



Marc Chagall, "Tribe of Levi," Hadassah-Hebrew University Medical Center, Jerusalem. Copyright by A.D.A.G.P., Paris, 1982.

Sketch by Marc Chagall for stained-glass window in Jerusalem depicting the priestly tribe of Levi. A dying Moses blessed the 12 tribes of Israel as they prepared to re-enter the Land of Canaan—sometime during the 13th century B.C. Then as now, security was a paramount consideration: Initial settlement was in the rugged eastern mountains, impervious to enemy chariots.

# Israel

"If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning." Zionist leaders, intent on regaining their ancient homeland in Palestine, cited that biblical injunction in rejecting Britain's offer (1903) to establish an "autonomous Jewish colony" in Uganda. Fixity of purpose paid off in the establishment of the new state in 1948. Yet today, 35 years later, Israeli society is divided as never before. Israel's economy is in disarray. Its Arab neighbors, Egypt aside, still harbor deep hatreds. No longer do the pioneer values of earlier days permeate national life—the proud austerity, the moral vision, the communal altruism. "Israeli society still treasures a Sleeping Beauty," the writer Amos Oz has noted. "Will the beauty wake?" Here historian Shlomo Avineri reflects on the nation's origins; political scientist Don Peretz surveys the current scene; and journalist Lawrence Meyer looks to the future.

## THE ROOTS OF ZIONISM

*by Shlomo Avineri*

On May 14, 1948, as a bagpiper skirled "The Minstrel Boy," the British High Commissioner of Palestine, Sir Alan Cunningham, left the Haifa dockside on a launch bound for the cruiser HMS *Euryalus*. The 26-year-old British Mandate over Palestine was due to end at midnight. On the same day, under white flags bearing a pale blue Star of David, David Ben-Gurion in Tel Aviv proclaimed "the establishment of the Jewish State in Palestine, to be called Israel." Those words marked the end of one chapter in Jewish history and the beginning of another.

With expiration of the British Mandate, Israel became the world's newest nation—but also a successor to one of civilization's most ancient polities. Three thousand years earlier, a Hebrew-speaking Israelite nation had inhabited the strip of hill and fertile plain along the southeast corner of the Mediterranean. A kingdom, with Jerusalem as its capital, arose around 1000 B.C. under David and Solomon. Though subjugated intermittently by invading Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks,

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and Romans, the Jewish people also knew epochs of independence and imperial glory, of literary creativity and moral fervor.

The disastrous Jewish rebellion against the Roman Empire beginning in 66 A.D. marked a turning point. The Roman response was brutal; its goal was to erase the identity of the Jews as a nation. Jerusalem was captured and razed by Titus, son of the Emperor Vespasian. The temple on Mount Moriah was burned, most of the Jewish population was exiled, and the name of the country was changed to *Palaestina* after the coastal nation (by then extinct) of the Philistines.

### Emancipation

Yet a distinct Jewish identity persisted in the Diaspora (Greek for "dispersion") despite the absence of a homeland. Jews reconstructed their lives around their families, their houses of learning and prayer, and the *kehilla*, the religious community. When Jews found themselves persecuted in any given country, they tended to move to another one. Over two millennia, the focus of Jewish life moved from the Mideast and the shores of the Mediterranean, which had been the original areas of Jewish dispersion, to Europe and later to America. By the mid-19th century, most of the world's 7.5 million Jews were concentrated in central and eastern Europe (especially Russia and Poland), the so-called Jewish Pale of Settlement.

While they continued in their prayers to hope for a return to Palestine, this hope was more passive than real, a yearning for otherworldly redemption. Jews might pray three times a day for the deliverance that would transform the world and transport them to Jerusalem, but they did not emigrate there; they could annually mourn the destruction of the Temple on *Tish'ah be-Av* and leave a brick over their door bare as a constant reminder of the desolation of Zion, but they did not move there. Even so, this link with the land of their forefathers, nebulous though it may have been, singled the Jews out from the communities in which they resided. It was because of this that Jews were considered by others—and considered themselves—not only a minority but a minority *in exile*.

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"Next year in Jerusalem." The Passover prayer was fulfilled for some when Britain's Sir Moses Montefiore purchased farmland near the ancient capital in 1856 to encourage Jewish resettlement.



From *The New Jerusalem: Planning and Politics* by Arthur Kitcher, published by Thames and Hudson, Ltd. and the MIT Press, © 1973 Thames and Hudson, London.

In the medieval world, which defined itself predominantly in religious terms, a special identity was not difficult to maintain. To be sure, until the French Revolution, Jews in most Christian societies were excluded from public life. They could not hold public office, were excluded from the feudal bond of fealty, and were relegated to the society's periphery. If they accepted their marginal and subordinate position, however, they could in most cases survive and practice their religion. Outbursts of religious fanaticism and persecution did shatter Jewish life from time to time in one place or another. Jews were persecuted under the Visigoths and Byzantines, massacred during the Crusades, expelled from England, France, and then, traumatically, from Spain, forcibly converted in Portugal and Persia alike, made to wear distinctive clothes and barred from holding public offices in Christian Italy and Muslim Morocco. But during 2,000 years of exile, the Jews always managed to find safe haven *somewhere*, even if the price of safety was inferior social status—being in, but not of, the local society.

The egalitarian ideas of the French Revolution and the Enlightenment were supposed to change these conditions—to allow absorption of the Jews as individuals into the body politic. "No man should be molested for his beliefs, including religious beliefs, provided that their manifestation does not disturb the public order established by law"—those words are contained in the *Declaration of the Rights of Man* promulgated by the French National Assembly in August 1789. As a result of what would

come to be called the "Emancipation," discriminatory legislation was gradually repealed, first in western European countries and later (and less consistently) in eastern Europe. Schools and professions were opened to Jewish applicants. Throughout Europe, the 19th century witnessed an unprecedented amelioration in the status and position of the Jewish people.

The results were dramatic. If around 1815 the Jews had had little impact on European society, by 1900 it would be inconceivable to write the history of any aspect of European culture—politics, diplomacy, and finance, the arts and philosophy, medicine and science, literature and music—without mentioning the contributions of massive numbers of people of Jewish origin. A corollary (and indeed a condition) of this change was the exodus of Jews from the hinterland, from the *shtetls* of the Pale of Settlement and rural districts like Hesse and Alsace, to Europe's great cities. Prior to 1815, few European capitals had any significant Jewish population. On the eve of World War I, Berlin and Vienna, Budapest and Warsaw, and, to a lesser degree, London, Paris, and Odessa were home to large numbers of Jews. It could be said that no other group benefited as much from the industrial revolution, and from the ideas of the Enlightenment, as the Jews.

### Nationalism and Identity

This was the new environment that produced Zionism, and that it should have done so is at first glance perplexing. Why did the quest for a national culture and for political sovereignty—and ultimately for a return to *Eretz Israel*—develop among the Jews precisely when European society seemed finally ready to shed its worst prejudices, to emancipate itself from overt religious bigotry, and to treat the Jews more or less as equals, as *citizens*?

The answer, ironically, is that the forces behind Emancipation gave rise to something else as well: Just as the ideas of the French Revolution were gaining acceptance, those same ideas encouraged the emergence of nationalism. New nationalisms were asserting themselves, and old nations, long dormant, were awakening. The emergence of modern Greece and its heroic struggle for independence against the Muslim Turks (1821–31) became a symbol for the new Age of Nations. The people of central and eastern Europe—Serbians, Germans, Italians, Poles, Czechs, Hungarians, Romanians—were rediscovering their roots, salvaging a national culture from half-forgotten memories and sometimes slim and disparate historical evidence. The pre-

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sumption that the West was united in Christendom, shattered first by the Lutheran Reformation, was now finally stripped of the remnants of its credibility.

The newly emancipated and secularized Jews coming out of the ghettos all over Europe now faced a problem. While their ancestors had been clearly distinct, as orthodox Jews, from the surrounding Christian (or Muslim) society, what were *they*, once they had been accepted by Christians as equals? Could they be both Jewish *and* Polish or German or Russian? Were the Jews merely Germans (or whatever) of the Jewish—or “Mosaic”—faith? If they lost their Jewish faith, could they be viewed simply as Germans or Poles? Or did their Jewish ancestry, and the fact that they had been estranged from their own religion, make them slightly different from their non-Jewish neighbors? When French children learned in school that their ancestors were Gauls, could a Jewish child truly identify with Vercingetorix, and would his schoolmates truly view him as a descendant of the ancient Gauls?

These were not merely philosophical questions. They intruded on the daily life of every Jew. Take, for example, the case of a Jewish parent living in one of the centers of Jewish life in eastern Europe, in Wilno, once part of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and, in the 19th century, part of the Russian Empire. Imagine this parent wishing to give his children a good, modern, “European” education, and hence unwilling to send them to the orthodox Jewish *heder* and *yeshiva*. To what school should he send them?

### Reviving a Language

The state school was, of course, Russian, inculcating in its students (in Russian) the values of Russian culture and heritage. But because most of the population in Wilno was Polish and was continually agitating for its political and cultural rights, there existed a Polish-language school as an alternative. The highly educated Baltic German minority in the region, proud of its own heritage, maintained a German-language school. And the newly awakened Lithuanian self-consciousness of the peasant population gave rise to the beginnings of a Lithuanian school system. So the Jewish parent hoping to burst out of his own “tribal” Jewish traditions and wishing to give his children a “general” education was really faced with the problem of choosing whether to give his children a Russian, Polish, German, or Lithuanian education.

No wonder then that he, and other Jewish parents in similar

## A CHRONOLOGY, 1882-1982

**1882-1903** First *aliyah*: 25,000 eastern European Jews emigrate to Palestine.

**1897** Theodore Herzl organizes first Zionist Congress in Basel, Switzerland.

Theodor Herzl  
(1860-1904)



**1904-14** Second *aliyah*: 40,000 eastern European Jews emigrate to Palestine.

**1909** First *kibbutz* (Deganya) established; Tel Aviv founded.

**1917** Great Britain, in Balfour Declaration, supports creation in Palestine of "National Home" for the Jews.

**1919-23** Third *aliyah*: 35,000 Jews emigrate to Palestine.

**1919** *Ha'aretz*, first Hebrew newspaper in Palestine, begins publication.

**1920** Founding of Histadrut (General Federation of Labor) and Haganah (Jewish defense unit).



Eliezer Ben-Yehuda  
(1858-1922)

**1923** League of Nations confirms British Mandate over Palestine.

**1924-28** Fourth *aliyah*: 67,000 Jews, mostly middle-class Poles, go to Palestine.

**1925** Hebrew University opens in Jerusalem.

**1929-39** Fifth *aliyah*: 250,000 Jews, one-quarter of them refugees from Nazi Germany, pour into Palestine.

**1932** *Jerusalem Post* founded.

**1936** Arab riots and strikes protest growing Jewish population.

**1938** Philosopher-theologian Martin Buber emigrates to Palestine.

**1939** Great Britain issues White Paper on Palestine, curbing Jewish immigration and land purchase.

**1941** First Nazi death camp (Chelmno) established in Poland; in Palestine, creation of Palmach, the permanently mobilized striking force of the Haganah.



From *The Auschwitz Album A Book Based Upon an Album Discovered by a Concentration Camp Survivor, Lili Meier*. Copyright © 1981 by Peter Hellman, Lili Meier, Beate Klarsfeld. Reprinted by permission of Random House, Inc.

*Jewish inmates at Auschwitz*

**1945** Germany surrenders; estimated Jewish death camp victims: 5,820,000.

**1946** Irgun, Jewish military underground, plants bomb in Jerusalem's King David Hotel, killing 100.

**1947** Arabs oppose UN plan to partition Palestine into Jewish and Arab states; discovery of Dead Sea scrolls.

**1948** State of Israel comes into existence (May 14); total Jewish population is 650,000; Arab neighbors invade new nation.

**1949** First Knesset (parliament) convenes, David Ben-Gurion is Prime Minister; armistice agreements signed on Rhodes, between Israel and Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria; Jerusalem divided.

**1951** Jewish migration to Israel since independence: 684,000.

David Ben-Gurion  
(1886-1973)



**1955** Arab terrorists (Fedayeen) step up attacks on Israeli settlements.

**1956** Suez Crisis: Egypt nationalizes canal and closes it to Israeli shipping; Israel invades Gaza and Sinai as French and British land at Port Said, then withdraw under U.S. pressure.

**1962** Adolf Eichmann, former operations officer in the Reich Security Head Office, hanged in Israel for war crimes.

**1964** Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) created at first Arab summit conference in Cairo, Egypt.

**1966** Total U.S. military aid to Israel since independence: \$47 million; poet Shmuel Yosef Agnon awarded Nobel Prize for Literature.



Golda Meir  
(1898-1978)

Wide World Photos  
(Associated Press).

**1967** Six Day War (June 6-11): Israel launches pre-emptive strike against Egypt, Syria, and Jordan, gaining control of the Sinai, Gaza, Golan Heights, and West Bank; Jerusalem reunited.

**1968** First Israeli settlement on occupied West Bank established at Kefar-Etzion.

**1969** Golda Meir succeeds Levi Eshkol as Prime Minister.

**1970** PLO, during "Black September," driven out of Jordan into southern Lebanon.

**1972** PLO terrorists kill 11 Israeli athletes at Olympic Games in Munich, West Germany. Total Israeli population: three million, of whom one-sixth are non-Jews.

**1973** Syria and Egypt attack Israel on

two fronts (Oct. 6); after initial reversals, Israelis threaten Damascus and push across Suez Canal; OPEC oil embargo begins.

**1974** Secretary of State Henry Kissinger's "shuttle diplomacy" yields disengagement agreements between Israel and Egypt, Syria; Yitzhak Rabin becomes Prime Minister. At Rabat, Arab leaders declare PLO sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.

**1976** Israeli commandos free 110 airline passengers held hostage by Palestinian terrorists at Entebbe Airport in Uganda; Syria occupies strife-torn Lebanon.

**1977** Likud coalition leader Menachem Begin becomes Prime Minister, ending dominance of Labor Party; Egyptian President Anwar Sadat visits Jerusalem.

**1978** Israel invades southern Lebanon to root out Palestinian guerrillas; UN buffer zone created. At Camp David with President Jimmy Carter (Sept. 5-17), President Anwar Sadat and Prime Minister Begin agree to conclude peace treaty within three months; Sadat and Begin awarded Nobel Prize.

**1979** Knesset approves Israel-Egypt peace treaty; Israeli inflation rate: 111.4 percent.

**1980** Israel begins phased withdrawal from Sinai; second invasion of Lebanon provoked by renewed terrorist attacks.

**1981** Israeli air force destroys \$275 million Iraqi nuclear reactor near Baghdad; Knesset votes annexation of Golan Heights.

**1982** Israel again invades Lebanon, routing Palestinians and Syrians; siege of Beirut ensues, resulting in evacuation of PLO supervised by Italian, French, and American troops; massacre of civilians by Christian Phalangists.



Wide World Photos (Associated Press).

Camp David agreements, September 17, 1978



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situations all over central and eastern Europe, began to think that perhaps the way out of the dilemma should be to give their children a modern *Jewish* education. Thus, we see secular Jewish schools established in the 19th century, modeled on the German gymnasium, but teaching Jewish history and Hebrew literature.

The revival of national languages and vernaculars in central and eastern Europe contributed to a Hebrew linguistic renaissance in the 19th century. Down through the ages, Hebrew had continued to function as a kind of "Jewish Latin"—a common language of prayer, theological writing, and learned discourse. Now attempts were being made to write stories and poems and feuilletons in Hebrew—a development that was anathema to some rabbis, who saw in it a desecration of the Holy Tongue. Romantic novels set in biblical times, in which kings commanded and shepherds sang in the language of the prophets, began to appear. The Hebrew Haskala or Enlightenment was born, and the most famous of its writers was Lithuanian-born Abraham Mapu (1808–67), whose two novels, *Ahavat Zion* ("The Love of Zion") and *Ashmat Shomron* ("The Guilt of Samaria"), became the most popular Hebrew novels of the period.

### A Sense of History

Urbanization, education, and improved means of communication (the telegraph, the modern printing press, the railroad) gave impetus to the Hebrew language revival. So long as Europe's Jewish communities, separated by distance, were out of touch with one another, the need for a common language was not acutely felt. Conditions also varied greatly from one country to another; there was little sense that the Jewish people faced common problems. That all changed, however, as Jews began to travel, to publish, to congregate in cities. When attempts were made by Jewish modernizers, most of them secularized intellectuals, to found Jewish periodicals, they soon realized that, if they wished to reach a universal Jewish public, only Hebrew could transcend political frontiers and cultural barriers.

Historical research flourished as well. Between 1853 and 1876, a German-Jewish scholar, Heinrich Graetz, published his *Geschichte der Juden von den ältesten Zeiten bis auf die Gegenwart*, an 11-volume history of the Jewish people that was soon translated into many languages. Orthodox Judaism, like early Christianity, cared little for the precise recording of events: Revelation, not history, was what really mattered. But now, in the volumes of Graetz, modern educated Jews had before them,

for the first time, a body of scholarship about their own roots.

Whatever the achievements of the Haskala, and they were considerable, one Jewish scholar at the time, Eliezer Ben-Yehuda (1858–1922), complained of what he perceived to be inferiority in the quality of the Hebrew literature in eastern Europe. The reason for that, he argued, was that while a lot of people were *writing* in Hebrew, no one was really *speaking* it. (Could one imagine writing modern poetry in Latin?) A first-rate Hebrew literature, Ben-Yehuda argued, would be able to thrive only if Hebrew became a medium of daily intercourse rather than an intellectual *jeu d'esprit*.

### Returning to Zion

For obvious reasons, Jews living as a minority in non-Jewish societies would never be able to develop Hebrew as a language of daily life. Only in one place could a Hebrew-speaking population emerge—in Palestine. As Ben-Yehuda put it: "We will be able to revive the Hebrew tongue only in a country in which the number of Hebrew inhabitants exceeds the number of Gentiles. There, let us increase the number of Jews in our desolate land; let the remnants of our people return to the Land of their ancestors; *let us revive the nation and its tongue will be revived too.*"

True to his convictions, in 1881 Ben-Yehuda emigrated to Jerusalem. There he prepared the first modern dictionary of the Hebrew language and coined many new words. Until the work of Ben-Yehuda and his successors brought Hebrew up to date, the language had lacked such terms as *statistician*, *oxygen*, *artillery*, *traffic light*, *philatelist*, *cinema*, and thousands more. The absence of even common words greatly constrained the first generations of Hebrew writers. Commenting on the works of Russian-born Peretz Smolenskin (1842–85), a novelist-publicist who composed in Hebrew, Ben-Yehuda once observed: "Has any of the readers ever felt that in all of the circumstances of the different events that this very capable author brought into his stories, he never mentioned for example the simple common act of tickling?" In Hebrew, there was no word for it.

The first Zionist thinkers were troubled not only by the precariousness of Jewish life and by the contradictions inherent in Jewish existence in a modern, secularized world. They also deplored a further anomaly of Jewish life in the Diaspora—the skewed Jewish social structure. Most Jews in 19th- and 20th-century Europe could be found in various strata of the middle classes. There hardly existed a Jewish proletariat, and there was



Swindlers like the one at left (the 1885 drawing is from a Hebrew newspaper) profited from the first Jewish migration to Palestine. According to the paper, the man was "collecting money for the Jewish settlement 'the Seed of Israel' in Gaza. This settlement never existed."

virtually no Jewish peasantry. Modernizing Jewish life—*normalizing* it—would mean having more Jews involved in primary production, in agriculture, in industry. But how could such a transformation occur under European conditions? Obviously, it could not. A return to the land would be possible only if it went together with the Return to the Land—so argued members of the associations of Hovevei Zion ("Lovers of Zion") that sprang up all over eastern Europe during the 1880s and 1890s and were instrumental in helping set up the first Jewish villages in Palestine.

This was a tremendous (and unique) social revolution. Middle-class Jewish students and ex-merchants were not only leaving Europe for the Land of Israel; they were also deliberately aiming at becoming peasants and workers. Of all the great migration waves of the 19th and 20th centuries—of Italians, Germans, Irish, Slavs—the only one that had a conscious and articulate ideology of *downward* mobility was the Zionist immigration to Palestine. This ideology was sustained by the important socialist wing of the Zionist movement. As writers like Moses Hess foresaw, a Zionist commonwealth would be based on public ownership of the land and of the means of production, which would be organized on cooperative and collective lines. Many came to see Zionism and socialism not as two separate elements that might be welded together but as two sides of the same coin. Such ideas found ready expression in Palestine in a variety of institutions—*kibbutzim* and *moshavim*, various cooperative and collective industries, the paternal labor federation

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Histadrut—aimed at bringing about radical social change.

The cultural and linguistic revival in central and eastern Europe—not the outbreaks of anti-Semitism in late 19th-century Europe—paved the way for the idea of a return to the cradle of the Jewish people. To be sure, the Russian *pogroms* and the anti-Semitic policies of the tsarist government prompted almost three million Jews to emigrate between 1882 and 1914. But fewer than one percent of these immigrants went to Palestine. Most went to America. The fact that an avant-garde minority opted for a return to the Land of Israel cannot be explained just by the *push* which drove them out of Europe. There was also a *pull*. Those who went to America were attracted by the promise of personal liberty and advancement. Those who went to Palestine had a vision of a national and social renaissance. Upon arriving, many of them shed their European names. (Ben-Yehuda—"Son of Judah"—was originally named Perlman.) Others went to the length of exchanging their European clothes for Arab *abayahs* and *kefiyas*. Snapshots of early Jewish immigrants to Palestine show groups of people who could be mistaken for bedouins if one were to judge from their clothing.

#### 'If You Will It . . .'

Theodor Herzl (1860–1904), the Viennese journalist and playwright, is generally considered to be the founder of modern, political Zionism. It was certainly due to his efforts that the first Zionist Congress was convened in 1897 in Basel, Switzerland, and the World Zionist Organization established. (The Zionist Organization would be responsible for coordinating Jewish emigration from Europe to Palestine.) Herzl's memorable words, scribbled in his diary after the Congress, were given prophetic significance after the founding of Israel in 1948: "In Basel," he wrote, "I have founded the Jewish state. Were I to state this publicly today, the answer would be a general outburst of laughter. But in five years, in *fifty* years, everyone will acknowledge this."

Viewed in historical perspective, however, Herzl's effort was nothing more than the culmination of earlier efforts, undertaken by many individuals and groups. Herzl's idea of establishing a Jewish state in Palestine had been voiced by people like Hess and Leon Pinsker, whose pamphlet, *Autoemancipation*, published in 1882, was perhaps the most far-reaching critique of the failure of Emancipation to solve the twin problems of Jewish security and identity. Jewish villages were established in Palestine decades before Herzl took up the cause.

What Herzl added to these efforts was not simply organization and direction. Owing to his public-relations acumen, Herzl was also able to bring the quest for Jewish national consciousness to world attention. What had hitherto been discussed in obscure Hebrew journals in Odessa and Warsaw now became front-page news. What motley groups of unemployed Jewish intellectuals had been arguing about in obscure discussion groups in eastern European *shtetls* now became fashionable talk in cultured salons in central and western Europe.

Every movement needs such a person—the *grand simplificateur*, the popularizer, if not vulgarizer, of a complex idea. While Herzl's two books—the programmatic *Jewish State* (1896) and the utopian novel *Old-New Land* (1902), both written in German but widely translated—became best sellers and spread the Zionist gospel, most of Herzl's ideas were neither new nor particularly profound. But he was blessed with the gift of tongues, the light pen of the trained journalist, the ability to coin the catchy phrase (“If you will it, it will not be a fable”) and to strike the dramatic pose. Even his appearance—the combination of a well-bred Victorian gentleman (top hat, white gloves) with the visage of an exotic prophet from the Middle East—greatly contributed to his success.

### The Balfour Declaration

The beginnings of the Jewish resettlement of Palestine (financed by such groups as Hovevei Zion and by Jewish philanthropists like Baron Edmond de Rothschild in Paris) were very modest, and it must have been the minuscule scale that was responsible for the initially mild reaction of the local Arab population. Few Arabs in pre-1914 Palestine (then part of the decaying Ottoman Empire) were sensitized to the stirrings of modern nationalism. Moreover, Palestine had always had a relatively high proportion of non-Muslim inhabitants due to its Judeo-Christian associations. By the mid-19th century, for example, Jews—largely pious, ultraorthodox Jews who had trickled in to live and die in the Holy Land—were already a majority in Jerusalem. As Karl Marx reported in an article published on March 18, 1854, in the *New York Daily Tribune*, “the sedentary population of Jerusalem numbers about 15,500 souls, of whom 4,000 are Mussulmans and 8,000 Jews.”

When the first tentative moves of Arab nationalists surfaced during the 1880s, they were naturally aimed at overthrowing the oppressive Ottoman regime. The existence of a few Jewish agricultural villages in Palestine was not then considered a



Some 25,000 Israelis now inhabit settlements on territory occupied during the Six Day War in 1967. As of last June, 103 of these new communities were located in the West Bank, 11 in Gaza, and 35 on the Golan Heights (which was formally annexed by Israel in December 1981). Israel's phased withdrawal from the Sinai, stipulated in the peace treaty with Egypt, was completed on April 25, 1982.

Source: U.S. Department of State.

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major issue. Before the outbreak of World War I, the Jewish population in the Turkish provinces which made up Palestine was only about 100,000, out of a general population of about 800,000. Until 1917, the whole Zionist enterprise remained relatively minor in scale.

In 1917, Great Britain, looking for friends in the war against Germany and its Turkish allies, helped and encouraged the Arabs in the Levant to rebel against the Turks. In a similar effort to rouse support, Britain declared in 1917 that "His Majesty's Government views with favor the establishment in Palestine of a National Home for the Jewish people." This statement, known as the Balfour Declaration, was later endorsed by the League of Nations when it granted Great Britain a Mandate over Palestine in 1923 and directed Britain to encourage "close settlement of Jews upon the land." In actuality, the Mandatory Administration, trying to steer a middle course between conflicting claims, ultimately pursued an erratic course. As Arab riots, strikes, and terrorist attacks proliferated during the 1920s and '30s in response to continued Jewish immigration, the British took steps to limit the inflow and restrict land sales to Jews. Even so, the Jewish population in Palestine by the mid-1930s had surpassed one-half million.

### **Unfinished Business**

In 1947, with the grim memory of World War II and the Holocaust still vivid, and following the influx of hundreds of thousands of Jewish refugees from Europe, the United Nations General Assembly proposed the partition of the British Mandatory territory into two states, one Jewish and one Arab. The Jewish community in Palestine accepted this truncated homeland. The Arabs of Palestine and in the surrounding Arab states did not. Within hours of David Ben-Gurion's proclamation of the State of Israel in May 1948, troops from seven Arab nations attacked the new nation. The Israeli Defense Force stood its ground. The clash of Jewish and Arab nationalisms has not yet been resolved, although the 1979 peace treaty with Egypt is no doubt a first step in the right direction.

By any conventional standards, Zionism has been a success story. A Jewish state has been established in part of what was the ancestral homeland of the Jewish people. It has integrated, albeit not always with total success, emigrants and refugees from more than 70 countries, half of them fleeing from Arab nations—Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Morocco, Algeria, Libya, Tunisia, Egypt—where Jewish life had become intolerable. And Hebrew

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has been revived as a modern language. Theodore Herzl once remarked that the Jews returning to their ancestral land would not return to their ancestral tongue: "Who among us," he asked, "can ask for a railway ticket in Hebrew?" Israeli railways are nothing to write home about, but El Al pilots communicate with ground control at Ben-Gurion Airport in Hebrew, just as Israeli children bicker with one another and Israeli scientists discuss their latest discoveries in the language of the prophets.

More important, Israel has become the public focus of Jewish existence. In the pre-Emancipation period, as I have noted, religion and the *kehilla* played this role; being Jewish entailed being a member of a community. Emancipation changed all that, but the State of Israel has put the public dimension back into Jewish life around the world. Without this having ever been defined or decided upon, the fact remains that to be Jewish today means feeling some link with Israel. That link was forged at first by concern among Jews for the new nation's very survival, threatened in four wars. In the long run, however, it can only be maintained by the *content* of Jewish life in Israel, by the cultivation of qualities there that do not exist in the Diaspora.

The founders of the revolutionary Zionist society in Israel realized from the very beginning that independence, sovereignty, and self-determination involve not only a flag, ambassadors, and the pomp and circumstance of state occasions. Independence means first of all the existence—or creation—of a social and economic infrastructure to sustain a more or less self-supporting society. The question for the founders of Zionism never was only how many Jews would live in the Jewish state and what its boundaries were going to be. It was also the quality of life and the kind of society they would establish. This is the unfinished business of the Zionist revolution.





## A DIFFERENT PLACE

by Don Peretz

When Palestine's Jewish community, the Yishuv, was suddenly transformed into a Jewish state in 1948, most of its 650,000 people resembled those of the old eastern European *shtetls* in language and physical appearance, in tastes and outlook on life. But Palestine did not *look* like Poland or Romania or western Russia.

In place of wooded mountains, fertile plains, and broad rivers the first Jewish settlers had found bare, rugged hills, a few valleys, a swamp-infested coastal plain, and a vascular system of dry wadis, which ran with water only during the winter months; coaxing the desert into life took decades. Tel Aviv (which the Yishuv boasted was the largest all-Jewish city in the world) was a suburb perched on sand dunes north of Yafo. With its stucco-and-tile architecture, the town in 1948 felt less like Wilno or Pinsk than like Malaga or Beirut. Dress was informal, as it still is. The Prime Minister, David Ben-Gurion, a native of Plonsk (then in Russia), wore a necktie when he proclaimed Israel's independence but almost never thereafter. A tie is referred to even today as a *dag ma'luach*, a herring.

As in the *shtetls*, everyone seemed to know everyone else. To call a fellow Jew *adon* ("Mr.") was almost insulting. Much preferred was *haver* ("comrade, friend"). Rather than a mere nation, the Yishuv seemed to be a large, self-centered Jewish town where doors were left unlocked and children played in the streets under every adult's protective gaze.

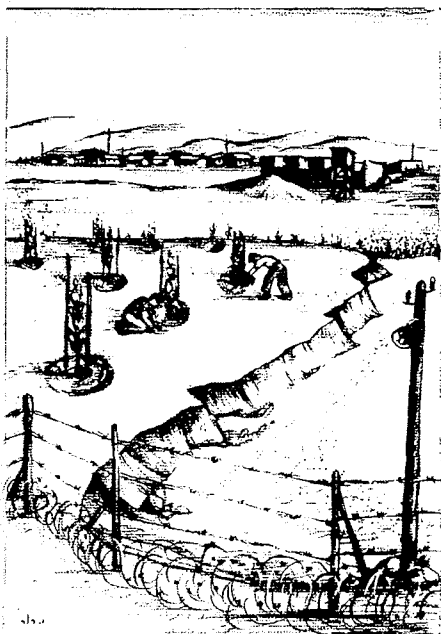
Most Jews belonged to the Histadrut, the labor federation that Ben-Gurion had helped to found in 1920. The Histadrut was much more than just a trade union, though it would come to embrace more than 40 labor organizations representing, among other groups, actors, lifeguards, psychologists, and the craftsmen in Israel's diamond-finishing industry. The Histadrut also provided cradle-to-grave social security and medical care. It sponsored clubs for young people and old. It staged political rallies for voters, a plurality of whom would cast their ballots for Mapai, anchor party of the Labor Alignment and ruled, like the Histadrut, by an elite of labor-Zionist "founding fathers." The start-up capital for some of the Yishuv's most important agricultural and commercial ventures came from Histadrut-run enterprises—Bank ha-Po'alim, the Workers' Bank; the agricultural cooperative Nir; and Solel Boneh, a mammoth engineering

and construction combine.

The activities of the labor federation, in sum, cut across the entire social and economic structure of the Yishuv, serving in a way as a catalyst for transformation of the Jewish community into the Jewish state.

Every Jew in Palestine had a sense of mission, a feeling of destiny, in 1948. Israel was not just "another country" but a gallant experiment in democracy, socialism, nationalism. The mood was embodied in the person of Prime Minister Ben-Gurion, the "Old Man," whose identity card listed his occupation simply as "agricultural worker." Ben-Gurion, his balding head fringed with a halo of wild white hair, assigned a messianic role to his people and laid down a creed for his country. It would not, he proclaimed, "recognize idols of gold and silver; it does not accept the robbery of the poor, the oppression of peoples, the lifting up of swords by nation against nation or the study of war. . . . It looks forward to the day when nations will cease to do evil."

This vision appealed to Jews everywhere. Of course, then as now, Israel confronted the implacable hostility of Arab neighbors. But domestically there was much to admire in the confusing, seemingly ill fitting, yet somehow workable amalgam of



*Life on a kibbutz, by Israeli artist Joel Rohr. Much of the early 20th-century Yishuv inhabited scores of struggling farming settlements, reflecting the desire of Zionist pioneers to "return to the land." Today, agriculture accounts for only 11 percent of Israel's GNP.*

*From Village Paintings of Israel by Joel Rohr.*

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public and private institutions, of urban and rural lifestyles, of socialistic and capitalistic values.

The central government ran the railroads, the communications industry, and the major development projects, as it does now, but there was room for individual initiative, and family businesses account even today for a majority of Israeli companies, including such established firms as the Moshevitz family's Elite candy empire. The Histadrut, functioning as both management and labor union, helped put to work thousands of new arrivals from eastern Europe—many of them skilled workers—in its own factories, banks, and hotels. After government, the Histadrut remains the nation's single largest employer, with some 250,000 people on its payroll.

### Strangers to Zionism

Although Israeli agriculture was and continues to be predominantly a matter of small family farms (average size: seven acres), the collective *kibbutzim* prospered, as did the hundreds of less spartan *moshavim*—both institutions striking an emotional chord abroad. It was above all the *kibbutzim*, with their regimentation and communal ethic, that had made possible the reintroduction of efficient agriculture in Palestine. Israel's farms today produce many of the citrus fruits now found in supermarkets throughout Western Europe, the avocados, the fresh flowers that have ended Holland's horticultural hegemony.

From the outset, Diaspora Jews lent a helping hand. Even during the Mandate, Jews outside of Palestine, mostly Americans, had contributed large sums to sustain the Yishuv, to found and fund charitable organizations such as Boys Town Jerusalem or *Magen David Adom* (Israel's Red Cross—though symbolized by a red Star of David). The effort launched in 1938 by the United Palestine (later Israel) Appeal was augmented in 1951 by the Israel bond drives, and by the mid-1950s Israeli bonds were providing almost one-half of the country's development budget.

It has been said that a nation's vices are the excess of its virtues. Israel's virtues—its optimism and determination, its concern for its own—were fully unleashed only after independence. In 1950, in one of its first acts, the Knesset or Parliament

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passed the famous Law of Return, stating that "every Jew has the right to come to this country." There followed the "ingathering of the exiles." The exiles now were not the familiar eastern Europeans, who had been repopulating Palestine since the 1880s, but the "forgotten" Jews of North Africa and the Middle East. These Jews had not tasted Emancipation or heard of Zionism, and they were uneasy with even the moderate socialism of Israel's establishment. They arrived from the ghettos of the Arab states—650,000 of them by 1964—importing along with their curious clothes and mementos a conservative, pre-Zionist notion of what a Jewish state should be.

Initially, the new immigrants were housed in supposedly temporary sites—first in tents, later in crowded, barrack-like encampments known as *ma'abarot* ("transition camps"). But all too often the transition took years instead of months. Many of the *ma'abarot* evolved into "development towns," where the non-European Jews were effectively isolated from the mainstream of Israeli life. Other immigrants were moved into the abandoned Arab quarters—soon to be slums if not slums already—inside or adjoining the three big urban centers of Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, and Haifa.

### A Rift of Tongues

Rather abruptly, the compact physical and cultural homogeneity of the prestate Yishuv, its demographic cohesion, its virtually one-class (and hence classless) social structure began to disappear. The "Orientals," as the North African and Middle Eastern Jews were commonly called (they are also known as Sephardim, and more properly as Afro-Asians) became Israel's *lumpenproletariat*. In looks, dress, diet, speech, and education they differed from their European (or Ashkenazic) countrymen. Their arrival made Israel the only nation in the Middle East during the 1950s whose literacy rate declined. They disdained the gefilte fish, the borscht, and the kreplach of the immigrants from the old Pale of Settlement, preferring the kebab and couscous of Baghdad, Damascus, and Casablanca. Among the Ashkenazim, Yiddish was the mother tongue used at home, but the first language of the Orientals was usually Arabic. (Ironically, Arabic but not Yiddish was recognized by law as one of Israel's two official languages, the other being Hebrew—the language of public life and "more equal" by far.) By 1970, the Orientals, with a high birthrate, constituted the majority of Israel's Jewish population.

The challenge represented by the influx of immigrants dur-

### A PEOPLE'S ARMY

The Israel Defense Force (IDF) was created in 1948, and it has served ever since as the guarantor of Israel's security. Unlike other Mideastern armies, it was not built around a core of former colonial regiments; instead, it drew from (and superseded) existing underground units, primarily the Haganah. Unlike other regional armed forces, the IDF imported no doctrine and few foreign advisers, preferring to adapt the art of war to Israel's unique circumstances. After many false starts, considerable confusion, and endless disagreements, the Israelis taught themselves everything from the techniques of aerial dogfighting to strategy and tactics. As former Defense Minister Ezer Weizman once wrote, "We mustn't ape others. . . . What counts is your originality, your improvisation, and your inventiveness."



The IDF has been tested now in five major conflicts: the War of Independence (1948–49), Suez (1956), the Six Day War (1967), the Yom Kippur War (1973), and the Lebanese "operation" (1982). Even when intelligence evaluation or strategy has failed, as in 1973, the IDF has shown itself to be quick to recoup, flexible and daring. Today, the Israeli Air Force, chief claimant on the defense budget, dominates area skies; the ground troops are unsurpassed in the Mideast.

For Israel, military pre-eminence has been a necessity, not a luxury, and it exacts a high price. The Israelis must always overcome three basic liabilities:

*Manpower* With a Jewish population of only 3.3 million, Israel is enveloped by hostile states with a combined population of 60 million. The Israelis "equalized" this disparity in two ways: by emphasizing *qualitative* superiority in training and weaponry; and, in effect, by conscripting the entire country, creating a "people's army." All males from age 18 to 29 must serve in the armed forces for three years, all unmarried women for two (though they are barred from combat zones). Men remain in the reserves until age 55 (women until 39, unless married) and are called up each year for intensive training—always with the same unit. Thus, while the IDF in peacetime comprises some 120,000 conscripts and 52,000 "regular army" personnel, mostly career officers and technicians, it can mobilize a fighting force of 400,000 within 48 hours. (Israel's nearly 600,00 Arab citizens, with the exception of the Druze community,

ing the 1950s was not only cultural but also economic. The strong emphasis of labor-Zionism on farming—*Kivush avoda*, *kivush adama* ("conquest of labor, conquest of land"), to quote an early slogan—was a driving force during the British Mandate, but it lost much of its relevance after 1948, as Israel's lead-

are not eligible for service.) Former Chief of Staff Yigael Yadin described every Israeli civilian as "a soldier on 11 months' leave."

*Money* In solving its manpower problem, Israel escalated the cost of any extended military campaign: Full mobilization drains the civilian economy of its work force—not to mention its trucks, tractors, and bulldozers. In terms of actual outlays, the price of "preparedness" is sobering. Most of its arsenal Israel must buy abroad—the F-15 and F-16 fighters, the HAWK missiles, the armored personnel carriers. As a percentage of GNP, Israel quintuples U.S. defense spending. The government has been able to cut some corners, however. Thus, the Israelis are adept at reconditioning obsolete weaponry—turning old Sherman tanks into mobile artillery platforms, for example. And like the Japanese, they have demonstrated a knack for copying the technology of others (e.g., the Kfir jet fighter, adapted from the French Mirage, and the Shafrir air-to-air missile, adapted from the American Sidewinder). The government-controlled Israel Aircraft Industry has also produced sophisticated missile boats and transport planes, and deployment of the innovative Merkava tank has begun. Until recently, Israel was barred by the United States from selling Kfir jets abroad (they are powered by General Electric engines), but the country does a brisk trade of as much as \$1 billion a year in small arms and military hardware. As an export item, weapons are surpassed only by diamonds.

*Geography* Israel's size, shape, and location do not forgive generals' mistakes. The country has a 115-mile Mediterranean coastline but in places is no wider than 15 miles. Most of Israel's industrial plant is clustered in the crowded, vulnerable, Tel Aviv-Haifa strip, within three minutes by jet fighter of the Jordanian border. Israel must therefore rely on its well-developed intelligence network for at least 48 hours' warning of impending attack in order to mobilize and deploy. It must also count on the air force to keep Israeli skies clear. And it must carry the war to the enemy. Densely settled and lacking "strategic depth," Israel cannot afford to trade space for time. These requirements have prompted a continual and intense debate over tactics—with sometimes mixed results. General Israel Tal's "all-tank" theory of armored warfare (using fast tank "wedges" without accompanying infantry) proved brilliantly successful in the open desert against Egypt in 1967. But the "static" defense of the Sinai had disastrous results in 1973. The Egyptians quickly breached the fortified "Bar-Lev line," isolating and ultimately overrunning all but one of the 20 Israeli strong points along the Suez Canal.

ers faced the task of creating jobs for the newcomers.

Palestine boasted a respectable industrial base even during the 1930s, concentrated mostly in metal-working, textiles, chemicals. But after independence, the industrial sector, engorged with money from government and the Histadrut, ex-

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panded quickly. Between 1952 and 1972, Israel experienced a 350 percent increase in industrial investment, an increase of 1,100 percent in industrial exports, and a rise of nearly 500 percent in the value of industrial output. GNP leapt upwards by an average of 10 percent annually during the 1950s, a rate of growth exceeded only in Japan and Taiwan.

Inevitably, "the land" lost much of its glamor. While agricultural productivity has increased tenfold since 1948, thanks to a "green revolution" spearheaded by such entities as the Volcani Institute, less than seven percent of Israel's labor force—75,000 people all told, one-fifth of them Arabs—is now employed in agriculture. Less than three percent of the population today lives on a *kibbutz*, long perceived by Diaspora Jews as the symbol of Zionist life in Israel. Many of the collectives have switched from farming to manufacturing. For lack of other recruits, some *kibbutzim* have had to hire Arab laborers.

The sudden transformation of Israel's economy is evident in the upward thrust of skyscrapers in Tel Aviv, which remains the nation's financial and publishing center and the heart of "cosmopolitan" Israel—though the seat of government is actually Jerusalem. It is evident in the Ruhr-like sprawl of workshops, industrial dumps, and factories around Haifa, the once-leisurely port city built on the slopes of Mount Carmel, bearded with smog. And it is evident, too, in Israeli lifestyles.

### American Dollars

The simple life is no longer virtuous, or at least not fashionable. There now exists not only an "underclass" and an apartment-dwelling middle class but a suburban upper class and not a few millionaires (many of whom made fortunes after the 1967 war in construction of the ill-fated, \$500 million Bar-Lev defense line along the Suez Canal's eastern bank). Israel's well-to-do frequent cabarets, tee-up at country clubs, and take yearly jaunts abroad. The old-timers in their wrinkled khaki would shudder to learn that Israeli *haute couture* is big business; sales of leather-wear, bathing suits, and other apparel bring more than \$170 million a year into the country.

Israel did not deliberately set out to become what it has become. Indeed, for a variety of obvious reasons, the nation has seldom been free to chart its own course. Smaller than Massachusetts, it is constrained physically. It is endowed with little naturally fertile land and few mineral resources. Its trading partners are far away, its enemies are not. Time and again, its leaders have had to choose between the bad and the less bad. In

some respects, the Yishuv as a community enjoyed more independence under Britain's military rule than it has any time since—freedom, at any rate, from war, from trade deficits, from inflation; freedom to define itself; freedom, too, from the sometimes irritating concern and unwelcome influence of the United States, the source since 1948 of some \$23 billion in official military and economic aid (mostly low-interest loans) and of perhaps \$600 million a year in contributions by individuals.

In 1948, the Israelis accepted the partition of Palestine because the alternative was worse. To protect themselves they accepted creation of a large Israel Defense Force—the current ratio of soldiers to civilians in this country of fewer than four million, one to 22, is by far the highest in the world. Again, the alternative was worse. Because the costs of defense were so high, the Israelis resigned themselves to a state of perpetual debt—and to an inflation rate that eventually crept into triple digits.

#### **'I'm All Right, Jack'**

Israel's inflation, of course, has many causes—lucrative wage contracts won by the Histadrut being one of them. British-style "I'm all right, Jack" attitudes among labor unions have resulted in a comfortable standard of living for most workers, but the high rates of productivity that might have offset high living have not been forthcoming. (The average American worker, no Stakhanovite, has an annual output of some \$24,200 compared to the Israeli's \$14,300.) With expansion of the service sector—transportation, communications, education, and so on—only 33 percent of the Israeli labor force is engaged in goods-producing work of any kind. Also fueling inflation are Israel's generous social programs—maternity grants, allowances for large families, health insurance—and the government's Keynesian attempts to ensure "full" employment.

But the prime cause of rising prices, most economists agree, has been the defense burden. Military spending increased 1,600 percent between 1952 and 1966. By 1962, the inflation rate was 18 percent, prompting Prime Minister Levi Eshkol's government to decree "austerity" and ease the country into a recession. Yet in 1971, inflation was back to 12 percent as massive transfers of Soviet weaponry to Israel's Arab foes, in the wake of the Six Day War, spurred the Knesset to boost annual defense outlays to \$1.5 billion. Then came the Yom Kippur War in 1973. By 1980, inflation was running well above 100 percent.

A unique feature of inflation in Israel is that so many Israelis are protected against it; despite the erosion of the economy,



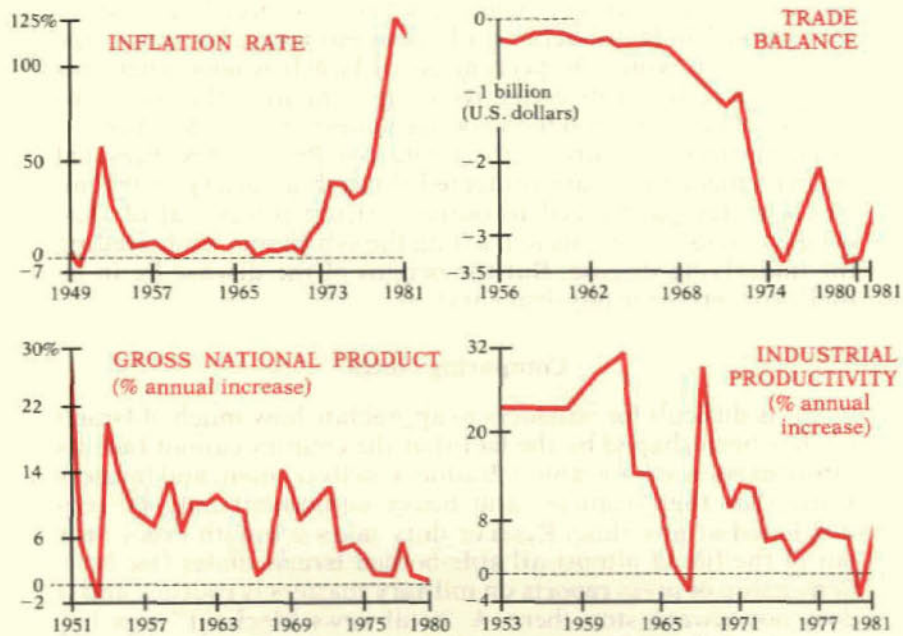
**ASHKENAZIM VS. SEPHARDIM: A CLASH OF CULTURES**

	Israeli-born Jews	Asian/African- born Jews	European/American- born Jews
<b>FAMILY SIZE</b>			
Percent of parents who have:			
4 or more children	17.4%	46.2%	17.9%
2-3	67.9	46.4	64.8
1 only	14.7	7.3	17.4
<b>EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT</b>			
Percent who have attended:			
graduate school	13.1	3.9	17.9
university	8.8	3.7	6.7
high school	27.7	15.4	25.9
grade school	11.8	37.8	30.6
no school	0.5	19.3	2.4
<b>PUBLIC ASSISTANCE</b>			
Percent of welfare recipients who are:	10.37	61.74	27.89

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, *Statistical Abstract of Israel*, 1981 and 1979.

*The political, economic, and cultural differences separating Sephardic Israelis born in Asia or Africa and Ashkenazic Israelis born in Europe and America (above) are so large that some commentators speak of the "two Israels." Not all of the Sephardic immigrants have done poorly, however. The Yemeni Jews along with the Iraqis and Iranians have generally fared well; the Moroccans, concentrated in urban slums, have done poorly and account for much of the surge in street crime (which between 1960 and 1970 alone rose by 800 percent). Intermarriage between Ashkenazim and Sephardim is common, however, and some Israelis believe the problem of social cleavage will ultimately be solved "in bed." Israel's economic woes (right) include high inflation, sluggish industrial growth, and a worsening trade balance. High levels of defense spending are a prime culprit. The 1973 Yom Kippur War, for example, cost \$7 billion—equivalent then to one full year's GNP. Israel's arms purchases and civilian imports are financed largely by loans (debt service consumes more than one-third of the national budget) and aid from the United States.*

### THE ISRAELI ECONOMY: SELECTED INDICES



### ISRAEL'S 1982 BUDGET

**\$15.8 billion**

Total debt repayment  
28.8%

Health and welfare  
5.2%

Other  
17.9%

Interest payments  
(domestic loans)  
14.9%

Defense  
27.4%

Education  
and culture  
5.8%

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, *Statistical Abstract of Israel*, 1981; International Monetary Fund, *International Financial Statistics Yearbook*, 1981; Economic Department, Embassy of Israel, Washington, D.C.

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they can continue to pay exorbitant prices for TV sets, (owned by 90 percent of all Israelis), washing machines (70 percent), and refrigerators (97 percent). One reason is widespread tax evasion and a flourishing "underground" cash economy. Another is the Histadrut, to which 90 percent of all Israeli wage-earners belong. As a result of its collective bargaining over the years, the Histadrut has managed to introduce widespread "indexation"—linking wages to jumps in the Consumer Price Index. Personal savings, meanwhile, are protected through a variety of ingenious schemes guaranteed to outpace rising prices. All of this, needless to say, amounts to treating the symptoms while feeding the underlying disease. But the origins of the disease lie in Israel's concern over physical survival.

### Comparing Notes

It is difficult for outsiders to appreciate how much of Israeli life has been shaped by the fact that the country cannot take its future existence for granted. Builders, deliverymen, and farmers know that their vehicles and heavy equipment may be requisitioned at any time. Reserve duty takes a month every year out of the life of almost all able-bodied Israeli males (*see box*). Censorship of press reports on military matters is routine, and it does not always stop there. A "total news blackout" was imposed by Defense Minister Ariel Sharon when Israeli settlers in the Sinai were forcibly evicted in April 1982.

Some aspects of the defense burden are undoubtedly positive. Because military service is nearly universal—a rite of passage eliciting both grumbling and pride—the Israel Defense Force (IDF) is a strong cohesive factor in a nation that now badly needs one. For many indigent Sephardim, a hitch in the IDF can mean a few more years of technical training or perhaps even a career, though prejudice remains. (Noting the sharp increase in Oriental recruits, former Defense Minister Moshe Dayan once exclaimed: "But who will fly the airplanes?") The Israel Defense Force transcends class, generational, and ideological lines. On Friday evenings, the "social" night in Israel, the army is often a topic of conversation. People trade gossip and argue over tactics. Fathers and sons compare notes, debating, say, the merits of the old Uzi submachine gun, now out of production, versus those of the adaptable new Galil assault rifle, a prime export item.

Israel's burgeoning high-technology sector, of which the Galil is a profitable manifestation, is the late-in-life child of industrialization. It barely existed during the late 1950s, and it was nurtured in its infancy by those in the Labor Party who

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realized that Israel's mounting arms outlays left the nation with a simple choice: to go bankrupt buying tanks, aircraft, missiles, and small arms from abroad, or to recoup part of the loss by manufacturing some of those items itself.

Ben-Gurion rationalized this further step away from the "drain the swamp, till the land" ideal he had once espoused, arguing that "pioneering" could also mean opening an electronics plant or pharmaceutical company. He was opposed bitterly by many in his own party. But throughout the 1960s, new high-tech industrial conglomerates appeared or expanded—the Israel Aircraft Industry, for example; innovative smaller firms proliferated and prospered. Between 1970 and 1978, exports of sophisticated electronics alone—e.g., word processors, medical equipment, solar energy systems—grew tenfold.

Much of the impetus came from the Six Day War. In the eyes of many, Israel's lightning victory over Egypt, Syria, and Jordan in 1967 signaled that the Jewish state at last had "arrived." Companies such as ITT, RCA, IBM, Allied Chemical, and Motorola substantially increased their investments in Israel. This massive influx of capital created a new elite of well-connected, well-heeled Israelis who took their place alongside the old establishment—the political parties, the Histadrut, the *kibbutz* organizations, the armed forces.

"We have no 'poor whites'," Israel's first President, Chaim Weizmann, wrote in 1947, "and we also have no feudal landlords." But by the early 1970s, Israel no longer looked like Weizmann's Palestine. The Jewish population was far more heterogeneous than anyone had anticipated, and wealth was far less equally distributed. As a result of the Six Day War, Israel had also taken aboard large numbers of Palestinian and Syrian Arabs in the West Bank, Gaza, and the Golan Heights—1.2 million at last count, not including the 600,000 Arabs who are Israeli citizens, and who have long been considered by Jews to be a "problem" in their own right.\* The shift in economic emphasis, meanwhile, from farm to factory, from rural pioneer to urban scientist and technocrat, had been disorienting.

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\*Since the first election in 1949, Israel's Arab citizens have been permitted to vote and they enjoy, at least theoretically, the right to most employment opportunities and government benefits. Few hold positions of power. Yet the social and economic gains made by Israeli Arabs have been impressive. Life expectancy rose from 52 to 72 years between 1948 and 1978. In 1948, almost no Arab village had electricity; three-quarters did 30 years later. But Arabs lag considerably behind their Jewish compatriots in education, as they do in income. There are no independent Arab political parties as such, but Rakah, one of Israel's two Communist parties, attracts considerable Arab support. Long quiescent politically, Israeli Arabs have become increasingly nationalistic since the Six Day War. Eighty percent of them now favor creation of a Palestinian state, according to a recent poll.

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There was still a solid minority of Israelis who cherished the network of institutions (and the ethos underlying them) that Ben-Gurion and others had set into place before independence. But Ben-Gurion died in 1973, and his Labor Alignment had by then been losing electoral support for more than a decade—beset by defections, by public dissatisfaction with the conduct of the costly 1973 Yom Kippur War, by labor unrest that seemed increasingly to tie the economy in knots, and by a wave of political scandals. (Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, hero of the 1967 war, was himself forced to resign in 1977 after it was discovered that his wife maintained an illegal foreign bank account.) The Israeli population, moreover, was becoming younger: During the 1970s, a majority was under 30 years of age, and among young Israelis public opinion surveys revealed widespread unease and, as elsewhere, “alienation.”

Symptomatic was the steady decline in immigration to Israel throughout the 1970s and the steady increase in emigration from Israel. As many as 500,000 ex-Israelis now live in North America alone, with large concentrations in Los Angeles and New York. Many of those who have chosen to leave have been native-born Israelis (Sabras), former Army officers, even *kibbutz* members. Menachem Begin raised this issue in the Knesset in 1976, a year before the triumph of his Likud coalition. Since independence, he pointed out, “we have lost four divisions or a dozen brigades, which represents a real bloodletting.” In 1981, the government reported a net emigration of 20,000 Jews, more than enough, under Israel’s electoral system, to elect a candidate to the Knesset.

### A Political Potpourri

With its multiparty system, Israel is an extreme case of parliamentary democracy. In contrast to the British model, candidates do not compete in winner-take-all contests in individual districts but instead run in the country at large—with the 120 seats in the Knesset divided proportionately among all parties that have garnered at least one percent of the vote. There is thus no lack of political parties in Israel. About 30 vied in the last election, nine currently have seats in parliament, and five are part of the current Likud coalition government. *Every* government Israel has ever had has been a coalition affair and no political party has ever won a majority of the votes cast.

This system, dreamed up by Zionist idealists before World War I, is widely condemned but also widely regarded as permanent in a nation that has never been able to agree even on a

constitution. The upshot is that small parties like Shinui or Poale Agudat Israel are at times in a position to exert inordinate influence. The National Religious Party (NPR) has never won more than 15 seats in the Knesset, but it has been a part of almost every government since 1948, and on religious questions—the Kosher Food for Soldiers Ordinance, the Pork Prohibition Law, the Who is a Jew Amendment—its word has been law.\*

### Going Soft

In a faction-ridden system such as Israel's, it is sometimes difficult to discern ideological shifts from year to year. But a fundamental shift clearly occurred in 1977 when Menachem Begin's Likud bloc (consisting of his Herut or Freedom Party, the former Liberal Party, the Land of Israel movement, and some dissident Laborites) formed a coalition with the NPR and other parties to finally rout the Labor Alignment. Likud's umbrella covered a diverse constituency: ultranationalists, big industrialists, private farmers, most Orientals, and many Orthodox Jews. Its outlook was capitalist, not socialist. And it hoped to fill the ideological vacuum created by the decay of labor-Zionism with a call for reestablishment of Israel's "biblical" frontiers—at the very least Judea and Samaria (the West Bank, occupied by Israel in 1967) but defined by some to include Jordan and conceived by others to stretch as far as the Euphrates.

This biblical approach to Israeli territory is epitomized by the Gush Emunim, the "Bloc of the Faithful," formed after the 1973 war. The influence of the Gush spread quickly, finding adherents in Begin's Herut movement and elsewhere. Gush Emunim's stance is simply put: "Every piece of our land is holy—a gift from God." An unusually high percentage of the Gush are Orthodox Jewish immigrants from the United States. Most are Ashkenazim. Few wear the black coat, fur hat, or long side locks seen among Jerusalem's most militant Orthodox. Contending that Israel has gone soft morally and economically—becoming an "international schnorrer"—they prescribe a remedy called *hitnahalut*, which amounts to a

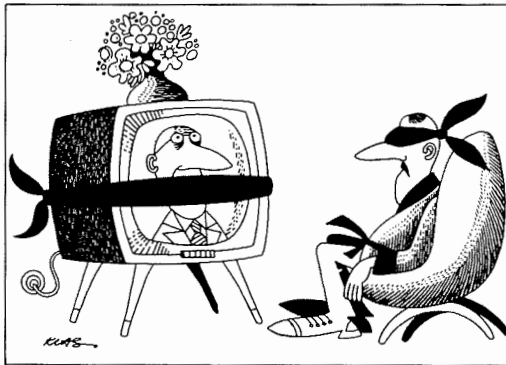
\*Israel is technically a secular state, but Jewish holidays are also national holidays and the Jewish Sabbath, Saturday, is the day of rest; all interurban public transport ceases and El Al jets do not fly (a recent victory won by the religious parties). Marriage and divorce are matters for the Jewish (or Christian, or Muslim) clerical hierarchies; neither can be accomplished by civil authorities. While many of the American immigrants are not Orthodox but Reform or Conservative Jews, their rabbis are not officially recognized in Israel—a sore point between the American Jewish community and the Jewish state. Because religious parties hold the balance of power in the Knesset, it is likely that Israeli law will become more rather than less Orthodox, despite the uneasiness or opposition of many Israelis.

ISRAELI SELF-PORTRAITS



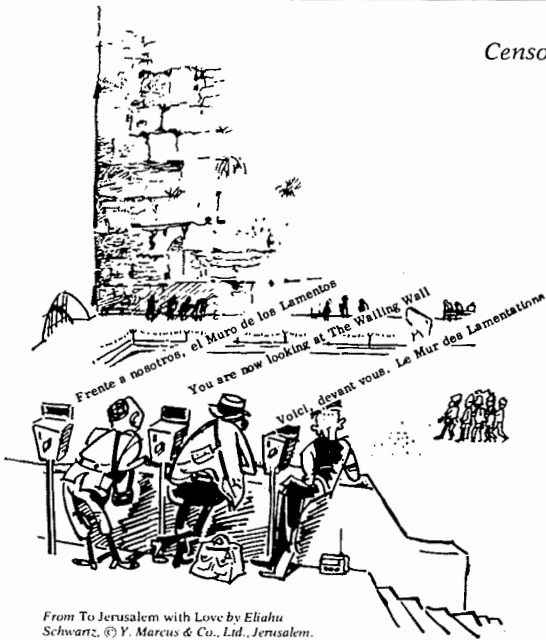
Ze'ev/Ha'aretz/1982.

Prime Minister  
Menachem Begin

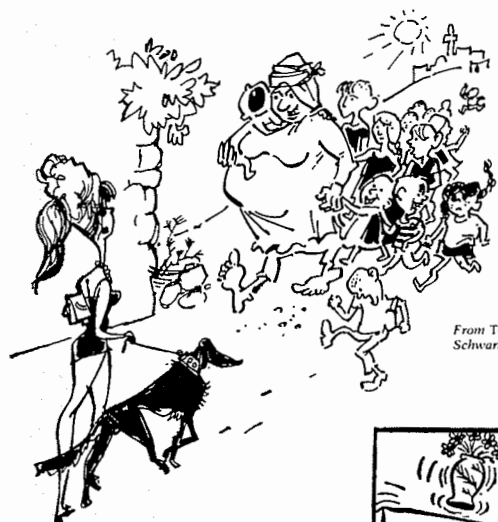


Klas/Migvan.

Censorship



From To Jerusalem with Love by Eliahu  
Schwartz. © Y. Marcus & Co., Ltd., Jerusalem.



"East is East  
and West is West"

From To Jerusalem with Love by Eliahu  
Schwartz. © Y. Marcus & Co., Ltd., Jerusalem.

The Lebanon War  
displaces World Cup  
soccer: "I'm missing  
Paolo Rossi."

Ze'ev/Ha'aretz/1982.



Defense Minister  
Ariel Sharon



Ze'ev/Ha'aretz/1982.



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combination of frontier settlement and messianism, requiring Jews to establish themselves in all of Greater Israel as a cultural imperative and religious obligation.

Gush volunteers have set up dozens of Jewish settlements in Judea and Samaria, at first opposed but now winked at by a government that, since 1967, has itself established more than 100 settlements on the West Bank. They frequently resort to stealth, infiltrating Arab areas in the middle of the night. Recently, 18 Gush families reoccupied the old Jewish quarter—abandoned after rioting in 1929 that left 67 Jews dead—in the center of Hebron, an Arab town of 70,000 south of Jerusalem.

The Peace Now movement occupies the other end of the political spectrum. It, too, was formed after the costly 1973 war, and its position is also simply stated: "Peace is greater than Greater Israel." Peace Now commands a considerable following among students, *kibbutzniks*, and big-city socialists. Its power peaked during the late Egyptian President Anwar Sadat's visit to Jerusalem in 1977 and ever since has been on the wane, although it was able to mount several large demonstrations protesting Israel's recent invasion of Lebanon. The political party whose program embodied Peace Now principles, Shelli, lost both of its seats in the Knesset in the last elections.

### Beginomics

The 1981 balloting, in which Begin's Likud increased its share of the vote to 37 percent, caught many commentators—and the Reagan administration—by surprise and served to highlight the conservative trend in Israeli politics.

The worsening state of the economy seems to have swayed few voters. Inflation had passed the 100 percent mark in 1979, and it stayed there for two more years. The peace treaty with Egypt signed in 1979 had proved costly; among other things, Israel now has to pay \$2 billion annually for new imports necessitated by loss of the Sinai oil fields. Despite the government's hope that Israel would one day be able to export its way out of the economic doldrums, the chronic annual trade deficit continued to hover around \$3 billion.

In February 1981, four months before the June voting, the government's third Finance Minister in four years, Yoram Aridor, introduced a quasi-supply-side economic scheme, cutting taxes and spending, and freezing government employment. What effect this will have in the long term remains in doubt. In the short term, the Begin government's decision in the months before the election to borrow heavily from private banks—in

order to subsidize further and in fact reduce the price of milk, eggs, soft drinks, air conditioners, motor bikes, and other items—may have helped, as MIT's Bernard Avishai put it, "to contrive an illusion of prosperity."

The most decisive change in outlook, as gleaned from the 1981 election returns, seems to have occurred in the military, once a bastion of the old labor-Zionist ideals. A 1972 survey of retired senior officers found 57 percent willing to make territorial concessions on the West Bank; they displayed liberal attitudes on such matters as civil marriage. Yet in 1981, Likud received far more support from soldiers—46 percent of their vote—than it did from the public at large. The shift is reflected in the army's leadership: Begin's Defense Minister, Ariel Sharon, and the Chief of Staff, General Rafael Eytan, both sympathize openly with Gush Emunim.

#### **Back to Basics?**

The same trend was apparent among the Sephardim, 60 percent of whom backed Begin in 1981. During the Ben-Gurion era, Labor wooed the Oriental Jews, successfully winning their support in political campaigns. With Ben-Gurion's disappearance, Begin gradually replaced the "Old Man" as father figure, prophet, and fiery-tongued critic of the Ashkenazic establishment. While Oriental Jews have slowly been narrowing the economic gap with the Ashkenazim, the income differential is still equivalent to that between whites and blacks in the United States. Orientals account for only 10 percent of university students. They deeply resent paternalism and "tokenism" and now identify Labor with both.

The fact that Israel's ideological cleavage is increasingly an ethnic cleavage has many people worried about the future of democracy in Israel. There had always been those who, like Rabbi Moshe Levinger, one of the founders of the Gush and now one of the Jewish residents of Hebron, believed that "the Jewish national renaissance is more important than democracy." But alienation from the electoral process seems of late to have become far more pervasive, particularly among Jews from Arab states whose first taste of true democracy was in Israel.

In a survey released before the 1981 voting by Dahaf, one of Israel's principal polling organizations, 31 percent of Jewish respondents were in favor of abolishing political parties; 55 percent supported restrictions on press freedom; and 21 percent said they would prefer an undemocratic government with "acceptable" policies to a democratic one with "unacceptable"

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policies (20 percent were undecided). Two weeks before the election, the *Jerusalem Post*, alarmed at what some see as "Peronist" tendencies in the electorate, warned that "a not inconsiderable segment of the population takes a dim view of the country's system of democracy, and would be happy to see it scrapped and replaced with an authoritarian, 'strong-man' regime."

It has never required a strenuous act of will, during Israel's short history, to view with alarm the nation's future prospects. That, ironically, is one reason why Western visitors have found so much to admire in the Israelis themselves: not because they have turned their nation into a Levantine version of prosperous, multiethnic Switzerland, which is hardly the case, but because they remain a high-spirited people despite their saga of chronic, sometimes self-inflicted, difficulties. Faced with catastrophe, they have time and again managed to find its exposed flank and ward off the unthinkable. So it is, perhaps, today. There are signs, for example, that the Labor Party is serious about reform—and about building bridges to the Oriental Jews. There are signs, too, that Israelis are becoming less willing to tolerate a chaotic regime of single-interest parties: In 1981, many small factions lost Knesset seats as voters moved in large numbers to back major parties instead.

Israel's invasion of Lebanon in June 1982, its inconclusive victory, the months-long Israeli occupation, and the massacre of Palestinian refugees in Beirut by Lebanese Christian Phalangists under Israeli eyes—all of this has prompted a great deal of vocal soul-searching among Israelis. Whatever the military merits of the operation, it has forced everyone to confront the basics once again: the nature of the Jewish state, the price to be put on peace, the road Israel has traveled since 1948. With all of the other problems Israel must face, it may be that, in 1983, an ounce of perspective will be worth a pound of cure.

## INTO THE BREACH?

*by Lawrence Meyer*

Thirty-five years have passed since the establishment of the State of Israel. The novelty of a Jewish state has long since worn off. The world has become accustomed to its existence, and the memory of the reasons for its creation is fading.

Theodor Herzl believed that a Jewish state would end the anomalous position of Jews in the world. The wonder and elation that Jews once felt at seeing Jewish policemen, farmers, laborers, soldiers, pilots, porters, and waiters working in their own country have largely disappeared. In this respect, Israel has fulfilled Herzl's dream of making the Jews a "normal" people. Israel has Jewish scientists and criminals, Jewish professors and prostitutes, Jewish soldiers and statesmen, Jewish tax collectors, Jewish soccer and movie stars. A whole generation of Israelis has grown up without experiencing the humiliations of anti-Semitism. "When I hear the phrase 'dirty Jew,'" an Israeli once told me, "my first impulse is to think I need a shower."

For purposes of comparison and perspective, it is useful to remember that Israel is roughly at that point in her history where the United States was when Andrew Jackson occupied the White House. Socially, economically, and politically, Israel is still grappling with difficulties that have confronted the state since its inception. These problems, however serious, are relatively minor when viewed against the malaise and lost sense of purpose that have afflicted Israelis during the past decade. The failure of Israel's recent leaders to articulate any sort of national vision, the transformation from an agrarian to an industrial society, the shift from group to individual values—all of these changes have stirred unease among a people who once took strength from the idea that they were part of an historic, even spiritual, adventure.

No longer do the Israelis perceive themselves as bold pioneers, braving poverty and adversity as they settled the land and made the desert bloom. The idealism, self-sacrifice, and abstemious living that marked the nation's early years have been displaced in a new generation by consumerism and a proclivity toward "looking out for No. 1." Far from being independent and self-sufficient (as David Ben-Gurion and other Zionists had hoped it would become), Israel today must rely on the largesse of the United States—not for economic development

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but to underwrite the very comfortable standard of living the nation could otherwise not afford. In a way, the life of Israel parallels that of her greatest ruler, King David, who rose from humble poet and shepherd to great warrior and conqueror of Jerusalem, and then succumbed to the temptations of the flesh.

The Jewish state was created, among other reasons, to restore the Jewish people to the family of nations. Here, too, the results after three decades have been disappointing. The image of Israel as a just and humane society has lately given way to a more dismal perception of the country—both at home and abroad—as an occupier and oppressor, denying to Palestinian Arabs what Israeli Jews so passionately sought for themselves. Israel has thus become more and more isolated in the world community.

Sensing their isolation, the Israelis have begun to view themselves as pariahs, concluding with some justice that whatever good they may do is deemed irrelevant while even the smallest ill is judged with merciless scrupulosity. "Where Israel is concerned, the world swells with moral consciousness," novelist Saul Bellow has written. "What Switzerland is to winter holidays and the Dalmatian coast to summer tourists, Israel and the Palestinians are to the West's need for justice—a sort of moral resort area." The nation's response has been to harden its position, to assume a pugnacious stance.

Without a doubt, the world Israel inhabits today is far less hopeful and expectant than it was in the era after World War II when the state was established. But the change of outlook within Israel cannot be attributed merely to the "end of innocence." For all of the fresh-faced optimism of Israel during its early years, the Israelis had already learned firsthand, in a bitter war for independence that followed the greatest slaughter of a single people in history, what sort of world they lived in. Still, Israel held out the promise that, in its dealings with its neighbors and with its own citizens, it could tread a path between meekness and arrogance, irresolution and intransigence. As the Israeli intellectual Yehoshafat Harkabi has written, until the heady triumph of the Six Day War in 1967 "Israel insisted on

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Olive Trees, by Israeli artist Aharon Halevy.

keeping to the realistic, middle way, taking pride in its capabilities but never losing sight of its limitations. That is why it accepted partition [in 1948], and when there was no way out even retreat. Its leaders were fully aware of the dangers of rising above reality and losing touch with it."

The question that arises today is whether Israel is still determined to pursue that middle course. The question is not rhetorical. Although the fact is not fully appreciated by the world outside, Israel *has* paid a considerable price—economically and psychologically, if not strategically—to secure peace with Egypt. In their own minds, Israelis see themselves taking a large, calculated risk in order to accomplish their ultimate goal: achieving peace with their neighbors.

Yet the sense of a transcending higher purpose that once motivated Israel seems to be succumbing to a simple urge for territorial possession. Dressing that urge up in historical-religious verbiage, as the present government has done, cannot disguise Israel's apparent intention to impose her will and rule on more than one million reluctant subjects. Whether Israelis have fully reckoned the cost of this enterprise is not clear. "When the white man turns tyrant," George Orwell wrote of his own experience with colonialism, "it is his own freedom he destroys. . . . For it is the condition of his rule that he shall spend

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his life in trying to impress the 'natives,' and so in every crisis he has got to do what the 'natives' expect of him. He wears a mask, and his face grows to fit it."

The other nations of the Middle East, of course, indulge in rhetoric and actions far more severe and extreme than anything Israel says or does. But Israel alone among the countries of the region is a member of the family of Western democracies—democracies that were present at Israel's creation and from which Israel now risks estrangement. In an odd way, some Israelis may welcome that prospect; among a broad section of the populace a kind of bunker mentality has already set in. In place of the values shared by the leaders of the prestate and early poststate era—in place of Ben-Gurion's vision of Israel as a "light unto the nations"—one finds increasingly a narrow nationalism, a new tribalism.

The notion of a fortress Israel, though appealing to some, raises the possibility also of seige and obliteration. Such an eventuality is not without historical precedent. In the first century A.D., the Jewish people in Israel revolted against the Romans. The rebellion was put down. Fleeing Jerusalem after its fall and the destruction of the Second Temple, almost 1,000 religious zealots made their way to the mountaintop fortress of Masada where they managed to keep a Roman army at bay for more than a year. Finally, faced with defeat, capture, and slavery or death, they elected to commit mass suicide. In all, 960 men, women, and children perished.

As an inspiration to an infant country fighting for its very life, the legend of Masada served Israel well. But different times call for different responses. There is also virtue in survival, in distinguishing between the essential and the desirable, in rejoicing in history rather than seeking to repeat it. Chaim Weizmann, Israel's first President, composed this parting admonition on his deathbed: "We are a small people," he said, "but a great people. An ugly and yet a beautiful people. A creative and a destructive people. A people in whom genius and folly are equally commingled. We are an impetuous people who time and again repudiated and wrecked what our ancestors built. For God's sake, let us not allow the breach in the wall to swallow us."

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## BACKGROUND BOOKS

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### ISRAEL

"Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee."

Abraham, an elderly and wealthy resident of Ur (it is thought) in Sumer, did as the Lord bade him, arriving after a time in the Land of Canaan. His descendants fled to Egypt, driven by famine, but after many centuries they returned, taking the Promised Land by force.

The saga of the Israelites from Abraham's era (c. 2000 B.C.) through the Exodus and Babylonian captivity to the successful revolt of the Maccabees against the Greek Seleucid rulers of Palestine in 168 B.C. is recounted in **The Pentateuch and Haftorahs** (Soncino, 1950; rev. ed., 1960), more commonly known as the Old Testament. To the surprise of some, much modern research vouches for the essential "historicity" of the Bible; contemporary Israelis have invested heavily in archeological research—to demonstrate, as diplomat Abba Eban once put it, that Israel "is not a new synthetic nation writing its history on a clean slate."

Yet the slate has often been partially erased. Pompey captured Judea in 63 B.C., ending a century of de facto Jewish independence. The Israelites chafed under Roman rule. The massive revolt of 66–70 A.D. was the focus of Flavius Josephus's **Wars of the Jews** (Peter Smith, 1959, cloth; Penguin, 1959, paper). Josephus, a Romanized Jew, probably intended his book to discourage further outbreaks of the kind that had led to the loss of one million Jewish lives.

But the Jews rose up again in 118 A.D.—and then once more in 132 A.D.,

after Emperor Hadrian announced plans to rebuild Jerusalem as a paganized Roman city. The Romans finally overcame the rebels led by Simeon Bar Kokhba after a tough, three-year war. Most of the remaining Jews in Palestine were massacred, enslaved, or expelled.

Books describing the return of the Jews to Palestine are, as the Bible says of Abraham's descendants, "numberless as the stars in the sky." They include broad historical surveys, such as Martin Gilbert's **Exile and Return** (2 vols., Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1978, out of print); authoritative and balanced treatments of the Mandate, notably J. C. Hurewitz's **The Struggle for Palestine** (Greenwood, 1968, cloth; Schocken, 1976, paper) and Christopher Sykes's lively **Crossroads to Israel** (Ind. Univ., 1973, paper); reminiscences, including **Trial and Error** (Greenwood, 1972), the autobiography of Israel's first President, Chaim Weizmann; collections of speeches and essays, such as David Ben-Gurion's **Rebirth and Destiny of Israel** (Philosophical Library, 1954); and experiments in "historical journalism" like Amos Elon's engaging **The Israelis: Founders and Sons** (Holt, 1971, cloth; Bantam, 1972, paper, out of print).

Palestine proved disappointing. As they disembarked at Yafo, Elon writes, "many arrivals recorded their shock at the Oriental confusion, the noise and the squalor . . . its filthy bazaars, its thoroughly corrupt Turkish administration, its swarms of sore-eyed children, money-changers, peddlars, beggars, flies."

One of the better short introduc-



tions to the birth of Zionism, the mass migration (*aliyah*) of Jews to Palestine, and the social organization of the struggling Jewish community there prior to 1948 is **The Modern History of Israel** (Praeger, 1975, out of print) by Noah Lucas.

Among enlightened European Jews of the 19th century, the notion of socialism as a means of Jewish emancipation predated (and long precluded) serious talk of return to the ancient homeland. A socialist impulse persisted as Zionism gained momentum after the 1880s.

But the socialist-Zionist vision remained only a vision until the arrival in Palestine, during the second *aliyah* (1904–14), of a small group of hard-headed pioneers, who were not café ideologues but pragmatic rebels and ardent nationalists. They were led by such men as David Ben-Gurion (who in 1920, with Berl Katznelson, would found the Histadrut, Israel's labor federation) and the charismatic Russian émigré A. D. Gordon.

Faced, Lucas writes, with an already entrenched class of Jewish landowners from the 1882 migration, Gordon took a group of followers north on foot to the Galilee. There the Gordonites established a network of *ktzuva*, small agricultural units dedicated to self-sufficiency and cooperative trading. These were the forerunners of the *kibbutzim*.

For all their common sense, Lucas concludes, the early settlers of Palestine suffered from some blind spots—especially where the indigenous population was concerned. “The vital illusion beclouding Zionist contemplation of the Arabs,” he writes, “was that well-timed compromises or well-worded gestures of moderation would, by overcoming piecemeal the particular instances of Arab opposition, suffice

to resolve the problems of the relations between the two peoples.”

Combining sharp wit and poetic flair with an acute understanding of international affairs, Arthur Koestler, in **Promise and Fulfillment: Palestine 1917–1949** (New York: Macmillan, 1949, out of print), places much of the blame for the enduring conflict in the Middle East on Great Britain. In essence, he writes, Britain made promises in the Balfour Declaration to both Jews and Arabs that it simply could not keep—on the one hand, creation of a “national home” for the Jewish people; on the other, protection of the “civil and religious rights of non-Jewish communities in Palestine.”

Arab terrorists raided Jewish settlements right under British noses; the Jewish underground, the Haganah and the Irgun, fought back. When the British, preoccupied by withdrawal from India, vacated Palestine in 1948, they made no provision for legal administration or peacekeeping forces in the territory.

“The whole plan and manner of this unprecedented abandonment of a country,” Koestler argues, “after a long period of international trusteeship, with no authorized security forces in any area, could produce no other foreseeable result than to set that country, and *ipso facto* the whole Middle East, ‘afame.’”

So it did—and has. For more than a year following proclamation of the state in 1948, the Israelis, their manpower stretched to the limit, held off invading armies from Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Libya, spearheaded by Jordan's elite Arab Legion. After the UN cease-fire of June 11, 1949, the Israelis, having lost 4,000 soldiers and 2,000 civilians, vowed never again to be caught unprepared.

"Of the many ironies of Israeli life," write Edward Luttwak and Dan Horowitz, in **The Israeli Army** (Harper, 1975, out of print), "none is more significant than the sharp contrast between the near-pacifism of the founding fathers and the military preoccupation of modern Israel." During the 1973 Yom Kippur War, they note, Israel sent into battle the third largest tank force and the sixth largest air force in the Western world. A good supplement to Luttwak and Horowitz is Ze'ev Schiff's profusely illustrated **A History of the Israeli Army** (trans. and ed. by Raphael Rothstein, Straight Arrow Books, 1974).

One of the basic characteristics of Israeli society today is its class stratification—the subject of Sammy Smooha's **Israel: Pluralism and Conflict** (Univ. of Calif., 1978).

There exist, he contends, four levels: "The disenfranchised Palestinian Arabs rank at the bottom, the subordinate Arab minority occupy the next lower layer, the disadvantaged Oriental majority take an intermediate position, and . . . the superior Ashkenazi minority outdistance all the non-European groups." Lawrence Meyer, though echoing Smooha's findings, provides a far more comprehensive picture of modern Israeli society in his vivid survey **Israel Now: Portrait of a Troubled Land** (Delacorte, 1982).

Despite domestic tensions between Jews and Jews, and between Jews and Arabs, the Israeli government has had somewhat better luck moderating differences at home than it has in its dealings abroad. While the United States remains Israel's only steadfast (if not always uncritical) friend, Nadav Safran explains in

**Israel: The Embattled Ally** (Harvard, 1978, cloth & paper), some Israelis find the intimacy of the relationship disquieting. There is, he observes, "a sense of the American 'presence' in every corner of Israeli life. There is hardly an important educational, cultural, scientific, or philanthropic institution today which is not supported in some significant way by American Jewish (as well as governmental) aid." Reminders are everywhere. On the doors of Israeli ambulances, one may find such inscriptions as "Donated by Feigenblat & Blumenkohl, New York."

A more complex association is that of the Israelis and the Egyptians. Howard M. Sachar recounts the parallel emergence of both **Egypt and Israel** (Marek, 1982) from colonialism and traces their "mutual search for political identity"—culminating with the Camp David agreements in 1978. Sachar is the author of several outstanding works on the Jewish state, notably **A History of Israel** (Knopf, 1976, paper only) and **Aliyah: The Peoples of Israel** (Cleveland: World Publishing Co., 1961); his writing is lucid and often anecdotal.

Sachar regards Israel's rapprochement with Egypt as grounds for guarded optimism. But there are still many Jews and Arabs whose philosophy was best expressed by a character in **The Bridal Canopy** (trans. by I. M. Lask, Doubleday, 1st ed., 1937; Schocken, 1967, paper), a novel by Israeli Nobel laureate S. Y. Agnon: "If there's a chance that when I begin treating [a stranger] in friendly fashion I'll have to finish by kicking him, it's better to kick him to begin with and then he won't trouble me any more at all."