Introduction

Expressions of Jewish Identity
in the Modern Era
in the Diaspora and in Israel

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"To the Jews as a nation, nothing;
to the Jews as individuals, everything."
—Antoine Clermont-Tonnere

"To the Jews as a nation, nothing; to the Jews as individuals, everything … [T]hey must be citizens individually." These words have been quoted many times since they were first articulated in December 1789 by Antoine Clermont-Tonnere, in an effort to convince his colleagues in the French National Assembly to support the provision of equal rights to Jews. This short, concise sentence illustrates the complex and problematic situation in which Jews found themselves during the modern era as well. It contains three fundamental concepts that are extremely relevant to the topic at hand: nation, individual, and citizen. The condition which Clermont-Tonnere proposed for providing Jews with equal rights—negation of their existence as a nation—was never clearly defined. In practice, it could never have been formulated in a precise manner in any event.

For example, when a Jewish person attending synagogue in Paris (the modern French state had already guaranteed the right to freedom of religion to all citizens, including Jews) faces east and prays for "next year in Jerusalem," is this merely a religious act or is it also a reflection of a national inclination?

The immanent lack of clarity in this definition has cast a shadow upon Jewish existence for more than two centuries and continues to do so. The new constitutional status enjoyed by the Jews after becoming equal citizens, and the resulting differences and similarities between them and other citizens of the state, was one factor in the emergence of modern anti-Semitism. Moreover, Emancipation and its implications undoubtedly resulted in major changes with long-term, far-reaching impact on Jewish life during the past two centuries. Many historians

regard these two historical processes as the beginning of the modern era of Jewish history.

The fundamental meaning of Emancipation was the majority's provision of equal rights under the law—or full civil equality—to all Jews as individual people and citizens. This resulted in dynamic changes within Jewish society, which made efforts to adapt itself to the changing reality and to take part in shaping it. It is common to understand the *Haskala* as beginning with Moses Mendelssohn (1729–1786) and his associates in the *me'asfim* circle in 1880s Germany. The *Haskala* was aimed at bringing about changes in Jewish society in the realms of social activity, occupation, education, dress, language and religion. It stemmed from internal and external processes and questioned the essence of Judaism and its reason for existing. During the *Haskala,* historical processes that began in the sixteenth and seventeenth century erupted in full force, impacting most parts of the Jewish world during the nineteenth century. The nations that struggled for their right for self-determination in the modern era based their rights on common identity. The Jews first needed to clarify what their identity was.

At a Crossroads

Herein lies the origin of the mysterious rupture at the foundation of Jewish existence. The Jews now stood at a crossroads. To a large degree, despite the great changes that have taken place since then, the Jews of Israel and the Diaspora are still standing at the same juncture, which, as a result of the *Haskala* and Emancipation, requires them to choose a path and define their identity. This has resulted in an opening up of the question of Jewish identity. The differences between the major streams of contemporary Judaism reflect the different responses to the process of Emancipation: Jewish identity prior to the Emancipation appears to be uniform, while Jewish identity after the Emancipation appears divided.

The new situation put the fused national-religious concept of Judaism (which regards Judaism as simultaneously a community, a religion, and a nation) to the test. Jews had to make a fundamental decision between accepting and rejecting Emancipation, between openness and closedness toward the surrounding non-Jewish society and culture. Next, they had to determine their conditions for openness and closedness.

Jews needed to provide answers, first and foremost to themselves, regarding how to relate to the state and the society that granted them equal rights, and how to relate to the price of equality and integration. They faced difficult questions, such as: How should they practice and preserve Judaism as citizens of new nation states? What was the nature of their relationship with the new democracy and the secular state that, in addition to civil equality, was supposed to ensure them religious freedom as well? Moreover, Jews now had to delineate their attitude

toward the new nation state, which was trying to equate citizenship with nationality. When a Jew became a French citizen with equal rights, what was his or her nationality: French or Jewish?

Until the *Haskala* and Emancipation, the Jews were constantly being discriminated against and humiliated. Paradoxically, however, Jews' inferior status enabled them to worship god as they wished. The circumstances and conditions of the traditional Jewish suffering provided them with the ability to preserve their Jewish identity. As long as they were not requested or required to convert to another religion, they could maintain their Jewish identity, including its religious and national-ethnic differentiation from the surrounding population. During the period of Jewish seclusion (whether willing or coerced) that preceded the Emancipation, Judaism cultivated the motif of being a chosen and unique group of people as the foundation of their differences and isolation from non-Jews (*goyim*). The Emancipation also created a future-oriented perspective toward exile and redemption. Messianic redemption, it was thought, would redeem the Jews from their exile.

Over the past two centuries, Jews' answers regarding their Judaism and Jewishness have of course undergone many changes. However, we can nonetheless identify a number of the characteristics that are extremely significant to the discussion here. The immanent, unbreakable connection between religion and nationality was no longer shared by all Jews. The clarifications offered by some Jews with regard to their Jewish identity in its modern sense included some that highlighted the dominance or the exclusivity of the national component, others that highlighted the dominance or the exclusivity of the religious component, and still others that maintained a combination of the two. This process resulted in the emergence of a number of collective national and religious alternatives, alongside the quest for individual solutions.

The Israeli public, which has no experience with pluralism, often needs to be reminded that orthodox Judaism is only one religious alternative and that Zionism was only one national alternative. As a result of the *Haskala* and the Emancipation and based on a desire to solve the emerging problem of Jewish identity, a number of religious streams have been evolving in Judaism since the first half of the 1900s. These streams—the most prominent of which are Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform Judaism—differ from one another on many issues, including: the meaning, substance, and rituals of religion; the relationship between religion and nationalism, faith and ritual, and continuity, change and innovation; and the essence of Jewish-non-Jewish relations. Jews choose to practice different forms of Judaism in accordance with its religious significance for them.

Furthermore, the linkage between religion and nationality, or the concept that the Jewish religion is a national religion espoused by members of the Jewish nation alone, does not imply linkage in the opposite direction. That is to say, Jewish

national identity during the modern period is not necessarily religious national-ism. In contrast to the linkage between religion and national identity, the link in the other direction—between national identity and religion—has ceased to be immanent and self-evident.[1] Many Jews minimize the significance of their religious belonging to Judaism and in some cases deny its very essence. This has introduced non-religious Jews to the stage of Jewish history. Non-religious Jews are secular Jews who do not regard their Judaism as religious in nature and who, to an even greater extent, do not regard religion as an authority for their Judaism. The process of secularization throughout human society in general and Jewish society in particular remains one of the most significant phenomena underway in Jewish society during the nineteenth and twentieth century.

It was against this background that Zionism came into existence, in addition to a number of other movements that emerged at the time. For this reason, it is simply impossible to understand the emergence of Zionism without understand-ing secularization. Again, it is important to emphasize that Zionism has been only one expression of Jewish national sentiment during the modern era of Jew-ish history. Others have included Autonomism, the Bund, and Territorialism. The attraction of universalist and cosmopolitan solutions, including communist revolutionary dogma, is also noteworthy. Jews who were attracted to these ideas, who sometimes had an extremely strong Jewish identity, hoped that the Jews' integration into the surrounding society, and their struggle to change it from its very foundations, would solve the problems of the Jews and create a new inter-national reality in which no fundamental difference existed between the nations. These movements completely rejected religion in general, and Judaism was no exception.

All in all, I can say that Jews chose different ways of addressing the impor-tant challenge they faced, which is first and foremost a challenge of self-identity. Some completely rejected integration, opposed all changes, and held fast to the religion of their ancestors. Others saw integration as a necessity and attempted to negate their religious and national uniqueness by means of conversion or as-similation. Still others, as we have seen, attempted to integrate into society by joining broader movements that would work to erase all national and religious uniqueness. However, what appears to have been a large majority chose neither unconditional integration nor unconditional closedness, but rather embraced various forms of the more moderate approach of integrating into society while maintaining their unique Jewish identity.

During the nineteenth century, Jews underwent a process by which the ele-ments differentiating them from non-Jews diminished. Some refer to this process as assimilation. Others refer to it as acculturation, modernization, or cultural adaptation to the surrounding environment. However, regardless of the termi-nology used, Jews during this period faced difficult questions of identity which they solved in various ways.

The *Haskala* generation of the early nineteenth century answered these questions with the formula: "Be a Jew in your tent and a man when you go out." These words point to a duality and a divided spirit, and illustrate the position of Jews during the Emancipation period as well. The formula envisioning "a Frenchman or German of the religion of Moses" points to a similar duality. During the nineteenth century, some French Jews tried to see themselves as Jewish by religion and French by nationality (like their co-religionists in other European countries), even if some of them had ceased performing religious rituals or believing in religious precepts altogether. At the same time, during the first half of the nineteenth century, the different religious streams of Judaism began to crystallize. These responses were expressions of the great hopes and expectations that Jews had for the Emancipation.

During the second half of the nineteenth century, almost 100 years after the beginning of the Emancipation, often bitter disappointment with the solution it offered and the price Jews had to pay for it had started to emerge. The nineteenth century was not only the era of liberalism but the era of nationalism as well. Jews encountered a chaotic entanglement of national contradictions and the tensions of other nations, and often found it difficult to find themselves. Then, and only then, did the Jews begin developing unique modern national solutions to the question of identity. One of these unique national collective solutions was Zionism—the only one not destroyed by the brutal history of the twentieth century. Fascism and Communism struck the Eastern European human reserve of these movements with a lethal blow. In a very different way, the success of Zionism—which rivaled these movements—also contributed to the disappearance of the non-Zionist national movements. Universalist solutions also met with great failure and disappointment.

In contrast, the different streams of Judaism—which are based on Jewish identity, belonging, and religious practice—still constitute a meaningful expression of Judaism in the West, and particularly in the United States. During the twentieth century, the non-orthodox streams underwent significant changes in their self-consciousness. Rejection of Zionism and the national component of Judaism as a widespread, essential element of the outlook of Reform Judaism declined and subsequently almost disappeared altogether. All the streams contain a hard core that rejects the formula "American in nationality and Jewish in religion." Some Jews express a desire to understand their nationality as Jewish as well, or at least to understand it as a mixed Jewish-American nationality, with varying degrees of emphasis placed on each of the different components.

Individual solutions also still remain. According to a number of assessments, few have chosen the path of conversion. Some, apparently without ideological motivation, have chosen the path of distancing themselves from Jewish identity in a way that makes Jewish identity irrelevant to their lives and devoid of meaning. This approach is commonly referred to as assimilation.

Zionism as Revolution

The question of Jewish identity is undoubtedly one of the most challenging, fundamental questions facing the Jewish world outside of Israel today, at the beginning of the twenty-first century. In this context, the question of how to pass on Jewish identity to future generations has become more significant, and, directly or indirectly, the crystallization of the Jewish-Israeli identity found in Israel may end up being of great and perhaps decisive importance. This is because in some respects, the Jewish reality found in Israel is completely different than that found elsewhere. In other respects, there are many similarities. Zionism, the practical and ideological progenitor of the state of Israel, was and remains an active effort to solve the national problems of the Jewish people and to change its character and culture on the basis of national sovereignty.

Zionist ideology is based on the premise that the Jewish people are a nation like all other nations, aspiring to sovereign self-determination in *Eretz Israel.* As stated in the resolutions of the First Zionist Congress, Zionism aspires to establish a national home for the Jewish people in Eretz Israel. Zionism holds that the Jews are a nation and that Zionism is the Jewish nation's movement of national liberation. First and foremost, this stems from the fact that at least some Jews wish to see themselves as a people. Zionism's object of reference is the Jewish people, whose future existence Zionism is supposed to ensure. The various streams within Zionism that stressed "the suffering of Judaism" instead of "Jewish suffering" (such as spiritual Zionism), also did not relate to Judaism as a religion. Secular Zionist thinkers saw Judaism as a culture.

The "culture question" was already on the agenda during the first Zionist Congresses. To a large extent, this question went unanswered due to pragmatic considerations and the desire to prevent division in the ranks of the still nascent Zionist movement. Over the years, and during its struggles for actualization, which were actually struggles for survival, Zionism refocused its emphasis by moving in political and practical directions and neglecting moral and ideological aspects. The "culture question," which to a large extent is actually a question of Jewish identity, was left unresolved.

According to the historiosophic approach espoused by many, Zionism is a product of world secularization and secularization of a large percentage of the Jews themselves. Zionism also incorporates the profound impact of the nationalist movements of modern Europe and the ideas of modern secular nationalism. Nonetheless, the complex relationship between religion and nationality in the Jewish context has yet to be sufficiently clarified and remains unresolved today, both within the Zionist movement and within the state of Israel.

It is also important to note that, in contrast to all other national and religious responses to the new Jewish post-Emancipation reality, Zionism regarded the con-

tinued existence of Jews among other peoples as a negative phenomenon. This position, known as "negation of the Diaspora," really meant "negation of exile." Other national solutions embraced by Jews regarded the existence of Jews among other nations in a positive light. Without a doubt, the importance of the Land of Israel as a concrete concept, not to mention a target for Jewish political sovereignty, has decreased among the non-orthodox religious streams. Reform Jews in the United States voiced phrases such as "America is our Zion, and Washington our Jerusalem." Although religious Jews forged the connection between "exile and redemption" and messianic faith linked the vision of redemption with the Land of Israel, none of these social expressions brought the Jews to Eretz Israel. Redemption was conceived of as a divine act and as a vision for the distant future and the end of days. Many of the ultra-orthodox conceptualizations regarded Zionism as "climbing a wall," and opposed and struggled against it. At the same time, reform Jews opposed Zionism due to its central Jewish-national component.

Zionism's struggle against the other streams further accentuated the differences among them. Zionism emphasized negation of the exile, which at times drifted into negation of the "exilic Jew" sometimes associated with religious Jews. Instead, Zionism emphasized the "new Jew" of the Land of Israel who differed from the "exilic Jew." In this way, Zionism must be understood as a revolution.[2]

The Ability to Remember and the Ability to Forget

The tension between change and revolution that exists within every revolutionary movement has been clearly manifested in Zionism since its inception. In 1934, Berl Katznelson, a central ideologue of the socialist Zionist movement, wrote the following words:

> Some understand our rebellion according to its simple aim, which is an extremely primitive revolutionary understanding: complete destruction of the old world, the setting ablaze of all the possession that have accumulated over the generations, and starting completely over—like newborn babies! This is a statement with strength and protest power. And a few revolutionaries, in fact, described the anarchistic days of the messiah in such terms. However, it is doubtful that this conceptualization, which naively renounces the entire heritage of so many generations and desires to start building the world from square-one, is progressive and revolutionary. Instead it may seen as profoundly and terribly reactionary.

Katznelson reminds us that "we have been given two abilities: the ability to remember and the ability to forget," and that "we can do nothing without both of them." He also stresses that:

> A rejuvenating, productive generation does not throw the heritage of so many generations onto the trash heap. It examines and checks it, distances it and brings it closer. Some grasp on to an existing tradition and build upon it. Others go down to the trash heap, find things that have been forgotten, polish away the rust, and revive ancient traditions capable of sustaining the soul of the rejuvenating generation.[3]

I am of the opinion that the Zionist revolution placed a greater emphasis on our ability to forget by emphasizing the negation of the Jewish past as opposed to renewal, the rebellion, and the present and future revolution in the Land of Israel. While doing so, the Zionist movement intentionally or unintentionally imbued the youth of the Land of Israel with an ambiguous if not completely negative attitude toward the exilic Jews and the Jewish people, the vast majority of whom did not live in the Land of Israel. Understanding the deep significance of this process is of critical importance for the discussion here, as it alienated and disengaged the youth of the Land of Israel from the greater Jewish people: the point of origin of Zionist ideology, and the object of its vision.

The effort to move "toward normalcy" and the revolutionary component of Zionism produced a stereotypical image and a black-and-white dichotomy of the "exilic Jew" as opposed to the "new Jew" of the Land of Israel. In this way, it disregarded the complexity, the anguish, and the internal contradictions of the modern Jewish experience.

"When a Man Can No Longer Be A Jew, He Becomes A Zionist," and Vice-Versa

Yudka, the hero of Haim Hazaz's story "The Sermon" (*Hadrasha*) clearly articulates this point:

> To my mind, if I am right, Zionism and Judaism are not at all the same, but two things quite different from each other, and maybe even two things directly opposite to each other! At any rate, far from the same. When a man can no longer be a Jew, he becomes a Zionist. I am not exaggerating … Zionism begins with the wreckage of Judaism, from the point where the strength of the people fails. That's a fact!
>
> Please note that: not new or restored, but different … I believe that this Land of Israel already is no longer Jewish. Even now, let alone in the future. Time will tell, as they say.[4]

Yudka speaks these words, which were well-known in their time and which for years were studied in schools, before the secretariat of his kibbutz: "All clean cut and positive, like captains and heroes in council." In a later edition in which Hazaz inserted no substantial changes, the "chairman of the Committee" explic-

itly becomes the "head of the Hagana."[5] In any case, Yudka's words reflect an authentic element in Israelis' sentiments toward Jews and Jewish history.

"The Sermon" was published in many editions. Very few people have noticed that the story first appeared in *Luach Haaretz* in the autumn of 1942, at the height of the Holocaust, when extermination was proceeding in high gear and reports to this effect were already appearing in the print media in Palestine.[6] Hazaz was considered an important author, and the newspaper was highly regarded.

From the Hebrew to the Canaanite

The borderline anti-Semitic character of the writings of the Canaanites during and following the war is hard to believe. In 1943, when the Jewish community in Palestine was aware of the fact that tens of thousands of Jews were being slaughtered each day, Yonatan Ratosh labeled the murdered and fleeing Jews "a mixed multitude of refugees and pilgrims" and called on the Hebrew youth "to be aware of the depth of the chasm and the alienation separating you … from those in the Jewish Diaspora who insisted on this Diaspora, with all its faces, roots, and adaptations, the impact of which remains indelibly imprinted on their thoughts and spirit."[7]

The Canaanite movement was a small organization which encompassed only a small minority of the Jewish youth in Palestine even at its height in the 1940s and early 1950s. Here, I am interested in the extent to which this group constituted an extreme expression of a more moderate phenomenon that existed on a much wider scale. To what degree were large numbers of Jewish youth in Palestine in one way or another Canaanites? Our understanding of the Yishuv's attitude toward the Holocaust as it was taking place, which is still incomplete but which is gradually being clarified from a number of angles.

It is also important to consider whether the Israeli youth of the 1990s have retained some of the more moderate elements of the Canaanite world-view. For the most part, these young people know nothing about the Canaanite movement and are therefore unable to attribute these components of their outlook to this group. In any event, we can identify a tendency toward "post-Canaanite liberalism" in Israeli thought of the 1980s.[8]

"Are We Still Jews?"

Two important essays written in the early 1950s are particularly relevant to the present discussion. The first, titled "Are We Still Jews?", was written by philosopher and educator Ernst Simon.[9] The second, titled "The Nature and Origins of the 'Young Hebrew' (Canaanite) Movement," was written by philosopher and

literary critic Baruch Kurzweil.[10] Simon and Kurzweil argue—in my opinion, somewhat justifiably—that it was Zionism that provided the Canaanites with the ideological tools to develop their philosophy.

According to Kurzweil: "The most important and dangerous elements that appear to belong to this movement alone are also shared, albeit in a concealed manner, by other, completely different circles. To be more specific, the Young Hebrews' positions on Judaism, Zionism, the Jewish past, the values of the Jewish religion, and exile actually provide the clearest indicator of the attitude of the vast majority of the younger generation to these issues."

According to Simon, the group, which was "composed of a small minority of the youth in the country, actually expresses the sentiments of many others who are not organized within its framework." Canaanite ideology, which is of course not Zionist ideology, took Zionist ideas to an absurd extreme. Its mood and its anti-Jewish and anti-exile tendencies were also characteristic of much wider circles.[11]

This perspective helps us better trace the evolution of the identity of the native Israeli—the new Israeli persona of the generation of children of the first waves of Zionist immigration. It has changed in character over the years, at first toward the Hebraism which the founding fathers of Zionism aspired to institute,[12] and later, during the 1940s and the early 1950s, toward Canaanism, which as I have said was an ideology that was explicitly espoused by very few. During the period spanning the second half of the 1950s and the first half of the 1970s, Israeliness replaced Hebraism and Canaanism among what by then was the third and fourth generations in the country.

The Sabra Myth

The concept of "negation of the Diaspora," which at times evolved into negation of the "exilic Jew," has been present to varying degrees in all three phases of the metamorphosis of Israeli identity. During these different periods, attitudes toward Judaism and Jewish values have also been ambiguous at best. The pioneers of the second and third waves of Jewish immigration to Palestine in the early twentieth century cultivated the myth of the "Sabra" with regard to their children, who were completely different from their own ancestors whom they left behind through a painful and tortuous separation. Sabras are sometimes described as people who sprouted out of nowhere. In this way, these pioneers were attempting to erase their exilic past.

From the 1940s onward, and perhaps even earlier, the figure of the Sabra—the "new Jew" who was a native of the Land of Israel—became a common concept, image, and a symbol. This image represented a deep cultural, ideological, and psychological process that, in my view, was the product of the revolutionary na-

ture of Zionist actualization. The Sabra was perceived as an image with vitality and "natural" rootedness that was free of "exilic complexes" and excessive "intellectualism" and "abstraction," and that embodied a new spirit.[13] The native Sabra of the Land of Israel, the "child of the sun," was the "superior Jew" (who to a large extent had freed himself from his Judaism), or the negative of the "exilic," "inferior" Jew.

The Sabra had two specific qualities that were not qualities of exilic Jews: They were farmers, cultivators of land, as well as fighters and soldiers, familiar with war. It is important to remember that in terms of defense and settlement, Zionism's actualizing and revolutionary significance came to be increasingly focused over the course of a number of decades. More than anything else, Zionism in the Land of Israel was in need of and was calling for farmers and fighters. This fact provides a telling indication of the immanent tension in Zionism between continuity on the one hand, and change, revolution, and a yearning for normalcy on the other hand.

The myth of the Sabra—of Israeliness—began to lose currency during the 1970s and has been in continual crisis ever since.[14] During this period, as the Israeli components of our identity weakened, the Jewish components began to gain strength. Thus, we witness the decline of the secular Sabra and the rise of the image of the "religious Sabra"—the member of "Gush Emunim," the political-messianic settler cultivating the new ethos of the Greater Land of Israel. This ethos differs from the religious Zionist and secular Zionist ideal of settlement in that it does not necessarily involve physical labor and social vision. At least initially, the religious Sabra also attracted considerable interest and support as a new type of pioneer in much wider circles.

Who Is a Jew?—An Attempt to Define Identity

During the 1950s and 1960s, questions concerning the essence of Israeliness and Jewishness remained largely unsolved. The deep divisions within Israeli society were now hidden behind the celebratory words of the Declaration of Independence, and the proclamation of "the establishment of a Jewish state in the Land of Israel to be known as the State of Israel" failed to define the Jewishness of "the Jewish state" (and not "the state of the Jews" to which Herzl referred fifty years earlier).

In 1950, the Israeli government placed the Law of Return before the Knesset to be legislated. The law, which has also been referred to as the "who is a Jew" law, expressly stipulates that "every Jew has the right to come to this country as an *oleh* [Jewish immigrant to Israel]." The underlying premise of the law—that Israel belongs not only to its citizens but to all Jewish people, wherever they may live—is a clear reflection of the Zionist character of the state.[15]

The Declaration of Independence and the Law of Return contain expressions of the uniqueness of Jewish history (the nation's separation from its land, anti-Semitism and the Holocaust, the vision of the ingathering of the exiles, etc.). However, they also reflect the tension between this uniqueness on the one hand, and the aspiration for normalcy and the desire to live "like all other nations" on the other hand. For this reason, Israel has not, and I believe cannot adopt the premise of the modern nation state regarding the equivalence of nationality and citizenship. After all, most Jews in the world choose not live in the Jewish state, and a significant percentage of Israeli citizens (1 out of every 6) are not Jewish.

It is no coincidence that the Law of Return fell short of explicitly defining which Jews were eligible to immigrate to Israel. At that time, like today, Israeli society had no clear-cut answer to this question. Nonetheless, in 1970—after a Supreme Court ruling that inquired about policy in this area and had received no answer—the government and the Knesset were compelled to formulate a clear policy on this issue through Knesset legislation. In 1970, the government of Golda Meir introduced an amendment to the Law of Return, which stated that: "For the purposes of this law, 'Jew' means a person who was born of a Jewish mother or has become converted to Judaism and is not a member of another religion." The different instructions that have been introduced by the various ministers of the interior regarding the registration of Jews for the purposes of the Law of Return have reflected the marked differences between the conceptions of nationality that exist throughout Israeli society and within the Israeli government. Over the years, the difficulties surrounding questions on the nature of Jewish identity, the essence of belonging, the process of joining the Jewish people, and the equating of national identity with religion have only increased.

The history of these debates remains relatively unknown throughout the general public and the Israeli student body. Unfortunately, few people know that Bar-Yehuda is not only the name of the bridge that crosses the Yarkon River but also one of Israel's early interior ministers. In March 1958, Interior Minister Israel Bar-Yehuda issued instructions for registering Jews for the purpose of receiving Israeli identity cards. The instructions read as follows: "A person who declares in good faith that he is a Jew shall be registered as a Jew, and no additional evidence shall be required." However, on 22 June 1958, as a result of the public debate on the issue, the government voted to amend the instructions and resolved that: "A person who declares in good faith that he is a Jew, and is not a member of another religion, shall be registered as a Jew." At the same opportunity, the government resolved that if a mother and father declare that their child is a Jew, the child shall be registered as a Jew.[16]

In response to this resolution, the ministers of the National Religious Party (NRP) resigned from the government, and on 15 July the new instructions were suspended and a three-member committee (consisting of the Prime Minister, the Justice Minister, and the Interior Minister) was appointed to consider the

issue. The committee decided to consult with the Jewish sages in Israel and the Diaspora in order to hear their opinions on the matter. Most thought the national component and the religious component could not possibly be separated. Clearly, the disagreement on the matter was one of principle. Without a doubt, closer exploration of the manner in which these disagreements evolved and the nature of the Supreme Court rulings on this and other related issues stands to shed important new light on the question of Jewish-Israeli identity.

The Israeli state leadership, and first and foremost David Ben-Gurion, decided not to decide on these questions out of a desire to prevent a major rupture surrounding fundamental questions during the first years of statehood. Based on his statist approach (*mamlakhtiut*), and apparently due to other factors as well, Ben-Gurion and his colleagues refrained from enforcing their views, which could have led to the emergence of an alternative, secular Jewish nationality. They refrained from a possible political resolution that may have worked against the interests of the religious minority, and this helps explain the "status-quo agreement," the abstention from adopting a constitution, and the dismantling of the workers' sector of the Israeli education system. The subsequent outcome, which they most likely did not expect, was a blurring of the distinction between the national and religious components of Jewish identity and an increased equating of the two. Furthermore, over the years, religious circles have become increasingly extreme in their demands. Some regard this abandonment of the element of change within Zionism as missing a historic opportunity and as something to lament for generations (*bekhiya l'dorot*). In the 1970s and 1980s, a new national ethos that was more religious in nature began to emerge.

Developments in the Israeli education system also reflect a similar trend of statism and amalgamation, which in retrospect appears to imply a degree of concession with regard to the fundamental interests of non-religious Jews. "Jewish consciousness" was introduced into schools in an attempt to chart a more Jewish course for education without actually defining what this course would be.[17] Later, conscious and subconscious attempts would be made to identify Jews with religion. These attempts met with a degree of success.

After the Six Days War

Individually and together, the Six Days War (1967) and the Yom Kippur War (1973) changed everything from the ground up. Israelis' deep fears concerning their future existence, at least on a subjective level, were replaced with sweeping and sometimes almost messianic enthusiasm that had far-reaching long-term influence on questions of identity. The Six Days War has increasingly come to be regarded as a point of historic rupture in the short history of the state of Israel. In many ways, this war was the most significant event after the Holocaust and

the establishment of the state, not only from the perspective of Israeli and Zionist history but in terms of its significance for the Jewish world as a whole.[18] Less than seven years later, Israel suffered the tragedy of the Yom Kippur War, which brought a swift end to the false sense of power that characterized the country during the years following 1967.

Most important for the current discussion is the fact that the combined impact of these two wars resulted in the decline of the mythological Sabra, Israelis' loss of faith in their own power and confidence, and the beginning of a crisis of Israeli identity. The "children of the sun" began to lose their safe horizons, living the war as an existential nightmare and having no idea when the so-called "final war" would be fought. As we will see, Israeli youth perceive wars as decisive events with regard both to their own future and to the destiny of the Jewish people in general.

The combined impact of the Six Days War and the Yom Kippur War, including the effect of the ongoing occupation, accentuated fundamental dilemmas in the Jewish-Israeli experience and the Zionist world-view that had previously been swept under the rug. Disagreements which Israeli society was not strong enough to solve now rose to the surface. Today, forty-three years after the Six Days War, Israeli society is still living out the seventh day of the war and is still standing at a crossroads that demands a clearer definition of its Jewish and Zionist identity.

Below are a number of major dynamics in Jewish-Israeli identity that emerged during the period following the Six Days War:

1. First a Jew

If the period preceding 1967 was characterized by the sentiment "first an Israeli and only then a Jew," the prevalent sentiment following the war was "first a Jew and only then an Israeli." This period witnessed an increasing emphasis on the Jewish components of our identity, a change that was first noticeable in the political realm and among those responsible for shaping the formal education system. As we will see, this emphasis is currently in the process of being internalized by young Israelis, who today express a much weaker level of the sentiment of "first an Israeli." In many ways, the history of the state of Israel has proven the complete reversal described by Yudka in the "Sermon": When Israel could no longer be Zionist—in the original sense of the term—it became Jewish.[19]

However, for most young Israelis, Jewish experience and Jewish life are vague foreign concepts. The members of the generation of their grandparents and great-grandparents who immigrated to the country acquired Jewish roots and knowledge during their childhood, including the ones who rebelled against their religious upbringing. Although they suffered what Schweid has referred to as "the sorrow of severed roots," their roots in Judaism existed, were part of their lives, and were present in their memories. The generation of their parents and

grandparents also had alternative means of Jewish expression to take the place of traditional Judaism. However, most young Israelis today share a sense that for them, when it comes to Judaism, something is missing. As we will see, the Holocaust has played a central role in filling this gap and imbuing their Jewish identity with meaning.

2. A Nation Dwelling Alone

Relations between Jews and non-Jews, and Israel's relations with the rest of the world, have been understood in different ways throughout Israel's existence. Without a doubt, the Zionist vision contained elements of openness to the world, integration, and universalism. Zionism was understood as the only possible solution for normalizing Judaism's distorted relations with other nations. In contrast to the state of Judaism during the Diaspora period, Zionism restored Judaism's significance as a responsible, historical force and aspired to return the Jews as a collective to the family of nations.

In one of many similar quotations, Ben Gurion asserted that:

> Since our last national tragedy—the suppression of the Bar Kochba re-bellion, we have had "histories" of persecution, of legal discrimination, of the Inquisition and the pogroms, of dedication and martyrdom, of scholars and Jewish personages. But, we did not have Jewish history anymore, because a history of a people is only what the people create as a whole, as a national unit, and not the sum total of what happens to individuals and to groups within the people. For the last eighteen hundred years during which our people has been non-existent as a national unit, we have been excluded from world history, which is made up of the histories of nations.[20]

These words are also reminiscent, indeed almost identical, to the words spoken by Yudka in his "sermon."[21]

Zionism attempted to change this situation at its very foundations. Integration and involvement in the world was now an ideal. The leaders of the new state expressed a distinct desire for normalization, to be a nation like all other nations, and to return to the family of nations. Furthermore, the first years of statehood also witnessed a nurturing of the vision of "a light until the nations"—"a treasured nation," in the sense of Ben-Gurion's secular statism. Since then, and since the Six Days War in particular, a large portion of Israeli society has embraced the approach, the rationale, and often the ideal of "a nation that dwells alone" ("… and shall not be counted among the nations.") in both the religious and non-religious senses. Religious circles, and some other circles as well, advance the idea of "a kingdom of priests and a holy people." In these ways, they highlight differentiation and the chosen aspect of the Jewish existence.

Israel's ongoing conflict with the Arab world, which as we have seen constitutes a meaningful aspect of Jewish identity (the impact of which has yet to be adequately explored) and which some in Israeli society regard as unsolvable, is an important force shaping this approach. Another reason is the emergence of the Holocaust as a key element of collective Jewish-Israeli identity, as well as personal, individual identities. In this way, many Israelis began to consider their country as the heir of the hated and persecuted Jew, in the spirit of "and Esau hates Jacob."

It is of course relatively simple to prove the inaccuracy and unfounded nature of this approach, which was reinforced by government propaganda and the education system even before the political turnover of 1977. Irrationality, fear, and anxiety not only gained legitimacy but began to guide Israeli society and the Israeli leadership. This approach stands in stark contrast to the cold, rational, pragmatic analysis and real-politic approach of Israeli state leadership during the first decades of statehood.

3. The Charm of Americanization

Concurrent with, and ostensibly in contradiction to these processes of withdrawal and seclusion, movement in the opposite direction was also underway. Israeli society had developed a fascination with the charisma of America and Americanization, which emphasizes individualism, consumerism, the quest for a high standard of living, and material status. With this, the primacy of values such as "pioneering," "actualization," and "to build and be rebuilt" declined, and were replaced by the quest for "self-fulfillment" in its spiritual and materialistic sense. Israeli society was thus transformed from a society emphasizing collective values and the needs of the general public into a society based on individualistic values—a society that no longer spoke in first person plural. Instead of the often complete identification of society and state, inclinations toward alienation and division intensified. Many came to regard Zionism and its unique creative expressions as something that had already been completed, concluded, or exhausted. For others, Zionism represented ruin. "Could it be that it's over?" sang Arik Einstein, who for decades was one of the most familiar voices in Israeli pop music:

> They say that there was a wonderful dream here,
> But when I came, I didn't find anything.
> Could it be that it's over?

At the same time, Israeli society had to navigate this challenging terrain and confront questions with profound meaning and great potential impact for the society as a whole and the individual lives and personal futures of all of its citizens. These questions pertained to the essence of Judaism and Zionism; the social and economic fabric of Israel; the relationship between religion and state; Jewish im-

migration to Israel; and perhaps most important, war and peace. Unfortunately, however, the decline of common myths and visions did not result in the crystallization of new alternative common goals capable of making society's demands worthy of acceptance. During this period, we can clearly identify processes of exhaustion, separation, and polarization, and of people looking out for their own interests at the expense of the unifying aspects of identity. The sense of mutual obligation that was once so strong in Israel began to decline.

The result has been an ongoing identity crisis that has been reflected (among other things) in Jewish emigration from Israel (*yerida*), and perhaps even more cogently in the legitimacy, acceptance, understanding, and at times justification of this phenomenon in the eyes of the Jewish-Israeli public. The change in attitude toward this phenomenon in recent decades offers important insight into the evolution of Jewish-Israeli identity.

Against this background, other processes reflecting different aspects of existing or aspired-to Jewish-Israeli identity began to take place in the different political and ideological groupings and streams that make up Israeli society. The following brief comments relate not to the political dimensions of these processes, but rather to their ideological-theoretical dimensions in Jewish and Zionist context.

4. Failing to Meet the Challenge of "the Seventh Day"

The difficulties and confusion of secular Judaism were perhaps most discernable in its two major sociopolitical constructions: the labor movement—or socialist Zionism—which had constituted the dominant stream within the leadership of the Zionist movement and the state of Israel; and liberal Zionism. Although to a certain degree the problems began prior to the Six Days War, their most significant manifestation emerged in the labor movement's inability to effectively meet the challenge of the seventh day of the Six Days War. In this context, a shift in Zionist and Jewish-Israeli priorities began.

These two streams within moderate secular Jewish-national Judaism and Zionism sought a means of reconciliation with and integration within the family of nations, and this included an effort to achieve co-existence with the Arab world. In addition to emphasizing the unique nature of Judaism, they also demonstrated an openness to universal values. According to their Zionist vision, the Jewish state and the Land of Israel were essential means toward the actualization of Zionism. However, by Ben-Gurion's statist period, the state had already become more important. After the Six Days War, emphasis was now placed on the "homeland." The vision of the "full" (or "greater") land of Israel was increasingly cultivated in some circles within the secular Zionist labor movement and liberal Zionism. As a result of its internal divisions, the labor movement had lost the ability not only to decide but also to take initiative. It had lost its self-confidence and was transformed from a leading force that played an important, proactive

role in shaping Israeli and Zionist priorities into a force that simply responded to events and developments. Ten years after the Six Days War and three years after the Yom Kippur War, Israel also experienced a political turnover, which removed the Labor Party from government and replaced it with a government led by Israel's political right wing.

The seventh day of the Six Days War has lasted for forty-three years, and who knows what the future holds. The process that brings an end to the war, whether by annexing the territories or withdrawing from them, will involve some of the most significant decisions made since the establishment of the state.

5. *The Rise of Radical Nationalism—From National Identification to Chauvinistic Nationalism*

Since 1967, secular and religious Zionist circles alike have experienced an intensification of radical nationalist trends. This has often taken the form of xenophobic nationalism, rejection of the (non-Jewish) other and an unwillingness to recognize the rights of the other party to the conflict. During this period, Israel's political right wing and radical right have grown stronger.

Religious Zionism also underwent a fundamental change in character. Its focus was no longer "Torah and labor" or even "Torah and *derech eretz* [morally upstanding behavior]." Instead, a great deal of significance was now attributed to the wholeness and the sanctity of the land. It was from these circles that *Gush Emunim* (the Bloc of the Faithful) emerged. Moderation and openness toward other ideas, including secular Zionism, were replaced by radicalization in the religious realm (in competition with the increasingly ultra orthodox Judaism, which was also growing stronger) and the nationalist realm (in competition with the increasingly powerful political right wing and the radical right). Now, the national-religious stream of Zionism placed greater emphasis on the religious sanctity of all parts of the Land of Israel.

In addition to the increased significance of the Land of Israel, radical Israeli nationalism is characterized by a number of other elements, such as an emphasis on the importance of the state itself; a more aggressive approach to Jews' relationship with the world in general and the Arab world in particular (based on the belief that "power will solve everything"); a focus on Jews' differences with and separateness from the rest of the world ("a nation that dwells alone"); a growing need to incorporate hatred and anti-Semitism into Zionist ideology (based on the belief that "the whole world is against us" and the lesson of the Holocaust which obligates Jews to be strong).

Radical nationalism attributes greater importance to Jewish tradition and religion than moderate secular nationalism does. It also attempts to reconnect Israeli society and the Israeli state with the Jewish past and the historic destiny of the Jewish people.

6. Messianism

Although manifestations of messianism have been widespread throughout the religious and secular streams of the Zionist movement during its entire existence, until 1967, messianic sentiments had nonetheless never played a dominant role in the Zionist idea or in Zionist policies and actions. After the Six Days War, messianic sentiments grew stronger, and not only in religious circles. One explanation for this development lies in the intensity and power of the abrupt shift from the deep fear of possible annihilation that characterized the period of waiting preceding the Six Days War, to the elation stemming from the sweeping victory in the war itself. Between May and June 1967, our Jewish and Israeli identity underwent a dramatic transformation. Another factor was the degree to which Israeli society was intoxicated with power after the war. Although entirely different, this dynamic can be compared in intensity to the complete helplessness of the Jewish people during the Holocaust, which had come to an end just over two decades earlier. Although the expressions of messianism among secular Zionists gradually declined, religious Zionism continued to relate to the victory in the Six Days War as a divine miracle, and to the occupied territories as "liberated" parts of the Land of Israel.

In this way, messianic tendencies began to play a more important role in Judaism and Zionism, a trend illustrated by the appearance and ongoing influence of movements such as Gush Emunim[22] and by the increasing acceptance of messianic concepts in some circles within ultra-orthodox Judaism (Chabad, to name one). Here, however, lies an internal weakness of at least a portion of today's national-Zionist sector: The fact that it draws on Zionist messianic ideology, which is transcendental and a-historical in nature, means that, sooner or later, it will suffer the fate of all past messianic movements with beliefs and activities not anchored in the practical reality of their time, but rather in transcendental belief.

Although this study does not explore the concept of messianic Zionism, I must nonetheless point out the serious warnings that have been articulated regarding the future of this religious Zionist stream. In 1976, Yeshayahu Leibowitz wrote: "Ultimately, from a Jewish perspective, delusions of *atchalta d'geula* (Aramaic for "the beginning of the redemption") are likely to result in bitter and unfortunate outcomes for those who embrace them. When the messianic bubble bursts … they will discover 'believers' (*anshei emunim*) that no longer have roots in this Judaism and that no longer find something worthwhile in this Jewish-Israeli reality."[23]

Gershom Scholem, who also directs his comments toward Gush Emunim, asserts clearly and simply that Zionism is not a messianic movement. "…from the moment I grew up and began to think of Zionism in a systematic manner, I concluded that the decisive aspect of Zionism is the fact that it is a process—one of the most legitimate processes—and not a messianic movement. This is its

secret, for as a messianic movement it would be predestined for failure … I think it would be a terrible tragedy if the Zionists or the Zionist movement were to change, to obfuscate the borders between the realms of messianic-religiosity and historical-political reality."[24]

7. Ultra-Orthodoxy

Ultra-orthodox Judaism began to gain strength in the 1970s. During the years immediately following the Holocaust and the establishment of the state of Israel, the ultra-orthodox stream appeared to be growing increasingly marginalized within Jewish society both in Israel and in the Diaspora. Not only had its membership reserve suffered a major blow during the war in Europe, but it also had trouble effectively addressing the religious significance of the Holocaust. How was it possible to explain the murder of 1.5 million innocent children? The ultra-orthodox world also faced the victory of the Zionist movement, its adversary, which had succeeded in establishing a sovereign Jewish state. Indeed, from an ultra-orthodox perspective, the existence of a secular state in the holy land meant either the victory of heresy or an unequivocal confirmation of the failure of religion.[25]

However, as years passed and the original values of Zionism declined, ultra-orthodoxy grew stronger and more self-confident, due among other things to the substantial support of the state of Israel.

Ultra-orthodox Judaism increasingly attempted to present itself as the authentic if not the sole possible Jewish answer. Today, ultra-orthodox Judaism boldly challenges both Jewish secular identity and Jewish national-religious identity. To this end, it stresses the transitory nature of Jewish-Zionist identity and offers a Jewish alternative that negates the impact of the Emancipation, as well as that of the "auto-Emancipation" achieved by Zionism and the state of Israel as a secular state.[26] The 1980s witnessed the emergence of a new ultra-orthodox image and political style that was meant not only to differentiate ultra-orthodox Judaism from the political center, but also to gain greater access to it, influence it, and accrue benefit from it. Some of the ultra-orthodox population—particularly in the Sephardic sector—has become more moderate in its negation of Israeliness, and perhaps in its negation of the state as well.

The Jewish ultra-orthodox worldview consists of a number of basic components, the most important of which are as follows:

1. Rejection of all present or past cultural values that do not originate from Jewish religious sources.
2. Extreme negativity toward, and sectarian seclusion from, all non-ultra-orthodox parts of the Jewish world.
3. Understanding of the Holocaust as a divine punishment for the abandonment of the ultra-orthodox way of life that began with the *Haskala,* or for the sin of Zionism.

4. The repudiation of Zionism and the establishment and existence of the state of Israel as sins aimed at attempting to bring about the messianic era that reject the belief that the ingathering of the exiles will take place at the end of days with the coming of the messiah.

8. A Lack of Failure

Prior to its failure in effectively addressing the challenge of the seventh day of the Six Days War, the troubles facing Israeli society in general and the labor movement and liberal Zionism in particular stemmed largely from the disappointing but natural discrepancy between expectation and reality. The utopian aspirations and vision of Zionism were courageous, all-embracing, and revolutionary, and at times the movement was attributed secular and religious messianic significance. One example of an aspiration which by definition had no chance of complete actualization was the creation of a new model society, a treasured nation and "a light unto the nations."

The same was true of Zionism's failure to create a "new Jew." Zionism not only aspired to return a people to its land, but also sought to give birth to a new type of person—to bring about a revolution within the body and soul of Jews. This aspect of the Zionist worldview resulted in the ideal of the Hebrew and the myth of the Sabra, which portrayed the superior Sabra as the opposite of the inferior exilic Jew. Societies, nations, and revolutionary movements, in particular, set ideals for themselves which they cannot possibly actualize fully. By cultivating a certain myth, such societies may actually inadvertently be sowing the seed of their own failure in the future.

With the wisdom of hindsight, we now know that Zionism, led by the labor movement, went too far in cutting off its roots and cultivating the ethos of rebellion, change, and revolution. It went too far in the intensity of the utopian vision that called for complete destruction of the old world. It goes without saying that Zionism made many mistakes. However, its most serious mistake of all in this context was the division it created between Israelis and Jews—its severing of ties between Jews born in Israel and their brethren abroad. The fulfillment of Zionism, which placed the Jewish people at the top of its agenda, brought the myth of the Sabra—the fruit of its own labor—to a point of rupture.

Consciousness of the homeland cannot come at the expense of consciousness of the nation. The state of Israel exists for the sake of the Jewish people. It has no roots, and its designation for the Jewish people detracts from its importance. From this perspective, Zionism paid a heavy price for its lack of failure in cultivating the myth of the Sabra, which was subsequently shattered.

A rational, critical, sober evaluation of the Zionist enterprise illustrates the fundamental and largely positive change that the Zionist movement and the state of Israel has brought about in the lives of Jews in Israel and the Diaspora. In addi-

tion to its far-reaching vision, Zionism was characterized by a pragmatic and re-
alistic style of thinking that facilitated its success, or at least prevented its failure,
despite the prevailing circumstances in which success appeared highly unlikely.
Critical thinkers have also been hard pressed to ignore Zionism's considerable
successes. As Nathan Rotenstreich wrote in the conclusion of his book *On Jew-
ish Existence in the Present:* "Few social movements have achieved what we have
achieved. Our utopia was not a complete disappointment."[27] Yaakov Talmon,
who typically offers sharp criticism, also acknowledged, "When surveying the
history of national liberation movements, we must conclude that of all national
movements, only Zionism enjoyed such great success in such a relatively short
period of time while facing such enormous difficulties. Even if this remains the
only achievement of that generation, its members can stand proud before the
generations of the future."[28]

9. At a (Second) Crossroads

Until World War II, the Zionist movement was—in the words of Martin Buber
that were initially intended to describe the kibbutz—an "exemplary non-failure."
Since then, the Zionist movement and the state of Israel have been at a Jewish
and Zionist crossroads. The manner in which it crosses this junction will to a
large degree determine not only the future of the state of Israel, but the destiny of
Jewish existence in Israel and the Diaspora as a whole.

    The Zionist movement offered one approach to the continued existence of
Judaism and the Jewish people. Zionists sought the Jewish people's integration
as a collective within the family of nations, without sacrificing their differences
and uniqueness and without waiting passively on the sidelines of history for the
coming of the messiah. Extremely appealing streams and identities within Israeli
society aspire to undermine these Zionist premises. One is the secular and reli-
gious national Zionist stream, which, with or without its messianic attributes,
is represented most clearly by Gush Emunim and its successors. This group at-
tempts to divert the course of Zionism by replacing the redemption of the na-
tion and the individual with redemption of the land and the establishment of
a territorial Land of Israel. In parallel, and in partnership with this stream, the
secular nationalist stream offers a Jewish-Zionist identity based on a foundation
of tribal impulse and political and military power. The non-nationalist ultra-
orthodox stream, in contrast, aspires to return Israel to its pre-Zionist past. These
approaches may lead Israel and contemporary Judaism to a dead end.

    It is a struggle over faith and religion, and a debate between different concepts
in Judaism and Zionism. As we have seen, this competition offers three primary
options: secular radical messianic nationalism, religious radical messianic nation-
alism, and ultra-orthodoxy, all of which offer clear, emphatic answers. A fourth

option—a return to the original objectives of Zionism—is more vague, ambiguous, and indecisive.

It is doubtful whether these fundamental divisions will be resolved in the foreseeable future. The goal should not be a decision in favor of one of these approaches over the others. Rather, Israeli society has the obligation to learn to live with the divisions, to recognize pluralism and to accept difference. We must accept the legitimacy of different expressions of Jewish identity, even if we do not agree with them. If a new Jewish-Israeli existence is to emerge in Israel, it will undoubtedly be multi-faceted and contain many contradictions. The difficult questions, however, still loom: Will Israeli society succeed in building the consensus necessary to ensure the existence of multiple valid and legitimate conceptions of Judaism? Will it be able to produce the mutual tolerance required to ensure the co-existence of different approaches, based on mutual recognized legitimacy? This is the most important question currently facing Jewish Israeli society.

The Choice between the "Objective Jew" and "Subjective Jew"

A final major dilemma that has challenged the Zionist movement throughout its entire existence concerns the nature of Jewish individuals' belonging to the Jewish collective, and the correct way of exercising this belonging. The different solutions to this dilemma have practical, personal, theoretical, and educational implications.

A brief review of the debates surrounding this issue from the early years of Zionism is crucial for our understanding of the question today. Zionism emphasized the national component, or the assertion that the Jews are a nation. Herein lies the revolutionary core of the Zionist idea: In the words of the Basel Program adopted by the first Zionist Congress in 1897, "Zionism aims at establishing for the Jewish people a publicly and legally assured home in the Land of Israel." At the time, a wide variety of groups throughout the Jewish world did not accept the presumption of modern Jewish nationhood. Today, some groups play down the revolutionary essence and profound significance of the national concept at the heart of Zionism.[29] Zionist leaders and philosophers have countered Jewish opponents of this idea with the only answer they could: that the Jews constituted a nation in the present, not just in the past. This was because (most) Jews regarded themselves as part of the Jewish nation and wanted to be defined (right to self-determination) as such, and therefore regarded the revival and self-liberation of the Jewish people as their auto-emancipation. The tensions and divisions between religious circles (*Mizrachi*) and other circles within the Zionist movement, which during the early years of Zionism were led by the "Democratic Fraction," have still not been resolved. As I have noted, the ultra-orthodox opposition to Zionism stemmed from the ultra-orthodox world-view itself.

The question of "who is a Jew" was of course not an issue of practical importance during the early days of Zionism. Nonetheless, the essence, substance, and nature of Judaism and its relationship with the non-Jewish world lay at the heart of the movement's theoretical agenda. As the movement was still in its infancy, Herzl worked to prevent a crisis regarding such fundamental questions at any price. Distancing himself from the rabbis who had supported him would most likely have given Zionism the image of an anti-religious movement. Herzl was undoubtedly justified under the circumstances at the time in trying to preserve the appearance of unity within the nascent movement. Although I am unable to discuss this point in detail here, it is important to note that the prevalent attitude among most non-religious groupings within the Zionist movement was markedly different than the approach later adopted by the state of Israel.[30] Below are some examples of this disparity.

In contrast to the religious concept of the "objective Jew"—a person who is Jewish by virtue of Jewish law, heredity, and belonging—new approaches began to stress the "subjective Jew."[31] This emphasis on willful and conscious aspects of Jewish identity—that is, on the decision to be Jewish and Jewish identification and nationality as a sentiment, a bond of belonging, and an internal reality—was not characteristic of the secular socialist labor movement alone. Rather, it was shaped by much larger circles.

At the turn of the twentieth century, when the Zionist movement was busy with everyday business and the major crisis that followed the Uganda affair and the death of Herzl, the Russian Zionists, who were then the most important and deeply rooted group within the Zionist movement, resolved to "work in the present." This meant strengthening the Jews of the Diaspora as a necessary stage in Zionist actualization. The platform of the Russian Zionist movement, approved at its third general convention in 1906 under the influence of Ze'ev Jabotinsky and Itzhak Greenbaum, read as follows: "The Jewish nation encompasses every Jew who has not announced his withdrawal from the nation."[32] The seventh convention of Russian Zionists, which was held in May 1917, passed resolutions that were almost identical to those passed in 1906 in Helsingfors.[33] On the question of who is a Jew, it was decided: "Every Jew who has not announced his withdrawal from Judaism and is not a member of another religion is Jewish."

The willful aspect of Jewish identity is also emphasized by Ehad Ha'am and Martin Buber, two major Jewish and Zionist philosophers closely associated with Jewish tradition, heritage, and, to a certain extent, at least in the case of Buber, religion. In his 1909 article "Judaism and the Jews," Buber asks:

> Why do we call ourselves Jews? And what does it mean that we are Jews? I want to speak to you not about an abstraction, but about your own life, our own lives … Why do we call ourselves Jews? Merely because our forefathers did so? That is to say, out of a habit that we inherited? Juda-

ism is only meaningful for Jews when it is their internal reality. What is it that makes a person's nation an independent reality in his soul and in his life? What makes a person feel his nation not only around him but within him?[34]

Ahad Ha'am, asks the same question in almost the same words:

> Why are we Jews? How strange the very question! Ask the fire why it burns! Ask the sun why it rises! Ask the tree why it grows! … This is like asking a Jew why he is Jewish. We are incapable of not being what we are. It is within us; it is one of our laws of nature … It emerges from the darkness of our souls, it is part of our heart! It cannot be annulled, overcome or denied, just as the heart itself cannot be annulled, overcome, or denied …[35]

In this context, the Jewish nationalist non-Zionist philosopher Shimon Dubnow reached the following conclusion: "The objective signs of nationality are gradually making way: from the definition of scientific concepts to subjective signs; a spiritual union based on a common cultural inheritance, historical tradition, common spiritual and public ideals, and signs of other characteristic developments."[36] From his perspective, the nation's own self-awareness is the primary criterion of its existence. The guiding principle of the "cultural-national" group was the following formula: "I recognize myself as a nation, therefore I exist."

In an article critiquing the "who is a Jew" law in 1970, philosopher Gershom Scholem, who also had a deep connection to religion, chose a definition that was not based on Jewish law: "A Jew is a person, with at least one Jewish parent, who identifies himself as a Jew and assumes the obligation and right of being a Jew."[37]

Each in their own way, Amos Oz and A. B. Yehoshua, two popular contemporary authors whose literary and journalistic writings deal with these issues, emphasize the elements of choice, freedom, and identification in being a Jew. "A Jew is someone who defines himself as such," writes Yehoshua. "Being a Jew is a matter of choice."[38] Amos Oz also provides a clear answer to the question "who is a Jew?":

> I call Jewish anyone who sees himself as a Jew and anyone who is forced to be a Jew. A Jew is someone who acknowledges his Judaism. A person who acknowledges it in public is usually a Jew by choice. Indeed, a person who acknowledges his or her Judaism to themselves alone is a Jew by fate. Someone who acknowledges no connection to the Jewish people, neither in public nor in secret, in his own torments, is not a Jew, even if Jewish law regards him as a Jew because he was born to a Jewish mother. According to this non-religious definition, a Jew is anyone who chooses or is compelled to share a common fate with other Jews.[39]

Israeli youth, however, are neither exposed to nor familiar with the complexities of the above discussed dilemmas and solutions. It also seems that they do not ponder them. Nonetheless, a mere glance at a daily Israeli newspaper reflects the extent to which we are entangled in and divided about questions regarding the different aspects of our Jewish and Israeli identity. Only rarely do we succeed in creating contexts in which Israeli youth are able to understand the connection between specific newspaper articles, Judaism, and Zionism, as well as the resulting implications for Jewish-Israeli identity. The Israeli education system has not succeeded, and perhaps is not interested in succeeding, in making questions regarding the nature of Judaism, Israeliness, and Zionism relevant for the young people being educated in Israel today. In the context of such issues, the involvement and searching required by all educational processes has rarely been exercised.

Human identity consists of many different elements of a given reality, and only a few components that are actually chosen. In many ways, such elements of choice are the essence of the human struggle and human existence. The fact that someone is Jewish, Israeli, or Zionist is not and should not be obvious or automatic—not even in the state of Israel. Although many would certainly disagree with me, I believe that being Jewish, being Israeli, and being a Zionist are things that should be chosen. Although Judaism and Israeliness constitute part of the objective reality of the life of a Jew born in Israel, they are by no means all-encompassing. Judaism, Israeliness, and Zionism should neither be taken lightly nor taken for granted. They should also not be taken as the precepts of scholars. Young Jewish-Israelis in particular are required to sacrifice many things—at times their lives—for the sake of their Judaism and Israeliness. Their education must provide them with the means to make these choices. Some of us may choose not to be an Israeli, not to be a Zionist, and perhaps not even to be a Jew, and we must recognize the legitimacy of these choices regardless of whether or not we agree with them. The fact of the matter is that a few hundred thousand people who were born as Israelis have already chosen not to be Israeli. This is a phenomenon that must be recognized, even though it may be difficult to accept.

I am aware of the different types of difficulties faced by people trying to change or give up some elements of identity. Still, some people choose to do so, and in some cases are forced to do so. They are also sometimes successful to some degree, albeit at the price of psychological challenges, tensions, and contradictions. I only partially agree with the argument that a Jew cannot cease being a Jew because others will always make him a Jew. The right and obligation to choose is extremely important both from a human perspective and from a Jewish and Zionist perspective. We must recognize people's freedom to choose to belong for themselves. Providing a person with the ability to make such choices is the task of education in the deepest sense of the word. It means enabling a person to understand the issues, to decide among different options, to make a choice based on

free will, and to take responsibility for his or her decision. In my view, enabling people to choose their relationship with Judaism and Zionism is the most profound and true meaning of Jewish and Zionist education.

The empirical data presented throughout this study is neither directly nor indirectly related to the decision of someone to be a Jew. However, the study data does appear to demonstrate that the conditions necessary for making such a decision—which are not always entirely sufficient—do not exist within the Israeli education system. Young Israelis possess neither the knowledge nor the awareness required to make such a decision.

Notes

1. The relationship between religion and nationalism is also not always a given. Consider, for example, the fascinating case of Brother Daniel, who requested to become an Israeli citizen under the Law of Return, and the fundamental questions raised by his subsequent appeal to the Israeli Supreme Court. Ultimately, his request was rejected by a majority opinion. Although there have been few similar cases, Brother Daniel's was certainly not the only one. Another was that of Paris Archbishop Cardinal Jean-Marie Lustiger, who did not regard his position in the Catholic Church as contradicting his sense of belonging to the Jewish people.

2. See Shlomo Avineri, *Varieties of The Zionist Idea* (Tel Aviv, 1980) [Hebrew], particularly the introductory section, titled "Zionist as a Revolution," and the concluding section, titled "Zionism as a Continuous Revolution."

3. Berl Katznelson, "Being Tested (Conversations with Youth Leaders)," in *The Writings of Berl Katznelson,* vol. VI (Tel Aviv, 1950), 388–90 [Hebrew]. Katznelson wrote "Perpetually Enriching Sources" in response to what he referred to as "emotional debates" sparked by his article "Destruction and Uprooting," which discusses the significance of the Ninth of Av for the Land of Israel Labor Movement in general and its young members in particular (365–68).

4. Excerpts from Haim Hazaz, "The Sermon," in *Modern Hebrew Literature,* ed. Robert Alter (New York, 1975), 271–87, 283–85.

5. Hazaz edited this version of the story while he was still alive, in preparation for the publication of all his writings. See Haim Hazaz, *The Sermon and Selected Stories (According to the Curriculum of the Ministry of Education)* (Tel Aviv, 1991) [Hebrew].

6. Although "The Sermon" was written shortly before the extermination of Jews in Europe became public knowledge, its publication at that particular point in time should still be regarded as significant. I believe that "The Sermon" should be understood as a response to the experiences of Jews during that period. It also appears to have been influenced by fear and anxiety stemming from the possibility of an invasion of Rommel's forces into Palestine, and it contains a call for Jewish activism. Regardless, the subject is undoubtedly in need of reassessment. Although "The Sermon" was originally written as one of a number of chapters with a planned continuation, Hazaz never wrote one. Canaanite poet Aharon Amir explains this fact as follows:

    Why?

    Because it made too many waves and toppled too many mountains.

> Because Hazaz had learned of the extent to which his words of rejection and denial took the natural intuition of the masses of Hebrew youth, imprisoned within the confines of Jewish concepts and Zionist education, too far. Because he had learned of the inflamed debates his Sermon had provoked in the meeting places of the different youth movements. Because he had learned of the extent to which the youth understood his words in their simple form, as a sort of "authorization from above" for the sense of uniqueness within them, for their sense of complete detachment from Judaism. Hazaz heard this, and was alarmed. He explained to one of the young Hebrew authors who came to him in those days to discuss his Sermon that he, Hazaz, was allowed to say this and that, as he was completely saturated with Judaism and Jewish values, a Jew down to the very marrow. But those youths who have not read and have not suffered Jewish tribulations—who were they to reject … For whatever reason, a continuation never appeared. (from *Alef,* June–July 1950)

On the attitude of the Jewish youth movements in Palestine toward the Diaspora during the Holocaust, see Yair Auron, *The Attitude of the Youth Movements of the Land of Israel Labor Movement to the Diaspora during the Holocaust,* Symposium on Youth Movement Research (Efal, 1990) [Hebrew].

7. See Yaakov Shavit, *From Hebrew to Canaanite* (Tel Aviv, 1984), 186–90 [Hebrew], which contains a full reprint of Ratush's "Epistle to the Hebrew Youth."

8. Yosef Gorny, *In Search of National Identity* (Tel Aviv, 1990), 279–92 [Hebrew].

9. Ernst Simon, *Are We Still Jews?* (Tel Aviv, 1982) [Hebrew].

10. Baruch Kurzweil, ["The Nature and Origins of the 'Young Hebrew' (Canaanite) Movement," *Luach Haaretz* 1952/3 [Hebrew]. Excerpts taken from Kurzweil's *Our New Literature—Continuity or Revolt?* (Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, 1965), 270–330 [Hebrew].

11. Although Simon and Kurzweil hold opposing opinions on many issues, both voice harsh criticism of secular Zionism and religious Zionism alike for "being far from engaging the fundamental problem of our entity—the revival of the values of Judaism—in a serious, straightforward, living manner." Ibid., 329. Simon issues a stern warning regarding the false call of redemption and the principle that replaces god with the homeland. He is critical of equating the "kingdom of priests" (of the past) with the "kingdom of soldiers" that had been established in its stead, and expresses great concern regarding the future.

12. In this context, see the chapter titled "The Last Jews or the First Arabs," in Shavit, *From Hebrew to Canaanite,* 16–44 [Hebrew]. Shavit holds that "instead of [Hebraism's] ambiguous attitude toward the Jewish past and Jewish heritage, the 'Canaanites' propose complete, unequivocal separation. Hebraism, therefore, is not 'Canaanism.'" Ibid., 11.

13. Ibid., 160.

14. Only six years elapsed between the publication of Amos Elon's *The Israelis: Founders and Sons* (London, 1971) and Amnon Rubinstein's *To Be a Free Nation in Our Land* (Jerusalem, 1977) [Hebrew], which contains a chapter titled "The Rise and Fall of the Mythological Sabra." Also see Oz Almog, *The Sabra: The Creation of the New Jew* (Berkeley, 2000).

15. Ben-Gurion had the following to say about the Law of Return: "The Law of Return is one of the fundamental laws of the state of Israel. It embodies a central purpose of our state, the purpose of ingathering the exiles. This law stipulates that it is not the state that grants Jews from abroad the right to settle in it, but that this right is inherent in any Jew, wherever he may live, if he desires to join in the settling of the country." Law of Return, 1950, *Knesset Debates,* 1950 (6), 2035–36 [Hebrew].

16. The government resolution amended Bar-Yehuda's instructions in at least two fundamental ways: 1) by adding the stipulation regarding those who declare in good faith that they are "not a member of another religion"; and 2) by striking the clause that said that in the event that a person declares in good faith that he is Jewish, "no additional evidence shall be required."

17. Baruch Kurzweil later added the following important comment to his article "The Nature and Origins of the 'Young Hebrew' (Canaanite) Movement," which as we have seen was published in his 1965 book *Our New Literature:* "For the moment, official circles have responded to the situation by 'inventing' a miracle cure: 'Jewish consciousness.' However, this consciousness, which is most clearly characterized by the fact that no one knows what it is, will do nothing to change the situation, which is marked by emptiness, a loss of values, cynicism, and careerism."

18. On this subject, see Yaakov Talmon, "The Six Days War in Historical Perspective," in *The Era of Violence* (Tel Aviv, 1974) [Hebrew]. The article, which foresaw far-reaching processes, was in fact written prior to the Yom Kippur War.

19. On this subject, see Rubinstein, *To Be a Free Nation in Our Land,* 182.

20. Quoted in Yosef Gorny, "The Attitude of the Poale Zion Party in the Land of Israel toward the Diaspora (During the Second Aliyah)," *Hatzionut* 2 (Tel Aviv, 1970–71), 77 [Hebrew]. Ben-Gurion's article was meant to assess the revolutionary significance of the Balfour Declaration, was originally published in Yiddish, and was titled "Die Geula" (The Redemption).

21. "We have no history at all … We didn't make our own history, the Goyim made it for us … What is there in it? Oppression, defamation, persecution, martyrdom. And again, and again, and again without end … I would simply forbid teaching our children Jewish history. Why the devil teach them about their ancestors' shame? I would just say to them: 'Boys, from the day we were driven out from our land we've been a people without history. Class dismissed. Go out and play football …" Hazaz, "The Sermon," 274–75.

22. Zvi Raanan, *Gush Emunim* (Tel Aviv, 1980) [Hebrew]; Amnon Rubinstein, *The Zionist Dream Revisited: From Herzl to Gush Emunim and Back* (Tel Aviv, 1980) [Hebrew], particularly the chapter titled "Gush Emunim and its Secular Partners," 111–33; and Danny Rubinstein, *On the Lord's Side: Gush Emunim* (Tel Aviv, 1982) [Hebrew].

23. Yeshayahu Leibowitz, *Faith, History and Values* (Jerusalem, 1983), 219 [Hebrew] (excerpt taken from the article "Faith and the Faithful").

24. Gershom Scholem, *Dvarim be-Go* (Tel Aviv, 1976), 49 [Hebrew].

25. Eliezer Schweid, "The Justification of Religion and the Test of the Holocaust," *Yahadut Zmanenu* 5 (1988–89) [Hebrew]; and Menachem Friedman, "The State of Israel as a Religious Dilemma," *Alapyim* 3 (1990): 24–68 [Hebrew].

26. On ultra-orthodox Jewry in Israel, see (among other sources) Menachem Friedman's books: *Society and Religion: The Non-Zionist Orthodoxy in the Land of Israel, 1918–1936* (Jerusalem, 1978) [Hebrew]; and *The Haredi Ultra-Orthodox Society: Sources Trends and Processes* (Jerusalem, 1991) [Hebrew].

27. Nathan Rotenstreich, *On Jewish Existence in the Present* (Tel Aviv, 1972), 187 [Hebrew].

28. Talmon, "The Six Days War," 378.

29. Instead, they stress the connection between the people of Israel and the Land of Israel, and the religious aspect of the relationship "between Zion and Zionism." In this way, they highlight the continuity of the Jewish presence in the Land of Israel, sometimes through a tendentious presentation of the facts. They also tend to downplay the fundamental dif-

ferences between pre-Zionist Jewish immigration to the Land of Israel and the later waves of Zionist immigration.

30. See Ehud Luz, *Parallels Meet* (Tel Aviv, 1985) [Hebrew]. According to Luz, the place of religion (or tradition) in national life was the most important internal question facing the Eastern European Zionist movement during its early years. Ibid., 10.

31. See Rotenstreich, *On Jewish Existence in the Present,* 107–08.

32. Aryeh Rafaeli, *National Conventions of Russian Zionists: A Source on the Zionist Movement in Russia* (Tel Aviv, 1963–34), 98–99 [Hebrew].

33. The resolutions passed by the convention addressed issues such as the political struggle to ensure national autonomy and the civil and national rights of all minorities in Russia.

34. Martin Buber, *Judaism and the Jews* (Jerusalem, 1959–60) [Hebrew].

35. Ehad Ha'am, "Three Steps," in *Collected Writings of Ahad Ha'am* (Tel Aviv, 1952–53), 151 [Hebrew] (originally published 1899).

36. Shimon Dubnow, "The Doctrine of Israeli Nationalism," in *Letters on Ancient and Modern Judaism* (Tel Aviv, 1936–37), 14–24 [Hebrew] (originally written between 1897 and 1903).

37. Gershom Scholem, "Who Is a Jew?" in *Dvarim be-Go,* 596. Scholem believed that it was the government of Ben-Gurion, not Golda Meir, that bore responsibility for the ancient sin.

38. A. B. Yehoshua, *Toward Normalcy* (Jerusalem, 1980), 110–15 [Hebrew].

39. Amos Oz, "Homeland," in *Under This Blazing Light (Essays)* (Tel Aviv, 1979), 74 [Hebrew] (originally published 1967).