence of a young dying doctor, Dr. Nussbaum, who writes
letters to his psychologist-girlfriend Mina. Dr. Nussbaum identifies his physical
ailment with that of Jewish community. In one of his letters, while pondering over the
deadly disease cancer and the consequences of civil war, Dr. Nussbaum declares,
“As for me - what am I? A weak Jew. Consumed by hesitations. Dedicated but
apprehensive. My heart is heavy because I do not want to devise formulas for
explosives or to contribute to wars and I am also ashamed of my fear. The shame is
more than I can bear. I wake up in pain” (*Hill* 159-61). It is evident from the
experience of Dr. Nussbaum that constant fear, uncertainty and anxiety have become
an indispensable part of Jews who live in Jerusalem. The fear of an individual and his
struggle to overcome the deadly disease is symbolic that every Jew in Israel as a
victim of displacement and an everlasting civil war hopes and aspires to live in peace
in the soil of turmoil and turbulence.

Historically, Jerusalem has always been destroyed by the political envy, and
baseless hatred by anti-semitism and Holocaust. Down the history, there has been no
trace of hope for a better life for Jews through their days of war. Mr. Levi in the last
story, “Longing”, voices out the mind set of Jews:
There was nothing but sorrow as far as the eye could see. The refugees who were being turned away daily from the shores of our country and being sent off to desert islands like Zanzibar or Mauritius. Blood thirsty gangs were prowling in the villages. May be Jerusalem and the Promised Land of the Bible were not here after all, but in some other corner of the earth; surely in the course of thousands of years some mistake might have arisen. And it was there that the rose of Sharon and the lily of the valley bloomed, and there that rest and peace were to be found. May be the Hebrew state had already been established there, and only we had been forgotten among these mountains. For a moment I longed to pardon all the foes of Israel, to forgive them everything; … Enough. (Hill 101)

Oz, by presenting the personal malady of a socially committed physician, symbolizes the anxious state of Jews in Jerusalem. By venturing into the personal state of an individual, Oz presents the public space which has been preoccupied by socio-political unrest.

Oz, in his autobiography Tale, explains the evils of war and the uncertainty that prevailed amidst Jewish chaotic world. He records, “Nobody imagined what was really in store, but already in the twenties almost everyone knew deep down that there was no future for the Jews” (Tale 185). Later, Jews established a nation in the Land of Jerusalem and consequently, they were hated continuously by their neighbours and by the people around the world. The school headmaster in Oz’ autobiography, Tale, has a belief, which all his students approved. Oz records, “He [the headmaster] believed that the Land of Israel was the only place where Jews could be cured of their mental illness and prove to themselves and to the world that they had some good qualities
too” (*Tale* 187). Therefore, Jews have always been particular in claiming their right to the land which they believed to be the Promised Land for the entire Jewish community.

At the same time, it is a horrible reality that people living in Jerusalem always have experienced the fear of being killed, the sudden explosions of war, and the cries of the dying and the atrocities of the oppressors. Because of all such experiences, along with their Holocaust and genocide experiences in their past, the suicidal rate seems to increase more among Jews. Their living is being conditioned in such a way that they give up hope for a better living. The constant panic and angst have created a wounded psyche. Yet, many Jews have survived through the perplexity of life holding on to hope against all hopeless situations. But there have been people who find difficulty in prolonging their life in such a bedlam. As a result, the suicide rate has been found to be increasing during the wave of immigration to Israel due to the chaotic religious and socio-political atmosphere. There have been several reasons for people to commit suicide. One of the main reasons has always been the political instability and the atrocities that are forced upon Jews due to the unrest. Pastor John Hagee, in his *Jerusalem Countdown*, records an incident where a group of Jews commits suicide for one such reason. It is recorded that:

That night Eleazer gathered all the defenders, giving an impassioned plea that they should all commit suicide by their own hand rather than allow the Romans to rape their wives and daughters and place their sons in the chains of eternal slavery. When the Romans came in full battle dress the next morning, they were met by the thunderous sound of silence. They discovered that nearly all of the 960 Jews who had held out for three years had committed suicide. Two women and five
children, who had hidden in a cave, came out and informed the
Romans of this daring act of freedom. It is a moment in Jewish history
that will be remembered for eternity. (106)

It is not the only time when Jews dared such a thing. There have been several
occasions when Jews have been compelled to end their lives.

Oz, as a boy of twelve and a half, has experienced the pain of missing his
mother, when she has committed suicide. Almost all his works explore the poignant
depths of his characters. His autobiography, Tale, reveals the love-hate relationship in
personal and political sphere that causes much turmoil in Jerusalem: both in
individuals, in particular, and community on the whole. Such a living condition leads
to both physical and psychological unrest in every individual. Oz’ mother has also
experienced depression and all sorts of physical illness. Jerusalem has become an
impossible place for her survival. In his autobiography, Oz records what his mother
has experienced:

Two years before her death, she began to have frequent headaches. She
often had flu and sore throats, and even when she recovered, the
migraines did not go away. … Gradually she had to cut down on her
house work. … My mother smiled at me affectionately, but it was a
smile without a smile. That winter she got more wrinkles at the corners
of her eyes. … on Mother’s side, all sorts of packets and jars appeared,
vitamin pills, migraine pills, something called APC, and bottles of
medicine. … Her insomnia came from her migraine. … [Father]
begging her to banish her bad thoughts and think pleasant thoughts
instead. … she almost stopped eating. (Tale 385-89)
Owing to her fear and anxiety caused due to the political turmoil and the evils and with all her physical pains, Oz’ mother decides to end her life. In Tale, Oz records the emotional state of his mother, “something in the twilight zone between the sublime, the tormented, the dreamy and the solitary, all kinds of ‘Will-o’-the-wisps of ‘longing and yearning’, deluded my mother most of her life and seduced her until she succumbed and committed suicide in 1952.” (Tale 203). For every Jerusalemite, the cause for committing suicide is not only the physical tortures that they undergo, but it is their emotional trauma that leaves them in frustration and distress which ultimately results in mental depression.

Daisy V. Maze, an author, in The Rueban Trek, records the cruelties that have been forced upon Jews. She documents:

The people in Israel were not allowed on the streets after sundown and only then with permission during the day. It was getting worse day by day. Many were lined up and executed … Children were taken from homes and used as sexual objects for the man and his troops. Young men and women were taken also. None were safe. Many people committed suicide to avoid being taken. (116)

Jews suffered every kind of physical, psychological, religious and socio-political pain. They sustained through them all for one reason that they need to inherit the Promised Land. Ben-Dov, Professor of Hebrew and Comparative Literature, in his introduction to Amos Oz Reader, states that, “Here [Jerusalem] is so-so living, medium, but the people is always together. … I mean about the life. The life here is all the time together – the troubles together, the happiness together” (iv). So, the rate of suicide has always been more with Jews. The suffering Jews, give up their hope and choose to end their lives.
Oz juxtaposes light and darkness more effectively in the penultimate story, “Singing,” in his collection of eight interlinked short story collection, *Scenes*, set at a community sing-along at the home of Dalia and Avraham Levin. The boisterous gaiety of the gathering hides not only the sorrows but also of their hosts, whose son has committed suicide before four years. It is said that, “They searched for him all over the village for a day and a half, not realizing that he was lying under his parents’ bed. Dalia and Avraham even slept in the bed without realizing that their son’s body was right underneath them” (*Scenes* 231).

While tracing the history, Jews have spent much of their years in the land of exile. They have always been taken from one land to another. Jews have lived almost in every country around the world. Yet, they could not have a sense of belonging anywhere. They have wandered around the world for survival. The terms wanderer, scapegoat and schlemiel are always metaphorically related with Jews. For that reason, it is found necessary to define the term, wanderer, and trace the significance of the term with regard to Jews and Oz’ fictional characters. Tyler R. Tichelaar, an author of historical novels, in his *The Gothic Wanderer: From Transgression to Redemption; Gothic Literature from 1794 – Present*, traces the ideas of wandering Jew in literature. He affirms:

Mathew Lewis was the first and only Gothic novelist to use the Wandering Jew as an actual character in a Gothic novel. Lewis’ portrayal of the Wandering Jew was so popular that it resulted in numerous adaptations where Gothic novelists created characters based on the Wandering Jew, as well as the Romantic poets making the Wandering Jew a frequent character in their poetry. … The Jew’s link to Cain was relevant because Cain was already understood to be a
wandering outcast while Abel was commonly interpreted as a character similar to Christ; Cain’s murder of Abel was compatible with that of the Wandering Jew as an example of how the Jewish people were blamed for murdering Christ. (46)

S T Coleridge, one of the greatest English poets, literary critic and philosopher during the eighteenth century, has created his own wanderer character, in his “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” (1798). William Godwin, an English journalist, political philosopher and novelist, in his St. Leon (1799) uses elements of wandering Jew legend in the creation of a main character who is a Gothic wanderer. The Irish protestant priest, Charles Maturin’s Melmoth the Wanderer (1820) also draws upon the figure of the wandering Jew to create its title Gothic wanderer character. William Wordsworth, the greatest English Romantic poet, in his Song for the Wandering Jew (1800) and Byron, in Childe Harold Pilgrimage (1812) uses the gloomy wanderer characters.

Evidently, most of Oz’ works that are set in Jerusalem and its suburbs, deal only with the Jewish characters and the characters of Oz reflect in them, the wandering nature in its various manifestation. John Renard, Professor of Theological Studies, in his The Handy Religion Answer Book elaborates on the idea of scapegoat or scapegoating. He delineates:

We use the term “scapegoating” to refer to any attempt to shift blame onto some person or group in order to escape consequences for oneself. In religious studies the term applies to the ritual transference of guilt or evil intent … Jews themselves have often been the victims of a more tragic scapegoating through history. Scapegoating now typically involves projection of evil and ill-intent onto a hapless but convenient
“other,” sad confirmation of the adage that we have most in others the very things we cannot face in ourselves. (103)

Like wanderer and scapegoat, schlemiel is the other word that is very much connected with Jews and their personality. The schlemiel, in the broadest sense, is one who “handles a situation in the worst possible manner or is dogged by an ill luck that is more or less due to his own ineptness” (qtd. Furman 160). The term is much used in Yiddish literature written during the nineteenth and early twentieth century by Jewish American novelist such as Saul Bellow, Bernard Mal mud, and Philip Roth. Andrew Furman, Professor of English, in his Contemporary Jewish American Writers and the Multicultural Dilemma: The Return of the Exiled (Judaic Traditions in Literature, Music, and Art), the discussion is made with reference to the term schlemiel. In this discussion, he asserts:

The more prominent schlemiels in Yiddish literature include I. L. Peretz’s Bontshe … Shalom Aliechem’s Sholom Shachnah … and I. B. Singer’s Gimpel…. . Saul Bellow, Bernard Mal mud, and Philip Roth may have had these very characters in mind when they fashioned their own most prominent schlemiels, Moses, Herzog, Morris Bober, and Lou Epstein, respectively … The schlemiel turned out to be a wildly successful character for these Jewish American writers. (161)

Ronald Emerick, in the article, “Wily Trickster, Tragic Mulatto, and Schlemiel in Philip Roth’s The Human Stain”, quotes Sheldon J. Hershinow’s definition for a schlemiel as, “the good-hearted but ineffectual comic bumbler who habitually stumbles into misfortune” (77). Ronald refers the idea of Ruth Wisse to describe the idea of schlemiel:
Ruth Wisse mentions several types of the schlemiel and argues that the concept of the schlemiel has evolved from simple fool and victim to survivor. In recent writers like Bernard Malamud, Issac Bashevis Singer, and Saul Bellow, the schlemiel has become ‘a comic figure who seems to be a victim, but redefines his world, wins out in the end’.

(77)

It is a fact that the usage of the term, schlemiel in this sense, has almost become extinct. But, Jay L. Halio, Professor of English, in his Philip Roth Revisited, acknowledges that, “Roth has employed the figure continuously in his stories and novels to show how the Jew deals with and survives the absurdities of life” (5).

By this means, in literature, the terms wanderer, scapegoat, and schlemiel, are all used to refer Jews in different circumstance. Oz’ characters in his fiction are mainly wanderers in constant search for someone or something. In his interview with the researcher and her supervisor, when it is asked about his characters who are wanderers, Oz said, “Jews have been homeless for 2000 years. They were guests and visitors, always unwanted. Unwanted guest among the other nations. In the State of Israel, for the first time in the 2000 years, the Jews are at home but they still have characteristics of a wanderer” (Interview).

Oz’ Scenes is a collection of eight short stories namely “Heirs”, “Relations”, “Digging”, “Lost”, “Waiting”, “Strangers”, “Singing”, and “In a faraway place at another time”. Seven of the eight stories in Scenes are set in the village of Tel Ilan, a pioneer settlement dating from the start of the 20th century which is developing into a resort town, with weekend and holiday homes, boutique wineries and art galleries. Many of the characters in the stories are wanderers.
In “Relations,” in *Scenes*, the village Dr. Gili Steiner, a grim, rather cruel woman, waits for her nephew, Gideon to come in the bus from Tel Aviv, but of course he never shows. When her nephew has not turned up, the driver gives hope to Dr. Steiner that, “Don’t you worry Dr. Stainer, whoever didn’t arrive this evening will certainly turn up tomorrow morning, and whoever doesn’t arrive tomorrow morning will come tomorrow lunchtime. Everyone gets here sooner or later” (*Scenes* 31). When the bus keeps moving, she continues to wait for her cousin. She then decides to go behind the bus to check whether Gideon has fallen asleep in the last seat. She keeps wandering in the streets and finally goes to Mirkin, the bus driver’s house and the driver confirms that her cousin has not been there in the bus. With no hope for his arrival, Dr. Stainer keeps believing and wandering in the streets of the village Tel Ilan.

In *Hill*, Oz has created wandering characters who represent Jews. Dr. Kipnis has emigrated to Palestine with the intention of establishing a cattle farm in the mountains. Oz characterises Dr. Kipnis in the beginning of the story. He records that,

*He [Dr. Kipnis] was a polite young man, quiet, principled, and full of hopes. In his dreams he saw himself wandering with a stick and a haversack among the hills of Galilee, clearing a patch of forest, and building with his own hands a wooden house beside a stream, with a sloping roof, an attic, and a cellar. He meant to get together some herdsmen and a herd of cattle, roaming by day to new pastures and by night sitting surrounded by books in a room full of hunting trophies, composing a monograph or a great poem. For three months he stayed in a guesthouse in the small town of Yesod-Hama’alah, and he spent whole days wandering alone from morning to night in eastern Galilee*
looking for water buffalo in the Huleh swamps. In the Arab village of Halsa, he met a wandering Bavarian ornithologist, a lonely and fervently evangelical man who believed that the return of the Jews to their land heralded the salvation of the world, and was collecting material for a great work on the birds of the Holy Land. Together they roamed to the Marj-'Ayun valley, into the mountains of Naphtali and the Huleh swamps. Occasionally, in their wanderings, they reached the remote sources of the Jordan. (Hill 8-9)

With the above mentioned characters, Dr. Kipnis and the Bavarian ornithologist, Oz establishes the faith that Jews carry with them for centuries. Oz, a Jew, through his wandering characters, draws the attention of his readers to the firm Jewish belief that the salvation to the whole world is sure to come with the Jewish return to their Promised Land, Jerusalem.

Oz’ Night, set in Tel Kedar, a small development town in the Negev, is a story that explores the breakdown of a long-term relationship between Theo, an aging civil engineer, and Noa, a young schoolteacher. Theo, states, “In my years of wandering around these parts I had been drawn to a hypnotic tropical femininity that sometimes seemed imprisoned like a dark flame in a cage of Hispanic arrogance” (Night 103). Theo, by reflecting on his own past, realizes that his long years of wandering have helped him learn so many things. Theo seems to hold a positive attitude towards the wandering years. Oz’ characters, as a consequence, mirror the positive attitude of the Jews who wander around the world for so many centuries as scapegoats and schlemiels.

Contradictory to the Bavarian ornithologist, Fima, the eponymous hero, is preposterous and he spends his hours fantasizing about solving the nation's problems
and pursuing women with equivocal success. The protagonist has no ambition and has no plans for the next day. In *Fima*, it is said that:

…there was something in his pudgy form, his shuffling, abstracted way of walking, … and his kindly eyes that always seemed lost and looking either inward or out beyond the mountains and the desert … wandering around the city center as though he did not know who had brought him there or how he was going to get out again. (*Fima* 27-28)

By presenting Fima, Oz presents a generation that lives without hope. People like Fima live their life in Jerusalem with disgust and frustration. Since they could not find the purpose of their life and the reasons for their chaotic survival in Jerusalem, their wandering is continued from Diaspora to Jerusalem. Fima, thus becomes a microcosmic representation of the Jewish population who fails to perceive the ultimate faith of a religious Jew who awaits and hopes for a better world and the salvation to the humankind through the Jewish community.

Many Jews, at present return to Israel, the Promised Land from their erstwhile diaspora. Ironically in Jerusalem things have never been ideal as they wanted them to be. Their life in Jerusalem has also been threatened by the horrors of war between the Palastinians and Jews. Oz in his autobiography, *Tale*, reveals the emotional state of Jews. He expresses, “There was fear in Jerusalem, but people tried as hard as they could to bury it deep inside their chests” (*Tale* 287). As recorded in the history, Jews in their wandering around the world, have settled in the lands of Morocco, Cuba, Mexico and Austria. Significant Jewish population is still live in Canada, Argentina, and Brazil. More than a million Jews live in Europe and many in the Middle East, Africa, Asia and Oceania. Among the 13 million and more Jews in the world, it is known that around 5 million have come back to Israel and the rest is found settled
around the world. Resultantly, Jews are still considered to be settlers, wanderers and also people of no land, even after the declaration of a separate Jewish land.

Even though Jews are considered and established to be wanderers, scapegoats and schlemiels, every Jew takes up the responsibility to preserve the Jewish traits. They have always had their religious and cultural standards. Augusto Segre, a Professor at the Italian Rabbinical College, in his *Memories of Jewish Life: From Italy to Jerusalem, 1918-1960* says, “The particular circumstances could, at least in large part, even justify them, but for a good Piedmontese peasant, and especially for a Jew who is and remains faithful to his own ideas and has never on principle accepted any form of compromise” (200). Many critics establish that despite the dilution of Jewish religion, culture and language, Jews preserve some basic standards throughout. Therefore, the Jewish religion, culture and language have been easily revived once Jews have got back to the Holy Land, Jerusalem which has become their own. In *Tale*, Oz brings forth the importance of education among the Jewish community: He insists:

All so that for the studies and textbooks they won’t be short. It was always like that with Jewish families: they believed that education was an investment for the future, the only thing that no one can ever take away from your children, even if, Heaven forbid, there’s another war, another revolution, another migration, more discriminatory laws – your diploma you can always fold up quickly, hide it in the seams of your clothes, and run away to wherever Jews are allowed to live. (*Tale* 172)

Perceptibly, Jews, down the history have proved their excellence in every field they get in. Dean Keith Simonton, a distinguished Professor and vice chair of the department of psychology, in his *Greatness: Who Makes History and Why* states:
In Western civilization, the most conspicuous evidence is the history of the Jews. Jews make up only between 1% and 3% of the population of Europe and the United States. Yet their presence in the list of the eminent exceeds statistical expectations by a factor of 10 or more. This prominence holds especially for mathematicians, physicists, chemists, biomedical researchers, economists, lawyers, violin virtuosos, chess champions, and faculty members at prestigious universities. (167)

All of Jewish characters in Oz’ works are well educated. In Night, Theo is a civil engineer and his wife Noa is a school teacher. In Fima the protagonist Fima is a writer by interest and a receptionist in a gynecology clinic. Yoel Ravid, in Woman, is a retired Israeli secret service agent. In Michael, Hannah, the narrator, is a literature student and her husband, Michael Gonen, is a geology student who works hard with his doctoral research. To list a few more characters from his trilogy, Hill, the like a mild-mannered veterinarian Dr. Kipnis, Mr. Nehamkin, Dr. Nussbaum, and in Scene, a short story collection, Rachel, and her elderly father, a town mayor, and a famous deceased author are all well educated and seem professionally well settled. Evidently, all of Oz’ characters who are Jews, are the replica of the well educated ethnic community in Jerusalem and around the world.

Moreover, the analysis of Jewish land and people, in reality and in literature, presents a vivid picture of the existing extremes in the living condition of every Jew in the land of Israel and in the lands of diaspora. Jerusalem is the Holy Land and it is also the land of war. It is the land of beauty and the land of blood shed. It is the land that has produced Nobel laureates and the land where Nazism creates its worst effects. The Promised Land is filled with pandemonium and perplexity.
Emil L. Fackenheim, a noted Jewish philosopher and Reform rabbi, in his article, “The Jewish Return into History: Philosophical Fragments on the State of Israel”, published in *Jewish Philosophy and the Academy*, states that, “Jews are ‘the eternal people,’ covenanted to the God of Eternity” (223). In Jerusalem, the Eternal people, owing to the socio-political and religious pressure, choose to end their life before nature gives the call. The well educated, cultured and well mannered people are the most scattered, depressed and shattered people. The most blessed land and God’s chosen people have thus become the most cursed land and extremely scattered people of the world. The people who are certain about prophesy and promises about the land, are the people with no land for centuries together. The sacred land has always been claimed to be the land of scapegoats.

Jews, the most unwanted people with the wounded psyche create a unique history of 4000 years of survival. Avner Falk, an Israeli clinical psychologist, in the preface to his *A Psychoanalytic History of the Jews*, affirms that, “The reality of the Jewish people as an ethnic entity and of the continuity of Jewish national life through the past four thousand years is taken for granted” (11). Apparently, Jerusalem is proved to be the land of extremes. Oz’ autobiography, *Tale*, draws out the extremity that prevailed in Jerusalem in general and the extremities that prevailed within his own family. He suitably entitles his autobiography as *A Tale of Love and Darkness*. The love that has prevailed inside the family and the darkness that has prevailed in the outside world are only due to various political disturbances caused by the territorial problem.

With all these extremities, to trace the history and culture of Jews become complex due to their long years of exile in different parts of the world in different eras. There is no parallel in all human history to the diaspora of Jews. Howard Fast, in
his *The Jews Story of a People*, asserts, “Here a people scattered across the face of the earth maintained itself for two thousand years without either a homeland or a common language. They maintained their religion, their identity, their separateness, and above all, their communal brotherhood” (136-37). The solidarity among Jews is considered to be one of the main reasons for their survival through their years of exile. Nonetheless, the long years of being away from the homeland, has lead to a dilution in their uniqueness of their culture and language. Oz, in his essay, “Integrity”, included in *Peace*, states, “There is no Hebrew word for integrity: perhaps we Jews lack this ‘Roman’ quality altogether. In my dictionary I found, among other synonym for integrity, ‘intactness, wholeness, being firm, in one piece’. We Jews are probably made of several pieces, not of one” (*Peace* 1).

Jews, while returning from diasporas to their native land, with the establishment of Israel as the Jewish state, carried with them the cultural practices of the land of exile. Jerusalem with all different immigrated cultures seems to possess a mosaic of culture. The multi cultural and multi religious setting in Jerusalem makes it unique from any other city in the world. In this regard, it is essential to focus on the importance of religion, culture and politics while analyzing time and space as the existential construct. For almost 4000 years, Jews have been living on their religious faith. Their faith has always relied upon prophesies that are given unto them thousands of years ago. All promises seem to be irrational and impossible to all people around the world. But Jerusalemites could witness every promise, which has been given to them, come true.

Oz and his daughter Fania-Oz, while talking about *Jews and Words*, in their interview, *A Compelling, Chutzpadik History of ‘Jews and Words’*, with the National Public Radio host, Scott Simon, affirms that he and his daughter Fania regard Judaism
not as a religion but as a civilization, as a heritage much more than a faith-based belief system. Oz firmly declares that, “The heritage contains first and foremost books [and] texts, and religion is only one of the components. For thousands of years we Jews had nothing but books, and these were always discussed, surely more often than God, around the family table”. Thereby, both according to the religious texts and Jewish history, for Jews, everything begins with the promise that has been made to their fore father, Abraham, by God. The eternal covenant given by God to their fore father is: “I will establish my covenant between me and you, and your offspring after you throughout your generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you” (Gen.17.7). The eternal promise makes Jews claim themselves as people of God.

Nicholas de Lange, in his Judaism, states that, “To be a Jew means first and foremost to belong to a group, the Jewish people, and the religious beliefs are secondary, in a sense, to this corporate allegiance” (4). God establishes the covenant out of love for the people. Classical Judaism does not grant Jews the option of leaving the covenant. It is the fact that even if a Jew sins, he cannot leave the covenant because even in his sins he remains a Jew. In precise, a Jew despite his socio-political suffering as an unaccepted ethnic community, and his status of being resident aliens in Jewish diasporas are resolute to either stay in or to return back to Jerusalem.

For instance, Oz’ characters suffer due to the political, religious and social mess in Jerusalem. Their extreme sufferings do not give them the courage to leave the place. Hannah in Michael, Fima in Fina, Theo in Night and the protagonist, Author, in Rhyming, choose to continue their discontented life in Jerusalem. Jerusalem, the space, becomes the chief reason for their unsatisfied living. Author, in Rhyming, is surrounded by the audience after a literary evening.
In that particular moment, he meets Dr. Pessach Yikhat, a veteran teacher who takes a dim view of current trends in literature. The Author takes up the responsibility to assure him that, “contemporary literatures does not negate the State: condemning the injustices of the occupation, satirizing corruption and widespread brutishness, exposing decadence and stupidity, these things do not amount to negating the State, often, in fact, they come from a broken heart” (Rhyming 32). In saying so, the protagonist, Author, brings out the existing condition of the State of Jerusalem. The place that Jews claim their rights, does not give them a congenial atmosphere to live yet they choose to live there.

In Fima, the titular protagonist, Fima has a strong belief that the physical space where he lives is not where he ought to be. Pathetically, he does not know where he is supposed to be if not for Jerusalem. Oz, in creating the character of Fima, has created a generation who dreams noble dreams yet the dreams remain unattained. Specifically, Fima grounds the reason for his failure on Jerusalem, the place where he lives. Oz, towards the end of Fima, presents the relationship that Fima has with the land. Oz writes:

Suddenly Fima had to fight back tears of longing. Not longing for the dead, or for what once existed here and no longer did, but for what might have been and was not, and never would be. There came into his head the words “his place does not know him.”… It struck him now as precise and penetrating. The minarets on the hilltops surrounding Jerusalem, the ruins and stone walls enclosing secretive convents, topped with sharp broken glass, the heavy iron gates, …the gloomy basements, brooding, resentful Jerusalem, sunk up to its neck in
nightmares of prophets stoned and saviors crucified and redeemers hacked to pieces. (Fima 309)

Consequently, Fima is frequently overcome by the feeling that, “he was here [Jerusalem] by mistake, that he ought to be somewhere completely different. But what the mistake was, or where he ought to be, he did not know this morning. In fact he never did” (Fima 6). This proves that the inter relationship between time and space from the scriptural promises, made to Abraham by God; determine the character of a Jew. Thereby, a Jew is complete as an individual only through a Jewish space.

Though they are the chosen people of God, it is also said that Jews will have to be scattered around the world. It is prophesised that, “And you I will scatter among the nations, and I will unsheathe the sword against you; your land shall be desolations, and your cities a waste” (Lev. 26.33). All such prophesies seem to get fulfilled in the land. Down the history, Babylonians, Greeks, Maccabees, Romans, Muslim rulers, and Ottomans have their hands in making Jerusalem and Jews desolate. Jews suffered in the hands of different rulers. Through Holocaust, anti-semitism, genocides, and crusades the foreign rulers tried to bring an end to the entire Jewish community. Wajid Mahmud Bashir, a sociologist, in his Ten Reasons Why Israel Will Fail, reports:

Much of the Jewish population of Europe had been killed in the Holocaust. Poland, home of the largest Jewish community in the world before the war, had had over 90% of its Jewish population, or about 3,000,000 Jews, killed. Greece, Yugoslavia, Hungary, Lithuania, Bohemia, the Netherlands, Slovakia, and Latvia each had over 70% of their Jewish population destroyed. Belgium, Romania, Luxembourg, Norway, and Estonia lost around half of their Jewish population, the
Soviet Union over one third of its Jews, and even countries such as France and Italy had each seen around a quarter of their Jewish population killed”. (52)

In this way, Jews have become less in number which again is a prophecy getting fulfilled. Moses, the greatest leader of the Israelites revealed God’s word to them even before entering the Promised Land, Canan. He has foretold that, “… you will soon utterly perish from the land that you are crossing the Jordan to occupy; you will not live long on it, but will be utterly destroyed. The Lord will scatter you among the peoples; only a few of you will be left among the nations” (Deut. 4.26,27).

It is an evident fact that Jews have been scattered and become a few in number, and they have been cruelly persecuted in all possible ways. The damnation of the entire ethnic community is also prophesied by Moses. It is said that, “You shall perish among the nations, and the land of your enemies shall devour you. And those of you who survive shall languish in the land of your enemies because of their iniquities; also they shall languish because of their ancestors” (Lev 26: 38, 39). In Tale, Oz, while recording the wretched experiences of his mother’s family in exile, has agonizingly expressed the lived and shared experiences inside and outside Jerusalem. He states that:

Her parents, Hertz and Itta, like all the Jews in Rovno, were witnesses and victims of the anti-semitism that was growing both among their Polish neighbours and among the Ukrainians and Germans, Catholic and Orthodox Christians, acts of violence by Ukrainian hooligans, and increasingly discriminatory measures by the Polish authorities. And like a rumble of distant thunder echoes reached Rovno of deadly
incitement of violence and persecution of Jews in Hitler’s Germany”.

(Tale 180)

The painful and threatening experience of Oz’ mother is the experience of most of the Jews around the world. In all their suffering and persecution, Jews have patiently endured and survived. Jews, through their endurance, have always proved the world of their physical, emotional and psychological stamina down the history. Jews are blessed in one way because of the promise that God has given them. They have been blessed to be the beaconing light to the nations. No nation would have endured so much of hardships. They have gained the extraordinary power to live through the years by holding on to the promise of God, which says, “I will give you as a light to the nations” (Isa. 49.6).

Contradictorily, Oz, in Michael, presents a conversation that reveals the fact about the frustrating state of Jerusalem’s existing conditions. Hannah, the narrator of the story, records one of the casual evening conversations that has taken place among her husband, Michael and her neighbours, Mr. Kadishman and Mr. Glick. From her blurred and indistinct memory, Hannah attempts to record the conversation. She records:

The conversation goes something like this-

“Once upon a time people used to say, “When the British leave, the Messiah will come,” Mr. Glick begins hesitantly. “Well the British have left and still Redemption tarries.”

… My husband:

“There’s no point in reducing everything to heroes and villains. There are objective factors and objective trends in politics.”

Mr. Glick:
“Instead of being a light to the nations, we have become just one of the nations, and who can say whether it is for better or for worse?” (Michael 153)

In presenting such conversations through his narrator, Oz seems to opine his differing stance about all that are foretold about Jerusalem in the Holy Scriptures. In Night, Noa invites a few people on Friday nights and they have talks about:

…national security and the Occupied Territories. Jokes about government ministers. Deplore the way the town has stopped growing, the better residents are leaving and are leaving and are being replaced by people who are only so-so. Perhaps the immigration from Russia will give us bit of a boost. Though in point of fact, what will they do here? They’ll dry out in the sun like us.

(Night 113)

Despite the fact that, Jerusalem is a Land of Promise and Land of Prophesies, Oz in his works asserts the current status, which appears to be not so promising. Coldness, aggression, and brutality continue to spread in every corners of the State of Israel. The space where Jews have longed for a comeback, do not seem to enjoy the bliss of being at home.

Nevertheless, everything that happens to the City of Jerusalem has always been the fulfilment of the Word of God. Whatever happens, Jews have been promised a comeback. Prophet Ezekiel has foretold that, “But you, O mountains of Israel, shall shoot out your branches, and yield your fruit to my people Israel; for they shall soon come home” (Ezek. 36.8). After so many years of persecution and suffering, Jews have been given their portion of the land as their own. The inheritance of the land firmly declares that they are the Chosen lot. The inheritance of the Promised Land after many centuries by the Jews initiates the socio-political and religious trauma in
the minds of Jews and the Arabs in erstwhile Palestine. Oz, in his literary works, remains passively objective and delineates the special conflict as an artistic response to the age old crisis.

Moreover, Jews have had their hopes in the ingathering of the exile which has already been promised by God through prophet Jeremiah: “See, I am going to bring them from the land of the north, and gather them from the farthest parts of the earth, among them the blind and the lame, those with child and those in labor, together; a great company, they shall return here” (Jer. 31.8). All through their times of exile, Jews have never let their faith die. They have waited for the Jewish kingdom to be rebuilt. They have believed strongly that by the ingathering of the exiles and by the restoration of Jewish sovereignty, the messianic era would be marked. Oz presents characters who get back to Jerusalem with the establishment of the State of Israel. Oz’ autobiography, Tale reveals the in depth emotional longing that Jews have held for their sacred land, Jerusalem. The space is what they have longed for so many years. Oz states in Tale about the belief that his headmaster, Dr. Issachar Reiss has on the ingathering of Jews in Jerusalem. Such understanding emphasizes the deliberate need of the place. Evidently, the self of an individual gains its authority only when they could claim their belonging to the space, Jerusalem.

With the dissemination and dislocation of the Promised Land, the culture and the language of Jews suffer enormously. The ingathering, thus, paved way to the revival of Hebrew language, which again is a promise getting fulfilled. Zephaniah has prophesised that, “At that time I will change the speech of the peoples to a pure speech” (Zeph. 3.9). When Jews have been in exile, Hebrew has not been used as a spoken language. Instead, they have spoken the languages of the peoples among whom they lived. Hebrew has remained to be a language of prayer and poetry. The
Hebrew language revival has begun in the latter part of the eighteenth century as a part of Jewish enlightenment. In *Encyclopedia of Judaism*, it is recorded that, “Ben-Yehudah believed that in addition to reacquiring Jewish sovereignty in Israel, Jews needed to revitalize their language, Hebrew. Since the Jewish exile began in 70 C.E., Hebrew had become a ‘dead language,’ utilized only in written form and no longer spoken” (52).

Alina Polyak, a writer and employee in Johann Wolfgang Goethe University at Frankfurt Main, Germany, in his *The Role of Religion – Tradition and Modernity in Contemporary Jewish American Literature*, highlights her views on Hebrew language. She establishes, “Hebrew is more than just a language. It reminds of the past and unites the Jewish history with the messianic future in the Land of Israel, where it is spoken again” (64). This significant quote affirms that Hebrew has always been the language of religious practice. The establishment of the State of Israel made Hebrew the national language. Alina Polyak considers that, “It serves as a lingua franca between Jews from different communities” (63).

Despite being a polyglot, Oz insists on the usage of Hebrew and prefers to write in his racial language, Hebrew, a language which is dearer to him. In his interview, “Amos Oz, The Art of Fiction”, with Shusha Guppy, Oz admits the fact that:

I have never chosen Hebrew. I was born into it. It is my native tongue. I dream and laugh and curse in Hebrew. And I have said many times that I’m a chauvinist only in respect of the language, and that even if I had to part with this country, I would never part with the language. I feel for the language everything that perhaps I don’t always feel for the country.
Oz’s father and mother have spoken many languages. In his *Tale*, Oz clearly records that, “My father could read in sixteen or seventeen languages, and could speak eleven. My mother spoke four or five languages and read seven or eight. They conversed in Russian and Polish when they did not want me to understand. … But to me they spoke only in Hebrew” (*Tale* 2). This is the situation of many Jews in diaspora and this is the major reason for Hebrew to become a language of religious text than to be a spoken language. Yet, the uniqueness of Hebrew is confined to Jews. In *Jews and Words*, Oz and Fania, his daughter, the authors claim that some things are untranslatable. “The granite splendor of Hebrew and the coarse spice of Yiddish can never become universal flavors” (181). However, with the revival of Hebrew in the late eighteenth century, Hebrew has become the spoken language of many Jews. Hebrew literature has found its international acclaim and thus Hebrew culture in itself has gained its prominence in the Land of Israel. Hebrew language has regained its integral part in Hebrew culture.

Furthermore, spiritual revival is also promised to Jews. “Many peoples and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem and to entreat the favor of the Lord” (*Zech. 3:22*). Jews, the people of religion, have regained their lost hope with their return to the native land. Oz has travelled throughout Israel and the West Bank in the 1980s and he has been speaking with many people about the past, present, and future of his country. Oz in his *Land*, a collection of essays on political issues, accounts that which he has found in his journey. In the “Author Note”, Oz affirms the fact that his journey has taken place among people of strong convictions for the place. In the first essay “Thank God for His Daily Blessings”, included in his *Land*, Oz records an old shopkeeper’s dream, whom he encounters in a grocery shop in the Geulah Quarter of Jerusalem who reveals his spiritual stand. The shopkeeper,
who has suffered the pain of being an alien while he has been in exile, with much content, shares his emotional state in his own land. He reminisces the glory of Jerusalem’s past and present, with a Jewish thankful heart. He avows:

I will tell the young people what everybody should be saying here every morning and every night should say thanks God for everything what we got here in this country: the army, the ministers by the Knesset, the El Al, the income tax even, the streets, the Kibbutzim, the factories – the everything! What is this?! They forgot how we had it in this country in the beginning? There wasn’t nothing! Sand and enemies! Now, thanks God, we got the State and everybody has what to eat and clothes and education – not enough yet, the education – and we even got of luxury! What did we have in the Diaspora? We had bubkes, that’s what! This is a great honor to the Jewish people, what they done in country so quick! Against all the tsuris! Only, all Jews what lives in America, in France, in Russia, by Khomeini even, should all come here quick, we should have all the Jewish people at home. …

From a simple man in the street. In Romania I was a woodworker. In Ashdod I worked in wood, too. Now – a pensioner. … there wasn’t no freedom to talk. There was fear, In Eretz Yisrael, there is freedom to say anything, no fear, but you know what? I got no criticism. Nothing. Only compliments… only thanks God. (Land 23)

After centuries of despair and suffering, the Jews who have restored and resettled in their own land, like the shopkeeper, tend to develop a thankful heart for all the goodness that has been bestowed upon them. It is evident that Israel as a physical
space remains a distant dream in the past and dwells in the memory of the Jews as a space which is perfect and personal.

The entire Jewish community has struggled hard to rebuild the city of Jerusalem. The desert land has soon become a land which produces vegetables and fruits to the entire world. The economy of the land has improved. The education system in Jerusalem is found to be the largest and most diverse. Thus, in all sectors the city has expanded widely for betterment. Oz, in his Land, shares the outlook of a forty year old man, who shares his outlook on Jerusalem and its rapid developments that has taken place after their ingathering.

Oz records:

A city planned by social democrats: without imperial boulevards, without monuments, without grandiose merchants’ homes. A city living entirely in the present tense, a clean city, almost serene. The horns of passing cars do not squeal, the pedestrians do not run. It seems that almost everybody here knows almost everybody. If there is poverty here it is not glaring. Even the wealth of the suburb of villas near the beach is not ostentatious. A city of workers and businessmen and artisans and housewives. Of the sixty or seventy thousand souls here, about half are immigrants from North Africa, approximately one-third come from Western Europe and the Americas, and the remainder are native-born. At this morning hour, a weekday serenity rests on Ashdod: the men at work, some of the women at work, some at home. The children have gone off to day-care centers or to school. You will find no Light unto the Nations here, but also no ghetto or slum – only a
small, bright port city rapidly growing and expanding to the south and
east. (*Land* 226)

This developed status of Jews in Jerusalem gives a comforting feel to the entire
Jewish community. There are political tribulations still prevailing due to the territory
and partition problems. But still, it is consoling to the heart that the people who have
been wanderers and scapegoats for years, have a land of their own and thus relieved
from pains which they have been undergoing in their diaspora.

Similarly, religion is another significant part of any culture. With regard to
Jerusalem, three important religions claim their place and all three religions consider
Jerusalem as their religious Holy City. M. A. Muqtedar Khan, an Associate Professor
in the Department of Political Science and International Relations at the University of
Delaware, in *Jihad for Jerusalem: Identity and Strategy in International Relations*,
establishes the reality that prevails in Jerusalem with regard to Jerusalem. The
religious status of Jerusalem is thus, elaborated:

The present struggle for sovereignty over Jerusalem is symbolic of the
convergence of the spiritual and the physical, the religious and the
political in the Middle East. This “Holy” city is historically, as well as
scripturally, claimed by Jews, Muslim, and Christians. For the Jews,
Jerusalem is the “mountain of the Lord.” …Jerusalem has become the
symbol and source of Jewish religious, as well as nationalist, identity.
…for Christians, Jerusalem is the site of its origin and early history. …
Jerusalem is one of the three most sacred places of Islam. (114)

Apart from the distinct religions which claim Jerusalem to be their holy place,
Judaism is considered to be an important religion since it is the religion of Jews. This
religion of the Land cannot be excluded in the study of Jewish culture. Eli’ezer Shvaid, a Hebrew author, in his *The Idea of Modern Jewish Culture* states that:

> When a society’s activity is dominated by a religious establishment, the culture created is intended primarily to serve religious ideals. If religion is conceived of as a superhuman authority and thus supra-cultural, then culture itself is conceived as a means to a religious ideal but it is not itself considered an ideal sought out for its own sake. (1)

Therefore, it is a known fact that Jerusalem is a land which gives importance to its culture and is ultimately based on the religion. It is, thereby, a Land that is built on its religious standards. People living in the Land of Israel are known to be the people of religion. As already mentioned, Jews do not have an option to leave the religion to claim themselves to be secular individual. In this regard, being a Jew in itself is an identity that he is very much a man who belongs to God. Consequently, being a part of Jewish religion is the same as being a part of Jewish culture.

Judaism gives an ethnic and cultural identity to every Jew. Jacob Neusner, an American academic scholar of Judaism, in *The Basic Judaism* states, “Judaism is a religion like any other. In this - worldly, social perspective, any religion (or religious tradition) forms a cultural system that is comprised by three components, (1) its worldview, (2) its way of life, and (3) its definition of the community of the faithful” (1). So, Judaism, as religion, is also considered as a cultural system. However, there are a large number of secular Jews in Israel, for whom Judaism is more a culture and ethnic identity than a spiritual practice.

While dealing with Jewish religion, Oz constantly proves his atheistic stand in many of his interviews and the trace of atheism is identified in almost all characters in his fiction. He does not involve much in religious argument in his writings. Despite
the fact that, handling the political issues of Israel, Oz argues that the conflict between Israel and Palestine is not because of religion, culture and tradition, but it is merely a real estate dispute.

Being a Jew often refers to a common Jew who is not as strong in his belief as the Judaists are. The religious and cultural status within Jews is generally classified into two groups based on their religious affiliation. The stanch believer and strict follower of Jewish religious culture, customs and a way of life are socially termed as Judaists. Jacob Neusner, in Judaism the Basics defines the difference between the ethnic group and religious people in Jerusalem. He states, “All Judaists – those who practice the religion, Judaism – also are Jews, but not all Jews are Judaists. That is to say, all those who practice the religion, Judaism, by the definition of Judaism fall into the ethnic group, the Jews, but not all members of the ethnic group, the Jews, practice Judaism” (6).

Oz’ works highlight characters who are Jews and not Judaists. Oz’ characters do not seem to have a strong religious hold. It is because Jews are made to wander around the world for so many centuries and that has brought in a sort of dilution in their religious and cultural standards. Any Jew would never give up his ethnic identity as a Jew, yet, there have been sturdy followers of Judaism. By this means, the characters in Oz are mere Jews and not Judaists. No Jew would ever give up one’s ethnic identity as a Jew. Neusner shares that, “we cannot draw too rigid a distinction between the ethnic and the religious in the context of the Jewish people and Judaism. The ethnic group and the religion reciprocally shape the life of one another” (7).

Fima, the titular protagonist in Fima, “…had never been a practicing Jew, was certain that God was not in the least religious, and had no use for religion” (Fima 19). Fima’s affinity to the Promised Land is very much ambiguous and uncertain. His
sense of physical alienation and his religious reluctance about the space where he lives, have driven him away from the Jewish community. Furthermore, his detachment from the religious codes of life and lack of affirmative assertion of his existence and his attempts without hope, pave way to consider him a failure. Fima expresses his religious detachment in a very clear manner to his father Baruch, to which his father firmly disagrees to his son’s opinion. Fima argues:

Every time in history that the Jews have gone out of their minds and started navigating their way through this world with messianic charts instead of real, universal ones, millions of them have paid with their lives. Apparently we still haven’t managed to get it into the famous Jewish head that the Messiah is really our exterminating angel. That’s it in a nutshell, Baruch: the Messiah is our angel of death. So it’s perfectly okay to disagree about where we want to go; … Wherever we decide to go, we must use real, universal charts, not Messianic ones.

(Fima 183)

Such a reluctant attitude of Fima towards religion leaves his father Baruch amaze at his son’s “wisdom or his own foolishness” (183). Fima’s unsuccessful life is attributed to his existential dilemma and his self detachment from the land.

In Hill, when Mitya expresses his religious faith to Dr. Kipnis, he hopelessly expresses that, “Even King couldn’t help. Or the …Messiah himself, not that I believe in him” (Hill 33). Such an attitude of Mithya towards religion foretells his hopelessness for a better future for the place where he lives. It is the belief of every Jew that when Messiah comes, the redemption for Jews will attain its fullness. When Mithya fails to believe in Messiah, he ultimately proves his faithlessness towards Judaism and thereby his despondency for his existing space, Jerusalem.
In the same way, Michael is found to be a Jew in an ethnic sense, but not a Judaist from a religious realm. On a Sabbath eve, Michael, Hannah and their son, Yair have gathered on the table for dinner. Hannah says, “On our table a white tablecloth. … Michael slices the Sabbath loaf. Yair sings three Sabbath songs… We do not light Sabbath candles, because Michael would consider it hypocritical in people who choose not to follow the ways of religion” (Michael 147). Such is the religious standards of Oz’ characters who are less concerned about the practices of their religion and religious text. Thereby, though Oz’ characters are pious, they are not religious fanatics. They have believed in their religious beliefs and God as the Creator of everything and provider of all goodness in life. However, they do not tend to believe and accept everything without any questions. In short, Oz, in his works, creates sceptics, the doubters of religious doctrines and principles.

Supplementing the arguments on religion, culture of the land gains equal importance in the life of Jews. The study of Jewish culture includes a detailed analysis of Jewish language, religion, cuisine, social habits, music and art. Jewish culture in Jerusalem is multi cultural due to the exile and ingathering from around the world. Due to the longer number of years in exile, Jews have imbibed the culture of the land where they have lived. The ingatherers in Jerusalem have brought in the cultures from around the world making the Land, a multi cultural one. In the essay “Has Israel Altered Its Visions?” included in Peace, Oz declares the fact that:

I would say that one of the major factors was the mass immigration of Holocaust survivors, Middle Eastern Jews and non-socialist and even anti-socialist Zionists who ached for ‘normalization’. … Then there were the masses of orthodox Jews who wanted to create a replica of a Jewish ghetto … As for the North African Jews, and many of the
Central Europeans, they brought with them the attitudes of a French-inspired middle class – conservative, puritan, observant, extremely hierarchical and family oriented, and, to some extent, chauvinistic, militaristic and xenophobic. These arrivals, together with many of the Polish and Romanian immigrants, wanted, Israel to become a ‘decent’ little nineteenth-century France. (Peace 13)

Similarly, Marc H. Ellis, an American author, liberation theologian, and former University Professor of Jewish Studies, in his O, Jerusalem! : The Contested Future of the Jewish Covenant, records the changes that has come up in Jewish culture. He declares that, “The National-Israeli culture is a culture of disruption” (110).

Culture can be defined as ways of life: including arts, beliefs, and institutions of a population that are passed down from generation to generation. In highlighting the culture of Jews, their language, religion, and social habits become the salient features to be analyzed. The culture of Jewish society includes institutions like family and marriage. Traditionally, there are powerful social taboos against intermarriage in Jewish tradition, and it is illegal for a Jew to marry a non-Jew. Even within the Jewish community, it is unusual for a very observant Jew to marry someone secular.

Divorce is legal, but orthodox Jewish laws are applied to perform the divorce act. The most common family unit consists of a nuclear family. In traditional Jewish families, grandparents are sometimes included within the nuclear family structure.

Julie Hanlon Rubio, an Associate Professor of Christian Ethics at St. Louis University, in A Christian Theology of Marriage and Family, states that, “… family is a primary place where good life can be lived. …in Jewish culture the family is directly tied to the faith. The Jews as people have a covenant with God, and each Jew becomes a part of the covenant in and through the family” (53). Oz, in his interview
with the researcher and her supervisor, has acknowledged that, “My novels are primarily about families. If I have to say in one word, what all my work is about I will say families. If you give me two words, I would say unhappy families” (Interview).

Almost all of Oz’ novels revolve around the families and as he declares they are unhappy families. In Oz’ works the disharmony in families is caused due to space where they live or belong. In view to Oz’ opinion, the Israeli Palestinian partition issues is referred to as the dispute over real estate, which becomes the ultimate reason for the personal struggles within the Jewish family unit. Family, as the chief institution of a society is built upon devotion. The devotion to the members within and outside the family, to the religion they believe in, to the culture they are bound to and to the space where they live, are vital to any individual who chooses to have peace within oneself and with the neighbours. With regard to Jews, without doubt, the devotion to their physical space is intense. Yet their devotion is constantly shattered due to the detachment to the space because of the political, religious and special chaos and confusions. When the individual is left to face bloodshed, war and uncertainties in every part of his life, his emotions are shattered resulting insecurity in every part his life. The insecurity that has been created owing to the spatio – political reasons, eventually results in the family disharmony. As Oz sets his writings in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, the themes of his stories are based upon the geographical space, where they belong.

Oz’ Michael, spins around the couple Michael and Hannah. A close reading of the text reveals the fact that there are no personal differences between Michael and Hannah to make their life an unhappy one. The family that has been built on the love for one another has ended a discord. Hannah is totally unsatisfied with the place Jerusalem. The relationship between Hannah and Michael happens to be a
metaphorical representation of the relationship of a Jew with the land. The family of Hannah and Michael has been disintegrating during the course of the story. Oz symbolically presents the love – hate relationship of a Jew and Jerusalem in the light of Hannah and Michael. Even the changing seasons parallel Hannah’s state of mind, with much of her story taking place in the autumn. Hannah, in her frustration, tells, “There is a sameness in the days and a sameness in me. There is something which is not the same. I do not know its name” (Michael 224). Hannah’s possessive nature towards Michael is intense and it is surprising to see her alienate herself from Michael. She confronts to her own self that, “I [Hannah] loved him [Michael] more than I have ever loved any one else in the world” (Michael 213).

On the other hand, during a holiday visit by the sea side, Hannah and Michel seem to enjoy the outing. All of a sudden, when Michael could not see Hannah, he has got frightened. In such a terrifying situation, Hannah articulates, “He didn’t recognize me, he mumbled, I was unfamiliar again, and he didn’t like me. I was glad I was unfamiliar. I didn’t want him to like me” (Michael 239). This kind of love – hate relationship that Hannah has for Michael is very much similar to the Jewish bond to the space, Jerusalem.

Similarly, Night, is a story concerned primarily with the relationship of two characters, Theo and Noa. As the plot moves, Theo’s temperament is destined to conflict with Noa’s inchoate desire for self-definition. The conflicting moods and viewpoints of their different places in life lead to the toughness in their relationship. The decline of Noa’s marriage corresponds to her topographical transition from Jerusalem to Tel Aviv, which parallels the historical development of Israel from a settlement of idealists into a fragmented bourgeois society.
Woman, is inclined toward Yoel Ravid, former Israeli espionage agent, who attempts to confront the unresolved issues of his marriage. The novel begins with an agent; Arik Krantz helps Yoel to rent a house at Ramat Lotan where peace and quietness is guaranteed by the neighbour. As the novel proceeds, Yoel seems to be emotionally disturbed. Yoel happens to see, “An overturned truck, lying with its wheels still spinning by the roadside at the beginning of the winding ascent to Jerusalem, …he still felt the nagging worry that there was some discrepancy, some implausibility, some irregularity. What it was, he could not tell” (Woman 21). Towards the end of the novel, Krantz again helps Yoel to sell the two apartments in Jerusalem and buy that same house in Ramat Lotan. The geographical space, Jerusalem, seems to keep nagging him and brings back his painful and disturbing past. Thus, Oz presents Yoel as a representative of a Jew’s anguished search for meaning in a space which is a metaphoric representation of a confused, treacherous world. Yair Mazor, Professor and academic speaker, in his Somber Lust: The Art of Amos Oz, states, “Yoel’s departure from Jerusalem and his installation in Tel Aviv – a move epitomized by the sale of he Jerusalem apartments and the rental of the house in the Tel Aviv suburb of Ramat Lotan- mark his first step toward divesting himself of the constricting armor of the dour secret agent and opening himself up to a more positive, life-enhancing existence” (97). In his way, Yoel’s shifting of his house show a certain irenic trend, a more diplomatic, appeasing feel, a small step to have a better emotional stability.

Fima, as well, is in total disappointment about Jerusalem. At the beginning of a winter day, he could see no sign of life outside his window. As he climbs up the stairs reading the headlines in the daily, he has concluded saying to himself, “The country has fallen into the hands of a bunch of lunatics, who went on and on about
Hitler and the Holocaust and always rushed to stamp out any glimmer of peace, seeing it as a Nazi poly aimed at their destruction” (Fima 10). Fima has constantly overcome by the dominant feel that he is supposed to be in some place other than Jerusalem. His reflection about his own self reveals to him that his inability to succeed in his personal and professional life is due to the space where he lives. Over and over again he thinks that, “We [Jews] held on in Jerusalem as long as we could, against incomparably superior odds and stronger forces. We did not go under peacefully. And even if we were overcome in the end, we still have the advantage of Pascal’s ‘thinking reed’” (Fima 254).

*Tale, Oz*’ autobiography, reveals the painful experiences of Oz’ mother who killed herself. The pages of the text unfold the experiences of an unhappy family where Oz is very much a part of it. The atrocities of the enemies on the land, the blood shed, the death and the cruelties that Jews witnesses in Jerusalem leave them a wounded psyche and give them a detached feel for the land which they longed to come back. Oz records one such historical incident which has the worst impact on his mother’s life. He documents Israel in the era of World War II between 1943 and 1944. He records:

…Germans, Lithunians and Ukrainians, armed submarine guns, had marched the whole city… the Germans opened fire and slaughtered on the edge pits, in two days, some twenty-five thousand souls [Roughly the population of Arad]. Almost all my mother’s classmates perished. Together with their parents, and all of their neighbours, acquaintances, …Not long afterwards, in 1948, when the Arab Legion was shelling Jerusalem, another friend of my mother …was also killed, by a direct hit from a shell. ... Perhaps something of the childhood promise was
already infected by a kind of poisonous, romantic crust that associated the muses with death? ... Something my mother, when life failed to fulfill any of he promises of her youth, envisage death as an exciting but also protective, soothing lover, a last, artistic lover, who would finally heal the wounds of her lonely heart. (Tale 208-9)

The psychological trauma that has been caused due to such experiences, has left Oz’ mother to have a disturbed self and has ultimately resulted in a restless state of living. She at the age of thirty two has decided to end her life, due to her acute psychological depression.

The consequences of living in Jerusalem has thus resulted a wounded psyche in every Jew and ultimately the families have ended up with disharmony due to the individuals who create such families. Esther Fuchs, Professor of Public Affairs and Political Science at Columbia University’s School of International and Public Affairs, in her Israel Mythogynies: Women in Contemporary Hebrew Fiction, by deals the thematic correspondence between the country’s historical and topographical representation and the heroine’s biography. She states, “The deterioration of the heroine’s marriage corresponds to her topographical transition from Jerusalem to Tel Aviv, which parallels the historical development of Israel from a settlement of idealists into a fragmented bourgeois society” (118). Evidently, the Promised Land which Jews aspired to live in, during their long years of exile, though fulfilled, has given them the most unpleasant experiences and has ended up their lives in utter despair. The influence of the physical space and time has a greater impact on the personal, political, religious and social life of every Jew, in Jerusalem and around the world.
Furthermore, every Jewish individual has the responsibility to perform some of the traditional religious observances. Sabbath and festivals are of particular importance in the life of Jews. The food and celebrations gain vital importance in the culture of Jewish community. The practicing of religious rituals is a part of the social and cultural norms of Jewish community. Claudia Roden, a cookbook writer and cultural anthropologist, in *The Book of Jewish Food: An Odyssey from Samarkand and Vilna to the Present Day*, brings out the importance of the Sabbath and festivals and food that is prepared for the celebration:

In the old days, cooking revolved around the Sabbath and festivals. A characteristic of traditional Jewish life was the contrast between the sobriety of weekday food and the opulence of Sabbath and holiday food. According to Biblical prescription, the Sabbath should be a day of joy and beauty, when the best possible food must be prepared. This is also set out in the Talmud, by rabbinical decree. The pattern was to eat very meager cheap food all the week, but come to Sabbath the choicest foods were on the table. (n.p.)

Pinchas Stolper, an Orthodox rabbi, writer, and has been a spokesman for Orthodoxy through his writings and books popularizing Orthodox Judaism, in his *Living Beyond Time: The Mystery and Meaning of the Jewish Festivals* tells, “The holidays are G-d’s great gift to the Jewish people. This experience enables us to transform our lives by attaching ourselves to G-d’s goals for each individual Jew and for all humanity” (9). All the festivals and celebrations of Jews keep the tradition alive and create a sense of oneness and belonging with the community. All the festivals and practices remind the Jewish believers of important historical events.
Apart from Sabbath, Passover, Shavuot, and Sukkot, are the three major pilgrimage festivals that are the most important Jewish holidays. Passover commemorates the Exodus, the liberation of the Hebrews from slavery in Egypt in the time of Moses. Shavuot commemorates the anniversary of the day God gave the Torah to the entire nation of Israel assembled at Mount Sinai. Sukkot, which is also known as the Festival of Booths, is a Jewish harvest holiday. Jewish festivals are usually not solitary affairs. Stephen M. Wylen in *Settings of Silver: An Introduction to Judaism*, brings out the ultimate aim of Jewish festivals. He writes:

The rabbis taught that the difference between gluttony and festive rejoicing is that the joy of a festival must be shared with those who cannot afford it. Charitable gifts to provide a festival meal for the poor are an essential part of festival celebration. … The law presumes that sorrow is not displaced by Shabbat, while on a festival all sorrows are forgotten in the joy of God’s happy day. (155)

Evidently, language, religion, family and festivals contribute much to the uniqueness of Jewish culture. Oz, through his writings, asserts the uniqueness of Jewish cultures. Hence, Oz grounds his characters in Jerusalem and grants them an experience of the Jewish landscape. His works affirm the fact that the landscape of Jerusalem provides an experience, which is the representation of Jewish life. Yet, the uniqueness has never given them the liberty to enjoy the place where they live. The painful and hurting experiences of Jews in diaspora are believed to end when Jerusalem has been declared as the State of Israel. Their dreams are crushed, when they continue to suffer in their Promised Land. In *Tale*, Oz reveals the threatening life condition of a Jew in the land of Jerusalem. He records:
In Jerusalem people always walked rather like mourners at a funeral, or late comers to a concert. First they put down the tip of their shoe and tested the ground. Then, once they have lowered their foot they were in a no hurry to move it: we have waited two thousand years to gain a foothold in Jerusalem, and we are unwilling to give it up. If we picked up on foot someone else might come along and snatch our little strip of land. On the other hand, once you have lifted your foot, do not be in a hurry to put it down again: who can tell what menacing nest of vipers you might step on. For thousands of years we have paid with our blood for our impetuousness, time and time again we are fallen into the hands of our enemies because we put our feet down without looking where we were putting them. That, more or less, was the way people walked in Jerusalem. *(Tale 6)*

In stating so, Oz establishes the fact that the space and people have not been a separate entity but a unified one. Jerusalem thus earmarks the facilities accorded to its inmates, pinpoints its ambience and feeling, loftiness and territorial attributes by which Jews have been characterized or rather familiarized. One is made to see the participants of a culturally patterned community, constantly realizing the cultural categories as segmented and enacted by a physical environment.

Oz generates an appeal pronounced by the landscape, tragically touched with uncertainty and insecurity. He makes Jerusalem symbolize the human situations within it. Consequently, the reader’s interest is kept alive in the landscape. It is not an invention when Oz writes about his place and people, but it is a record on the facts of Jewish life in Jerusalem and in their diasporas. In order to give a psychological depth to the predicament of a wandering race, Oz employs quite a lot of cultural contexts. In
Fima, Oz presents the discontented and meaningless existence of any Jew who lives within the walls of Jerusalem by representing the protagonist Fima:

Will, longing, memories, carnal desires, curiosity, passion, gladness, generosity – everything gradually faded. As the wind died in the mountains, so the spirit too expired. Indeed, even pain decreased somewhat with the passage of the years, but then, together with pain, other signs of life also declined… so many primal things that we once had, but have lost. Things never to return. Or, worse, they will return rarely, glimmering in the distance, while the original excitement will have vanished forever. And everything is dimmed and dissolved. Life itself is gradually growing dusty and grubby. (Fima 201)

Oz’ conviction is that a landscape is always defined or qualified by the conditions of the people who dwell there. The spirit of the locality is thus identified by its associations that qualify the people. Ilias, an Associate Professor and coordinator of the Gulf Studies programme, in Space, Memory and Jewish Identity, establishes the idea that, “…in all stages of history Jews had possessed all the attributes of nationhood; a common history, a commonly shared memory of the land, and a common language” (66-67).

Nevertheless, some mainstream gentiles have remarked that Jews do not have a culture. Oz explicates the fear that every Jew has undergone because of such remarks by the gentiles who lived around Jews. In his Tale, Oz affirms the fact that:

The fear in every Jewish home, the fear we never talked about, but that we were unintentionally injected with, like a poison, drop by drop, was the chilling fear that perhaps we really were not clean enough, that we really were too noisy and pushy, too clever and money-grubbing.
Perhaps we didn’t have proper manners. There was a terror that we might, Heaven forbid, make a bad impression on the gentiles, and then they would be angry and do things to us too dreadful to think about.

(Tale 183)

Jews have established and have safeguarded their tradition and culture in every way. Ilias, in *Space, Memory and Jewish Identity*, makes a mention on the cultural identity of Jews, who have been scattered around the world for so many centuries together. He says, “Scattered across the world, nearly two millennium, the Jewish communities continued to exist, united by certain common elements of religion, belief in the oneness of god and above all the promise of return to the homeland. The place, of course, was the rallying point in the history of Jewish people” (35). Jews carried the cultural residue even when they were forced to scatter around the world. Ilias firmly declares that, “Throughout the diaspora there had been a dichotomy of the living places and the ideal place…, for recognizing their life. Ideal and sentimental binding to that distant place, kept the Jewish life alive in spite of the diasporic realities” (35).

In such a diasporic situation, an intertwined culture was beginning to spring forth. Yet, Jews have stood firm to have their cultural exceptionality undiluted even though the gentiles have corroded the Jews’ self dignity. In Oz’ Tale, he brings to light that a Jew is compelled to remain a Jew in his manners, behaviours and attitudes. Oz establishes the fact that:

A thousand times it was hammered into the head of every Jewish child that we must behave nicely and politely with them even when they were rude or drunk, that whatever else we did we must not provoke the gentiles or argue with them or haggle with them, we must not irritate them, or hold our heads up, and we must only speak to them quietly,
with a smile, so they shouldn’t say we were noisy, … In short, we had to try very hard to make a good impression, an impression that no child must mar, because even a single child with dirty hair who spread lice could damage his reputation of the entire Jewish people. (Tale 183-84)

Jews, thus, have not lost their sovereignty to live life the way they wish to live. Instead, they have always been in a compulsion to prove the world that they are cultured and well-bred. The constant fear and anxiety for the external political powers and the internal struggle and longing to live life in their Promised Land have putrefied their entire existence on earth for many years.

Oz’ fiction becomes the storehouse, where one could obtain materials of the existing Jewish culture. All of Oz’ characters are so conscious in holding on to their human dignity. They are well mannered and educated, no matter whether they live in diaspora or in their home land. When the Jews get back to their Land of Promise, the life in Jerusalem has turned out to be different from what they have long aspired for. The socio-political discord that prevailed in Jerusalem has become a great big threat for Jews in their own locality.

As locale, Jerusalem affects the essential traits of community life. It becomes a place where people love, live, eat, fight, look for jobs, bring up children and make friends. Jerusalem becomes a physical space, which defines a community of educated lots. Though there is no scope for aspirations, they exist in long-lasting sentimental attachment towards the locale that they are promised with. Oz brings out the condition of Jews before their ingathering to Jerusalem in Tale. Oz reveals the uncertainty that, “Nobody imagined what was really in store, but already in the twenties almost everyone knew deep down that there was no future for the Jews either with Stalin or in Poland or anywhere in eastern Europe, and so the pull of Palestine become stronger
and stronger” (Tale 185). But, in their return to the Land that they have dreamed for, has not turned out to be the way they expected it to be. War, bloodshed, and atrocities caused due to the political turmoil and religious instability have made their life in Jerusalem unpleasant. Even in such a situation, Jews are firm enough to hold on to their Land.

Even in such chaotic and unpleasant state, the Jerusalemite Jews hold on to the space, since it is only the space that creates an ethnic, religious and social identity in the world for them. Jerusalemite Jews have never preferred to be ruled by any other powers of the world. Though Jews are stereotyped to be wanderers, they no more claim themselves to be so since they own a land of their own. The position of the Jews everywhere was almost similar, everywhere and nowhere at home, everywhere and nowhere powerful. Paul Johnson, in A History of Jews, declares that, “The Jews in diaspora looked upon Jerusalem as their metropolis, where they treated current place of residence, as a mere place of their exile” (85-86).

Oz, in his works creates characters who choose to live in Jerusalem. Though the characters experience bitterness and restlessness in Jerusalem and deliberately feel the need to be out of Jerusalem, they do not go anywhere. In Night, when Noa affirms that, her husband, Theo has lost interest in new things long ago and she accepts the fact that, “Such small town. And it’s all my fault we’re here. This is the place I chose, and Theo gave in and agreed” (Night 31). For, everything that happens in the life of Jews, is closely knit with the place. The joy or sorrow in a Jew’s life is being accepted for the sake of the place, Jerusalem.

In Woman, Yoel returns home, resigning his professional carrier, after his wife’s accidental death. His life has nothing to offer him. Yoel is in such a state that, “Because the days and nights were empty and vacant. Yoel fell into the habit of
watching television almost every evening until the programs ended at midnight” (Woman 34). The monotony that prevails in the Land is reflected in the life of the fictional characters of Oz and also among Jews in Jerusalem. They own the Land which has been given for them after many years of exile and wandering. The people of no land and from nowhere have a place to claim as their own with the establishment of Jerusalem. Therefore, Jews do not choose to leave the place, instead, they find a way to cope with the existing condition of the land.

A demand for equal rights for Jews came up in diaspora and many nations respond positively to the demands. Jewish uniqueness and orthodoxy held out a little attraction. Ilias, in Space, Memory and Jewish Identity affirms the opinion that:

Enlightenment brought about a new geography too; a switch over in the concept of space. The space upon which they capitalized was certainly a social one that of renaissance, in place of a religiously defined messianic one. There sprang up a new concept “mission of Israel”, which provided a ray of hope for a diaspora community. (41)

Jerusalem, both according to the biblical records and the present day political records, belongs to Jews. In this regard, they establish a culture and landscape for Jews themselves. With a greater conviction and vision, the Jewish state has been established. The Proclamation of Independence, signed by the leaders like David Ben – Gurian, Daniel Auster, Mordechai Bentor on 14th May, 1948, led to the formation of Israel. The Declaration of Independence declared that the State of Israel will promote the development of the country for the benefit of all inhabitants, will uphold social and political equality without discrimination of race, creed or sex. Ultimately, after all painful experiences of wanderings, anti-semitism and Holocaust, Jews established a State for their own.
While describing Jerusalem, Oz does justice in bringing out the physical beauty of Jerusalem; still the psychological moods of the characters bring out the dry and emptiness that prevail in the country. Oz presents Jerusalem in different ways through the understanding of different characters. In Hill, Uriel tells:

The islands in the tattered clouds, the mysterious continents that Father had told him about dryly and Mother with tears of longing…father used to say that the beautiful lands had vomited us up here in blind hatred, and that therefore we would build ourselves a land a thousand times as beautiful here. But Mother would call the land a backyard, and say that there would never be a river, a cathedral, or a forest here. Uncle Mitya the lodger used to chuckle through his rotten teeth and utter broken phrases about birth pangs, death throes, Jerusalem killing its prophets, God’s curse on ruined Babylon. (Hill 15)

People can neither hope for a betterment nor give up their faith about their life in Jerusalem. Oz brings in a comparison about the life of people in Jerusalem as if it is, “like a stupid party. A little light, a little music, a little dancing, and then darkness” (Tale 56). He brings out the impermanence that prevails in his land.

The situations and background of Jerusalem presented in Oz’ stories are not fictional exaggeration of Oz, but it is the reality reflected through the characters and situations. The fictional protagonists of Oz represent the land, politics and society in which they survive. In Fima, the eponymous hero, Fima has a, “…unique combination of wit and absent-mindedness, of melancholy and enthusiasm, of sensitivity and helplessness, of profoundness and buffoonery. He simply doesn’t think about tomorrow. And he’s not getting any younger. He must be having an argument with himself and presumably he’s winning it (Fima 27). The emotional stability of
Oz’ characters are found to be the replica of the momentary space in which they live. Thereby, the space and time as presented by Oz in every work and through every character, brings out the tragic reality in Jerusalem. The language, religion and culture are all shattered due to the political turmoil. The partition of the land into Israel and Palestine becomes one main reason for the hatred to grow strong in the minds of Jews and Arabs.

Consequently, an extensive analysis of Jewish religion and culture brings in a compulsory need for a detailed outlook on the political state of Jerusalem. Robert Alter, in his introduction to The Amos Oz Reader states, “The landscape of Oz’s fiction is an Israeli landscape, and thus, inevitably, it is pregnant with the elements of political tension that he confronts so lucidly in his political journalism” (xii). Oz firmly believes that the clash that goes on between Palestinian Arabs and Israeli Jews is between right and right. In his essay, “Has Israel Altered Its Visions?” Oz establishes the fact about the ultimate need of Jews who claim the Land of Israel to be their own. Oz declares that, “We came to this country to build it and to be rebuilt by it. They put strong emphasis on the need to change human nature, to revolutionize the ‘Jewish psyche’, to heal their own tormented souls” (Peace 8).

The main problem that creates the political unrest is the partition of the Jewish land. After the World War II, many Jews have come back to the land of Israel. As Judaism is based on the religious and cultural traditions, customs, attitudes and way of life of Jews, Zionism is a movement that comes up in the late nineteenth century in response to growing anti-semitism and sought to re-establish a Jewish homeland. The modern political movement is dedicated to the reconstruction of a Jewish homeland in Eretz Israel. Zionism is of different types and their ideologies differ from one another in their approaches. Political Zionism, Practical Zionism, Synthetic Zionism, Labor
Zionism, Revisionist Zionism, Cultural Zionism, Revolutionary Zionism and Religious Zionism are a few to list out. David Chana, an Yiddish Literary Historian, in his *Modernism and Zionism*, brings out Martin Buber’s declaration on the purpose of Zionism:

As soon as the Jewish state was established, Bubur declared that a moral ‘boundary line’ was necessary. The state, he believed, was not an end in itself, and was justified only if it produced a ‘Hebrew humanism’, that is to say, a genuine rebirth, the renewal of living tradition, as little injustice as possible and a striving towards wholeness and the categorical imperative. This was the ‘purpose’, the aim of the original Zionist vision. (52)

Oz being a Labor Zionist, reflects the political turmoil that prevails in his land. More than religious and cultural aspects, Oz’ works can be considered a political reflection and his characters speak more politics. He has always been the cultural voice of two-state solution. Reviewing his works would reveal the evident political reflections that have influenced his writings in both fictional and prose works.

His autobiography, *Tale*, is his quest to understand his mother’s life and death against the background of the establishment of Israel. *Michael* is set in 1950s Jerusalem where the political implications are not too hard to unravel. *A Panther in the Basement* is a novel about a twelve-year-old boy which is set during the British-Zionist conflict. *Perfect Peace* is a novel set in Israel, just before the Six-Day War. Yoel in *Woman* is an Israeli secret service agent looks back at his life which includes his years of service to the state. *How to Cure a Fanatic* analyses the historical roots of violence and confronts truths about the extremism nurtured throughout the society. *Evil Counsel* recreates the twilight world of Jerusalem during the fading days of the
British Mandate. *Fima* is about a receptionist at a gynecology clinic spends his hours fantasizing about solving the nation’s problems. *Peace* is an important testimony about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

In this regard Oz is found confined more to political activism rather than story telling. Oz in his essay, “The Real Cause for My Grandmother’s Death”, included in *Peace*, brings out the commonality between historian and novelist. He says:

So, what the historian and the novelist do have in common is that they both use the criterion of relevance, they are both selective with their facts, although in different ways; both of them supply us with an interpretation, not a full recording. They both select and emphasize; each chooses his or her own focus. (*Peace* 25)

In this way, Oz presents the political background of Jerusalem either metaphorically or symbolically. His characters and settings are the tools to reveal the living condition amidst the chaotic world of reality. He also states that:

What is transitory in Jerusalem, and what is permanent. Why are the colors different here, the autumn colors and the evening colors. And on another level: What are the intentions of the British. Is there going to be a political vacuum. What are the real limits of our power, and how much is simply delusion and arrogance…. What is going to happen. What lies in store for us…. Doubts and hesitations. Pathetic preparations. Worries. (*Peace* 198)

Jerusalemites have always been aware of the reality of what exactly Palestinians want from them. They have also been conscious of the fact that in need of peace, if Jews stop fighting Palestinians would take the upper hand to destroy them completely to take away the land and their lives. Fima’s opinion about the Arabs reveals the existing
mindset of the Arabs. He hits back stating, “I’m not worried about the Arabs. I’ve explained to you thousand times. I’m worried about us. … peace be upon Israel and upon Ishmael …. It’s Jerusalem they want … To slit our throats a little bit, that’s all they want. To wipe us out” (Fima 72).

The constant political turmoil that prevails between Arabs and Jews, and the hatred and wound constantly gets intensified due to various reasons which could not be resolved by any means. The hatred that is nurtured in the minds of people is presented by Oz, in Fima, through a conversation between the protagonist and his driver:

Fima: “We’ve got to make peace,”-“we can’t go on like this. Don’t you think we ought to make the effort and start talking to them? What’s so terrible about talking? You don’t get killed by talking…”

Driver: “We ought to kill them when they are young. Not permit them to raise their heads. Let them curse the day they were crazy enough to start with us”

Fima: So tell me how long do you think we should go on murdering each other?

Driver: Another hundred years if necessary. That’s how long it was in Bible time. There’s no such thing as peace between Jews and goyim. Either they are on the top of us and we are underneath, or they’re underneath and we’re sitting on top of them. May be when the Messiah comes he’ll show them their rightful place. (Fima 154)

In this regard, no solution could be made for the political claims of Palestinians and so the plight of Jerusalem would remain the same even after many years from now. In Hill, Oz reveals the gloomy atmosphere in Jerusalem when he tells, “The whole city is
under the sway of a painful longing... a woman grumbling, a shutter squeaking, a lovesick cat screeching among the garbage cans in a backyard. And a very distant bell” (*Hill 6*). This sort of depressing ambiance in the city is what makes the people to leave Jerusalem and find their inhabitants some where less extreme. “They believed almost without exception that the hard times would soon be over, the Hebrew state would be set up, and everything would change for the better. Surely they had completed in full their term of suffering” (*Hill 64*).

With sparkling beauty and charm, and with dignified educated people, Jerusalemites still struggle hard for the peaceful existence. The political solutions made by the leaders do not seem to satisfy the demands of Arabs which results in the rejection of peaceful co-existence. In many of Oz’ works, references are made quite often on the wars like Six Days War, Korean War, Lebanon War, War of Independence and many others that took place in Jerusalem. Oz’ fiction and writings reveal the historical past as well as the existing socio-political situations in Jerusalem. Oz’ writings clearly highlights the society that has become a victim to the blood shed and chaos with all existing political unrests.

In all confusions, the Arabs reject peace with Israelis. Oz, in his “Whose Holy Land? Divided Israel in Palestine”, included in *Peace*, brings forth the stand adopted by the Arabs. He reiterates, “Only the Three Noes adopted by the Arab heads of state at the Khartoum summit – No peace with Israel, No recognition of Israel, and No negotiations with Israel” (*Peace79*). Thus, all these reasons lead to further blood shed and combats.

Jews have always had their wars to fight hard to defend their rights. Undoubtedly, Jews remained to be wanderers, scapegoats and schlemiels for thousands of years. Yet, they have been the survivors through trials and tribulations.
They have had their stamina to hold on to atrocities of the dictators and rulers. Though they have become less in number due to Holocaust, anti-semitism, crusades and genocides, their faith that they would someday inherit a land of their own has never been shattered. Throughout the history, Jews have been the most unwanted people. On the contrary, Jerusalem has been the most wanted place for many rulers around the world, but the plight of Jerusalem has never been an enviable one.

Shlomo Slonim who has personally experienced the Arab massacre of Jews in Chevron, in his *Jerusalem in America’s Foreign Policy, 1947-1997*, states that, “As time wore on, and with supplies dwindling, the plight of the Jewish population became more and more desperate. Jerusalem was under virtual siege, and the aim of the Arab bands was to starve its Jewish population into subjection” (74). Hence, it seems to be a matter of fact that Jews are going to live life amidst the chaos and confusions that constantly prevail in the Promised Land. Though there cannot be any concrete solutions made, the life of Jews in Jerusalem has somehow been compelled to be a life of compromises. Their life is built upon their hope in the promises that God has given them in the ages past. The unresolved problems in Jerusalem are indeed due to the religion and politics in the Middle East. M.A. Muqtedar Khan, in his *Jihad for Jerusalem: Identity and Strategy in International Relations*, affirms that, “It is Jerusalem that the temporal, the spiritual, the political, the cultural, and the territorial converge. …there can be no political solution for Jerusalem without a religious one” (115). This confused state of existence that has been continuing for centuries together remains to be the same even in the 21st century.

Oz, as a member of Peace Now Movement, suggests his opinion in his “Clearing the Minefields of the Heart”, included in *Peace*. 
Even a long and bitter conflict can sometimes create a deep and secret kind of intimacy between enemies. This intimacy may from now on be used for reconstruction and rehabilitation. There is, of course, a long way to go yet, a way full of fury and disappointments, but one can see at last the first hesitant lights of hope. … Let us and Palestinians give strength to these lights, let us cherish them and defend them…. For we shall not for ever live by the sword. And death shall have no more domination. (Peace 128)

Jerusalem which is measured as a place of unimaginable beauty and perfection still remains with the hope that peace will be established in the land. Jews, in Jerusalem and around the world, aspire for a land without chaos and confusion, war, and bloodshed, fear and anxiety, and from all territorial problems based on religion. In every work of Oz, the dazzling beauty of his land and the hope for betterment could always be traced.

The long history of the land and the crisis that the people undergo due to the Land has gained the focus in this chapter. Oz, as a story teller, political writer and philosopher, has effectively fixed time and space as an existential construct in all his writings. Everyone in Jerusalem is in need to hold on to hope against every hopelessness. Oz has also established the possibility of peace in Jerusalem with certain amount of compromises from both the ends. The detailed analysis of Jewish religion, culture and politics has contributed to understand the place and people. David A. Harris, who writes and teaches about police behaviour and regulation, law enforcement, and national security issues and law, in his work, In the Trenches: 2004-2005, quotes President John F. Kennedy who has offered his perspective on the meaning of Israel’s rebirth nearly 1,900 years after its last sovereign expression. He
states that, “Israel was not created in order to disappear – Israel will endure and flourish. It is the child of hope and home of the brave. It can neither be broken by adversity nor demoralized by success. It carries the shield of democracy and it honors the swords of freedom” (273).

Eventually, the literary analysis on the concepts of time and space in the works of Oz, discloses the fact that his works are chronotopic. The spatio-temporal relationship with the life of Jews is evidently significant. Neusner, in *Judaism the Basics*, while establishing the inter-relationship that lies between the space and the people, states,

‘Israel’ did not refer to a nation-state or to a nationality… When Zionism, or Jewish nationalism, reached its realization and the Jewish state came into being in 1948 in what Judaism known as the Land of Israel, calling the Jewish state ‘Israel’ or ‘the State of Israel’ created a second meaning for the category

‘Israel,’ a place people go to, a citizenship people adopt, a nation-state. (8)

With this definition, it is clear that the word “Israel” stands for both the people and the place. Wherever the Israelis have their residents, that place eventually becomes their nation Israel. The place gives the ethnic and religious identity for a Jewish individual. Jews are the people of the place and since every work of Oz is based upon the place and time and thus all his works are found to be chronotopic.

While reading Oz, though he seems to detach himself from the Jewish religion and place and attach himself more with the socio-political issues, he affirms what he feels for his land. In his preface, to *Peace*, he expresses his hold for his mother land. He asserts that, “Ultimately, these pages were written by an Israeli who fought for his country and who loves it, even during dark times when he was unable to like it. I have
never maintained that ‘right or wrong – I must stand up for my country’; I have often felt that my country will survive and prosper only if it does right” (*Peace* xii).

Francis A. Scheffer, an American Theologian and philosopher, in his *Genesis in Space and Time*, states that, “Space and time are like warp and woof. Their interwoven relationship is history” (15). The Jewish history is written based on the turbulent phase in Jerusalem and the civil war over the territories and possession by the Palestinians and the Jews. Hence, the chronotope of time and space preoccupy the creative process of the writers and Oz in his fiction internalizes the exterior conflicts and delineates the psychological maladies of the individuals as social.

The following chapter, “Dread and Anxiety: The Maze of Life”, with the existential ideologies as the background, attempts to analyze the fictional characters of Oz in detail. While doing so, the researcher aims at categorizing the individual characters based on the choices that they make for their living in Jerusalem, the most chaotic part of the world, and ventures to bring out the consequences of their choices. This analysis is made in order to present Jerusalem as the microcosmic depiction of the world and thereby, presenting Oz’ fictional Jewish individuals as the representatives of the human individuals in the muddled world.