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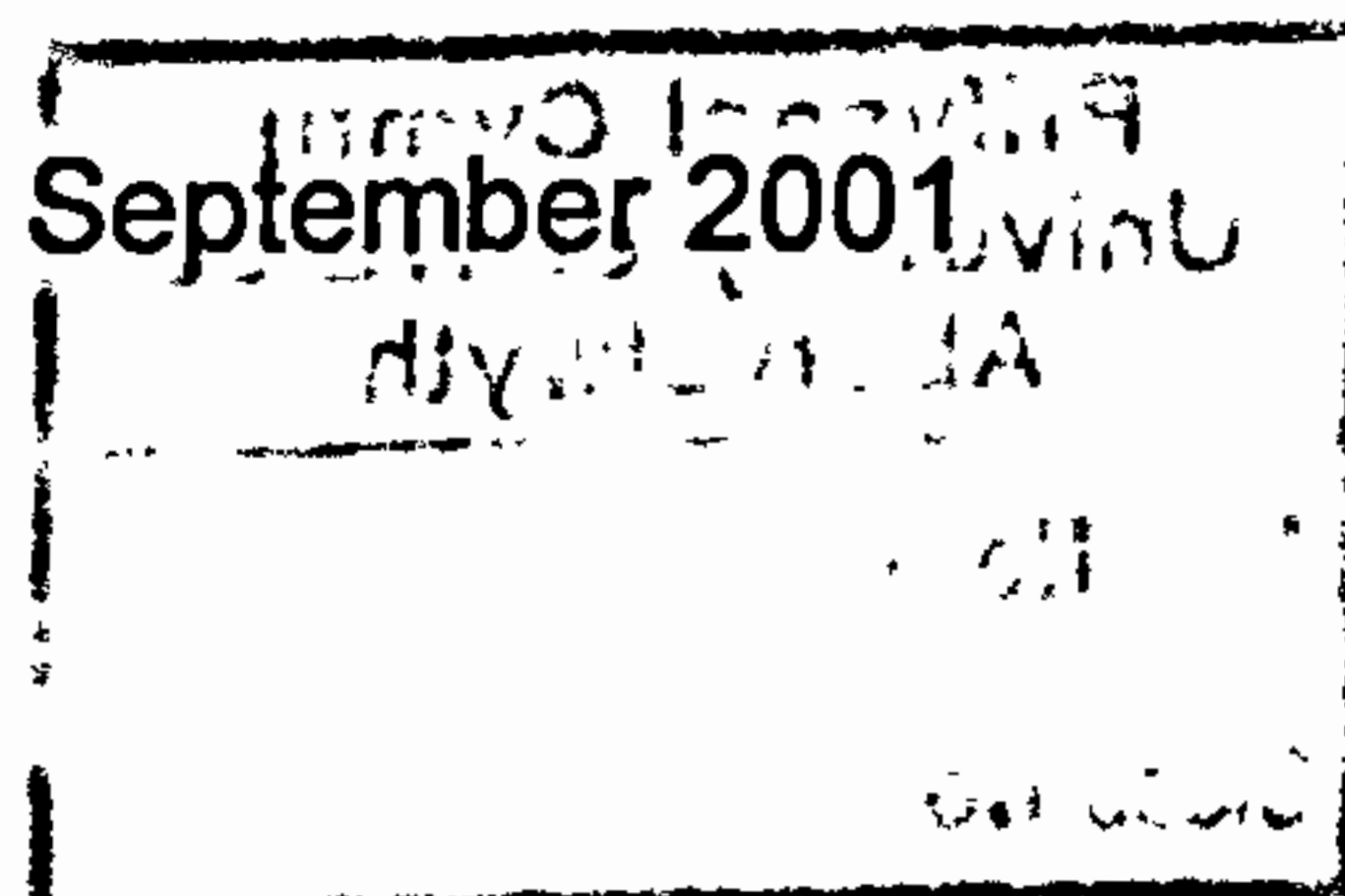
Department of International Politics

TRAUMA AND THE MAKING OF ISRAEL'S SECURITY

This thesis is being submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree
of PhD in International Politics

By

Hannah Starman



To Andreja with all my love.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank first and foremost, my thesis supervisors, Dr. Tim Dunne and Prof. Ken Booth. Tim Dunne has been a constant source of inspiration and support. His thoughtful and competent criticism at various stages of the thesis has been crucial for both the progress and the quality of my research. Tim also read the entire manuscript and made valuable editorial suggestions on several occasions. Despite his numerous other responsibilities that demanded his attention, Prof. Ken Booth has always afforded me his time and advice whenever I needed it, and I thank him for that.

The Department of International Politics has granted me the E.H. Carr Award without which I could not have pursued the work on this thesis. The Department has also provided me with an intellectual environment and expertise that welcomed creativity and fostered critical spirit. Numerous discussions with members of the faculty, especially with Dr. Jenny Edkins, Prof. Steve Smith, and Prof. Mike Foley, have helped me refine and focus my ideas. I also wish to thank Prof. William D. Rubinstein from the Department of History for supplying me with articles and references relevant to my research and for spending his lunch hours to enlighten me on various other issues in modern history.

My special gratitude and appreciation go to Yael and Rabbi Hillel Simon who never missed an occasion to further my Jewish knowledge and patiently answered my endless questions about Chassidism and Jewish mystical traditions. I would also like to use this occasion to express my fondness to all the wonderful people at the Cardiff New Synagogue who made me feel at home in their community. Eileen and Norman Berg have offered me their hospitality, affection, and encouragement on countless occasions, and Louise and Barry Fuller gave me the magnificent gift of Encyclopaedia Judaica. I am especially grateful to my friend and teacher Rabbi Elaina Rothman and her husband Gerald for their friendship and kind support.

This thesis has required research in Israel where I spent six months during 1999. The British Friends of the Hebrew University and The Ian Karter Foundation have contributed the resources that made my research in Israel possible. My Israeli friends were wonderful in their efforts to introduce me to people who could help me advance in my inquiries. Doron Greenspan and Morit Heitzler offered me all the benefits of an unyielding friendship combined with professional expertise. Doron translated part of my Hebrew sources and provided me with some valuable references. Morit spent hours of her beach time in Tel Aviv discussing trauma and the Holocaust, and I can think of very few people who would do this for me. I also wish to thank Tamar Agnon and her family for their hospitality in Jerusalem and Eilat, and Daphna Golan for her help with advice and contacts.

I would like to express my gratitude to all the people in Israel, Germany, France, and in the United States who kindly took time to talk about my research and answer my questions, especially Prof. Asher Arian, Prof. Shlomo Aronson, Dr. Benjamin Ze'ev Begin, Dr. Liora Bilsky, Dr. Yael Danielli, Prof. Yaron Ezrahi, Mr. Alain Finkelkraut, Dr. Ruth Firer, Justice Moshe Landau, Prof. Efraim Inbar, Prof. Ruth Kartun-Blum, Mr. Amos Oz, Prof. Israel Shahak, Mr. Yehuda Sheffer, Prof. Moshe Zuckermann, Prof. Shai Feldman, and Prof. Michael Walzer.

My very special thanks go to Sandra Schiller who was genuinely interested in my subject and often discussed with me extensively. She also helped me in my research by sending me last-minute articles, read parts of the manuscript, and made numerous valuable suggestions. Sandra and her partner Chris have been reliable friends and priceless hosts during my stays in Tübingen and Heidelberg. Annegret Buske and Claudia Fussel have always welcomed me in Berlin and never refused to give me their precious medical and psycho-therapeutical point of view on my research. Liz Brook-Powell also never failed to provide me with the necessary medical references and a bed in NYC.

Throughout the solitary period of writing I received steadfast encouragement and support from my family and friends. I owe special gratitude to my mother who read parts of the final version and printed the entire thesis for me. Both my mother and grandmother have shown extraordinary patience in putting up with my mood swings as the deadline approached and I remain forever thankful. I would also like to thank my aunt Lidija De Angelis, my cousin Amy Okršlar, my uncle Tomaž Okršlar, and my friends Anne B., Ash, Mojca Škrinjar, and Nicole N., for their love and support. Last but not least I wish to thank Janko Jamšek for being such a wonderful and devoted father and teacher.

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Introduction

The thinking that resulted in this thesis has its roots in the first televised images that marked my childhood. The destruction of Beirut under the Israeli fire was *the* news item during my first school holidays. I was seven years old and I remember seeing Menachem Begin's impassionate speeches, thinking that they made sense. Knowing that Hitler was the ultimate evil, and hearing that Arafat was like Hitler, how could it be wrong to destroy him? But when I looked among the images of people in Beirut to find the Nazis, all I could see were people who looked poor, quiet or scared. Nothing like the tall and erect Nazis, shouting out orders in their uniforms and shiny boots. I was confused. And this confusion bred a lifelong interest in what was really going on in Israel. How could a people that had suffered so much cause so much suffering? Why were they telling the world that they were fighting the Nazis? And why did the world believe them? Years later I came across an article which seemed to answer my question. The author concluded with the following words:

The inability of many Israelis to tell the difference between Nazis and Palestinians, and their inability to recognise their own military superiority so that they could understand that they are no longer a powerless people trembling at the threshold of the extermination camps of Europe is not a willed stupidity. It is, rather, a pathological distortion based on the trauma of victimisation not yet overcome.¹

The project of this thesis started with a curiosity awoken by the idea that collectivities can suffer from the same pathological symptoms as do individuals. If it could be shown that a collective trauma indeed exists and unfolds within a given society in a way similar to that observed in individual trauma survivors, then the argument would hold a great interest for the study of international relations. I decided to pursue my curiosity.

The questions that this thesis addresses are therefore the following: Is the Holocaust a collective trauma of the Israeli Jews? If yes, how does it deploy its

¹ Lerner, M., "Psychological Dimensions of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict" *Tikkun* 4: 5 (September-October 1989) p. 44.

effects within the Israeli society? I was particularly interested in the impact of the trauma on the Israeli concept of security, which brings me to the central question of this thesis: What is the impact of the Holocaust on Israel's making of security?

The choice of Israel as a case study came naturally. Not only because Israel kindled my interest in the first place, but more importantly because of the historical connection between the Holocaust and the State of Israel. The Nazi destruction of European Jewry represents the very paradigm of massive psychic trauma and its effects on the survivors and their children have been studied in great length by the trauma specialists, both in the clinical and in the psycho-therapeutic fields. Furthermore, the State of Israel has claimed a special relationship with the Holocaust and its survivors ever since its establishment in 1948 as shown in Tom Segev's major contribution to the history of Israel's dealing with the Holocaust.² Thirdly, Israel has been exposed to a precarious security situation that reinforced the identification with the Holocaust victims and thereby facilitated collective traumatisation. And fourthly, Israel is a young country with a small political, intellectual and cultural elite. It has a strong executive with the Prime Minister often conjoining the function of Minister of Defence. The leaders are few and their personal histories often coincide with that of the state itself. That means that if some leaders are personally affected by trauma their traumatised worldview will have a greater impact on the country's foreign and security policy than in a country with more checks and balances. For all those reasons Israel is the most likely candidate for collective traumatisation.

In this thesis, I will argue that the murder of European Jewry during the Second World War severely traumatised the Jewish people in Israel. Furthermore, this traumatisation had a profound impact on the young nation's conception of its security, both in terms of the perception of threat and the understanding of legitimate ways to counter the perceived threat. Consequently, I will maintain that any attempt to normalise the Israeli society will have to take the reality of its traumatisation into account.

² Segev, T., *The Seventh Million: The Israelis and the Holocaust* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993).

In order to sustain the above-cited argument, this thesis will draw upon three bodies of literature, which have not been combined in the study of international relations before: clinical and psycho-therapeutic research, history, and international relations. The clinical and psycho-therapeutic research into the post-traumatic stress disorders (PTSD) of the Holocaust survivors and their offspring provides the medical definition of trauma, a description of post-traumatic symptoms, and an outline of a recovery process based on years of clinical practice with the Holocaust and other survivors. History is crucial to retrace the narrative of events that provide the background to a particular stage of traumatising or healing. I relied on recent historical accounts of Israel's relationship with the Holocaust and its survivors (namely those by Tom Segev and Idith Zertal³), but also on some primary sources (Eichmann's trial transcripts), biographies and memoirs of the Israeli leaders, and secondary literature that supports my case studies. Although the international relations literature in this thesis is scarce, the focus of my research remains firmly embedded within the outer confines of international relations, which I hope this thesis will help bring towards the mainstream of the discipline.

The thesis is organised in six chapters and each chapter in two parts, with the exception of Chapter Three, which has three parts. Each part combines a theoretical discussion of trauma with an empirical illustration of the argument. The more detailed description of the chapters follows here.

In Chapter One, I will seek to demonstrate the presence of trauma within the Israeli society. After defining and circumscribing the concept of trauma both on individual and collective levels, I will systematise the Holocaust-related traumas into a typology of Holocaust survivors' groups in Israel. The aim of this typology is to determine the traumatic syndromes on the basis of each group's experience of the Holocaust. Such approach will allow a much more refined analysis of post-traumatic stress syndromes than it has been previously applied to nations or other human collectivities. Moreover, the systematisation of trauma by survivors' experience of the traumatic event will be crucial for an accurate assessment of its long-term effect. This is because the processes of traumatising and recovery vary between the individual

³ Zertal, I., *From Catastrophe To Power: Holocaust Survivors And The Emergence Of Israel* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

and collective survivors' groups. The first part of the chapter will focus on the personal traumas experienced by individual survivors and their offspring. Based on clinical research regarding the traumatisation of the physical survivors and its transgenerational transmission, I will identify the main features of post-traumatic syndromes observed in three groups of physical survivors (concentration camp survivors, fighting survivors and survivors in hiding) and in their children. In the second part of Chapter One, I will build upon Kai Erikson's research into the ways in which communities respond to the traumatic events to conceptualise the Holocaust trauma on the collective level. Given the distinct nature of collective traumatisation, the two groups of collective survivors – empathetic 'survivors' (members of the targeted community) and symbolic 'survivors' (the targeted community itself) – are affected both through a process of identification with the physical survivors, by the cumulative effect of individual traumas on the community, and by the overall destruction of the community's resources and focus of identification.

On the basis of the findings in the first chapter, Chapter Two will explore the link between trauma and security as it translates into the Israeli reality. The first part of the chapter will introduce the concept of Jewish prism, defined as a traumatised view of the world, which distorts reality by overemphasising the extremes and underemphasizing the nuance. Formulated primarily around the lessons and understandings of the Holocaust, but also informed by the historical memory of Jewish persecution, the Jewish prism consists of six key elements: Zionism, pessimism / fatalism, isolationism, expressivist use of force, and humanism / criticism. The Zionist facet of the prism represents the State of Israel as the only shield against future holocausts; pessimism projects the threat of annihilation on almost every situation, and fatalism frames this threat within an inevitable 'reality' of millennial Gentile hatred of the Jews. Such an extreme and Manichean perception of strategic reality justifies an exaggerated use of force which also serves to assuage feelings of revenge. Humanism and criticism, expressed as identification with the suffering of others, reflect sharpened sensitivity and higher moral standards acquired by the experience of being persecuted oneself. However, given the decisive predominance of particularistic elements over universalistic ones, a traumatised view of the world remains essentially self-centred. The second part of the chapter will outline short portraits of Israeli leaders who had a significant impact on Israel's

conceptualisation and exercise of security in an effort to detect elements of the Jewish prism in their perception of the world and Israel in relation to it.

The third and fourth chapters will revolve around the cardinal question of collective traumatisation of the Israeli society through gradual integration of the Holocaust trauma during the first two decades after the individual traumatisation took place during the Second World War. Based primarily on the scholarship of Israeli historians Tom Segev and Idith Zertal, Chapter Three will juxtapose the process of individual healing of the physical survivors with the first three phases of collective traumatisation: euphoria, encounter, and estrangement. Euphoria is the first community reaction to trauma: joy that part of the community survived and can be saved. The first part of Chapter Three will study euphoria in Israel during the period of clandestine immigration. The second part of the chapter will focus on the encounter with the physical survivors arriving to Palestine. During this second phase of collective traumatisation the first assessment of damage inflicted on the community and its surviving members is carried out. Consequently, in the phase of estrangement studied in part three, those who are not affected by trauma distance themselves from the survivors. The community reactions to trauma may encourage or impede the individual process of recovery. In the third chapter I hope to convey the mixed record of this individual - collective dynamics in the 1950s Israel.

Chapter Four will focus on the crucial moment in the healing process – reconstruction of the narrative of the traumatic event. The first part of the chapter frames the reconstruction of trauma as the beginning of personal and collective recovery. At this stage, the individual survivors reconstruct the narrative of their traumas and integrate the traumatic memory into their life story. Through the same mechanism, communities reconstruct the narrative of communal trauma in three steps: reclamation of earlier history of the community, recollection of facts in chronological order, reactivation and verbalisation of emotional sensations of trauma, and reconstruction of a value and belief system that integrates trauma and provides guidelines for future behaviour. In Israel, such reconstruction took place at the trial of a Nazi war criminal Adolf Eichmann in 1961. The second part of the chapter will analyse the construction of the Holocaust narrative during Eichmann's trial. Basing my analysis on the full transcript of the trial itself, corroborated with the accounts of

its chief protagonists, I will first situate the trial in its political context and identify its principal aims, before proceeding to an examination of how, to what extent, and with which consequences had these aims been realised. The third part of the chapter will assess the psychological impact of the Eichmann's trial on the individual survivors and on the Israeli Jewish community as a whole. I will argue that whilst the impact of the Eichmann's trial on survivors was highly beneficial, it finally traumatised the Israeli Jewish community through the process of identification.

Chapters Five and Six will analyse the practical implications of the Holocaust trauma for Israel's security. Chapter Five will focus on the influence of the Holocaust-permeated Jewish prism that emerged from the Eichmann trial on the leaders' perception of Israel's geo-strategic environment during the Six-Day and Yom Kippur Wars. The first part of the chapter will study the discrepancy between the sense of impending annihilation preceding the Six-Day War and the scope of Israel's victory. I will argue that both the exaggeration of threat and the mystification of victory originate from the traumatised worldview informed by the lessons of the Holocaust. The Six-Day War was a reactivation of the original trauma where those in charge of Israel's security sought to apply the lessons of the Holocaust and use what was perceived as the 'second chance' to secure a positive outcome. In the second part, I will examine the incongruity between the extent of victory after the Arab surprise attack in 1973 and the subsequent representation of the Yom Kippur War as a failure. Based on the scholarship of the Israeli sociologist Charles S. Liebman who analysed the reasons for recalling the Yom Kippur war as a calamity, I will suggest that such conceptualisation of the 1973 war serves an inner need of the great majority of the Israeli public that was then unable to confront the reality of Israeli power and its consequences.

In Chapter Six I will examine the critical juxtaposition of personal and collective traumas during Prime Minister's Begin's two terms in office. In the first part of the chapter I will seek to demonstrate that Begin's personal experience as a Holocaust survivor reinforced the particularistic elements of the Jewish prism. Building upon the findings of the clinical research, I will argue that Begin's emphasis on the expressivist use of force originated from a deep inner desire for vengeance. It was this fantasy of revenge that motivated Begin's decision to invade Lebanon in

1982 and to continue justifying the invasion even against intense international criticism and internal opposition. The second part will show that the excesses committed during the war in Lebanon precipitated a significant segment of the Israeli population into the next stage of recovery, that is, mourning. After reviewing the process of mourning from a clinical perspective, I will apply it to the analysis of Israel's identity crisis in the wake of the Lebanon war and argue that the twin trend of polarisation and radicalisation of the Holocaust lessons in the 1980s resulted from various strategies of resistance to mourning.

In the light of the findings of the thesis, the conclusion will review the state of the collective mourning process in Israel and evaluate the results of the profound self-examination that has taken place among the country's elites in the past two decades. I will end this thesis by suggesting that the recent trends observable in the Israeli academia, literature, and politics have an incredible potential to resolve the fifty year old trauma of the Israeli society as long as its presence is acknowledged and its symptoms not mistaken for bad will or conscious manipulation.

As the above outline shows, the thesis will contain three case studies and two mini case studies:

- Clandestine immigration and *Exodus* (mini case study)
- Eichmann's trial (case study)
- Six-Day War (case study)
- Yom Kippur War (case study)
- Invasion of Lebanon (mini case study)

The mini case studies will be used to illustrate or support a particular assertion within a given chapter, while the case studies will dominate the chapter and will be used to develop an argument rather than just illustrate it. The mini cases have been chosen according to their appropriateness to support a given argument. Thus the clandestine immigration and the story of *Exodus* offer the most suitable background to a discussion of the collective euphoria after the Second World War. Similarly, the invasion of Lebanon in 1982 will best frame the discussion of collective mourning, different resistances to it, and the crisis of Israel's victim identity. The Eichmann's

trial has been chosen because it represents the turning point and the single most important event in Israel's dealing with the Holocaust. It was at this trial that the Holocaust narrative was first publicly reconstructed and the Holocaust survivors first acknowledged and accepted by the Israelis. The trial had vital political and psychological consequences including the completion of collective traumatising and the beginning of healing. The Six-Day War is equally unavoidable because it represents another turning point – the 'Holocaust that did not happen' and a confirmation of the validity of the Holocaust lessons that emerged from the Eichmann's trial. At the same time, the Six-Day War begs the discussion of the Kippur war because the 'calamity' of 1973 shattered the promise of 1967, brought the nation back into victimhood, and thereby destroyed the healing potential of the 1967 victory. The 1982 invasion of Lebanon is also a milestone event in Israel's history and a crucial stage in Israel's story of recovery from trauma. Lebanon is the major event during Menachem Begin's term in office as a Prime Minister and therefore best illustrates his worldview and his revenge fantasy. Concurrently, the ill-conceived invasion of Lebanon precipitated almost a third of Israelis into introspection and mourning, breaking the consensus on the meanings, understandings, and lessons of the Holocaust and thereby marking a new stage in Israel's collective recovery.

This thesis aims to contribute to the field of International Relations by introducing a new, and in my view essential, dimension into the study of international relations – trauma. In the light of the recent fundamental change of security paradigm following the terrorist attack in the United States, I believe that massive traumatisations of civilian populations will require an approach to security that will take trauma into account. I also hope that the findings of this thesis will benefit critical scholarship by drawing attention to the presence of trauma and its symptoms in Israel, which in turn will alleviate some of the frustrations experienced by the critics and encourage a more compassionate attitude towards their traditional Zionist opponents.

Chapter One

HOLOCAUST AS TRAUMA

Introduction

On my left forearm I bear the Auschwitz number: it reads more briefly than the Pentateuch or the Talmud and yet it provides more thorough information. It is also more binding than the basic formulas of Jewish existence.¹

The purpose of this chapter is threefold: to define and unpack the concept of trauma, both on individual and on the collective levels, to systematise the Holocaust-related traumas, and to identify various groups of survivors in Israel on the basis of their war experience and the traumatic syndromes they developed afterwards. The organisation of the chapter seeks to disentangle the complex interweaving of Holocaust related traumas and survivors. The first part focuses on the concept of trauma with reference to individual survivors and their offspring. Based on clinical studies of survivors and their children, the section outlines the post-traumatic disorders observed in survivors as well as their intergenerational transmission. On the basis of their shared ordeal, three subgroups of physical survivors are examined: concentration and death camp survivors, survivors in hiding, and fighting survivors. Far from reflecting the totality of the Holocaust experience, this typology reintroduces two categories of survivors (fighting and hiding) that have been traditionally omitted from discussions of trauma, both because their traumas were considered less consequential and because they themselves rarely sought medical help. Among the subgroup of survivors in hiding, the exposure of hidden children to the Holocaust is of particular interest because the children were often traumatised twice: as survivors in their own right, and as children of survivors. Hidden children are also the youngest and therefore the last generation of physical survivors. The last group of this first part consist of the children of survivors who were born after the war – the so-called second generation. The intergenerational transmission of their parents' trauma is studied primarily with reference to the existing research on the traumatic symptoms observed in survivors' children.

¹ Amery, J., *At the Mind's Limits: Contemplations by a Survivor on Auschwitz and its Realities* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980) p. 58.

The second part conceptualises Holocaust trauma on the collective level. Based on the scholarship of Kai Erikson, a Professor of sociology at Yale, a model of communal trauma is introduced. Unlike the individual trauma with its direct impact on the survivors, communal trauma is a secondary, derived trauma. Two groups of communal “survivors” illustrate the singular operation of trauma on the level of community: empathetic (members the same community) and symbolic (the community itself). Empathetic “survivors” are affected chiefly through a process of identification with survivors and victims who were members of their community. Symbolic “survivors”, on the other hand, suffer primarily from the cumulative effect of individual traumas on the community as a whole and the overall destruction of community resources. The conceptualisation of trauma on both individual and collective levels is crucial for an accurate representation of its the long-term impact. As the individual survivors deal with their own personal tragedies, they also participate in shaping the collective understandings and experience of trauma. Inversely, empathetic and symbolic survivors need the authentic narrative of the trauma in order to grasp the magnitude of disaster through the process of identification with its victims and survivors. With the passage of time, as those who personally survived the traumatic event age and pass away, the collective survivors became the primary carriers and defenders of the collective narrative of trauma. As the conclusions to this thesis indicate, it is very important that the essential stages of healing from trauma are completed while the authentic narrative of the traumatic event is still available and amenable, lest the trauma becomes collectively frozen and transmitted to the next generations unresolved.

Individual Traumas: Physical Survivors And Their Offspring

Introduction

Trauma has the quality of converting that one sharp stab into an enduring state of mind. ... The moment becomes a season; the event becomes a condition.²

As Aaron Hass pointed out, “survivors of the Holocaust, particularly Jewish survivors, are often seen as a unitary phenomenon by both mental-health

² Erikson, K., *A New Species of Trouble: Explorations in Disaster, Trauma, and Community* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1994) p. 230.

professionals and laypersons.”³ Yet their experience varied markedly, depending on the circumstances in which they survived: some Jews spent the war in hiding or posing as Gentiles, others lived in ghettos and concentration camps or were confined to labour camps. Some fought in the forests as partisans. The majority of survivors lost family members and friends and many lost spouse and children. They came from disparate backgrounds and the catastrophe hit them at different stages of their lives. Traditionally, the term “Holocaust survivor” applies to “those people who had physically survived the Holocaust – by hiding, by fleeing, by living under Nazi rule.”⁴ Increasingly, the clinical scholarship revealing traumatic symptoms in the children of the physical survivors has been gaining ground and the children have joined the ranks of survivors under the heading of ‘second-generation survivors’.

Some survived the entire war hiding or posing as Gentiles and a small minority fought through the war with the partisans and underground movements. The majority of survivors, however, endured a combination of shocks so extreme that each one of them would suffice to traumatise a person ten times over. Countless survivors’ narratives report a succession of traumatic shocks: rupture of daily routine; persecution and humiliation; life in overpopulated ghettos where starvation, disease, and death reigned; liquidation of ghettos; shooting or hanging of friends and family; hiding, solitude, and hunger; life in camps with their unique pattern of labour, humiliation, starvation, cold, and death; death marches; liberation and life in displaced persons (DP) camps; more transit camps for those who wished to immigrate to Palestine; and last but not least, rebuilding a new life in a country that was on the verge of war and at best ambivalent about the arrival of emaciated immigrants. The traumatic shocks endured by the physical survivors were not only extreme, multiple, and cumulative, but also continuous and repetitive over a period of time. Almost without exception, all Jews who survived the Nazi occupation in Europe suffered a loss of home, family and a destruction of a life, as they had known it before the war. They all faced constant threat of death, unabated persecution and permanent fear for the lives of their friends and family. Most of them witnessed torture, death, degradation, starvation, and destruction. In spite of this fundamental

³ Hass, A., *In the Shadow of the Holocaust* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) p. 7.

⁴ Fox, T., *Inherited Memories: Israeli Children of Holocaust Survivors* (London and New York: Cassel, 1999) p. 6.

similarity of experience, however, the impact of traumatic shocks varied substantially across the spectrum of Holocaust survivors. Hence the importance of the typology of trauma developed here.

The individual personality characteristics and pre-war situation (including family background, education, profession, political ideology, religiousness, and age) sometimes played an important role in survivors' coping strategies and therefore precipitated one pattern of traumatisation instead of another. For example, most Jewish partisans and resistance fighters were young and active Zionists, most of the Jews who survived in hiding were assimilated adults or young children, and the majority of religious Jews from isolated *shtetls* ended up in concentration camps. However, the most powerful determinant of psychological harm resides in the nature of the traumatic event, and not in any individual characteristics. As Herman put it: "there is a simple, direct relationship between the severity of the trauma and its psychological impact."⁵ Various studies have documented a 'dose-response curve,' whereby the greater the exposure to traumatic events, the greater the percentage of the population with symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (hereafter PTSD). With severe enough traumatic exposure no one is immune. Almost without exception, all categories of physical survivors suffered severe enough exposure to be traumatised. However, their traumatic response varied according to the circumstances of survival: concentration and death camps, hiding, fighting. Each context of traumatisation exposed people to a certain combination or pattern of traumatic shock and shaped a relatively concurrent set of lessons, meanings and understandings of the common experience. Before looking into the particular patterns of traumatisation, however, some general consequences of trauma – applicable to all three categories of survivors – are briefly discussed.

In medical usage the concept of psychic trauma refers to the blow to the structures of the mind, "a psychologically traumatic event that is generally outside the range of usual human experience" and "would evoke significant symptoms of distress in most people."⁶ Although trauma is originally defined by the nature of the event that

⁵ Herman, J. L., *Trauma and Recovery* (London: Pandora, 1994) p. 57.

⁶ Janoff - Bulman, R., "The Aftermath of Victimization: Building Shattered Assumption," in Figley, C. (ed.), *Trauma and Its Wake* (New York: Brunner / Mazel, 1985) p. 16.

provokes it, the latter is dependent on its capacity to cause lasting damage. In other words, in order to be traumatic, the blow must be so devastating that it would cause traumatisation in most people. This type of reasoning immediately blurs the distinction between the event that provokes a disorder and the disorder itself. For that reason, the focus of recent trauma research is increasingly shifting towards a definition of trauma based on damage done rather than the shock that caused it. Such a re-location of the concept's centre of gravity allows more space for study of trauma (in its second meaning) in situations where the shock is less sudden, less extreme, indirect, or even absent. In practice, clinical trauma comprises both elements outlined above: a blow so damaging that it "overwhelms the ordinary systems of care that give people a sense of control, connection, and meaning,"⁷ and significant symptoms of PTSD. According to Green, Lindy and Grace, the events likely to cause lasting psychological harm include "physical violation or injury, exposure to extreme violence, or witnessing grotesque death."⁸ "In each instance," stated Herman, "the salient characteristic of the traumatic event is its power to inspire helplessness and terror,"⁹ or as Andreasen put it, a feeling of "intense fear, helplessness, loss of control, and threat of annihilation."¹⁰ Exposure to extreme events and the subsequent experience of victimisation results in "a loss of equilibrium. The world is suddenly out of whack. Things no longer work the way they used to."¹¹ In a similar vein, Herman argued that traumatic reactions occur when "action is of no avail" and when "neither resistance nor escape is possible."¹² Traumatic events shatter the construction of the self, "undermine the belief systems that give meaning to human experience" and "violate the victim's faith in a natural or divine order."¹³ Victimisation destroys the basic assumptions about oneself and the world: the belief in personal invulnerability, the perception of the world as meaningful, comprehensible, and benevolent, and the positive value of the self.

⁷ Herman, J. L., *Trauma and Recovery* p. 33.

⁸ Green, B. L., Lindy, J., and M. Grace, "Posttraumatic Stress Disorder: Toward DSM-IV", in *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease*, No. 173 (1985) p. 406 - 411.

⁹ Herman, J. L., *Trauma and Recovery* p. 34

¹⁰ Andreasen, N. C., "Posttraumatic Stress Disorder", in Kaplan, H. I. and B. J. Sadock (ed.), *Comprehensive Textbook of Psychiatry*, 4th ed. (Baltimore: Williams and Wilkins, 1985) p. 918 - 924.

¹¹ Bard, M. and D. Sangrey, *The Crime Victim's Book* (New York: Basic Books, 1979) p. 14

¹² Herman, J. L., *Trauma and Recovery* p. 34

¹³ Herman, J. L., *Trauma and Recovery* p. 50

The experience of victimisation shatters the perception of personal invulnerability. As Wolfenstein wrote, a victim feels a sense of “helplessness against overpowering forces ... and apprehension that anything may now happen to him. He feels vulnerable.”¹⁴ The victims’ lost sense of safety and security is often accompanied by feelings of intense anxiety and defencelessness. Their new perception of vulnerability regularly manifests itself in the “preoccupation with the fear of recurrence.”¹⁵ Once the experience is “available” in the victims’ imagination, they expect it to occur again. There is “a chronic apprehension of imminent doom, of something terrible always about to happen.”¹⁶ This is because, as Abram Kardiner put it, “the whole apparatus for concerted, co-ordinated and purposeful activity is smashed ... perceptions become inaccurate and pervaded with terror, the coordinative functions of judgement and discrimination fail [and] the aggressive impulses become disorganised and unrelated to the situation in hand.”¹⁷ After having been exposed to a traumatic event, the human system of self-defence seems to go on a permanent alert and “each component of the ordinary response to danger, having lost its utility, tends to persist in an altered and exaggerated state long after the actual danger is over.”¹⁸ Human-induced victimisations, of which the Holocaust is the most extreme occurrence, are particularly damaging to the victims’ trust in other people, and according to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual, 3rd edition (DSM-III), the PTSD is “more severe and longer lasting when the stressor is of human design.”¹⁹ The victims no longer see themselves safe in a benign environment. Instead, they see the world as a malevolent and threatening place, inhabited by untrustworthy and ill-disposed people. Severe trauma also “undermines or destroys the ordinary sense of a relatively safe sphere of initiative, in which there is some tolerance for trial and error. To the chronically traumatised person, any action has potentially dire consequences. There is no room for trivia, no space for mistakes or improvisations.”²⁰

¹⁴ Wolfenstein, M. *Disaster: A Psychological Essay* (Glencoe, Illinois: Free Press, 1957) p. 159.

¹⁵ Janoff-Bulman, R., “The Aftermath of Victimization” p. 19.

¹⁶ Hilberman, E., “The Wife-Beater’s Wife Reconsidered” in *American Journal of Psychiatry* 137 (1980) p. 1341.

¹⁷ Kardiner, A. and H. Spiegel, *War, Stress, and Neurotic Illness* (New York: Hoeber, New York, 1947) p. 186.

¹⁸ Herman, J. L., *Trauma and Recovery* p. 34.

¹⁹ American Psychiatric Association, *Diagnostic and Statistic Manual of Mental Disorders*, 3rd ed. (Washington: American Psychiatric Association, 1980) p. 236.

²⁰ Herman, J. L., *Trauma and Recovery* p. 91.

Both the constant expectation of danger and narrowed range of initiative are an expression of what Robert Jay Lifton called “death-haunted knowledge.”²¹ The view of the world carved by the victims in the aftermath of their victimisation is profoundly pessimistic, as the following passage (excerpt from a Holocaust survivor testimony) shows:

Yes it's always there; it's more a view of the world, a total world view...of extreme pessimism, of sort of one feels...of really knowing the truth about people, human nature, about death, of really knowing the truth in a way that other people don't know it. ... It's a complete lack of faith in human beings, in all areas you know, whether it's politics or whatever: you hear one thing and you believe something else. I mean you say: 'Oh, well, I know the truth.'²²

The second assumption that is shattered by traumatic experience is that of **the world as a comprehensible and orderly place**. Before victimisation, the world makes sense. It is seen as just, controllable and therefore essentially benign. In such a meaningful world, “we know what to expect and why negative events occur.”²³ A system where good, innocent people and children are starved, humiliated, tortured, and killed like vermin, destroys the basic assumption about the operation of the world. Leo G., a Holocaust survivor, expresses the untranscended loss of a world that once made sense:

All this you lived through, all this you saw, and you go out and work for money, or you go out and drive a car or whatever ... How could you? ... Is should be as, you know, some people that turn away from life, because they found it's senseless, it doesn't add up. And I and the kind of people that went through it should know that it doesn't add up. Nothing adds up. It doesn't make any sense. Nothing justifies it. To go on after you know what the world is like or what it was.²⁴

²¹ Lifton, R. J., “The Concept of the Survivor”, in Dimsdale, J. E. (ed.), *Survivors, Victims, and Perpetrators* (New York and London: Hemisphere Publishing Corporation, 1980) p. 118.

²² Testimony of Irene W. quoted in Langer, L., *Holocaust Testimonies: The Ruins Of Memory* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1991) p. 59.

²³ Janoff - Bulman, R., “The Aftermath of Victimization” p. 20.

²⁴ Testimony of Leo G. in Langer, L., *Holocaust Testimonies* p. 147.

Finding a purpose in one's victimisation and survival is crucial for coping afterwards. The more victimisation is meaningless and survival arbitrary, the stronger the desire and need to endow them with meaning. The inability to make sense of the world after the Holocaust was particularly acute among survivors. Nevertheless, diverse meanings and lessons of the tragedy have proliferated since the war, frequently accompanied by a rage at oneself and the others for failing to prepare the victims for such a malevolent world. As Langer put it: "The generalised hostility against reality ... expresses a ... resentment toward a world that had betrayed the individual by promoting values that proved useless in the presence of catastrophe,"²⁵ an attitude conveyed in the testimony of Bronia K.: "We were brought up in too humanistic a way. We learned how to love but not how to kill. And now we have to learn how to kill, how to fight."²⁶ For most survivors, presumption of human goodness was dashed by the Holocaust. Germany, the most civilised nation on earth and home to a rich tradition of Jewish culture, failed them. The world failed them. God failed them. Friends failed them. And in the case of children survivors, parents failed them as well.

Related to the assumption of a meaningful world is the **assumption of self-worth**, equally pulverised by trauma. On more than one level, the experience of being victimised activates negative self-images in the victims.²⁷ They see themselves as weak, helpless, unable to defend themselves and the loved ones, frightened, needy, and humiliated. Death guilt is epitomised in the survivors' question: 'Why did I survive while they died?' and it stems from the memory of the survivors' "inability to act in ways they would ordinarily thought appropriate ... or even to feel appropriate emotions (overwhelming rage towards victimisers, profound compassion for victims). Death guilt begins ... in the gap between that physical and psychic inactivation and what one feels called upon to do and feel."²⁸ "My conscience torments me," one survivor said. "I left children on the way, and they fell into the hands of the

²⁵ Langer, L., *Holocaust Testimonies* p. 92.

²⁶ Testimony of Bronia, K. in Langer, L., *Holocaust Testimonies* p. 100.

²⁷ Horowitz, M. J., Wilner, M. Marmar, C. And J. Krupnick, "Pathological Grief and the Activation of Latent Self-Images" in *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 137 (1980) pp. 1137-1162.

²⁸ Lifton, R. J., "The Concept of the Survivor" p. 118.

Germans.”²⁹ In extreme situations victims frequently coped by morally compromising themselves, and the memory of what in normal times appears as a moral failure, resulted in deep shame, feelings of guilt and unworthiness. Shame was widespread among survivors and its intensity was proportionate to the size of the gap that existed between the acts committed during the period of traumatisation and the survivors’ normal moral yardsticks. Since intense feelings of guilt and shame were particularly acute in the concentration camp survivors, this facet of traumatisation is examined in more detail in the next section.

Concentration Camp Survivors

*We learnt that our personality is fragile, that it is in much more danger than our life; and the old wise ones, instead of warning us ‘remember that you must die,’ would have done much better to remind us of this greater danger that threatens us.*³⁰

Former concentration and extermination camp inmates have been the most studied and represented group of survivors, to the extent that the emaciated figure in striped rags behind barbed wire has become the single most circulated image of a Jewish Holocaust survivor. Nazi concentration and extermination camps indeed represented the most vicious source of traumatisation, both in terms of the duration of exposure to a traumatic event, and the intensity of harm inflicted upon the victims. Although most physical survivors suffered more or less severe traumatisation, the main difference between the concentration camp survivors and other categories of survivors resides in the fact that the former were exposed to a prolonged, repeated trauma that can only occur in circumstances of captivity.

Studies and personal narratives of Nazi concentration and death camps³¹ depict the most extreme situation of captivity, where the organised techniques of disempowerment and disconnection were perfected and implemented with unprecedented brutality. The methods of psychological control were designed to “instil terror and helplessness and to destroy the victims’ sense of self in relation to

²⁹ Testimony of Hanche Sheich, quoted in Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 159.

³⁰ Levi, P., *Survival in Auschwitz: The Nazi Assault on Humanity* (New York: Collier, 1961) p. 49.

³¹ See for example Gutman, Y. and M. Berenbaum (eds.), *Anatomy of Auschwitz Death Camp* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994); Levi, P., *The Drowned and the Saved* (London: Abacus, 1999).

others.”³² The fear was maintained by inconsistent, unpredictable, and totally absurd outbursts of violence, combined with capricious enforcement of petty rules, and even rare and unexpected expressions of humanity. The arbitrariness and inconsistency of the perpetrators’ behaviour not only helped to convince the victims of the perpetrators’ omnipotence and the futility of resistance, but also destroyed the victims’ perception of an orderly and meaningful world. In addition to instilling fear, the perpetrators sought to destroy the victims’ sense of autonomy by scrutiny and control of their bodily functions. The concentration camps were unique in the degree of assault on individual autonomy; the perpetrators supervised what the victims ate, when they went to sleep and when they woke up, when they went to the toilet and when they took showers, what they wore, and when they died. They deprived the victims of their identities, including their names. Continuous humiliation to which victims were subjected produced an attitude of unworthiness and self-hatred. Yet, as Herman observes “the final step in the psychological control of the victim is not completed until she has been forced to violate her own moral principles and to betray her basic human attachments. ... It is at this point ... [that] the victim ... is truly broken.”³³ Countless survivors’ testimonies describe being forced to stand by helplessly while atrocities were committed against people they love, or even to execute the ordeals themselves. At this stage nothing could preserve the victims’ dignity, for it has been bent to the will of their enemies. The sense of shame and defeat comes not merely from the inability or omission to act but also from the realisation that their captors have usurped their inner life. Speaking of the extreme case of moral failure in Auschwitz, the acts committed by members of the Jewish *Sonderkommandos* (Special Squads), Primo Levi wrote:

One is stunned by this paroxysm of perfidiousness and hatred: it must be Jews who put the Jews into the ovens, it must be shown that Jews, the sub-race, the sub-men, bow to any and all humiliation, even to destroying themselves. ... In fact, the existence of the squads had a meaning, contained a message: ‘We, the master race, are your destroyers, but you are not better

³² Herman, J., *Trauma and Recovery* p. 77.

³³ Herman, J., *Trauma and Recovery* p. 83.

than we are; if we so wish, we can destroy not only your bodies but also your souls, just as we have destroyed ours.'³⁴

In 1964, after years of clinical experience with concentration camp survivors, William G. Niederland published a report where he proclaimed the existence of "survivor syndrome". He defined the latter as a combination of symptoms manifest in concentration camp survivors: chronic anxiety, fear of renewed persecution, depression, recurring nightmares, psychosomatic disorders, anhedonia [inability to feel pleasure], social withdrawal, fatigue, hypochondria, an inability to concentrate, irritability, a hostile personal identity, hallucinations and depersonalisations."³⁵ Similarly, Leo Eitinger, a psychiatrist and himself a Holocaust survivor, observed:

The most predominant sequel to the concentration camp activity seems to be the deep changes in personality, a mental disability which affects every side of the personality's psychic life, both the intellectual functions, and especially, emotional life and the life of the will, with the many facets of difficulties in adaptation ... Chronic anxiety states, ... chronic depressions of a vital type, inability to enjoy anything ... to establish new, adequate interpersonal contacts, the inability to work with pleasure ... in short, the inability to live in a normal way – are among the most characteristic symptoms of this condition.³⁶

Both authors asserted that the concentration camp experience left lasting, possibly permanent effects on the survivors. Not only do all symptoms of PTSD persist for many years after the traumatisation (for example, concentration camps survivors reported tenacious and severe intrusive symptoms forty years after the liberation), but also their features are most exaggerated in case of chronic trauma.

Herman defined a concept of "chronic trauma", as "insidious progressive form of post-traumatic stress disorder that invades and erodes the personality.... The victim of chronic trauma may feel herself to have changed irrevocably, or she may

³⁴ Levi p., *The Drowned and the Saved* p. 35-37.

³⁵ Niederland, W. G., "Psychiatric Disorders among Persecution Victims: A Contribution to the Understanding of Concentration Camp Pathology and Its Aftereffects" in *Journal of Nervous and Mental Diseases*, No. 139 (1964), pp. 458-474.

³⁶ Eitinger, L., *Concentration Camp Survivors in Norway and Israel* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1964) p. 190.

lose the sense that she has any self at all.”³⁷ After having been reduced to the goal of simple survival, the psychological constriction in every aspect of life became the necessary form of adaptation. Although this blocking out of all capacity for emotion was valuable in the camp setting, it leads to “a kind of atrophy in the psychological capacities”³⁸ and “emotional responses of ... pervasively shallow quality.”³⁹ The survivors were unable to reconstitute the kind of relationships they had before traumatisation, not only because their blunted ability to feel, but also because they viewed all relationships through the lens of extremity. Having witnessed “a morally inverted world where the righteous were destroyed, the survivors developed an intense distrust of human beings and human relationships.”⁴⁰ They were also deeply ambivalent about emotionally reinvesting in relationships for fear of betrayal or another precipitous separation. Prolonged captivity in concentration camps produced “profound alterations in the victim’s identity. All the psychological structures of the self – the image of the body, the internalised image of others, and the values and ideals that lend a person a sense of coherence and purpose – have been invaded and systematically broken down.”⁴¹ “In the most severe cases,” Herman observes, “the victims retain the dehumanised identity of a captive who has been reduced to the level of elemental survival: the robot, animal, or vegetable.”⁴² Similarly, Niederland asserted that alterations of personal identity were a constant feature of the ‘survival syndrome.’ While the majority of his patients complained that they were ‘now a different person’, the most severely damaged stated ‘I am not a person.’⁴³ Speaking of one of his patients, Paul Chodoff, observes: “At Auschwitz one of the things that had kept her going was a fierce resolve that she would live at all costs, that she would not notice or pay attention to what was happening around her. The price she seems to have paid for her determination to live was that living became simply survival and little else.”⁴⁴

³⁷ Herman, J., *Trauma and Recovery* p. 86.

³⁸ Herman, J., *Trauma and Recovery* p. 87.

³⁹ Hass, A., *In the Shadow of the Holocaust* p. 9.

⁴⁰ Hass, A., *In the Shadow of the Holocaust* p. 14.

⁴¹ Herman, J., *Trauma and Recovery* p. 93.

⁴² Herman, J., *Trauma and Recovery* p. 94.

⁴³ Niederland, W. G., “Clinical Observations on the ‘Survivor Syndrome’” in *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis*, No. 49 (1968), pp. 313-315.

⁴⁴ Chodoff p., “Psychotherapy of the Survivor” in Dimsdale, J. E. (ed.) *Survivors, Victims and Perpetrators* p. 215.

Even after liberation, the victims were unable to assume their former identities, because whatever identity they adopted it was tainted with memory of their persecution and humiliation. Their self-worth was shattered by the experience of utter helplessness and a consciousness of having been diminished. In the aftermath of traumatisation, when survivors reviewed and judged their own conduct with reference to their 'normal' moral codes, "feelings of guilt and inferiority were practically universal."⁴⁵ They were particularly intense when the survivor witnessed death or suffering of others and was spared himself; and they became unbearable when the survivor had actively participated in the death or suffering of others in order to save himself. 'Survivor guilt' is a generic term for a multitude of guilt feelings and self-incriminations observed in former concentration camp inmates: guilt for having survived while so many others (often perceived as more worthy of life) perished; guilt for not having suffered enough; guilt for not having gone to greater lengths to save others; guilt for compromising one's integrity in order to survive. The moral failures in a concentration camp setting ranged from relatively small acts of omission (failing to help a new arrival or to share half a glass of water)⁴⁶, through stealing someone's shoes⁴⁷ (and thereby possibly precipitating their death), all the way to horrific acts performed by members of Jewish *Sonderkommandos*. Although all those moral compromises took place against a background of "daily struggle against hunger, cold, fatigue, and blows in which the room for choices (especially moral choices) was reduced to zero,"⁴⁸ shame and guilt appeared as soon as the room for moral choices was regained. The guilt was particularly strong concerning the death of close relatives and friends but also with regard to the anonymous dead. Given the unpredictability and arbitrariness of one's own survival under the Nazi regime, the victims frequently appear in the survivors' narratives as those who died in their stead. The hair-raising survival stories are replete with examples of instances where the survivors witnessed annihilation of their fellow inmates, friends and family members, feeling responsible for their deaths by inability or omission to save them. The guilt for having survived in place of another has been poignantly described by Primo Levi in the following passage:

⁴⁵ Herman, J., *Trauma and Recovery* p. 53.

⁴⁶ Levi p., *The Drowned and the Saved*.

⁴⁷ Testimony of Hanna F., in Langer, L., *Holocaust Testimonies* p. 139.

⁴⁸ Levi p., *The Drowned and the Saved* p. 33.

I might be alive in place of another, at the expense of another; I might have usurped, that is, in fact killed. ... Preferably the worst survived, the selfish, the violent, the insensitive, the collaborators of the 'grey zones', the spies. ... I felt innocent, yes, but enrolled among the saved and therefore in permanent search of justification in my own eyes and those of others. The worst survived – that is, the fittest; the best all died.⁴⁹

According to Janoff-Bulman, guilt should be understood as an attempt to draw some useful lesson from disaster and to regain some sense of power and control. To imagine that one could have done better may be more tolerable than to face the reality of utter helplessness.⁵⁰ Researchers noted that survivor guilt plays a central role in the development and perpetuation of the ensuing symptoms of social withdrawal, depression, preoccupation with the past, and fear of persecution. Refusal to mourn was often motivated by guilt, as the survivors felt that they must not let themselves mourn the victims, lest the future generations forget. Concurrently, survivor guilt might motivate an individual to bear witness to the Holocaust, continually remember those who died, and thereby 'atone' for their perceived past failings.

After the war, a significant proportion of concentration camp survivors went to mandatory Palestine (later, Israel) and, as the next chapter shows, they were met with discomfort and ambivalence. Israel offered the survivors an opportunity to build positive self-images, as pioneers, kibbutzniks, and soldiers. The 1948 War of Independence, in which many participated, provided an outlet for repressed rage and frustrations. Forced to concentrate on the outside world and discouraged from recounting their Holocaust experience, camp survivors assumed a semblance of normality. However, the apparent normality resulted in isolation, loneliness, and mistrust of society, which made the task of public mourning virtually impossible. The only option left to survivors, apart from sharing their experiences with each other, was to withdraw completely into their newly established families. "Children of such families" states Danieli, "attested to the constant psychological presence of the Holocaust at home, verbally and nonverbally, or in some cases, reported having

⁴⁹Levi p., *The Drowned and the Saved* p. 63.

⁵⁰Janoff-Bulman, R., "The Aftermath of Victimisation."

absorbed the omnipresent experience of the Holocaust through ‘osmosis.’”⁵¹ The impact on the survivors’ children is examined in a later section.

Fighting Survivors

*Our brothers have gone to heaven
Through the chimneys of Sobibor and Treblinka ...
Only we few have survived
For the honour of our submerged people
For revenge and to bear witness.*⁵²

Although fighting survivors represented only a small minority of Jewish survivors, they monopolised the first decade of the Holocaust discourse in the newly established state. Most partisan fighters and resistance leaders remained actively involved in community and public life after the war. Many participated in the rescue attempts in the immediate aftermath and the majority of them came to Palestine, where they fought in the War of Independence and later became prominent figures in Israeli public life. In the eyes of the Zionist executive and native Palestinian Jews, the fighters embodied the ‘right’ and ‘honourable’ behaviour facing the extreme, and their lives and deeds were praised and publicly commemorated. Embraced by the new Jewish state as heroes, former members of organised Resistance enjoyed social recognition that was unique for the Holocaust survivors. They tended to set themselves apart from the rest of the Holocaust survivors “as if they belonged to some secret noble order”.⁵³ Thus Warsaw ghetto uprising veterans created their own kibbutzim, namely *Lohamei Hagetaot* (Ghetto Fighters) and Yad Mordechai, each representing a memorial site with a museum, library, publishing house, and a Holocaust research centre. Unlike the majority of camp survivors, the veterans of resistance had been politically active in various Zionist movements before the war. They espoused Zionist ideology and the concurring image of a ‘new Jew’ as an upright, fighting hero. The fighting survivors were young, active, and highly motivated to fight. Having received some basic military and organisational training in various Zionist youth movements, their choice to resist was less unexpected. The following biographical sketches of two of the most prominent fighting survivors in Israel – Abba

⁵¹ Danieli, Y., “The Treatment and Prevention of Long-Term Effects and Intergenerational Transmission of Victimization: A Lesson From Holocaust Survivors and Their Children” in Figley, C. R., *Trauma And Its Wake* p. 299.

⁵² Gedaleh’s song, in Levi p., *If Not Now, When?* (London: Abacus, 1987) p. 127.

⁵³ Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 451.

Kovner and Zivia Lubetkin – illustrate the only acceptable survivor conduct in the early days of Israel.

Abba Kovner (1918 – 1987) was the leader of the Vilna ghetto uprising and commander of the partisan underground organisation, as well as a poet and Israel Prize laureate. He was educated in the Hebrew high school in Vilna and he became a trainee in the socialist Zionist *Hashomer Hatzair* Youth Movement at a very young age. When Vilna fell to the Germans at the end of June 1941, Kovner was already a member of the underground organisation. After he became aware that the killings began in the Vilna Ghetto, Kovner urged Jews to fight against the Nazis. On 31 December 1941, Kovner read the famous statement urging Jews to defend themselves with arms before the delegates of all Jewish Youth Movements:

Hitler is plotting to destroy all European Jews. Lithuanians Jews will be the first in line. Let us not be led like sheep to the slaughterhouse. It is right, we are weak and without defence, but the only answer to the enemy is resistance! ⁵⁴

On 21 January, 1942, the "United Organization of Partisans" was founded in Vilnius. The new organization comprised all the parties and youth movements from the entire political spectrum in the Vilna Ghetto. Kovner was a member of the headquarters and later became the head of the organization. In the days of the last deportation from the Vilna Ghetto to the extermination camps, Kovner supervised the escape of the organization fighters to the woods. In Rodniky woods he commanded the Jewish Unit composed of Ghetto fighters and the "Revenge" battalion from the Jewish camp. After the liberation Kovner became one of the architects of the *Briha* escape movement and he was the spirit of the "East Europe Survivors Brigade" – an umbrella organization of Zionist spheres, that called for the unity of all forces, a call based on the lessons of the Holocaust and the still precarious situation of the Jewish people. In July 1945 Kovner arrived at the Jewish Brigade group base camp in Italy

⁵⁴ Abba Kovner's testimony in *The Trial of Adolf Eichmann: Record of Proceedings in the District Court of Jerusalem* (Jerusalem: Keter Enterprises, 1962). Session 27. Internet edition: <http://www.nizkor.org/hweb/people/e/eichmann-adolf/transcripts/> Last accessed on 13 September 2001. The expression 'lambs to the slaughter' is borrowed from Isaiah 53:7.

where he addressed an assembly of Jewish soldiers with a moving speech describing the destruction of European Jewry and the Vilna uprising. In the second half of 1945, Kovner arrived in Palestine to solicit support for an ambitious revenge plan aiming to poison six million Germans. On his way back to Europe he was arrested by the British and returned to Palestine. After his release from prison, Kovner joined the kibbutz Ein Hahores, together with his wife Vitka Kempner and a group of former partisans. During the Independence War Kovner was an education officer in of the famous Givati brigade. At the end of the war Kovner returned to his kibbutz and dedicated most of his time to writing. He was a witness at the Eichmann trial in Jerusalem.

Like Abba Kovner, Zivia Lubetkin (1914 – 1976) was an outstanding and influential survivor. She was one of the leaders of the Jewish Underground in Poland, a founder and the only woman in the High Command of its fighting organization, ZOB (Jewish Fighting Organisation). She was also one of the founders of the first resistance group in the Warsaw Ghetto in 1942, which was organized after the first massive deportations began. She fought in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, spending the last days of the uprising in the command bunker at Mila 18, and escaping with other survivors through the sewers to the Polish side of Warsaw. Until the end of the war, Lubetkin stayed in hiding in Warsaw underground and joined the Polish uprising on the Aryan side of Warsaw in October 1944. Lubetkin's Zionist activities began while she was still a high school student. She was first a member of Dror, the Zionist pioneering youth movement, and eventually became a member of Hahaluts Halohem executive council. In 1939, at the age of 25, Lubetkin participated at the Zionist Congress in Geneva. Like many others, she chose to return to Poland rather than escaping to Palestine. After the liberation, Lubetkin became active in the *Briha* escape movement, which facilitated the movement of Jewish Holocaust survivors to Palestine. In 1946 she settled in Palestine as one of the founders of the Ghetto Fighters' Kibbutz. She held various leading public positions as the representative of the kibbutz movement and she testified at the Eichmann trial.

Fighting survivors' lives, such as Kovner's and Lubetkin's, are inscribed in the heroic narrative of the Holocaust. Since the heroic account of the European tragedy was overly emphasised in the first decade of Israel, the former fighters enjoyed

considerable privilege over other groups of survivors during that period. The stylised image of a Jewish partisan or a ghetto fighter – proud, erect, muscled, holding a gun in his hand – obscured and denied the real persons' individual traumas. Almost all fighters abandoned their families and other loved ones when they chose to fight for their lives. Invariably, those left behind were killed, leaving the fighting survivors not only with pain of a loss but also with unbearable feelings of guilt. Although the fighting survivors epitomised the *choice* (as opposed to going 'like sheep to the slaughter') in the Zionist narrative, they experienced the same powerlessness and lack of choice, as did non-fighting survivors. Thus Benjamin, P., member of the Jewish Fighting Organisation in Poland had to watch helplessly while his mother was being burned alive: "If I took one step forward, I would immediately be shot. Should I throw myself on the fire? I just stood there. I sank into the ground. ... And the last cry from my mother: 'My child, stay alive.'"⁵⁵ Similarly, Abba Kovner described one of the many instances of utter helplessness when he was hiding in a niche of a stairwell and saw a woman being dragged by her hair by two German soldiers. At one point, the baby she was holding slipped out of her arms. One of the soldiers took hold of the baby ... raised it by its legs over his head ... and then he knocked its head on the wall, once, twice, and kept on doing it."⁵⁶ In spite of the horrors of their experiences, fighting survivors remained prisoners of the heroic narrative. Yet, their traumas transpired in other circumstances. Thus Yael Zuckerman, daughter of Zivia Lubetkin and Yithzhak (Antek) Zuckerman, both heroes of the Warsaw ghetto uprising, recounts: "Father and Mother spoke about nothing else. ... They talked about it all the time. Every conversation, no matter how it began, would get to the Holocaust, sooner or later."⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Niewyk, D. L. (ed.), *Fresh Wounds: Early narratives of Holocaust Survival* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998) p. 130.

⁵⁶ Abba Kovner's testimony in *The Trial of Adolf Eichmann*. Session 27.

⁵⁷ Quoted in Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 454.

Survivors in Hiding: Adults and Children

*So, I'm Jewish, I thought, without knowing what that meant, except, hadn't we killed Jesus?*⁵⁸

C. Gwyn Moser⁵⁹ compiled a list of 619 Jews who survived the war in Austria in hiding: they either hid during roundups and thus escaped deportation or went into hiding at the end of the war. In some instances these Jews passed by disguising their Jewish identity completely or faked their way into the category of *Mischlinge*.⁶⁰ Like the fighting survivors, Jews in hiding shared certain characteristics that may have aided their chances for survival. Among those were age, marital status, and level of assimilation. Two thirds of all Jews hiding in Vienna were between the ages of 30 and 60 when they went underground. Almost two thirds of Viennese survivors in hiding were unattached and the others were divorced or widowed but childless, or childless with a spouse who emigrated. Jews who were attached when they went into hiding often hid with only a part of their family. Last but not least, finding a shelter, food, and a protector required a good network of contacts with non-Jews. Assimilation was therefore another prerequisite for survival. Almost half of the survivors in hiding in Vienna, listed by Moser, had either converted, were non-practicing, or were Jews only under the racial classification of the Nuremberg laws. Survival in hiding, like any other type of survival under the Nazi regime, demanded an abundance of ingenuity and luck. Some tried to hide by wandering the streets during the day and sleeping in train stations and other public places at night, but this strategy was doomed to failure, because living unregistered without ration cards made it impossible for them to support themselves. Hunger thus forced them back to the Jewish ghetto and its roundups. Successful hiding required self-imposed

⁵⁸ Melson, R., *False Papers: Deception and Survival in the Holocaust* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000) p. 150.

⁵⁹ Moser, C. G., "Jewish U-Boote in Austria, 1938–1945" in *Simon Wiesental Center Annual*, Vol. 2 (Los Angeles: Simon Wiesental Center, 1997).

Internet edition at: <http://motlc.wiesenthal.com/resources/books/annual2/chap03.html> Last accessed on 18 September 2001.

⁶⁰ Mischlinge (hybrids) were those who were not classified as Jews but who had some Jewish blood. They were divided in two categories: Mischlinge of the first degree were those with two Jewish grandparents; and Mischlinge of the second degree were those with one Jewish grandparent. The Mischlinge were officially excluded from membership in the Nazi Party and all Party organizations. Although they were drafted into the Germany Army, they could not attain the rank of officers. They were also barred from the civil service and from certain professions.

incarceration in a protector's home. For most Jews in hiding the period of confinement lasted at least three to four years.

Some Jews lived in the open but concealed the most important and the most dangerous aspect of their identity: their Jewishness. It goes without saying that this option was open only to highly assimilated Jews who spoke the local language fluently and without accents, and whose mannerism and appearance were not Jewish. For Jews who lived under false identity, innumerable dangers still existed: at any time, anyone from their past could have recognised and denounced them. The men still wore the indelible mark of Jewishness and as Michael Berenbaum put it: "The Covenant of Abraham, a circumcised penis, was a death sentence."⁶¹ Self-betrayal was also a danger: any expression of sympathy or interest for the fate of the Jews could give away their hidden identity. Despite the difficulties and the dangers involved in living under false identity, the Jews who did so throughout the war, suffered comparatively little. They usually had the same level of awareness of what was happening to the Jews, as did the local population. Describing the liberation, Bobi, a child in a family that passed as Poles, said: "One day whispering in the street said that 'they' had arrived at the railroad station. ... I went to the railroad station, where I saw a parade of strange-looking people. They were dressed in striped uniforms, but they looked like walking corpses. ... The square was lined with people but no one applauded. ... 'Lagers. Camps,' people said. I had no idea what they meant."⁶² It is difficult to assess the level of traumatisation endured by survivors who spent the whole war in hiding. Most adult survivors in hiding eventually joined the resistance or were deported (in which case they figure in the other two categories). Narratives of adult survivors in hiding or passing as Aryans are rare and the reason for this absence probably lies in the public prejudice that survivors in hiding were "spoiled victims who, though they had endured self-imposed incarceration, hunger and exposure, and fear of capture, had nevertheless been spared the Nazi prisons and concentration camps."⁶³ They themselves often felt that since they had not suffered what the camp inmates had endured, they had no right to talk about their own suffering.

⁶¹ Berenbaum, M., "Foreword" in Melson, R., *False Papers* p. xiv.

⁶² Melson, R., *False Papers* p. 141.

⁶³ Moser, C. G., "Jewish U-Boote in Austria".

Hidden children, on the other hand, have been the subject of much attention since their accounts started to appear in the 1990s. Because of their age at the time of persecution, child survivors “may make up the most vulnerable group of survivors, especially as they approach middle age.”⁶⁴ Kohn Dor-Shav’s study demonstrated that “the younger the individual was at the time of traumatisation, the greater the likelihood of having sustained lasting psychological damage.”⁶⁵ Similarly, Hass observed: “people who were children as opposed to late adolescents or adults during the war appear to have more internal obstacles to establishing emotional ties with others. A child personality was not only less developed in a global sense, lacking in adequate coping mechanisms, but that very basic establishment of trust that must occur in the first few critical years of life was retarded.”⁶⁶ The experience of hidden children diverged considerably. Like the adults, children were either physically hidden or they passed as Aryans. Sometimes, they did both. Children who were physically hidden had to conceal their very existence from the outside world. They were either hidden together with their parents or confided to strangers. Whilst the children who hid with their parents frequently endured worse conditions (that is, they were more exposed to everyday hunger, filth, promiscuity, disease, and death), they never lost faith in their parents’ love and protection. Some parents built a hiding place in their own house, but usually they found a hiding place for the family. The size, security and comfort of hiding places varied tremendously. Sometimes the children were hidden in small, dark, and uncomfortable places (an attic, a cellar, a hole under a barn, sewers, and so on). They had to be extremely quiet, move slowly not to attract attention, and they could never leave the confinement of their hiding place. Many of these children would go months, even years, without seeing daylight. The children represented a danger to their own safety, that of other people in hiding, and that of the protectors. In shared hiding places, for example within ghettos, children were unwanted, and unless they kept quiet, their family would be made to leave. Mothers with babies were often forced to make a terrible choice of either exposing the whole family to certain death or smothering the baby. Though the families initially brought food and provisions with them, nobody was prepared to stay in hiding for several years. When they ran out of food and water it was very difficult and dangerous to get

⁶⁴ Hass, A., *In the Shadow of the Holocaust* p. 13.

⁶⁵ Kohn Dor-Shav, N., “On the long-range effects of concentration camp internment on Nazi victims: 25 years later” in *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 45: 1, pp. 1-11.

⁶⁶ Hass, A., *In the Shadow of the Holocaust* p. 13.

additional food. Most people were on rations and someone who was not supposed to exist had virtually no access to food. Getting fresh water was risky because it meant leaving the hiding place without being seen. Because of lack of water, lice and other diseases were rampant. Being completely secluded also meant that if a child got sick it could not be taken to a doctor. And if someone died, the body had to be disposed of secretly. All those daily problems were aggravated by the constant fear of being discovered. Sometimes the protector was denounced and arrested and when the information was passed on that their hiding place was known they had to leave immediately. When the Nazis discovered their hiding place they were deported to the camps or killed on the spot. Thus, children often witnessed grotesque death of their parents and siblings, a sight usually spared to those who were hidden by strangers.

Children who were separated from their parents were sometimes physically hidden (in convents, for example) or they hid alone, wandering from village to village. In most cases, however, their parents found them a family who usually passed them for a Christian relative from another town. Because the benefactors wanted children that would represent the smallest risk for them, the young, and especially young girls were most easily placed. Young children were considered less aware of their Jewish identity and therefore both less likely to betray themselves or to object adopting a new – Christian – identity. Girls were preferred because they were not physically marked as Jewish. For the same reason, boys were sometimes forced to hide not only their name and Jewishness but also their gender. A child survivor recounts that experience:

My fictional name was Marysia Ulecki. I was supposed to be a distant cousin of the people who were keeping my mother and me. The physical part was easy. After a couple of years in hiding with no haircuts, my hair was very long. The big problem was language. In Polish when a boy says a certain word, it's one way, but when a girl says the same word, you change one or two letters. My mother spent a lot of time teaching me to speak and walk and act like a girl. It was a lot to learn, but the task was simplified slightly by the fact that I was supposed to be a little bit 'backward.' They didn't risk taking me to school, but they took me to church. ... In order to go to the bathroom like a girl, I had to practice. It wasn't easy! Quite often I used to come back with wet shoes.

But since I was supposed to be a little backward, wetting my shoes made my act all the more convincing.⁶⁷

To appear Gentile, children had to go to church. Having never been to church, they had to learn very quickly all the right things, in order not to appear suspicious. They had to go to confession and some children who were the right age actually had to take their First Communion. As a result of hiding, many children were confused about their ethnic, religious, and sexual identity. Many had been acting Catholic for so long that they had trouble grasping their Jewish ancestry. These children were the survivors and the future - yet they did not identify with being Jewish. Some were too young to remember anything about their biological families. Others were too young to understand what was happening. They felt unjustly abandoned by their parents. Neither could they understand why they had to hide. Aniko Berger, a child survivor remembers: "I didn't understand the reasons that it was an embarrassment to be Jewish, but I had no doubt that something about me was repulsive only because I was Jewish."⁶⁸ Jewish hidden children were sometimes beaten, raped and otherwise maltreated by their caretakers, especially when the latter hid them for financial reasons. This dark part of children's rescue emerged only recently. As Stein observed: "Until recently only those rescued Jews who had been privileged and lucky to find a benevolent and caring home came forth with their rescue stories. This led to the idealisation of all Christian rescuers of Jews. In the last couple of years, however, hidden children have told stories of abandonment, cruelty, selfishness and even abuse."⁶⁹

Often, very young children were faced with choices and responsibilities that were way beyond their grasp and the consequences of which haunted them throughout their lives. Thus Ruth Kron Sigal sought to save herself and her little sister during a *Kinderaktion* in the ghetto by hiding in a closet in a benefactor's house. When the noises died down, Ruth judged that the soldiers were gone. She took her little sister back to the house, right into the hands of the Germans. The

⁶⁷ Marks, J., *The Hidden Children: The Secret Survivors of the Holocaust* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1993), pp. 46-47.

⁶⁸ Stein, A., *Hidden Children: Forgotten Survivors of the Holocaust* (Toronto: Penguin Books, 1994) p. 27.

⁶⁹ Stein, A., *Hidden Children* p. 30. See also Maya Schwartz's testimony on pp. 178-204.

benefactor intervened, but could only save Ruth, the older one. "I shall never forget the sight of my poor little sister with her arms stretched towards me and no one coming to her rescue," Ruth whispered with tears choking her voice, "That vision has haunted me all my life, and it will never leave me alone. Because that was the end of my four-year-old sister, Tamara." ⁷⁰ Last but not least, after the liberation, the children were confronted to broken parents they could for the most part not even recognize. The hopes of jubilant reunion that had kept those children going during their period in hiding were dashed when the parents returned. When Aniko Berger understood that the old woman dressed in a tattered black and white stripped dress with her coarse dark hair cropped close to the scalp was her mother, she was revolted. She refused to accept "this shell of a woman"⁷¹ as her mother. Similarly, when Ada Wynston's father came to see his daughter after the liberation, the child refused to come out: "This man was an impostor. Her father was a young man with reddish blond hair. This beaten old man had a dirty grey mop on his head."⁷² Sometimes, the liberation brought news of their parents' death or simply no news at all. It is difficult to say which case was worse. "For some, it was easier to adapt to a new life when neither parent returned and the child settled into a loving foster or adoptive family than to live with the grief of a broken father or mother. He or she returned from one or another killing field captive to everything that had been lost. In a very real sense, it was up to the fragile children to heal their parents' wounds."⁷³ The children usually proved to be good parents to their mothers and fathers. By taking up the burden of their parents' suffering, the children denied their own because in comparison with their parents their pain seemed almost perversely insignificant. Child survivors whose parents survived the camps are a unique group of survivors because they were both themselves survivors and children of often severely traumatised survivors. As a result, many of these children endured not only the trauma of their own survival, but also that of their parents' own personal version of hell. The overview of post-traumatic symptoms in the second generation in the next section therefore complements the discussion on hidden children.

⁷⁰ Testimony of Ruth Kron Sigal in Stein, A., *Hidden Children* p. 132.

⁷¹ Testimony of Aniko Berger in Stein, A., *Hidden Children* p. 44.

⁷² Stein, A., *Hidden Children* p. 91.

⁷³ Stein, A., *Hidden Children* p. 98.

Second Generation

Family stories are a kind of DNA, encoded messages about how things are and should be, passed from one generation to another.⁷⁴

One of the most potent coping strategies for concentration camp inmates was the hope of reuniting with their families. While some did find surviving relatives after the liberation, most learned that family members and friends perished. Thus a survivor named Saul recounts:

Only when I returned home did I become aware of what I had lost. In Auschwitz I only suffered physically, but spiritually hope maintained me in life. When I saw that all hope was lost – no family, no wife, no child, no anybody anymore alive, then came the shock.⁷⁵

Confronted with the task of rebuilding their lives, the survivors frequently entered into premature, hasty, ill-conceived marriages, called 'marriages of despair.' Those marriages were formed on short acquaintance, which disregarded the differences in pre-war socio-economic and educational status, life-style, age, and other ordinary criteria for marriage. Recreating a family was a concrete act to compensate for the losses, counter the massive disruption and undo the dehumanisation and loneliness they had experienced. Many survivors whose families were murdered longed to renew their lives by bringing healthy children into the world. In many instances, survivors gave birth in displaced persons camps as soon as it was physically possible. The newborn children replaced those who perished. Since most survivors resisted mourning the first families that they had lost, the second family of children had to coexist with the first one. Almost without exception the children were named after murdered members of their family. As second-generation survivor and scholar Robert Krell explained:

A complex of emotions accompanied the birth of children to survivors. These children were bound to be special. A child was a tangible evidence of one's survival and therefore incredibly precious. To some parents the child was the

⁷⁴ Karpf, A., *The War After* (London: Minerva, 1997) p. 17.

⁷⁵ Testimony of Saul, in Dimsdale, J. E., "The Coping Behaviour of Nazi Concentration Camp Survivors" in Dimsdale, J. E. (ed.) *Survivors, Victims and Perpetrators* p. 173.

representative or reincarnation of those who were lost; to some the child represented the ultimate defeat of Nazism – a life created against insurmountable odds. And to some, a birth was profoundly religious event, a precious gift from God to parents who frequently no longer believed in God.⁷⁶

Several studies⁷⁷ showed that the survivor parents expected their children to give meaning to their empty lives, provide restitution for everything lost, vindicate their suffering, and “undo the destruction of the Holocaust.”⁷⁸ Thus a survivors’ child recalled his own meaning in his parents’ lives: “We were supposed to be all the people who died.”⁷⁹ Survivors’ children may also have provided a justification for their survival and thereby expiating their guilt. Another member of the second generation testified: “We were my parents’ reason for living. So Hitler would not win out. So we have *their* purpose in the world.”⁸⁰ In his study of the impact of the Holocaust on the children of survivors, Alexandrowicz identified the need to discover, to re-enact, or to live the parents’ past as a major issue in the lives of survivors’ children. He wrote: “These children feel they have a mission to live in the past and to change it so that their parents humiliations, disgrace, and guilt can be converted into victory over the oppressors and the threat of genocide undone with a restitution of life and worth.”⁸¹

Not surprisingly, parental expectations of, and demands on the child were great and remained exaggerated. The youngsters bore the great burden of feeling they had not succeeded and could never succeed in satisfying their parents’ expectations. Thus a child of survivors remembered his parents’ demands upon him: “There was an expressed duty to the brothers and sisters who did not survive.

⁷⁶ Krell, R., “Holocaust families: The Survivors and Their Children” in *Comprehensive Psychiatry*, No. 20 (1979), pp. 560-567.

⁷⁷ See Barocas, C. and H. Barocas, “Manifestations of Concentration Camp Effects on the Second Generation” in *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 130: 7 (1973) p. 821; Sigal, J., J. “Second Generation Effects of Massive Psychic Trauma” in Krystal, H., *Massive Psychic Trauma* (New York: International University Press, 1968); Trossman, B., “Adolescent Children of Concentration Camp Survivors” in *Canadian Psychiatric Association Journal*, 13 (1968) pp. 121-123.

⁷⁸ Hass, A., *In the Shadow of the Holocaust* p. 27.

⁷⁹ Unidentified testimony, in Hass, A., *In the Shadow of the Holocaust* p. 66.

⁸⁰ Unidentified testimony, in Hass, A., *In the Shadow of the Holocaust* p. 66-67.

⁸¹ Alexandrowicz, D., “Children of Concentration Camp Survivors” in *Yearbook of the International Association for Child Psychiatry and Allied Professions*, Vol. 2 (New York: John Wiley, 1973), pp. 383-394.

Somehow we had to do better – both in accomplishment and morally.”⁸² The children felt guilty: for not having suffered themselves; for not fulfilling their parents’ impossible expectations; for hurting those who had already suffered so much. Survivors often aggravated those feelings of guilt by reminding their child of his or her good fortune compared with the deprivation and losses that the parent endured. Remembering his own survivor parents, Aaron Hass wrote:

‘For this I survived the Nazis? For this I survived the camps?’ This was my parents’ anguished refrain – if I talked back to them or if I came home later than I said I would. ... It was as if they had injected guilt directly into my heart. ... How could I answer them back? How could I be certain of the validity of my actions or feelings?⁸³

The protectiveness that the children felt towards their parents reflected a reversal of roles that sometimes took place. Many children of survivors sought to shelter their fragile parents from emotional distress, as the following excerpt from Hass’s own narrative illustrates:

How could I cause them more grief? How could I electrically prod an already exposed, frayed nerve? How dare I risk the final straw, which might precipitate the ultimate psychological breakdown?⁸⁴

As Hass observed: “Perceiving their parents as overly taxed and permanently traumatised by their losses during the Holocaust, children of survivors often refrained from relating their emotional difficulties.”⁸⁵ Most survivors needed to see their children permanently happy and any departure from this state had a devastating effect on the parents. On the other hand, the survivors’ extreme experiences made them highly intolerant of any expression of weakness. They tended to trivialise the difficulties felt by their children by comparing them to their own past. ‘Do you think that’s a problem? Go through what I went through and you will know what real problems are,’ was a

⁸² Unidentified testimony, in Hass, A., *In the Shadow of the Holocaust* p. 66-67.

⁸³ Hass, A., *In the Shadow of the Holocaust* p. 51.

⁸⁴ Hass, A., *In the Shadow of the Holocaust* p. 51.

⁸⁵ Hass, A., *In the Shadow of the Holocaust* p. 62.

common refrain in survivors' households. Anne Karpf reminisced about her childhood:

For my parents the war was the yardstick by which all other bad experiences were judged and thereby found to be relatively good. Frustration, irritation, anger, disappointment – to them all these seemed trivial and indulgent, and so never could be freely vented.⁸⁶

Like their parents, survivors' children could not express anger, albeit for different reasons. And like their parents, they turned their anger against themselves or transferred it to the first available outlet. Survivors' anger often manifested itself in their mistrust of the world, especially the non-Jews. The parents' traumatised views of the world and other people were transmitted to their children, who often reacted by developing excessive, unwarranted fears of their own. "The world, for these children of survivors, is clearly a hostile protagonist. ... Human nature is malevolent and this malevolence is especially directed toward Jews."⁸⁷ The following excerpts of survivors' children's testimonies show that they learned this lesson well:

They (my parents) thought me not to trust people. ... The Holocaust has increased my awareness of regarding the dark side in us ... That it can and did happen leaves disturbing implications on my outlook on life. I cannot be so trusting or idealistic ... For the most part I have come to realise that you cannot depend on other people.⁸⁸

The Holocaust has scared me, wounded me, at best. ... My mother ... instituted a sense of mistrust, that the world is a dangerous place.⁸⁹

I'd consider myself a hard-core realist. ... There is an ugliness to life that I understand ... I think the Holocaust has also contributed to a low-level sense of paranoia.⁹⁰

⁸⁶ Karpf, A., *The War After* p. 38.

⁸⁷ Hass, A., *In the Shadow of the Holocaust* p. 37.

⁸⁸ Testimony of Beverly, in Hass, A., *In the Shadow of the Holocaust* p. 37-38.

⁸⁹ Testimony of Herb, in Hass, A., *In the Shadow of the Holocaust* p. 38.

⁹⁰ Testimony of Fran, in Hass, A., *In the Shadow of the Holocaust* p. 39

Our parents depicted the world as so unsafe that we gathered it was best to lie down and hold back: if you avoided attracting attention, you might escape a backlash.⁹¹

I live with a sense of doom; that something bad is going to happen. I don't trust anyone who isn't Jewish.⁹²

You can't trust the non-Jews. Jews aren't in power. Goys don't like Jews. Things don't change. The Jew stands alone.⁹³

On a more positive note, Hass observed two marked interpersonal qualities in children of the Holocaust survivors: compassion and resilience. Overly concerned with others and keenly sensitive to another's pain, children of camp survivors frequently entered the helping professions. Their testimonies express a high degree of compassion, on personal, social, and political levels. This compassion is mainly universal, although some participants in the survey limited their concern to the Jewish community. On the universal plane, the prevalent argument is that Jews must not remain indifferent to the suffering of others, a view expressed in this testimony: "If I hear about oppression in other countries I feel like it is my responsibility to do something because others stood by while Jews suffered."⁹⁴ For others, it is precisely the world's failure to intervene on behalf of the Jews that justifies their own circumscribed engagement: "No one is going to care about Jews. We've got to take care of ourselves."⁹⁵ Resilience in the face of adversity is the most common strength described by the second-generation children. This is a particularly strong feature in fighters' families, but also frequent in others. Resilience originated primarily in identification with these qualities in the parents ("My mother is incredibly strong and quick to take charge. I'm the same way"⁹⁶), but also in the desire to please them, atone for their helplessness, as the following excerpts from survivors' children's testimonies show:

⁹¹ Karpf, A., *The War After* p. 13.

⁹² Unidentified testimony, in Hass, A., *In the Shadow of the Holocaust* p. 40.

⁹³ Unidentified testimony, in Hass, A., *In the Shadow of the Holocaust* p. 109.

⁹⁴ Unidentified testimony, in Hass, A., *In the Shadow of the Holocaust* p. 45.

⁹⁵ Unidentified testimony, in Hass, A., *In the Shadow of the Holocaust* p. 45.

⁹⁶ Unidentified testimony, in Hass, A., *In the Shadow of the Holocaust* p. 46.

The Holocaust gives me strength to try harder, to do well – to honour people in my family whom I never knew but, I know, would have loved me a lot.

My Holocaust background helps me to fight and do well because of what happened to them ... To prove that we are good. Wanting to make my mother happy ... I want to keep her going by my continuing fight.⁹⁷

On the basis of clinical data, Yael Danieli made a classification of survivors' family patterns which takes into account the parents' war experience. "Although the survivor parent's post-war posture may or may not be identical with his or her war experiences" asserts Danieli, "most survivors who headed victim or numb families were former concentration camp inmates; most of those in the fighter category were partisans and resistance fighters during the war."⁹⁸ Danieli distinguishes four categories of families: victim families, fighter families, numb families, and families who made it.

The home atmosphere of **victim families** was characterised by "pervasive depression, worry, mistrust and fear of the outside world, and by symbiotic clinging within the family."⁹⁹ In victim families relatively harmless, everyday activities were perceived as lethal hazards and catastrophic reactions were common. Marsha, a survivors' child, speaking of her parents said:

They overreacted to everything. For example, if someone stole a five-cent candy from their store, they became totally paranoid and hysterical. Everything was a matter of life and death. They were always waiting for the worst to happen.¹⁰⁰

Since they themselves had not been appropriately "prepared" for the Holocaust by their own parents, the survivor parents' made sure to avoid this mistake with their

⁹⁷ Unidentified testimony, in Hass, A., *In the Shadow of the Holocaust* p. 46.

⁹⁸ Danieli, Y., "Families of Survivors of the Nazi Holocaust: Some Short and Long-Term Effects" in Spielberger, C. D., Sarason, I. G. and N. Milgram (eds.), *Stress and Anxiety*, Vol. 8, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1981).

⁹⁹ Danieli, Y., "The Treatment and Prevention of Long-Term Effects and Intergenerational Transmission of Victimization: A Lesson From Holocaust Survivors and Their Children" in Figley, C. R., *Trauma And Its Wake*, Vol. 1, (New York: Brunner / Mazel, 1985) p. 299.

¹⁰⁰ Testimony of Marsha, in Hass, A., *In the Shadow of the Holocaust* p. 59.

precious offspring. Children in victim families were “often trained to be survivors of future Holocausts”¹⁰¹ and their ‘disaster smart’ parents invested all their energy into protecting and controlling their progeny. Wide range of involvement in their children's lives and overprotectiveness have been reported by a majority of children belonging to this category. Children witness:

They were overly protective. Every injury or illness was a cause of major panic and turmoil in the house.¹⁰²

Every time my throat hurt my mother was sure that I had cancer.¹⁰³

Having lost so much in the Holocaust, the survivor parents had an inordinate fear that harm might befall their children. On the other hand, they were terrified of separation from their children. As Danieli observes: “Victim families insisted that the inside doors of their homes remain open at all times. Any assertion of healthy independence and privacy needs by their children threatened parents, who felt they were reliving their war experiences, when being separated meant total and permanent loss.”¹⁰⁴ Parents found it extremely difficult to endure even the normal developmental disengagement that occurs between parent and a child in the process of growing up. Many survivors displayed “an acute lack of empathy for their children’s problems and emotional needs, particularly as they compared them with their own.”¹⁰⁵ The paramount concern in victim families’ homes was security based on physical, nutritional and material survival. Children had to be fed and kept warm. They often described their parents as obsessed with food, cleanliness, and money.

My mother’s experience with deprivation has made her obsessed with food. I remember having eggs rammed down my throat and vomiting them up, and then having more shoved down again. My mother is always thinking about, talking about, cooking, freezing, or packaging food.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰¹ Danieli, Y., “The Treatment and Prevention” p. 300.

¹⁰² Unidentified testimony, in Hass, A., *In the Shadow of the Holocaust* p. 57.

¹⁰³ Quoted in Karpf, A., *The War After* p. 231.

¹⁰⁴ Danieli, Y., “The Treatment and Prevention” p. 300.

¹⁰⁵ Hass, A., *In the Shadow of the Holocaust* p. 61.

¹⁰⁶ Hass, A., *In the Shadow of the Holocaust* p. 61.

The **fighter families'** homes were filled with compulsive activity and an intense drive to rebuilt, to succeed, and to achieve. Pride and strength were the paramount values. Any behavioural expression of weakness, victimisation, or self-pity was countered with contempt. Even physical illness was only faced when it was already a crisis. Like the victim parents, the fighter survivors distrusted the outside world. However, instead of instructing their offspring to keep low profile, they encouraged them to direct their aggression towards the outsiders. "Family members were 'never again' to let another Holocaust catch them unprepared," wrote Danielli, "Instruction for the offspring were clear: 'Stand on your own two feet and make it big! Scare them if you like. But don't let them know if you are scarred! Never give in ... Never give up, no matter what!'"¹⁰⁷ In **numb families**, both parents were frequently the only survivors of their own families (which before the war included a spouse and children). They were truly broken people: lifeless, silent, depleted of all emotions, and capable of tolerating only a minimal amount of stimulation. The parents protected each other and the children took care of the parents and of themselves. Children often withdrew into an inner world and sought parental figures outside of their family. Alternatively, they adjusted by numbing themselves. The last category comprises the "**families who made it.**" Many of the survivors heading this type of family coped by fantasising about 'making it big' after the liberation, as a kind of revenge against the Nazis. Usually too young to marry immediately after the war, they often married non-survivors. They persistently sought higher education, social and political status, and wealth, both for themselves and their children. Outwardly, these families were more assimilated in their social environment than any other survivor category. The Holocaust was rarely discussed in these families and the 'normal' posture was achieved at the price of denial and avoidance of any remainders of the past. Children often found out about their parents' Holocaust past indirectly or much later in their lives. Some of the survivors "who made it" consecrated "much of their careers, money, and political status to demand commemoration of and attention to the Jewish experience during the Holocaust, and dignity for its victims."¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ Danielli, Y., "The Heterogeneity of Post-war Adaptation" p. 118.

¹⁰⁸ Danieli, Y., "The Treatment and Prevention" p. 304.

Collective Traumas: Empathetic And Symbolic “Survivors”

Introduction

*Jews of the world know that the destruction of European Jewry binds them in a shroud of grief and dignity to the Jewish nation. Jewish identity whether we like it or not is reinforced, cemented, locked into place by the six million dead.*¹⁰⁹

The Nazi concentration camps killed 72% of eastern and central European Jewry, that is, approximately 5 million people.¹¹⁰ Of the total 8,861,000 Jews living in Europe prior to the Second World War, it is estimated that 400-500,000 survived the Nazi Holocaust in the underground, by hiding or escaping, in ghettos, or in slave labour camps, and no more than 75,000 outlived the Nazi death camps.¹¹¹ Those former inmates faced total rule by hostile bureaucracy, filth, promiscuity, starvation, beatings, cold, fear, humiliation, destruction of values, status, society, and family, and the threat of impending death. Furthermore, the twelve years of Nazi regime destroyed hundreds of years of European Jewish culture, communities, schools, political institutions, and synagogues.¹¹² As Marc Ellis wrote: “entire historic areas of Jewish life vanished forever.”¹¹³ The magnitude of destruction and the vicissitude of its design and execution were beyond human imagination. For a number of reasons, including the non-negligible fact that Israel received most of the European refugees after the war (in 1961 – that is, after the absorption of Jews from Arab countries – their proportion still represented 25% of the total Jewish population¹¹⁴), the Jewish State was particularly affected by the destruction of European Jewry. I begin by examining the collective trauma thesis developed by Kai Erikson, before outlining the

¹⁰⁹ Roiphe, A., *A Season for Healing: Reflections on the Holocaust* (New York: Summit Books, 1988) p. 22.

¹¹⁰ See Hilberg, R., *The Destruction of the European Jews*, unabridged version (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1961).

¹¹¹ See Epstein, H., “Heirs of the Holocaust” in *New York Times Magazine*, June 19, 1977, pp. 12-15 and 74-77; Epstein, H., *Children of the Holocaust: Conversations with Sons and Daughters of Survivors* (New York: Putnam and Sons, 1979); Davidowicz, L. S., *The War Against the Jews 1933-1945* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1975).

¹¹² For detailed figures of destruction, see the testimony of Dr. Salo Baron in *The Trial of Adolf Eichmann*, Sessions 12 and 13.

¹¹³ Ellis, M. H., *Beyond Innocence and Redemption: Confronting the Holocaust and Israeli Power* (New York: Harper and Row, 1990) p. 1.

¹¹⁴ Of the total 1,939,400 Jewish inhabitants in Israel in 1961, 490,595 were refugees from Europe. See Bachi, R., *Population Trends of World Jewry* (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1976) p. 66.

imprint of the Holocaust on those Israelis who were not directly affected by the events in Europe, as well as on the social, political, cultural, and psychological realms of the Israeli society.

Erikson built his argument on the assumption that “one can speak of traumatised communities as something distinct from assemblies of traumatised persons.”¹¹⁵ The author distinguished two forms of communal trauma. “Sometimes,” he wrote, “the tissues of community can be damaged in much the same way as the tissues of mind and body.”¹¹⁶ But “even when that does not happen,” Erikson proceeded, “traumatic wounds inflicted on individual can combine to create a mood, an ethos – a group culture, almost – that is different from (and more than) the sum of the private wounds that make it up.”¹¹⁷ The texture of a community is damaged when the blow hits its vital resources, such as a significant portion of its population, its elite and / or leadership, its spiritual or material centres, or a combination of the above. Unlike the sudden shock, which characterises an individual experience of trauma, a form of shock associated with collective trauma is “a gradual realisation that the community no longer exists as an effective source of support and that an important part of the self has disappeared.”¹¹⁸ Put differently “the collective trauma works its way slowly and even insidiously into the awareness of those who suffer from it, so it does not have the quality of suddenness normally associated with ‘trauma.’”¹¹⁹

How do communities react to trauma? Erikson observed a tense co-existence of both centripetal and centrifugal tendencies in traumatised communities. The former unite members of the community around the disaster that befell them and shared trauma serves as a source of communality in the same way that common language and common cultural background do. There is “a spiritual kinship ... a sense of identity”¹²⁰ in this “gathering of the wounded.”¹²¹ The disaster is followed by a

¹¹⁵ Erikson, K., *A New Species of Trouble: Explorations in Disaster, Trauma, and Community* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1994) p. 230.

¹¹⁶ Erikson, K., *A New Species of Trouble* p. 230.

¹¹⁷ Erikson, K., *A New Species of Trouble* p. 230-31.

¹¹⁸ Erikson, K., *A New Species of Trouble* p. 233.

¹¹⁹ Erikson, K., *A New Species of Trouble* p. 233.

¹²⁰ Erikson, K., *A New Species of Trouble* p. 231.

¹²¹ Erikson, K., *A New Species of Trouble* p. 232.

“stage of euphoria”¹²² characterised by the community’s whole-hearted mobilisation to rescue the survivors, renew old pledges of fellowship, and dress the wound as soon as possible. In Erikson’s words “they are celebrating their own rebirth.”¹²³ On the other hand, however, traumas “often seem to force open whatever fault lines once ran silently through the structure of the larger community, dividing it into divisive fragments [and] the fault lines usually open to divide the people affected by the event from the people spared,”¹²⁴ exactly the opposite of ‘the stage of euphoria’ described earlier. “Those not touched try to distance themselves from those touched, almost as if they are escaping something spoiled, something contaminated, something polluted.”¹²⁵ Yet, once the traumatic experiences work their way into the grain of the affected community “they come to supply its prevailing mood and temper, dominate its imagery and its sense of self, govern the way its members relate to one another ... the shared experience becomes almost like a common culture, a source of kinship.”¹²⁶

Given the complexity of the gradual integration of the Holocaust into the Israeli reality, the rejection and acceptance phases of Israeli society’s dealing with the European tragedy are studied in detail in subsequent chapters. The emphasis here is the result of this process – that is, the creation of “common culture” by means of identification with survivors. Encouraged and perpetuated by the consecutive Israeli governments since the beginning of the 1980s (by means of school curricula, state-sponsored trips to concentration camps in Poland, and other Holocaust educational projects), identification with the Holocaust survivors is very high among not directly affected Israelis. The section on empathetic “survivors” analyses the nature and symptoms of the communal trauma experienced by this group, as well as its origin and means of transmission. The second category of communal “survivors” comprises the Jewish people and their territorial embodiment of sovereignty – the State of Israel. Those symbolic “survivors” endured great casualties: the Nazis murdered one third of the world’s Jewish population, destroyed whole communities and their unique

¹²² Anthony F. C Wallace, quoted in Erikson, K., *A New Species of Trouble* p. 235.

¹²³ Anthony F. C Wallace, quoted in Erikson, K., *A New Species of Trouble* p. 235.

¹²⁴ Erikson, K., *A New Species of Trouble* p. 236.

¹²⁵ Erikson, K., *A New Species of Trouble* p. 236.

¹²⁶ Erikson, K., *A New Species of Trouble* p. 236-37.

culture, and plundered inestimable amounts of Jewish property.¹²⁷ Likewise, the Jewish State in the making lost its main resource of human capital, that is, the east European Jewry. As Ben Gurion wrote: "Hitler harmed more than the Jewish people, whom he knew and hated: he caused damage to the Jewish state, whose coming he did not foresee. He destroyed the country's main support and central force. The state appeared and did not find a nation that had awaited it."¹²⁸

Empathetic "Survivors": Israeli Jews

My mother's mother was from Cracow, thirty miles from Auschwitz, and I must assume that if she ... hadn't ... sailed to America, that I'd have been sent to Auschwitz in the early 1940s. I'd have been twelve years old. I'd have been wearing a drab grey suit and a flat grey 'golfer' cap, and I'd have stepped from the train with my mother, father, and freckle-cheeked sister ... and onto the concrete platform inside the Auschwitz wires.¹²⁹

In a 1992 study of Israeli identity among college students revealed that close to 80 percent of those asked identified with the statement: 'We are all Holocaust survivors.'¹³⁰ This unparalleled level of identification with survivors' experience reflects the equally novel contours of Israeli identity. As Chapters Three and Four of this thesis show, the integration of the Holocaust into the Israeli identity was a long and painful process for all parties involved. Starting with the reconstruction of the tragedy at the trial of a Nazi war criminal, Adolf Eichmann, the non-fighting Holocaust survivors slowly gained their place in the public discourse. Until the Eichmann trial, native Israelis could not imagine something like the Holocaust happening to them: "no one could have slaughtered us in the synagogues; every boy and girl would have shot every German soldier."¹³¹ Therefore, they blamed the catastrophe on the passivity and the meekness of the Diaspora Jews. Agonising personal narratives that emerged from the witness stand, brought the Holocaust closer to the average Israeli, and the gap between the Jewish (that is, Diaspora) and Israeli identity progressively narrowed until the two virtually merged, as "part of Israeli ... identity and self-

¹²⁷ Beker, A. (ed.), *The Plunder of Jewish property during the Holocaust* (New York: New York University Press, 2001).

¹²⁸ Ben Gurion, D., "Eternal Israel" in *Government Yearbook 1954* (Jerusalem: Government Press Office, 1954) p. 37.

¹²⁹ Sack, J., *An Eye For An Eye*, (New York: Basic Books, 1993) p. ix.

¹³⁰ Oron, Y., *Jewish-Israeli Identity* (Tel Aviv: Kibbutz College School of Education, 1992) p. 58.

¹³¹ Quoted in Teveth, S., *The Road to Iyyar* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1986) p. 229.

perception have come to be connected to suffering and to the Holocaust."¹³² It was reported at the time of Eichmann trial that "many of those not affected by the Holocaust, amongst them particularly Sephardic Jews, reacted more violently to the horrors told at the trial than those directly affected."¹³³ The story made the rounds that when a hangman was sought to hang Eichmann there were many more Sephardic volunteers than Ashkenazic ones. This anecdote confirms the findings of the study according to which, by the late 1970s, the Holocaust became an event common to all citizens of Israel, independently of their origins.¹³⁴

In their 1993 survey of the perceptions of the Holocaust in Israel, psychoanalysts Rafael Moses and Yechezkel Cohen identified a selection of reactions observed in individuals and groups who were not directly affected by the Holocaust: feelings of guilt and shame, identification fantasy, sense of entitlement, anger, fear and sense of vulnerability. Unlike the survivors' **guilt** examined in the previous section of the chapter, the feeling of those not directly affected is "guilt for not having suffered, for not having been part of an experience of suffering, which, looked from an Israeli vantage point, was very widespread indeed."¹³⁵ **Shame** was particularly intense in the first fifteen years after the war when most Israelis reacted to Holocaust survivors by distancing themselves. They felt that the Diaspora Jews, not only went "like sheep to the slaughter," but by doing so, brought shame upon the whole Jewish nation. After the Eichmann trial, feelings of shame regarding the survivors virtually disappeared. However, the memory of this blow to the national pride makes Israelis very sensitive to any action or utterance that might be interpreted as disrespectful or insinuating weakness. It is not surprising that 'freier' [sucker] is one of the worst insults in the national lexicon. Like the opening quote of this section, **identification fantasy** is an attempt to imagine oneself in the shoes of the victims; persecuted by the Nazis, in a concentration camp, hiding in the forest, and so on. 'What would I have done? How would I have survived in a camp? How

¹³² Moses, R. and Y. Cohen, "An Israeli View" in Moses, R. (ed.), *Persistent Shadows Of The Holocaust: The Meaning To Those Not Directly Affected* (Madison, CT.: International University Press, 1993) p. 128.

¹³³ Moses, R. and Y. Cohen, "An Israeli View" p. 132.

¹³⁴ Bar-On, D. and O. Sela, *The Vicious Circle between Relating to Reality and Relating to the Holocaust among young Israelis* (research report) (Beersheva: Ben Gurion University, Department of Behavioural Sciences, 1990) p. 39.

¹³⁵ Moses, R. and Y. Cohen, "An Israeli View" p. 128.

would I have behaved? What might I have done to stay alive? Identification fantasy is often generated by exposure to Holocaust-related books or films, in Jews and non-Jews alike. In Israel, however, identification with survivors was actively encouraged by the leadership through the Holocaust education programs in schools and elsewhere. The history of Jewish suffering, culminating in the Holocaust, created in Israelis a marked **sense of entitlement**. The latter is expressed in a claim to ethical indulgence and sympathy owed to those who suffer. On the other hand, it is also an entitlement to any action that serves Israeli needs, “as if moral laws of behaviour towards others were suspended because of the Holocaust: as if inverting Rabbi Hillel’s famous injunction, they now feel entitled to do unto others what was done unto them.”¹³⁶ Feelings of **anger and vengefulness** are both intense and diffuse. Since the cause of the tragedy no longer exists, the anger is directed at other enemies and bystanders. In his discussion of Jewish revenge against the Nazis, Berel Lang identifies a displacement effect, defined as “the appearance of revenge in other guises.”¹³⁷ Filtered through displacement effect, “revenge would have been silent, deliberately not announcing itself.”¹³⁸ Lang attributes a number of Israeli attitudes and deeds to a displaced revenge: for example, “the continued (potentially limitless) ascription of guilt,” both towards Germany and the world; trial and execution of Adolf Eichmann (as opposed to simple assassination in Argentina); and above all, Israel’s representation of the Arabs as successors of the Nazis. Lang thus argued:

At least to a degree, certain disfigured representations of Arab character and rights – and the expression of self-assertion and force directed against those representations – reflect an emergence from powerlessness that in recent Jewish history was epitomised in the Shoah and that has since found in the Arabs an available target for compensation – that is, for revenge.¹³⁹

In Israel, external danger has been omnipresent ever since the establishment of the state. The Holocaust made Jews conscious of their vulnerability. It is therefore understandable that the reaction of many individuals to what is perceived as a threat

¹³⁶ Roiphe, A., *A Season for Healing* p.177.

¹³⁷ Lang, B., “Holocaust Memory and Revenge: The Presence of the Past” in *Jewish Social Studies, History, Culture and Society*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (1996) p. 3.

¹³⁸ Lang, B., “Holocaust Memory and Revenge” p. 3.

¹³⁹ Lang, B., “Holocaust Memory and Revenge” p. 13-14.

of extinction would immediately connect to the Holocaust. The analogy provokes both genuine and exaggerated fears. Genuine fear is an actual, inner response to what is perceived as a real threat. This leads to fear that once again, the Jewish people are threatened with extinction. As Chapter Five of this thesis shows, such reactions were particularly strong during the 'waiting period' before the Six-Day war, and to a lesser extent during the Yom Kippur war. The exaggerated fear is a traumatic response to anxiety, mostly present in the physical survivors due to a reactivation of their past experiences. And finally, fear is also sometimes "called up partly deliberately and partly half-consciously, both for inner political purposes within Israel and for external political purposes outside Israel."¹⁴⁰ Unlike the traumatic symptoms observed in physical survivors, which are direct and constant, those enumerated above, come up on occasion and rarely as a central theme in the lives of empathetic 'survivors.' "Rather," the authors claim, "[they] surface at times in relation to stimuli which may be either internal or external."¹⁴¹

The question remains, however, how and why has the Holocaust become such an integral part of Israeli identity? In his discussion of Israeliness (defined as a cultural entity, a set of attitudes, a state of mind which shapes the responses of the Israelis), Akiva Orr argues that the identification with the Holocaust resulted from a state-designed and promoted boost of 'Jewish consciousness' among Israeli youth. The history of Holocaust education in Israel reproduces the pattern of Israeli society's dealing with the issue. The first fifteen years of the state were marked by an almost total absence of the topic from Israeli school curricula. For many students and teachers of that period, the Holocaust was a personal trauma and "the memories were too harsh, too close, and some of the questions were too distressing to discuss."¹⁴² On the other hand, the teaching of the Holocaust was a political problem. In those years, Israeli schools were associated with political parties, which made it even harder to design a common curriculum. During the Eichmann trial in 1961-62, "educators suddenly found themselves sharing the surprising discovery that the Israeli educational system had not fulfilled its duty in teaching the Holocaust, thus leaving the Israeli student unprepared for the confrontation with the problems and

¹⁴⁰ Moses, R. and Y. Cohen, "An Israeli View" p. 135.

¹⁴¹ Moses, R. and Y. Cohen, "An Israeli View" p. 120.

¹⁴² Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 477.

revelations raised by the trial.”¹⁴³ Eichmann trial (analysed in Chapter Four of this thesis) was not only a historical, but also an educational turning point. “In preparing for the trial”, assistant state prosecutor Gabriel Bach later recalled, “the prosecution set itself the goal of inducing Israeli youth to identify with the Holocaust’s victims. This identification, it was hoped, would replace the arrogance that had, up until then, been the main component of the attitudes of young Israelis to the survivors.”¹⁴⁴

Ruth Firer researched the way in which the Holocaust was presented to Israeli pupils and students in textbooks and teaching programs. She reviewed three different types of textbooks¹⁴⁵: *Mikra’ot* (readers) for children between the ages of 9 and 14, history textbooks for upper elementary grades and high school pupils, and research textbooks for university students. What follows here is an attempt to retrace, on the basis of Firer’s research, a standard Israeli child’s / youngster’s exposure to the Holocaust. “Every Israeli child is born as if already crucified by the burden of the Jewish historical experience,” states Firer, “From infancy he is faced with the siren that pierces every home in the country on the morning of the Day of Remembrance. Embraced by his parents, the toddler experiences the first collective terror while standing at the memorial to six million Jews who were massacred during World War II.”¹⁴⁶ In the years that follow, the child gets an explanation from parents and kindergarten teachers. Thus, the majority of Israeli children know more about the Holocaust before they even start school than many adults do elsewhere. Until the fifth grade, the Holocaust falls within other chapters (for example in ‘Ingathering of the Exiles’). From fifth grade onwards, a specific chapter is consecrated to the Holocaust and it grows in size with each grade. The Holocaust chapter is usually found after the Passover and the Independence Day chapters, which fits the Zionist narrative of the Exile, with its culmination in the Holocaust and redemption.¹⁴⁷ In the *Mikra’ot*, the child is the protagonist of the Holocaust, a didactical approach that

¹⁴³ Schatzker, C., “Holocaust Education in Israel” in Levine, E. (ed.), *Voices From Israel: Understanding the Israeli Mind* (New York, London and Toronto: Herzl Press, 1986).

¹⁴⁴ Gabriel Bach quoted in Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 478.

¹⁴⁵ The textbooks under consideration are limited to those used in secular Israeli schools. Religious schools follow a different program.

¹⁴⁶ Firer, R., “The Holocaust in School Textbooks, 1948-1984” in Braham, R., *The Treatment of the Holocaust in textbooks: the Federal Republic of Germany, Israel, the United States of America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987) p. 161.

¹⁴⁷ For more on the Holocaust within the Zionist narrative see Sivan, E., *Izkor: Les Esclaves de la Mémoire* (France: Société Française de Production, 1991). Visual material.

facilitates the Israeli child's identification with the Jewish child during the Holocaust. The usual themes are the following: spiritual resistance and maintenance of human image (the child is struggling for survival yet he remains loving, human, and courageous); armed resistance (the youngster is a messenger or helper, usually in Warsaw ghetto setting); vengeance and the vow to remember (the child is directed to sublime his vengeance and fulfil his vow by building and defending his homeland); and inevitably, the imaginative escape to Israel that provides both the consolation and the happy end. The *Mikra'ot* presentation of the Holocaust aims at forming an "Israeli Jewish adult who is sensitive to human values and a keen Zionist as well."¹⁴⁸

It is worth noting that until the 1970s many *Mikra'ot* hardly included the Holocaust, and others spread the subject across different chapters. The same trend can be observed in history textbooks. Until 1980, the Holocaust had not been a mandatory subject for secondary schools, and when it was taught, three to four hours a year were considered appropriate. Only since 1982, have teachers been obliged to consecrate thirty hours a year to the Holocaust, with the latter appearing in final examinations as well. During the period 1948 – 1977, the main theme of the history textbooks regarding the Holocaust was 'a proof of Zionist truth.' The gist of the Holocaust message during this time was that the Jewish nation, because of their illusions concerning Jewish emancipation in the Diaspora failed to understand or refused to accept the truth of Zionism. The Final Solution destroyed all these illusions and proved Zionism right. The catastrophe ended with the miracle of Israel. The issues of shame and honour that plagued the Israeli society in the first decade of the state found their way into the history textbooks. Since Jewish resistance was seen as "a compensation for the *shameful surrender* of the Jews who were transported to the death camps"¹⁴⁹ its role was overemphasised. The majority of textbooks devoted twice as much space to the description of the armed resistance than to suffering, destruction and spiritual resistance. The connection made between the ghetto fighters (who are called 'Hebrews' or even 'Israeli youngsters') and the young Hebrew pioneers "may create an impression that Zionism fought against the Nazi

¹⁴⁸ Firer, R., "The Holocaust in School Textbooks" p. 174.

¹⁴⁹ Excerpt from a history textbook, quoted by Firer, R., "The Holocaust in School Textbooks" p. 181. Italics supplied.

regime, and won by building the Jewish State of Israel out of the ashes of the war.”¹⁵⁰ As the Chapter Four shows, the Eichmann trial represented the turning point in the Israelis’ perceptions of the Holocaust and its victims. It also provided an impetus for the revision of history textbooks. The new approach abandoned the presentation of the Holocaust as “an apocalyptic war between Zionism and Nazism”¹⁵¹ and focused on the crisis of the individual in the modern totalitarian state. The authors of those textbooks sought to understand how is it possible to turn a civilised person into a murderous beast and to draw universalistic lessons from the tragedy. Yet, those ‘humanistic textbooks’ did not last long. It was judged that they lacked national-Zionist angle and that their humanistic-universal message “could not in itself be relevant for the Israeli pupil.”¹⁵² The first-time victory of the right-wing Likud party and the consequent Premiership of Menachem Begin set another order of priorities: inclusion of Sephardic Jews into the Holocaust (which was seen to be an ‘Ashkenazi affair’) and attempt to draw some useful lessons from the tragedy.

Apart from the changes in school textbooks, the 1980s also brought another educational novelty – trips to Poland. Zevulun Hammer, a religious Minister of Education introduced organised school tours for eleventh and twelfth graders from Israel to the Nazi extermination camps in Poland. “Nothing better illustrates the change that has occurred in Israel’s attitude toward the Holocaust,” commented Tom Segev, “than the journey of these students, members of the third generation, to Treblinka, Majdanek, and Auschwitz. ... A single generation after the founding of the state, Israel was sending its children to the Jewish past abandoned by its founding fathers. ... The young people were sent out to seek what secular Israeli society was, apparently, unable to offer them: roots.”¹⁵³ In 1990, Segev joined a group of 150 high school students from seven schools on a trip to Poland. For two months prior to the trip, all the participants had taken part in an orientation program, which included reading books, viewing films, visiting memorial sites, and meeting survivors. They all received a special booklet put together by the Ministry of Education. Among other things, the booklet also contains the Prayer for the State of Israel, the Blessing for the Soldiers of Israeli Defence Forces (which should be recited at Auschwitz), a

¹⁵⁰ Firer, R., “The Holocaust in School Textbooks” p. 181.

¹⁵¹ Firer, R., “The Holocaust in School Textbooks” p. 190.

¹⁵² Firer, R., “The Holocaust in School Textbooks” p. 191.

¹⁵³ Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 488.

Yizkor (the Jewish memorial prayer), as well as the following message for the teacher and guide, which deserves to be quoted in full:

As we stand beside the death furnaces in the extermination camps, our hearts fill with resentment and tears come to our eyes for the horrible destruction of European Jewry, and Polish Jewry within it. Yet while we weep and suffer pain and sorrow over the destruction, our hearts fill with pride and contentment at the great privilege we have of being citizens of an independent Israel. At the sight of the flag of Israel flying high above the death pits and furnaces, we stand straight and proud and murmur: 'The people of Israel live! The eternal one of Israel will not fail us!' We swear before our millions of murdered brothers, 'If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand lose its cunning!' And it is as if we hear their souls crying out to us, "In our deaths we have commanded you to live. Preserve and defend the State of Israel as your most precious possession.' Then we answer, with a full heart, 'May the State of Israel live forever.'¹⁵⁴

During the eight days of pilgrimage to the death camps of Treblinka, Majdanek, and Auschwitz, "the students endured emotional extremes – sharp swings from outbursts of elation to attacks of weeping, to the point of hysterics."¹⁵⁵ Most of them wore an outfit created specially for the trip, a purple sweatshirt with a large white Star of David, with the word Israel written inside it. Some of the students, reports Segev, frequently walked in formation, waving the Israeli flag. "They did this, they explained, so that the passersby in the Polish cities would know that there is life after the Holocaust. It was their revenge as Israeli emissaries."¹⁵⁶ Again and again, the students were reminded that the Holocaust meant that they must stay in Israel. The tragic irony of this message resided in the fact that this particular trip took place in the middle of the Persian Gulf crisis, and a few months later the students endured the third war of their young lives. Waiting for the flight to Warsaw at Ben Gurion airport, "inevitably, one of the teenagers ... quipped that he had no reason to worry – when Saddam Hussein's missiles hit Tel Aviv, he would be in Auschwitz."¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁴ *I Seek My Brothers: Youth Trip to Poland* (Jerusalem: Ministry of Education and Culture, 1990).

¹⁵⁵ Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 497.

¹⁵⁶ Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 498.

¹⁵⁷ Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 487.

The teenager's utterance reveals a contradiction that is even deeper than the incongruity of feeling safer in Auschwitz than in Tel Aviv: the fact that fifty years after the Holocaust, the independent Jewish State aimed for (and largely achieved) an almost complete identification of its youngest generation with the helpless, stateless, victims of the Holocaust. When most individual Holocaust survivors have well advanced in their process of recovery or even successfully reconnected with the outside world, the youngest generation of Israelis was being traumatised again. Following Kai Erikson's observations, it can be stated that the traumatic shock endured by the generation of Israelis educated in Israel during the late 1970s and early 1980s, was particularly insidious. It consisted in a guided collective emotional identification with the Holocaust victims. The beginning of this section outlined the major post-traumatic symptoms observed in those Israelis who spontaneously empathised with the survivors, either through distant personal connections to the Holocaust, or through the Holocaust narratives that emerged during the Eichmann trial and afterwards. The youth that grew up during the 1980s, however, represents the first entire generation of individuals with more or less standardised and regulated experience of the identification with the victims. The effects of this education have been unfolding since the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s, and many, including Holocaust survivors, denounced an education that re-enacts the very experience of trauma in all its emotional intensity, rather than perpetrate and honour the memory of its victims. The concluding chapter of this thesis returns to the major pitfalls and concurrent criticism of the Israel's Holocaust education.

Symbolic "Survivors": The State of Israel

*This country was founded on a silver platter made of six million bodies.*¹⁵⁸

Three years after the war ended in Europe, the Declaration of Independence of the State of Israel was signed in Jerusalem. Its text included the following section:

The recent holocaust, which engulfed millions of Jews in Europe proved anew the need to solve the problem of the homelessness and lack of independence of the Jewish people by means of the re-establishment of the Jewish State,

¹⁵⁸ General Yossi Peled, Holocaust survivor, quoted in Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 513.

which would open the gates to all Jews and endow the Jewish people with equality of status among the family of nations.¹⁵⁹

Yet, the Zionist solution came too late for the millions of East European Jews, who in 1939 still constituted one half of world Jewry as a whole. The Holocaust represented an awesome blow for the new state and its leaders; "it destroyed at a stroke the most important single reservoir of future immigration – the great nucleus of East European Jewry with its cohesive sense of Jewish peoplehood, its cultural creativity and background of Zionist *hachshara* [training]."¹⁶⁰ The destruction of European Jewry also severely affected the social, cultural, educational, and ideological composition of the State of Israel. In the absence of young, healthy, enthusiastic East European Zionists, Israel had to rely on the exhausted, broken 'remnant' to settle in the country and fortify its army against Arab threat. Furthermore, the Holocaust dictated a new attitude towards the Jews of the Arab world, until then considered "mostly as subjects for historical and anthropological research,"¹⁶¹ rather than a legitimate reservoir of immigration to the Jewish state. "The Jews of the Arab world were brought to Israel in large numbers and at a rapid rate, with no selection, and before anyone had any idea what to do with them."¹⁶² The chasm between the Jews of European descent (Ashkenazim) and those who came from the Middle East (Sephardim), and the tensions between the newcomers and the native Israelis, put a tremendous strain on a society already overtaxed with wars and the absorption of immigrants. When something was needed to unify the Israeli society on the verge of implosion, neither Judaism (which was incompatible with secular Israeliness) nor the Zionist ideals of a model socialist society (which contradicted the predominantly religious identities of the Sephardim) were up to the task. The only thing that both groups shared was a memory of Gentile persecution of the Jews. As the debates preceding the Eichmann trial demonstrate, one of the aims of the trial was also to provide all Israelis with an identity that would eclipse their differences. This identity consisted of double-layered identification: with the victims and survivors of the Holocaust, and with the State of

¹⁵⁹ "State of Israel Proclamation of Independence" in Laqueur, W. and B. Rubin, *The Israel – Arab Reader: A Documentary History of the Middle East Conflict* (New York: Penguin Books, 1995) p. 107.

¹⁶⁰ Wistrich, R. S., "Israel and the Holocaust Trauma" in *Jewish History*, 11: 2 (Fall 1997) p.16.

¹⁶¹ Eliyahu Dobkin quoted in Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 121.

¹⁶² Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 122.

Israel. The previous section showed how this goal had been achieved with regards to the former, whilst this one analyses the roles and value of the State of Israel for secular Israeli Jews.

Since the Eichmann trial and even more so, since the Six-Day and Yom Kippur wars, “the Holocaust had come to replace the founding myths of the Jewish State as the major source and its *raison d’être*. ... The notion of Israel as the guardian and heir of the Holocaust memory has steadily gained ground as the new unifying myth.”¹⁶³ As a state, Israel claims a particular relationship to the Holocaust. In the 1950s, Mordechai Shenhabi even proposed a law according to which every Holocaust victim would be retroactively granted Israeli citizenship. He argued that “The loss of millions is ... a direct loss to the State of Israel. ... The extermination of each of those millions, from the point of view of the Israeli state, was like the slaughter of a ‘potential citizen.’ The State of Israel, as the national expression of the dispersed Jewish people, will bestow its citizenship on the fallen, thus upholding their memory and honour.”¹⁶⁴ The idea was debated extensively by the Israeli government and abandoned only when it turned out that it was legally impossible to grant a citizenship retroactively for a period prior to establishment of the state to someone who did not apply for it. The Holocaust memorial authority, Yad Vashem, offers certificates of honorary citizenship at 12\$ each, but according to the staff, they are not in great demand. This tragic-comic episode illustrates the observation made by Moses: “Israel views itself as an heir to the Holocaust. It feels that it needs to represent, and represents, the victims and the survivors of the Holocaust: it represents them morally everywhere, politically in Israel and abroad, and serves as a vocal spokesman who will inform generations to come of the unbelievable, unimaginable events that took place during that time.”¹⁶⁵ Apart from its role as an heir, guardian of memory, and representative of the victims, the State of Israel also represents the core of Jewish secular identity, symbol of Jewish revival and vindication of the victims’ suffering, and the guarantee that it will never happen again.

¹⁶³ Wistrich, R. S., “Israel and the Holocaust Trauma” p.19.

¹⁶⁴ Quoted in Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 432.

¹⁶⁵ Moses, R. and Y. Cohen, “An Israeli View” p. 129.

The fact that 'secular' and 'Jewish' are contradictory makes a 'secular Jewish identity' a rather nebulous concept. The first generation born and bred in Israel, as well as immigrant children, who received their primary and secondary secular education in Israel, were indeed a different 'breed' of Jews. They were Israelis. They spoke Hebrew as a mother tongue, were atheist, modern, and without the inferiority complexes that characterised their ancestors in the Diaspora. To all intents and purposes, they were Gentiles who spoke Hebrew. Their identification with Jewishness was non-existent. This was the generation of arrogant youth that rejected the Diaspora and with it the Holocaust survivors who came to Palestine from 'over there'. In the 1950s, the Israeli government – composed of the founding fathers with a clear sense of Jewishness – became aware of the fact that the young, secular Israelis had developed a non-Jewish mentality. In order to rectify what was perceived as threatening to the Jewish character of the state, the government introduced special lessons on 'Jewish consciousness' into secular schools. As the previous section showed, those lessons consisted primarily of representing Jewish history as a history of persecution. According to Orr, the idea behind this volt face in the Israeli education, was that "those who no longer practice the religion will lose the Jewish identity, but as long as others persecute them because of their Jewish origin, they are forced to accept it."¹⁶⁶ As a result of this boost of Jewish consciousness "the Israeli youth which before ... did not feel itself to be Jewish now feels linked to a history of persecution. It acquires a negative substitute for the positive religious definition of Jewishness, which it lacks, namely: 'I may not have a clear idea of what secular Jewishness means, but as long as I am persecuted by Jew-haters I am a Jew.'"¹⁶⁷ Both 'Jewish' and 'secular', the State of Israel embodies the **secular definition of Jewishness** based on the history of persecution culminating in the Holocaust. Orr observed that most secular Israelis "identify their image – and self-image – with that of their state."¹⁶⁸ Furthermore their attitude towards the State of Israel is anthropomorphic, projecting upon the state an identity and a life of its own. Aided by a firm conviction that a disappearance of the territorial state would result in massive murder of Israeli Jews, the latter identify their own survival, and that of the entire Jewish people, with a continuous existence of the State of Israel. Elie Wiesel

¹⁶⁶ Orr, A., *Israel: Politics, Myths and Identity Crises* (London and Boulder: Pluto Press, 1994) p. 48.

¹⁶⁷ Orr, A., *Israel* p. 49.

¹⁶⁸ Orr, A., *Israel* p. 57.

described this osmosis between the Jewish people and the State of Israel when he wrote:

The Jewish people would have survived for centuries to come, even if Israel had not been established in 1948. But now that Israel exists, our people is so linked to it that we could not survive its disappearance.¹⁶⁹

More than just a 'regular' territorial state, Israel is a **symbol of Jewish survival and continuity**. It also symbolises Jewish revenge against the Nazis and their accomplices, and represents a living monument to the Holocaust victims. In the words of Marc Ellis "Israel thus becomes a response, perhaps *the* response, to the shattered witness of the Jewish people."¹⁷⁰ Israeli poet, Haim Guri expressed this sentiment in the following short poem:

We have avenged your bitter and lonely deaths
With our fist, heavy and hot,
We have established a monument here to the burnt ghetto,
A living monument that will never end.¹⁷¹

Within the Jewish community, Holocaust survivors are the staunchest supporters of Israel. The Jewish homeland resuscitated their pride and exclaimed their own presence. According to Hass, "most survivors experience an identification with Israel's ongoing struggle to overcome its enemies. As Israel is perceived as the bulwark averting another Holocaust, the outcome of that battle has very personal ramifications for the felt vulnerability of survivors."¹⁷² The existence of an independent Jewish state also provides survivors with a kind of symbolic compensation for all the losses they endured. Since revenge is not possible – "because nothing can be avenged. People are dead; even most of the perpetrators are dead; and even if they were not, what can be avenged?" – the State of Israel, the symbol of Jewish endurance and vitality, is the only metaphysical revenge of the

¹⁶⁹ Wiesel, E., "Israel Twenty Years Later" in Abrahamson, I. (ed.), *Against Silence: The Voice and Vision of Elie Wiesel* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1985), pp. 190-191.

¹⁷⁰ Ellis, M. H., *Beyond Innocence And Redemption* p. 17.

¹⁷¹ Guri, H., "From That Fire" in *Readings for Holocaust and Heroism Memorial Day* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1975) p. 60.

¹⁷² Hass, A., *In the Shadow of the Holocaust* p. 140.

Jewish people. Revenge can also turn into pathetic absurdity, like the memorable Israeli – Polish soccer match for example. In 1995, Israel's national soccer team went to Poland to play against the Polish national team in the qualifying pre-European cup competition. Just before the game the team was taken to Auschwitz. That evening the visit was aired on the main news program. The young players wept as they spoke. "We are playing today on a soil saturated with blood," said one; "our aim is to prove that we exist;" "On the field we shall give vent to all the pent-up emotions..." Another said, "Today I understand why it was so important to establish a Jewish state."¹⁷³ The Israeli team lost 4 to 3.

Last but not least, in spite of its perceived vulnerability, Israel is viewed as the only reliable **safe haven for the Jewish people**. As one American member of the second generation explained:

Israel is very important to me. ... I think [it] is central to the survival of the Jewish people. ... If Israel were to go, I would feel extremely vulnerable. ... And I see the possibility of destruction any time. The world is filled with Israel's enemies. Israel's enemies are my enemies.¹⁷⁴

For many Israelis and Diaspora Jews the conclusions drawn from the Holocaust seem to be those of straightforward survivalism. Only a strong Israel can ensure that the Nazi horrors will not recur: "The determination to be a strong military power is not only a response to realistic Middle East conditions ... but it is also a commandment that rose naturally from the ashes of the camps."¹⁷⁵

¹⁷³ Quoted in Arad, G. N., "The Holocaust as an Israeli Experience" in *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 95: 5 (June 1997). Internet edition at <http://www.upenn.edu/gazette/0697/israeli.html>. Last accessed on 19 August 2001.

¹⁷⁴ Hass, A., *In the Shadow of the Holocaust* p. 140.

¹⁷⁵ Roiphe, A., *A Season for Healing* p. 175.

Conclusion: Community Of Fate

*Israel, a political state, a state like any other, was born out of the ashes of the camps. The nations of the world had a second of pity, a moment of horror, and they made the state for the survivors so that the genocide could not be repeated.*¹⁷⁶

The differentiation among various groups of Holocaust survivors, and particularly, the distinction made between the individual and collective traumas in this chapter, are significant, to the extent that the effects of trauma deploy differently across the various components of the Israeli society. Although the rest of the thesis demonstrates an essential similarity of mechanisms behind individual and collective healing processes, it is nevertheless crucial at this stage, to stress the major long-term implications of this difference. As the above typology of survivor groups showed, the most significant asymmetry between the individual and collective traumatisation lies in the immediacy of the traumatic experience and the controllability of its impact on the individual's quality of life and daily functioning. Those survivors who were closest to the epicentre of trauma, and thus most immediately exposed to the traumatic impact, had least control over the damage inflicted on their psychological, emotional and physical substance. Without a sense of control, the agency of those survivors has also been severely reduced. The above discussion of concentration camp survivors and some family structures they created after the war (numb and victim families) indicates that the survivors most deeply affected by the Holocaust trauma, that is, those who deployed the most comprehensive array of PTSD syndromes, quite expectedly, exercised a minimum control over their lives. Numb and emotionally depleted, they were often unable to act beyond their most immediate daily functioning.

Moving away from the core of the trauma, as the controllability over its impact grew, the capability and willingness to act also increased. Even within the very group of physical survivors, it has been demonstrated that those who were spared the worst of the concentration camps and spent the war fighting or hiding, displayed comparatively more dynamism, even when the latter was still confined to a relatively narrow sphere of initiative. Consequently, the greatest competence and motivation to vigorously react to trauma emerged in the periphery of the traumatic experience.

¹⁷⁶ Roiphe, A., *A Season for Healing* p. 23.

Energised by the guilt for not having suffered enough and the responsibility towards the dead, the individuals who were not directly affected by trauma (empathetic 'survivors') often became the most efficient spokespersons of the survivors and the staunchest defenders of the Holocaust memory. The inverse ratio between the immediacy of traumatic experience and ability / willingness to act upon it, is crucial because it ascribes specific roles to different groups of survivors and thereby defines the relationships between them. The subsequent chapters illustrate the complex interaction between different groups of survivors at various junctions in Israeli history. As chapters Three, Four, and Six show, the physical survivors usually intervened to provide the legitimacy of their immediate experience of trauma to the collective story of the Holocaust. The following chapter indicates that it was the collective survivors' groups, namely the Israeli public and the majority of the leadership who were not directly affected by the Holocaust, who took up the task of applying the lessons of the Holocaust on a wider scale.

Chapter Two

SECURITY AFTER THE HOLOCAUST

Introduction

Any principle that is generated by the Holocaust and to which Israel responds ... becomes overwhelmingly normative for the Jewish people.¹

In mainstream security scholarship, Israel has represented “an ideal example of a state behaving as realists expect states to behave, for they [neo-realists] assumed that state behaviour will conform more closely to their predictions when state security is at stake, and Israel’s security was viewed to be highly threatened.”² Within the neo-realist framework, Israel presented the model of a small and vulnerable state whose security concerns drove its foreign policy. Israel’s geo-strategic position has been consistently presented as the single major explanatory variable for its foreign policy. Many scholars in Israel and abroad explained Israel’s state of being constantly at war or preparing for war with reference to systemic pressures “stemming from the geopolitical factors in the region.”³ A survey of these traditional approaches to Israeli security indeed yields a number of important insights into the material strains on Israeli security policies mentioned above: size, demography, and geo-strategic position. A neo-realist analysis, however, fails to account for the decisive link between the existing material circumstances and the formulation of security policies. The latter are designed as a response to the perceived threats from the strategic environment, and the assessment of one’s capability to overcome those threats. This chapter addresses the following questions: How do different understandings of the history of Jewish persecution, especially the Holocaust, shape moral and psychological conditions of possibility for action in Israel? How do Israeli leaders and publics perceive security through the ‘Jewish

¹ Greenberg, I., “The Third Great Cycle in Jewish History” in *Perspectives* (New York: National Jewish Resource Centre, 1981) p. 22.

² Telhami, S., “Israeli Foreign Policy: A Realist Ideal-Type or a Breed of Its Own?” in Barnett, M. N. (ed.), *Israel in Comparative Perspective. Challenging the Conventional Wisdom* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1996) p. 30.

³ Inbar, E., “Attitudes Toward War in the Israeli Political Elite” in *Middle East Journal*, 44, Summer 1990 p. 433.

prism' and what are the consequences of this departure from instrumental rationality in the field of security?

Some of the leading Israeli security scholars draw attention to the fact that the perception of, and response to, threat in Israel includes a series of psycho-cultural elements grouped under the heading "Jewish prism." Coined by Michael Brecher, the term denotes "the psychological predispositions rooted in the historical legacy through which images from the environment are filtered."⁴ Although Jewish prism in its original formulation does not focus exclusively on the Holocaust, the latter's part has become paramount. In comparison, "other Jewish past experiences and cultural contents are given little importance."⁵ For that reason, the systematisation of various components of the 'Jewish prism' in the first part of this chapter draws predominantly on the lessons, meanings and understandings of the Holocaust. The second part of this chapter sketches a composite portrait of the Israeli political and defence elite, with emphasis on the leaders who had a significant impact on the Israeli concept of security. David Ben Gurion was certainly the single most important Israeli leader; founder of the State of Israel, twice its Prime Minister and twice its Defence Minister. Menachem Begin and Yitzhak Shamir were the longest serving Prime Ministers after Ben Gurion. They had both belonged to Revisionist right-wing underground movements in mandatory Palestine and spent most of their political careers in the opposition. Begin was a survivor of Soviet labour camps and both he and Yitzhak Shamir lost their closest relatives in the Holocaust. Yizhak Rabin and Moshe Dayan, on the other hand were native-born Israeli Generals, with no experience of Jewish persecution in the Diaspora. Other important leaders whose impact was intimately related to a particular event are analysed in the appropriate case studies (Levi Eshkol in the Six-Day war and Golda Meir in the Yom Kippur war).

⁴ Inbar, E., "Attitudes Toward War" p. 435.

⁵ Inbar, E., "Jews, Jewishness and Israel's Foreign Policy" in *Jewish Political Studies Review* 2:3-4 (Fall 1990) p. 180.

Key Elements Of The Jewish Prism

Introduction

*The Holocaust remains a basic trauma of Israeli society.*⁶

In a 1972 overview of Israeli society, Amos Elon observed: “The Nazi Holocaust caused the destruction of that very same Eastern European world against which the early pioneers had staged their original rebellion, but to which, nevertheless, Israel became both outpost and heir.”⁷ Elon continued by identifying the features of “latent hysteria in Israeli life”⁸ that stems from Holocaust trauma. The latter, he claimed, “accounts for the prevailing sense of loneliness”, “obsessive suspicions, [and] the towering urge for self-reliance at all cost.”⁹ Furthermore, the “memory of the Holocaust makes Arab threats of annihilation sound plausible” and “fears and prejudices, passions, pains, and prides, that spin the plot of public life and will likely affect the nation for a long time to come.”¹⁰ The elements of this ‘trauma’ are outlined below in form of different types of lessons and understandings of the Holocaust that shaped the worldview of Israeli leaders and public. To the Holocaust survivors those lessons emerged from a personal experience. The older generation in Palestine related to the Holocaust through their own recollections of anti-Jewish persecution in their countries of origin, whilst the young Israelis’ attitudes were largely shaped by the state’s educational system reviewed in the previous chapter. The majority of Israelis hold a combination of the features described below, although the trend has been clearly moving away from humanistic understandings of the tragedy.

⁶ Elon, A., *The Israelis: Founders And Sons* (London: Bantam Books, 1972) p. 259.

⁷ Elon, A., *The Israelis* p. 260.

⁸ Elon, A., *The Israelis* p. 260.

⁹ Elon, A., *The Israelis* p. 260.

¹⁰ Elon, A., *The Israelis* p. 260.

Zionism

*The Holocaust proved Zionists right. It ended the discussion.*¹¹

The Zionist interpretation of the Nazi murder of European Jewry is straightforward: the Holocaust proved beyond any shadow of doubt that Jewish life in the Diaspora is impossible and that, without a state of their own, Jews will always be at the mercy of others. This thesis figures prominently in the Israeli Declaration of Independence quoted in the previous chapter. The Zionist justification for the State of Israel unfolds both into the past and into the future. Since Jews were killed because they did not have a state, the argument goes, it is only logical that had Israel been established a decade earlier, it could have prevented the slaughter of European Jewry. This argument was epitomised in 1992 by Ehud Barak, Israel's former Prime Minister then incumbent Chief of Staff of its armed forces, who told Israeli television during a visit to Auschwitz: "We, the soldiers of the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF), have come to this place fifty years later, perhaps fifty years too late."¹² This 'failure' to prevent the destruction of European Jewry imprinted a moral obligation to build and defend Israel, because solely the continuous existence of the Jewish state guarantees the survival and safety of the Jewish people. The notion that "the security of the State of Israel is the only guarantee that 'this [the Holocaust] would not happen again' is deeply rooted in every Israeli citizen."¹³ The flip side of the Zionist lesson is thus a firm conviction, held by the majority of Israelis, that "any military defeat would mean the destruction of the state and would pose Israel's society with the danger of extermination."¹⁴ Since the State of Israel is represented as being the only shield against any future holocausts, it is not surprising that the willingness to defend it runs very high among Israeli public and leadership. Among motivational factors of Israeli soldiers, the Holocaust gets the top billing: "Every Israeli soldier, be he a Sabra, a Saphardi, or an Ashkenazi, carries with him the remembrance of the 6 million Jews extinguished by the Nazis. ... He clearly knows what he is fighting for."¹⁵ The Holocaust education of the IDF soldiers and officers, as well as the symbolism of

¹¹ Roiphe, A., *A Season for Healing* p. 177.

¹² Ehud Barak at Auschwitz, 7 April 1992. Quoted in Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 514.

¹³ Gal, R., *A Portrait of the Israeli Soldier* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986) p. 70.

¹⁴ Quoted in Feldman, S., *Israeli Nuclear Deterrence: A Strategy for the 1980s* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982) p. 88.

¹⁵ Gal, R., *A Portrait of the Israeli Soldier* p. 70 and 146.

conducting the IDF basic training graduation ceremony at Yad Vashem, undoubtedly helped maintain this motivational conviction.

Pessimism / Fatalism

*We cannot afford further failures of imagination.*¹⁶

The pessimistic / fatalistic worldview can be traced to the experience of the Jews in the Diaspora and the transposition of this understanding in the Middle Eastern context. Traditional Zionism claimed that hatred of the Jews originated from their unnatural role among nations of the world as a weak and dependent group. Bring them to their own land, the argument went where these unnatural circumstances would no longer exist, and hatred of Jew would vanish as well. Anti-Semitism was seen by the founding fathers of Zionism as a direct consequence of Jewish statelessness.¹⁷ Jewish experience in 1930s Palestine proved that the reality was different. In spite of Jewish transformation to a group that dwelt on land and had a normal division of labour, the Jews who came from Europe encountered a “behaviour of local Arabs [which] seemed consistent with the hatred which they had often experienced in the lands they left.”¹⁸ Out of collapsed hopes invested in the settlement of Palestine and the physical threat represented by Arab hatred emerged a new motif – the basic similarity of Jewish experience everywhere. The importance of the independent Jewish state was thus not in its mere existence (which proved insufficient) but in its military strength and self-reliance. The Nazi assault on Jews in Europe proved once again that “the world would do nothing to protect the Jews.”¹⁹

Not surprisingly, fatalistic and pessimistic attitudes are most pronounced in the belief systems of Holocaust survivors and their children. The fatalistic lessons of the Holocaust reflect an attempt to make sense of the world as a comprehensible place, even if comprehensible means hostile. The search for meaning converges around the themes of betrayal and markedness: betrayal of the world and the mark of

¹⁶ Rabbi Bernard Raskis, quoted in Lifton, R. J., *The Genocidal Mentality: Nazi Holocaust and Nuclear Threat* (London: Macmillan, 1991). p. 246.

¹⁷ See contributions by Herzl, T., Pinsker, L., Nordau, M. and Y. H. Brenner in Charbit, D. (ed.) *Sionismes: Textes Fondamentaux* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1998).

¹⁸ Arian, A., “Perception of Threat in Israel” in Rattinger, H. and D. Munton, *Debating National Security: The Public Dimension* (New York: Peter Lang, 1991) p. 10.

¹⁹ Arian, A. “Perception of Threat in Israel” p. 11.

Jewishness. Hass, who is a child of survivors himself, reminisces on his own Holocaust lessons:

The world, I learned, is divided in two. There are Jews and there are the Goyim. Goyim are different from Jews. They are brutish. We are sensitive, humane. They persecute. We study. ... Goyim are to be shunned. They are to be feared. ... We live in their countries and they hate us. And, sometimes, they decide to murder us.²⁰

Fatalism teaches the constancy of Gentile hatred of the Jews. Jewish history is presented as “a series of holocausts with only some improvements in technique.”²¹ The Nazi murder of European Jews is seen simply as the most recent and most sophisticated of the Gentile assaults on the Jews. The certitude that anti-Semitism is somehow inherent in the Gentile mentality and that persecution of Jews is therefore an eternal feature of the world inhabited by Gentiles, is accompanied by an equally immovable conviction that nobody will ever intervene on behalf of the Jews. ‘The whole world hates us’ and ‘A Jew always stands alone’ are the two most commonly encountered phrases among the Holocaust survivors and their children. Most of the survivors believe in the possibility of another attempted mass assault on the Jewish people.²² The indifference of the world in such an occurrence is taken for granted (“Goyim don’t like Jews. Things don’t change. The Jew stands alone.”²³). Thus, when asked about the lessons of the Holocaust, some survivors responded: “What the world learned from the Holocaust is that you *can* destroy six million Jews and no-one will care.”²⁴ Most survivors communicated their deep-seated mistrust of non-Jews to their children whom they often prepared to be “survivors of the future holocausts.”²⁵ This mental outlook was continually reinforced by the children’s constant exposure to other Jews with similar attitudes. Their survivor parents also taught them that since Gentiles could not be trusted, the Jews must be strong enough to defend themselves against all attacks. The presence of almost a million members of first or second-

²⁰ Hass, A., *In the Shadow of the Holocaust* p. 106.

²¹ Aharon Appelfeld, an Israeli author, quoted in *Jerusalem Post Magazine*, 27 November, 1987.

²² Krell, R., “Holocaust Families: pp. 560-567.

²³ Hass, A., *In the Shadow of the Holocaust* p. 108.

²⁴ Hass, A., *In the Shadow of the Holocaust* p. 75.

²⁵ Danieli, Y., “The Treatment and Prevention” p. 300.

generation survivors undoubtedly enhances the fear of the Gentiles and the ensuing Manichean worldview. According to Jay Gonen, the basic sense of insecurity provoked by systemic threats from Israel's environment has been further amplified by Israel's Jewishness, which preserved typical minority attitudes.²⁶ Arian goes even further by saying that "even mainstream Zionist parties still tend to reject a geopolitical explanation of international conflict and persist in analysing the conflict between Israel and the Arab states in the spirit, and often in the lexicon, of the persecution suffered by Jews in most European countries."²⁷ Thus in 1988, when the panel of five international arbitrators awarded the Taba enclave to Egypt, Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir exploded: "The UN, the world court, international arbitration, or international conference – is always against us."²⁸

The fatalist attitude and concurrent 'two-camps' thesis are most visible in Israelis' attitudes towards war. The state of being at war or preparing for war was perceived by the Israeli political elite as "a decree of fate."²⁹ Thus Rafael Eitan, Chief of Staff of Israel Defence Forces in 1982 recalled in his memoirs an incident in which he was summoned from abroad to carry out a military operation. His reaction was: "Now I know that I have come home ... there is a war. I do not complain. Every people has its own fate."³⁰ Similarly, Amnon Rubinstein, leader of the centrist Shinui party, wrote: "It is Israel's *fate* to live in a hostile world that refuses to accept her."³¹ Some members of Israeli decision-making circles explained this situation with reference to systemic pressures in the Middle East. Most politicians, however, tend to see war as a "phenomenon forced upon Israel."³² Although the argument that war is inevitable is probably the most common justification for any war,³³ fought by any country, the concept of "no choice" (*Ein Breira*) in Israeli political establishment deserves a closer look. According to Reuven Gal, the *Ein Breira* concept is a result of

²⁶ Gonen, J., *Psycho-History of Zionism* (New York: Meridian, 1975), Chapter 2.

²⁷ Arian, A. "Perception of Threat in Israel" p. 11.

²⁸ PM Shamir quoted in Klieman, A., *Israel and the World After 40 Years* (Washington D.C.: Pergamon - Brassey's, 1990) p. 45.

²⁹ Inbar, E., "Attitudes Toward War" p. 433.

³⁰ Eitan, R., *A Soldier's Story* (Tel Aviv: Ma'ariv Library, 1985) p. 117.

³¹ Rubinstein, A., *From Herzl to Gush Emunim and back* (Tel Aviv: Schocken Books, 1980), 103.

³² Inbar, E., "Attitudes Toward War" p. 433.

³³ See Waltz, K., *Man, the State and War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1954). Waltz famously argued that wars occur 'because there is nothing to stop them'.

a combination of two Israeli collective memories: the “vivid memory of the Holocaust and the systematic extermination of 6 million helpless Jews” and the “realisation that the State of Israel, the only sovereign home for the Jews, is surrounded by Arab states, who are waiting to take advantage of any Israeli weakness.”³⁴ The Zionist lesson that “between Israel and survival there is only IDF”³⁵ takes yet a different spin when combined with a fatalistic or pessimistic assessment of Israel’s strategic environment. Inbar observes that “many in Israel, including many in its political elite, ... hold a Manichean *Weltanschauung*, in which the Jews alone face the hostile and/or untrustworthy Gentiles.”³⁶ Seen through the Jewish prism, the world is divided into “them and us, goyim and Jews ... they, the predictable persecutors; we, the inevitable victims.”³⁷ Viewed from Jerusalem the world is still ‘a hostile place’ and “nothing, not even statehood, has sufficed to change this basic condition, anti-Semitic prejudice.”³⁸ When the international community criticises Israel, a great many Israelis, including former Israeli President Chaim Herzog, perceive those attacks as an “irrational attitude of the Western world against Jews, Judaism, and ... the Jewish State.”³⁹

Isolationism

*When we looked out at the world we saw it divided between those who wanted to see us destroyed and those who would not raise a finger to prevent it from happening.*⁴⁰

The pessimistic worldview described above promotes introversion and self-reliance. As Aaron Klieman puts it: “it perpetuates the ancient themes of threat and persecution. It pictures Israel as alone and as friendless, with the possible exception of fellow Jews.”⁴¹ The sense of isolation implicit in the assumption of the world’s hostility (or at best, malevolent indifference) was captured by Asher Arian in the form of a concept called the “people apart syndrome” which the author posited as “central

³⁴ Gal, R., *A Portrait of the Israeli Soldier* p. 146.

³⁵ Gal, R., *A Portrait of the Israeli Soldier* p. 146.

³⁶ Inbar, E., “Jews, Jewishness” p. 174.

³⁷ Marrus, M., “The Use and Misuse of the Holocaust” in Hayes p. (ed.) *Lessons and Legacies, The Meaning of the Holocaust in a Changing World* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1991) p. 108.

³⁸ Klieman, A., *Israel and the World* p. 45.

³⁹ Klieman, A., *Israel and the World* p. 51.

⁴⁰ Eban, A., *My Country* (Jerusalem: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1972) p. 180.

⁴¹ Klieman, A., *Israel and the World* p. 51.

in explaining the relations between perceived threat and policy position.”⁴² The “people apart syndrome”, argues Arian, “identifies and sanctifies Israel as a people with unique challenges and opportunities. It is a secular nationalist extension of the biblical covenant of the chosen people ... the ‘catechism of Israel’s religion of security.’”⁴³ This belief system sets Israel as “a people apart ... relying on itself, on [its] military strength, on the Jewish people, and on God.”⁴⁴ Thus the two constructs – the God-and-us construct and the do-it-alone construct together identify the Israelis as a people apart. The organisation of attitudes that Arian calls ‘religion of security’ includes both instrumental and mystical elements. Thus a rational model of security policy that establishes predictable relations between means and ends coexists with irrational beliefs in historical determinism and divine intervention. As Arian put it: “On the symbolic and psychological levels, there are the Almighty and the Jewish people; on the level of rationality and professionalism, there are the Israeli Defence Force, the Mossad, the Shin Bet (General Security Service), and Israel’s other security institutions.”⁴⁵

The passage in the Bible that assigns Israel to being an eternal “people that shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations” (Numbers 23:9) is deeply rooted in the political culture of contemporary Israel and thus “isolation is immediately recognised.”⁴⁶ For example, in 1974, Prime Minister Rabin said: “We should have no illusions and we should know that we are isolated in the world. ... Israel shall dwell alone and only our military might guarantees our existence.”⁴⁷ An even more poignant illustration of this attitude is the fact that during the period of relative military superiority between the Six-Day War and the Yom Kippur War, when Israeli society was imbued with an entire repertoire of nationalistic songs, one of the more popular ones was entitled *Ha’olam Kulo Negdainu* – “the entire world is against us.” Kook states that the “enthusiasm” and “arrogance” with which the song was sang is symptomatic of the intertwining of the politics of uniqueness and the politics of

⁴² Arian, A., “A People Apart: Coping With National Security Problems in Israel” in *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 33: 4 (December 1989) p. 606.

⁴³ Arian, A., “A People Apart” p. 611.

⁴⁴ Arian, A., “A People Apart” p. 606.

⁴⁵ Arian, A., “A People Apart” p. 611.

⁴⁶ Inbar, E., “Jews, Jewishness” p. 175.

⁴⁷ Yitzhak Rabin in *Ma’ariv*, September 25, 1974.

exclusion in Israel.⁴⁸ Uniqueness is a desired isolation, while exclusion implies an imposed isolation. Israelis' sense of entitlement and the concurrent claim to sympathy and ethical indulgence favoured uniqueness. Israel has always been seen as "a country that defines, and then plays, by its own rules, and which embodies a history that does not abide by the accepted conceptual and experiential categories."⁴⁹ At times, it seems that Israel opted for uniqueness even at the price of exclusion. In an empirical study, Arian demonstrated both the importance of the feelings of aloneness and self-reliance that characterise Israel and "the generalised distribution of these convictions, regardless of class, education, age, and even of politics."⁵⁰ The "people apart syndrome" establishes identity by excluding the outsiders as well as by excluding oneself from the outside world. It thereby increases the cohesion and solidarity within the community. Although "the people apart syndrome may," as Arian argues, "represent a tremendous strength for defining the community of the Jewish State of Israel,"⁵¹ it is also a self-fulfilling prophecy. Zygmunt Bauman saw this self-exclusion of the Israelis as the greatest posthumous triumph of the *Endlösung's* designers:

They did not manage to turn the world against the Jews, but in their graves they can still dream of turning the Jews against the world, and thus – one way or another – to make the Jewish reconciliation with the world, their peaceful cohabitation with the world, all that more difficult, if not impossible.⁵²

Expressivist Use of Force

*There won't be another Holocaust in history. Never again. Never again.*⁵³

In a 1986 sample⁵⁴ 82 percent of those questioned reported that they did not believe that a Holocaust is again likely. What is more important, however, is that this conviction is related to the belief in the strength and prowess of Israeli Defence

⁴⁸ Kook, R., "Between Uniqueness and Exclusion: The Politics of Identity in Israel in Comparative Perspective" in Barnett, M. N. (ed.), *Israel in Comparative Perspective* p. 199.

⁴⁹ Kook, R., "Between Uniqueness and Exclusion" p. 199.

⁵⁰ Arian, A., "A People Apart" p. 617.

⁵¹ Arian, A., "A People Apart" p. 622.

⁵² Bauman, Z., "The Holocaust's Life as a Ghost" in *Tikkun*, 13: 4 (July / August 1998) p. 37.

⁵³ Menachem Begin quoted in Shipler, D. K., "Begin Defends Raid, Pledges to Thwart a New Holocaust" in *New York Times*, 10 June 1981 p. 1.

⁵⁴ Arian, A. "Perception of Threat in Israel."

Forces and *not* in their greater trust in Gentiles.⁵⁵ The strong feeling of mistrust regarding the international environment described in the previous sections, coupled with a “fundamental belief that ... if it depended on the world at large, the Holocaust could happen again”⁵⁶ engendered two lessons about national security: military strength and self-reliance. Israel should always be prepared to fight alone (because nobody would come to its rescue) and still win (because a defeat would mean total annihilation). Thus the Holocaust provided both motivation and justification for Israel's acquisition of the ultimate weapon. It was, as Avner Cohen put it “the determination not to be helpless again” that “inspired his [Ben Gurion's] pursuit of nuclear weapons.”⁵⁷ A 1988 sample⁵⁸ showed that 58 percent were willing to use nuclear weapons in order to avoid defeat in a conventional war and 52 percent to save many lives. 96 percent supported the use of nuclear weapons against a nuclear attack. This brief example of nuclear weapons demonstrates the pervasiveness in Israeli approach to security of two seemingly contradictory elements: the perception of threat “reminiscent of the crusades, the pogroms and the Holocaust,” and a response which was now Biblical: “No longer passive and meek, the response of Israel and Israelis was one of armed power, retaliation, and retribution.”⁵⁹

Although Israel has often had to use force and has, in most cases, done so within the parameters of instrumental rationality, violence has also been exercised in order “to fulfil a deep inner need.”⁶⁰ Inbar identified this expressivist use of force as “not so much intended to influence the enemy as to give vent to the need to pay him back.”⁶¹ For the traditional Zionist ideology, the resurrection of the Jewish state marked the end of a long history of Jewish helplessness and persecution. In that context, the role of violence goes beyond the need to survive, it fulfils the need for “assertiveness and respectability.”⁶² In the words of Member of the Knesset (hereafter MK) Hanan Porat: “The days of pogroms, persecutions, forced baptism and blood-

⁵⁵ Arian, A. “Perception of Threat in Israel” ft. 8.

⁵⁶ Arian, A. “Perception of Threat in Israel” p. 11.

⁵⁷ Cohen, A., *Israel and the Bomb* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998) p. 10.

⁵⁸ Arian, A. “Perception of Threat in Israel.”

⁵⁹ Arian, A. “Perception of Threat in Israel” p. 11.

⁶⁰ Naor, A., *Government At War: How The Israeli Government Functioned During The Lebanon War, 1982* (Tel Aviv: Yediot Aharonot, 1986).

⁶¹ Inbar, E., “Jews, Jewishness p. 176.

⁶² Inbar, E., “Attitudes Toward War” p. 438.

libels are gone forever. Now, since our return home to build the House of Israel, a life without shame and degradation, a life of honour, has returned to us.”⁶³ In this context, a hesitation to use force has often been depicted as an expression of the “exile mentality” – one of the most serious offences for an Israeli. When attacking the critics of the Lebanon war, MK Geula Cohen began by accusing them of Diaspora mentality when she said: “Among a certain section of the critics ... there is also a Diaspora tone. They are only prepared for pogroms. When they are on the receiving end of massacres, then they are prepared to retaliate. They love to be massacred. They are not prepared to go out and prevent massacres.”⁶⁴ Therefore, war does not only guarantee the physical survival, it serves, as Inbar put it, “to restore Jewish honour.”⁶⁵ The conviction that too little was done to resist the Nazis during the Holocaust makes Israeli defence establishment more risk prone. As Shai Feldman observed: “With memories of the Holocaust so vivid in the minds of Israelis, the prospects of military defeat are likely to induce even greater risk-taking than would normally have been the case.”⁶⁶ Furthermore, the General Chief of Staff during the Lebanon war, Rafael Eitan, openly admitted “military actions have also served to assuage feelings of revenge.”⁶⁷ Similarly, Ezer Weizman, former Israeli President, noted that the desire for vengeance was at the core of Israeli retaliatory policy: “During thirty years of war and terrorist activity there was created in Israel a tariff of retaliation and vengeance, a sort of commercial balance-sheet of the blood bank. Success or failure in actions and wars, the need to retaliate and to act or not to act, were also measured in accordance with the number of coffins on both sides of the border.”⁶⁸

⁶³ Quoted in Inbar, E., “Jews, Jewishness” p. 177.

⁶⁴ *Parliamentary Minutes*, Vol. 94 p. 2915 (June 28, 1982).

⁶⁵ Inbar, E., “Jews, Jewishness” p. 177.

⁶⁶ Feldman, S., *Israeli Nuclear Deterrence* p. 88.

⁶⁷ Eitan, R., *A Soldier's Story* p. 163.

⁶⁸ Weizman, E., *The Battle for Peace* (New York: Bantam Books, 1981) p. 43.

Humanism / Criticism

*We did not survive the gas chambers and crematoria so that we could become the oppressors of Gaza.*⁶⁹

The need to emphasise by means of military power that a new breed of Jews, proud and erect, is creating a new Jewish history in Israel is “undoubtedly attractive among all shades of Israeli political opinion.”⁷⁰ However, some voices of dissent drew attention to the dangers inherent in this emphasis on Jewish power, especially in combination with self-righteousness of an eternally persecuted victim. In a very influential article, a famous Israeli columnist, Boaz Evron interrogated the standard Israeli version of the lessons of the Holocaust.⁷¹ The first sentence set the tone: “Two terrible things happened to the Jewish people this century: the Holocaust and the lessons learned from it.”⁷² The author began by challenging the thesis that the extermination of Jews was unique among Nazi crimes. He argued that “the Jewish monopolisation of the Nazi experience, by presenting the Jews as its almost-exclusive victims, separates Jews from the human race ... This causes a paranoid reaction among parts of the Jewish population, which feel themselves cut off from humanity and its laws.”⁷³ Such disconnection, warned Evron, “might cause certain Jews, when in a position of power, to treat non-Jew as subhuman and, in fact, to repeat the racist Nazi attitudes.”⁷⁴ Evron further observed that “the continuous mentioning of the Holocaust, anti-Semitism and the hatred of Jews in all generations, has created in the Israeli consciousness a peculiar *moral blindness*, expressed by double moral standards. Because ‘the world’ was always presented as out to get us, we ourselves are exempted from any moral consideration in relating to it.”⁷⁵ Evron is particularly critical of the inability (and sometimes unwillingness) of Israelis to distinguish between Arab hatred and other forms of persecution to which Jews had been subject in the Diaspora. Blurring the critical difference between Arabs and Nazis combined with a continuous reminder of the danger of the Holocaust “causes a

⁶⁹ Lerner, M., “The Occupation: Immoral and Stupid” in *Tikkun* 3 (March-April, 1988) p. 7.

⁷⁰ Inbar, E., “Attitudes Toward War” p. 444.

⁷¹ Evron, B. “The Holocaust: Learning the Wrong Lessons” *Journal of Palestine Studies*, No. 10 (Spring 1981), pp. 16-26. Originally published in Hebrew under the title “Holocaust: A Danger to the Nation” in 1980.

⁷² Evron, B. “The Holocaust” p. 16.

⁷³ Evron, B., “The Holocaust” p. 19.

⁷⁴ Evron, B., “The Holocaust” p. 19.

⁷⁵ Evron, B., “The Holocaust” p. 21.

hysterical response from the average Israeli [and] freezes Israeli political consciousness at the pre-state level, so that it is unable to relate to real forces operation in the political sphere or to understand them.”⁷⁶ Since the threat perception is totally divorced from reality and the “choices presented to the Israeli are not realistic, but only ‘Holocaust’ or ‘victory’”, Evron warned, “the Israeli becomes free of any moral restrictions, since one who is in danger of annihilation sees himself exempted from any moral considerations which might restrict his efforts to save himself.” Last but not least, Evron notes, the leadership itself “is no longer able to understand what is happening in the real world, and what are the historical processes in which the state is caught. Such a leadership ... itself constitutes a danger to the very existence of the state.”⁷⁷

Other critics were embittered by the fact that a nation as persecuted as the Jews is able to perpetrate immoral and cruel acts against another nation. The image of the Holocaust being readily available in the minds of Israelis, the plight of Arab refugees or the brutality of the Israeli response to the Palestinian uprising, spontaneously evoked parallels between Palestinian and Jewish suffering. Already in the 1950s some Jewish and Israeli critics lamented the Israeli behaviour vis-à-vis the Arabs. They were particularly saddened by the young state’s desire to dispose of its Arab minority by making them flee. Thus Nathan Chofshi wrote:

The point that is usually overlooked [in reports that glorify Israel] is the tragedy of Arab refugees. Whatever the political and other causes which have brought about the mass psychosis of an entire people and made them run naked and barefoot from their homes ... the fact is that hundreds of thousands of people are now in want and suffer hunger, cold, and disease. ... How can one remain indifferent in the face of such an awful tragedy? ... What did we use to say to non-Jews who remained indifferent to similar tragedies of Jews?⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Evron, B., “The Holocaust” p. 26.

⁷⁷ Evron, B., “The Holocaust” p. 26.

⁷⁸ Quoted in Zukerman, W., *Voice of Dissent: Jewish Problems, 1948-1961* (New York: Bookman Associates, 1962) p. 151.

After the Israeli reprisal attack in the Jordanian town of Kibiyeh, which took the lives of more than fifty Arabs in 1953, Zukerman observed:

The truth which a good many Jews have deliberately avoided facing is that the rise of nationalism has had the same effect on Jews as on most other people of our age. Together with the normal emotions of love for wronged and persecuted people, it has awakened also the feeling of group selfishness and chauvinism and has unleashed the latent forces of cruelty from which the Jews are not exempt.⁷⁹

Humanistic dissent almost totally disappeared in the period after the Six-Day War, which for many represented a conversion experience of almost mystical nature. It was only in the wake of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon and the horrific massacre of Palestinian refugees perpetrated by the Lebanese Phalanxists with IDF's knowledge at Sabra and Shatilla, that the critical outrage erupted again. When the slogan 'Death to the Arabs' gained currency in the early 1980s among the young followers of a racist rabbi, Meir Kahane, the Knesset member Haiké Grossman, a Holocaust survivor said that "in her darkest dreams ... in the nightmares that pursued her for many long years, she never thought that such a thing could happen."⁸⁰ Similarly, Jacobo Timerman, who was a victim of anti-Semitism in Argentina, wrote in regard to the war in Lebanon: "In these past months I have left behind me many illusions, some fantasies, several obsessions. ... Among all those things there is one that shatters me beyond consolation. I have discovered in Jews a capacity for cruelty that I never believed possible."⁸¹ This time the dissent went further than in the 1950s and turned the existing Holocaust discourse against itself by comparing Israel to Nazi Germany. The latter linkage – sometimes only implied, sometimes explicit – was even more often circulated during the Palestinian uprising in the occupied territories. Thus a leading public figure, Professor Yeshayahu Leibowitz called Israeli policies in Lebanon "Judeo-Nazi"⁸² and a well-known songwriter declared "We had better start preparing ourselves and the glass booths in which we will sit when they judge us for

⁷⁹ Zukerman, W., *Voice of Dissent* p. 35.

⁸⁰ Quoted in Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 407.

⁸¹ Timerman, J., *The Longest War: Israel in Lebanon* (New York: Vintage, 1982) p. 158.

⁸² "Professor Leibowitz Calls Israel's Policy in Lebanon Judeo-Nazi" *Yediot Aharonot*, 21 June 1982 p. 7.

what we did to the Palestinian people.”⁸³ As Chapter Six shows, an influential minority of Israelis, namely members of Israel's intellectual and cultural elite, has espoused universalistic lessons of the Holocaust, teaching compassion and mercy for all those in distress.

Jewish Prism Of Israeli Leaders

Introduction

*Those with 'survival complex' devised the educational system; those with the 'accomplished facts' mentality execute it. ... The products are to be seen in the third generation.*⁸⁴

The Israeli political and military elite consists of three generations each with a different socialising experience and mentality. Until very recent appointments of the first Sephardi Jews to key positions in the Israeli establishment (Chief of Staff Shaul Mofaz in 1998 and President Moshe Katzav in 2000), all posts of responsibility were occupied by Jews of European origin. The first generation of European Jews in Israel were the **founders**. Born between 1880 and 1918, the founders are those people who founded political Zionism and struggled for the creation of the State of Israel. After the establishment of the state, they moulded its institutions, politics, society, economics, and army. The founding fathers held key positions in the Israeli government and army until the 1970s and they determined the education of the young. They were especially marked by waves of persecution culminating in the pogroms that swept the Czarist Russia between 1881 and 1903. The pogroms were partly government inspired, partly ignored by the authorities. Jews were killed, maimed, robbed and made homeless from Warsaw to Odessa, “with a violence not seen since the Crusaders.”⁸⁵ As a result of this persecution, many Jews fled to America (and rarely to Palestine), others became socialist revolutionaries, and others again found refuge in Zionism. A few thousand Zionist pioneers came to Palestine between after the abortive 1905 revolution and the First World War. Among this second wave of immigration were also the sixteen-year old Shmuel Dayan, the father of General Moshe Dayan, and a young man from Plonsk, David Grien who later changed his name to Ben Gurion and became the founder of the State of Israel. The

⁸³ Almagor, D., “I Regret” in *Yerushalaim*, 16 Dec. 1988 p. 23.

⁸⁴ Orr, A., *Israel* p. 37.

⁸⁵ Elon, A., *Founders and Sons* p. 68.

third wave of immigration followed the 1917 Balfour Declaration and the ferocious upsurges of peasant anarchism in Ukraine, which caused a series of pogroms resulting in numerous Jewish casualties. Members of the first three *Aliyot* (waves of immigration) were moved by the same spirit and the same values: to create a 'new Jew' and a model society based on social, economic and political equality. The *chalutzim* (pioneers) totally rejected the Diaspora and everything to do with it, including its social rituals, dressing codes, religion, and the proverbial Jewish sentimentality. They sought to create the ideal of a 'new Jew': free, tough, unsentimental, proud, and always ready to strike back. They founded the collective and cooperative forms of settlement – kibbutzim and moshavim, respectively – in the spirit of egalitarianism and religion of labour.

The children of those who left their countries and immigrated to Palestine, born or educated in Palestine under the British rule (1918–1948) constitute the **second generation**. Their experience was shaped by perpetual struggle against the Arabs and the British. Unlike their parents, this generation has no persecution or identity complex, and no memories of pogroms. They are the Sabras, the realisation of their parents' dream of a 'new Jew'. Generals Moshe Dayan and Yitzhak Rabin are typical representatives of this generation. The guiding attitude of the first generation of native-born Israelis is one of 'creating accomplished facts.' The second generation does not identify with the Jewish people but with the Israeli state. Therefore, unlike Ben Gurion's or Golda Meir's generation, who consider the Arabs as yet another brand of anti-Semites, people like Dayan and Rabin recognise the Palestinians as a people fighting for a justifiable, albeit unacceptable, cause. Last but not least, the second generation are those people who were most critical of the Diaspora, even to the point of 'understanding' anti-Semites for hating Jews. Those are also the young men and women who rejected the Holocaust survivors with utmost arrogance, sometimes bordering on cruelty, as the next chapter shows. It was precisely the extent of this rejection of the Jewish past and the European refugees that horrified the founders. The latter sought to remedy this situation in the **third generation** (born after 1948), whose consciousness was moulded by the Israeli state educational system and five Arab-Israeli wars in which most would have fought. The effects of the Jewish consciousness education and its results were discussed in the previous chapter and are not repeated here. Only one Israeli Prime Ministers so far belonged

to the third generation – Binyamin Netanyahu. Nevertheless, this generation is crucial both to the extent that its members constitute the pool of future leaders and the active core of the Israeli public and its Defence Forces.

David Ben Gurion (1886 – 1973)

The tragedy is deeper than the abyss, and the members of our generation who did not taste that hell would do best ... to remain sorrowfully and humbly silent. My niece, her husband, and her two children were buried alive. Can such things be talked about?⁸⁶

David Ben Gurion was the founder of the State of Israel and its longest serving Prime Minister (13 years altogether). Born in Czarist Poland in 1886, David Grien was educated in a Hebrew school established by his father who was an ardent Zionist. He immigrated to Ottoman-controlled Palestine in 1906 at the age of twenty and took a Hebrew name Ben Gurion (meaning 'son of a lion'). Young Ben Gurion worked as a labourer in agricultural settlements thus putting into practice the Zionist philosophy of redeeming the land through labour. In 1912, he started studying law in Istanbul but was expelled from Palestine, together with other Zionists, in 1915. In New York, where he was exiled during the war years, Ben Gurion devoted himself to building the American wing of Labour Zionism. He returned to Palestine as a soldier of the Jewish Legion, a unit of British Army created by the Revisionist leader Ze'ev Jabotinsky. Maintaining his conviction that Jewish labour would provide the foundation of the Jewish state, he became the Secretary General of the Histadrut (the General Federation of Labour), a post he occupied until 1935. The Histadrut still provided the bastion of Zionist power a decade and more after the creation of the state. Ben Gurion also established Mapai, which became the ruling party during the first decades of statehood. In 1935, Ben Gurion was appointed to the key post of chairman of the Jewish Agency Executive, the government of Jewish settlement in Palestine (Yishuv), a post he held until the establishment of the state in 1948. Deeply concerned with security, Ben Gurion worked tirelessly for the development of a Jewish defence capability in Palestine. When World War II broke out he encouraged Jews to fight for the Allies, while organizing an underground agency to smuggle Jews fleeing from Nazi-occupied Europe into Palestine. After the war, Jewish violence against the British escalated. While Ben Gurion supported the principle of armed

⁸⁶ Ben Gurion quoted in Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 294.

struggle, he condemned Jewish right-wing extremist groups Irgun and Lehi (under the leaderships of future Prime Ministers Menachem Begin and Yitzhak Shamir, respectively) that carried out acts of terrorism against the British.

On 14 May 1948, as the head of provisional government, David Ben Gurion proclaimed the establishment of the State of Israel and became its first Prime Minister and Defence Minister. Under Ben Gurion's leadership waves of mass immigration doubled the country's population. He directed absorption efforts, instituted universal education and the public school system, and built the state institutions. As Defence Minister, Ben Gurion dissolved all the formerly autonomous military organisations and carried out a nerve-racking integration of these rival factions into the Israel Defence Force. Ben Gurion moulded the structure and the character of the IDF, which remained his chief concern from 1947 to his last day as Defence Minister in 1963. For all practical purposes, throughout his years in office, the "army fell solely under the jurisdiction of Ben Gurion in his dual role of Prime Minister and Defence Minister. He exercised control over the defence establishment by assuming the responsibility for making the final decision on foreign policy matters relating to war and peace and by his power to appoint and promote top-level army officers."⁸⁷ Apart from its obvious primary function – to safeguard the state – the army, in Ben Gurion's eyes had to fulfil other roles as well. He wrote: "It is the duty of the army to educate a pioneer generation, healthy in body and spirit, courageous and loyal, which will unite the broken tribes and diasporas to prepare itself to fulfil the historical tasks of the State of Israel through self-realisation."⁸⁸ In the realm of education, the army's mission was to integrate the wave of post-war immigrants from Europe and the Islamic countries who lacked the political dedication and organisational skills characteristic of those who came prior to establishment of the state.

Ben Gurion's perception of Israel as a state with its back to the sea, surrounded by hostile Arab governments and indifferent 'world', favoured an attitude of self-reliance, especially with regards to weapon making. This policy required the

⁸⁷ Perlmutter, A., *Military and Politics in Israel: Nation-Building and Role Expansion* (London: Frank Cass, 1969) p. 58.

⁸⁸ Ben Gurion quoted in Perlmutter, A., *Military and Politics in Israel* p. 66.

formation of “a sizeable industrial and scientific research complex which has developed weapons and techniques of warfare unique to the Israelis.”⁸⁹ Weapons were produced locally even if that involved greater costs. It was the same fears and anxiety about Israel’s security that led to the Israeli nuclear project. “Without the Holocaust,” noted Avner Cohen, “we cannot understand ... the depth of Ben Gurion’s commitment to acquiring nuclear weapons.”⁹⁰ Ben Gurion’s preoccupations with security stemmed from his appraisal of the geopolitical reality of the Arab-Israeli conflict. He knew that in spite of Israel’s victory in the 1948 war, “the survival of the State of Israel was not assured.”⁹¹ Because Israel’s survival was at stake, it could not afford to pass the opportunity to develop nuclear capacity. Professor Ernst David Bergmann, the founding father of Israeli nuclear project, shared Ben Gurion’s conviction that the Holocaust justified Israel in taking any steps to ensure its survival. Although he rarely spoke about the Holocaust (as the opening quotation suggests), the tragedy of European Jews deeply influenced his outlook. He was quoted as saying: “I am convinced that the State of Israel needs a defence research program of its own so that we shall never again be led like lambs to the slaughter.”⁹² “Anxiety about the Holocaust,” observed Cohen, “reached beyond Ben Gurion to infuse Israeli military thinking. The destruction of Israel defined the ultimate horizon of the threat against Israel. Israeli military planners have always considered a scenario in which united Arab military coalition launched a war against Israel with the aim of ... destroying the Jewish state. This was referred to ... as *mikre ha’kol* [everything scenario]. This kind of planning,” concluded Cohen, “was unique to Israel, as few nations have military contingency plans aimed at preventing apocalypse.”⁹³

The same concern for Israel’s national interest led Ben Gurion to put his political career on the line to obtain approval for the highly controversial reparation agreement with the German Federal Republic. The early 1950s were difficult times in Israel – the country was flooded with hundreds of thousands of new immigrants. Under the austerity program food and other necessities were rationed and

⁸⁹ Perlmutter, A., *Military and Politics in Israel* p. 73.

⁹⁰ Cohen, A., *Israel and the Bomb* p. 10.

⁹¹ Cohen, A., *Israel and the Bomb* p. 13.

⁹² Peres, S., *From These Men: Seven Founders of the State of Israel* (New York: Wyndham, 1979) p. 185.

⁹³ Cohen, A., *Israel and the Bomb* p. 14.

unemployment led to emigration. The reparations and compensation monies allowed Ben Gurion's government to offer Israelis more comfort and thereby make them feel better in their country. According to Segev, during the twelve years the reparation agreement was in effect, Israel's gross national product tripled. The Bank of Israel reckoned that 15 percent of this growth, and 45,000 jobs, could be attributed to investment made with reparation funds.⁹⁴ On the other hand, agreements with Germany allowed tens of thousands of people to claim personal compensation. The reparations and compensation agreements issue illustrates Ben Gurion's pragmatic approach to a highly emotional issue. He had a vision and saw it realised. He pursued what he judged to be in the best interest of the State of Israel and he won the battle over negotiations with Germany. In 1953, Ben Gurion resigned from the government for two years and settled in Kibbutz Sde Boker in the Negev desert. Following the 1955 elections he returned as Prime Minister and led the country to the 1956 Sinai campaign. In 1963, Ben Gurion resigned from the government thus bringing to an end almost three decades of leadership. After the 1967 Middle East war, Ben Gurion argued against holding on to Arab territory beyond Jerusalem. The fright that Israel was given in the 1973 war when the Arabs enjoyed success revealed, in Ben Gurion's view, a dangerous sign of arrogance and complacency. To a man guided by the ideal of hard work in the cause of Zionism, these characteristics were abhorrent. He died at the age of 84 two months after the Yom Kippur War and was buried in Sde Boker.

Menachem Begin (1913 –1992)

*The lesson of the Holocaust – that compromise and weakness lead to death.*⁹⁵

In 1977 Menachem Begin became the first prime minister who did not belong to the Labour movement and he was also the first European survivor to lead the country. He was born in Brest-Litovsk⁹⁶ to a Zionist pioneer Ze'ev Dov Begin. He joined the Revisionist Betar movement in 1928. This movement abhorred the socialist ideology behind other wings of Zionism, and advocated strong leadership and discipline. Begin entered the law department at the University of Warsaw and

⁹⁴ Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 241.

⁹⁵ Menachem Begin quoted in Rowland, R. C., *The Rhetoric of Menachem Begin: The Myth of Redemption Through Return* (Lanham, New York, London: University Press of America, 1985) p. 135.

⁹⁶ Brest-Litovsk was held by Poland during the world wars.

graduated in 1935 as a master of jurisprudence. Just before the outbreak of the World War II, Begin became the commander of Polish Betar. After the Nazi invasion of Poland in September 1939, he fled to Lithuania where he was arrested by the Soviets for prohibited Zionist activities and sent to a forced labour camp in Siberia. He was released in 1942 to serve the Polish army unit in response to the German invasion of the Soviet Union. His unit was sent to Amman and later to Jerusalem. Although Menachem Begin arrived in Palestine as early as 1942, the Nazis killed nearly all members of his family and there are many indications that he suffered from 'survivor guilt.' Survivors' guilt is more than just a sense of guilt for having remained alive; it is also the memory of their utter helplessness, of their "inability to act in a way they would ordinarily have thought appropriate (save people, resist the victimisers, etc.) or even to feel the appropriate emotions (overwhelming rage toward victimisers, profound compassion for the victims)."⁹⁷ The shame for failing to act according to their moral principles creates in survivors a strong "sense of debt to the dead and responsibility toward them."⁹⁸

Begin joined the anti-British underground organisation *Irgun Tzeva'i Le'umi* (Etzel) and became its commander in 1944. Under Begin's command, the Irgun carried out numerous acts of violence. In 1946 Irgun blew up a wing of Jerusalem's King David Hotel, the British government and military headquarters, killing 91 people. In 1948 Irgun and Lehi (the Stern gang) took part in the massacre of Arabs in the village of Deir Yassin in the vicinity of Jerusalem. According to his own account of the years in the underground, Irgun's terrorist activities were motivated both by survival guilt and expressivist use of force. Thus Begin wrote: "We were not spared in order to live in slavery and oppression and to await some new Treblinka. We were spared in order to ensure life and freedom and honour for ourselves, for our people, for our children and our children's children. We were spared in order that there should be no repetition of what happened there..."⁹⁹ When he declared the revolt against the British Begin justified it with the following words: "This war [against the British] will demand many heavy sacrifices, but we enter on it in the consciousness that we are

⁹⁷ Lifton, J., "The Concept of the Survivor" *Survivors, Victims* p. 118.

⁹⁸ Lifton, J., "The Concept of the Survivor" *Survivors, Victims* p. 118.

⁹⁹ Begin, M., *The Revolt* (London: W. H. Allen, 1983) p. 42.

being faithful to the children of our people who have been and are being slaughtered. It is for their sake that we fight, to their dying testimony that we remain loyal."¹⁰⁰

According to Robert Rowland, Begin "dedicated ... his life to making certain that there can never be another holocaust."¹⁰¹ The Holocaust shaped his entire political career; in 1952 he threatened Ben Gurion with civil war should he accept the reparations from Germany. Begin's stance on the reparations issue clearly shows the failings of analysis based on rational argument. There is no question that it was in the immediate economic interest of Israel to accept German payment, but Begin rejected this aid "because he saw it as somehow absolving the German people of their guilt"¹⁰² and thereby betraying the memory of the Holocaust victims. In 1965 he bitterly fought against establishment of diplomatic relations with the Federal Republic arguing: "It is up to us not to normalise relations, before the eyes of the world, between the exterminated and the exterminator."¹⁰³ He viewed the Arab mobilisation preceding the Six-Day War as threatening another Holocaust,¹⁰⁴ and he also justified the 1981 raid upon the Iraqi nuclear reactor as an action aiming to prevent yet another Holocaust. After accompanying President Sadat to Yad Vashem during his visit in Israel, Begin gave his guest the canonical Israeli version of the Holocaust's lesson: "No one came to save us – neither from the East nor from the West. For this reason, we have sworn a vow, we, the generation of extermination and rebirth: Never again will we put our nation in danger, never again will we put our women and children and those whom we have a duty to defend ... in range of enemy's deadly fire."¹⁰⁵ In a nutshell, Begin's interpretation of the Holocaust lessons was articulated around the themes of betrayal and indifference of the world, its subsequent loss any moral legitimacy, insistence on Israel's empowerment, self-reliance, and superior moral rights.

On the eve of Israel's invasion of Lebanon in June 1982, Begin told the members of his government: "You know what I have done and what we have all done to prevent war and loss of life. But such is our fate in Israel. There is no way other

¹⁰⁰ Begin, M., *The Revolt* p. 43.

¹⁰¹ Rowland, R. C., *The Rhetoric of Menachem Begin* p. 58.

¹⁰² Rowland, R. C., *The Rhetoric of Menachem Begin* p. 59.

¹⁰³ Haber, E. *Menachem Begin: The Legend and the Man* (New York: Delacorte, 1978), pp. 237-8.

¹⁰⁴ Begin, M., "The Inheritance Of Our Fathers" *The Jewish Herald*, 28 March 1972 p. 12.

¹⁰⁵ Begin quoted in Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 308.

than to fight selflessly. Believe me, the alternative is Treblinka, and we have decided that there will be no more Treblinkas."¹⁰⁶ For Begin it was necessary to bomb the PLO camps. Like in the early days of the revolt against the British, through the raids Begin could again fight the ghost of the Holocaust and prove to the world that the Jews, although in mortal danger, will never die passively again and that Israel will deal out seven blows for every one it receives. In 1983 Begin convened the cabinet for the last time and announced his resignation. Five years later he supported Yitzhak Shamir's candidacy for Premiership at his party's (Herut) convention. He died in 1992 of a heart attack.

Yitzhak Shamir (1915 –)

*This state was born out of the ashes of the millions of Jews who died in the Holocaust.*¹⁰⁷

Like David Ben Gurion and Menachem Begin, Yitzhak Shamir originated from Poland. He was born Yitzhak Jezernitzky in a small town of Ruzinoy in 1915. His father was also an ardent socialist Zionist. The future Prime Minister of Israel attended Bialystok high school and like Begin entered the Revisionist Betar movement at the age of 14 and studied law. Shamir left Warsaw in 1935 for Palestine where he joined the Revisionist underground organisation, the Irgun. Unlike Begin, who was a commissar rather than a fighter, Shamir participated in retaliatory operations against Arab rioters. In 1940 Shamir followed a more militant faction of Irgun led by Avraham Stern that had broken away from the larger body. Stern's Lehi (*Lohamei Herut Israel* – Fighters for the Freedom of Israel) rejected Jabotinsky's call for a truce in the anti-British activities while Britain was fighting Nazi Germany and even made overtures to Hitler and Mussolini. Thus a representative of the Stern gang (as Lehi was also known) met with German foreign ministry official and offered to help Nazi Germany in its war against the British.¹⁰⁸ Shamir, however, has always claimed that he did not support Lehi's attempts to forge this link with the Nazis. After Stern was shot dead by the British police in 1942, Shamir took command of Lehi as part of a leadership troika. He coordinated organisational and operational activities, including the assassination of Lord Moyne, Churchill's representative in Cairo, in

¹⁰⁶ Naor, A., *Government At War* p. 47 ff.

¹⁰⁷ Lazaroff, T., "Shamir: I loved Israel in every way" in *The Jerusalem Post*, 27 April 2001.

¹⁰⁸ See Mor, N. Y., *Israël, Israël: Histoire du groupe Stern* (Paris: Presses de la Renaissance, 1978).

1944 and that of Count Bernadotte, the Swedish mediator appointed by the UN, in 1948. After having been captured by the British in 1946, Shamir spent two years in exile, in British and French jails, returning to Israel after its declaration of independence. Only then did he learn about his family's tragic fate. His mother and sister were murdered in Treblinka. His sister, brother-in-law and their children were killed having been betrayed by the Ukrainian business partner who had promised to hide them from the Nazis. And his father, who had succeeded in escaping on the way to Treblinka was murdered by his Polish neighbours when he asked them for help. Thirty years passed before Shamir would talk about these events publicly. "Shamir's Holocaust lesson was," wrote an Israeli journalist, "that, to survive, the Jews would have to learn to be tougher than their enemies, more resolute in pursuit of their interests, more stubborn, pig-headed and uncompromising, too, if necessary."¹⁰⁹ After receiving the prestigious Israel Prize for life-time contribution to the society and the state in April 2001, Shamir expressed his worldview in a nutshell when he said: "The creation of the state turns us from a persecuted nation into an independent one. Jewish history has returned to this land and what happens here influences Jews everywhere. ... The fight for Israel still continues and our enemies are still great."¹¹⁰

For ten years after the creation of the state, Shamir dropped out of the public eye. He first entered the business world before being recruited by the Mossad in 1955. There he allegedly ran ad hoc operations including assassinations.¹¹¹ After resigning from the Mossad in 1963, Shamir joined Begin's Herut party where he was responsible for the operation aiming to bring Soviet Jews to Israel. He was first elected to the Knesset in 1973 and after Likud's victory in 1977, Shamir was appointed speaker of the Knesset. Three years later, he was promoted to Foreign Minister and he succeeded Begin at the post of Prime Minister in 1983. Despite their common ideological background and their past in the underground movement, Shamir and Begin were as different in their approach as two men can be. Whilst Begin invoked the Bible and the Holocaust promiscuously, Shamir seldom mentioned

¹⁰⁹ Howovitz, D., "Yitzhak, We Hardly Knew Ye" in *The Jerusalem Report: Five-Year CD-Rom*, September 8, 1994 (Jerusalem: The Jerusalem Report, 1995).

¹¹⁰ Lazaroff, T., "Shamir: I loved Israel in every way" in *The Jerusalem Post*, 27 April 2001. Internet edition.

¹¹¹ See Black, I. and B. Morris, *Israel's Secret Wars: A History of Israel's Intelligence Services* (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1991).

either. He was a very cautious and unadventurous Prime Minister who unlike Begin resisted the pressures from Ariel Sharon and kept Israel out of war for the longest period of time in its short history. As a Likud minister explained: "It is a difference in mentality. ... Sometimes he [Shamir] tries to use big, Begin-like gestures in his speeches, but he doesn't like it. He looks ridiculous to himself." Yet, as the same minister concedes "the difference is more one of style than ideology"¹¹² because Shamir was no more likely than his preachy, charismatic predecessor to yield an inch. Yitzhak Shamir's second term as Prime Minister (1986 –1992) was marked by two major events: the 1991 Gulf War and the Middle East peace conference in Madrid that inaugurated direct talks between Israel and the Arab states, eventually leading to the Oslo Agreements. On the domestic front, Shamir's government carried out two major immigration and absorption efforts since the 1950s: the emigration of 450,000 Jews from the Soviet Union in 1989, and the 'Operation Solomon,' which brought 15,000 Ethiopian Jews to Israel in a massive airlift. On this occasion, Prime Minister Shamir reiterated the moral justification for the existence of Israel : "The State of Israel's highest obligation is to stand ready to defend the Jewish people anywhere in the world where evil has come upon them."¹¹³ After his party lost the 1992 elections, Shamir stepped down from the party leadership and retired from the Knesset in 1996.

Moshe Dayan (1915 – 1981)

Millions of Jews who were killed because they had no country now gaze at us from the dust of Israeli history and command us to settle and raise up, once again, a land for our people.¹¹⁴

Moshe Dayan was born in 1915, on kibbutz Deganya Alef, near Lake Kinneret to parents Shmuel and Devorah. According to Dayan's own account his parents never suffered personal persecution in their native Russia. They came to Palestine "as young idealists"¹¹⁵ and settled on the kibbutz. At the age of fourteen, Dayan joined the Haganah, an underground organization that defended Jewish settlements from Arab attacks. The Haganah decided to enrol the youngsters after the Arab massacre

¹¹² Quoted in Silver, E., "Caution Above All: Yitzhak Shamir, The Inflexible Pragmatist" in *The Jerusalem Report: Five-Year CD-Rom*, 18 April 1991.

¹¹³ Yitzhak Shamir, 6 July 1972. Quoted in Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 514.

¹¹⁴ Dayan, M., *Milestones* (Tel Aviv: Idanim, 1976) p. 191.

¹¹⁵ Dayan, M., *Story of My Life* p. 25.

of sixty-seven Jews in Hebron. Sixty others were wounded, synagogues were destroyed and Torah scrolls burned. "The Haganah was determined," writes Dayan, "that isolated Jewish communities ... would never again be helpless, unarmed, or at the mercy of Arab extremists."¹¹⁶ When the British outlawed the Haganah in 1939, Dayan was arrested, together with 42 of his comrades and sentenced to ten years imprisonment. Released in 1941, he joined the British army, where he served with the forces that liberated Lebanon and Syria from Vichy France during World War II. He was wounded in battle in Lebanon and lost his left eye. He began to wear the black eye patch that later became his trademark. He remained active in the Haganah until 1948.

During the 1948 War of Independence Dayan commanded the defence of Jewish settlements in the Jordan Valley before he was appointed commander on the Jerusalem front in August 1948. He was appointed chief of operations at General Headquarters in 1952, and in December 1953 became Chief of General Staff, a post he held until January 1958. Dayan became Chief of Staff during a time of severe Arab belligerence. Despite the military armistice of 1949, the surrounding Arab nations remained hostile, maintaining a maritime blockade, reinforcing an economic boycott, promoting political and propaganda warfare and supporting terrorism in Israel. The Israeli government was unable to contain the terrorist violence. Dayan insisted on strong retaliation operations. His view was that the Arabs saw terrorism as a stage of war, and the longer the terrorist attacks continued, the longer the Arabs had to build up their military strength. He wanted to force the Arabs into open battle before they gained full military power. Under Dayan's command, the Israeli military launched raids in Gaza and other retaliatory missions, causing heavy casualties to the Egyptians, Syrians, and other Arab populations. On October 29, 1956, Dayan led Israel's Suez campaign, an invasion of the Sinai Peninsula after Egypt, Syria and Jordan signed a pact stating as their goal the destruction of Israel.

Dayan left the military in 1958 and entered politics. He joined the Labour Party and was elected to the Knesset in 1959. He served as Minister of Agriculture in the government of David Ben Gurion from 1959 until 1964. With the buildup of tension

¹¹⁶ Dayan, M., *Story of My Life* p. 38.

between Egypt and Israel leading to the 1967 war, Dayan was invited to join the national unity government as Minister of Defense, in which capacity he conducted the Six-Day War. After the war, Dayan was in charge of the territories occupied by the Israeli Army. He opened the borders for Arab residents of the territories to travel to Arab countries, while at the same time maintaining order and security in Israeli-held areas. Moshe Dayan kept his position as Defense Minister when Golda Meir succeeded Levi Eshkol as Prime Minister in 1969. If 1967 was Dayan's finest hour, the Yom Kippur war tarnished his prestige. When the Egyptians attacked on October 6, 1973, Israel was unprepared for the surprise attack and unable to repulse it quickly. The nation's lack of preparation was blamed on Defense Minister Dayan and an outraged public demanded his resignation. The president of the Supreme Court set up a commission to investigate the performance of generals during the war. The commission recommended the resignation of the Chief of Staff, but reserved judgement on Dayan. The press and the public, however, condemned him. After attending a military funeral at which bereaved parents had called him a murderer of their sons, Dayan submitted his resignation in 1974. In 1977, newly elected Likud Prime Minister Menachem Begin offered him the Foreign Ministry portfolio. In May 1977, Dayan began the negotiations leading to Camp David Accords of 1978. In 1979, he resigned as Foreign Minister. On May 14, 1979, Dayan was diagnosed with colon cancer. He died on October 16, 1981 in Tel Aviv.

Yitzhak Rabin (1922 – 1995)

The analysis of the facts proves that essentially what has assured Israel's existence and will continue to do so, in the face of the hatred around it and the will to destroy it, is primarily Israel's comprehensive power, with military might as the decisive element.¹¹⁷

Yitzhak Rabin was the first Sabra who became the Prime Minister of Israel. He was born in Jerusalem in 1922 into a zealous Zionist family. His father had immigrated to Israel from the United States and served as a volunteer in the Jewish Legion during the First World War. His mother was one of the first members of the Haganah, the pre-state Jewish army. After completing his schooling at the Kadoorie Agricultural high school, Rabin joined the Palmach – the elite strike force of the Haganah. During his years of service in the Palmach, he distinguished himself as a

¹¹⁷ "Interview with Yitzhak Rabin" in *Bamahane*, 28 December 1965 p. 4.

military leader. With the dissolution of the Palmach and the creation of the IDF after the independence, Rabin began his long career in the army. By 1962 Rabin had risen to the position of Chief of the General Staff and was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant General. He developed the IDF fighting doctrine based on swift movement and surprise, which was employed in the Six-Day war, the finest hour of Rabin's military career. In 1968, Rabin retired from the IDF and took the post of Israel's ambassador to Washington. During his mandate, Rabin played a major role in securing massive American military aid to Israel. Yet, despite his commitment to friendly relations with Washington, Rabin was averse to transforming the special relationship with the United States into a formal alliance. Rabin returned to Israel just before the Yom Kippur war in 1973 and in 1974, he defeated Shimon Peres in a vote for a Labour leader to replace Golda Meir. During the period of Rabin's Premiership, just after the Yom Kippur War, special emphasis was placed on improving the economy, strengthening the IDF and restoring public morale, which had been badly affected by the war. In July 1976, the government headed by Yitzhak Rabin ordered the "Entebbe operation" – the daring rescue of Air France passengers hijacked by pro-Palestinian terrorists to Uganda.

Rabin's coalition fell apart in 1977, and the subsequent election brought the right-wing Likud bloc to power. Following the elections, Rabin served as a labour member of the Knesset in opposition, and was a member of the Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee. He filled these positions until the formation of a national unity government in September 1984 where he served as Minister of Defence. During his tenure as Defence Minister, Rabin oversaw a major restructuring of the army and the IDF's withdrawal from Lebanon. According to his political biographer, Yitzhak Rabin adopted a *realpolitik* outlook on international affairs from an early age.¹¹⁸ He emphasized the military power as the most important factor in world politics governed by a realist concept of 'self-help.' Like Ben Gurion, Rabin believed that Israeli military strength was a precondition for survival in the face of Arab enmity and that Israel could not afford to lose a war. Rabin viewed the military built-up not only as a guarantee for survival but also as a prerequisite for negotiations with Israel's Arab neighbours. He believed that Israel's military superiority could serve the purpose of

¹¹⁸ See Inbar, E., *Rabin and Israel's National Security* (Washington, D.C., The Woodrow Wilson Centre Press / Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1999).

moderating Arab political expectations in the conflict. Unlike other Israeli leaders, Yitzhak Rabin “never indulged in expressive use of force and ... he never mentioned revenge or national honour as a reason for using military force.”¹¹⁹ Following the footsteps of Clausewitz, whom he occasionally praised in military forums, Rabin perceived the use of force as a means to achieve a desired political goal.

The Palestinian uprising in the occupied territories taught the then Defence Minister Rabin the limits of force. In 1987, Rabin ordered tough measures to be used against the rebelling Palestinians. Yet, neither the beatings and shootings nor mass arrests and deportations solved the problem. Rabin realised that 1.7 million Palestinians under occupation could not be ruled by force. Based on of a more optimistic evaluation of the regional environment Rabin operated a significant shift in Israel’s strategic thinking. Back in office as Prime Minister in 1992 he prepared the Israeli public for compromise with the Palestinians. In August 1993 Rabin announced mutual Israel-PLO recognition and his government began negotiations towards a peace settlement with the Palestinians and with Israel’s Arab neighbours. The agreement with the PLO was followed by a peace treaty with Jordan and the beginning of ties with various Arab countries including Morocco and Tunisia. The Arab countries eased their economic boycott of Israel and the latter’s international standing – tarnished by its response to the Intifada – improved. For his efforts toward regional peace, Rabin received the 1994 Nobel Peace Prize, together with Shimon Peres and Yasser Arafat. At the same time that they were viewed favourably by a large number of Israelis, Rabin’s concessions aroused considerable opposition in the right-wing bloc. The anti-Rabin vilification reached its climax on November 4, 1995, when a young nationalist Israeli, Yigal Amir, assassinated the Prime Minister as he was leaving a mass peace rally he had addressed in Tel Aviv.

¹¹⁹ Inbar, E., *Rabin and Israel's National Security* p. 85.

Conclusion: Holocaust Education For The Israeli Defence Forces

Those who survived the holocaust, those who see pictures of a father and a mother, who hear the cries that disturb the dreams of those close to them, those who have listened to stories - know that no other people carries with it such haunting visions. And it is these visions which compel us to fight and yet make us ashamed of our fighting.¹²⁰

A brief overview of the Holocaust education offered to IDF officers, cadets, and soldiers brings to a close the discussion on Israeli security. Organised by the Yad Vashem Centre in cooperation with the educational staff of the officer-candidate school, the Holocaust awareness seminars are offered as an integral part of the cadets' training. Since its creation in 1985, 33,000 cadets have taken part in this Holocaust educational program. The objectives and didactic goals of the one-day seminars include:

- To impart Holocaust consciousness ... by enhancing knowledge and understanding.
- To emphasise the uniqueness and historical significance of the Holocaust on the national and human level.
- To convey identification with the fate of the Jewish people around the world. ...
- To emphasise the importance of the creation and existence of the State of Israel to the entire Jewish people. ...
- To understand the connection between the IDF and the Holocaust and the cadet's role not only as a soldier but as an Israeli, a Jew, and a human being.¹²¹

The programme of the seminars starts with a clip from the film *Der Ewige Jude* (The Eternal Jew) and a lecture on "The Uniqueness and Historical Significance of the Holocaust." *Der Ewige Jude* is the most famous Nazi propaganda film, created to legitimise the exclusion and ultimately the destruction of the Jewish people. Produced at the insistence of Joseph Goebbels, the film depicts the Jews of Poland

¹²⁰ Muki Tzur quoted in "When Soldier-Poets Remember the Holocaust: Anti-War Poetry in Israel" in Young, J. E., *Writing and rewriting the Holocaust: Narrative and the Consequences of Interpretation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990) p. 136.

¹²¹ Shehori, F., "Holocaust Education and the Israeli Defense Forces" (October 14, 1999) p. 4. Courtesy of Yad Vashem.

as corrupt, filthy, lazy, ugly, and perverse: they are an alien people which have taken over the world through their control of banking and commerce, yet which still live like animals. The lecture that follows the film stresses the uniqueness of the Holocaust and discourages any comparison with other “horrors taking place in the present.”¹²² It furthermore paints the scope of destruction and the significance of the Holocaust. The latter is assessed primarily with reference to “the critical harm to the biological future of the Jewish people ... the destruction of the eastern European Jewish biological pool which had the highest rate of natural increase.”¹²³ The lecture is followed by testimonies by Holocaust survivors and another lecture – “Difficulties in Creating a Fighting Consciousness in the Polish Ghettos.” The latter presentation addresses the “collective accusations made in Israel after the Holocaust”¹²⁴ by means of depicting the near-impossibility to resist the Nazis. Quite expectedly, the last part of the seminar establishes the connection between the IDF and the Holocaust. The film “In the Name of the Later Generations” is followed by a discussion led by company commanders. The film documents a visit by cadets, trainee pilots, and marines of the IDF to the extermination sites in Poland. According to the Yad Vashem description, the film represents “an emotional encounter of the present with the past, of free people in IDF uniforms – future officers – with the Holocaust.” It also “emphasises the strength of the State of Israel and of the IDF as factors that may prevent the recurrence of the Holocaust.”¹²⁵ The concluding discussion is “intended to examine the feelings that the cadets are assumed to have and the conclusions that emerge from the discussion.” The feelings that the cadets are expected to have acquired during the day are the following:

- Anger at the Germans (for murdering the Jewish people ...), at the world (for its silence) and at the Jewish people (for going ‘like sheep to the slaughter’).
- A desire for political and personal revenge ...
- A sense of pride in being part of the Jewish people, which survived despite it all, founded the State of Israel, ...
- A sense of public and personal mission ...

¹²² Shehori, F., “Holocaust Education” p. 4.

¹²³ Shehori, F., “Holocaust Education” p. 4.

¹²⁴ Shehori, F., “Holocaust Education” p. 5.

¹²⁵ Shehori, F., “Holocaust Education” p. 6.

The conclusions and recommendations of the seminar summarise the Israeli Army's lessons of the Holocaust:

Feelings of anger, fear, and indignity can be resolved in the strong need for a safe refuge for the Jewish people. Therefore Israel must be strong. The physical strength of the State of Israel is dependent on its army. ...The IDF fights for the existence of the Jewish people against all enemies, despite its small size. It wins its battles because it is motivated by unique factors. ... Because IDF is a unique army, its officers are unique too. All the commanders should feel a sense of mission and should be motivated by the knowledge that their military service ... is enabling their nation to survive. . By means of Holocaust education, the officers will be able to foster in their soldiers a sense of identification with and belonging to the nation and state.¹²⁶

The programme of the Holocaust seminar designed for the IDF cadets includes all the elements of the Jewish prism described in the first part of this chapter. Not surprisingly, the Zionist lesson, combined with a strong sense of isolation, lies in the centre of the message: the strong need for a safe refuge can only be provided by a strong Israel. Concurrently, pessimism and fatalism pervade the discourse: another Holocaust appears to be kept away from the Jewish people only by the strength of Israel and the unique inspiration of its soldiers. Undoubtedly, the feelings of revenge and anger provoked by such seminars are channelled to improved performance and heightened motivation of the IDF via an expressivist use of force. Although the humanistic message of the Holocaust may be downplayed by the particularistic ones, Chapter Six and the Conclusion of this thesis show that the Israeli soldiers were in certain circumstances very receptive to the universalistic lessons of the Holocaust, which they applied to the situation at hand according to their best judgement.

¹²⁶ Shehori, F., "Holocaust Education" p. 7.

Chapter Three

INDIVIDUAL HEALING AND COLLECTIVE TRAUMATISATION

Introduction

Trauma is contagious.¹

The preceding two chapters surveyed the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder in various groups of Holocaust survivors, intergenerational transmission of trauma, and the impact of the Holocaust on the worldview of those not directly effected, including Israeli leaders. The purpose of this and the following chapter is to survey the integration of Holocaust survivors and their traumas into Israeli society. The interdependent yet desynchronised processes of physical survivors' healing on one hand, and collective 'traumatisation' on the other, unfolded gradually across the decades. This chapter surveys the period between the end of World War II and the trial of Adolf Eichmann in 1961. This first period of Israel's dealing with the Holocaust is characterised by a unique situation in which the physical survivors tried to rebuilt their lives as "a new, extremely dynamic and enthusiastic community made demands on the newcomers for cooperation, effort, and rebuilding, which never before had been made on a group of such deeply traumatized persons."² On the other hand, the Jewish community in Palestine showed the first signs of collective traumatisation described by Erikson in chapter one: a stage of euphoria that a remnant survived, followed by a denial, and disidentification with survivors.

Based on trauma literature the first part of the chapter begins with a description of individual healing following a massive traumatisation. As mentioned beforehand, given the scope and nature of Holocaust trauma, individual healing was inevitably framed within a broader, collective response to the murder of European Jewry. Thus the first section examines the incidence of initial collective response (euphoric) on the healing process of physical survivors. It does so with reference to Zionist rescue and state-building efforts epitomized in the famous journey of *Exodus*.

¹ Herman, J. L., *Trauma and Recovery* p. 140.

² Eitinger, L., "The Concentration Camp Syndrome and Its Late Sequelae" in Dimsdale, J. E., *Survivors, Victims* p. 157.

Three features of this episode of Zionist history are significant: first, the Zionists consciously manipulated the survivors' tragedy for political ends and thereby generated power of the powerlessness; second, by joining forces with the survivors, the Palestinian Jews identified with the victims vis-à-vis the Gentiles and acted as rescuers vis-à-vis the survivors; and third, both the Zionists' manipulation of survivors' suffering and their ambiguous position as both victims and rescuers, were in more than one way beneficial to the survivors' process of healing.

The second section describes the second phase of collective response to trauma – alienation and rejection. As the initial euphoria evaporated, solidarity with survivors collapsed in favour of arrogance and discomfort. The transition from euphoria to estrangement is illustrated with reference to the key moment in Israeli collective traumatisation – the physical encounter between survivors and the Palestinian Jews on the shores of Palestine. The popular image of “young men of the Zionist collective carrying the Holocaust survivors on their backs to the shores of the homeland”³ has symbolised the Zionist dichotomy, the old and the new, Diaspora and Israel, death and life. Statements of Zionist leaders and excerpts from Israeli popular literature from that period are used to reconstruct the Palestinian Jews' perception of themselves and their representation of the remnants of the European Jewry. The Zionist's leadership's efforts to impose their vision of 'new Jew' on Holocaust survivors are examined in relation to the survivors' need to reconstruct their shattered identities.

The public reconstruction of the Holocaust did not take place until the Eichmann trial in 1961. Section three seeks to account for fifteen years of absence of public discourse on the greatest tragedy in modern Jewish history. Based on both the literature on trauma and the Zionist history the section demonstrates that a reconstruction of trauma did not take place within that time frame for two major reasons: firstly, the political enterprise of building a state in extremely difficult circumstances⁴ did not leave any room for such painful soul-searching, and secondly,

³ Zertal, I., *From Catastrophe to Power* p. 7.

⁴ In the first year of its existence, Israel waged a war against five regular Arab armies (Egypt, Transjordan, Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq), and absorbed 250,000 immigrants (representing 50 percent of its population at the time). Immigration figures are taken from Segev, T., *1949, The First Israelis*, (New York: The Free Press, 1986) p. 95.

the non-directly affected Israelis' refusal to listen to the survivors was an attempt to dissociate themselves from the catastrophe and its consequences. This apparent lack of interest and inability to hear their experiences somehow impeded the survivors' process of healing.

Euphoria: Clandestine Immigration And *Exodus*

In those difficult and trying days they [members of the Haganah and the illegal immigrants] all came together in a true partnership. Together they stood against their common enemy, together they fought and struggled, and together they participated in bringing about the birth of the State of Israel.⁵

'Disaster is power' is a slogan coined by Ben Gurion⁶ conveying the idea that the Jewish disaster could represent "a kind of steam power that could be harnessed for political and military purposes,"⁷ that is, for the creation and preservation of the Jewish state. It goes without saying that this concept never implied that a disaster should be created in order to glean an advantage from it. Rather, the concept reflects Ben Gurion's belief that "since the Jews were unable to prevent the disaster from befalling them, they should at least employ it as best they could in their defence."⁸ Thus, instead of lamenting the suffering, Ben Gurion saw the latter as a source of political power, as the following excerpt illustrates:

Disaster is power if we know how to channel it in a productive direction; the whole trick of Zionism is its ability to turn our disaster not into depression and helplessness, as has happened once in the Diaspora, but into a fountain of productivity and exhilaration.⁹

Ben Gurion pronounced these words only weeks before the information about the existence of the death camps was confirmed. When the scope of the disaster became known, the concept fell out of use, and it was only at the last stages of the Holocaust that Ben Gurion returned to his formula. Before the Holocaust, the aim of Zionism was to convince Jews to come to Palestine. The purpose of immigration was

⁵ Halamish, A., *The Exodus Affair: Holocaust Survivors and the Struggle for Palestine* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 1998) p. xiv.

⁶ Teveth, S., *Ben Gurion and the Holocaust*, (New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1996) p. xli.

⁷ Teveth, S., *Ben Gurion and the Holocaust* p. xlii.

⁸ Teveth, S., *Ben Gurion and the Holocaust* p. xli.

⁹ Teveth, S., *Ben Gurion and the Holocaust* p. xlvi.

to establish a Jewish majority and thereby 'resolve' the Arab problem. It was believed that a combination of those two factors would lead to the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine. Zionists welcomed the hardships inflicted upon the Diaspora to the extent that they brought Jews to Palestine. As Ben 'Gurion put it in 1933:

From an abstract Zionist perspective ... there is no need at the moment to make propaganda for Palestine. Jewish life in the Diaspora provides the strongest propaganda, and this propaganda is produced by the destruction ... of all possibility for existence for great masses of Jews ... Jews by the thousands are charging at Palestine's gates.¹⁰

In 1936, he suggested that Hitler should be exploited for the Zionist purpose: "It is in our interest that Hitler should be wiped out, but as long as he remains we are interested in exploiting his presence for the building up of Palestine."¹¹ The Holocaust changed the parameters completely – after the Holocaust both the immigration and the establishment of the Jewish state took on a different sense of urgency. Most important of all, after the Holocaust the Gentiles become major players in the Zionist project. If before the Holocaust Zionism appealed to the Jews' sense of insecurity in order to bring them to Palestine, the aftermath of the Holocaust saw the Zionist use their 'weapon of suffering' against the Gentiles. The remnant of European Jewry hardly needed to be convinced that Europe was a dangerous place, and although the survivors might not always be as keen to go to Palestine as the Zionists argued, a great majority of them went. The list of priorities on the Zionist agenda changed however; the establishment of the state became the first priority, followed by mass immigration that would create the Jewish majority. In order to get the state, the Gentiles had to be persuaded that the establishment of the Jewish state in Palestine is vital for the survival of the Jewish people. To that end, Zionists appealed to the Gentiles' guilt feelings by displaying the survivors' suffering.

The survivors of Nazi concentration camps played a vital role in post war Zionist schemes – as both propaganda and "human material"¹² for the Jewish state;

¹⁰ Teveth, S., *Ben Gurion: The Burning Ground* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987) p. 678.

¹¹ Ben Gurion quoted in Teveth, S., *Ben Gurion and the Holocaust* p. xlv.

¹² Expression commonly used by the Zionists to design the potential immigrants to Palestine. See for example Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 120.

propaganda, because the 'remnant' of the European Jewry were a (barely) living proof that the Jews needed a state of their own if they were to survive as a nation; and human material because the Jewish state needed the Jews in order to survive as a Jewish state. Idith Zertal describes this dual role of the survivors in the following passage:

The great human potential for clandestine immigration and the most efficient instrument for carrying out the Zionist political design were one and the same and were located in the DP camps.¹³

In order to fulfil their role as 'human material', the remaining European Jews had to come to Palestine. The crucial question, however, was related to the manner in which they were to come. If the propaganda part was to be fully exploited, the journey itself of the Holocaust survivors to Palestine had to be used as a weapon against the British; a point put forth by Idith Zertal: "Yishuv ... needed the clandestine immigration extravaganzas for its own political purposes."¹⁴ The part of the Holocaust survivors in the clandestine immigration drama consisted of "persuad[ing] the world of the link between the fate of the Holocaust survivors and the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine,"¹⁵ Related to the concept of "disaster is power", is a concept of "immigration war" defined "not a war for immigration, but a war through immigration ... not a secret immigration in order to maximise the number of Jews in Palestine, but immigration as a means of political warfare that will keep the English government under pressure."¹⁶ No other episode in the history of clandestine immigration to Palestine has captured more attention and generated more sympathy than the epic journey of *Exodus 1947*. Also *Exodus* stands apart from other clandestine immigration actions because of its visibility and publicity that surrounded it. Idith Zertal described *Exodus* as "the quintessence of the Jewish clandestine immigration movement in terms of the use of refugees for political and propaganda purposes."¹⁷

¹³ Zertal, I., *From Catastrophe to Power* p. 79.

¹⁴ Zertal, I., *From Catastrophe to Power* p. 80.

¹⁵ Zertal, I., *From Catastrophe to Power* p. 244.

¹⁶ Zertal, I., *From Catastrophe to Power* p. 157.

¹⁷ Zertal, I., *From Catastrophe to Power* p. 135.

On July 10, 1947, some 4,500 Jews boarded the *Exodus 1947* at a French port of Sète, where they set sail for Palestine. Having discovered the Haganah's¹⁸ plans for the ship, the British reacted by sending its destroyers to escort the ship and prevent its passengers from disembarking in Palestine. A week later, the *Exodus* passengers entered a fight with eight battleships of the Royal Navy outside the territorial waters of Palestine. The passengers threw bottles and cans at the British soldiers, attacking them with iron rods and hatchets and trying to spray them with boiling oil.¹⁹ The three-hour battle resulted in death of three Jews and three British, with two hundred Jews wounded, seventy seriously. The British eventually prevailed, and the passengers were forced onto three British ships for transfer back to Europe "before the very eyes of the members of UNSCOP [United Nations Special Committee for Palestine]."²⁰ The battle on the ship close to the shores of Palestine where "thousands of Holocaust survivors [were] being denied access to the shores of their 'national home' through the use of British force"²¹ had a tremendous political effect. French authorities gave permission for the Jews to re-enter France if they wished to do so. In spite of a heavy British pressure, the French refused to disembark the passengers by force. The official French position communicated to the British read: "The French government wish to make known to the immigrants who were on board of Exodus 47 that they will not force them to disembark, but will give refuge to all who disembark voluntarily."²² On the other hand, the refugees refused to leave the ship. Only a hundred and thirty passengers, most of them ill, old, or women in the last months of pregnancy, disembarked. The drama lasted for three weeks and the Zionists made the most of it. Journalists from around the globe were dispatched to the port. "The world had not been swept by such a wave of sympathy for Jewish suffering since the day the first reporters entered the concentration camps."²³ Weeks later, the ships sailed again, this time for Hamburg. Yishuv did nothing to prevent this transfer. "In a way," argues Zertal, "the sending of the refugees to Germany was, for

¹⁸ Haganah (defence, in Hebrew) represented the Yishuv (Jewish settlement in Palestine) underground armed forces, in charge of the Mossad (Zionist organisation responsible for clandestine immigration).

¹⁹ Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* pp. 130-31. Halamish, A., *The Exodus Affair* p. 88 provides an exhaustive list of the pitiful arsenal of arms used against the British: metal poles, tent pegs, screws, nails, buckets, bottles, potatoes, food tins, etc.

²⁰ Halamish, A., *The Exodus Affair* p. 84.

²¹ Zertal, I., *From Catastrophe to Power* p. 83.

²² Paris to Foreign Office, 25 July 1947, quoted in Halamish, A., *The Exodus Affair* p. 114.

²³ Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 131.

the Zionists, an additional and unexpected – if cruel – propaganda windfall.”²⁴ In September 1947, two months after leaving France, the passengers found themselves on the German soil again. There, two of the ships surrendered, while the third resisted being forced back into Germany. The refugees finally arrived to the British zone of Germany where camps were prepared for their arrival. Later, most passengers passed through to the American zone of Germany. From there most were eventually able to make it into Palestine.

What was *Exodus* supposed to achieve in the Zionist scheme? Contrary to other rescue missions, nothing about *Exodus* was secret. Journalists were invited to cover the story, “which included ceremonies and celebrations preceding the sailing.”²⁵ The ship purchased in the United States and initially called President Warfield “had been the subject of a ‘great stink’ of publicity and media attention from the instant of its departure from the United States [and] the British had doggedly trailed it everywhere it went.”²⁶ In other words, had the aim of the Zionists been the immigration of the passengers, the chances of success of that operation would have been nil. But as Zertal argued “the Zionists have never intended to actually bring the 4,500 refugees onto the shores of Palestine.”²⁷ The sailing of *Exodus* was intended as a “public-relations tool for the Zionist movement.”²⁸ Or, as Zertal put it: “*Exodus* was a show project from its inception.”²⁹ *Exodus* was supposed to arouse the sympathy of the world and thereby force the arm of the British with the aim of creating a Jewish state in Palestine. As Halamish put it:

The operation [of illegal immigration] was not a struggle over the opening of the gates of Palestine ... The issue was the foundation of a state. It was meant to prove the Jews’ desire to immigrate to Palestine, no matter what ... to keep the headlines and world public opinion busy with the problem of Jewish DPs who were rotting away in Europe.”³⁰

²⁴ Zertal, I., *From Catastrophe to Power* p. 91.

²⁵ Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 130.

²⁶ Zertal, I., *From Catastrophe to Power* p. 53.

²⁷ Zertal, I., *From Catastrophe to Power* p. 83.

²⁸ Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 130.

²⁹ Zertal, I., *From Catastrophe to Power* p. 83.

³⁰ Halamish, A., *The Exodus Affair* p. 265.

Ben Gurion's personal envoy to Europe expressed belief in the unique political power of the Holocaust survivors if only Zionism would hurry to make correct use of them.³¹ Shaul Meirov, head of the Mosad le Aliyah-Bet (Organisation for illegal immigration), described illegal immigration as "the exploitation of the indefatigable power of the immigrants. ... a 'grass root power' ... of people who had no choice. And, in the final analysis, we depended on the existence of this non-surrendering power."³² The main weapon used by the Zionists was the image of the survivors themselves – "wretched Jews ... who have lost everything but their lives;"³³ exhausted people; old people, women, and children. Although there is no evidence that the *Exodus*' passengers were chosen on any particular criteria, the fact that there were pregnant women, hundreds of infants,³⁴ and even handicapped people,³⁵ certainly served the Zionist purpose. When the first baby was born on board, the news was telegraphed to the entire world.³⁶ As the affair dragged on and people were living on the British prison ships in unbearable conditions for weeks the moral accusation embodied in the image of survivors became increasingly insistent. A letter addressed to the French government and transmitted from the boat to the shore represents one of the many articulations of this moral pressure:

We thank France for its generosity and its willingness to receive us, but we repeat that the decision we made three weeks ago not to descend to the European shore has grown even stronger. We are living in inhuman conditions and the rains have made conditions unbearable. *And this is after what we have endured in the camps.* We are convinced that the French government is not interested in having this suffering continue. But the suffering is continuing. We demand that the British remove us from here and return us to Palestine.³⁷

The second powerful image used by the Zionists was the grotesque imbalance of forces: the mighty British Empire attacking the survivors of the Nazi camps armed

³¹ Minutes, Jewish Agency Executive, 24 February 1946, CZA.

³² Halamish, A., *The Exodus Affair* p. 264.

³³ Zertal, I., *From Catastrophe to Power* p. 79.

³⁴ Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 130.

³⁵ Halamish, A., *The Exodus Affair* p. 44.

³⁶ Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 130.

³⁷ Quoted in Zertal, I., *From Catastrophe to Power* p. 89. Italics added.

with bottles and cans with eight destroyers of the Royal Navy. As Zertal observed: “without the spectacles of violent clashes between Jewish refugees, with only sticks and cans of food for weapons, and uniformed British soldiers with firearms, the events surrounding the ships would have been much less attractive to the media ... the concept of resisting with of hands, sticks, and bottles ... was a deliberate choice [with] the intention to elicit of moral outrage produced by any David vs. Goliath battle.”³⁸ This pitiful battle of the refugees was instigated by the Zionists for two reasons: to create an ‘immigration martyr’ for the Gentiles’ consumption, but also to create a ‘new Hebrew,’ from the wretched mass of refugees for the internal consumption, that is for the Palestinian Jews. The author of an unsigned article that appeared in the *Palmach Newsletter* admitted: “the true purpose of resistance was the transformation of the refugees character. After all, the article said, when one retreats – that is, when one does not fight deportation even if the fighting is without practical consequence and involves casualties – one ‘turns into human sheep.’”³⁹

The last episode that was exploited to the full was the British Government’s ill-conceived decision to deport the Holocaust survivors back to Germany. The Jewish Agency Executive not only did nothing to prevent the deportation to Germany, but it went so far as to obstruct every possibility of sparing the refugees the trip to Germany. From London, Chaim Weizmann tried to prevent this outrageous deportation but “he was vehemently rebuffed by Ben Gurion”⁴⁰ who also “vehemently refused to accept the British compromise to quietly return the refugees to France, which would have spared them the horror of returning to Germany.”⁴¹ The compromise to send the refugees to Denmark was equally sabotaged by the Jewish Agency.⁴² The Danes were asked “not to lend themselves to be a party to forcing those sorely tried people to land anywhere save in the country of their free choice.”⁴³ All this shows that the Jewish Agency “had an interest in the sentimental and symbolic aspects of deportation to Germany.”⁴⁴ In other words, Ben Gurion wanted to

³⁸ Zertal, I., *From Catastrophe to Power* p. 139 and 143.

³⁹ *The Palmach Book*, Vol. 1 p. 839. Quoted in Zertal, I., *From Catastrophe to Power* p. 149.

⁴⁰ Zertal, I., *From Catastrophe to Power* p. 91.

⁴¹ Zertal, I., *From Catastrophe to Power* p. 251.

⁴² See Zertal, I., *From Catastrophe to Power* p. 251.

⁴³ Jewish Agency Executive in Zurich to the Prime Minister of Denmark, 26 August 1947. Quoted in Halamish, A., *The Exodus Affair* p. 201.

⁴⁴ Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* pp. 131-132.

“take advantage of the unexpected moral dimension in the media offered by the nightmarish aspect of the deportation of the Holocaust survivors back to Germany.”⁴⁵ And indeed the concluding chapter of the visible Exodus episode – the forced disembarkation in Hamburg with British paratroopers dragging Jewish kids from the boat, “twisting their arms behind their backs, beating them on the head and back and bending their legs”⁴⁶ “was ... truly the media apotheosis.”⁴⁷

The timing of the *Exodus* affair was also significant – the whole affair was taking place at the same time as the team of the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) was touring the country in search for a solution to the Palestinian question. It was no coincidence that members of the UNSCOP were present in Haifa as the refugees were being loaded into the British ships and sent back to Europe. They had been specially invited to assist at that sad spectacle by the passengers from the ship. The message read:

Dear Sirs, we implore you to visit us ... to witness for yourselves the live testimony of the refugees ... see with your own eyes – our ship, our suffering and the efforts we are making to reach the safe haven of our homeland. Witness for yourselves the cold-heartedness of the British as they try to expel us from the shores of our homeland in order to incarcerate us behind barbed wire, in concentration camps, which ... remind us all the time of those concentration camps in which we were interred during the days of Nazis. ... Come to Haifa! See the evil!⁴⁸

They did come; and they assisted at the fuss involved in transferring the immigrants from *Exodus* to the British deportation ships. Golda Meir later wrote that by their behaviour the British made a notable contribution to UNSCOP's final recommendations.⁴⁹ The latter were made during the 'Hamburg chapter' of the *Exodus* affair. Commenting upon this state of affairs in August 1947, Moshe Sneh, the Head of the Aliyah-Bet Department in the Jewish Agency Executive, said: “I am convinced that the immigrants of the ‘Yetzi’at Eiropa’ [Exodus] are going to save the

⁴⁵ Zertal, I., *From Catastrophe to Power* p. 253.

⁴⁶ Gamuz, Y., *Yearning and Turmoil*, (Tel Aviv: Misrad ha-Bitachon, 1985) p. 283.

⁴⁷ Zertal, I., *From Catastrophe to Power* p. 137.

⁴⁸ *Ha-Olam*, 24 July 1947, quoted in Halamish, A., *The Exodus Affair* p. 100.

⁴⁹ Meir, G., *My Life*, (London: Imprint Futura Publications, 1975) p. 169.

Zionist struggle before Zionist diplomacy saves the immigrants."⁵⁰ Although the later accounts of the illegal immigration efforts gave extra credit to the Palestinian emissaries, downplaying the role of the immigrants, their part in the establishment of the State of Israel is historically established.

What remains to be assessed is the significance of these efforts for the survivors' process of healing. Before examining the effects of the *Exodus* affair on the survivors, however, the main stages of healing from trauma are briefly discussed. Healing unfolds in the following stages: establishment of security, reconstruction of trauma and mourning, and reconnection with the wider community. It goes without saying that recovery does not follow such a clearly delimited linear course. However, "it should be possible to recognise a gradual shift from unpredictable danger to reliable safety, from dissociated trauma to acknowledged memory, and from stigmatised isolation to restored social connection."⁵¹

The first stage of healing is **establishing safety**. Survivors need to first recover their sense of security. When the survivors' community was persecuted as an ethnic minority in their country of citizenship, its quest for security will often require an establishment of an autonomous political entity or at least a security zone, where the survivors feel safe enough to start reconstructing the narrative of their trauma, the next stage of recovery. In that respect, the Zionist and survivors' interest for establishing a Jewish state fully coincided. In the second stage of healing, the survivors reconstruct the full story of trauma, in depth and in detail. The **reconstruction of trauma** allows the survivors to reclaim their earlier history, integrate the experience of trauma into their life-story and thus reconstitute a sense of continuity with the past.⁵² This stage of healing is by far the most important because it represents a point where meanings, lessons, and understandings are assigned to the traumatic event. As Chapter Four demonstrates, the assignment of meanings is particularly crucial in an event of massive trauma, where the lessons and understandings of individual traumas determine the outlook of people who were

⁵⁰ Moshe Sneh quoted in Halamish, A., *The Exodus Affair* p. 148.

⁵¹ Herman, J. L., *Trauma and Recovery* p. 155.

⁵² Danieli, Y., "Treating Survivors and Children of Survivors of the Nazi Holocaust" in: Ochberg, F. (ed.), *Post-Traumatic Therapy and Victims of Violence*, Brunner / Mazel, New York, 1988 p. 286.

not directly affected by the trauma. Survivors therefore not only transmit their interpretation of trauma to their children, as the Chapter One showed, but once learnt and transmitted those lessons become part of the community's collective identity. Reconstruction of trauma is followed by mourning of the loss that trauma inevitably entails. Analysed in more detail in Chapter Six, mourning is both the most necessary and the most frightening step towards healing. It cannot be bypassed and it cannot be hurried. It usually takes longer than any other stage of recovery because survivors resist confronting their traumatic memories and descent into grief. The last stage is the stage of re-integration into the wider community. The victims, who by the time they arrive to this stage will have reconstructed their sense of safety, integrated the story of trauma into their life-stories and into that of their community, mourned the loss, and will be ready to learn how to trust again. Reintegration into the wider community involves three steps; learning to fight, reconciling with oneself, and reconnecting with other.⁵³ Learning how to fight is based on the assumption that the survivors, having arrived at that stage, will understand "that their post-traumatic symptoms represent a pathological exaggeration of the normal responses to danger."⁵⁴ They have to thus learn how to assess the threat and respond accordingly. In other words, instead of responding to any threat only by extreme reactions, survivors need to relearn both the gradation of threat and the gradation of appropriate responses to it. They have to re-introduce all the shades of grey into their black and white image of the world and of their security in it. Because massive trauma also shatters the victim's sense of self, as Chapter One showed, the crucial step in reintegration is the rebuilding of an identity. In this process the survivors draw upon aspects of their pre-traumatic identity, from the experience of trauma, and from the process of healing. The survivors must acknowledge and "let go' of those aspects of themselves that were formed by the traumatic event."⁵⁵ This letting go allows them to overcome their shame of being helpless, of not having been prepared, of not having done more to prevent the trauma, and to forgive themselves. The recovery is achieved when "compassion and respect for the traumatised, victim self join with a celebration of the survivor self."⁵⁶

⁵³ This typology follows the one developed by Herman, J. L., *Trauma and Recovery*, Chapter 10.

⁵⁴ Herman, J. L., *Trauma and Recovery* p. 197.

⁵⁵ Herman, J. L., *Trauma and Recovery* p. 203.

⁵⁶ Herman, J. L., *Trauma and Recovery* p. 204.

The literature on trauma provides three closely associated factors that can account for the incredible endurance and courage demonstrated by the survivors on board of Exodus: guilt, shame, and mission. In the aftermath of a traumatic event, “as the survivors review and judge their own conduct, feelings of guilt and inferiority are practically universal.”⁵⁷ The failure to act or feel in ways that would have been compatible with the victims’ image of themselves elicits shame, defined as a “response to helplessness, the violation of bodily integrity, and the indignity suffered in the eyes of others.”⁵⁸ Survivors’ mission belongs to the realm of the survivors’ struggling for meaning, but also to that of guilt and shame. Survivors feel that the fact that they survived while others died makes them responsible towards the dead. A mission offers them the possibility of giving meaning to the tragedy and loss and also to somehow atone for having survived. Survivors’ mission can take many forms of public activity, usually bearing witness and keeping the memory alive. In the late forties and early fifties in Israel, however, the chief activity of the survivors was the building-up of the Jewish state. The Jewish state endowed the otherwise meaningless death with a meaning – they did not die for nothing; they died, but from their ashes Israel would rise again. The survivors saw it as their mission to do everything in their power to contribute to the creation of the state and thereby make themselves worthy of having survived, both in their own eyes and in the eyes of the others.

The Zionists drew heavily on all the above-mentioned emotions, and “of course such survivor emotions have been politically used in various ways.”⁵⁹ The survivors’ feelings of guilt for having been helpless, guilt for having survived; their feelings of shame for not having behaved in a way they would have chosen to had there been a choice; their desire to make their lives worthy of being lived and their deaths of their beloved meaningful – all those emotions have been used by the Zionists to achieve the establishment of the state. Despite ruthless pragmatism of this approach, Zionist manipulation of survivors’ emotions was largely beneficial for the survivors’ process of recovery. Resistance against the British – no matter how

⁵⁷ Herman, J. L., *Trauma and Recovery* p. 53.

⁵⁸ Herman, J. L., *Trauma and Recovery* p. 53.

⁵⁹ Lifton, R. J., “The Concept of the Survivor,” p. 123.

difficult, and at times both pointless and costly – restored in the survivors a sense of agency and power; it gave meaning both to their lives and to their deaths; and last but not least, it gave them the opportunity to rebuilt a self that they themselves could be proud of, but also one that the Palestinian Jews would respect. As Halamish argues “the *Exodus* affair changed the immigrants’ image for the better and the Yishuv was swept away on a collective catharsis of admiration toward them.”⁶⁰ Related to the above, resistance also gave the survivors a sense of belonging, as well as of security. The Haganah people

worked hard to convince the immigrants that they were taking care of them.” During the waiting period in France, for example, they “sailed boats close to the deportation ships, offered encouragement ... promised them that the Yishuv ... was firmly behind them, and swear that they would indeed immigrate to Palestine.”⁶¹

The attitude adopted by the Haganah undoubtedly bore fruit – the refugees felt safe (from the memoirs of an immigrant: “No need for concern. The Haganah are with us. ... They are our security.”⁶²). Disembarking in France would “mean a severance of ties with the Haganah, abandoning its protective auspices and even relinquishing the right to immigrate to Palestine.”⁶³ Maybe even worse, landing in France would bring upon the refugees contempt and ostracism of the others – a threat embodied in Roseman’s⁶⁴ speech which said that “anyone who wanted to could disembark, but everyone would spit in their face, as would the entire Jewish race.”⁶⁵

Although the issue of identity will be dealt with in the next section, the above-quoted excerpt from Roseman’s speech raises an issue that would become a major obstacle to the survivors’ healing later on – the Palestinian Jews’ acceptance of the survivors was conditional upon the latter’s ability to adopt a new identity, that of the

⁶⁰ Halamish, A., *The Exodus Affair* p. 271.

⁶¹ Halamish, A., *The Exodus Affair* p. 261.

⁶² Gamuz, Y., *Yeaming and Turmoil* p. 144.

⁶³ Halamish, A., *The Exodus Affair* p. 261.

⁶⁴ Mordechai Roseman held various positions within the Zionist movement (with the Bricha organisation, in the DP camps, he had been head of Ha-Shomer ha –Tsa’ir movement in Germany); on the *Exodus* he held a position in the secretariat and as a communication link between immigrants and Hebrew-speaking escorts.

⁶⁵ From the *Exodus Diary*, 21 August 1947, quoted in Halamish, A., *The Exodus Affair* p. 182.

'fighting Jew'. In other words, the survivors had to come toward the Yishuv, had to make themselves worthy of being part of the Jewish community in Palestine, lest the "entire Jewish race spits in their face." As Halamish put it "the illegal immigration was ... a bridge between the Yishuv and the Diaspora, a tool of national solidarity."⁶⁶ Quoting Allon,⁶⁷ Zertal stated: "continuing resistance on the ships was the best guarantee that the Yishuv will find a way to identify with the refugees."⁶⁸ Fighting for the establishment of the Jewish state, in other words, became the survivors' mission which they carried out with incredible commitment and bravery, both because they 'owed' it to the dead, and because it presented them with the opportunity to play a heroic part in the great historical project of re-establishing a Jewish state in Palestine and thereby restore their own self-worth. The *Exodus* veterans' behaviour in the British camps in Germany provides a superb illustration of the newly acquired self-worth, which, as it is often the case, went hand in hand with "a touch of condescension."⁶⁹ Like other fighting survivors described in the first chapter, the *Exodus* immigrants did not see themselves as ordinary survivors. Therefore they refused to mix with other DPs and they also refused to take part in any of the institutions set up by and for the Holocaust survivors. They "were full of self-worth, aware that they were bearing the flag of the Jewish national struggle, a shining halo of heroism above their heads."⁷⁰

Identity Conflict: Encounter And Its Aftermath

*A shadow passed between the tribes ... The links were broken ... What has happened cannot be undone.*⁷¹

Based on Kai Erikson's analysis in Chapter One, the previous section described the initial phase of communal response to trauma – euphoria, and the influence of this response on the physical survivors' process of healing. This section examines the second stage of communal response – division and distancing. Erikson observed that after the initial euphoria, traumas often divide the larger community

⁶⁶ Halamish, A., *The Exodus Affair* p. 265.

⁶⁷ Yigal Allon was the commander of the Palmach.

⁶⁸ Yigal Allon, quoted in Zertal, I., *From Catastrophe to Power* p. 150.

⁶⁹ Halamish, A., *The Exodus Affair* p. 226.

⁷⁰ Halamish, A., *The Exodus Affair* p. 235.

⁷¹ Alterman, N., "Michael's Page," in: Alterman, N., *City of the Dove* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1962) pp. 25 – 27.

along the already existing fault lines.⁷² The heroic halo of the Holocaust evaporated as soon as they reached the Promised Land, and so did the admiration of Palestinian Jews. Once the immigrants fulfilled their historical role prescribed by the Zionist scenario, they had to face a very different reality from what they expected. The fault line that burst when the survivors finally made it to pre-state Israel was that of identity.

This division is best portrayed with reference to the undertext of the popular images used to describe the encounter that took place 'on the shores of the homeland.' Better than any other source, those images reveal the essential traits of the Zionist attitude towards the survivors of the European Diaspora. An analysis of two of the most popular literary works / historical documents describing the physical encounter between the Palestinian Jews and the survivors reveal the identity conflict. Yitzhak Sadeh's "My Sister on the Beach" and Nathan Alterman's "Michael's Page" belong to, as Zertal put it "the basic scrolls of Zionist revival narrative and were constitutive in the shaping of Israeli collective identity in the country's first decades of independence."⁷³ Both authors belonged to the Zionist power elite close to the central political leadership. Sadeh was a general and the first commander of the Palmach, and Alterman was the most respected national poet of the first statist period – "Ben Gurion's poetic alter ego."⁷⁴

Here is Sadeh's "My Sister on the Beach":

Darkness. On wet sand, my sister stands before me: filthy, tattered, wild-haired, her feet are bare and her head bowed. She stands and weeps.

I know. Her flesh is branded: 'For Officers Only.'

My sister weeps and says:

Friend, why am I here? Why did they bring me here? Am I worthy that young healthy boys risk their lives for me? No, there is no place for me in the world. I should not live.

I embrace my sister, embrace her shoulders and tell her:

⁷² Erikson, K., *A New Species of Trouble* p. 236.

⁷³ Zertal, I., *From Catastrophe to Power* p. 263.

⁷⁴ Zertal, I., *From Catastrophe to Power* p. 270.

You have a place in the world, my sister, a very special place. Here, in our land you should live, my sister. Here you have our love to you. Dark and comely art thou, my sister. Dark, because seared by suffering, but comely, more beautiful to me than all other beauty, holier than all holiness.

Darkness. On wet sand my sister stands before me, filthy, tattered, wild-haired, her feet bare and her head bowed.

I know: evil people have tortured her and made her barren. And she weeps and says: Friend, why am I here? Why did they bring me here? Am I worthy that young healthy boys risk their lives for me? No, there is no place for me in the world. I should not live...

I embrace my sister, embrace her shoulders and tell her:

You have a place in the world, my sister, a very special place. Here, in our land. And you should live, my sister. Your feet have trodden the road of suffering, and tonight you have come home, and here with us is your place. We love you, my sister. All the glory of motherhood you carry within you, all the beauty of womanhood is in you. Our love is for you, you will be a sister to us, you will be our bride, our mother.

Before these sisters I kneel, I prostrate myself in the dust at their feet. And when I rise to my feet, straighten my body, raise my head upwards, I sense and I know:

For these sisters – I am strong.

For these sisters – I am brave.

For these sisters – I will also be cruel.

For you everything – everything.⁷⁵

Which images are articulated in Sadeh's poem and what do they reveal? The encounter is taking place on the beach, in the darkness. On one side stands a group of "young, healthy boys", on the other side a lone refugee girl. A group of young, healthy, and strong native-born Israeli men is facing a single, uprooted, filthy, beaten, and weeping woman. The setting is described by Zertal as "male power in the plural opposite female weakness in the singular – in short, strong, rooted, and brave Israeli

⁷⁵ Sadeh, Y., "My Sister on the Beach", in: Zerubavel, G. (ed.), *The Palmach Book*, Vol. 1 (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1953) p. 725.

Zionism facing a defeated, despairing Diaspora longing to die (“No, there is no place for me in the world. I should not live.”) It is Zionism as an organised discourse of manliness and power built on and emerging from Jewish catastrophe. “For these sisters I am strong. ... I am brave. ... I will also be ‘cruel.’”⁷⁶ It is not surprising that the Diaspora should be symbolised by a woman and the Yishuv by a man – this metaphor was “a continuation of a common stereotype that depicted the Exile as weak, feminine, and passive, and the Yishuv as strong, masculine and active.”⁷⁷ Also, the girl in the poem has not only been tortured but made barren – the European Diaspora after the Holocaust is barren and thereby condemned to death.

Sadeh provides an additional, gratuitous, piece of information, which reveals “the moral judgement passed by the Zionist / Israeli community, which would later become the basis of Israeli society’s hegemonic discourse, at least until the 1960s about the survivors who arrived at Israel’s gates.”⁷⁸ The girl’s flesh is branded “For Officers Only.” The text thus states, very much in accordance with the popular wisdom of the time, that the girl only survived because her body served the Nazi officers. The same moral judgement is contained in a number of public statements. Ben Gurion for example was quoted saying: “Among the survivors of the German concentration camps were those who, had they not been what they were – harsh, evil, and egotistical people – would not have survived, and all they endured rooted out every good part of their souls.”⁷⁹ A *Ha’aretz* journalist wrote: “We have to see things with open eyes. ... The few that remain to us in Europe are not necessarily Judaism’s best. The nation’s jewels were destroyed first” and many of the survivors “are suspected of low morality.”⁸⁰ As Zertal correctly observed “this judgement ... is double-edged. Those who survived committed some kind of moral sin through which they were saved. Those who did not survive, however, are not absolved either, because they ... went ‘like sheep to the slaughter.’”⁸¹

⁷⁶ Zertal, I., *From Catastrophe to Power* p. 266.

⁷⁷ Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 180.

⁷⁸ Zertal, I., *From Catastrophe to Power* p. 269.

⁷⁹ Ben Gurion, quoted in Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 118-19. See also Dobkin, E., *Immigration and Rescue during the Holocaust Years*, (Jerusalem: Reuven Mass, 1946) p. 144.

⁸⁰ Gelblum, A., “Fundamental Problems of Immigrant Absorption,” in *Ha’aretz*, 28 Sept. 1945 p. 3.

⁸¹ Zertal, I., *From Catastrophe to Power* p. 269.

What follows here are two verses from Alterman's long poem - "Michael's Page":

At the night of unloading, with the star watching us
As we shoulder those who arrive in the dark, as we carry their lives on our
backs
We sense the fear in their breathing and the moaning of their tortured and
outcast bodies
But also their hands closing on our throats.

The people will multiply in this land. Not as a sect of converts
Will they wander among its masses. But a war of two
Unseen and unbridled, will crawl through like a thread,
from outside and from within
To resolve whether its millstones will grind the grain
Or the grain grind the millstones.⁸²

Like Sadeh, Alterman's encounter is taking place in the dark. In both texts darkness provides a screen between the survivors and the Palestinian Jews. Occluded vision was a defence mechanism employed by the Zionist collectivity when confronted with the survivors, "as if the horrors of the Holocaust could only be watched in the dark, that is in the state of non-seeing, of blindness. ... This was apparently the only way ... that the community in Palestine was able to 'mobilise' in order to 'see' the remnants of the Holocaust and overcome the petrifying terror that they aroused."⁸³ The report sent in from the DP camps by Eliahu Dobkin of the Jewish Agency Executive expresses the revulsion evoked by the sight of the Holocaust survivors:

"I have seen the Tehran children, I have seen other refugees, but I have never seen a picture as horrifying as this one. ... These are torn and broken shadows of men, plagued by lice and boils and eye diseases. ... God's own horror."⁸⁴

⁸² Alterman, N., "Michael's Page" pp. 25-27.

⁸³ Zertal, I., *From Catastrophe to Power* p. 273.

⁸⁴ Dobkin, E., quoted in Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 19.

The terror provoked by the Holocaust and its survivors is palpable in Alterman's poem – "We sense the fear in their breathing and the moaning of their tortured and outcast bodies./ *But also their hands closing on our throats.*"⁸⁵ The same apprehension is expressed further in the poem: "But a war of two ... to resolve whether the millstones will grind the grain of the grain grind the millstones."⁸⁶ The war that Alterman anticipated was a war between the old and the new, the Diaspora and the Eretz Israel, the exile Jew and the Sabra; and the winner of this struggle will shape the Israeli collective identity. This is a sad but crucial piece of information: those people, who had survived the Holocaust, and who for the past two or three years had been dragged through detention camps, quarantines and political displays, who had played a major role in the immigration wars and thereby significantly participated to the creation of the Jewish state – those people were seen as a threat to the Zionist collective, a threat which had to be countered by all means. One may want to ask though how could the "tortured and outcast bodies" of the survivors possibly threaten "the new, young, healthy men, moulded and created in the image of the new land and under its skies?"⁸⁷

The danger was a moral one. There were those who said that the survivors were liable to poison Zionism, democracy, and progress and to obliterate the country's socialist agricultural foundation, until it became "one big Tel Aviv."⁸⁸ These fears were based not only on the survivors' experience in the camps, but also on what was called a 'Diaspora mentality.' One should keep in mind that for the Zionists, Diaspora stood for everything they disliked; their aim had been to "transform the '*shtetl* Jew' into a 'new Jew' in Palestine, no longer a shop keeper or a broker, but a worker, a creator of material goods, preferably a pioneer, a farmer, and a socialist."⁸⁹ No wonder that the envoys to the DP camps were shocked to see that "the survivors are not willing to work ... [that] some of them leave the camps, marry German women, and open stores or do business in German black market ... [and] allow themselves luxuries, specifically jewellery and silk dresses."⁹⁰ According to another

⁸⁵ Alterman, N., "Michael's Page". Italics supplied.

⁸⁶ Alterman, N., "Michael's Page".

⁸⁷ Zertal, I., *From Catastrophe to Power* p. 271.

⁸⁸ Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 120.

⁸⁹ Teveth, S., *Ben Gurion and the Holocaust* p. xxxii.

⁹⁰ Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 118.

report “young people tried to eject old ones from their berths ... the girls went around with sailors and soldiers and showed no sense of virtue.”⁹¹ In the eyes of the Zionists, the survivors were diminished, not only physically and psychologically, but also morally. They “had lost their self-respect, all faith in their fellowman and in altruism, to the point of cynicism, nihilism, and lawlessness.”⁹² Poet Leah Goldberg said: “This people is ugly, impoverished, morally unstable and hard to love.”⁹³ Put bluntly: “concentration camps bred a mean lot.”⁹⁴ The survivors were seen as a threat to the Zionist project of emancipation and redemption – first as the Diaspora Jews with their ‘exile mentality’, and second as survivors of massive psychic trauma with their ‘concentration camp mentality.’ It goes without saying that both of the above-mentioned mentalities were antithetical to Zionist ideals and as Sternhell put it: “no one was more disgusted with their people, more contemptuous of its weaknesses and its way of life, than the founders. ... [They] described exiled Jews in terms that at time resembled those of most rabid anti-Semites.”⁹⁵ For example, the immigrant had been described upon arrival as “human dust, a refugee, a creature of the Diaspora, inferior human material resistant to change, evader of agricultural work, with illegal dollars hidden in his belt.”⁹⁶ Nevertheless, the Zionist collective “felt morally and ideologically responsible for the survivors. Everyone knew that, without them, there was no chance of achieving statehood.”⁹⁷ According to Zertal, the prevalent opinion was that “the Jews of the Diaspora should be helped not for their own sake, for what they are, but because tomorrow they will be Israel.”⁹⁸

As Alterman’s poem demonstrated, the Zionists were afraid that the survivors might spoil their ‘new Jew’ by infusing it with their ‘Diaspora mentality.’ Therefore, everything reminiscent of Diaspora had to be eradicated. For the second time within a very short time span, the survivors found themselves stripped of their identity and given a new one; after having been ‘Diaspora Jews’ and ‘Holocaust survivors’, they

⁹¹ David Shatiel, later an Israeli Army general, quoted in Segev, T, *The Seventh Million* p. 118.

⁹² Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 117.

⁹³ Quoted in: Segev, T., *1949: The First Israelis* p. 138.

⁹⁴ Uris, L, *Exodus* p.123.

⁹⁵ Sternhell, Z., *The Founding Myths of Israel*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998) p. 47.

⁹⁶ Segev, T., *1949: The First Israelis* p. 117.

⁹⁷ Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 119.

⁹⁸ Zertal, I., *From Catastrophe to Power* p. 10.

now had to become Hebrews. "They must learn to love their homeland, a work ethic, and human morals ... They should be given the first concepts of humanity ... they should be re-educated."⁹⁹ They were encouraged to Hebraise their names, speak Hebrew, became sun-tanned, settle the land, and learn how to hold a spade. Those who failed to adopt the new identity were bullied. Novelist Aharon Appelfeld wrote about a Polish boy who was mistreated and beaten by his native comrades because he had not become sun-tanned like them. He swore that he was trying to darken his skin and the response he got was that had he really wanted to, he would have done it long ago.¹⁰⁰ "The Sabra represented a national ideal and the Holocaust survivor its reverse"¹⁰¹ and the gap between the "pure sons of the land" and the "Exile Jews" had to be bridged by the latter alone. "Not both parties to the encounter, but only the Diaspora must fundamentally and unilaterally change and cease to be what it is, and in this way fulfil its function in the Zionist scenario."¹⁰²

The natives were permeated with a deep feeling of their superiority over the newcomers. As the author Yehudit Hendel observed:

To put it bluntly, there were almost two races in this country. There was one race of people who thought they were gods. These were the ones who had had the honour and privilege to being born in Degania, or in the Borochov neighbourhood of Givataim. ... And there was, we can certainly say, an inferior race. People we saw as inferior had some kind of flaw, some kind of hunchback, and these were the people who came after the war. I was thought in school that the ugliest, basest thing is not the Exile but the Jew who came from there.¹⁰³

"The attitude of the first Israelis toward the newcomers was complex and self-contradictory, charged with emotions and infused with prejudices, reflecting their self-images as Jews and as Israelis."¹⁰⁴ There were those who blamed the European

⁹⁹ Various Mapai (leading party) officials, quoted in Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 158.

¹⁰⁰ Appelfeld, A., *Searing Light* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1980).

¹⁰¹ Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 180.

¹⁰² Zertal, I., *From Catastrophe to Power* p. 270.

¹⁰³ In the film *Cloudburst*, produced by Orna Ben-Dor-Niv and Daphna Kaplanski, first broadcast on Israeli television in June 1989.

¹⁰⁴ Segev, T., *1949: The First Israelis* p. 117.

Jewry for its own extermination. Menachem Begin was quoted saying that the “age-old inexcusable utter defencelessness” of the Jewish people in Europe “was a standing invitation to massacre.”¹⁰⁵ Ben Gurion’s rhetoric was similarly accusatory, “placing responsibility for what happened, at least partially, on the survivors themselves, making a moral judgement by way of comparison to the Yishuv.”¹⁰⁶ Time and again the survivors were asked: Why did you not rebel? Why did you go like sheep to the slaughter? Yoel Palgi, one of the paratroopers that were parachuted to Hungary during the World War II, said in June 1945:

I realised that we were ashamed of those who were tortured, shot, burnt. There is a kind of general agreement that the Holocaust dead were worthless people. Unconsciously, we have accepted the Nazi view that the Jews were subhuman ... History is playing a bitter joke on us: have we not ourselves put the six million on trial?¹⁰⁷

Another bitter joke of History and the cruellest expression of the natives’ contempt for the survivors can be found in Hebrew slang – the word *sabon* (meaning ‘soap’) came to be used to refer to the Holocaust survivors, and it is still used to describe a coward or a weakling. Palestinian Jews thus re-positioned themselves vis-à-vis the survivors. On the shores of the homeland, the Palestinian Jews dissociated themselves from the victims and positioned themselves as rescuers. The fact that the heroes of yesterday became today’s burdens is also reflected in Israeli historiography of the clandestine immigration, which attributed the survivors a passive role. The official accounts of the Exodus affair, for example, “gave extra credit to the emissaries from Palestine, downplaying the part of the immigrants.”¹⁰⁸ Similarly poets and writers did their share to “glorify ‘bearing their nation on their shoulders’ thereby deflecting attention from the true heroes of the immigration campaign – the refugees themselves.”¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁵ Begin, M., *The Revolt* p. xii.

¹⁰⁶ Zertal, I., *From Catastrophe to Power* p. 221.

¹⁰⁷ Palgi, Y., *A Great Wind Comes*, (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1978) p. 243.

¹⁰⁸ Reference to Bracha Habbas’ account. Halamish, A., *The Exodus Affair* p. 269.

¹⁰⁹ Zertal, I., *From Catastrophe to Power* p. 170.

In the late 1940s, at the height of the immigration, the Yishuv was preparing to face a very different enemy – the Arabs. And for that enemy, they needed fighters and labourers, not the agonising mass of wretched Jews that proved itself so useful in the immigration wars. The political situation dictated the rules: the Jewish state needed fighters, and the newcomers had to adjust to the needs of the state and transform into warriors practically overnight. About two months before the declaration of independence, Ben Gurion wrote to one of the immigration envoys: “The war depends on immigration, because the manpower in Israel will not suffice. ... Immigration that is not directed entirely, from start to finish, to the war’s needs is no blessing.”¹¹⁰ Following Ben Gurion’s orders the envoys in the DP camps presented enlistment as a duty to every man or woman. Haim Yahil wrote that there was “an atmosphere of enlistment in the camps ... parents of enlistees won respect, and evaders were publicly disgraced. A young man who did not sign up had trouble walking through the camp.”¹¹¹ According to Professor Emmanuel Sivan¹¹² of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, close to half of the 104,000 Jews who enlisted in the War of Independence were newcomers to Israel, many of them Holocaust survivors. Approximately 5,682 Jews died during the War of Independence. 35 percent (1,462) were immigrants who arrived in the country no earlier than the start of World War II. Most of the newcomers killed were Holocaust survivors. They could not speak Hebrew and therefore could not be assigned to the administrative roles in the rear. Thus, they were sent to the front. Some of them received basic military training before arriving, but most were drafted immediately after their arrival, with no prior training and no knowledge of the land they were going to defend. They did not have time to search for their relatives and neither did they know what would become of them after their service in the army. They were often thrown in with Sabras and others who had no idea what the survivors had been through or what they were expecting. Here, too, of course, the Sabras's sense of superiority interfered with the survivors' healing process.¹¹³ “Low-ranking commanders often humiliated and insulted the new recruits, who had a reputation for being melancholic, cowardly soldiers,

¹¹⁰ Ben Gurion quoted in Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 177.

¹¹¹ Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 177.

¹¹² Interview with the author.

¹¹³ See Yablonka, H., *Survivors Of The Holocaust: Israel After The War* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999) p. 134.

prisoners of their past."¹¹⁴ The newcomers were held responsible for demoralisation of other soldiers and many felt that they were used as 'cannon fodder', a widespread expression at the time.¹¹⁵ As a young non-commissioned officer in 1948, Ariel Sharon commanded a number of Holocaust survivors. He said: "Songs weren't sung for them. They weren't spoken of around the bonfires. Many of them came as unknowns, and some [died] as unknowns."¹¹⁶

Both the resistance against the British, and the war against the Arabs benefited the survivors in some respect; for example, it gave them part in the victory and a certain sense of belonging, but "it did little to advance the immigrants' social integration."¹¹⁷ After the war was over, the immigrants faced "a barrier of blood and silence and agony and loneliness."¹¹⁸

Estrangement: Wall Of Silence

*The absence of an empathetic listener, or more radically, the absence of an addressable other, an other who can hear the anguish of one's memories and thus affirm and recognise their realness, annihilates the story.*¹¹⁹

As the first section showed, at a crucial junction of struggle for the Jewish state, the political interests of the Zionists coincided with the survivors' emotional, psychological, and physical vulnerability. Thus the latter provided their agony, their Holocaust credentials, and their desperate courage, and the former – following the slogan 'disaster is power' – transformed the survivors' suffering into a powerful weapon against the guilt-ridden Gentiles. Suddenly, the survivors gained central importance in the Zionist project, and under that spotlight they quickly regained a feeling of self-worth, which had been previously shattered by the traumatic experience. In that respect, the Zionist use of survivors' emotional state for the purpose of achieving statehood was valuable. However, as the second section showed, the survivors' self-worth was extremely short-lived. Upon arrival to the 'promised land' the survivors were looked down upon; they were expected to

¹¹⁴ Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 178.

¹¹⁵ Guri, H., *Until Dawn Comes*, (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1950) p. 85.

¹¹⁶ Quoted in Ha'aretz, *Independence Day Supplement*, 26 April 2001.

¹¹⁷ Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 178.

¹¹⁸ Ben Gurion quoted in Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 179.

¹¹⁹ Laub, D., "Bearing Witness" in Felman, S. and D. Laub, *Testimony: Crisis of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History* (New York and London: Routledge, 1992) p. 68.

abandon their pre-concentration camp identity ('Diaspora mentality' in Zionist terminology) and transform into workers and fighters, as well as to eradicate all post-traumatic disorders caused by the experience of the concentration camps (what Zionists would call to 'learn some humanity'). In short, the survivors had to become a healthy fibre of the Zionist collective, and that by their own means. A vow of silence was imposed on the survivors.

Yet, many survivors felt that they had a moral and historical duty to tell what had happened to them. In the post-war months many felt "as though they were the last living Jews, who alone knew what had happened to their communities."¹²⁰ They had a responsibility to preserve the memory of those who died, but they also needed to reconstruct their own individual traumas in order to start the process of healing. The survivors soon discovered, however, that people did not always want to, or could not, listen to them; they "had trouble finding a sympathetic audience"¹²¹ and often their stories were simply not believed. In a well-known film called *The Eighty-first Blow*,¹²² Michael Goldman narrates how, as a seventeen-year-old boy, he was whipped and beaten by the commandant of the camp where he was prisoner. Goldman fainted and when he woke, the commandant continued beating him – eighty lashes, until Goldman broke. His back was torn, but he was alive. He survived and came to Israel after the war. When he recounted his story to his relatives they did not believe him. They were convinced that he "was imagining things or exaggerating. 'That disbelief was the eighty-first blow,' Goldman later said."¹²³

Describing early days of Israel through a child's eyes in his novel *See Under: Love*, David Grossman conveys the atmosphere of tension, silence and impossibility to face the Holocaust. The survivors soon realised, as Lifton put it, "that others view them as in some way carrying the taint of the Holocaust – as persons to be feared and avoided as though they and the taint were contagious."¹²⁴ The language itself consigned the survivors to another planet. They came from "Over There," as

¹²⁰ Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 155.

¹²¹ Niewyk, D. L. (ed.), *Fresh Wounds* p. 2.

¹²² Guri, H., Erlich Z., and D. Bergman, *The Eighty-First Blow* (Teaneck, NJ: Ergo Media, 1987). Visual material.

¹²³ Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 155.

¹²⁴ Lifton, R. J., "The Concept of the Survivor," p. 123.

Grossman's nine-year old character, Momik, explains, "a place you weren't supposed to talk about too much, only think about in your heart and sigh with a drawn-out krechtz, oyyyy, the way they always do."¹²⁵ People sincerely feared meeting the survivors face-to-face, with all their physical and psychological handicaps, their anguish, suffering, and terror. As Segev put it: "The Holocaust survivors came from another world and, to the end of their days, they were its prisoners."¹²⁶ One day, Momik's grandfather was brought to the house in an ambulance, wearing blue-stripped pyjamas. The "oldest man in the world"¹²⁷ in Momik's eyes was introduced with: "Ten years he's been with us at the insane house in Bat Yam and you never know what he is talking to himself ... and he doesn't hear what you say ... and nu, we don't even know in which camp he was ... there came people in worse condition, you should see, no, better you shouldn't see."¹²⁸ When Momik tried to penetrate the secret of his grandfather's story, his questions were met with silence and sometimes anger, which led him to conclude: "whatever it was that happened Over There must have been really something for everyone trying so hard not to talk about it."¹²⁹

This incapacity or refusal to listen, fear, revulsion, and disgust at the survivors' conduct, scepticism of their stories, and contempt for their weakness, reflected the mechanism of denial, defined as "the wish not to have these terrible events be true, not to have them touch us, not to be too closely aware of what took place."¹³⁰ Like Grossman's character Momik, "there can be hardly a child who grew up in Israel in the 1950s and 1960s who does not recall a lost soul in the neighbourhood, a mad person, a *meshugene* [Yiddish for mad person] from 'there'.¹³¹ The images of those grotesque characters combined with fragments of stories that children sometimes succeeded in extracting from adults, haunted little Israelis like Momik. And "who does not remember waking up to a neighbour's nightmare screams piercing through the darkness – frightening behaviour which neighbourhood common sense and compassion attributed to the horrors experienced in the camps."¹³² In those

¹²⁵ Grossman, D., *See under: Love* (London: Picador, 1991) p. 13.

¹²⁶ Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 158.

¹²⁷ Grossman, D., *See under: Love* p. 4.

¹²⁸ Grossman, D., *See under: Love* p. 14.

¹²⁹ Grossman, D., *See under: Love* p. 29.

¹³⁰ Moses, R. (ed.), *Persistent Shadows of the Holocaust* p. 130.

¹³¹ Fox, T., *Inherited Memories* p. 100.

¹³² Fox, T., *Inherited Memories* p. 100.

circumstances only emotional, and sometimes physical, distancing from the survivors allowed the Palestinian Jews to “maintain their own beliefs in personal invulnerability”¹³³ – one of the fundamental assumptions about oneself in the world. According to Kai Erikson, the process of those not touched dissociating themselves from those touched is an inevitable phase of collective response to trauma. Only by holding the victims responsible for their own fate, were the Palestinian Jews able to pretend that it could not have happened to them. Because they were different: they would not be slaughtered in their synagogues (to paraphrase Ben Gurion), they would resist, they would die upright and fighting, they would not go like sheep to the slaughter.

The Holocaust might have proved Zionism right, but it also represented its failure. “Each new arrival,” wrote Segev, “was a reminder that the Zionist movement had been defeated in the Holocaust.”¹³⁴ Nothing could change the fact that the Yishuv had been helpless. Furthermore, the Zionist collective in Palestine depended on the willingness and ability of the Holocaust survivors to settle the land and defend it against the Arab threat. The silent accusations were coming from both sides. Zionists blamed the Diaspora mentality of the victims for the tragedy that had befallen them, whilst many survivors resented and blamed the Yishuv. “You danced the hora while we were being burned in the crematoriums” said a DP leader at Bergen-Belsen.¹³⁵ Holocaust survivors also reminded the Palestinian Jews of their own vulnerability as Jews. They “imposed on the earlier immigrants a past that many of them had not yet succeeded in putting aside.”¹³⁶ The return of the Holocaust survivors represented a horrifying return of the repressed Diaspora. The latter could only be suppressed again by imposing silence and a new identity on the survivors. European Diaspora had been destroyed, entire historic areas of Jewish life had vanished forever, and last remaining Diaspora Jews were forced to eradicate whatever might have been left intact from their pre-concentration camp identities in order to become new men and women, moulded according to the Zionist ideal.

¹³³ Janoff-Bulman, R., “The Aftermath of Victimisation” p 27.

¹³⁴ Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 180.

¹³⁵ Quoted in Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 181.

¹³⁶ Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 180.

Repression of trauma and the almost solid silence surrounding it, made the survivors' healing process a very lonesome and difficult task. Although the Israeli government did everything it could in given circumstances to absorb and provide for all the refugees, material assistance was not matched with adequate psychological and social support. The scarcity of sympathetic listeners and the absence of public acknowledgement of the survivors' suffering during the first decade of statehood represented the major obstacle to their healing. This is because the reconstruction of the narrative is a critical stage of recovery, without which trauma cannot be integrated into the survivors' memories and identities. Since the survivors were discouraged from speaking about their experience, they could not process the trauma. Many survivors then repressed their memories; they never talked about it, not even to their children and friends. Some had undergone plastic surgery to have their blue tattooed numbers removed, while others just kept it hidden. They could not and did not integrate the experience of the Holocaust into their identity, but the repressed pervaded their lives:

They suffered from anxieties, nightmares, and attacks of depression, fury, and apathy; from suspicion of strangers, introversion, overwhelming worries about their personal, economic, and professional security, great fear and great aspirations for their children. ... Holocaust anxieties could suddenly break onto daily life, triggered by routine events at home or at work or on the news. An illness, losing a job, or a border incident – everything took them back to 'there'. For many, the past continued to intrude.¹³⁷

The awareness of the Holocaust's effects on survivors and their families was almost non-existent, even among those in caring professions. Rare survivors who approached therapists "were treated with nothing more than drugs: there was no attempt to touch the past."¹³⁸ Today, psychologists and counsellors who work at *Amcha* (National Israeli Centre for Psychosocial Support of Survivors of the Holocaust and the Second Generation) are constantly facing survivors who had been in and out mental care institutions without any mention of their Holocaust

¹³⁷ Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 159.

¹³⁸ Fox, T., *Inherited Memories* p. 99-100.

experiences in their medical files.¹³⁹ Silence surrounding the murder of European Jewry may have been preferred by some survivors, but for many it was a painful and difficult experience. Some survivors talked about it excessively to those who would listen, usually their children and spouses. Because they were unable to reconstruct their traumas, Holocaust survivors could not mourn their losses either. They could not let go of something they had not yet had the opportunity to appropriate. Only after the reconstruction of trauma and mourning, can the survivors of massive psychic trauma rebuild their identities, drawing both on their pre-traumatic identities and the lessons of the traumatic experience. Holocaust survivors in Israel could not draw upon their pre-traumatic experience because the latter had been in conflict with the prevailing ideology. But neither could they integrate the traumatic experience into their identities because the trauma had not been reconstructed. In other words, they had no internal sources to build their new identities from. On the contrary, they were given an identity before they were able to deal with their traumas and they were re-integrated into the wider community before having integrated the story of trauma into their own life stories and mourned the losses.

Conclusion: Breaking The Silence

*Thank you for having liberated the tears which remained welled up in me since the day in 1942 when, as a girl of nine, I was separated from my parents, never to see them again.*¹⁴⁰

Two events occurred in the 1950s that brought the Holocaust to the centre of public discussion: the reparations agreement with the Federal Republic of Germany (hereafter FRG) in 1952, and the Kastner affair in 1954. Although the fundamental change of attitude did not take place until the Eichmann trial in 1961, the reparations agreement and Kastner trial represented important steps towards full reconstruction of trauma almost a decade later.

The opening of negotiations leading to the reparation agreement with the Federal Republic sparked heated debates and created much disagreement in Israel.

¹³⁹ Fox, T., *Inherited Memories* p. 100.

¹⁴⁰ A letter of thanks addressed to the Attorney General Gideon Hausner after the Eichmann Trial. Quoted in Herman, S. N., *Jewish Identity: A Social Psychological Perspective* (London: Sage, 1977) p. 109.

“Passions were aroused as though a religious war had erupted,”¹⁴¹ Ellie Wiesel reported in his memoirs. The Israeli public was divided between those who – like Ben Gurion and Nahum Goldman – maintained that Israel should accept the German reparations money, and those who opposed this pragmatic approach with a series of moral, emotional, and even Biblical arguments. Among the latter were the leaders of the opposition – most prominently Menachem Begin – but also the majority of survivors condemned the reparations agreement. The opponents to the agreement circulated petitions in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem and held daily demonstrations. Lobbies and pressure groups appeared in every corner. Posters on the walls and advertisements in the newspapers sought to rally the public to one side or the other. Most of the daily newspapers were opposed to the agreement, and the poll carried out by a daily *Ma’ariv* showed that 80 percent of those who responded were against direct negotiations with the Federal Republic.¹⁴²

On 7 January 1952, the day of the debate on whether to empower the government to start negotiations with Germany in the Israeli Knesset, Begin made a speech from the balcony of a hotel overlooking the Zion Square in Jerusalem. Thousands of people gathered there, wearing yellow Stars of David, like the ones the Jews in the ghetto were forced to wear. Begin threatened the Ben Gurion government with a civil war if he accepted war reparations from Germany. Haber, Schiff and Yaari reported Begin’s speech:

There is no sacrifice we will not make. We will be killed rather than let this come about. This will be a war for life or death. A Jewish government that negotiates with Germany can no longer be a Jewish government. ... Before Hitler came to power, the German people voted for him. Twelve million Germans served in the Nazi army. There is not one German who did not kill our fathers. Every German is a murderer. Adenauer is a murderer.¹⁴³

Demonstrators stormed the Knesset, throwing stones at the members of Knesset. The army had to be called out to prevent the mob from entering the building.

¹⁴¹ Wiesel, E., *Tous les fleuves vont à la mer* (Paris: Seuil, 1994) p. 292.

¹⁴² “Public Opinion Survey on Compensation Concluded,” *Ma’ariv*, 9 Jan 1952.

¹⁴³ Menachem Begin quoted in Haber, E., Schiff, Z. and E. Yaari, *The Year of the Dove* (New York: Bantam Books, 1979) p. 234.

Hundreds were wounded and dozens had to be hospitalised. Four hundred people were arrested. When the vote took place two days later, the Knesset was surrounded by policemen and armed soldiers. The majority voted in favour of negotiations with Germany. The reparation controversy was important, both because it mobilised large numbers of survivors, but also because it made the Holocaust a topic of debate in Israeli society. However, the reparations episode created a division within the Israeli society between the 'heroes' and the 'collaborators', a division that was further aggravated by the Kastner affair.

Rudolf Israel Kastner worked with a Zionist rescue committee in Budapest from 1942 onwards. He conducted negotiations with Adolf Eichmann to exchange Jews for goods (million Jews for ten thousand trucks). He succeeded in rescuing 1,685 Jews from death, among them the members of his family and friends. Two years after the liberation of the camps, Kastner immigrated to Israel and became an active politician. In 1953, a Hungarian Jew Malchiel Gruenwald accused Kastner, in a widely distributed newsletter, of collaboration with the Nazis, indirect murder of Hungarian Jewry by means of concealing information about the true destination of Hungarian Jews (Auschwitz), partnership with and defence of a Nazi war criminal – Kurt Becher – at the Nuremberg trials, and of saving friends and fellow party members at the expense of many more Jewish lives. Kastner, who at that time was serving as press spokesman for the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, sued Gruenwald for libel. During the course of the trial, in which he was the plaintiff, Kastner in fact became the accused and had to defend himself against the allegations that the defence attorney made against him. The judge's verdict endorsed the defence. "In accepting the [Nazi] offer," ruled judge Halevy, "Kastner sold his soul to the devil."¹⁴⁴ Kastner's verdict was not only a verdict against an individual but against Ben Gurion's party – *Mapai*, and even more so against the victims and survivors of the Holocaust and their Exilic mentality. The dichotomy between the proud, fighting Israeli, and a submissive, weak Diaspora was a recurrent motive during Kastner trial, and the attorney of the defence Tamir even asked one of the witnesses if it was correct to say that it was the Diaspora mentality that made Jews "accept the reality of the Exile and the need, in time of trouble, to resort to bribery and special

¹⁴⁴ The verdict of the Jerusalem District Court, quoted from the original in Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 283.

pleading.”¹⁴⁵ The government appealed the verdict to the High Court, and in January 1958, the Court reversed the original judgement. The decision came too late for Kastner who was assassinated in March 1957, by three right-wing extremists.

Like the reparations agreement, Kastner’s trial aroused passions around the subject of the Holocaust. The trial forced the Israeli public to reflect on a number of difficult issues surrounding the Holocaust: adequate response to the Final solution, behaviour of the Jewish leadership under Nazi occupation (Jewish Councils or *Judenräte*) and in Palestine, conflicting Jewish identities (Diaspora vs. Sabra). Kastner’s trial brought to the public debate issues that had not been previously talked about. However, the assault on the behaviour of the European Jews and their leadership during the war, and the clear dichotomy between two Jewish responses to the Nazis – resistance and the *Judenräte* – conveyed by the trial and the verdict, “proved once more that it was wise for the survivors to keep a low profile about the Holocaust in Israel, unless one had been a ghetto fighter or a partisan.”¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁵ The verdict of the Jerusalem District Court, quoted from the original in Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 273-74.

¹⁴⁶ Miller, J., From Indifference to Compassion
Internet edition at <http://www.msu.edu/user/mille228/isrhol.htm>. Last accessed on 27 September 2001.

Chapter Four

RECONSTRUCTION OF TRAUMA AT THE TRIAL OF ADOLF EICHMANN

Introduction

Only during this terrible trial, as the witnesses from over there continued, one by one, to go up to the witness stand, these strange and anonymous individuals who passed by on countless occasions now joined together until we had the clear and sudden understanding that these individuals were not only a public of individuals but ... an ineradicable part of the quality and form of the living nation to which we belong.¹

Sixteen years after the end of the Second World War, the trauma of the Holocaust was finally reconstructed within a framework of a great historical trial. Unlike the Kastner trial, discussed in the conclusion of the preceding chapter, the trial of the Nazi official in charge of the Final Solution, Adolf Eichmann, was “intended from its very outset to be a celebrated educational affair.”² The event was framed as one of great historical significance in which for the first time in history, the entire Jewish nation (by means of Israeli state), undertook to try one of its worst persecutors, Adolf Eichmann, and by extension, Nazism itself. The testimonies of survivors and the material evidence presented were supposed to educate the Israeli public, who were deeply ignorant about the Holocaust.³ The silence that surrounded the murder of European Jewry in the 1950s hardly prepared the Israelis for such a momentous confrontation with the past. When the people learned about the Mossad’s successful capture of Adolf Eichmann in Buenos Aires, they were stunned. Israeli poet Nathan Alterman described the surreal scene in a Tel Aviv street after the announcement was made: “A Jewish woman walking down the street was surprised to see people standing together reading newspapers fresh off the presses. The entire street seemed to be still, everyone reading something from hastily grabbed pages –

¹ Natan Alterman quoted in Weitz, Y., “Holocaust Memory in Israel During the 1950s” in Wistrich, R. and D. Ohana (eds.), *The Shaping of Israeli Identity: Myth, Memory, and Trauma* (London: Frank Cass, 1995) p. 141.

² Bilsky, L., “In a Different Voice: Nathan Alterman and Hannah Arendt on the Kastner and Eichmann Trials” in *Theoretical Inquiries in Law*, 1:2 (July 2000) p. 525.

³ Ofer, D., “Israel” in Wyman, D. S. (ed.), *The World Reacts to the Holocaust* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1996) pp. 836-923.

as when war is declared. She approached one of the groups and saw what was written in large letters at the head of the page. Adolf Eichmann has been captured and is already in Israel. She saw it. She stood for a moment, wavered, and fell in faint.”⁴ One of the national newspapers wrote: “It is hard to remember any other instance of emotion and shock like the one that hit us this week.”⁵ The sudden announcement of Eichmann’s arrest set off an ‘emotional explosion’ and released an unbearable anxiety over what the trial would reveal.

After reviewing the principal steps towards reconstruction of trauma on individual and collective levels in the first part, this chapter examines the way in which the trauma of the destruction of European Jewry was reconstructed during the trial of Adolf Eichmann in Jerusalem. The first section briefly situates the trial in its political context and identifies the principal aims of the trial while the second section examines how and to what extent those aims had been realised. The analysis of the two voices which shaped the Holocaust discourse in Israel for years to come – that of the prosecution, and that of the prosecution’s witnesses – is based on three sets of documents: documents related to the question of the Court’s jurisdiction, which established the link between the Jewish victims of the Holocaust and the State of Israel; the Attorney General’s opening speech codifying the traumatic experience; and prosecution witnesses’ testimonies, which confirmed and legitimised the formal codification. The concluding part assesses the psychological impact of the Eichmann’s trial on the survivors and the Israeli Jewish community.

⁴ Alterman, N., “The Scales of Justice” in *The Seventh Column* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1981), 2: 497.

⁵ “The Prosecution Against Eichmann must be Prepared Meticulously” in *Ha’aretz*, 27 May 1960 p. 2.

Individual And Collective Dimension Of Trauma Reconstruction

Personal Reconstruction of Trauma

It is very difficult to strike a balance between consciously remembering these things and being possessed by them.⁶

In the second stage of healing, survivors reconstruct the narrative of their traumas by transforming the traumatic memory into a linear chronological narrative. Before the reconstruction of trauma is completed, the survivors live, as it were, in two different worlds: the realm of trauma and the realm of everyday life. Isabella L., a former Auschwitz inmate, explained this condition when she said:

You have one vision of life and I have two. I – you know – I lived on two planets. After all, I was – it seems to me that Hitler chopped off part of the universe and created annihilation zones and torture and slaughter areas. You know, it's like the planet was chopped up into a normal part ... and this other planet, and we were herded onto that planet from this one, and herded back again, while having ... virtually nothing in common with the inhabitants of this planet.⁷

The aim of trauma reconstruction is the collapsing of the two worlds into one and the assimilation of the traumatic wound into the individual's life story. Reconstructing the narrative begins with a review of the survivor's life before the traumatic event. According to Yael Danielli the commitment to reclaiming the survivor's earlier history is crucial for a successful restoration of a sense of continuity with their past.⁸ In the second step towards integration of traumatic memory, the survivors piece together the succession of facts. As therapeutic practice demonstrated, the narratives of the survivor's pre-traumatic past and a barren recounting of facts in chronological order belong to the realm of everyday memory, and are therefore relatively easily accessible. The same cannot be said of the narration of traumatic memory, which represents the crucial, the most difficult, and for that reason, the most resisted part of the reconstruction process. At this stage, the survivors need to retrieve and verbalise

⁶ Testimony of Peter C. in Langer, L., *Holocaust Testimonies* p. 173-74.

⁷ Testimony of Isabella L., quoted in Langer, L., *Holocaust Testimonies* p. 53.

⁸ Danielli, Y., "Treating Survivors" p. 286.

their feelings, bodily sensations, and describe traumatic images that haunt them.⁹ The description of emotional and physical responses to traumatic stimuli pushes the survivors to the limits of narration: the more they approach the realm of the traumatised memory, the more they find it difficult to find words to match their feelings. This is because, unlike everyday memory, traumatic memory is inscribed in the uncontrollable and inaccessible part of the survivor's body and psyche in form of a static series of indelible still snapshots. As such, it cannot be recalled at will or represented. Instead, traumatic memory makes claims on the person's present: it intrudes in forms of flashbacks, reenactments, severe anxiety, and dreams. The traumatic images and sensations literally possess the one who experiences them. Again, Isabella L.'s testimony is instructive:

I feel my head is filled with garbage: all these images, you know, and sounds, and my nostrils are filled with the stench of burning flesh. And it's ...you can't excise it, it's ... like there is another skin beneath this skin and that skin is called Auschwitz.¹⁰

B. A. van der Kolk and Onno van der Hart defined traumatic memory as “the unassimilated scraps of overwhelming experiences, which need to be integrated with existing mental schemes, and transformed into narrative language.”¹¹ The task of organising and distilling the traumatic imagery into the survivors' life stories is both necessary and daunting. As Michael Roth observed, “a trauma is a part of one's past that seems to demand inclusion in any narrative of the development of the present but that makes any narrative seem painfully inadequate.”¹² Because the traumatic event is by definition outside the normal realm of the individual's experience, it cannot be assimilated without filtering it through existing mental and emotional apparatus. Thus a successful reconstruction of the story of trauma robs it of its unique traumatic substance and inevitably leads to a relativisation of the traumatic past in relation to the rest of one's life. The survivors often resist the verbalisation of trauma because it can only be achieved at the expense of the very quality that makes

⁹ McCann, L. and L. Pearlman, *Psychological Trauma and the Adult Survivor: Theory, Therapy, and Transformation* (New York: Brunner / Mazel, 1990).

¹⁰ Testimony of Isabella L., quoted in Langer, L., *Holocaust Testimonies* p. 53.

¹¹ Roth, M. S., “Hiroshima Mon Amour” in Rosenstone, R. A. (ed.), *Revisioning History: Film and the Construction of a New Past* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995) p. 94.

¹² Roth, M. S., “Hiroshima Mon Amour” p. 94.

the experience traumatic. This 'loss' can be felt "as a cure and as a betrayal, a sacrilege."¹³ A transformation of the traumatic memory into a narrative also confronts the past with the forces of forgetting. Even the most intense traumatic experiences lose their potency and detail when they are remembered and shared, unlike for example, the flashbacks that rush into consciousness without warning. "If something is unforgettable," wrote Roth, "this is, paradoxically, because it could not be remembered or recounted. ... It is through an acknowledgement of the powers of forgetting that one can live with (and with losing) the past."¹⁴

A reconstruction of the traumatic narrative is completed when the survivors reconstitute the belief system that makes sense of their suffering, examine the moral questions of responsibility and guilt, and develop a full understanding of the trauma. The reconstruction of trauma integrates traumatic events into the existing mental schemes, and in doing so, the overwhelming aspects of trauma are configured into something that can be told. The abstractions and omissions that allow the assimilation of the traumatic past into the survivors' present are not accidental. They usually reflect the survivor's need to justify her survival, draw some useful lessons from the event, compensate for the loss, ascribe guilt, and above all, rebuild the shattered assumptions about meaning, order, and justice in the world. On the other hand, the survivors' reconstruction of trauma does not take place in a social and political vacuum. The traumatic narrative therefore inevitably bears the mark of the external environment. Thus for example, the societal and institutional acknowledgment of trauma, communal support, secondary knowledge about the traumatic event (and the benefit of the hindsight), the expectations or sensitivities of the audience, and one's own sense of entitlement, to name just a few factors, can configure the story in distinct ways. As the next section shows, the external pressures on the trauma narrative are particularly pervasive on the collective level.

¹³ Roth, M. S., "Hiroshima Mon Amour" p. 99.

¹⁴ Roth, M. S., "Hiroshima Mon Amour" p. 98-99.

Collective Codification of Traumatic Narrative

*The speech of survivors ... is highly politicised., The battle over meaning of a traumatic experience is fought in the arena of political discourse, popular culture, and scholarly debate. The outcome of this battle shapes the rhetoric of the dominant culture and influences future political action.*¹⁵

Integration of personal trauma into the survivor's life story represents an unavoidable step towards individual healing. In the same way, a collective trauma needs to be incorporated into the community's narrative record. A collective reconstruction of trauma follows the same sequence as the one observed on the individual level: reclaiming of the earlier history of the community, recollection of facts in chronological order, reactivation and verbalisation of emotional and bodily sensations of trauma, reconstruction of value and belief systems that give the trauma a meaning and yield lessons for the future. As is the case for individual survivors, the first two steps towards reconstruction are comparatively easy to access. The socio-cultural history of the community prior to the traumatic event plays an important role in the final narrative that emerges from a collective trauma reconstruction. Similarly, the ascriptions of guilt and responsibility, as well as the formulation of meanings and lessons, are moulded in relation to the community's present needs. A collective reconstruction of trauma alters the group's identity, principles of its boundedness, and the way in which it relates to those outside the group. As Kai Erikson argued "trauma can create community [and] a trauma shared can serve as a source of communality in the same way that common languages and common backgrounds can."¹⁶ Because of all those implications, public reconstruction of trauma inevitably becomes a site of struggle over the narrative and its meaning.

As the discussion of the Eichmann trial in the next section shows, on the collective level the external pressures intervene at various stages of reconstruction outlined above. Like individual survivors, the community can control and manipulate the pre-traumatic history, the factual narrative, and the reconstruction of a belief and value systems. The only step that is unpredictable is the confrontation with the

¹⁵ Tal, K., *Worlds of Hurt: Reading the Literatures of Trauma* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) p. 7.

¹⁶ Erikson, K., "Notes on Trauma and Community", in Caruth, C. (ed.), *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1995) p. 185-186.

traumatic memory. On the collective level, the latter is represented by the testimonies of the physical survivors, which, like still snapshots in a traumatised person's mind, invade, disturb, and sometimes overwhelm the community. Individual stories of death, escape, bravery, and pain must all become part of the collective narrative of the event through a public recounting of the survivors' experience. In that process, the connection between the individual traumas and the collective representations of the collective event is crucial, both for the survivors and their community. As has been established earlier, reconstructing the story of trauma is a necessary and crucial stage of recovery. It helps survivors to reconnect with the past and thus re-establish the flow of continuity in their life. It also represents the first step towards rebuilding their identity. The survivors who have only recently reconstructed their own personal traumas can sometimes benefit from the opportunity to bear witness. As explained in Chapter Three, bearing witness is an important part of the survivor's search for the meaning and purpose of their survival. However, a public exposure at an early stage of survivors' recovery is helpful only if their testimony is met with understanding and support of the wider community.

Apart from the paramount importance it represents for the survivors' process of healing, the reconstruction of trauma is also important because the narrative of trauma that emerges from survivors' testimonies determines what is going to be remembered and which lessons should be drawn from the event. The representation of traumatic experience shapes the framework within which the collective entity is going to define itself and its world: its security, its friends and foes, its values, and its fears. Therefore, any attempt to incorporate the traumatic event into the collective history requires the active participation of individual survivors. Given that the survivors' stories can greatly disturb the community's everyday functioning, a successful integration of communal traumatic memory into the collective history demands a carefully monitored retrieval of individual survivors' stories. The community needs to restore order and in doing so, the physical, political, and social implications of the catastrophe, which are of central importance of the group, may conflict with the highly personal needs of the individual survivors. The ceaseless negotiation of a safe passage between the need to avoid the community's collapse in grief, and the need to face the past is extremely delicate because it touches upon the individuals' and the societal fundamentals. It goes without saying that reconstructing

a story of massive trauma on the level of the collective unit is always performed within a socio-political context of competing interests. The process of telling the story of trauma thus represents a very complex battleground over meanings, lessons, and identities. The collision of multiple interests affects all of those involved; first and foremost the survivors, but also members of the community who have not been directly injured, bystanders, resisters, perpetrators, and those born later. Each one of those actors may have a very different political agenda with regards to the trauma. "If 'telling it like it was' threatens the status quo," noted Kali Tal, "powerful political, economic, and social forces will pressure survivors either to keep their silence or to revise their stories. If the survivor community is a marginal one, their voices will be drowned out by those with the influence and resources to silence them, and to trumpet the revised version of their trauma."¹⁷

Eichmann's Trial And The Emergence Of The Holocaust Narrative

Political Background of the Trial

The sudden sharp voice of the bailiff announced – 'members of the court!' and thus the trial began. This common official announcement ... this time ... had a ring which it had never had before ... when upon hearing the two Hebrew words, 'the court', the head of the destroyers of the Jewish people ... got up on his feet and stood in attention.¹⁸

Adolf Eichmann was born in Solingen in the Rhineland on 19 March 1906, and as a child moved with his parents to Linz, Austria. After unfinished studies of machine building, he was a blue-collar worker, salesman and a representative of a petrol firm. In 1932, he joined the Austrian Nazi Party and volunteered for service in the SS a few months later. When the Nazis established the Third Reich, Eichmann left Austria for Germany. In 1934, he went to serve the Central Office for Reich Security where he dealt with Jewish matters. After the Anschluss in March 1938, Eichmann returned to Austria, where he was regarded as an expert with practical experience in Jewish affairs. In Vienna, he built up the Department for Jewish Emigration, the only official office which was allowed to grant Jews exit permits from Austria and later from Czechoslovakia and the whole of the Third Reich. Eichmann devoted himself to the task of forced emigration with great zeal and soon his achievements were brought to

¹⁷ Tal, K., *Words of Hurt* p. 7.

¹⁸ Alterman, N., "The First Day" in *Hatur Hashevi'i*, 2 (Tel-Aviv, 1973) p. 501. Quoted in Weitz, Y., "Holocaust Memory in Israel" pp. 140-41.

the attention of the Ministers of the Reich as “the model to follow.”¹⁹ Eichmann was then transferred to the RSHA and took over the department IV D 4 (since 1942 IV B 4) for “Jewish and clearance affairs”. From 1941, his department organised the mass deportations of the European Jewry to the extermination camps. In January 1942, Eichmann took part in an interdepartmental meeting in Wannsee to discuss the organisation of the extermination program, known as the Final Solution. Executing the deportation, Eichmann always acted completely without emotion, though he never had been a fanatic anti–Semite and kept repeating that he personally had nothing against Jews. His eagerness was shown by his steady complaints about the difficulties in fulfilling the death-camp quota. Before the end of the war, when even Himmler was becoming less ferocious, Eichmann ignored his order to stop the gassing, as long as his direct superiors covered him. By the end of the war Eichmann held a rank of *Obersturmbannführer*, an equivalent (in the US Army) of lieutenant colonel. He was not the most senior official in the program, but he was the highest Nazi official who had direct contact with the Jewish leaders. After the war, Eichmann was interned in an American army prison camp, but he escaped before his identity was discovered and fled to Argentina. After receiving information about Eichmann’s whereabouts from the chief prosecutor of the West German state of Hessen, a German Jew Fritz Bauer, the Israeli Secret Service undertook a complicated and dangerous mission of kidnapping Eichmann and bringing him to Israel.

Two hours after Eichmann’s arrival to Israel, on May 23, 1960, Ben Gurion made “the most dramatic announcement the Knesset had ever heard”²⁰:

It is my duty to inform you that a short time ago the security services apprehended one of the most infamous Nazi criminals, Adolf Eichmann, who was responsible, together with the Nazi leadership, for what they called ‘the final solution to the Jewish problem’ – in other words, the extermination of six million of Europe’s Jews. Adolf Eichmann is already imprisoned in this country, and will soon be brought to trial in Israel under the Nazi and Nazi Collaborators (Punishment) Law of 1950.²¹

¹⁹Rosenne, S. (ed.), *6.000.000 Accusers: Israel’s Case Against Eichmann*, (Jerusalem: Jerusalem Post, 1961) p. 55.

²⁰ Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 326.

²¹ Ben Gurion, 23 May 1960, *Knesset Papers*, Vol. XXIX p. 1291.

What was the Israeli political leadership hoping to achieve by bringing Adolf Eichmann to trial in Jerusalem? The aims of the trial were crucial for the decisions regarding the format of the trial, the scope of charges and the selection of witnesses for the prosecution. The combination of all those factors gave shape to the story of the Holocaust. On the basis of the reports regarding the general situation in the country at the time prior to the trial, as well as interviews²² and memoirs²³ of the key actors, the following objectives of the trial have been identified for the purpose of this discussion:

- To recount the story of Hitler's attempt to destroy the Jewish people "in its full magnitude and horror,"²⁴
- To enable the ruling party – Mapai – to reassert its control over the heritage of the Holocaust and expunge the leadership from the historical guilt which had been attached to it since the Kastner trial in 1950's,
- To "impress the lessons of the Holocaust on the people of Israel, especially the younger generation,"²⁵
- To remind the countries of the world "that the Holocaust obliged them to support the only Jewish state in the world,"²⁶
- To unify Israeli society after the mass immigration of Jews from Islamic countries who "had no idea what was being done by Hitler"²⁷ and were therefore unaffected by the Holocaust,
- To do all of the above without embarrassing the Federal Republic of Germany.

By the early 1960s, Israeli public was considerably more ready to hear the full story of the Holocaust than it had been in the earlier decades, primarily due to the debates over the reparations from Germany and the Kastner trial, discussed in Chapter Three. In contrast to all previous approaches to the Holocaust, the Eichmann trial had a unifying, rather than a dividing, effect on the Israeli public.

²² "The Eichmann Case as Seen by Ben Gurion", *New York Times Magazine*, 18 Dec 1960 p. 7 and 62.

²³ Hausner, G., *Justice in Jerusalem* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1967).

²⁴ Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993) p. 329.

²⁵ Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 327.

²⁶ Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 327.

²⁷ Ben Gurion, quoted in Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 328.

Yechiam Weitz's review of the Holocaust memory in Israel during the 1950s, confirmed the lack of political consensus regarding the Holocaust at that time, and observed a tendency of the then leadership to view the destruction of European Jewry through political lenses. "The memory of the Holocaust and its victims was accompanied by unending political strife,"²⁸ he wrote. The Holocaust served as a weapon to attack any political opponent. Thus, the Israeli Communist Party and Menachem Begin's right wing Herut sought to delegitimise the centrist party in power – Ben Gurion's MAPAI – by accusing it of collaboration with the Nazis and thereby of partial responsibility for the annihilation of European Jewry. This charge was particularly virulent after the MAPAI member Kastner was found guilty of collaboration in 1954. The Zionist left also accused the leaders of the Jewish Agency including Ben Gurion of an anaemic response to the Nazi assault on the European Jews. The Zionist left, and especially the Kibbutz movements with which it was connected, positioned itself entirely within the heroic tradition of the Holocaust and saw itself as the only legitimate representative of the resistance. The Kibbutz and youth movements held separate ceremonies that commemorated only those members of the underground connected with a specific movement. Last but not least, the ultra-orthodox accused all Zionists across the spectrum for interfering with the divine plan of redemption and thereby bringing God's wrath upon the people of Israel.

Given the fragmentation of the Holocaust remembrance and a lack of a national understanding of the greatest modern Jewish tragedy, the leadership had good reasons to stage a "national saga that would echo across the generations."²⁹ The immediate aims of the trial thus consisted of mitigating the damage caused to the ruling party by the Kastner trial and reassuring the public that "in spite of its ties with Germany, despite the reparations agreements and the arms deals – the Ben Gurion administration was not insensitive to the Holocaust."³⁰ However, as Ben Gurion explained in an interview in 1960, the trial was also meant to convey two messages to two different audiences – one to the world and one to the Israeli youth. Regarding the former, Ben Gurion told the *New York Times* that the world must learn

²⁸ Weitz, Y., "Holocaust Memory in Israel" p. 130.

²⁹ Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 336.

³⁰ Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 328.

from the trial where hatred of the Jews had led – and then it must be made ashamed of itself. ³¹ In a similar tone, the Communist Knesset member Moshe Sneh declared:

The trial is not necessary for this defendant, with whose name we need not soil our mouths by pronouncing it too often ... This trial is necessary because we need to remind the world of what happened during World War II, something many would like to consign to oblivion.³²

Reminding the world of its guilt – either by commission or by omission – was one of the principal aims of Eichmann's trial. The major purpose of exposing the passivity of the Allies in the face of Nazi assault on the Jews was to prove the Zionist ideology: that the Enlightenment failed to resolve the Jewish problem and that only a Jewish state could guarantee the survival of the Jewish people. In other words, now that the Jews have a state of their own, the world must join forces and do what it failed to do during the war – to protect and support the State of Israel. Based on Ben Gurion's postulate that the enemies of the State of Israel were the enemies of the Jewish people, the message to the world was obvious: "supporting Israel was equivalent to fighting anti-Semitism."³³

The other objective, equally important in Ben Gurion's eyes, was to teach the young generation that "the Jews are no sheep to be slaughtered but a people who can hit back – as Jews did in the War of Independence." ³⁴ Like Ben Gurion, Attorney General Hausner thought about affecting younger people. He stated in his memoir:

It was imperative for the stability of our youth that they should learn the full truth of what had happened, for only through knowledge could understanding and reconciliation with the past be achieved ... The teenagers of Israel, most of them born into statehood or during the struggle for it, had no real knowledge and therefore to appreciation, of the way in which their own flesh and blood had perished. There was here a breach between the generations, a possible source of an abhorrence of the nation's yesterday. ³⁵

³¹ Interview with Ben Gurion "The Eichmann Case as Seen by Ben Gurion"

³² Moshe Sneh, quoted in Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 333.

³³ Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 328.

³⁴ Interview with Ben Gurion "The Eichmann Case as Seen by Ben Gurion"

³⁵ Hausner, G., *Justice in Jerusalem* p. 292.

The chasm however, did not only exist between the younger and older generations of Israelis, but even more so between the Israelis of European descent (Ashkenazim) and those originating from Arabic and Asian countries (Sephardim). The latter came to Israel shortly after the Holocaust survivors, mainly in the 1950s. In 1959, for the first time since their arrival in Israel, Sephardim revolted against the Ashkenazi establishment. From a poor neighbourhood in Haifa, inhabited mostly by immigrants from Morocco, the riots spread to other locations. Something was required to unite Israeli society – “some collective experience, one that would be gripping, purifying, patriotic, a national catharsis.”³⁶ The Holocaust was foreign to Sephardic immigrants, and as Ben Gurion remarked: “we have to explain the thing [Holocaust] to them [Sephardim] from square one.”³⁷

The other issue lurking in the background of the trial were discussions relating to German-Israeli relations. Shortly after Eichmann was arrested in May 1960, Adenauer contacted Ben Gurion and asked him to ensure that the trial did not provoke a wave of anti-German sentiment in the world.³⁸ The Federal Republic had grounds for fears because the German Democratic Republic and the countries of the Eastern bloc sought to exploit the trial in order to delegitimise the FRG by identifying it with the Nazis. Adenauer was particularly concerned about one of his close advisors – Hans Globke – who had been employed by Interior Ministry of the Nazi Germany and had written “one of the authoritative interpretations of the Nuremberg statutes. Together with Eichmann’s men, Globke had a hand in the deportation of Germany’s Jews and the expropriation of their property.”³⁹ During the trial, Hausner avoided drawing attention to Globke’s role. Instead, he gave great prominence to the testimony of a German Protestant priest, Heinrich Grüber, who helped Jews and even went to Eichmann to plead for their lives. In the end, he was arrested and sent to a concentration camp. “At the trial, he represented the good German.”⁴⁰ References to other “good Germans” were also brought to the forefront by the

³⁶ Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 328.

³⁷ Ben Gurion, quoted in Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 328.

³⁸ Gilad, Y., *Israeli Public Opinion on Israel-West German Relations 1949-1965*. Dissertation. (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, 1984) p. 370.

³⁹ Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 340.

⁴⁰ Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 341.

Attorney General's guiding of the witnesses during their testimonies. Last, but not least, a special attention was being paid to refer to Nazi Germany and Nazis, as opposed to abbreviated 'Germany' and 'Germans.'

Construction of the Holocaust Narrative

Together, their stories told the saga of European Jewry from the thriving communities of the 1920s, through Hitler's rise to power, Anschluss, Kristallnacht, the Wansee Conference, the ghettos, the Gentiles who did help, the search for ever more efficient methods of mass killing, the medical experimentations, the gas chambers, the Jewish resistance, the mountains of eyeglasses, gold teeth, shoes neatly piled.⁴¹

The trial of Adolf Eichmann was intended to play a political, historical, and educational role. In order to meet the above-outlined objectives, the trial required a specific format, a careful selection of witnesses, and of issues to be presented to the public. In his memoirs, Attorney General Gideon Hausner, who served as Eichmann's prosecutor, described his preparations for the trial as a much bigger project than it would have been necessary to convict Eichmann in court. The legal case prepared by the special police division which had interrogated Eichmann (Bureau 06) was "good, from a legal point of view."⁴² Following the model of Nuremberg trials, the major part of the prosecution was based on documents. The great advantage of this approach was that "whatever it [the written proof] has to convey is there in black on white. There is no need to depend on the retentive memory of the witness, especially many years after the event. Nor can a document be browbeaten or broken down in cross examination."⁴³ To convict Eichmann, it would have been sufficient to present the documents, "a fraction of them would have sufficed to get Eichmann sentenced ten times over."⁴⁴ In spite of the undeniable advantages of a restricted charge, limiting the evidence to the incidents immediately relevant to Eichmann's guilt would, according to the Attorney General, "miss the point of the trial: the covering of the whole Jewish disaster."⁴⁵ Therefore, in order to achieve

⁴¹ Lahav p., *Judgement in Jerusalem: Chief Justice Simon Agranat and the Zionist Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997) p. 148.

⁴² Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 337.

⁴³ Hausner, G., *Justice in Jerusalem* p. 291.

⁴⁴ Hausner, G., *Justice in Jerusalem* p. 291.

⁴⁵ Hausner, G., *Justice in Jerusalem* p. 298. Italics added.

the aims of the trial, the latter had to take a format that “would shock the heart”⁴⁶, or as Hausner put it, “a living re-creation of a gigantic human and national disaster.”⁴⁷ In other words, from the outset of the trial, the focus was not on Eichmann’s deeds but on Jewish suffering. Hausner thus decided to present broad charges, covering the entire story of the Final Solution including crimes against Jews throughout the Nazi-occupied lands, and not only those which were directly related to Eichmann’s guilt. Once the decision on the scope of charges had been taken, the question of content arose: What should be included and what excluded? Which episodes should be emphasised and which ones downplayed? Which interpretation should be privileged when it comes to controversial issues?

David Ben Gurion and the Attorney General Hausner wanted the trial to tell both the story of Jewish misery and of “Gentile frigidity.”⁴⁸ The task of telling the story fell on two actors: Israeli state embodied in its Attorney General, and Holocaust survivors represented by witnesses. As far as the government of Israel was concerned, the Attorney General’s opening speech, which was delivered over three sessions of the Court, was meant to be “the fundamental declaration of Israel’s official attitude toward the Holocaust.”⁴⁹ Therefore Ben Gurion inspected Gideon Hausner’s speech after it had been completed and he requested some corrections in content and wording. Unusual from a legal perspective, this procedure demonstrated a tight control over the formation of the Holocaust narrative in Israel. “Here was a leader dictating historiography of his people,”⁵⁰ commented Segev. The final version of the speech opened with the following words:

When I stand before you here, Judges of Israel, to lead the Prosecution of Adolf Eichmann, I am not standing alone. With me are six million accusers. But they cannot rise to their feet and point an accusing finger towards him who sits in the dock and cry: ‘I accuse.’ For their ashes are piled up on the hills of Auschwitz and the fields of Treblinka, and are strewn in the forests of Poland. Their graves are scattered throughout the length and breadth of

⁴⁶ Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 338.

⁴⁷ Hausner, G., *Justice in Jerusalem* p. 291.

⁴⁸ Lahav p., *Judgement in Jerusalem* p. 147.

⁴⁹ Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 346.

⁵⁰ Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 346.

Europe. Their blood cries out, but their voice is not heard. Therefore I will be their spokesman and in their name I will unfold the awesome indictment.⁵¹

The first paragraph of the opening speech established the legitimacy of the State of Israel to prosecute Eichmann in the name of the six million murdered European Jews. One of the preliminary objections advanced by the Defence was that the *Nazis and Nazi Collaborators (Punishment) Law*, on the basis of which Eichmann was accused, is invalid because it lays down the law regarding persons and acts which took place before the establishment of the State of Israel, outside its borders, and against persons who were not citizens of the State of Israel. This objection was rejected after a legal argument and the competence of the Jerusalem court was established.

Although Hausner tried to set the extermination of Jews apart as a singular crime, the destruction of European Jewry was integrated into the Jewish history as the culmination of anti-Semitic persecutions.

The history of the Jewish people is steeped in suffering and tears ... Pharaoh in Egypt decided to afflict them with their burdens and to cast their sons into the river; Haman's decree was to destroy, to slay and to cause them to perish; Chmielnicki slaughtered them in multitudes; they were butchered in Petlura's pogroms. Yet never, down the entire blood-stained road travelled by this people ... has any man arisen who succeeded in dealing it such grievous blows as did Hitler's iniquitous regime and Adolf Eichmann as its executive arm for the extermination of the Jewish people.⁵²

This view of earlier Jewish history coincided with Zionist view and "undoubtedly found favour with the Germans."⁵³ It even led the Attorney of the Defence to suggest that anti-Semitism might derive from "some kind of metahistorical law, dictated from above."⁵⁴ The trial hardly touched upon the factors that had led to the Nazis' rise to power, the nature of the regime, or the causes that led millions of Germans to

⁵¹ Rosenne, S. (ed.), *6,000,000 Accusers* p. 29.

⁵² Rosenne, S. (ed.), *6,000,000 Accusers*.

⁵³ Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 348.

⁵⁴ Wistrich, R. S., "Israel and the Holocaust Trauma" p. 18.

support Hitler. Neither has the prosecutor analysed the characteristics of Nazi racism or addressed the “ambiguities and dilemmas posed by the need to obey the law versus the responsibility to disobey ‘manifestly illegal’ orders.”⁵⁵ These omissions were dictated by Ben Gurion’s concern for Germany’s image. According to Segev, Ben Gurion demanded three corrections after having read the draft of the opening speech: firstly, an abbreviation Germany for Nazi Germany and Germans for Nazis should be abandoned in favour of a rigorous distinction between the two; secondly, Ben Gurion suggested omitting the thesis that Nazism in Germany was inevitable because it may weaken the prosecution and lead to a debate over developmental trends in German history or even over the German national character; lastly, Hitler’s guilt should be given precedence over the collective guilt of the German people.⁵⁶

Hausner went on to describe the new kind of killer – ‘the murderer behind the desk – and proceeded to speak about the rise of anti-Semitism⁵⁷, the role of Nazi organisations in the Final Solution,⁵⁸ and Eichmann’s life and career.⁵⁹ The remaining hundred and twelve pages⁶⁰ were consecrated to the misery of the Jewish people, and not to Eichmann’s deeds as one would expect. The general description of the Final Solution was followed by the story of the extermination in Poland and the mass killings by the *Einsatzgruppen* in the areas governed by the Soviet Union. Next day, Attorney General proceeded with a review of events in Northern, Western and Southern Europe, dwelling in greater detail on the story of Dutch Jewry. Hausner continued with Hungary, where Eichmann’s role was particularly important, before describing some of the death camps. The penultimate section reviewed the flourishing of Jewish life in Europe before the Holocaust, including in the East European *shtetels*, “the home of millions of Jews ... where the Jewish spirit was nurtured till the last generation and the tradition of Jewish family was preserved in the typical small home, a stronghold of piety, tradition and yearning for the coming of the

⁵⁵ Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 348.

⁵⁶ Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 347.

⁵⁷ Rosenne, S. (ed.), *6,000,000 Accusers* pp. 32-43.

⁵⁸ Rosenne, S. (ed.), *6,000,000 Accusers* pp. 44-53.

⁵⁹ Rosenne, S. (ed.), *6,000,000 Accusers* pp. 54-62.

⁶⁰ Rosenne, S. (ed.), *6,000,000 Accusers* pp. 63-175.

Messiah – which was no more.”⁶¹ In the last section, the Attorney General reviewed the charges and the evidence against Eichmann. He concluded with the words:

I am afraid that even after submitting all the evidence and material which is in our possession, we shall not be able to do more than give a pale reflection of the enormous human and national tragedy which beset Jewry in this generation.⁶²

The scope and content of the trial were chiefly determined by the aims of the trial, outlined earlier, but the role of conveying the message and of “recreating this national and human disaster” fell on the witnesses of the prosecution. For the first time, the simple survivors who were neither heroes nor traitors were offered a possibility of publicly telling their stories, and thereby gain the long-delayed legitimacy. They could “tell what they had seen with their own eyes and what they had experienced on their own bodies.”⁶³ However, like the individual mental apparatus distils traumatic images into a narrative through a process of selection and abstraction, the witnesses’ testimonies also had to be chosen from a list of hundreds of Holocaust stories.⁶⁴ The choice depended on the objectives set in advance, but it also largely determined the character of the trial and therefore the narrative of the trauma that emerged in the end. Witnesses were chosen according to a certain number of criteria: first of all, their experience under the Nazi rule, but also age, profession, eloquence, and so on. Hausner recounts that the prosecution wanted to tell what happened to every area under the Nazis and it wanted “the story told by a broad section of the people: professors, housewives, artisans, writers, farmers, merchants, doctors, officials and labourers.”⁶⁵ Young people were preferred because the Israeli youth could more easily identify with them and survivors who had already put their experiences on paper were given priority because, as Hausner explained, “writers were usually equipped with good powers of observation and [they] carefully checked their facts before publishing them.”⁶⁶

⁶¹ Hausner, G., *Justice in Jerusalem* p. 325.

⁶² Rosenne, S. (ed.), *6,000,000 Accusers* p. 175.

⁶³ Hausner, G., *Justice in Jerusalem* p. 293.

⁶⁴ Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 338.

⁶⁵ Hausner, G., *Justice in Jerusalem* p. 296.

⁶⁶ Hausner, G., *Justice in Jerusalem* p. 296.

The prosecution wanted to reconstruct the full story in all its horror. Yet, the experience of prolonged and repeated trauma creates so many traumatic incidents that it is impossible and futile to approach each as a separate entity. Instead, a reconstruction of prolonged traumas is often based upon paradigmatic incidents that stand for many others.⁶⁷ Therefore, Rachel Auerbach – historian, survivor, and advisor to the prosecution – proposed focusing immediately on the extermination itself. Following her suggestion, the witnesses were led to emphasise the particularly monstrous treatment imposed on Jews by the Nazis, events that would underline the latter’s “odiousness and satanic cruelty.”⁶⁸ Therefore, witnesses who saw the horrors with their own eyes painted a universe that made the audience’s hair stand on end: eight people were put in a barrel of water and froze to death,⁶⁹ twenty religious men were soaked in kerosene and set on fire alive,⁷⁰ a boy of fifteen was hanged twice because the rope had broken the first time,⁷¹ a woman was shot and her intestines spilled all over a little girl standing next to her,⁷² babies were smashed against the wall or thrown out of the windows to save ammunition,⁷³ and so on. Furthermore, given the structure of Attorney General’s charges, each country occupied by Nazi Germany was represented by one or more witnesses, respecting the proportion of destruction afflicted upon the community in question. For example, only one or two witnesses described the suffering of Jews in each West European country, compared to more than twenty witnesses which took the stand to recount the destruction of the Jewish community in Poland. The major extermination camps were equally represented by those who miraculously survived them.

Humiliation, abuse, and slaughter, however, was only one part of the story that the prosecution wanted to recount through the medium of witnesses, the part destined at the ‘world.’ The Israeli youth had a different lesson to learn – a lesson of heroism and revolt. ‘The Jews did not go like sheep to the slaughter and even when they did they did it because they had no other choice’ was a message to the Israelis.

⁶⁷ Herman, J. L., *Trauma and Recovery* p. 187.

⁶⁸ Auerbach, R., “Witnesses and Testimony at the Eichmann Trial,” *Yediot Yad Vashem* 28 (Dec. 1961).

⁶⁹ Testimony of Hugo Ya'akov Kratky, *The Trial of Adolf Eichmann*, Session 20.

⁷⁰ Testimony of Ada Lichtman, *The Trial of Adolf Eichmann*, Session 20.

⁷¹ Testimony of Moshe Beisky, *The Trial of Adolf Eichmann*, Session 21.

⁷² Testimony of Leon Weliczker Wells, *The Trial of Adolf Eichmann*, Session 22.

⁷³ Testimony of Shmuel Horowitz, *The Trial of Adolf Eichmann*, Session 29.

Again, the witnesses fulfilled the role of providing evidence. An exceptionally high proportion of witnesses had been either members of the Jewish underground or partisans. Also, many of the witnesses had been very young during the war, and that choice was also deliberate. Many years later Attorney General Gideon Hausner said in an interview with a daily *Ma'ariv*: "I wanted testimony about the fate of young men and women, so that our own young people would hear what happened." He believed that young people could more easily identify with those of their own and he wanted the Israeli youth to see themselves in the place of the victims.⁷⁴ The witnesses who had belonged to the underground repeated again and again that they "would not go like cattle to the slaughter."⁷⁵ The Warsaw Ghetto uprising was given a prominent place in the trial, although the Jewish heroic resistance had nothing to do with Eichmann and in spite of the fact that "Hausner's attempts to convince the Court that the story of Jewish resistance was part of the story of Jewish extermination were only partially successful."⁷⁶ Those who did not have their own heroic stories to tell, told of heroes they had known.⁷⁷ Others still were challenged to explain why did they not revolt. This was the question in the air, the question that Sabras were asking, and it was the role of the Attorney General to provide them with an answer. Repeatedly, the witnesses were faced with situational questions of the kind:

When you thought that it [the train] was likely to go to Belzec [extermination camp], why didn't you resist, why did you board the train?⁷⁸;

15.000 people stood there, and opposite them hundreds of guards. Why didn't you attack them, why didn't you revolt?⁷⁹;

Now tell me – there weren't many guards for 2000 people: why did all these people go to be shot – why didn't they try at least, to injure the murderers before they were killed?⁸⁰

⁷⁴ Strassman, G., "What did the Eichmann Trial Give Us?" *Ma'ariv*, 11 Dec. 1981 p. 27.

⁷⁵ Testimony of Rivka Kuper, *The Trial of Adolf Eichmann*, Session 26. See also the testimony of Abba Kovner, Session 27.

⁷⁶ Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 353.

⁷⁷ Testimony of Frieda Masia, *The Trial of Adolf Eichmann*, Session 27.

⁷⁸ Attorney General's question to Yaakov Gurfein, *The Trial of Adolf Eichmann*, Session 21.

⁷⁹ Attorney General's question to Moshe Beisky, *The Trial of Adolf Eichmann*, Session 21.

⁸⁰ Attorney General's question to Leon Weliczker Wells, *The Trial of Adolf Eichmann*, Session 22.

The answers to those questions varied in style but they all pointed in the same direction: resistance in the early stages was impossible because there was always someone or something to lose – a friend, a member of the family, or simply, hope; later, when everything was lost, there was no strength nor will to live or fight left. And there was fear, of course. In the words the witness Moshe Beisky:

I can no longer ... describe this sensation of fear ... After all this thing is ultimately a terror inspiring fear. People stand facing machine guns, and the mere fact of gazing upon the hanging of a boy and his cries – and then, in fact, no ability remains to react.⁸¹

The trial thus emphasised both “the inability of Jews to resist their murderers and their attempts to rebel.”⁸² The two were given almost the same weight in the trial, and for a long time Holocaust and Heroism stood side by side in the Israeli collective memory of the destruction of European Jewry – a fact clearly illustrated by Yad Vashem, which still today bears an official name of Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority. This is a straightforward example of a teleological bending of a narrative from within to fit a certain belief system, in this case the Zionist ideology.

A crucial absence from the Holocaust story as conveyed by the Attorney General and his witnesses was the issue of the Jewish Councils (*Judenräten*) and their co-operation with the Nazi authorities, which had been at the centre of the Kastner trial. “Hausner would almost completely ignore the *Judenräten*”⁸³ and Hannah Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, where she drew attention to the issue of Jewish role in the execution of the Nazi plans, attracted venomous criticism from the Jewish public. The episode of Jewish collaboration was excluded from the official story of the Holocaust and became the taboo subject for decades to come. The court's dealing with the issue of Hungarian Jewry is illustrative of this type of restriction. Hausner wrote in his memoirs that he appealed to the witnesses not to touch upon the thorny

⁸¹ Testimony of Moshe Beisky, *The Trial of Adolf Eichmann*, Session 21.

⁸² Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 348.

⁸³ Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 348.

issue of Kastner's collaboration with the Nazis. "The Hungarian case was painstakingly prepared and every prospective witness was considered from all possible angles," reminisced Hausner in his memoir, "we could not call any witness who might use the platform for a pro-Kastner or anti-Kastner demonstration. Two witnesses were disqualified by this criterion."⁸⁴ Equally absent from the reconstructed narrative was the issue of Jewish revenge after the war. The testimonies collected in 1946 in the DP camps where the survivors talk openly about the actions they had undertaken to avenge their dead against the Germans immediately after the liberation of the camps, had not been published until 1998.⁸⁵ Even in the 1990s however, the Jewish public is not willing to examine the issue of revenge critically. A book addressing the question of Jewish revenge was widely criticised and delegitimised as revisionist literature when it was published in 1995.⁸⁶ Both the story of Jewish revenge and that of Jewish collaboration were set as taboo issues, a forbidden territory for the researcher to venture into.

The story of destruction of European Jewry that had been reconstructed through joint efforts of the survivors and the Israeli leadership of the time was disseminated widely. The Eichmann trial had incredible media coverage for the early 1960s: hundreds of journalists arrived to report the trial and the court had authorised the entire proceedings to be broadcast on the radio and filmed for television "so that the whole world could watch."⁸⁷ The Israeli government invited foreign countries and central legal bodies to send their observers to Jerusalem. The press and important visitors were provided with portable transistor radios and earphones through which they could receive simultaneous translation of the proceedings into Hebrew, English, French and German. Within the first month of the trial over five hundred special foreign correspondents covered the sessions. Two hundred more joined them in the course of the proceedings. Special telecommunication services were provided in the court building in the large press hall and the radio provided a very wide coverage of the trial, often broadcast directly from the courtroom. A survivor child who was eight or nine at the time of Eichmann's trial recounts: "I remember, but not so much because I listened ... but because the whole country was one big loudspeaker. ...

⁸⁴ Hausner, G., *Justice in Jerusalem* p. 341.

⁸⁵ Niewyk, D. L. (ed.), *Fresh Wounds*.

⁸⁶ Sack, J., *An Eye for An Eye*.

⁸⁷ Hausner, G., *Justice in Jerusalem* p. 307.

Wherever you went, whatever you did, from all the windows ... And as a child, you played and heard Eichmann, ate lunch and heard Eichmann. ...”⁸⁸

Through the process of telling and retelling the story of the Holocaust, the collective traumatic memory stored in individual testimonies was gradually incorporated into the everyday Israeli and Jewish history. Once the traumatic experience is appropriated, that is, codified and transmitted, it somehow freezes in time. It becomes an untouchable and unchallengeable property of the traumatised individual or community. At this stage before mourning various strategies are used by the self-appointed ‘guardians’ of the narrative to control and limit its repetition, reification, and ‘authentic’ representation. In other words, the resistance to the inevitable consequences of trauma recollection, that is, exposure to forgetting and banalisation, reappears in form of resistance to mourning after the story is reconstructed. Although mourning is discussed in detail in Chapter Five, a brief illustration of the resistance to ‘normalisation’ of traumatic history is appropriate here. Ever since the creation of the Holocaust studies as an independent academic discipline in the late 1980s, conservative circles have undermined the legitimacy of a scientific approach to the Holocaust. Yehuda Bauer, one of the most prominent Israeli scholars and a Holocaust historian, warned already in 1977 “against the creation of ‘Holocaustology’ and the careerism of ‘Holocaustologists.’”⁸⁹ Four years later, Robert Adler was similarly worried that presenting the fathomless and bottomless evil of the Holocaust in the detached, dispassionate environment of a university lecture hall would have, in his words, the “unhappy effect of naturalising the horror.”⁹⁰ As recently as 1998, Gabriel Schoenfeld, senior editor of *Commentary*, observed the realisation of Adler’s and Bauer’s fears – the ‘naturalisation’ of the Holocaust and the appearance of ‘Holocaustologists’ such as Harvard Professor and author of *Hitler’s Willing Executioners*, Daniel Jonah Goldhagen. Schoenfeld was particularly distressed by chiefly two developments in Holocaust studies: the increasing tendency to regroup Holocaust studies together with other genocides,

⁸⁸ Testimony of Naftali Kupfer in Fox, T., *Inherited Memories* p. 119.

⁸⁹ Yehuda Bauer quoted in Schoenfeld G., “Auschwitz and the Professors” *Commentary*, June 1998.

⁹⁰ Adler, R., “Deformations of the Holocaust” *Commentary*, February 1981.

peace studies, or even human rights, and even more so, by feminist approaches to the Holocaust.⁹¹

Conclusion: Political And Psychological Consequences Of The Trial

*I could almost smell the lethal gases and the stench of burnt flesh. As the witnesses tonelessly gave their testimony, we relived the nightmare with them.*⁹²

Adolf Eichmann was found guilty on all fifteen counts against him. He was convicted by the district court on December 15, 1961 and condemned to death. His conviction sparked heated debates in Israel about the appropriate method of punishment for a murderer like Eichmann. There were people, like Martin Buber, sought to prevent his execution “for the sake of the country and for the sake of our people.”⁹³ In a letter addressed to President Ben-Zvi, Buber and his circle wrote: “Carrying out a death sentence will make it possible for them [the haters of Israel] to claim that the crime of the Nazis has been paid for, that blood ransom has been paid to the Jewish people for the blood that was shed.”⁹⁴ Others felt that putting Eichmann to death was too lenient as a punishment. After his own request for clemency was rejected, Eichmann was hanged in the Ramla prison in the evening hours of May 31, 1962. His body was cremated and his ashes scattered at sea, outside Israel’s territorial waters.

Despite deep divergences of opinions, most scholars and commentators agree that Eichmann trial marked the turning point in the history of Israel’s attitude towards the Holocaust. All short-term political aims of the trial were met successfully: the story of the Nazi assault on European Jewry was told, as comprehensively as the political interests allowed, Ben Gurion’s party reasserted its control over the narrative of the Holocaust, and the world was reminded of its guilt without a parallel resurgence of hostile feelings against the Federal Republic of Germany. On the contrary, it was the Eichmann trial that “moderated anti-German sentiment in Israel.”⁹⁵

⁹¹ See Schoenfeld G., “Auschwitz and the Professors” *Commentary*, June 1998 and the responses of feminist Holocaust scholars in the August issue.

⁹² Hausner, G., *Justice in Jerusalem* p. 346.

⁹³ Martin Buber quoted in Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 363.

⁹⁴ A letter by Buber and others to Yitzhak Ben-Zvi, 30 May 1962. Buber Archives. Quoted in Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 363.

⁹⁵ Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 366.

With regards to the impact of the trial on the young Israelis, on the Sepharadim, and above all, on the Holocaust survivors, the balance sheet is less straightforward. The trial failed entirely in its educational purpose to the extent that the event was not accompanied by discussions in schools or a proper school curriculum that would allow students to start grasping with the broader issues. As the first chapter of this thesis demonstrated, Holocaust education was virtually non-existent in Israel before the 1970s. That means that the trial's 'education' of Israeli youth and Jews of non-European origin consisted mainly of eliciting a strong emotional response without a parallel understanding of historical context in which the events took place. Those who were children at the time remember mostly the sounds blasting from the loudspeakers and the fear they provoked: "And there were these smothered, choking sounds which terrified me: I was convinced these were the sounds from the war – or the sounds of the dead..."⁹⁶ Even later, the cassettes of the Eichmann trial were played to the children on Holocaust Remembrance Day without explanation. "We would be sitting quietly," remembered Yaron, "lots of children ... There was a stack of cassettes and a booming loudspeaker. And we would sit ... in the shelter: black, and memorial candles ... Booming: I wouldn't listen to the words but the tones, the shrieks ..." ⁹⁷ And "when children are not told things clearly and repeatedly," explained Tamar Fox, "they make up their own explanations, devise their own conclusions and proceed to deal with them."⁹⁸

Not surprisingly, such an arsenal of fear and confused emotions was nearly impossible to control. As Hannah Arendt shrewdly observed: "Manipulations of opinion, insofar as they are inspired by well-defined interests, have limited goals; their effect, however, if they happen to touch upon an issue of authentic concern, is no longer subject to their control and may easily produce consequences they never foresaw or intended."⁹⁹ Whilst the initial aim of the ruling generation was simply to bend the youth's arrogance and shame of the nation's past, the trial affected young Israelis way beyond the expectations: "Rather than generate feelings of pride in Israel's newfound strength, which had atoned, as it were, for the shameful impotence of the 'submissive generation', it aroused Israeli Jews, and the youth in particular, to

⁹⁶ Testimony of Orna Ben-Dor, in Fox, T., *Inherited Memories* p. 118.

⁹⁷ Testimony of Yaron, in Fox, T., *Inherited Memories* p. 120.

⁹⁸ Fox, T., *Inherited Memories* p. 120.

⁹⁹ Arendt, H., *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (London: Penguin Books, 1994) p. 283.

increased feelings of identification with their tortured and slaughtered brethren in the Diaspora.”¹⁰⁰ The terrifying stories that emerged from silence and were continually transmitted on the national radio “touched upon an issue of authentic concern” as Arendt put it. The latter does not imply that Eichmann’s trial uncovered a repressed trauma in all Israelis independently of their experience during the war, but rather that the unexpected level of identification by most Israelis with the Holocaust victims and survivors created an acute sense of insecurity and vulnerability, comparable to that of the survivors themselves. Through the process of identification young Israelis became empathetic ‘survivors’ and developed symptoms of indirect / collective traumatisation described in Chapter One. Similarly, the aim of uniting Israelis of all origins behind the European Jewry’s tragedy was a success that came with a price tag. Sephardi Jews, who came to Israel from the Middle East in the 1950s, identified with victims of Nazi persecution by assimilating their own suffering in the Arab lands into the Holocaust narrative. This move was facilitated by the Arab – Nazi collaboration in the person of Haj Amin al-Husseini, the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, who entertained contacts with Eichmann and even met Hitler once. The link between Arabs and Nazis made with the purpose of including the Sephardi Jews into the narrative allowed a transposition of the Holocaust into the Arab-Israeli conflict – undoubtedly one of the more worrying consequences of the trial.

Apart from fear, confusion, and sense of vulnerability, Eichmann’s trial also created a sense of isolation and tilted the balance between universalism and particularism in favour of the latter. The *Nazi and Nazi Collaborators (Punishment) Law* on the basis of which Eichmann was tried distinguishes between three types of offences (in the order that follows): crimes against the Jewish people, crimes against humanity, and war crimes.¹⁰¹ Four out of fifteen counts against Eichmann were crimes against the Jewish people, and six were crimes against humanity. The fact that the law posits crimes against the Jewish people above and apart from crimes against humanity enhanced the feelings of specialness and separateness from the rest of humanity. After the trial Israelis were “perceiving themselves as special: a special target for genocide and special in their right to ignore international norms in pursuit of

¹⁰⁰ Don-Yehiya, E., “Memory and Political Culture: Israeli Society and the Holocaust” in *Studies in Contemporary Judaism: An Annual*, 9 (1993) p. 149.

¹⁰¹ See “Nazi and Nazi Collaborators (Punishment) Law” in Rosenne, S. (ed.), *6,000,000 Accusers* pp. 309-313.

justice.”¹⁰² Reconstruction of the Holocaust gave all Israelis the poisonous gift of victimhood. As Pnina Lahav observed: “Popular hubris was growing, nurturing a victim mentality, a sense of self-righteousness and excessive nationalism, threatening to weaken the already shaky foundations of universalism in Israeli political culture.”¹⁰³ In a similar vein, Idith Zertal argued that the trial boosted Israeli militarism and “stressed the ‘sacredness’ of the army, conceived of now as the venerated, holy executor of the Six Million’s last will. ... [and] gave a new meaning to the fight against the Arab ‘enemy’ ... Defence of one’s country became a sacred mission endowed with the weight of the ultimate catastrophe.”¹⁰⁴

For the survivors, on the other hand, the trial meant a painful confrontation with the past. In the beginning, the prosecution found it difficult to convince witnesses to testify: “Many Holocaust survivors feared the encounter with the unspoken terrors of the past, some also feared they would not be believed.”¹⁰⁵ Yet, as the trial approached, “the urge to tell began to overwhelm the need to remain silent.”¹⁰⁶ Survivors who did not testify listened to the proceedings, either on the radio or in the courtroom. A child recounts the effect the broadcastings had on her survivor mother: “I was very scared. My mother listened. ... She became unwell. ... I was terrified. ... As if – I thought it was going to happen again. To my mother.”¹⁰⁷ Other children reported similar experiences: My father went once – to the trial – and ran away because he couldn’t be there.”¹⁰⁸ Many found out for the first time what had happened to the family they left behind in Europe, to their colleagues, neighbours, and parents. Many spoke about their own experiences for the first time, even to their children and friends. Eichmann’s trial brought survivors the recognition they had hoped for since the end of the war. As a result of the trial, the survivors were no longer an anonymous group of Jews living in Israel; they became individuals with names and biographies. They could now really begin their process of recovery.

¹⁰² Lahav p., *Judgement in Jerusalem* p. 150.

¹⁰³ Lahav p., *Judgement in Jerusalem* p. 150.

¹⁰⁴ Zertal, I., “From the People’s Hall to the Wailing Wall: A Study in Memory, Fear, and War” *Representations*, No. 69 (Winter 2000) p. 111-2.

¹⁰⁵ Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 339.

¹⁰⁶ Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 339.

¹⁰⁷ Testimony of Gila, in Fox, T., *Inherited Memories* p. 119.

¹⁰⁸ Testimony of Yair, in Fox, T., *Inherited Memories* p. 118.

Chapter Five

REACTIVATIONS OF TRAUMA: SIX-DAY AND YOM KIPPUR WARS

Introduction

The Eichmann trial swept through Israel's language and images. Everything was now discussed anew in relation to the Eichmann trial: Israeli politics, Israeli youth, world Jewry, Holocaust Remembrance Day, the teachings of the Holocaust, the Arabs, and the security of Israel.¹

Chapter Four outlined only the most salient features of the psychological impact of the revelations at the Eichmann trial on the Israeli population. It is the aim of this chapter to examine the influence of the Holocaust-permeated Jewish prism described in Chapter Two on perception of Israel's strategic environment in general and on the assessment of threat in particular. If the Eichmann trial represented the first major attempt to draw some useful lessons from the tragedy of European Jewry, the Six-Day war was the first notable occasion to put these lessons into practice. Known as 'the Holocaust that did not happen,' the June 1967 Arab-Israeli war was an exceptional event, not only because of the spectacular performance of the IDF resulting in the conquest of territories that in six days more than quadrupled Israel's land mass,² but above all because of the level of discrepancy between the "sense of impending existential danger of the Holocaust proportions"³ preceding the war and the extent of Israeli victory. The first part of this chapter traces the origins of the unprecedented fear of annihilation that marked the waiting period before the war, to the imagery of the Holocaust generated by the Eichmann trial. The discussion begins with an analysis of the influence of the equation established at the trial between Nazis and Arabs for the evaluation of strategic threat. It proceeds with a description of the key junctures of the Six-Day war: the three week waiting period preceding the outbreak of war and its immediate aftermath. The analysis of the June 1967 war exposes the weakness of the mainstream international relations analysis when it

¹ Zertal, I., "From the People's Hall" p. 111.

² Israel's territory before June 5, 1967 was 20,700 km². During the June war, Israel occupied 67,850 km² of land, including Golan Heights, Sinai, West Bank and Gaza.

³ Zertal, I., "From the People's Hall" p. 17.

comes to non-rational factors in foreign and defence policy. The study of the Six-Day war within the trauma framework also challenges Idith's Zertal's account, which opposes the elite and mass perceptions of the threat, by collapsing the boundary between the elite and the masses. The section thus seeks to identify the major factors that contributed to such inadequate threat assessment in June 1967.

Whilst the Six-Day war was characterised by an excessive overestimate of threat, the outbreak of Yom Kippur war in October 1973 came as a surprise to the majority of Israelis, including its defence and intelligence establishment. Although Israel won the war, it did so at the cost of a great number of casualties, loss of territory, self-confidence, and certain level of independence of action. Commonly referred to as 'something that went wrong' (*mehdal* in Hebrew), Yom Kippur war was the most traumatising of Israeli wars and the one most often compared to the Holocaust. The near defeat on both fronts at the early stages of the war engendered the worst existential fears since the establishment of the state and, in spite of Israel's victory, the aftermath of the war was characterised by a strong sense of failure. The second part of this chapter explores the shock of Kippur and the bitter victory after eighteen days of combat. Yom Kippur war demonstrated that Israel is not a secure haven for Jews and thereby contradicted the central message of Zionism. The following section therefore examines the role of the Yom Kippur war in the integration of Israel into 'normal' Jewish history: that of isolation and persecution.

Six-Day War: A Holocaust That Did Not Happen

Arab-Nazi Equation

They [the Arabs] could slaughter us tomorrow in this country ... We don't want to relive the situation that you [Holocaust survivors] were in. We don't want the Arab Nazis to come and slaughter us.⁴

The tendency of the founding fathers' generation to perceive Arab enmity as one of the avatars of anti-Semitism, comparable to all other expressions of anti-Jewish hatred across the ages, was articulated at the wake of the Eichmann trial in form of an equation between Arabs and Nazis. As Zertal put it: "There was rarely a

⁴ Ben Gurion to Mapai Central Committee, 13 December 1951. Quoted in Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 369.

mention of Eichmann's – and other Nazi criminals' – deeds without adding the Arab-Nazi dimension to it.”⁵ The transference of the Holocaust into the Middle East reality was operated in several ways: by frequent references to the presence of Nazi scientists and advisors in Egypt and other Arab countries, to the ongoing relations between Nazi and Arab leaders, and to the Arab-Nazi plans to annihilate the Jewish state. In an interview with the *New York Times*, Ben Gurion talked about his expectations of the forthcoming trial. “It may be,” he said,

that the Eichmann trial will help ferret out other Nazis – for example, the connection between Nazis and some Arab rulers. From what we hear on the Egyptian radio, some Egyptian propaganda is conducted on purely Nazi lines. ... I have no doubt that the Egyptian dictatorship is being instructed by the large number of Nazis who are there.

Similarly, Hugh Trevor-Roper, the British historian and the *Sunday Times* correspondent in Jerusalem during Eichmann trial, wrote:

Nazis are far more alive to Israel than to us. Like the Jews, their enemies too have now gone east. If several Nazi war criminals escaped to South America ... many more have escaped to the Arab countries, to put their Nazi anti-Semitism and their German efficiency at the disposal of the new nationalist rulers of the Near East, who also have their 'Final Solution' for the Jews who have settled in their midst.⁶

On the other hand, the Nazi connections of the former Grand Mufti of Jerusalem were insistently mentioned in all Israeli media and public speeches. Already during the preparations for the trial, Israeli press repeatedly stressed Eichmann's ties with the former Mufti of Jerusalem, “a fanatic Jew hater, who belongs among the biggest Nazi war criminals,”⁷ as one paper described him. The press inflated the Mufti's role in the Final Solution and one Israeli newspaper even insinuated that it was the Mufti who actually inspired the Nazi murder of European Jewry. “Various certificates and documents found in archives in Europe after the Nazi

⁵ Zertal, I., “From the People's Hall” p. 108.

⁶ Trevor-Roper, H., “Behind the Eichmann Trial” in *Sunday Times* (London), 9 April 1961.

⁷ Segev, S., “Eichmann on the Mufti” in *Ma'ariv*, 5 June 1961.

defeat,” said *Ma’ariv*, “have proven that Husseini [Grand Mufti], the most extreme leader the Israeli Arabs have ever had, was one of the most important collaborators of Adolf Eichmann. Those documents indicate that the physical extermination of the Jews of Europe began at the end of 1941, close to the Mufti’s visit to Berlin in November 1941.”⁸ The trial revealed that the Mufti indeed “sought help and advice from the Nazi leadership and found solace in their murderous actions in World War II.”⁹ Although the documents presented to the court failed to sustain the claim that the Mufti was a major contributor to the Nazi murder of European Jews, “the Israeli prosecutor insisted on inflating the Mufti’s role in the design and implementation of the Nazi crimes, devoting many hours in court to the issue, and the Israeli press followed diligently.”¹⁰

As Chapter Four showed, the prosecution’s insistence on the Mufti’s role in the Final Solution was motivated by the desire to include the Jews from Islamic countries in the narrative of national trauma. However, the transposition of the World War II situation to the Middle East context resonated also with other empathetic ‘survivors’ whose anger and revenge thus found a readily available outlet in the Arab enemy. Anne Roiphe attributed this Arab-Nazi equation to a frustrated anger and transference of revenge:

Anger with the enemy runs high not just because he is this enemy but because of what the last Jewish enemy had done. Anger in the Jewish mind grows cumulatively from anger with Haman, to anger with Syrian and Roman conquerors, to anger with Spanish Inquisitors, to anger with cossacs and czars and Austrian Grafts until we reach Hitler and Goebbels and Eichmann and Mengele, and the weight of the anger we bear causes us to stumble and to brim over with hate, and who can we hate but the Arab who stands now in the way of our power, our national expansion, our well-earned, long-delayed, deserved gratification.¹¹

⁸ Segev, S., “Eichmann on the Mufti” in *Ma’ariv*, 5 June 1961.

⁹ Zertal, I., “From the People’s Hall to the Wailing Wall” p. 109.

¹⁰ Zertal, I., “From the People’s Hall to the Wailing Wall” p. 109.

¹¹ Roiphe, A., *A Season for Healing* (New York: Summit Books, 1995) p.175.

Fighting against the Arab enemy and the possibility of death in such a fight acquired a new meaning after the Eichmann trial. It became “the belated vindication of the fathers’ helplessness in the face of the Nazi enemy. ... Defence of one’s country became a sacred mission endowed with the weight of the ultimate catastrophe.”¹²

The Waiting Period

*Only a nation haunted by the memory of mass extermination could plan so meticulously for the next holocaust.*¹³

On 15 May 1967, Israel celebrated its nineteenth anniversary of independence. Two hundred thousand people watched the military parade in the streets of Jerusalem. Towards the end of the parade it was noticed that Prime Minister Levi Eshkol leaned over to his Chief of Staff Yitzhak Rabin and whispered something in his ear: “News had just been received from Cairo about Egyptian troop concentrations.”¹⁴ According to Laqueur’s account, only routine measures were taken initially: a state of alert was declared and the southern border was reinforced. The intelligence assessment indicated that the Egyptian concentration of troops was nothing more than a demonstration of solidarity with its Syrian ally, whose six aircraft had been shot down by Israeli air force following an exchange of provocations in early April 1967. On May 12 1967, the Soviet Union announced that Israel was mobilising to attack Syria and the Director General of the Israeli Foreign Ministry replied that “peace in the area depended on the cessation of terrorist activities.”¹⁵ But, as Laqueur noted, “such exchanges were routine; there was no long discussion.”¹⁶

On the 17 May the cabinet received news that Nasser demanded immediate withdrawal of the United Nations Emergency Forces (UNEF), which served as a buffer on the border between Israel and Egypt. The next day the situation was newly reappraised and further reinforcements were sent to the Israeli forces in the south. In the evening of the same day while Prime Minister Eshkol and Chief of Staff Rabin were in session, news was received from the United Nations that its Secretary

¹² Zertal, I., “From the People’s Hall,” p. 112.

¹³ Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 389.

¹⁴ Zimuki, A. in Yediot Aharonot, 16 June 1967. Quoted in Laqueur, W., *The Road to War 1967* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1969) p. 109-110.

¹⁵ Mr. Levavi, quoted in Laqueur, W., *The Road to War 1967* p. 111.

¹⁶ Mr. Levavi, quoted in Laqueur, W., *The Road to War 1967* p. 111.

General U Thant was about to order the withdrawal of the UNEF. On the same day two Egyptian MiG 21s made a brief high-altitude reconnaissance flight over the Israeli nuclear installation in Dimona.¹⁷ During the day of 19 May the mobilisation order came into effect. On 21 May General Rabin informed the cabinet that about 80,000 Egyptians were massed at the border, compared to 35,000 at the beginning of the crisis. Prime Minister Eshkol called on the great powers (US, UK, France, and the Soviet Union) to exert their influence in Cairo and Damascus in order to lessen the tension and to protect the freedom of shipping through the Straits of Tiran, but to no avail. At four in the morning of 23 May, Eshkol was informed that Nasser had announced the closure of the Straits of Tiran, the entrance from the Red Sea to the Gulf of Eilat. Neither Israeli ships, nor foreign vessels carrying strategic cargo (including fuel) to Israel, would be allowed to reach the port of Eilat. For Israel the closure of the Straits clearly represented an act of war. On 26 May, the Ministerial Defence Committee was informed of the second reconnaissance flight over Dimona. Like the closure of the Straits of Tiran, "an aerial attack against Dimona would be a reason to go to war."¹⁸ To make matters worse, on 30 May President Nasser signed a defence agreement with Jordan, which complemented the 1966 military alliance with Syria. Iraq agreed to send reinforcements and contingents arrived from other Arab countries including Algeria and Kuwait. Israel was encircled and confronted by an Arab force of some 465,000 troops, over 2,880 tanks and 810 aircraft.

Egyptian manoeuvres were accompanied by Nasser's "harsh and blunt threats to annihilate Israel, which were broadcast daily on Hebrew programs of Egyptian national radio, heard in Israel and reproduced in the press."¹⁹ The 'Voice of the United Arab Republic' "reported daily that ships of the U.S. Sixth Fleet were standing ready to evacuate Jews from Israel and predicted that those who remained would be slaughtered."²⁰ Similarly, caricatures in the Arab press were unambiguously hostile, depicting for example, a long-nosed Jew with a goatee at the edge of a springboard, sweating and trembling for his life, with eight tank muzzles pointing at him,²¹ or a pile

¹⁷ Cohen, A., *Israel and the Bomb* p. 269.

¹⁸ Cohen, A., *Israel and the Bomb* p. 269.

¹⁹ Zertal, I., "From the People's Hall," p. 114.

²⁰ Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 389.

²¹ "The Tank Muzzles of Eight Arab States: Sudan, Algeria, United Arab Republic, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon" in *Al Jarida*, 31 Mai 1967.

of skulls and bones marked with Stars of David in front of ruined houses.²² Nasser's choice of words and the aggressiveness of their delivery "undoubtedly played a crucial role in intensifying the anxiety of Israel's population."²³ The withdrawal of the UNEF evoked in some the state of affairs in 1938-39: "then too there was a slight lull after each of Hitler's conquests."²⁴ Like Hitler, "Nasser," it was claimed "cannot be pacified by Israeli concessions."²⁵ An editorialist of a popular Israeli newspaper wrote: "For the time being, everything goes according to the Munich pattern: encouraging the strong at the expense of the weak ... and the absence of a warning to muzzle Nasser. And on the horizon a Chamberlain-like declaration of 'peace of our time' once we are erased off the map."²⁶ When Nasser started interfering with Israeli shipping and closed the Straits of Tiran, the military urged immediate action. Yet members of the Government hesitated. They predicted great casualties and destruction of Israel's cities. They also feared that the Egyptian army had significantly built-up since the last confrontation in 1956, and maybe even acquired a secret weapon. Last but not least, the Eshkol government feared the reaction of the Soviet Union. The army commanders and the military intelligence chiefs "showed growing impatience: they vigorously criticised the over-anxious comments and the dire predictions."²⁷ In another editorial, Rosenblum wrote on 26 May: "While Hitler had power, those facing him were physically powerless, but those crawling on their bellies today are armed to their teeth! Well?"²⁸

Despite the public's and the army's discontent, the Eshkol government launched a round of diplomatic initiatives. On 24 May Foreign Minister Abba Eban flew to Paris, London, and Washington to secure the great powers' support for the Israeli cause. Although De Gaulle was "not unfriendly,"²⁹ he clearly stated that France opposed any Israeli military action. For years France's support had been almost taken for granted in Jerusalem: France had been Israel's closest ally. As Laqueur put

²² "Barricades in Tel Aviv" in *Al Djundi Al Arabi*, 6 June 1967.

²³ Zertal, I., "From the People's Hall to the Wailing Wall" p. 115.

²⁴ Laqueur, W., *The Road to War 1967* p. 121.

²⁵ Laqueur, W., *The Road to War 1967* p. 121.

²⁶ Rosenblum, H., "Editorial" in *Yediot Aharonot*, 23 May 1967.

²⁷ Laqueur, W., *The Road to War 1967* p. 124.

²⁸ Rosenblum, H., "Editorial" in *Yediot Aharonot*, 26 May 1967

²⁹ Laqueur, W., *The Road to War 1967* p. 133.

it: "Not even the greatest pessimist in Israel had been prepared for this letdown."³⁰ France's abandonment went beyond political support: three days before the outbreak of the war, Israel's major arms supplier ordered a disruption of arms shipments to the Middle East, including Israel.³¹ Eban's reception in London was cordial but non-conclusive. Prime Minister Wilson expressed his disapproval of Egyptian interference with Israeli shipping without however committing his country to any action beyond verbal protest. Eban arrived in Washington on 25 May and he saw President Johnson the next day. The president was in favour of helping Israel, but beyond Johnson's friendly disposition, "the meeting in Washington was ... indecisive."³² Against the background of American involvement in Vietnam, the Pentagon was totally opposed to any unilateral US action in the Middle East. But, as Laqueur stated, "precisely because the Pentagon was so strongly opposed to American intervention, and because it realised that something ought to be done, it took a more lenient view of any possible military action by Israel."³³

In the meantime, the tension and anxiety in the country grew. By the second week of the crisis, Israel's citizens' army was mobilised, and most cars and trucks had been taken over by the army. The period called *Konenut* (preparedness) began: school children were enlisted as mailmen, milkmen and newspaper deliverers. Shelters were cleaned up and schoolchildren filled hundreds of sandbags or dug trenches where there were no shelters. The morale was high and "the readiness to volunteer and to help shown by every section of the population."³⁴ Laqueur listed examples of children under military age or over age adults, disabled persons, and even foreign nationals who insisted on joining the army; companies and private individuals who paid income tax ahead of schedule; workers and employers in every locality who gave cash or gave up their annual holiday and donated money to the Ministry of Defence; and even the ex-convicts who asked the police to temporarily restore their driving licences so that they could drive trucks for the army.³⁵ From 24 May onwards, volunteers started arriving from abroad: members of Jewish youth

³⁰ Laqueur, W., *The Road to War 1967* p. 134.

³¹ See Hazan p., *La Guerre des Six Jours: La Victoire Empoisonnée* (Paris: Editions Complexe, 1989) p. 32.

³² Laqueur, W., *The Road to War 1967* p. 137.

³³ Laqueur, W., *The Road to War 1967* p. 136.

³⁴ Laqueur, W., *The Road to War 1967* p. 130.

³⁵ See Laqueur, W., *The Road to War 1967* p. 130-31.

movements, ordinary people who wanted to help in whatever way they could, and even some famous men – musicians, writers (among them Elie Wiesel), and scientists. Elierzer Don-Yehiya described this period as “a time of unprecedented feelings of identification between Israelis and Diaspora Jews who agonised together about Israel’s fate.”³⁶

Apart from high morale and civic courage, *Konenut* was also characterised by mass anxiety and panic. People emptied supermarket shelves as if preparing for a siege. Some fled the country while a unit of *Chevra Kadisha* (the funeral service) surveyed the city’s parks, basketball courts, and vacant lots and sanctified them as cemeteries.³⁷ Talk about Auschwitz, Majdanek, and a new holocaust “grew louder and more strident.”³⁸ Day after day, in articles, editorials, and news analysis in major Israeli newspapers “the sense of an impending existential danger of the Holocaust’s proportions was accumulating.”³⁹ Parallels were drawn insistently between Hitler’s phony war and Nasser’s endeavours during the waiting period. Thus an article written by *Ha’aretz*’s military correspondent claimed that Nasser’s intentions were the same as Hitler’s: “It is bewildering to what degree a people who experienced the Holocaust in World War II, is willing to believe and take risks a second time ... Nasser declares his intentions to annihilate Israel ... and he will try to realise his plans.”⁴⁰ Another text pleaded with the Government to learn from the past and take the Arab threat more seriously:

The Jewish people cannot sustain another blow. We can accept no consoling and comforting advice. We shall pay the full price. The others will express sorrow for our disappearance. The sincerity of his [Nasser’s] repetitive and empathetic declarations, that he wishes to annihilate Israel, cannot be doubted. It will be an irresponsible folly not to believe what Nasser has been writing and saying for the last twelve years.⁴¹

³⁶ Don-Yehiya, E., “Memory and Political Culture” p. 150.

³⁷ *Ha’aretz*, 2 June 1967. Quoted in Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 389.

³⁸ Zertal, I., “From the People’s Hall,” p. 116.

³⁹ Zertal, I., “From the People’s Hall,” p. 117.

⁴⁰ Schiff, Z., “The Sand Clock” in *Ha’aretz*, 29 May 1967.

⁴¹ Livneh, E., “The Return of Hitlerite Danger” in *Ha’aretz*, 31 May 1967 p. 2.

The same author said bluntly: "For us, Abd-al-Nasser is Hitler."⁴² Ben Gurion also warned that Israel faced a severe trial: "A war of annihilation. None of us can forget the Holocaust that the Nazis brought on us. And if some Arab rulers declare day and night that Israel must be annihilated – this time referring not to the entire Jewish people in the world, but to the Jews living in their land – it is our duty not to take these severe statements lightly."⁴³

"Public opinion became increasingly dissatisfied with the way Eshkol's government was handling the crisis," wrote Laqueur, "the Government continued to waver, seeming always to trail after events."⁴⁴ Sunday, 28 May was a decisive day both for Levi Eshkol and for the war. After a lamentable live broadcast address to the nation in which the Prime Minister "stuttered and fumbled,"⁴⁵ he met with the army command. Eshkol's speech had a devastating effect on the nation; it came to "symbolise the weakness and uncertainty of the Government."⁴⁶ The meeting with the army command was "unprecedentedly stormy"⁴⁷ and after bitter exchanges with the generals, Eshkol left. The domestic crisis provoked by the loss of confidence in the government eventually led to the establishment on 1 June of a national unity government which included the opposition leader Menachem Begin. Retired General Moshe Dayan replaced Levi Eshkol as the Minister of Defence.

Levi Eshkol was seventy-two when the crises broke out. Born Levi Shkolnik in the Ukraine, Eshkol had a traditional Jewish upbringing before he immigrated to Palestine in 1913 as an eighteen-year old. During the First World War, Eshkol volunteered for the Jewish Legion of the British Army and later joined the group that founded one of the earliest collective settlements, kibbutz Degania Bet. He was among the founders of the Israeli General Federation of Labour – the Histadrut, but also Secretary of the Zionist Settlement Department in Berlin (1933-36), Secretary of the Tel Aviv Labour Council (1944), Treasurer of the Jewish Agency (1950), Minister of Agriculture and Development (1951), and a Minister of Finance (1952-1963).

⁴² Livneh, E., "The Return of Hitlerite Danger" p. 2.

⁴³ David Ben Gurion, quoted in "Ben Gurion Declared: Our Behaviour and Leadership Will Determine Our Fate," in *Yediot Aharonot*, 30 May 1967.

⁴⁴ Laqueur, W., *The Road to War 1967* p. 133.

⁴⁵ Zertal, I., "From the People's Hall" p. 118.

⁴⁶ Laqueur, W., *The Road to War 1967* p. 147.

⁴⁷ Zertal, I., "From the People's Hall" p. 146.

When Ben Gurion retired from politics in 1963, Levi Eshkol succeeded him both as Prime Minister and Minister of Defence. Although Eshkol lacked Ben Gurion's charisma, he was popular. The decade when he served as Finance Minister was characterised by "unprecedented economic growth despite the burden of financing immigrant absorption and the 1956 Sinai Campaign."⁴⁸ His approach was pragmatic, common sense, and conciliatory. His critics considered him to be too willing to compromise (the joke went that when asked: 'Tea or coffee, Sir?' Eshkol would reply: 'Oh, better give me half and half...'). He lacked the toughness that the younger generation of Israelis expected from their national leader. "The Eshkol government," wrote Zertal, "was considered weak, Diasporic more than Israeli in its diplomatic, lobbying ways."⁴⁹ The generational gap was such that someone even said during the domestic crisis: "Our main enemy is not Nasser, but the Second Aliyah – the generation of men who had reached Palestine before 1914 and still dominated Israeli politics."⁵⁰

News of Dayan's appointment "calmed the country in one fell swoop."⁵¹ Contrary to Eshkol, "Dayan was a symbol of military strength and confidence."⁵² In the eyes of the public, Dayan was "a man of exceptional fighting spirit and great personal charm."⁵³ Although it is arguable that Israel would have won the war even without Dayan, the psychological impact of his appointment was tremendous, "reflecting an almost mystical belief that the 'victor of Sinai' could save Israel."⁵⁴ The ground for war was prepared and on Sunday 4 June, the cabinet approved plans for a pre-emptive strike. Although the army was more optimistic in their predictions of Israeli losses, "Dayan shared the general feeling that should there be a conflict, it would be costly in terms of casualties."⁵⁵ On 5 June at 7:45 am Israeli time, the aircraft of the Jewish state attacked Egyptian aircraft and installations on the ground.

⁴⁸ Government of Israel, "Levi Eshkol," Biographic outlines published by Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Internet edition at: <http://www.israel-mfa.gov.il/mfa/go.asp?MFAH00fr0>. Last accessed on 18 September 2001.

⁴⁹ Zertal, I., "From the People's Hall" p. 118.

⁵⁰ Unidentified person quoted in Laqueur, W., *The Road to War 1967* p. 147.

⁵¹ Zertal, I., "From the People's Hall" p. 118.

⁵² Laqueur, W., *The Road to War 1967* p. 152.

⁵³ Laqueur, W., *The Road to War 1967* p. 150.

⁵⁴ Laqueur, W., *The Road to War 1967* p. 151.

⁵⁵ Laqueur, W., *The Road to War 1967* p. 159.

Within three hours sixteen airfields were destroyed and “nothing but a souvenir remained of the Egyptian air force,”⁵⁶ once the biggest air fleet in the Middle East.

From Auschwitz to Jerusalem

*The people plunged suddenly into the unreal, outside the realm of time and thought. ... At times they seemed to be reliving the trials and triumphs of the Bible ... At other times, they felt themselves thrust into a far away messianic future.*⁵⁷

In six days of the June 1967 war, the Israeli army not only repelled the enemy in a sweeping victory, but also occupied 67,850 km² of Arab territories, including East Jerusalem and the Western Wall, the holiest place in Judaism. Despite the dire predictions of the analysts (40,000 dead⁵⁸), Israeli casualties were very low compared to losses anticipated: 679 dead and 2,500 wounded.⁵⁹ Unlike the aftermath of the Yom Kippur war, which was characterised by repeated self-incrimination for threat assessment failure, the ‘seventh day’ brought nothing of the kind. On the contrary, Israel’s spectacular victory, and the concurrent capture of Jewish holy sites, was framed as both “a war of rescue from a great catastrophe” and “a war of redemption of the ancient land.”⁶⁰ The six days of war were often compared to the six days of creation: “The feeling for many was of zero hour ... It was as if the Zionist history had begun all over again.”⁶¹ The parallel action of ‘rescuing’ Israel from seemingly imminent annihilation and ‘liberating’ sacred Jewish sites, embodied in the June 1967 war, converted the latter into the symbol of “the recurring Jewish historical pattern of national revival as the outcome of destruction.”⁶²

As the previous section briefly illustrated, 1967 war was experienced as a “matter of survival of the Jewish people.”⁶³ In the minds of Israelis, to the extent that those were reflected in the media, letters to the editors, and individual recollections of the general mood at the time, all the elements of the Holocaust setting were present prior to the war: Hitler-like enemy ready to ‘exterminate Israel’ (the phrase that

⁵⁶ Hazan p., *La Guerre des Six Jours* p. 36.

⁵⁷ Wiesel, E., “At the Western Wall” in *Hadassah Magazine*, July 1967 p. 4.

⁵⁸ Hazan p., *La Guerre des Six Jours* p. 33.

⁵⁹ Hazan p., *La Guerre des Six Jours* p. 59.

⁶⁰ Zertal, I., “From the People’s Hall to the Wailing Wall,” p. 113.

⁶¹ Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 392.

⁶² Zertal, I., “From the People’s Hall to the Wailing Wall,” p. 113.

⁶³ Ellis, M. H., *Beyond Innocence And Redemption* p. 11.

everyone used at the time); indifference of the world (letdown of the allies – namely France, silence of the Vatican, and irresponsible behaviour of the UN Secretary General U Thant); and a weak leadership seen as too willing to compromise in the face of mortal danger. “Israel was a ghetto again,” Ellis summarised the mood, “and the war recalled the uprising of the Jewish survivors in Warsaw.”⁶⁴ Describing the atmosphere during the last week of the ‘waiting period,’ Laqueur noted:

Many Israelis spent worried hours and sleepless nights ... and some considered whether they should ... send their wives and children to Europe or America, but the great majority were not even willing to consider this step. This was the end of the line; Israel was their country, here they would live and if necessary die. ... With all their apprehensions they were resolved to sell their homes and their lives very dear. Memories of the Second World War ... were still fresh: never again were Jews to be conducted like sheep to the slaughter.⁶⁵

Once the war started, the soldiers’ motivation and fighting spirit were very high, a fact that was also partially attributed to the Holocaust. As Wiesel described this poetically: “Two thousand years of suffering, longing, and hope were mobilised in the battle, as well as the millions of the Holocaust victims.”⁶⁶ Israeli soldiers saw it as their historical responsibility towards the victims and the Jewish people as a whole, to preserve and defend the only Jewish state in the world. Uri Ramon, a young officer at the time explained: “Two days before the war, when we felt that we were at a decisive moment ... I came to the Ghetto Fighters Museum ... I wanted to pay my respects to the memory of the fighters ... I felt clearly that our war began there, in the crematoriums, in the camps, in the ghettos, and in the forests.” He left the museum “pure and clear and strong for this war.”⁶⁷ Thus, “the enemy lost the war also because of the Holocaust, that is, due to the expressions he used. Not knowing that there are words that cannot be expressed in our generation, in regard to the Jewish people ...

⁶⁴ Ellis, M. H., *Beyond Innocence And Redemption* p. 10.

⁶⁵ Laqueur, W., *The Road to War 1967* p. 132.

⁶⁶ Wiesel, E., “At the Western Wall,” p. 4.

⁶⁷ Uri Ramon, “The Consciousness of the Holocaust during the Six-Day War” *Dapim Leheker Hashoah Vehamered*, Collection A, 1969, pp. 59. Quoted in Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 393.

He hastened to threaten the annihilation of Israel, and that was one of his biggest mistakes.”⁶⁸

Immediately after the war, a group of young kibbutz members recorded and edited a collection of testimonies entitled *The Seventh Day*⁶⁹ in which the soldiers reviewed their thoughts and fears before and during the war. In a discussion animated by Abba Kovner, a group of soldiers talked about the war as seen through the Jewish / Holocaust prism that had been constructed in the preceding decade in Israel. “The Jewish aspect of the war applied to each one of us,” said Yariv. “Something in our education has made us very conscious of this Jewish tragedy. The war was a link in a chain of actions that derive from this tragic feeling.”⁷⁰ Listening to young Sabra soldiers, Abba Kovner – Holocaust survivor and partisan leader – expressed his surprise at the parallels drawn with the Holocaust. Kovner understood the tendency of the older generation, who experienced anti-Semitic persecution themselves, to interpret 1967 situation with reference to the Holocaust, but he was perturbed by the reactions of the younger generation. “I’m amazed,” Kovner said, “that Sabras could see what was happening as a beleaguement.” “Did you seriously see things in terms of the ghetto and the danger of annihilation?”⁷¹ he asked the youth surrounding him, as if in disbelief.

Identification with the Holocaust victims was not confined to the youth moulded by the Israeli educational system. “Suddenly,” Ellie Wiesel wrote, “all Jews had again become children of the Holocaust.”⁷² Israeli interpretation of the 1967 war was that of a Holocaust-like situation in which Jews were given a ‘second chance’: to act differently and by doing so not only avert the catastrophe, but also attract divine intervention and heavenly reward according to the motto ‘help yourself and God will help you.’ Contrary to the anaemic response of the world Jewry to the Nazi assault on European Jewry, the Jewish Diaspora mobilised all its forces to ‘rescue’ Israel in 1967, as if she also wanted to atone for her past failings. “A few words from Nasser

⁶⁸ Elie Wiesel quoted in Zertal, I., “From the People’s Hall” p. 114.

⁶⁹ Shapira, A. (ed.), *The Seventh Day: Soldiers’ Talk about the Six-Day War* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1970).

⁷⁰ Yariv, quoted in Shapira, A. (ed.), *The Seventh Day* p. 180.

⁷¹ Abba Kovner, quoted in Shapira, A. (ed.), *The Seventh Day* p. 186.

⁷² Ellie Wiesel quoted in Ellis, M. H., *Beyond Innocence And Redemption* p. 11.

sufficed to turn this event into a war of the entire Jewish people,"⁷³ said Wiesel. He described the unprecedented solidarity of world Jewry in the following passage:

University students flooded embassies to enlist for the fight; the Hassidim of Williamsburg declared days of fast and prayer; youngsters from assimilated homes organised fund raising drives and joined in protests; millionaires cast aside their businesses and took off for Jerusalem; community leaders went sleepless night after night because of their great efforts and profound anxiety. Never was the Jewish people so united, never so moved and anxious, never so ready and prepared to offer and sacrifice everything it had, its 'might, heart and soul.'⁷⁴

The perceived "possibility of being wiped out"⁷⁵ materialised in Jewish minds during the 'waiting period' and the degree of fear was such that even after Israel's victory, its Foreign Minister was able to declare at the UN Special Assembly: "There would have been no Jewish refugees had Israel lost the war. There would have been two million corpses added to the six million Holocaust victims."⁷⁶ Because of this anguished conviction, the victory was sanctified as "a miracle"⁷⁷ and a fruit of divine intervention, which had been absent in the death camps a quarter of a century earlier. The capture of the Old City of Jerusalem "transformed the 1967 war into a religious transcendental experience and turned land and stones into sacred beings."⁷⁸ The return to the Western Wall and other Jewish holy sites in Jerusalem, Hebron and elsewhere "enveloped the victory in a halo of national-spiritual redemption and led to a sudden emotional outpouring of Jewish identification, to the point of ecstasy and messianic mysticism."⁷⁹ The victory came to represent a journey of the Jewish people from destruction to redemption with Auschwitz and Jerusalem symbolising "the suffering of the Jewish people in Europe and the miracle of empowerment in Israel, the innocence of the Jewish people and the redemptive aspects of Israel."⁸⁰ Thus the French Academy member, Thierry Maulnier wrote in *Le Figaro*: "The struggle was as

⁷³ Ellie Wiesel quoted in Zertal, I., "From the People's Hall" p. 114.

⁷⁴ Ellis, M. H., *Beyond Innocence And Redemption* p. 11,

⁷⁵ Wistrich, R. S., "Israel and the Holocaust Trauma" p. 17.

⁷⁶ Abba Eban quoted in *Ma'ariv*, 27 June 1967.

⁷⁷ Ellis, M. H., *Beyond Innocence And Redemption* p. 10.

⁷⁸ Zertal, I., "From the People's Hall" p. 112.

⁷⁹ Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 392.

⁸⁰ Ellis, M. H., *Beyond Innocence And Redemption* p. 12.

if crowned by the light of a great miracle, receiving its significance, at least partially, from the depth of history ... In one generation only, almost in one stroke, the Hebrew people have completed the Journey from the Warsaw Ghetto to the praised Zion, from Auschwitz to Sinai."⁸¹ The unexpected victory also represented the return of God to the history of the Jewish people, because "Israel's faith in God of History demands that an unprecedented event of destruction be matched by an unprecedented act of redemption."⁸²

Two features of the June 1967 war are significant: first, the fact that Israel was able to perceive itself to be in imminent danger of mass destruction on the eve of the war; and second, the fact that even after Israel's swift military victory the inaccurate representation of the pre-war situation was maintained. One of the leading Israeli 'new historians' and Senior Lecturer at the Interdisciplinary Centre Herzliya and Adjunct Professor at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Idith Zertal critically examined the pre-1967 situation and attributed the initial exaggeration of threat to a collective anxiety or hysteria. Defined as a "peculiar combination of conscious elite contrivance and spontaneous and largely unconscious mass response," political hysteria involves "an extreme loss of customary political self-control and a very high degree of misperception – a passionate crusade to eliminate an imaginary threat."⁸³ The author acknowledged that "collective anxiety can never be a product of an elite invention or manipulation by itself," and noted that "discursive manoeuvres of this kind become effective only when they respond to deep and genuine social concerns."⁸⁴ Identifying those concerns, Zertal focused on immediate social and economic factors, such as recession, high unemployment, social unrest, a general sense of depression, and emigration.⁸⁵ All these elements undoubtedly helped creating a climate that was "receptive to the manipulations of hysteria,"⁸⁶ but they do not explain the roots of the fear that haunted Israel in May 1967.

⁸¹ Quoted in Zertal, I., "From the People's Hall" p. 120.

⁸² Greenberg, I., "The Interaction of Israel and the Diaspora after the Holocaust" in Davis, M. (ed.), *World Jewry and the State of Israel* (New York: Ayer, 1977) p. 32.

⁸³ Levin, M. B., *Political Hysteria in America: The Democratic Capacity for Repression* (New York: 1977), quoted in Zertal, I., "From the People's" p. 118.

⁸⁴ Zertal, I., "From the People's Hall" p. 118.

⁸⁵ Zertal, I., "From the People's Hall" p. 118.

⁸⁶ Zertal, I., "From the People's Hall" p. 118.

Furthermore, Israel's stunning victory does not automatically compromise Israeli leaders' good faith prior to the outbreak of the war, as Zertal's argument implies. The author misleadingly projects the post-victory awareness of the June 1967 real balance of forces and knowledge about the fate of the occupied territories on the leaders who had to make decisions about the war in May 1967. Her analysis reveals an understanding according to which, because the victory proved that the pre-war factual situation had been favourable to Israelis, Israeli leadership must have deliberately misled the public into believing it was not. In other words, Zertal's approach assumes that the Israeli leadership held an accurate interpretation of the actual strategic and military situation and consciously manipulated the Israeli public into an unnecessary pre-emptive war. This view is even more apparent in Zertal's analysis of the reasons for the Israeli leadership's continued misperception and misrepresentation of the pre-war threat long after the victory. Zertal claimed that "the Holocaust discourse [was] created prior to the war for ... the vindication of a first Israeli military strike, and then to aggrandize and mythify the victory, sanctify its fruits and legitimise further political practices."⁸⁷

In the light of the analysis of the Holocaust trauma and the Jewish prism of Israeli leaders, from the first two chapters of this thesis, I would argue that the elite itself was caught in the same panic and anxiety as those whom they were supposed to manipulate. Tom Segev confirmed this belief when he reported that the "fear that Israel was in imminent danger of being obliterated was ... widespread among the cabinet ministers, most of whom were European-born."⁸⁸ "Anxiety also plagued Israeli-born Chief of Staff Rabin," wrote Segev, "who was tormented by a sense of guilt for not having prevented the current threat. Tension, plus an overdose of nicotine, overcame him."⁸⁹ Although "the threat of extermination had not ... been real ... the fear of it had been real," noted Segev. "More than any other factor, fear had prompted the war – the same fear that had contributed to mass immigration in the 1950s and to the Dimona project. Its roots lay in the Holocaust."⁹⁰ The question of the *generalised* fear and misinterpretation, both before and after the war, is much more complex than the 'elite manipulation / public hysteria' thesis would suggest.

⁸⁷ Zertal, I., "From the People's Hall" p. 120.

⁸⁸ Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 391.

⁸⁹ Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 391.

⁹⁰ Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 392.

Yaron Ezrahi drew attention to the fact that until the 1967 victory, Israeli Jews had always perceived force “from the point of view of victims rather than of fighters equal or superior to their adversaries.”⁹¹ Although Israelis eventually won the 1948 war, they did so with a staggering number of casualties: 6,000 fell for Israeli independence at the time when Israeli Jewish population was only 600,000. The war was remembered as “a defensive action waged by a persecuted minority resisting the threat of annihilation ... in which weakness and inexperience were compensated for by great courage, self-determination, solidarity, and intelligence.”⁹² Between 1948 and 1967, Israeli Army grew into one of the most powerful armies in the Middle East. According to the Pentagon intelligence assessment on the eve of the 1967 war “Israel would win a war not only against Egypt but against any alliance of Arab states.”⁹³ Israeli intelligence was also confident that Israel would ultimately win but it predicted tens of thousands of victims. Despite predictions that conventional war would end with Israeli victory, a few days before the outbreak of the war, Israel “improvised’ two deliverable nuclear explosive devices,”⁹⁴ which were ready, if necessary, for launching. Cohen noted that given the pressures and anguish experienced by the leadership in the last days of May 1967, “it would have been unthinkable for those in charge not to have placed Israel’s most fateful system on operational alert.”⁹⁵ Cohen also reported that “there were individuals in Israel, particularly Shimon Peres, who thought and even proposed, that under the circumstances Israel should make use of its nuclear capability.”⁹⁶ When Shimon Peres’ family emigrated to Palestine, his grandfather stayed behind in Poland and was burned alive when the Nazis shut him and other Jews in the synagogue and set it aflame. According to Segev, during his childhood, young Shimon “had loved no one as much as he did his grandfather.”⁹⁷

⁹¹ Ezrahi, Y., *Rubber Bullets: Power and Conscience in Modern Israel* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998) p. 188.

⁹² Ezrahi, Y., *Rubber Bullets* p. 187-188.

⁹³ Laqueur, W., *The Road to War 1967* p. 136.

⁹⁴ Cohen, A., *Israel and the Bomb* p. 274. See also Zertal, I., “From the People’s Hall” p. 116

⁹⁵ Cohen, A., *Israel and the Bomb* p. 274-275.

⁹⁶ Cohen, A., *Israel and the Bomb* p. 274-275.

⁹⁷ Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 395.

As the previous chapter indicated, the awareness of the Holocaust and identification with its victims that resulted from the Eichmann trial created in the majority of Israelis an acute sense of vulnerability. The latter was enhanced by Nasser's rhetoric and the fatalist narrative of the Jewish condition, which attributed to the Arabs Nazi-like motivations and vices. The fact that the Israeli leadership considered even the use of nuclear weapons in 1967, shows that fear and anxiety totally obscured the real balance of forces. It is therefore understandable that, in a crisis that, for Israelis, represented a Holocaust-like situation, prudence required a response applicable to such an assessment of threat. Yariv, an Israeli soldier who fought in Six-Day War explained in *The Seventh Day*:

It's true that people believed that there we would be exterminated if we lost the war. They were afraid. We got this idea – or inherited it – from the concentration camps. It's a concrete idea for anyone who has grown up in Israel, even if he personally didn't experience Hitler's persecution, but only heard or read about it. Genocide – it's a feasible notion. There are the means to do it. This is the lesson of the gas chambers.⁹⁸

Whilst the waiting period was characterised by Israeli public's and leaders' anxiety "because the impending battles appeared hard to win and were sure to be costly," the aftermath brought a "rare taste of sufficient, even surplus force."⁹⁹ Yet, after the victory in June 1967, the tensions between particularism and universalism inherent to the Holocaust discourse generated first doubts about the use of force and about the occupation of the captured territories, issues that would divide the country in the 1980s during Israeli invasion of Lebanon and the Intifada.

In *The Seventh Day*, soldiers spoke of "tensions they had felt between the high, symbolic-expressive meanings attached to their conquests, the elevation of their deeds by a lofty, inspiring historical narrative, and the depressing, sometimes nauseating, shattering subjective experiences most of them had while fighting."¹⁰⁰ Thus a soldier named Aharon describes his feelings when his unit entered the Old City of Jerusalem. His indifference when the Chief IDF Rabbi appeared "running

⁹⁸ Yariv, quoted in Shapira, A. (ed.), *The Seventh Day* p. 181.

⁹⁹ Ezrahi, Y., *Rubber Bullets* p. 188.

¹⁰⁰ Ezrahi, Y., *Rubber Bullets* p. 189.

around blowing the shofar” was contrasted by Aharon’s intense experience at the sight of four adult Arab men and one woman who walked out of the Old City through the Lion’s Gate carrying the body of a little girl in a blanket. They walked quietly to a site nearby outside the wall, where they dug a hole, lowered the girl’s body, and covered it.¹⁰¹ Some said that the heritage of the Holocaust made it difficult for them to act as military occupiers,¹⁰² while others felt that “the ambiguity of the arguments for waging such a war was accentuated by the monumental dimensions of victory.”¹⁰³ Although such doubts were hardly reflective of the jubilant mood in the wider Israeli society, their appearance among Israel’s elite (soldiers from the kibbutzim) is significant. The victory therefore made it difficult for some Israelis to sustain the self-identification as victims and at the same time act as conquerors and military occupiers. Sociologist Charles S. Liebman, the Yehuda Avner Professor of Politics and Religion and Director of the Argov Center for the Study of Israel and the Jewish people at Bar Ilan University, suggested that the only way to mentally square the circle was to identify with the victim and interpret one’s upper hand in the situation as both anomalous and temporary. In his analysis, which is presented in the next section, Prof. Liebman argued that the 1973 concerted Arab attack on Israel on the Day of Atonement re-confirmed Israel’s identity as a lone victim for another decade and retrospectively integrated the 1967 victory as an extraordinary and short-lived anomaly in the narrative of Jewish historical experience.

¹⁰¹ Aharon, quoted in Ezrahi, Y., *Rubber Bullets* p. 192.

¹⁰² Shapira, A. (ed.), *The Seventh Day*, pp. 160, 173.

¹⁰³ Ezrahi, Y., *Rubber Bullets* p. 192.

Yom Kippur: A War That Went Wrong

The Earthquake

*And so we parted, he to the war and I to the synagogue.*¹⁰⁴

Although Israeli intelligence noted a build-up on both the Egyptian and Syrian fronts already in September 1973, its assessment was that these indications were just routine major exercises. The appraisal was partially based on a conviction that the Arab armies were not yet ready for an all-out military confrontation with Israel. The week preceding the outbreak of war was marked by the crisis that Austrian Chancellor Kreisky had provoked with his decision to close the Schönau Castle transit camp for emigrants from the U.S.S.R. en route to Israel. Four days before Yom Kippur, Israeli Prime Minister at the time, Golda Meir, left for Vienna in an endeavour to persuade Chancellor Kreisky to reconsider his decision, but to no avail. On the evening of her return to Israel on 3 October the sole subject of discussion at the Cabinet meeting was the crisis with Austria: "Not even once, the situation at the borders was mentioned."¹⁰⁵ Similarly, the headlines were dedicated to Golda Meir's aborted trip to Vienna. On Friday, 5 October, Prime Minister Meir received intelligence about the departure of Soviet families from Egypt and Syria.¹⁰⁶ This, coupled with the very heavy concentrations of troops along the borders of Syria and Egypt, indicated that a very serious situation had developed. In her autobiography, Prime Minister Meir recalled that although she herself had been alarmed by the departure of the Soviet families, her Minister of Defence, the Chief of General Staff and the Head of Intelligence services reassured her that an outbreak of hostilities was unlikely and that she would be informed in time should the danger of war arise.¹⁰⁷ A Cabinet meeting was called for midday on Friday 5 October in Tel Aviv, but apart from minor unit mobilization, preparations in the standing army, and cancellation of leave in the army generally, no other measures had been taken. Apart from deeper reasons, which are summarized in the next section, the government's reluctance to order full mobilisation was also reinforced by a precedent: in the spring of 1973,

¹⁰⁴ Former Chief Justice Simon Agranat describing his son's departure for Yom Kippur war. Quoted in Lahav p., *Judgement in Jerusalem* p. 224.

¹⁰⁵ Derogy, J. et J-N. Gurgand, *Israël: La mort en face* (Paris : Robert Laffont, 1975) p. 38.

¹⁰⁶ Meir, G., *Mein Leben* (Hamburg: Hoffman und Campe Verlag, 1975) p. 448.

¹⁰⁷ Meir, G., *Mein Leben* p. 448.

Israeli forces were placed on alert when intelligence sources detected the mobilisation of the Syrian and Egyptian armies. After a few weeks the alert was called off, giving rise to much criticism of the Israeli government for an unnecessary alert.

Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement) is the holiest day in the Jewish calendar. As it is customary for Jewish holidays, and particularly on Yom Kippur, from one sunset to the next, everything stops. Even non-practicing Jews respect the tradition of Kippur and rest at home. Religious Jews do not use the phone or the car on that day, and many non-practicing Jews refrain from driving in the religious areas out of respect. Even a secular chain-smoker like Prime Minister Golda Meir abstained from smoking at the height of the Kippur crisis. On 6 October 1973, the day of Yom Kippur, the phone rang at Moshe Dayan's apartment in Tel Aviv: the Mossad confirmed beyond doubt that a combined attack of Egyptian and Syrian forces was expected before the end of the day. At 10 am, total mobilisation of the Israeli armed forces was ordered. Throughout the holy day of Yom Kippur, Israel mobilized its forces. The irony was that the Arab choice of timing greatly facilitated Israeli mobilization – everybody was available either at home or in the synagogue. Although the Israeli intelligence sources predicted that the attack would take place at 6 pm, the Syrian and Egyptian armies simultaneously invaded Israel in the south and in the north at 2 pm. The attack, even though not unexpected, "surprised the Israelis and caught them completely off their guard."¹⁰⁸

In the first few days of combat the Israeli army suffered heavy losses and was forced to retreat on both fronts. Unlike in the 1967 war, the Egyptian and Syrian armies in 1973 represented a better-equipped and better-organised enemy to deal with. "The Egyptians and the Syrians," recalled General Moshe Dayan in his memoirs, "were not the Arab armies we had known in 1967. They were good troops using good equipment and fighting with determination."¹⁰⁹ The efficiency of the Egyptian and Syrian missile system inflicted "horrific damage" to the Israeli Air Force: "35 Israeli planes were shot down in the first twenty-four hours of the war."¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ Bregman, A., *Israel's Wars: 1947-93* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000) p. 93.

¹⁰⁹ Dayan, M., *Story of My Life* p. 576.

¹¹⁰ Bregman, A., *Israel's Wars*, 86.

Similarly, Israel suffered a heavy loss of tanks thanks to the Egyptian anti-tank guns, comparatively small and handy, which were “pushed out ahead of their own tanks to positions from where they could get close to the Israeli tanks and hit them.”¹¹¹ 153 out of 290 Israeli tanks in Sinai were “soon hit and put out of action.”¹¹²

The Israeli defence line in the Sinai collapsed under the Egyptian assault in the first few hours of the war. The 505 Israeli troops on the Bar-Lev line were mostly ill-trained low-grade troops who “found themselves in desperate straits and could do little to stem the Egyptian troops who surged across the [Suez] Canal like a tidal wave and had immense numerical superiority”¹¹³ of some 70,000 troops. To make matters worse, the entire Egyptian operation was carried out under cover of a dense anti-aircraft missile system, which caused heavy casualties to the Israel Air Force. The anti-aircraft missile system forced the Israel planes to fly low to avoid the missiles and thereby brought them within range of the conventional anti-aircraft guns. The Israel forces that attempted to reach the units besieged in the fortifications of the Bar-Lev line in order to relieve them suffered very heavy casualties.¹¹⁴

On the northern front the battle began with Syrian air attacks and a heavy artillery bombardment. Israel's 180 tanks could barely hold the line against Syrian armoured forces - “some 1,400 tanks.”¹¹⁵ After the successful air strikes, overwhelmingly superior Syrian forces “crashed through the Israeli lines along the entire front and penetrated into the Golan Heights.”¹¹⁶ By the nightfall of the second day, Syrians had reached the descent of the Jordan River and their advance elements came within 800 meters of the moshav of El Al overlooking the Sea of Galilee. Syria's rapid advance towards the Sea of Galilee and Israel's northern settlements unleashed a fear that has been hard for Israel to ever forget. The situation was so critical that even General Moshe Dayan was said to have predicted

¹¹¹ Bregman, A., *Israel's Wars*, 86.

¹¹² Bregman, A., *Israel's Wars*, 86.

¹¹³ Bregman, A., *Israel's Wars*, 86.

¹¹⁴ “Yom Kippur War: Military Aspect,” in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, CD-Rom Edition Version 1.0 (Israel: Judaica Multimedia, 1997).

¹¹⁵ “Yom Kippur War: Military Aspect.”

¹¹⁶ Bregman, A., *Israel's Wars* p. 87.

destruction.¹¹⁷ As the Deputy Chief of Staff, Yisrael Tal later confirmed, all that Israelis were interested in at that stage was “to put an end to the war ... this is the truth.”¹¹⁸

The tide of the war began to turn a few days later, on 10 October when the Syrian forces had been driven entirely from the Golan Heights, with Israel's forces closing in on the cease-fire line along its entire length. On the following day, Israel launched a successful counter-attack into Syria. The Soviet Union responded to Israeli advances by sending arms supplies by air and sea to Damascus and Cairo. To counter this massive Russian airlift the United States mounted an airlift to re-supply the Israelis on 12 and 13 October.

Israeli forces closed the Syrian front on 22 October holding the strategic heights of Mount Hermon which dominate the entire area between the battlefield and Damascus and positions as far eastward as Tel Shams, in an area which placed the outskirts of Damascus within range of Israel artillery. This was the situation when the Syrian command finally agreed to a cease-fire as requested by the Security Council on Monday 22 October. All parties accepted the cease-fire, but by the time it came into effect, Israelis encircled and cut off the Egyptian Third Army on the east bank of the Canal opposite the town of Suez. By 24 October, the Third Army – some 45,000 men and 250 tanks – was completely cut off and it was only under Soviet threats to send its troops to Egypt and the ensuing American pressure that Israel accepted a second cease-fire on 25 October 1973. It refused, however, to return to the 22 October lines: when the war finally concluded, Israeli forces stationed within 101 km of Cairo and 45 km from Damascus, occupying some 1,600 km² of territory inside Egypt. The loss of life in the Yom Kippur War on both sides was heavy: IDF lost 2,687 men, with 7,251 wounded and 314 taken prisoner and it is estimated that 15,000 Egyptians and 3,500 Syrians were killed.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 394.

¹¹⁸ Yisrael Tal to Uri Milstein, 8 January 1984, quoted in Bregman, A., *Israel's Wars*, 87.

¹¹⁹ “Yom Kippur War: Military Aspect.”

The Aftermath

*Until then [Yom Kippur War] we believed in the pairing of the words Holocaust and heroism and identified ourselves with heroism. The war made us realise the meaning of the Holocaust and the limitations of heroism.*¹²⁰

The 1973 Yom Kippur war “was a watershed event in Israeli political history and in the development of its national security outlook.”¹²¹ Although the IDF repelled the Egyptian-Syrian invasion and mounted a successful counteroffensive, which forced the two countries to demand a cease-fire, “the war did not provide Israel with a sense of victory.”¹²² Judging by the way in which the event is remembered on the anniversary of its outbreak, Yom Kippur war still “arouses an uncomfortable feeling among Israeli Jews” and is primarily referred to as “a disaster or a calamity.”¹²³ Unlike the pre-war period in 1967, the surprise attack in 1973 allowed the Israeli public no time to evaluate the situation and express their views: “all Israelis could do was to join their units and be mobilised to the front to repel the attackers.”¹²⁴ In the first days of the war, the medical teams were overwhelmed by the psychological state of shock and combat traumas of the soldiers. Thrown into the battle without any mental preparation and having to fight a defensive war on one’s own territory, Israeli soldiers reacted with intense fear and serious hysterical crises provoking even motoric paralysis and amnesia. Out of 1,500 soldiers evacuated in the first three days, 900 were in such a state of shock, without physical injuries.¹²⁵ Nobody ever taught Israeli soldiers how to fight in retreat with enemies that spring up from the back; and nobody taught Israeli officers how to take care of crying men on the verge of hysteria.

Despite victory, the aftermath of the war found Israelis in a state of deep collective shock, “a collective nervous depression”¹²⁶ as one psychiatrist suggested. What was objectively a victory was collectively perceived as failure, and “this ‘misery

¹²⁰ Colonel Ehud Praver quoted in Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 395.

¹²¹ Inbar, E., “Israeli National Security, 1973-96”, in *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 555 (January 1998) p. 63.

¹²² Inbar, E., “Israeli National Security” p. 63.

¹²³ Liebman, C. S., “The Myth of Defeat: The Memory of the Yom Kippur War in Israeli Society” in *Middle Eastern Studies*, 29:3 (July 1993) p. 399.

¹²⁴ Bregman, A., *Israel’s Wars* p. 93.

¹²⁵ Derogy, J. et J-N. Gurgand, *Israël: La mort en face* p. 116.

¹²⁶ Unidentified psychiatrist quoted in Derogy, J. and J-N. Gurgand, *Israël: La mort en face* p. 239.

of the victors' represents the most peculiar feature of the war."¹²⁷ Military experts from around the world, after having examined the situation at the cease-fire agreed that Israel had achieved a great victory, even greater than in 1967: Israeli Defence Forces, surprised by the attack and inferior in armaments and manpower, turned the tables and in eighteen days recovered all the territories and inflicted substantial damage to the enemy.¹²⁸ Yet, the sense of defeat remained.

Charles S. Liebman, a renowned Israeli sociologist studied the reasons for recalling the war as a calamity. A significant contribution of Liebman's analysis lies in the fact that the author considered both the rational and the mythical arguments for framing the Yom Kippur war as a defeat. After examining the four most often cited rational arguments – high number of casualties, loss of territory, intervention of superpowers, and surprise nature of the attack – Liebman proceeded to study the mythical arguments. He concluded that, unlike all previous Arab-Israeli wars, the Yom Kippur war was mythologized as a defeat, against any combination of rational arguments. This section scrutinises the most often cited reasons for terming the Yom Kippur as a 'mishap,' while the next section, based on Liebman's scholarship, suggests that this conceptualisation of the 1973 war served an inner need of the great majority of the Israeli public that was then both unable and unwilling to confront the reality of Israel's power and its consequences.

The Israeli **casualties** during Yom Kippur War were indeed higher than in Six-Day War (2,687 as opposed to 679), but they were also ten times lower than in the 1948 War of Independence when the Israeli population represented one fifth of that in 1973. Furthermore, unlike the War of Independence, which is "widely celebrated in Israeli memory,"¹²⁹ there were no civilian casualties in the October 1973 war. As far as the **surrender of territory** argument goes, Liebman noted the contrast between the cessation of Sinai following the 1956 and the 1973 wars. In the 1956 campaign IDF had captured the Sinai desert but was forced to evacuate the peninsula as well as the Gaza strip under intense Soviet and American pressure. In exchange, only one of Israeli the security demands was met: troops of the United Nations

¹²⁷ Derogy, J. et J-N. Gurgand, *Israël: La mort en face* p. 240.

¹²⁸ See Derogy, J. et J-N. Gurgand, *Israël: La mort en face* p. 240.

¹²⁹ Liebman, C. S., "The Myth of Defeat" p. 401.

Emergency Force (UNEF) were posted on the Egyptian side of the frontier and at Sharm el-Sheikh to guarantee free passage of Israeli vessels through the Straits of Tiran. Although Israel had to surrender territory without securing a demilitarisation of Sinai and other guarantees it had demanded, and thereby suffered a diplomatic defeat, the 1956 war "is not overlaid with a sense of tragedy and despair."¹³⁰ The surrender of Sinai following the Yom Kippur war, on the other hand, was part of the peace treaty with Egypt, "a treaty which overwhelming majority of Israelis acclaimed."¹³¹ Yet, the Israeli society was reluctant to credit the war with the achievement of having brought peace with Egypt. The intervention of the **superpowers** again demonstrated that "Israel could never inflict a blow of such magnitude on its enemies that they could no longer threaten its security."¹³² The June 1967 victory generated a belief in the minds of the Israelis (including the political and military elites) that Israel was nearly invincible, and that the Arabs had understood that as well.

The surprise attack on 6 October 1973 shattered the illusion that "Israel had achieved some permanent security"¹³³ in 1967. The **surprise nature of the attack** had three consequences for the public perception of the Yom Kippur war: first, it destroyed public confidence in the leadership and thereby "ushered in a younger generation of Israeli leaders,"¹³⁴ second, it undermined the general sense of security, leading to a period of "extremely high threat perception,"¹³⁵ and third, the lack of fear and trepidation preceding the war minimized the sense of victory. The country felt secure before the outbreak of Yom Kippur War and although the dread of the first few days when the war was not going well was overwhelming, the reversal of the tide of the battle did not bring a sense of relief or gratitude for successful completion of the war. On the contrary, the aftermath of the war was characterized by public anger at their leadership. "The more people learned about the war, the more indignant they became,"¹³⁶ noted Pnina Lahav. Anger and indignation manifested themselves as a

¹³⁰ Liebman, C. S., "The Myth of Defeat" p. 401.

¹³¹ Liebman, C. S., "The Myth of Defeat" p. 401.

¹³² Liebman, C. S., "The Myth of Defeat" p. 402.

¹³³ Liebman, C. S., "The Myth of Defeat" p. 402.

¹³⁴ Inbar, E., "Israeli National Security, 1973-96" p. 63.

¹³⁵ Inbar, E., "Israeli National Security, 1973-96" p. 66.

¹³⁶ Lahav p., *Judgement in Jerusalem* p. 227.

demand for accountability: How could such a disaster have happened? Who was to blame for Israel's failure to foresee the attack, and what price should they pay?

The most obvious targets of public discontent were Prime Minister Golda Meir and Defence Minister Moshe Dayan. At the time of Yom Kippur War, Golda Meir was a 75-year-old woman, with a long political career behind her. Born Golda Mabovich in Kiev (Ukraine) in 1898, the future Prime Minister of Israel immigrated to the United States at the age of eight, with her family. She was raised in Milwaukee (Wisconsin) and after marrying Morris Myerson left for Palestine at the age of 21. Golda Myerson became active in the Histadrut and even replaced Moshe Sharett as acting head of the Political Department of the Jewish Agency from 1946 (when the British arrested all the leaders of the Yishuv) until the establishment of the state. In June 1948, Golda Myerson was appointed Israel's first ambassador to the Soviet Union and she served as Minister of Labour and National Insurance from 1949 to 1956 when she occupied the post of Minister of Foreign Affairs and changed her name to Meir. During her decade as a Foreign Minister, Golda Meir "became a famous figure on the international scene and displayed an extraordinary capacity to convey, in public and in private talks with foreign statesmen and representatives, the moral aspect of Israel's vital interests."¹³⁷ Meir's greatest achievement as a Foreign Minister was establishment of friendly relations with the newly independent nations of Africa. Upon the death of Levi Eshkol in 1969, Meir was chosen to succeed him as the party's candidate for Prime Minister, a post that she had obtained after having led the party to victory, and held until 1974. Meir's iron will, warm personality and grandmotherly image, combined with a simple but highly effective rhetoric, secured an unprecedented measure of financial and military aid, including the American airlift of arms during Yom Kippur War.

Nevertheless, the public blamed Meir's government for the casualties due to unpreparedness of the army, and demanded its resignation. The protest movement following the war was precipitated "by the alleged failures of the government in handling the war ... What was especially resented was that no cabinet members or

¹³⁷ Syrkin, M., "Golda Meir," in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, CD-Rom Edition Version 1.0 (Israel: Judaica Multimedia, 1997).

senior officials were willing to assume responsibility for the failures and to resign their posts."¹³⁸ Golda Meir described the protesters' demands in her autobiography:

The storm of protest did not demand only my own and Dayan's resignation; everyone who could be made responsible in any way, for what happened, should resign. New people should rule the country, people whom no one can blame for having led the nation down the wrong path. It was an extreme reaction to the extreme situation in which we found ourselves, and even if the reaction was painful for us, it was understandable.¹³⁹

Only Minister of Justice Jacob S. Shapiro submitted his resignation, "after failing to persuade Dayan that he should assume responsibility and resign."¹⁴⁰ The political crisis precipitated the appointment, by the cabinet, of a commission of inquiry to conduct investigations regarding the responsibility for the mistakes that preceded the war. The Agranat Commission, named after its president Chief Justice Shimon Agranat, concluded that neither Prime Minister Meir nor Defence Minister Dayan were negligent in the discharge of their official duties and therefore exonerated both from direct personal responsibility. Most of the blame fell on the military officers in the Intelligence branch of the army, four of whom were relieved of their duties, and on the senior command level, namely on GOC Southern Command Major General Shmuel Gonen and on Chief of Staff Lieutenant General David Elazar, whose term in office was terminated upon recommendation of the commission. Although Golda Meir still led her party to victory in the December 1973 elections, she bowed to the 'will of the people' and resigned on 11 April 1974. On the appointment of the new government under Yitzhak Rabin, on 3 June 1974, Golda Meir also resigned her seat in the Knesset and retired into private life. She died in December 1978 at the age of 80.

¹³⁸ Etzioni-Halevy, E. and R. Shapiro, *Political Culture in Israel: Cleavage and Integration among Israeli Jews* (New York: Praeger, 1977) p. 117.

¹³⁹ Meir, G., *Mein Leben* p. 478.

¹⁴⁰ Lahav p., *Judgement in Jerusalem* p. 227.

Conclusion: Reaffirmation Of Victimhood

*Now it is clear and it is a bitter truth that we cannot live like other nations.*¹⁴¹

Three weeks of anxiety and intense concern for Israel's security preceded the June 1967 war. Holocaust imagery dominated the representation of the situation in the media and despite the military superiority over the enemy forces people identified with the desperate fighters of the European ghettos. The stunning victory of Israeli Defence Forces, the total destruction of the Egyptian air force, capture of the Sinai and the Golan Heights, but particularly, the conquest of East Jerusalem and other places with deep historical associations, "generated a sense of euphoria ... and a new set of perceptions and expectations about Israel"¹⁴²

The *kontzeptzia* (conception) as this new outlook was commonly called in Israel involved three realms of Israeli life: security, immigration, and economic prosperity. The security conception posited that Israel "no longer had to fear military threats from its neighbours"¹⁴³ because Egypt would not go to war until its airpower matched Israel's and that other Arab countries would not go to war without Egypt. Furthermore, "given Israel's post-1967 expanded borders and its military superiority," the reasoning went, "the regular army could absorb an attack quite efficiently until its reserves were mobilised."¹⁴⁴ Added to these assumptions was "an almost religious faith in the ability of the intelligence branch to give the chief of staff adequate warning."¹⁴⁵ With regard to immigration and economic prosperity, Israelis expected that the 1967 victory would incite Diaspora Jews to immigrate to Israel and attract foreign capital. Beyond those expectations, the 1967 victory endowed Israelis with a new image – no longer terrified Jews trembling for their lives, Israelis felt self-sufficient and capable of any achievement. The *Jerusalem Post* columnist David Krivine expressed these feelings when he wrote in June 1967:

¹⁴¹ Golda Meir quoted in Derogy, J. et J-N. Gurgand, *Israël: La mort en face* (Paris : Robert Laffont, 1975) p. 240.

¹⁴² Liebman, C. S., "The Myth of Defeat" p. 408.

¹⁴³ Liebman, C. S., "The Myth of Defeat" p. 408.

¹⁴⁴ Lahav p., *Judgement in Jerusalem* p. 230.

¹⁴⁵ Lahav p., *Judgement in Jerusalem* p. 230.

It may be said that the Jewish State underwent its Brit Mila [circumcision] in 1948 and its Bar-Mitzva [the ceremony marking the first reading from the Torah at the age of thirteen] in 1956. Today it has achieved its majority. Israel is no longer a ward of the benevolent powers of the UN which acted as mediators between herself and the countries around. From now on, any talking about Mideast problems concerning Israel is done with Israel. Her power is unquestioned in the zone.¹⁴⁶

On the other hand, the 1967 victory was confusing: ever since the Eichmann trial in 1961, Israeli Jews increasingly identified with the persecuted Diaspora Jews and began to think of themselves as a continuation rather than a rupture with the Jewish history, especially the Holocaust. The capture of Jewish holy sites enhanced their associations with Jewish religious symbols but at the same time, Israeli status as a victorious conqueror was fully incompatible with traditional Jewish paradigm. The latter is defined by the following key assumptions: hatred of the non-Jews (“the fate of the Jew is to be despised by the non-Jew and suffer thereby”¹⁴⁷), innocence and isolation of the Jews (“the Jewish people in the world is ‘the lamb among seventy wolves’”¹⁴⁸), and Divine protection of His chosen people. The view of the world through Goliath’s prism instead of David’s was troubling, because, as Liebman observed, “there is no way in which the victory of the Six Day War, the display of Israeli might, the conquest of territory, the subjugation of the Palestinians, and the supreme confidence in the future could be squared with historical Jewish paradigms.”¹⁴⁹ Uri, an Israeli soldier who had fought in 1967 described this ambiguity of victory: “Following the war, we became the strong ones as opposed to the ‘ideal’ of the weak, yet just party ... Suddenly you see a parallel between yourself and other conquerors who came here. It creates the discomfort of guilt.”¹⁵⁰ Only two segments of Israeli Jewish public were entirely untroubled by this contradiction: those secularist who were not elated into religious fervour at the sight of the Wailing Wall and continued to feel total alienation from the Jewish tradition, and the ultra-nationalist religious messianists who believed that the victory in the June 1967 war signalled the

¹⁴⁶ Krivine quoted in Gonen, J., “The Israeli Illusion of Omnipotence Following the Six Day War” in *Journal of Psychohistory*, 6 (Fall 1978) p. 249.

¹⁴⁷ Liebman, C. S., “The Myth of Defeat” p. 409.

¹⁴⁸ Liebman, C. S., “The Myth of Defeat” p. 409.

¹⁴⁹ Liebman, C. S., “The Myth of Defeat” p. 410.

¹⁵⁰ Uri, quoted in Ezrahi, Y., *Rubber Bullets* p. 193.

imminence of Divine redemption and the ensuing establishment of a messianic kingdom in which traditional Jewish paradigm would become obsolete.

The Yom Kippur War shattered the strategic 'conception' that had emerged after the Six-Day War and, as the previous section showed, the military command paid dearly for having read the writings on the wall through the rose tinted glasses of newly acquired Jewish self-confidence. One of the reasons why the Yom Kippur War has been framed as defeat by the Israeli society undoubtedly resides in the fact that the optimistic promise of the Six-Day War proved false. On the other hand, viewed as disaster, the Yom Kippur War resolved the tensions in self-representation created by the 1967 victory: the war re-affirmed the eternal Jewish condition of a persecuted and isolated victim and thereby facilitated the reintegration of Israel into traditional Jewish historical paradigms. Not surprisingly, "comparisons between the Holocaust and the Yom Kippur War were common in the period immediately following the war,"¹⁵¹ just as they were in the period immediately preceding the Six-Day War. The anomalous departure from the Jewish historical paradigm that started in 1967 was thus 'rectified' with the 'defeat' of Kippur in 1973. The aftermath of Yom Kippur War was marked by the petrol crisis and subsequent Israel's international isolation. When the United Nations General Assembly adopted the November 1975 anti-Zionist resolution, calling Zionism 'a form of racism', the first Israeli Sabra Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin expressed the renewed identification with the traditional Jewish paradigm when he said: "The whole world is against us – when was it not so!"¹⁵²

¹⁵¹ Liebman, C. S., "The Myth of Defeat" p. 409.

¹⁵² Yitzhak Rabin quoted in Rosenblum, D., "The 1000 Days of Rabin" in *Ha'aretz Magazine*, 6 May 1977.

Chapter Six

MOURNING: INVASION OF LEBANON AND ITS AFTERMATH

Introduction

A wounded people is ... dangerous and potentially destructive to either itself or others, against whom its rage is directed.¹

The waiting period preceding the June 1967 war and the aftermath of Yom Kippur War were characterised by exceptionally high threat perception and an intense collective identification with the fear and helplessness associated with the Holocaust. As noted in the previous chapter, the Six-Day War represented a reactivation of trauma and an attempt to master it by making the 'right' choice (which usually means fighting back). The Israeli response in 1967, albeit exaggerated with the benefit of the hindsight, was crowned with success. In terms of a collective healing process, the Israeli victory in 1967 embodied Jewish empowerment, and thereby created the necessary conditions for the next stage of recovery, the reconciliation and reconnection with the world. 'The promise of 1967,' discussed in the previous chapter, can be likened to a state of euphoria that follows the first successful response to a reenacted threat. The role of trauma reenactment, however, is not necessarily to win in a confrontation with one's fears, but to re-learn "the gradations of fear"² and to restructure "the survivor's maladaptive social ... physiological and psychological responses to fear."³ The surprise nature of the attack on Yom Kippur 1973 shattered the euphoria and revived existential fears, to the extent that final victory was totally obscured.

Beyond the gratifying sense of superiority, Jewish empowerment in 1967 brought about the first crisis of the victim identity. Instead of relinquishing "survivor's 'specialness'"⁴ through a process of mourning, and confronting the reality of power –

¹ Montville, J. V., "Complicated Mourning and Mobilisation for Nationalism" in Braun, J., *Social Pathology in Comparative Perspective: The Nature and Psychology of Civil Society* (London: Praeger, 1995) p. 172.

² Herman, J. L., *Trauma and Recovery* p. 199.

³ Herman, J. L., *Trauma and Recovery* p. 198.

⁴ Herman, J. L., *Trauma and Recovery* p. 235.

initiatives that would stimulate recovery – the majority of Israelis chose to interpret the 1973 victory in a way that their self-representation as victims could be sustained – that is, as a defeat. The concept of victimhood was further reinforced since the Yom Kippur War, and reached its peak with Menachem Begin's ascension to power in 1977. Since then, observed Don-Yehiya, "there has been a growing tendency to apply Holocaust-related imagery to events affecting Israeli security."⁵ Although the previous chapters showed that the Holocaust imagery had been present in the Israeli collective conscience all along, it is true that under Begin's leadership, the Holocaust was explicitly made into "a cornerstone of the basic creed of the State of Israel and the policies of its government."⁶ According to Tom Segev, Menachem Begin had always been a "great populariser of the Holocaust."⁷ Already as a leader of the opposition, he played a decisive role in involving Sephardi Israelis in what had until the 1970s been a solely Ashkenazi birthright: the Holocaust consciousness. While in office, he encouraged Holocaust education in Israeli schools and sponsored educational trips of the Israeli youth to the extermination camps in Poland. During Begin's two terms in office, the Holocaust was "a cornerstone of the basic creed of the State of Israel and the policies of its government."⁸ As the brief biographical outline in Chapter Two showed, Begin's personal Holocaust heritage was coupled with an ideology of nationalist Revisionist Zionism (hereafter Revisionism), developed and promoted by Vladimir Ze'ev Jabotinsky.

The first section of this chapter reviews the impact of the Holocaust on the radicalisation of Revisionism under Begin's leadership, and argues that the future Prime Minister blended the ethical code of Revisionism and his own Holocaust trauma into an irrefutable ideological justification for his personal revenge fantasy. Defined as "a mirror image of the traumatic memory, in which the roles of perpetrator and victims are reversed," revenge fantasy is "one form of the wish for catharsis. The victim imagines that she can get rid of the terror, shame, and pain of the trauma by retaliating against the perpetrator. The desire for revenge," pursued Herman, "also

⁵ Don-Yehiya, E., "Memory and Political Culture" p. 152.

⁶ Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 397.

⁷ Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 397.

⁸ Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 398.

arises out of the experience of complete helplessness. In her humiliated memory, the victim imagines that revenge is the only way to restore her own sense of power.”⁹

Begin’s revenge fantasy was directed against the composite ‘Arab-Nazi’ enemy embodied by the PLO guerrillas in Lebanon. The focus of the mini case study is restricted to the background of the Israeli crisis of victim identity, hence the reader will not find in the narrative details of internal Lebanese issues leading to Israeli involvement, nor other aspects of the war. Begin’s militant ideology favoured the expressivist use of force. His self-representation as a victim, on the other hand, made this use of force morally justifiable. As Thomas Friedman put it in a nutshell:

He [Begin] lived for the chance to correct the indignities that he and his forefathers had suffered for centuries. Begin loved the idea of Jewish power, Jewish generals, Jewish tanks, Jewish pride. ... He needed a war to satisfy his deep longing for dignity and to cure all his traumas about Jewish impotence. Begin ... needed a chance to lead 500,000 Jewish soldiers in a battle against Arafat, who for him was only the latest in a long line of anti-heroes who had risen up to slaughter the Jews. ... But what made Begin even more dangerous was that his fantasies about power were combined with a self-perception of being a victim. Someone who sees himself as a victim will almost never morally evaluate himself or put limits on his own actions.”¹⁰

What ultimately led to a personal and national tragedy in Lebanon, was the fact that, unlike most survivors with revenge fantasies, Prime Minister Begin had the real means to act them out: one of the most powerful armies in the world, and a Defence Minister with his own desires of power and grandeur.

Although the Prime Minister’s fantasy of revenge found positive resonance among many, especially within his traditional underprivileged electorate, the ranks of dissenters grew proportionately with the intensity and the perceived uselessness of the continuous Israeli assault on Beirut, reaching its climax after the news of the Sabra and Shatilla massacres had been received. Unlike the first crisis of victim

⁹ Herman, J. L., *Trauma and Recovery* p. 189.

¹⁰ Friedman, T., *From Beirut to Jerusalem: One Man’s Middle East Odyssey* (London: Fontana/Harper and Collins, 1990) p. 143-144.

identity in 1967, the public outcry following the 1982 'loss of innocence' and the subsequent self-criticism could not be appeased. Like the trial of Adolf Eichmann, which represented the critical turning point in Israel's dealing with the Holocaust trauma by hosting its collective reconstruction, the war in Lebanon, and especially, the brutal siege of Beirut and the Israeli army's complacency in the Sabra and Shatilla massacres, triggered in a segment of the Israeli collective a descent into mourning, which could not be reverted. The process of mourning started by a refusal to accept the Holocaust as a blanket justification for any Israeli military action, a rejection of Israel's victim identity, and an increasing awareness of the need to take responsibility for recovery and reconnection with the world. Interestingly, but not surprisingly from the point of view of post-traumatic reactions, the most radical fringe of the opposition to the war used the same imagery and had the same emotional quality to it as did Begin's discourse of justification. Revolted by the fantasy of revenge, the most radical segments of the Israeli left-wing intelligentsia and civil society swung to the other extreme – the fantasy of compassion. This fantasy aims to exorcise the trauma by a defiant act of compassion and concurrent excessive self-incrimination. The critical Holocaust discourse driven by a fantasy of compassion assimilated the Palestinians to former Jewish victims and the Israelis to their former victimisers. Both fantasies represent attempts to escape the process of mourning the real loss through either transposed anger or transposed compassion. The second part of this chapter thus studies the emergence of the critical discourse in the Israeli army and among its intellectual and cultural elite as the beginning of an unavoidable process of mourning the loss and letting go of the victimhood. The concluding section examines the twin processes of radicalisation and polarisation of the Holocaust lessons and understandings with reference to the emergence of Jewish racism and anti-Arab extremism as a political force under Rabbi Meir Kahane.

Resistance To Mourning: Torment And Tragedy Of Revenge Fantasies

Menachem Begin: Holocaust and Revolt

*The world does not pity the slaughtered. It only respects those who fight.*¹¹

After the 1977 elections, Israel's main opposition party – the Likud (Unity) – came to power for the first time in the history of the Jewish State. The leader of Likud's largest component, *Herut* (Freedom) party, Menachem Begin, was the first Israeli Prime Minister who did not belong to the Labour movement. Formed in the bourgeois nationalist tradition of the Revisionist Zionist movement led by Vladimir (Ze'ev) Jabotinsky, Begin was also the first Prime Minister who was a survivor of the Holocaust. Although Jabotinsky's influence on Begin's ideology was undeniable, his experience during the war in Europe radicalised his views even beyond the teachings of his mentor.

Vladimir Jabotinsky (1880-1940) was a Russian-born Zionist leader who, dissatisfied with the acquiescence of the World Zionist Organisation to what he believed to be unsatisfactory policies of the Palestine mandatory administration, gathered a group of educated and assimilated Zionist émigrés from Russia and founded the World Union of Zionist Revisionists in Paris, in 1925. "The sources of Revisionist thought," wrote Sasson Sofer in his study of Zionism,

were eclectic in the extreme. Although it had something in common with continental nationalism, it cannot be understood without recourse to its essentially Jewish roots. In many respects it bears a close resemblance to European Fascism, as indicated by the hierarchy of leader vis-à-vis masses and the revolt against the tradition of the Enlightenment, and militarism, as well as its criticism of the subservience of liberal democracy. Additional elements were the cult of youth as the motivating force of history, the apotheosis of the nation and deep hatred of Marxism and the Labour Movement.¹²

¹¹ Begin, M., *The Revolt* p. 36.

¹² Sofer, S., *Zionism and the Foundations of Israeli Diplomacy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 201-202.

According to Sofer, three concepts distinguished Jabotinsky's worldview: *avventura*, *Hadar*, and *monism*. The concept of *avventura* represents "Jabotinsky's realism combined with the romantic and the heroic ... an expression of heroism and daring ... action which involved taking great risks, where the chances of failure exceeded those of success."¹³ *Avventura* dictated taking the offensive as the appropriate approach in difficult times, a strategy that militant Revisionism had consistently pursued. *Hadar* is a Hebrew concept denoting splendour, dignity, pomp, and magnificence, as well as physical beauty, chivalry, good manners and nobility of the soul. Like most founding fathers, "Jabotinsky criticised the physical and mental features which had come to characterise Jews, making them objects of scorn and far from what fighting men and statesmen should be."¹⁴ He saw the Revisionist youth movement Betar (to which belonged young Begin) as "the ultimate expression of the 'new Jew,' one who was characterised by splendour, discipline and militarism."¹⁵ Jabotinsky believed in the importance of military training and was fascinated by military ceremony, although he remained "ambivalent about the use of force."¹⁶ The concept of *monism* relates to "the absolute supremacy of the nation and national considerations, regarding the national will as the highest motivating force in history."¹⁷ Another view links *monism* with the corporate aspect of Revisionism, according to which social and economic interests are subordinated to the interests of the nation. In that respect, Jabotinsky "was approaching the corporate model of Italian Fascism."¹⁸ In Jabotinsky's formulation of the ultimate national interest of the Jewish people, *monism* represented absolute loyalty to the aim of achieving "a state with a Jewish majority on both sides of the River Jordan."¹⁹ The monistic view deeply influenced the younger generation of the Betar movement, including Menachem Begin, educated according to Jabotinsky's ideology. According to Sofer, "monism prevented Revisionism from perceiving the factors moulding historical processes in a balanced and comprehensive way. ... The mood was that of an offensive, and everything was

¹³ Sofer, S., *Zionism* p. 209-210.

¹⁴ Sofer, S., *Zionism* p. 210.

¹⁵ Sofer, S., *Zionism* p. 210.

¹⁶ Sofer, S., *Zionism* p. 211.

¹⁷ Sofer, S., *Zionism* p. 211.

¹⁸ Sofer, S., *Zionism* p. 211.

¹⁹ Sofer, S., *Zionism* p. 212.

subordinated to the need to attain the aim [Israeli independence]. ... Monism's fatal outcome was that Revisionist education was devoid of any universal ideas."²⁰

In the 1930s, Jabotinsky was almost alone among the Zionist leaders who saw the disaster threatening the European Jewry. Pointing to events in Hitler's Germany and elsewhere in Europe, he argued that European Jewry faced "a catastrophe of unimaginable proportions."²¹ In 1935, at the Founding Convention of the New Zionist Organisation established after the Revisionists' secession from the World Zionist Organisation, Jabotinsky said: "We apparently live on the threshold of the last portal to hell, on the eve of the final holocaust in the global ghetto."²² According to Isaac and Isaac, "Jabotinsky had an almost physical sense of approaching doom of European Jews."²³ Out of this concern for the fate of the European Jewry was born an impractical evacuation plan for one and a half million European Jews. Jabotinsky argued already in 1937 that the Jews needed to leave Europe immediately:

I assure you that you face here today in the Jewish people with its demands, an Oliver Twist who has, unfortunately, no concessions to make. What can be the concessions? We have got to save millions, many millions. I do not know whether it is a question of re-housing one-third of the Jewish race, half of the Jewish race, or a quarter of the Jewish race; I do not know; but it is a question of millions.²⁴

As an answer to the impending catastrophe, Jabotinsky "called upon the Jews to put aside their passivity and take up arms."²⁵ He believed that the fate of the Jewish people depended upon their ability and willingness to defend themselves: "As with other nations also with us our national future depends on arming oneself, and life compels us again to put forth the demand for defence, self defence is at the

²⁰ Sofer, S., *Zionism* p. 212.

²¹ Rowland, R. C., *The Rhetoric of Menachem Begin* p. 48.

²² Isaac, E. and R. J. Isaac, "The Impact of Jabotinsky on Likud's Policies" in *Middle East Review*, 10:1 (Fall 1977) p. 43.

²³ Isaac, E. and R. J. Isaac, "The Impact of Jabotinsky" p. 43.

²⁴ Jabotinsky, V., "Evidence Submitted to the Palestinian Commission (1937)" in Hertzberg, A. (ed.), *The Zionist Idea: A Historical Analysis and Reader* (New York: Antheneum, 1977) p. 560.

²⁵ Rowland, R. C., *The Rhetoric of Menachem Begin* p. 48.

centre of our political struggle.”²⁶ Jabotinsky also took concrete steps towards Jewish re-appropriation of the nation’s long-forgotten military tradition: he founded both the Haganah and the Irgun Zvai Leumi, and through the youth movement tried to teach young Jews pride and courage. According to his biographer, Jabotinsky “told the youth that they – the poor, persecuted, miserable, underprivileged boys and girls of the Jewish ghettos in Poland, Rumania, Lithuania – were the heirs to the Kingdom of David, to the spiritual values of the prophets and to the proud, heroic tradition of the Maccabees and Bar Kochba.”²⁷

For young Begin, as for many other Eastern European Jews, “Jabotinsky served as a prophetic figure who pointed the way to the salvation of the Jewish people.”²⁸ When Begin took over the command of the Irgun in 1944, he based his program largely on Jabotinsky’s ideology. Similarly, the parties that grew out of the Revisionist movement (Herut, Gahal, and later the Likud) bore a distinct mark of Vladimir Jabotinsky. As Begin’s biographer explains: “For ... [Begin] the writings Jabotinsky left behind him rank with the volumes that describe Moses leading the Children of Israel to the Promised Land.”²⁹ Despite his admiration for his teacher, Begin’s views in a number of areas were more radical and less flexible than Jabotinsky’s. Thus at the Betar World Convention, held in Warsaw in September 1938, young Begin challenged his mentor: he questioned Jabotinsky’s method of diplomacy and expressed his despair at the conscience of the world. Begin neither shared Jabotinsky’s faith in the British administration of the Palestinian mandate, nor his “grave doubts about the value of military force as a means of forcing the British to recognise a Jewish state.”³⁰ At the 1938 Betar Convention, Begin proclaimed a new stage in Jewish history: “We are on the verge of the third era of Zionism, after practical Zionism and political Zionism, and it is military Zionism.”³¹ Professor Judas Magnes, former Rector of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem sadly commented on

²⁶ Isaac, R. J., *Party and Politics in Israel: Three Visions of a Jewish State* (New York: Longmans, 1981) p. 139.

²⁷ Schechtman, J. B., *Fighter and Prophet: The Vladimir Jabotinsky Story: The Last Years* (New York: Thomas Yoselof, 1961) p. 411.

²⁸ Rowland, R. C., *The Rhetoric of Menachem Begin* p. 50.

²⁹ Haber, E., *Menachem Begin* p. 26.

³⁰ Isaac, E. and R. J. Isaac, “The Impact of Jabotinsky” p. 34.

³¹ Menachem Begin at *The Third World Convention of Betar*, Warsaw, 11-16 September 1938, quoted in Sofer, S., *Zionism* p. 226.

this attitude a few years later: "The new Jewish voice speaks through the muzzle of guns ... Such is the new Torah of the Land of Israel ... May Heaven guard us from shackling Judaism and the people of Israel to this madness."³²

In 1939, Begin lost contact with Jabotinsky who at the time was active in Britain and the United States in the hope of establishing a Jewish army to fight side by side with the Allies against Nazi Germany. On 4 August 1940, while visiting the Betar camp in New York, Jabotinsky died of a heart attack. After the Nazi invasion of Poland, Begin and his wife attempted to flee Nazi-occupied Europe but were caught in Vilna, in Russian-occupied Poland. There, Begin was arrested by the Soviet authorities and convicted for espionage and other anti-Soviet activities. He was sentenced to eight years of hard labour in the Arctic region. After serving a little over one year in Soviet prisons and labour camps, he was released in the summer of 1941 as a result of an agreement between the Free Polish government and the Soviets regarding the Polish citizens. Begin joined the Free Polish army of General Anders in its fight against Nazism. He was assigned to a unit of Anders' army that took a route, which began in Central Asia and passed through Persia and the Arabian Desert. He reached Palestine in May 1942. Shortly after his arrival to Palestine, Begin became commander of the Irgun Zvai Leumi and "drastically changed the Irgun's policy from cooperation to conflict with the British."³³ According to Rowland, "the proximate cause for this change in policy was the holocaust."³⁴

The news about the systematic killings of Jews in Nazi death camps gradually became known in Palestine from the late 1942 onwards. With the awareness that "millions of men and women were shot, or drowned, or burned, or gassed or buried alive"³⁵ while the entire world stood by idly, came "an overpowering need to do something, anything, to fight the Nazis."³⁶ Yet, the Palestinian Jews were frustrated in their efforts to relieve their suffering brethren in Europe, not only because of their own helplessness but also because of British intransigence with regards to Jewish

³² Excerpt from Judas Magnes' opening address at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in 1946, in Bentwich, N., *For Zion's Sake: Biography of Judas Magnes* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1954 p. 131).

³³ Rowland, R. C., *The Rhetoric of Menachem Begin* p. 52.

³⁴ Rowland, R. C., *The Rhetoric of Menachem Begin* p. 52.

³⁵ Begin, M., *The Revolt* p. 36.

³⁶ Rowland, R. C., *The Rhetoric of Menachem Begin* p. 52.

immigration into mandatory Palestine. The grievances against the British included their indifference about the Holocaust of European Jews, denial of immigration permits to the persecuted Jews, failure to set up a significant Jewish Army, and failure to bomb the death camps. "In the light of these failings," noted Rowland, "Begin and the Irgun decided to act. If they could not fight the Germans directly, they could at least fight the British who seemed to be aiding the Germans."³⁷

It was against this background that the Jewish revolt in mandatory Palestine broke out in February 1944. "The two fundamental facts – the campaign of extermination of the Jews in Europe and the barred gates in the very days of that campaign – were the immediate causes of its outbreak,"³⁸ explained Begin in his memoirs. Begin's justified for the revolt against the mandatory government by stating that it was the Holocaust that required military action, a recurrent validation of the use of military force throughout Begin's public life: "Blood too brought the revolt to life. The blood of our people cried out to us from the foreign soil on which it had been shed, fired revolt in our hearts and gave the rebels strength."³⁹ The revolt against the British was the first of Begin's many transpositions of Nazi enmity upon another obstacle on the way to Jewish sovereignty and power. "We fight, therefore we are"⁴⁰ expresses the deep inner need in many Jews, especially survivors, to affirm and justify their own survival by avenging yesterday's and preventing tomorrow's Holocausts. Thus Begin wrote: "We were not spared in order to live in slavery and oppression and to await some new Treblinka. We were spared in order to ensure life and freedom and honour for ourselves, for our people, for our children and our children's children. We were spared in order that there should be no repetition of what happened there..."⁴¹ The Holocaust energised the revolt through the four years of struggle against the British administration in Palestine.

Although the primary target of the revolt was the British administration, Irgun had to face two other adversaries as well: the Arabs, and the official Jewish organisations who opposed conflict with the British. Begin's strategy towards the

³⁷ Rowland, R. C., *The Rhetoric of Menachem Begin* p. 52.

³⁸ Begin, M., *The Revolt* p. 38.

³⁹ Begin, M., *The Revolt* p. 40.

⁴⁰ Title of chapter four of Begin's memoirs, *The Revolt*.

⁴¹ Begin, M., *The Revolt* p. 42.

Arabs is particularly relevant because "the approach of the Irgun in responding to Arab violence is still present in current [1980s] policies of the Israeli Defence Force responding to PLO terrorism."⁴² With regards to the Arabs, Begin adopted a policy of retaliation. Whenever Arabs killed Jews, Irgun retaliated, even when they knew that innocent people would be killed. Thus for example, Irgun threw bombs into crowds of Arabs, some of whom were completely innocent.⁴³ If those responsible for attacks against Jews could not be located, someone else was punished for the attack in their stead. As Rowland put it: "From the perspective of the Irgun, this loss of life was unfortunate, but unavoidable."⁴⁴ They retaliated because "their ultimate aim was to prevent another Holocaust. And the only way to fight the Holocaust was through strength and instant retaliation."⁴⁵ The policy of retaliation, for which Israel became famous, is more than just an effective strategy of deterrence. It is an expressivist use of military force originating from a historical trauma and humiliation not yet overcome. No other episode in Israel's history illustrates this better than its 1982 invasion of Lebanon.

Israel's Invasion of Lebanon

*I feel like I have sent an army to Berlin to destroy Hitler in his bunker.*⁴⁶

From 1975 to 1981, Lebanon witnessed persistent internal conflict, fomented by wider regional conflict in the Middle East, which resulted in the fragmentation of the country, destruction of its infrastructure, and of its social cohesion. In the 1982 invasion of Lebanon, the Israeli government pursued two goals. The removal of the PLO threat to northern settlements was the declared aim and was widely supported by the Israeli public. The hidden agenda, however, included a destruction of Syrian missile batteries in the Bekaa Valley, the joining and cooperation with the Maronite forces in Beirut, and the establishment of a friendly Maronite government that would sign a peace treaty with Israel. The first part of this section thus examines the Palestinian presence in Lebanon and its impact on Israel's security, while the second

⁴² Rowland, R. C., *The Rhetoric of Menachem Begin* p. 57.

⁴³ See Bewer, S., "Irgun Bombs Kill 15 Arabs; 3 of 5 Attackers are Slain" in *New York Times*, 8 January 1948, pp. 1, 19.

⁴⁴ Rowland, R. C., *The Rhetoric of Menachem Begin* p. 57.

⁴⁵ Rowland, R. C., *The Rhetoric of Menachem Begin* p. 142.

⁴⁶ Zimuki, A., "Begin to Reagan: I feel like I have sent the Army into Berlin to destroy Hitler in his bunker" in *Yediot Aharonot*, 3 August 1982 p. 1.

part briefly reviews the main stages of Israeli progressive realisation of the hidden agenda until the tragic reversal of fortune after the assassination of Israel's protégé Bashir Gemayel and the subsequent massacres in Sabra and Shatilla refugee camps.

After the debacle known as 'Black September' in September 1970, the Palestinian Liberation Organisation and Yasser Arafat's *Al Fatah* were expelled from Jordan in 1971. They re-established their organizational and operational centre in south Lebanon, and their headquarters in Beirut. The PLO began infiltrating the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon and built a new power base and infrastructure in their midst. In the decade between the Black September and 1980, and particularly after the outbreak of Lebanese civil war in 1975, the PLO essentially created a state within a state in most of south Lebanon. Forging an alliance with the Lebanese National Movement (LNM), a loose confederation of various nationalist and progressive Muslim dominated parties, the PLO made inroads among the Shi'ite Muslims in the countryside and the Sunni Muslims chafing under Maronite hegemony in the city. According to Schiff and Ya'ari, the PLO had become by 1976 "the sole instrument of rule in the western sector of Lebanon stretching from Beirut south to the Israeli border."⁴⁷ The Palestinians controlled roads, collected customs at the ports of Tyre and Sidon, and virtually ran Beirut international airport.⁴⁸

From their Lebanese stronghold, the PLO had coordinated and often carried out a number of terrorist attacks against Israel, including some that made international headlines. The massacre of eleven Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympic Games in 1972, the hijacking of an Air France aircraft on its way from Tel Aviv to Paris in 1976, and holding six small children hostage in the Misgav Am kibbutz nursery in 1980, are just a few examples of the more spectacular operations. In retaliation, Israel usually unleashed powerful air strikes against PLO encampments and Palestinian refugee camps in southern Lebanon, where guerrillas were believed to be hiding, or carried out assassinations. For example, in response to the Munich massacre, in April 1973, forty Israeli commandos conducted an ambitious mission to strike at multiple targets and deliver a decisive blow against the PLO in Beirut. Some

⁴⁷ Schiff, Z. and E. Ya'ari, *Israel's Lebanon War* (London: Counterpoint, 1986) p. 79.

⁴⁸ Schiff, Z. and E. Ya'ari, *Israel's Lebanon War* p. 79.

of those responsible for the Munich tragedy were killed together with approximately one hundred PLO guerrillas. Yet, it was not until Begin came to power in 1977, that Israel directed a ground operation against the PLO in Lebanon. Twice during Begin's tenure as Israel's Prime Minister, military actions were launched in response to Palestinian terrorist acts against Israeli citizens: the 1978 'Operation Litani' and the 1982 'Operation Peace for Galilee.'

On 11 March 1978 eleven Palestinian terrorists stopped two buses on the Tel Aviv-Haifa coastal road, crammed all the passengers into one and at gunpoint ordered the driver to go to Tel Aviv. After being stopped by Israeli security forces just north of Tel Aviv, the terrorists murdered thirty-seven Israelis and wounded seventy-six in an exchange of fire, before being themselves either killed or taken prisoner. In an address to the press on the following day, Prime Minister Begin called the attack a "Nazi atrocity"⁴⁹ and expressed outrage at the fact that "the remnant of the Jewish people"⁵⁰ was being massacred in their own land only because they were Jews. He proceeded by recalling that "this organization called "Fatah" or PLO" is one of the meanest, the basest armed organizations ever in the annals of mankind since the days of the Nazis. ...They came to kill Jews. They are Nazis, and perpetrated a Nazi deed."⁵¹ In his statement to the Israeli Knesset, Begin criticised the governments and organizations that spoke of a moderation in the PLO and warned:

Gone forever are the days when Jewish blood could be shed with impunity. Let it be known: The shedders of innocent blood shall not go unpunished. We shall defend our citizens, our women, our children. We shall sever the arm of iniquity. Under no circumstances, under no conditions will we acquiesce in a criminal's hand being raised against a Jewish child, a Jewish woman.⁵²

⁴⁹ "Statement to the press by Prime Minister Begin on the massacre of Israelis on the Haifa - Tel Aviv Road, 12 March 1978" in Government of Israel, *Israel's Foreign Relations: Selected Documents*, vol. 4-5 (1977-1979), Document 133. Internet edition at:

<http://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/go.asp?MFAH0ezt0>. Last accessed on 15 August 2001.

⁵⁰ "Statement to the press by Prime Minister Begin on the massacre of Israelis on the Haifa - Tel Aviv Road, 12 March 1978." 'The remnant' is a biblical expression from Isaiah 53:10.

⁵¹ "Statement to the press by Prime Minister Begin on the massacre of Israelis on the Haifa - Tel Aviv Road, 12 March 1978."

⁵² "Statement to the Knesset by Prime Minister Begin on the terrorist raid and the Knesset resolution, 13 March 1978" in Government of Israel, *Israel's Foreign Relations: Selected Documents*, vol. 4-5 (1977-1979), Document 134. Internet edition at:

<http://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/go.asp?MFAH0ezu0>. Last accessed on 15 August 2001.

The Prime Minister concluded his statement to the Knesset by reiterating his pledge: "We shall do what has to be done to defend our people."⁵³

Keeping his promise, the Begin government launched a military operation against terrorist bases in Lebanon in early hours of 15 March 1978. Later depicted as a rehearsal for the 1982 invasion, the 1978 Litani campaign was the biggest IDF military operation since the Yom Kippur War. In seven days of the campaign, the 7,000 Israeli troops with armour, artillery, and the IAF air support, occupied the entire area north of the Israeli border up to the Litani River and destroyed the PLO infrastructure. The Litani Operation had limited and only temporary success. The UN Security Council called for an international peacekeeping force UNIFIL (United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon) to be deployed in south Lebanon and monitor the activities of the Palestinian guerrillas. Israel withdrew to its self-designed 'security zone' in June 1978. The purpose of this security zone was to create a buffer between the Palestinian refugees, whom they had driven north to the suburbs of Beirut, and the northern villages of Israel. At the same time, Israel created and financed its own proxy militia, the South Lebanon Army (SLA), to police the region from Lebanon.

In the years that followed, UNIFIL failed to prevent the PLO from re-establishing itself in the south and resuming cross-border attacks against Israel. Israel's policy of "preventive measures"⁵⁴ was intended to keep the pressure on the PLO: military fire across the border was a frequent occurrence. For reasons outlined in the beginning of this chapter, Begin favoured an active policy: rather than retaliate after the other side had already struck, the new strategy aimed to destroy the ability of the enemy to strike by inflicting blows "on the murderers in their own bases."⁵⁵ Begin's cabinet secretary, Arye Naor, quoted the Prime Minister as saying: "We go out to meet them [the PLO], we penetrate into their bases ... we no longer wait for them to come to us and spill our blood."⁵⁶ With the resignation of Ezer Weizman from

⁵³ "Statement to the Knesset by Prime Minister Begin on the terrorist raid and the Knesset resolution, 13 March 1978." Internet edition at: <http://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/go.asp?MFAH0ezu0>. Last accessed on 15 August 2001.

⁵⁴ Bregman, A., *Israel's Wars, 1947-93* p. 99.

⁵⁵ Naor, A., *Begin in Power: A Personal Testimony* (Tel Aviv, Yediot Aharonot, 1993) p. 253.

⁵⁶ Naor, A., *Begin in Power* p. 253.

the Defence Ministry in May 1980, Israel's policy became "even tougher, for it was now designed by Begin, who was not only Prime Minister but also Defence Minister."⁵⁷ The fact that the hawkish former general, Ariel Sharon, replaced Begin at the Defence Ministry on 30 June 1981 did little to moderate the Prime Minister's belligerency. After having destroyed the Iraqi nuclear reactor in June 1981, the newly elected Israeli government increased its pressure on the PLO in Lebanon. On 10 July 1981, for example, the IAF began a massive bombing campaign against the PLO basis in Lebanon. The PLO responded by a massive shelling of Israeli settlements in the Galilee, killing six Israelis and wounding thirty-eight. Israel hit back by launching an air strike at the PLO headquarters in downtown Beirut. In the attack a number of civilians were killed and Israel was condemned by the United States, Egypt and other nations. The US-brokered cease-fire came into effect on 24 July 1981 and led to a period of relative peace along the border between Israel and Lebanon.

Unimpressed by the ceasefire – although it was holding well – Begin's Defence Minister Ariel Sharon echoed the hawkish views of the Prime Minister when he argued that only the total destruction of the PLO in Lebanon would lead to peace in Israel and in the occupied territories. Sharon said: "Quiet on the West Bank requires the destruction of the PLO in Lebanon."⁵⁸ Similarly, the then Foreign Minister, later Prime Minister, Yitzhak Shamir, stated: "The defence of the West Bank starts in West Beirut."⁵⁹ In December 1981, Defence Minister Sharon presented the Cabinet with plans for a military operation against the PLO. According to the former Israeli ambassador to the UK, Moshe Raviv, the proposed plan took the Cabinet completely by surprise. In the early 1980s, Israelis were not in the mood for war. Israel was in the final phase of a troop pullout in the Sinai desert (part of the bargain in the 1979 peace agreement with Egyptians) and Israeli ministers did not think it would be wise to invade one Arab country while pulling out of another. Furthermore, they correctly estimated that Lebanon would be a slippery target: a civil war between the PLO-Lebanese National Movement (LNM) alliance and Maronite Christians, was further complicated by Syria's involvement alongside the PLO-LNM Muslim block. The ministers' overriding concern was that any such Israeli operation would lead to a

⁵⁷ Bregman, A., *Israel's Wars, 1947-93* p. 99.

⁵⁸ Quoted in Schiff, Z., "Op-Ed" in *Ha'aretz*, 23 May 1982.

⁵⁹ Quoted in Marcus, Y., "The War is Inevitable" in *Ha'aretz*, 23 May 1982.

clash with Syrians stationed in the Bekaa valley and risk a full-blown war with Syria.⁶⁰ Undeterred by the cabinet's scepticism, Ariel Sharon started rallying political support in Washington. US Secretary of State, Alexander Haig warned Sharon that "nothing should be done in Lebanon without an internationally recognised provocation, and the Israeli reaction should be proportionate to that provocation."⁶¹ Fearing that his remarks to Sharon were not clear enough, Haig later wrote a personal letter to Prime Minister Begin in which he expressed concern about "possible future Israeli military actions in Lebanon, which regardless of size, could have consequences none of us could foresee."⁶² Typically, Begin rebuked him with the following words: "Mr. Secretary, my dear friend, the man has not yet been born who will ever obtain from me consent to let Jews be killed by a bloodthirsty enemy."⁶³

The benefit of hindsight sheds additional light on the extent to which Ariel Sharon misled the Cabinet into believing that they were invited to consider a limited, Litani-like campaign, in which troops would only penetrate to a depth of 45 kilometres into Lebanon. In fact, the Israeli operational plan, known to the Israeli army commanders and to the allied Maronite leadership, was hidden from the Israeli ministers. After the authorisation to invade had been issued, the Cabinet lost control over the events and was only occasionally asked to authorise post-hoc what had already been carried out on the ground.⁶⁴ Like during the days of the revolt against the British, Begin "sanctioned the actions of his soldiers without being able to control them."⁶⁵ Given the lack of governmental and public overview during the later stages of the war, only the decision to attack and the first stage of the operation – war against the PLO (6-9 June 1982) are examined in some detail here. Those two moments in the Lebanon war could still be made compatible with Israeli self-representation and were supported by the public. The later stages of the war, however, especially the merciless siege of Beirut culminating in the news of the

⁶⁰ Raviv, M., *Israel at Fifty: Five Decades of Struggle for Peace: A Diplomat's Narrative* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1998) p. 207.

⁶¹ Alexander Haig, quoted in Bregman, A., *Israel's Wars, 1947-93* p. 102.

⁶² Ball, G. and D. Ball, *The Passionate Attachment: America's Involvement with Israel: 1947 to Present* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1992) p. 123.

⁶³ Ball, G. and D. Ball, *The Passionate Attachment* p. 123.

⁶⁴ For a detailed discussion of Sharon's manipulation of the Cabinet see Schiff, Z. and E. Ya'ari, *Israel's Lebanon War* (London: Counterpoint, 1986).

⁶⁵ Sofer, S., *Zionism* p. 236.

Sabra and Shatilla massacres, provoked a collapse of consensus among the public and the army, thus leading to the most serious identity crisis in the history of the Jewish state.

It took a series of incidents to convince the hesitating cabinet ministers about the soundness of Sharon's invasion plan. On 3 April 1982 Yaakov Bar-Siman-Tov, a Mossad agent, was shot dead in Paris, and the proposal to invade Lebanon in retaliation was made at the cabinet meeting a week later: five ministers opposed the plan and Begin decided to postpone it. On 21 April 1982, an artillery officer was killed and two soldiers were wounded when their vehicle hit a mine in south Lebanon. The IDF retaliated and killed twenty-three PLO guerrillas in Lebanon. In response the PLO hit back with rockets and projectiles. Yet, when Prime Minister Begin brought the issue of ground invasion up at the meeting, seven ministers still opposed the operation. The incident that eventually triggered the war was the attack on Israel's Ambassador to London, Shlomo Argov on 3 June 1982. The fact that the assassination attempt was carried out by a group belonging to the sworn enemy of the PLO, Abu Nidal, did not prevent the cabinet from concluding that PLO had to be wiped out in response. "Abu Nidal, Abu Schmidal. We have to strike at the PLO,"⁶⁶ sneered the Chief of Staff Lt. Gen Rafael Eitan when an intelligence officer brought this detail to his notice. At the meeting of the Israeli Cabinet on 4 June, Begin declared: "We will not stand for them attacking an Israeli ambassador! An assault on an ambassador is tantamount to an attack on the State of Israel, and we will respond to it!"⁶⁷ The following day, the crucial meeting took place at the Prime Minister's residence: the Minister of Defence Sharon and the Chief of Staff Eitan sought the cabinet's approval for the invasion. The ministers were led to understand that the operation would involve a maximum forty-five kilometres penetration into Lebanon with the aim of removing the PLO artillery. The Defence Minister explicitly stated that Beirut was not involved in the plan and that any clash with Syrians in the Bekaa valley would be avoided. He estimated that the operation, baptised 'Peace for Galilee,' would take forty-eight hours to complete. The Prime Minister's explanation for this action was entirely within the boundaries of the Jewish/Holocaust field of vision:

⁶⁶ Rafael Eitan quoted in Schiff, Z. and E. Ya'ari, *Israel's Lebanon War* p. 98.

⁶⁷ Menachem Begin quoted in Schiff, Z. and E. Ya'ari, *Israel's Lebanon War* p. 97.

You know what I have done and what we have all done to prevent loss of life. But such is our fate in Israel. There is no way other than to fight selflessly. Believe me, *the alternative is Treblinka and we have decided that there will be no more Treblinkas.*⁶⁸

Thus, at 11 a.m. on June 6, 1982, a convoy of 80,000 Israeli troops moved into southern Lebanon with the publicly declared objective of rousting out the PLO. On the third day of the war, on 8 June, the IDF spokesman announced, that the Israeli forces have achieved all their objectives ahead of schedule and were currently “involved in cleaning up and securing the area [of Sidon].”⁶⁹ The declared part of Israel’s objective in Lebanon having been achieved, the army should have been told to stop fighting. Instead, one of the IDF armoured brigades attacked Syrian positions in Jezzín. In what became a common procedure, the cabinet was asked post-hoc to approve the opening of the Damour-Aley road to relieve the pressure on the division held up by the Syrians near Ein Zechalta in the Shouf Mountains. The Israeli army had already been fighting the Syrians in Jezzín and in Ein Zechalta without the cabinet’s permission. The authorisation to destroy the Syrian missile batteries in the Bekaa Valley was extracted by the Defence Minister Sharon on 9 June under the pretence that the soldiers in the field could not get the air support they so desperately needed without first removing the missiles. The first in the series of hidden objectives was realised in a spectacular air battle with “some 200 supersonic jets targeting, dodging, and firing at each other over an area of approximately 2,500 square kilometres.”⁷⁰ According to Schiff and Ya’ari, the Syrian losses were “staggering.”⁷¹ Some 30 planes were destroyed and about a half of Syria’s combat pilots were killed in the battle. Even when the 11 June ceasefire between Syria and

⁶⁸ Naor, A., *Government At War: How The Israeli Government Functioned During The Lebanon War, 1982* (Tel Aviv: Yediot Aharonot, 1986) p. 47 ff. Italics added.

⁶⁹ “I.D.F. Spokesman’s announcement, 8 June 1982” in Government of Israel, *Israel’s Foreign Relations: Selected Documents*, vol. 8 (1982-1984), Document 9. Internet edition at: <http://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/go.asp?MFAH0ido0>. Last accessed on 15 August 2001.

⁷⁰ Schiff, Z. and E. Ya’ari, *Israel’s Lebanon War* p. 167.

⁷¹ Schiff, Z. and E. Ya’ari, *Israel’s Lebanon War* p. 167.

Israel came into effect in the eastern sector of Lebanon, "the war, as it turned out, was barely under way."⁷²

On 13 June 1982, the IDF linked up with the Phalangist forces in the outskirts of Beirut and, headed by the Chief of Staff Rafael Eitan, entered the Christian section of the city. At that stage, the government overview of IDF's activity was virtually non-existent. Thus Schiff and Ya'ari reported that Begin and the cabinet learned about the presence of Israeli troops in Beirut from the hourly news bulletin airing a live report about Beirut streets being jammed with Israeli vehicles, just after Begin's own statement – denying that IDF was in Beirut at all – had been broadcast on the Israeli radio.⁷³ Despite his agreement with the Israelis, the Christian Maronite leader, Bashir Gemayel, refused to send his men to clear Beirut of the PLO guerrillas who dug in and mingled with the civilian population. Unwilling to send his own troops into Beirut, Sharon ordered his military command to tighten the noose around the city, bomb incessantly the areas where the PLO was hiding, cut water and electricity, and stop the food supplies from reaching the population. The aim of this brutal policy was to press the local population and the Lebanese government into demanding that Arafat and his men leave the city and thereby spare the civilian Lebanese population further hardships. The siege of Beirut went on for two months and was highly unpopular within the ranks of the IDF and with the Israeli public, as the next section examines in more detail. After weeks of saturation bombing of the city from ground, air, and sea, and massive air attacks on the Palestinian refugee camps, the PLO finally agreed to leave Beirut. On 21 August at 3 pm, the first contingent of PLO evacuees left the city by sea. Over the course of twelve days, 14,398 Palestinian and Syrian fighters departed from Beirut, leaving the elderly, women and children behind in the Palestinian refugee camps.⁷⁴

Two days after the PLO began its exit from the Lebanese capital, Israel's favourite candidate Bashir Gemayel was elected president. His inauguration was

⁷² Schiff, Z. and E. Ya'ari, *Israel's Lebanon War* p. 180.

⁷³ Schiff, Z. and E. Ya'ari, *Israel's Lebanon War* p. 193.

⁷⁴ "I.D.F. Spokesman's Statement on the expulsion of the P.L.O. and Syrian Army from Beirut, 1 September 1982" in Government of Israel, *Israel's Foreign Relations: Selected Documents*, vol. 8 (1982-1984), Document 66. Internet edition at: <http://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/go.asp?MFAH0icy0>. Last accessed on 16 August 2001.

scheduled for 23 September. The Israeli government, particularly Sharon and Begin, were now highly pleased with this development. Begin sent Gemayel a warm cable of congratulations and made it public. In an article, written for the *New York Times*, the Defence Minister assessed the Lebanese campaign and expressed confidence that Israel's peace treaty with Lebanon would create "a new triangle of peace – Jerusalem, Cairo, Beirut."⁷⁵ Sharon's dream was shattered on 14 September 1982 when a member of the pro-Syrian militia assassinated the president-elect. "The bomb that killed Gemayel," wrote Bregman, "destroyed every reasonable chance that Israel and Lebanon could sign a workable peace treaty."⁷⁶ To 'restore order', the Israelis moved into West Beirut on 15 September in an operation called 'Iron Mind'. Without the authorisation of the cabinet, the IDF encircled the refugee camps in Sabra and Shatilla. Between September 16-18, while the Israelis were surrounding and guarding all entrances to the camps, the revenge-thirsty Phalangists entered the camps in coordination with the IDF, allegedly to clean out the 2,000 PLO fighters who were believed to be still hiding there. As it turned out later, they proceeded to massacre some 700-800⁷⁷ Palestinians and Lebanese civilians, including women and children, literally in front of the noses of the Israeli army. Although the Israelis did not participate in the killing, they provided the artillery support and the illumination of the site. More than anything else, the assassination of Bashir Gemayel and the massacre that followed symbolised "the total collapse of Israel's disastrous adventure in Lebanon in 1982."⁷⁸

As he explained in an interview conducted in 1977, Begin was fighting the Holocaust all his life, including in Lebanon:

So I think I finished saying that the holocaust lives within me. It is the prime mover of all that we have done in our generation; for instance, our fight for liberation is a result of the recognition that we, in our time, must create

⁷⁵ Sharon, A., "Gains from the War in Lebanon" in *New York Times*, 29 August 1982.

⁷⁶ Bregman, A., *Israel's Wars, 1947-93* p. 115.

⁷⁷ The estimate of the Israeli intelligence (700-800) is the figure adopted by the Kahane commission investigating the IDF's role in the massacres. The Palestinian Red Cross put the number at over 2,000 victims, while the death certificates were issued for 1,200 although these also included the disappeared persons, and are therefore not entirely reliable. See Schiff, Z. and E. Ya'ari, *Israel's Lebanon War* p.282.

⁷⁸ Bregman, A., *Israel's Wars, 1947-93* p. 115.

conditions so that never again will the Jew be defenceless. Our scourge was the defencelessness of the Jewish people. And that defencelessness which became helplessness was the real provocation for the murderers. They say that they can do to the Jew anything they want to. A cruel man is a coward. If he sees that there is no resistance that there is no danger to him, then he doesn't know any limits ... It lives within me. And I live within it. And I will live with it until the last day of my life.⁷⁹

Rowland described Begin's futile struggle against the ghost of the Holocaust with considerable candour and sympathy: "The raids in Lebanon might best be understood as rituals through which Begin enacted his continuing commitment to the myth of the Holocaust and return. Through the raids, Begin could fight against the Holocaust and prove to the world that the Jews were not weak."⁸⁰

The author Amos Oz understood what drove Begin's behaviour but warned against the danger of entertaining revenge fantasies in a position of power. In an open letter to the Prime Minister he wrote:

Adolf Hitler destroyed a third of the Jewish people, among them your parents and relatives, among them my family. Often I, like many Jews, find at the bottom of my soul a dull sense of pain because I did not kill Hitler with my own hands. I am sure that in your soul a similar fantasy hovers. There is not and will never be a cure for this open wound in our souls. Tens of thousands of dead Arabs will not heal that wound. But, Mr. Begin, Adolf Hitler died thirty-seven years ago. Unfortunately or not, it is a fact: Hitler is not in hiding in Nabatea, in Sidon, or in Beirut. He is dead and gone.

Again and again, Mr. Begin, you reveal to the public eye a strange urge to resuscitate Hitler in order to kill him every day anew in the guise of terrorists. ... This urge to revive and obliterate Hitler over and over again is the result of melancholy that poets must express, but among statesmen it is a hazard that is liable to lead them along a path of mortal danger.⁸¹

⁷⁹ Begin quoted by Breindel, E., "The Many Wars of Menachem Begin" in *Rolling Stone*, 3 November 1977 p. 87.

⁸⁰ Rowland, R., *The Rhetoric of Menachem Begin* p. 206.

⁸¹ Oz, A., "Hitler is Already Dead, Mr. Prime Minister," in *Yediot Aharonot*, 21 June 1982 p. 6.

As Oz had predicted, the consummated revenge did not bring Begin the personal relief he might have hoped for, nor was his later torment ennobled by national glory. Instead, his decisions brought upon Israel virulent international criticism and an unprecedented internal split. Last but not least, after the Kahane Commission's findings about the role of the IDF in Sabra and Shatila massacres were published, Menachem Begin himself "became less strident about his defence of the war until he withdrew into isolation and complete silence."⁸²

Mourning And Identity Crisis: Israel After Lebanon

Mourning Traumatic Loss

*Okay, I've had enough of walking around like I'd like to brutalise everyone who looks at me wrong. I don't have to feel like that anymore.*⁸³

Mourning is, according to Judith Herman, "at once the most necessary and the most dreaded task of this stage of recovery. Patients often fear that once they allow themselves to start grieving they will never stop."⁸⁴ Survivors resist mourning chiefly for two reasons: the fear of confronting the pain, and pride. The fear of being overwhelmed by grief is particularly discouraging for survivors who have to confront a tremendous personal loss. Some refuse to mourn because they refuse to acknowledge the reality of an event. Others resist mourning out of pride; they may consciously refuse to grieve "as a way of denying victory to the perpetrator."⁸⁵ This resistance to mourning is even more present in the cases of massive traumas because the survivors feel that they must not let themselves mourn those who did not survive, lest the future generations forget. As Chodoff put it:

The stubborn, even prideful refusal to forget displayed by certain survivors ... suggests a desperate attempt to rescue their dead from the limbo of insignificance to which they have been consigned ...⁸⁶

⁸² Schiff, Z. and E. Ya'ari, *Israel's Lebanon War* p. 284.

⁸³ Quoted in Bass, E. and L. Davis, *The Courage To Heal: A Guide for Women Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1988) p. 163.

⁸⁴ Herman, J. L., *Trauma and Recovery* p. 188.

⁸⁵ Herman, J. L., *Trauma and Recovery* p. 188.

⁸⁶ Chodoff p., "The German concentration camp as a psychological stress," in *Archives of General Psychiatry*, No. 22 (1970) p. 87.

When the victims resist mourning, the story of trauma becomes frozen into a timeless and untouchable entity. Any attempt to grieve the loss is then interpreted as betrayal of those who perished. Mourning is an indispensable stage of recovery because as Lifton puts it “unresolved, incomplete mourning results in stasis and entrapment in the traumatic process.”⁸⁷ The latter almost inevitably leads to repeated reenactments of trauma, in which the perpetrator is fought in different guises over and over again. Since mourning is so difficult, “resistance to mourning is probably the most common cause of stagnation ... of recovery.”⁸⁸

According to Herman, resistance to mourning takes various disguises. Most frequently it takes either, or a combination, of the following fantasies: revenge, forgiveness, compensation, and compassion. Each one of these fantasies deflects the survivor's efforts from confronting the traumatising loss, and more often than not, from the original perpetrator. As the example of Begin's experience of the PLO's presence in Lebanon showed, **fantasy of revenge** seeks to redress the humiliation and shame of traumatisation by a demonstration of victim's empowerment. When the original perpetrator cannot be targeted, the revenge finds its outlet in another enemy, which is inevitably believed to be a direct continuation of the first one. The **fantasy of forgiveness** is equally self-defeating, because true forgiveness before mourning “remains out of reach for most ordinary human beings. ... And even divine forgiveness is not unconditional.”⁸⁹ In the **fantasy of compensation** the victims seek to score a victory against the perpetrator and thus erase the humiliation of the trauma. A variant of the compensation fantasy seeks rectification not from the perpetrator but from the bystanders. In a case of massive trauma compensation fantasy would mean that survivors would seek compensation from global humanity. Like the fantasy of revenge, forgiveness, and compensation, the **fantasy of compassion**, represents a formidable hindrance to mourning. Although the victim's feeling of compassion for another may be “a fragile beginning of compassion for herself,”⁹⁰ it usually leads to a further stigmatisation of the victim. The traumatic

⁸⁷ Lifton, R. J., “The Concept of the Survivor”, in Dimsdale, J. E. (ed.), *Survivors, Victims* p. 124.

⁸⁸ Herman, J. L., *Trauma and Recovery* p. 189.

⁸⁹ Herman, J. L., *Trauma and Recovery* p. 190.

⁹⁰ Herman, J. L., *Trauma and Recovery* p. 194.

response to humiliation and feeling of worthlessness can be clothed in an intense awareness of moral superiority: former victims sometimes seek to recover their self-worth by establishing a maximum moral distance between themselves and the perpetrator, thus imposing upon themselves a standard of morally irreproachable behaviour. The latter is a prominent feature of their 'victim specialness.' On the other hand, for the reasons described in Chapter One, the survivors have a tendency to consider most of their actions as provoked by an external threat and as such morally justifiable. If, however, the victim realises that her behaviour was not morally acceptable according to her own standards, the grandiose feeling of specialness, which gives her a sense of worth, collapses. As a result, the victim vilifies herself beyond any reasonable measure of self-criticism by immediately assimilating her slightest departure from the self-imposed moral standards with the evil that had been inflicted upon her. The fantasy of compassion is therefore nothing but identification with the hatred of the perpetrator and tacit reconfirmation of the victim's worthlessness.

The process of mourning is usually the longest in the recovery process. It is never entirely completed and certain life situations can reawaken the traumatic memory. However, after many repetitions of the traumatic narrative and traumatic reenactments, the moment comes when the memory of trauma no longer arouses quite the same level of emotional intensity as it used to. The victim's story and her grief begin to fade in the background and at one point the survivor realises that "perhaps the trauma is not the most important, or even the most interesting, part of her life story."⁹¹ Herman observed that the major part of mourning is accomplished, "when the patient reclaims her own history and feels renewed hope and energy for engagement with life."⁹² After mourning the trauma and her old self, the survivor faces a demanding task of rebuilding the self. "Gaining possession of oneself," wrote Herman, "often requires repudiating those aspects of the self that were imposed by the trauma. As the survivor sheds her victim identity, she may also choose to renounce parts of herself that have felt almost intrinsic to her being."⁹³ However, victimhood carries with it certain privileges – including the right to sympathy and

⁹¹ Herman, J. L., *Trauma and Recovery* p. 195.

⁹² Herman, J. L., *Trauma and Recovery* p. 195.

⁹³ Herman, J. L., *Trauma and Recovery* p. 203.

ethical indulgence owed to those who suffer – and therefore, letting go of the victim identity is often resisted. Like any stage of healing, the recreation of the self is never completed. It can be considered successful, however, when the victim part of survivor's identity is integrated into the new self without dominating it. In other words, the survivor is ready to reconnect with the world when victimhood is no longer the principal paradigm governing her behaviour.

On the collective level, both mourning and letting go of the trauma are extremely complex and like all threatening processes, are often resisted. An individual trauma governs a traumatised person's life and activity and defines her as a victim, until she mourns the loss and rebuilds a new self. Likewise, a communal trauma dominates the collective identity and determines the parameters of the community's view of the world and itself in relation to it. Encoded in the institutional fabric of the society, the traumatised outlook and victim identity are cherished as communal heritage and transmitted from one generation to another. The community leadership, albeit willing to stage a collective reconstruction of the traumatic narrative and establish a ritualised collective remembrance, rarely ventured into promoting genuine collective mourning and redefinition of collective victim identity. The reasons for communal resistance to mourning are usually a combination of the following:

- Fear that a community may split or collapse in grief once it starts mourning.
- Concern that in the absence of a continuing trauma, no other source of communality could provide a level of social cohesion necessary for the community's survival.
- Anticipation of short-term opportunity costs incurred by abandoning the privileges of collective victimhood.
- Challenge of having to redefine the basis for community's identity as well as its internal and external relationships.

Like individual mourning, the collective grieving and consequent abandonment of victim identity, are provoked by an identity crisis resulting from an irresolvable antagonism between one's self-perception as a weak, embattled, and innocent victim, and the reality of one's power and its consequences, as felt by the outside world. Given the difficulty of mourning, and the concurrent resistance to the process,

often, such a crisis occurs only when the former victim creates victims of her own aggression, usually through a fantasy of revenge or / and compensation. Thus, the first part of this chapter outlined the story of one man's resistance to mourning by means of enacted revenge fantasy. The latter undoubtedly found positive resonance within a considerable proportion of the 70 percent of Israelis who supported the war until the end. The fantasy of revenge was accompanied by a fantasy of compensation, sought mainly from the bystanders. The fantasy of compensation was expressed as a demand that the 'those who stood by *then*,' refrain from intervening in the victims' 'getting even' (that is, in the enactment of revenge fantasy) with the newest avatar of the perpetrator.

The rationale behind Israel's response to international criticism of the war is typically that of compensation: "after the Holocaust, the international community has lost its right to demand that Israel answer for its actions."⁹⁴ The supporters of war circulated countless variations on that premise, among them Begin's famous snub of the *London Times*: "A newspaper that supported the treachery of the Munich agreement should be very careful in preaching morality to a small nation fighting for its life."⁹⁵ The last mechanism of resistance to mourning that can be observed in the Lebanon war is the fantasy of compassion, which takes the form of extreme moral sensitivity and parallel extravagant self-criticism bordering on self-hatred. Unlike genuine mourning, the fantasy of compassion does not lead to the relinquishing of victim identity and subsequent assumption of responsibility for one's empowerment. In the Lebanese context, the fantasy of compassion found its outlet in a representation of the war as an inverted Holocaust setting, where the Israelis-Nazis humiliate, starve, kill, and brutalise the Palestinians-Jews. Although this extreme radical dissent was "rare and was restricted, generally, to the lunatic fringe,"⁹⁶ it nevertheless included some prominent members of the Israeli cultural and intellectual elite, including a distinguished professor and recipient of prestigious Israeli prize (which he refused), Yeshayahu Leibowitz, who described the war in Lebanon as "Judeo-Nazi policy."⁹⁷

⁹⁴ Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 399.

⁹⁵ Menachem Begin, 18 June 1982, in *Knesset Papers* 10:2 p. 2973.

⁹⁶ Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 409.

⁹⁷ "Professor Leibowitz Calls Israel's Policy in Lebanon Judeo-Nazi" in *Yediot Aharonot*, 21 June 1982 p. 7.

Crisis of Israel's Victim Identity

*How can Jews who have themselves been the victims of so much cruelty become so cruel?*⁹⁸

The Lebanon war was, beyond any shadow of doubt, "the most controversial of all Israel's wars."⁹⁹ It broke the national consensus on security and provoked a number of unprecedented actions and attitudes within the Israeli army and the public. While the war was still in progress, eighty-six reservists, including fifteen officers, sent a letter to the government, known as the 'Letter of the 100' which stated their opposition to the war accompanied by a demand to do their reserve duty within Israel, not in Lebanon.¹⁰⁰ Other anti-war movements were formed within the army as the siege of Beirut continued. Enlisted men who had fought in Lebanon organised a movement called 'Soldiers against Silence,' which later merged with *Shalom Achshav* (Peace Now). They called for the removal from office of the Defence Minister and for an immediate end of the war. By September 1982, over 500 reservists became members of an organisation called *Yesh Gvul* (meaning 'there is a border / limit'), which became the spearhead of opposition to the war and later a support group for conscientious objectors. *Yesh Gvul* became the strongest of the groups, with 2,000 reservists eventually signing a petition not to serve in Lebanon; 150 of them were court-martialled. Not only the reserve units, but also a number of the IDF elite soldiers opposed the war. Thus, all members of the commando that carried out the Entebbe rescue operation in 1976, as well as all 22 IAF pilots, signed a protest letter against the war, expressing their utter distrust in the Defence Minister Sharon and demanding his immediate resignation.

The anti-war mood in the army reached its climax when on 22 July 1982, Colonel Eli Geva, head of an elite armoured brigade asked to be relieved of his duties. In a letter sent to the Minister of Defence and the Chief of Staff, Colonel Geva explained that his conscience did not allow him to take part in the attack on Beirut and the harming of innocent civilians. This was the first time that a senior Israeli officer had ever resigned in protest during any of Israel's wars. When Prime Minister

⁹⁸ Benjamin Cohen of Tel Aviv University to Pierre Vidal-Naquet on 8 June 1982. Courtesy of Pierre Vidal-Naquet.

⁹⁹ Bregman, A., *Israel's Wars* p. 115.

¹⁰⁰ The letter is reproduced in Menuhin, I., and D. Menuhin (eds.), *The Limits of Obedience* (Tel Aviv: Tenu'at 'Yesh gvul', 1985).

Begin asked Geva why he had refused to continue in the siege, the high-flying son of a reserve general replied that he could see children when he looked through his binoculars into Beirut. He was not ostracized as a traitor and was not court-martialled. He was discharged of his duties in the army and sent home.

The growing disillusionment within Israel at the terrible toll being inflicted upon Lebanese civilians brought thousands of Israelis to the streets. An estimated 10,000 had staged a protest rally in Tel Aviv as early as 26 June 1982. Commenting upon that event, the Communications Minister in Begin's cabinet said: "It was the first time in the history of Israel that such an event had taken place during the course of war."¹⁰¹ A week later, 100,000 attended a peace rally organised by Peace Now.¹⁰² The participants, including a group of elite officers who had recently returned from Lebanon, demanded the immediate ending of the war and Sharon's resignation. Parents of the soldiers serving in Lebanon also organised a group called 'Parents against Silence'. But most significantly on the symbolic level, on 6 August 1982, a Holocaust survivor began a hunger strike on Yad Vashem's grounds: Shlomo Schmelzman, survivor of the Warsaw Ghetto and of Buchenwald, "protested both the war and the use of Holocaust to justify it."¹⁰³

Rosh Hashana (Hebrew New Year) is one of the highest holidays in the Jewish calendar. According to the oral tradition this day celebrates the creation of the world: every year on this day God reviews and judges the deeds of his Creation. It is called Rosh Hashana, the 'head' of the Year because, just as the head directs the body, so too, God's judgment on Rosh Hashana directs the events of the coming year. During Rosh Hashana weekend 1982, while the Israelis were enjoying time for reflection and self-evaluation, hundreds of Palestinian and Lebanese civilians were being massacred in Sabra and Shatila. Schiff and Ya'ari describe the shock that the news of the massacres provoked in Israel:

Something snapped ... as hundreds of thousands of Israelis took the hideous pictures of slain children and piles of bloodstained bodies as confirmation of

¹⁰¹ Zipori, M., *In a Straight Line*, (Tel Aviv: Yediot Aharonot, 1997) p. 305.

¹⁰² Jansen, M., *The Battle of Beirut: Why Israel invaded Lebanon* (London: Zed Press, 1982) p. 104.

¹⁰³ Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 401.

most of their suppressed fears. ... The growing shock and revulsion led the whole country to take a new, deeply sobered look at the aims of the war and the means used to achieve them, and gradually the entire enterprise was perceived in a different light; it seemed to have changed the face of Israel and debased its cherished rectitude to the point where the government and army were implicated in the commission of atrocities. Sabra and Shatilla had become synonymous with infamy.¹⁰⁴

Further press revelations disclosing the circumstances surrounding the massacres, combined with the government's "clumsy attempts to cover Israel's tracks in everything related to the hideous affair"¹⁰⁵ fuelled the public outcry for an investigation. Only after a record 400,000 people had gathered in Tel Aviv demanding an independent commission of inquiry into the role of the IDF in the massacres, Begin finally agreed to appoint Chief Justice Yitzhak Kahan to head a state commission of inquiry. The Commission published its report on 9 February 1983. It stated that while the Phalangists had done the actual killing, the IDF Regional Command that controlled the area and allowed the Phalangist forces into the camps was indirectly responsible. The Commission strongly criticised the Minister of Defence and recommended his removal from office. Yet, Begin could not "summon up the political and personal fortitude to fire him."¹⁰⁶ The country was in uproar again and while a demonstration demanding Sharon's removal, organised by Peace Now, was taking place in front of the Prime Minister's office, a fanatical Sharon supporter tossed a hand grenade into the dispersing crowd, killing one demonstrator and wounding another. Begin resigned in September 1983, to be succeeded by Yitzhak Shamir, and Sharon stayed in the Cabinet as minister without a portfolio.

Over the summer 1982 and especially after the Sabra and Shatila massacres, countless Israelis experienced a deep crisis that marked the beginning of the mourning process and rebuilding of new identity. In the aftermath of the war in Lebanon, Israel's progressive Left from among the ranks of intellectual and cultural elites, began a thorough re-examination and redefinition of some basic and often

¹⁰⁴ Schiff, Z. and E., Ya'ari, *Israel's Lebanon War* p. 280.

¹⁰⁵ Schiff, Z. and E., Ya'ari, *Israel's Lebanon War* p. 281.

¹⁰⁶ Schiff, Z. and E., Ya'ari, *Israel's Lebanon War* p. 284.

quasi-sacred, historical and sociological concepts. Although the Israeli 'new historians' and 'new sociologists' have also committed certain excesses and mistakes, they indicated a decisive step in the right direction. As the conclusion to this thesis shows, the critical dissent in the Israeli academia undertook a challenging task of reconstructing a new system of meanings and beliefs and a new, non-victim, identity. Together with the parallel step of taking responsibility for one's own power, the relinquishing of victimhood as prime focus of identity made mourning and therefore, healing, a real possibility.

Conclusion: Radicalisation And Polarisation Of The Holocaust Legacy

But in the marrow of my bones, I feel that disaster looms¹⁰⁷

The conclusion to the Chapter Two briefly reviewed the main features of the Holocaust education seminars organised in 1985 for the IDF cadets. A few years later, during the Intifada, a decision was made to discontinue the special Holocaust study courses for soldiers because of the effect that those courses had on the soldiers' morale. "The soldiers make comparisons, and ... some leave as supporters of Kahane others ... as refusniks.¹⁰⁸ This anecdote epitomises the role of the Holocaust as the catalyst of polarisation and radicalisation of the Israeli society in the 1980s, and the two ideal-types – Kahanist [supporters of a quasi-fascist racist rabbi Meir Kahane], and refusnik [someone who refuses to serve in the occupied territories] – symbolise the depth of this division.

In 1984, Rabbi Meir Kahane was elected to the Israeli Knesset on the extreme anti-Arab ticket. Although Kahane was initially dismissed as "an eccentric troublemaker,"¹⁰⁹ by mid-1980s he headed the quickest growing political party in Israel's history. The polls predicted that, had it not been outlawed, his militantly anti-Arab party – Kach (meaning, 'Thus')– could have won as much as 12 seats in the 1988 Knesset elections, making it into the third largest party in Israel.¹¹⁰ His influence

¹⁰⁷ Kahane, M., *Never Again! A Program for Survival* (Los Angeles: Nash Publishing, 1971) p. 250.

¹⁰⁸ Don-Yehiya, E., "Memory and Political Culture" p. 159.

¹⁰⁹ Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 405.

¹¹⁰ To facilitate comparison it is worth recalling that in the 1988 elections, the third largest party – Shas – had 6 seats, whereas Likud had 40 and Labour 39. 12 seats would require approximately 10 percent of the total votes.

was considerable and Kahanism spread through Israel and gained power, especially among the youth. "Kahane's violent anti-Arab, antidemocratic nationalism and religious extremism," wrote Segev, "won most of their support in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, nourished by a complex of social frustrations, xenophobia ... fears for survival, and vague anxieties that Kahane knew how to stir up."¹¹¹

Born in New York City in 1932, Meir Kahane, joined the Revisionist Betar youth movement as a child. He studied at the Mir Yeshiva in Brooklyn and received his rabbinic ordination in 1956. That same year, Rabbi Kahane graduated from New York Law School and obtained a masters degree in International Relations from New York University. When he founded the militant Jewish Defence League (JDL) in 1968, Kahane announced that it would be necessary for the organization to use violence to gain its ends. Over the years the JDL has acted out the fantasies of its leader to leave behind it a trail of bombings, arson and intimidation, which finally led to its ban in the United States. Kahane immigrated to Israel in 1971 and founded Kach. Kach was most famous for its platform calling for the forcible removal of the Arab population from Israel and demanding the annexation of all the territories occupied in 1967 and unlimited Jewish settlement there. Kahane failed his 1976 and 1980 Knesset bid, but he was successful in winning his seat in the 1984 elections. Meir Kahane was assassinated in New York City in November 1990, but "his place was filled with other Kahanists, who knew how to express their demand for the deportation of the Arabs in acceptable language."¹¹² Other political parties (for example Tehiya, Tsomet and Moledet) advocated the transfer of Arabs to neighbouring countries, a project that has become a legitimate subject of discussion in the Israeli Knesset and has increasingly gained importance in the mainstream parties and the Israeli public. Thus, according to a survey conducted in 1998 by the Israeli daily *Ma'ariv*, 65 percent of Jewish Israeli respondents supported the idea of expelling Arabs to other Arabic countries if Israel is not subjected to international condemnation because of that.¹¹³ Kahane's ideas were also articulated by parts of the Israeli and American religious hierarchy (including former Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi

¹¹¹ Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 405-6.

¹¹² Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 407.

¹¹³ See *Ma'ariv* poll, 20 September 1998.

Shlomo Goren), and the settlers' movements, most notably *Gush Emunim* (meaning Bloc of the Faithful).

Rabbi Kahane's ideology represents the most extreme expression of revenge fantasy. His writings are full of biblically supported calls for revenge. In his 1971 book entitled *Never Again!*¹¹⁴, which his critics often equate to Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, Kahane offered a distinctly radical interpretation of the Holocaust lessons. After virulently criticising the passivity of the Jewish leadership in the United States vis-à-vis the dangers threatening the Jewish people in America (where the biggest threat is assimilation) and abroad (especially in the USSR and in the Arab countries), Kahane proceeded:

The lesson is clear. In the end, for the Jews, there is no ally except the Jews. That which our brothers and sisters learned in Europe we must learn here. Their Polish and Lithuanian and Czech and German friends deserted them in their hour of need. ... When the State of Israel was proclaimed and the Arab armies swarmed across the borders to exterminate the Jewish population, there was no one who came to help. No Berlin airlift was mounted for the besieged Jews of Jerusalem. ... It was only Jewish blood and Jewish funds and Jewish support that preserved Jewry from yet another holocaust. ... Let us cease fooling ourselves ... The death of six million Jews has in no way lessened the thirst of a world for Jewish blood. ... Never again. Never again must we make the same tragic error of refusing to believe that a Holocaust can sweep up the Jews wherever they may be and that hatred of the Jew is a thing that flourishes in all types of climates and regions. ...¹¹⁵

In this program for Jewish survival Kahane called for action. "Let us not fear 'overreaction'," he wrote, "Quite the contrary; the Jewish curse is underreaction as we learned so painfully in Germany."¹¹⁶ As a Member of the Knesset, Meir Kahane put his words into practice. He demanded the expulsion of Israel's Arab citizens and Arab residents of the occupied territories, and advocated establishing Jewish religious law as the law of the land.

¹¹⁴ Kahane, M., *Never Again!*

¹¹⁵ Kahane, M., *Never Again!* p. 224-8.

¹¹⁶ Kahane, M., *Never Again!* p. 98.

In September 1984, Kahane introduced two bills to the Knesset. The first one would have restricted Israeli citizenship to Jews whereas non-Jews would have the status of 'stranger' as defined by the Jewish law. As 'strangers', non-Jews would have only personal, but no political rights, and would therefore not be allowed to vote, hold public office, or reside in the city of Jerusalem. The second bill was called the 'Law to Prevent Assimilation between Jews and non-Jews and for the Holiness of Israel.' As the name indicates, this law – if accepted – would terminate all contact between Jews and non-Jews. There would be separate schools, summer camps, and beaches for Jews and non-Jews. Jewish children would not be allowed to visit Arab children in their homes or villages and they would also not be permitted to stay with non-Jewish families abroad. Non-Jews would not be allowed to live in Jewish neighbourhoods without the agreement of the majority of the Jewish residents. Jewish citizens and residents would not be allowed to marry non-Jews, neither in Israel nor abroad. Intermarried couples would be forced to separate immediately. Any sexual relations between Jews and non-Jews would be punishable with a 2-year prison sentence (5 years for a homosexual relation or intercourse with a Jewish prostitute). A Likud MK, Michael Eitan, compared the proposed legislation with the Nuremberg laws and found many points of similarity. Initially, the Knesset presidium refused to allow Kahane to bring the bills to the debate, but the Supreme Court reversed that decision because of lack of jurisdiction.¹¹⁷ Consequently, in 1985, an amendment (section 7a) was added to *Basic Law: The Knesset*, according to which candidates can be prevented from participating in the Knesset elections if their purposes or deeds express incitement to racism.¹¹⁸ Section 7a served as the basis for the disqualification of Kach in the 1988 elections. Rabbi Kahane was not allowed to stand at the 1988 Knesset elections, and Kach and its offshoot Kahane Chai (meaning 'Kahane lives') were outlawed in 1994,¹¹⁹ after Baruch Goldstein, a member

¹¹⁷ See Cohen-Almagor, R., "Disqualification of Lists in 1988 and 1992: A Comparative Analysis" in Karsson, M.M. (ed.) *Law, justice and the state: essays on justice and rights: 16th World Congress of the International Association for Philosophy of Law and Social Philosophy*: Reykjavik, 26 May-2 June, 1993 (Stuttgart: F. Steiner Verlag, 1995), pp. 88-103.

¹¹⁸The amendment was passed by the Knesset on 31 July 1985 and published in *Sefer Ha-Chukkim* No. 1155 of 7 August 1985 p. 196. *The Basic Law: Knesset* is also available on the Internet: <http://www.israel-mfa.gov.il/mfa/go.asp?MFAH00h80>. Last accessed on 3 September 2001.

¹¹⁹ See the Cabinet Decision to outlaw Kach.

of Kach, shot 29 worshippers wounding 60 in the Ibrahim Mosque in the Hebron's Cave of the Patriarchs.

Assessing the impact of Kahanism on the Israeli soldiers, education-corps officer Col. Ehud Praver recalled that in the wake of Kahane, an increasing number of soldiers exposed to the history of the Holocaust "were planning all sorts of ways to exterminate the Arabs."¹²⁰ There were reports that "events in the occupied territories had elicited extreme reactions from the soldiers: some had concluded from what they saw in the Holocaust museum that brutality like that of the Nazis was the way to deal with rioters."¹²¹ In the summer of 1989 the press revealed that a group of soldiers calling itself the Mengele unit had plotted to kill Arabs. Similar stories emerged of units called 'Auschwitz platoon' and 'Demjanjuks.' The army first tried to prevent publication of these stories and later explained that the "idea was no more than black humour on the part of the soldiers."¹²² Nevertheless, Praver confirmed that "too many soldiers were deducing that the Holocaust justifies every kind of disgraceful action."¹²³ Appalled by the Israeli society's distinct shift to the right, culminating in the appearance of Jewish racism that invoked the Holocaust as its main source of legitimacy and moral weight, segments of the Israeli Left also radicalised in the 1980s. The outbreak of the Intifada in December 1987 plunged the country's left-wing elites further into self-criticism initiated in the wake of the Lebanon war. Concurrently, a growing number of Israelis declared themselves unwilling to serve in the territories and put down the Palestinian uprising. Thus the trend, which had begun in the Lebanon war, continued. To mention just a few examples: by the end of December 1987 sixty-six high school students about to become eligible for the military service had sent letters to the then Defence Minister Yitzhak Rabin,¹²⁴ declaring their intention to refuse to serve in the occupied territories. Also in December 1987, 160 reservists, including several officers, refused to participate in

Internet edition at: http://www.ict.org.il/counter_ter/law/lawdet.cfm?lawid=2 Last accessed on 3 September 2001.

¹²⁰ Col. Ehud Praver quoted in Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 407.

¹²¹ Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 408.

¹²² Sagir, D., "In The Battalion They Knew That We Were A Killer Company" *Ha'aretz*, 31 July 1989 p. 11.

¹²³ Col. Ehud Praver quoted in Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 407.

¹²⁴ Josephs, B., "Pubios say refusal campaign is growing" in *Jerusalem Post*, 23 October 1987 p. 2. and Galil, L., "16 other 12-graders wrote to Rabin" in *Ha'aretz*, 30 December 1987 p. 5.

the suppression of the Intifada.¹²⁵ In February 1988, *Yesh Gvul* announced that further 260 reservists had made know their intention not to carry out any orders to beat the Palestinians.¹²⁶ Tom Segev noted that the phenomenon was probably more widespread than it was publicly disclosed because individual cases were handled informally within each unit. Although the figures may seem small compared to the number of conscientious objectors in other Western democratic states, they are extremely significant in the Israeli context where "service in the army had always been seen not only as a necessity but also as a pillar of the personal and collective identities of the Israeli people."¹²⁷ The refusals to perform military service were accompanied by a critical assessment of the Holocaust lessons among the Israeli and the American Jewish left-wing intellectuals who denounced the existing understandings of the Holocaust as inadequate and warned that the misuse of the Holocaust for political purposes is pregnant with dangers: social, cultural, moral, economic, political, and even physical.

¹²⁵ Court, A., "160 reservists say they won't serve in occupied territories" in *Jerusalem Post*, 1 January 1988.

¹²⁶ Galil, L., "260 reservists announced" in *Ha'aretz*, 15 February 1988.

¹²⁷ Segev, T., *The Seventh Million* p. 408-9.

CONCLUSION

Introduction

*The hardships of the mountains are behind us /
Before us lie the hardships of the plains.¹*

In the introduction to this thesis, I asked the following questions: Is the Holocaust a collective trauma of the Israeli Jews? How does it deploy its effects within the Israeli society? What is the impact of the Holocaust on Israel's making of security? The body of this thesis has demonstrated that the Holocaust severely traumatised the Jewish people in Israel and that this traumatisation had a profound impact on the young nation's conception of its security.

Chapter One showed that the Holocaust traumatised the Israeli Jews both individually and collectively. The distinction made between the individual and collective traumas emphasised the long-term implications of the difference in the immediacy of traumatic experience of trauma, and the consequent controllability of its impact on the survivor. I have demonstrated that the immediacy of trauma and ability / willingness (agency) to act upon it are locked in an inverse ratio and argued that this fact is crucial because it ascribes specific roles to different groups of survivors and defines the relationships between them. The systematisation of the Holocaust-related traumas into a typology of survivors' groups determined the traumatic syndromes of each group, based on its experience during and after the Second World War. The juxtaposition of the ratio between immediacy and agency on one hand, and the typology of survivors' groups and symptoms on the other hand, identified the most likely agents of trauma and their post-traumatic symptoms.

On the basis of the findings in the first chapter, Chapter Two established the link between trauma and security as it translates into the Israeli reality. I have shown that the post-traumatic symptoms observed in all four survivors' groups, particularly in empathetic 'survivors' group, which included the majority of the Israeli leadership, are reflected in the traumatised view of the world, the Jewish prism. The analysis of the

¹ Die Mühen der Gebirge liegen hinter uns / Vor uns liegen die Mühen der Ebenen. Brecht, B., "Wahrnehmung" in *Hundert Gedichte* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1998), p. 153.

key elements of this worldview explained the distortion of reality observable in Israel's perception of threat and the lack of gradation of response in its reaction to the perceived threat. In the composite and individual portraits of Israeli leaders I have detected the key elements of the Jewish prism in their perception of the world and Israel in relation to it. Furthermore, I have shown that the Jewish prism is transmitted to the IDF cadets by means of Holocaust education seminars, which articulate the meanings and lessons of the Holocaust.

In the Chapters Three and Four I outlined the process of collective traumatisation in four steps: euphoria, encounter, estrangement, and reconstruction of trauma. I have established that the collective traumatisation in Israel spread across almost two decades, until the trial of Adolf Eichmann in 1961, which marked the beginning of the collective recovery process. On the individual level, the timetable was slightly different. Already traumatised by the time they arrived in Israel, the physical survivors were met with a negative reaction that characterised the third phase of collective traumatisation (estrangement). They were essentially alone in dealing with their personal traumas until the Eichmann's trial provided them with an opportunity to publicly recount their stories and thereby contribute to the collective reconstruction of trauma. Chapter Four also showed that the unprecedented level of identification with the Holocaust survivors during and after the trial marked the final step towards collective traumatisation of the staggering majority of Israeli Jews, Ashkenazim as well as Sephardim.

In the wake of the Eichmann's trial, the personal and collective narratives of trauma coincided and the process of collective recovery slowly began. The recovery process consists of four major steps: establishment of safety, reconstruction of trauma, mourning, and reconnection. The first phase of healing was accomplished with the creation of the State of Israel, which received the majority of the Holocaust survivors, before the community as a whole was traumatised through increased awareness of the damage, contact with survivors, and exposure to their stories at the Eichmann's trial. The second stage was completed in 1962 with the closure of the trial of Adolf Eichmann in Jerusalem. The period between the reconstruction of trauma and mourning is marked by 'active victimhood.' After having told the story of trauma publicly once, the survivor (either as an individual or as a collective entity)

acquires the identity and status of a victim. The former represents a non-controllable imprint of traumatisation and is therefore characterised by the post-traumatic stress symptoms. The latter governs the victim's interactions with the outside world and is marked by a profound sense of entitlement and self-righteousness. Trauma can be, and usually is, manipulated during the period that precedes mourning. Yet even the manipulation of trauma is an integral part of recovery process. It represents one of the expressions of resistance to mourning, compensation fantasy. Other types of resistance are: revenge fantasy (which usually translates in expressivist use of force), fantasy of forgiveness, and fantasy of compassion. The combination of the uncontrollable and controllable factors thus lead to a specific type of behaviour, which largely results from trauma but may appear exceptionally manipulative and / or aggressive.

Chapters Five and Six analysed the practical implications of the Holocaust trauma for Israel's security. Chapter Five focused on the influence of the Holocaust-permeated Jewish prism that emerged from the Eichmann trial on the leaders' perception of Israel's geo-strategic environment during the Six-Day and Yom Kippur Wars. I have shown that both the exaggeration of threat during the 'waiting period' in 1967 and the mystification of victory afterwards originate from the traumatised worldview informed by the lessons of the Holocaust. I have also suggested that the Six-Day War could be seen as a reactivation of the original trauma where the Israeli leaders sought to apply the lessons of the Holocaust and use what was constructed as the 'second chance' to secure a positive outcome. After reviewing the seeming incongruity between the extent of victory after the Arab surprise attack in 1973 and the subsequent representation of the Yom Kippur War as a calamity, I established that such conceptualisation of the 1973 war was needed in order to sustain the victim identity and status. I also suggested that this need was a reflection of the Israeli public's inability to confront the reality of Israeli power and its consequences.

In Chapter Six I analysed the effects of a coincidence between personal and collective traumas during Prime Minister Begin's two terms in office. After establishing that Begin's personal experience as a Holocaust survivor reinforced the particularistic elements of the Jewish prism, I showed that Begin's (and by extension, Israel's) behaviour during the 1982 invasion of Lebanon was a clear expression of

revenge fantasy. I have also shown that some extremely radical left-wing critics engaged in the opposite strategy of resistance, that is, fantasy of compassion. Most importantly, I determined that approximately a third of Israel's population descended into genuine mourning (characterised by a willingness to undertake a process that will result in relinquishing of the victim identity) in the wake of Israel's excesses in Lebanon. As a result of this partial descent into mourning, Israeli society split and radicalised in the 1980s.

This conclusion seeks to answer two main questions: How does this thesis contribute to a better understanding of Israel's security and foreign policies? How can the findings of this thesis assist the critical efforts towards normalisation and resolution of trauma within Israel?

The first part of this conclusion reviews the critical contributions by Israeli and American Jewish academics and commentators, which in my view represent a genuine and constructive attempt to move beyond victimhood and the triumphalism of pain to establish a new Israeli cultural identity. Their criticism focuses on two trends: Jewish monopolisation of the Holocaust via an ahistorical representation of it, and Israel's continuous use of the Holocaust for the sake of immediate political gains. Reconceptualised according to the trauma paradigm presented in this thesis, the Jewish monopolisation and ahistorical representation of the Holocaust are both a reflection of a victim identity. Consequently, the advantageous manipulation of the victim status is a strategy of resistance to mourning, known as compensation fantasy. This thesis showed that both trends are only partially controllable, which contradicts the assumption of the Zionist leaders' conscious and deliberate manipulation of the world and the Israeli public that pervades the critical contributions.

As a response to their observations, the commentators repeatedly asked for a critical investigation of history aiming to revise the existing understandings of the Holocaust. The call for new Jewish history is multi-layered: it demands that the focus of study be directed on different issues in Jewish history, but also, more fundamentally, that the essentially ahistorical and providential theological conception of the Jewish history as *destiny* be replaced with modern secular historical analysis.

However sound these suggestions may be in a normal context, it must be noted that on the trauma timeline, a secularisation and revision of pre-traumatic and traumatic history, represent the first step of rebuilding new identity and new system of belief. Put differently, a radical re-examination of history should only intervene after the completion of the mourning process. It is therefore fully understandable that the critics' demand for new history is met with vehement opposition. This is because it touches upon the core of the victim identity, which those who still identify themselves as survivors, either individually or collectively, are neither willing nor able to relinquish. These observations by no means seek to frustrate the effort of normalisation undertaken by the new generation of Israeli intellectual and cultural elites. Quite the contrary: I am convinced that the project of transformation of Israeli society known as 'post-Zionism' holds a unique potential to resolve trauma. However, in order to be successful, the makers of the new historical narrative should not dismiss the opposition lightly, but address every issue presented to it with the utmost care and attention, lest it repeats the very Zionist mistakes that it abhors.

Implications for the Israel's Foreign and Security Policies

Whichever way you look at it, the ghost of the Holocaust appears self-perpetuating and self-reproducing. It made itself indispensable to too many to be easily exorcised.²

Three years prior to Meir Kahane's election to the Knesset, Boaz Evron wrote that the lessons learned from the Holocaust "have in themselves become a danger to both the Jewish people and the State of Israel."³ In the article mentioned in Chapter Two, Boaz Evron denounced the non-historical interpretation of the Holocaust, which according to the author, led to mystical and pseudo-religious understandings of the event. "A Holocaust is something indefinite," wrote Evron, "it can be an earthquake or a plague, something that seems to hit you suddenly, out of any historical context. You are exempted from attempting to understand it."⁴ Evron's description of the Holocaust corresponds to the collective narrative of the trauma with the corroborating set of lessons that emerged from the Eichmann's trial. As I discussed in Chapter Four, a traumatic event is remembered as something outside of history until it is fully integrated in the individual or the collective life story. The reconstruction of trauma is

² Bauman, Z., "The Holocaust's Life as a Ghost" in *Tikkun* 13:4 (July / August 1998), p. 37.

³ Evron, B., "The Holocaust" p. 16.

⁴ Evron, B., "The Holocaust" p. 16.

only just the beginning of the healing process, during which the story is repeated again and again until the trauma can be mourned in the next stage of recovery. Evron's and other commentators' call for a historical understanding of the Holocaust reveals their own readiness and a willingness to 'let go' of trauma as the prime definer of the collective identity. However, like integration of traumatic memory into the everyday memory of the individual survivor, which can be completed only after mourning, the historicisation of a collective trauma is possible when the prevailing majority is already well advanced in the process of mourning.

In his contribution, Evron observed that the non-historical presentation of the murder of European Jewry, by depicting the Jews as almost-exclusive victims of the Nazi assault, and the Holocaust as a unique crime in human history, separated the Jews and the Holocaust from the rest of humanity, its history and its laws. Similarly Phillip Lopate, one of the foremost American Jewish essayists, warned that the Jewish insistence on the uniqueness of the Holocaust contains a dangerous element of mystification, and repudiated the "self-dramatising theological ambition to portray the historic suffering of the Jews during World War II as a sort of cosmic storm rending the heavens."⁵ In the author's eyes, such mystification diminishes or even demeans the mass slaughters of other peoples. Boaz Evron expressed a concurrent concern that the identification of Nazism with anti-Semitism, resulting from Jewish emphasis on their unique fate under the Nazis, may bring non-Jews to consider Nazi activities as 'a Jewish matter' and therefore not as a danger to themselves. Moreover, the author warned that the Jewish, and particularly Israeli, disconnection from humanity may cause certain Jews in a position of power to treat others as subhuman, thereby repeating the racist attitudes embodied in Nazism. The appearance of Jewish pornographic racism in the person of Kahane just a few years later confirmed Evron's fears.

As I have shown in this thesis, trauma *by definition* separates its survivors from the rest of humanity. It shatters all the former frames of reference and locks the survivors in a separate world, until they undertake the last stage of recovery and reconnect with humanity. The non-historical understanding of the Holocaust was

⁵ Lopate, P., "Resistance to the Holocaust" in *Tikkun* 4:3 (May/June 1989) p. 56.

therefore the only way in which this trauma could be confronted at the time. However, Evron is correct in warning that victimhood coupled with power is dangerous, as the discussion of Begin's revenge fantasy in Chapter Six amply demonstrated. Following Evron's line of argument, Israel's reconnection with the rest of the world depends on a prior historical reappraisal of Jewish history and the Holocaust within it. The new history of the event would have to demonstrate that the mass murder of European Jewry was neither the only, nor the worst crime of genocide, and that the Jews were not the only group targeted by the Nazi assault. Much of the critical literature called for such historical reassessment, denouncing both the uniqueness of the Holocaust and the Jewish monopolisation of the event. A thorough historical reassessment of the Holocaust is indeed a necessary prerequisite for Israel's successful normalisation. However, if it should intervene before the completion of the mourning process, it must be gradual and as non-threatening as possible.

After presenting the staggering figures illustrating the magnitude of other genocides, Lopate reiterated his call for a relative perspective in the study of the Holocaust before attacking the Jewish appropriation of death and suffering as "simply another opportunity for Jewish chauvinism."⁶ Lopate defined Jewish chauvinism with regard to the Holocaust as a variation on the theme of the Chosen People: this time God's people have been chosen for extraordinary suffering. To do justice to that concept it is important to situate it within the theological explanations of the Holocaust, especially since the ultra-Orthodox response to the Holocaust is mentioned at a later stage. From a Chassidic perspective, all which emanates from God is *chesed* (meaning goodness), though its understanding can be hidden from man's finite perspective. Suffering must be therefore accepted with love and personal sacrifice on the basis of faith and unquestioning trust in God's ultimate justice. In this light, the Holocaust is also a supreme test of faith, a modern sacrifice of Isaac. Thus even in Treblinka, Rabbi Israel Shapira told his disciples: "We should not question God's actions. If it is indeed destined that we shall serve as a sacrifice for *Hevlei Mashiach* [literally meaning 'the birth pangs of the Messiah,' that is the period of

⁶ Lopate, P., "Resistance to the Holocaust" p. 61.

suffering which heralds the messianic era⁷] during this period of redemption, and thus be consumed in the flames – how fortunate then that we have been privileged for this purpose.”⁸ I would argue that more than chauvinism, the notion that the Jewish people was singled out for a Christ-like sacrifice that would precipitate the redemption of the world, is an attempt by the ultra-Orthodox Jews to grapple with the meaning of God’s failure to intervene on behalf of His people during the Holocaust.

Some of Lopate’s analysis of the Jews’ reluctance to surrender the role of the victim is either purposefully provocative (“There is something so testy, so vain, so diva-like about this insistence that we always get the top billing in any rite of mourning.”⁹) or too specifically American (“Sometimes it almost seems that ‘the Holocaust’ is a corporation headed by Elie Wiesel, who defends his patents with articles in the Arts and Leisure section of the *Sunday Times*.”¹⁰). Nevertheless, the author called attention to two issues that make the surrender of victim identity both urgent and costly: the use of the Holocaust for political purposes, and the erosion of Jewish traditional sources of communality in favour of victimhood. While the immediate price of ‘letting go’ of traumatic identity in general, and the Holocaust in particular, is easily deduced from the gain secured by it, the long-term costs of holding on to victimhood are more difficult to evaluate. Almost without exception, this calculus accompanies other reasons underlying the resistance to mourning and rebuilding a new identity among trauma survivors. Therefore, as Chapter Six concluded, criticism that focuses specifically on these concerns is more likely to have a positive impact than criticism that is itself a form of resistance to mourning (fantasy of compassion).

Thus Boaz Evron shrewdly argued that the political manipulation of the Holocaust damaged first and foremost the *Israeli* interests. Evron traced the practice of Holocaust politics to the Eichmann’s trial, which forced Germany to apply to Israel a special preferential relationship and thereby act against its own interest, which at the time would have dictated avoiding establishing open diplomatic relations with

⁷ See Jeremiah 30:7 and Daniel 12:1.

⁸ Rabbi Shapira quoted in Hass, A., *The Aftermath: Living with the Holocaust* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 145-6.

⁹ Lopate, P., “Resistance to the Holocaust” p. 59.

¹⁰ Lopate, P., “Resistance to the Holocaust”, p. 56.

Israel in order not to risk its relations with the Arab world. The asymmetrical system of relations with Germany represented a blueprint for relations between Israel and other guilt-ridden states of the Christian West, especially the United States. These relations were not based on objective common interest, but on a widespread guilt feeling towards the Jewish people. According to Evron, the results of this system of relations are the following: the special treatment accorded to Israel, including unconditional economic and political support, cut Israel off from global economic and political realities. Furthermore, the Jewish prism presented the Israeli leaders and the public with such Manichean and unrealistic choices – Holocaust or victory – that they immediately exempted the Jewish State from any moral restrictions when relating to the outside world. The fact that Israel has never needed to face the real forces operating in the world and adjust to the international rules of the game accordingly, made the Jewish state dependent on foreign aid, political support, and most significantly – on the perpetuation of the moral pressure of the Holocaust. According to Evron, it was precisely the reliance on the victimhood status that prevented the normalisation and locked Israel in an ahistorical existence where the past juxtaposed the present without the necessary distance. Furthermore, the dependence on the guilt consciousness of the Western Christian world has made Israel extremely vulnerable because, as Evron put it “guilt consciousness ... has its own limits. It is a bank account continuously reduced by withdrawals. ... The world gets tired of it [mentioning the Holocaust], we get tired of it.”¹¹

Indeed, critical reviews of various mechanisms of pressure employed by Israeli governments when dealing with the Christian world and the American Jewish Diaspora have burgeoned since Begin’s promiscuous use of the Holocaust in the early 1980s, culminating in the recent debates surrounding the publication of Norman Finkelstein’s controversial *The Holocaust Industry*.¹² According to the critics, the “fine art” of using the murder of European Jewry for political purposes is based on both cultivation and exploitation of guilt feelings. A continuous reminder of the world’s failure to intervene on behalf of the Jews during the Second World War (cultivation) is inevitably accompanied by an extension of an opportunity to do better the second

¹¹ Evron, B., “The Holocaust” p. 22.

¹² Finkelstein, N., *The Holocaust Industry: Reflections on the Exploitation of Jewish Suffering* (London: Verso, 2000).

time round (exploitation). Thus every important non-Jewish visitor to Israel is taken, as a matter of course, to Yad Vashem “even before he has had time to leave off his luggage in his hotel,”¹³ as Avishai Margalit sarcastically pointed out. The children's room in Yad Vashem, a pitch-black room with tape-recorded voices of children crying out in Yiddish, ‘Mame, Tate,’ is meant, according to Margalit, to deliver a message to the visiting foreign dignitary that “all of us here in Israel are these children and the Hitler-Arafat is after us.”¹⁴ The guilt feeling is manipulated in several ways, noted Evron: firstly, Israel presents itself to the world as the symbolic ‘survivor’ of the Holocaust: the remnant of the European Jewry that survived the Nazi carnage and the heir to the Holocaust legacy. Secondly, Israel claims to be in permanent danger of annihilation. Similarly divorced from reality, according to Evron, is Israel's concurrent assessment that every one of its wars represents a danger to the actual existence of the Jewish State. Thirdly, the Christian Western states are called upon to assuage their guilt by economically and politically supporting Israel and thereby ‘preventing another Holocaust.’ Fourthly, Israel has used the Holocaust to silence the criticism of its policies with a Begin-like argument: those who stood silent *then*, cannot teach a small and vulnerable state what it ought to do to defend itself from another Holocaust. Lastly, Israel exploited the loss of any other focal point to the American Jewish identity to control the Jewish Diaspora in the United States. With regards to the latter, Phillip Lopate concluded that the growing importance of the Holocaust for assimilated Jews in America and for secular Jews in Israel was inversely related to the erosion of Jewish religion and tradition. In the absence of Jewish rituals, ceremonies, cuisine, and *Yiddishkeit*, that used to be transmitted from generation to generation, the Holocaust and common history of persecution remain the only source of Jewish communality among secular Jews. “There is a danger,” warned Lopate, “that, in effect, the Holocaust will swallow up Judaism.”¹⁵

In the wake of Kahanism and the Intifada, the critics concluded with one voice that Israel's cultivation of guilt feelings and exploitation of the Holocaust for the sake of political interests, especially in combination with the growing erosion of other sources of communality among the Jewish people, is damaging, and ultimately

¹³ Margalit, A., “The Kitsch of Israel,” in *New York Review of Books*, 24 Nov. 1988.

¹⁴ Margalit, A., “The Kitsch of Israel”

¹⁵ Lopate, P., “Resistance to the Holocaust”, p. 64.

dangerous to Israel and the Jewish people as a whole. To thwart this menace and make normalisation possible, the commentators pleaded for radically new understandings of the Jewish history and identity, as well as a more inclusive and realistic concepts of ethics. From the point of view of trauma and recovery, the next section evaluates the work that has already been done in the direction of reconnection and draws attention to some significant challenges to this process, which in my view, the critical literature has so far overlooked.

Implications for the Resolution of Trauma

*The Jews ... need to remember not only how they died, but also how they lived.*¹⁶

In an excellent article, David Biale, the director of the Centre for Jewish Studies at Berkley, declared that the therapy for traumatic past lies in a critical investigation of all periods of Jewish history. "The task of history," wrote Biale, "is ... to integrate each event, no matter how catastrophic, into the whole; to put trauma into perspective and make it possible to remember without being overwhelmed."¹⁷ Reiterating the concerns of the critics reviewed previously, Biale called for a secular and historical reappraisal of Jewish exilic existence, as opposed to the dominating theological and ahistorical view of Jewish history. Such critical examination of the entire Jewish history would, according to Biale, allow the Jews today to see both the past and the present through a realistic lens and thereby secure "the health of the Jewish people."¹⁸ The discussion that follows returns to some of the key elements of the Jewish prism described in Chapter Two in order to examine the transformative potential of history with regards to the way in which Jews perceive the world and themselves in it. It must also be noted that the outlines of Jewish ancient, medieval, Zionist, and 'new' history are purposefully sketchy because they only support or introduce the arguments.

The cardinal components of the Jewish prism, fatalism and isolationism, lie at the very heart of the Jewish traditional conception of history as both unique and providential. In an influential study of Jewish history, the historian Yosef Yerushalmi

¹⁶ Biale, D., "Power, Passivity and the Legacy of the Holocaust," in *Tikkun*, 2: 1 (January-February 1987) p. 73.

¹⁷ Biale, D., "Power, Passivity" p. 70.

¹⁸ Biale, D., "Power, Passivity" p. 73.

described the Jewish consciousness of the past as uniquely ahistorical.¹⁹ Yerushalmi observed that during the nearly fifteen centuries after the death of the famous Jewish historian Josephus, throughout the entire period when the Talmudic commentary flourished, there were no Jewish historians. He attributed this phenomenon to the rabbis' belief that the Bible already contained all the patterns of Jewish historical existence. Combined with a traditional Jewish notion of time as being cyclical and not linear, this belief led to an ahistorical history in which all events are cyclical recurrences of the ancient archetypes. As Biale put it: "The exile from Spain conjures up the memory of the exile from Judaea, the pogroms of the Crusaders are repetitions of the slaughter of the martyrs by Antiochus Epiphanes."²⁰ The concept of the Chosen People, with a unique fate and purpose that remain largely hidden from men, demanded a total faith in God's providence in order to sustain itself. In turn, the limitless trust in God is based on a Covenant, in which the Jewish people is an equal partner: in return for a rigorous execution of His commandments, God has an obligation to actively intervene in the historical destiny of His Chosen People and protect it. God therefore represents the ultimate causal factor of the Jewish history.

The rabbis of the Talmudic times interpreted the Exile as a punishment for the sins committed by Jews. In the Middle Ages, the survivors of the Crusader pogroms similarly understood their suffering as a way of atonement for the sins of the generations. Thus a great Spanish Jewish poet and philosopher, Yehuda Ha-Levi, further suggested that the suffering of the Jews was a sign of God's continued election. After the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 C.E., when the Jews lost political sovereignty for almost two millennia, they became a spiritual people and powerlessness became a virtue. From the point of view of Jewish historical memory, the Exile was a vale of tears, a tale of a tortured, persecuted, stateless and powerless God's Chosen People, "an eternal people, a people outside of history."²¹ Today's ultra-Orthodox interpretations of the Holocaust remain faithful to this representation of history and therefore provide an excellent illustration of fatalism and isolationism that embody the uniqueness of the Jewish existence. Based on the premise that God punishes his people for its sins, embodied in the concept of the

¹⁹Yerushalmi, Y. H., *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (New York: Schocken Books, 1987).

²⁰ Biale, D., "Power, Passivity" p. 68.

²¹ Biale, D., "Power, Passivity" p. 69.

mipenei hata'einu (meaning 'because of our sins we were punished'), a number of ultra-Orthodox rabbis asserted that Zionism and assimilationism had aroused God's wrath and allowed Germans to strike at God's people. According to this account Israel was sinful and Auschwitz is her just retribution. The second explanation is based on the special mission of the Jewish people: Israel is the 'sacrificial lamb,' the 'suffering servant' (Isaiah 53) who redeems the world and atones for the sins of others through suffering. In the third interpretation, again God intervenes, to test the faith of His people. The Holocaust, in this account is a modern sacrifice of Isaac. When all other theological explanations fail, God is simply inexplicably absent from history or unaccountably chooses to turn His face away. According to one of the greatest modern Jewish philosophers, Martin Buber, the eclipse of God, like the eclipse of the sun means that for a moment God may not be seen, but in the end He would be visible.²²

Although secular Zionism vigorously rejected the ultra-Orthodox explanations of the Holocaust, it reproduced the same theological logic in its own account of the Jewish historical existence. A number of critics including the aforementioned Charles S. Liebman and Eliezer Don-Yehiya, observed that instead of secularising the historical narrative of the Jewish people, Zionism only adjusted the traditional theology by replacing the Jewish God with the Jewish State.²³ Thus, Zionism accepted the traditional view of Jewish history as a unique history, marked by suffering, passivity, and powerlessness. One of the foundational texts of Zionism, Haim Hazaz's *The Sermon*, provides a representative interpretation of the Zionist portrayal of Jewish history. In this short story, Hazaz depicts the Zionist ideal of the negation of the Exile through a sermon monologue of his protagonist Yudka, who declares at a general assembly of his kibbutz his 'opposition to the Jewish history':

First, I will begin with the fact that we have no history at all. That's a fact. ...
Because we didn't make our own history. ... Just think ... what is there in it?
Oppression, defamation, persecution and martyrdom. And again oppression,

²² See Buber, M., *The Eclipse of God: Studies in the Relation Between Religion and Philosophy* (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 1998).

²³ See for example Liebman, C. S. and E. Don-Yehiya, *Civil Religion in Israel: Traditional Judaism and Political Culture in the Jewish State* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983).

defamation, persecution and martyrdom. And again and again and again, without end. ... We love suffering, for through suffering we are able to be Jews; it preserves us and maintains us ... In fact, the more we are degraded, the greater we think is our honour ... The Exile, that is our pyramid, and it has martyrdom for a base and Messiah for its peak.²⁴

Biale rejected this mystification of the Jewish history on two accounts: first of all, Jews have never been entirely powerless, and secondly, they have never been apolitically passive. The author sketched a timeline of the Jewish period of the Exile that showed that the Jewish people survived, not because God wanted it to, but because the Jews acquired “an extraordinary ability to maneuver between a quest for full sovereignty and apolitical passivity.”²⁵ To illustrate this claim briefly, Biale drew attention to the period after the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 C.E. when the rabbinical government, far from retreating into the study of the Torah, constituted a powerful political leadership that preserved its inner authority and regulated the relationship to the host state. Similarly, the Middle Ages was not a period of retreat into otherworldliness. In a groundbreaking monumental study of Jewish social history, Professor Salo Baron²⁶ showed that the medieval Jews regarded themselves as free people who were not subjected to serfdom and had full citizenship rights in many medieval cities. For substantial periods during the Middle Ages, Jews carried arms and defended the cities in which they lived. To cut a long story short, Biale concluded: “Rather than subsisting on the fringes of society as an impotent and marginal people, the Jews were close to the centres of power and it was this proximity to power, as much as anything, that attracted the animosity of their non-Jewish neighbours.”²⁷ Although the Jews were in danger of expulsion and did not always possess sufficient power to defend themselves against the popular forces, they were neither powerless nor without allies or powerful defenders. The Jewish history that transpires from a secularised account is characterised by a wide spectrum of persistent and ongoing attempts to achieve some measure of political

²⁴ Hazaz, H., “The Sermon” in Mendes-Flohr, P. and J. Reinharz (ed.), *The Jew in the Modern World: A Documentary History* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 619-21.

²⁵ Biale, D., “Power, Passivity” p. 70.

²⁶ Baron, S. W., *Social and Religious History of the Jews* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983). Vols. 9-18.

²⁷ Biale, D., “Power, Passivity” p. 70.

power. This image departs considerably from the theological representations of Diaspora history as a series of persecutions and massacres unleashed upon the Jews by enemies from Haman, to the Romans, to Spanish Inquisitors, to Cossacks and czars to Hitler and Goebbels, until we reach 'Arafat as the latest incarnation of perennial anti-Semitism. Divorced from the Jewish traditional metanarrative of election and persecution, the history of the Jewish people becomes a fragmented history of individual Jewish communities with their own experience, customs, and pattern of interaction with the local Gentiles.

On the basis of the historical fallacy of Jewish powerlessness and national unity across the ages, the Holocaust was interpreted as a culmination of the Exile and its inevitable outcome. Like the religious Jews, the secular Zionists often concluded that it was the Jews who had brought the Holocaust upon themselves through their passivity. Thus Menachem Begin, in the introduction to *The Revolt* attributed the Holocaust to the “age-old inexcusable utter defencelessness of the Jewish people,” which he defined as “a standing invitation to massacre.”²⁸ In the secular account, the Jews were being punished for the sin of weakness. Jewish empowerment thus became ‘a commandment that rose from the camps’ and the Zionists executed it as diligently and scrupulously as the traditional Jews followed the 613 of God’s commandments. The injunction ‘Never again would the Jews be powerless’ has the same religious urgency to it as does ‘Never again would the Jews sin against God.’ Zionism and expressivist use of force are the two facets of the Jewish prism that respond to the construct of the Holocaust as the result of Jewish powerlessness. Zionism replaced the abnormal condition of Jewish exilic existence with statehood and the victimised Diaspora Jew its diametric opposite: an armed hero. Yet, since the Zionist conceptions of power, revolt, and retribution are indissolvably tied with the metaphor of the victim, Israel as the symbol of Jewish power remains tied to the Holocaust as its anti-thesis. Moreover, the Holocaust was sometimes mystified as the destruction that preceded redemption, a secular version of *Hevlei Mashiach*. Thus the sacrifice of the six million innocent Jews precipitated the secular Messiah – Zionism – that re-established the State of Israel. In order to demystify that claim, the historical account that refutes Jewish powerlessness and

²⁸ Begin, M., *The Revolt*, p. xii.

political passivity during the period of the Exile must pay special attention to the history of the Zionist movement and place it within the secular Jewish history of quest for political autonomy and power, and the broader historical context of the 19th century European nationalism.

The critics also often pointed out that the Zionist interpretation of the Holocaust as the outcome of Jewish powerlessness rather than Nazi ideology, encouraged an unrestrained and self-righteous use of force. Situating the Holocaust within its proper historical context of the 1930s Europe and the Nazi totalitarian ideology would discredit the thesis that Jews went like sheep to the slaughter, the great historical shame that again and again energised the Israeli use of power. The Zionist efforts towards absolving the victims of this shame have so far required a degree of historical inaccuracy that, according to critics like Evron, is neither needed nor desirable. The Zionist overemphasis on the few instances of Jewish armed resistance sets the desperate fight of the Warsaw Ghetto rebels, for example, as the ultimate model of behaviour in times of crisis. The discussion of a new Jewish ethics in the last section explores in more detail the dangers inherent in such model for action within the context of Israel's reality of power. In spite of the fundamental change of circumstances represented by the establishment of the Jewish State in 1948, the Zionist depiction of Israel's subsequent historical and material reality continues the legacy of the Chosen People – a people that, besieged and isolated, 'stands alone, uncounted among the nations.' Oscillating between imminent threats of annihilation and miracles of redemption, the modern Zionist view of Israeli history remains essentially mythical.

Beginning in the late 1980s, a new generation of more open-minded and critical historians started to reconsider the founding tenets of Zionism and Israeli nationalism. In contrast with the traditional cyclical history of destruction and redemption that blurred all difference between all wars and enemies across generations, the body of literature that has conveniently been termed 'new history,' sought to break away from the traditional concepts of Jewish history by refocusing on social, economical, and cultural history of a particular period or issue. These 'new historical' accounts, the building bricks of new Israeli history, offered new insights into the circumstances surrounding the creation of the State of Israel, a reappraisal of the

War of Independence²⁹ and the Arab-Israeli conflict in general,³⁰ a critical evaluation of Zionist rescue efforts³¹ and Israel's attitude towards the Holocaust and its survivors,³² to name just a few examples.

The revised account of Israeli history that emerged from these critical investigations emphasised that the pre-state leadership in Palestine had not done enough to rescue Hitler's victims during World War II. In *The Seventh Million* Tom Segev also wrote that the Zionist movement used the Holocaust to advance its political goals, arguing that political groups in the Yishuv viewed the destruction of European Jewry as a historic opportunity to morally pressure the Western states into the creation of the Jewish state. When the survivors came to Palestine, the story goes, the Yishuv did nothing to welcome them to their new homeland and help them assimilate. Idith Zertal's *From Catastrophe to Power* studied the Zionist rescue efforts and emphasised the arrogant and insensitive attitude of the Sabras toward the survivors of the Holocaust who immigrated to Palestine in the years right after 1945. The Sabras charged with saving and absorbing the refugees treated them with contempt and harshness. As to the founding of the Jewish state and the Arab-Israeli conflict, the 'new historians' shattered a number of old Zionist myths. Contrary to the David and Goliath 'myth' of Israel's precarious existence in the face of a powerful enemy, some critics claimed that Israel had never been in serious military danger and that the Jews had always been stronger than the Palestinians and the Arab armies, even in 1948. Historian Benny Morris further argued that Israel had forcibly expelled the Arabs from their houses during the 1948 war thus countering the official Israeli version, according to which the Arabs left Palestine out of their own will or were called on to do so by the leaders of the neighbouring Arab states.³³ Similarly, historian Avi Shlaim wrote that during November 1947, King Abdullah of Jordan and Golda Meir reached an agreement whereby each of their sides, Israel and Jordan,

²⁹ Rogan, E. L. and A. Shlaim, *Rewriting the Palestine war: 1948 and the history of the Arab-Israeli conflict* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

³⁰ Morris, B., *Righteous Victims: A History of the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1881-1999*, (New York: Vintage Books, 2001); Shlaim, A., *The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World* (New York: Norton W.W., 2001).

³¹ Zertal, I., *From Catastrophe to Power*.

³² Tom Segev, *The Seventh Million*.

³³ Morris, B., *The birth of the Palestinian refugee problem, 1947-1949* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

would annex parts of the land allocated to the Palestinians.³⁴ A revision of the crucial episodes in Israel's history was accompanied with a reassessment of Jewish and Zionist historiography.³⁵ Like David Biale, historian Moshe Zimmerman advocated an interpretation of Jewish history based on a methodological rejection of a priori distinctiveness of Jewish history. Instead, Zimmerman proposed a universal history, which, he claimed would significantly change the appearance of Jewish history within it.³⁶ A study of Jewish history from the universalist point of view, concluded Zimmerman, would relativise and contextualise Jewish persecution in the Middle Ages, Enlightenment and assimilation, anti-Semitism, Zionism, and the Holocaust. Such a historical analysis would facilitate Jewish reconnection with the rest of humanity by showing that "the history of the Jews has always been subject to the same laws as the histories of other peoples."³⁷

The reception that the 'new historians' received in Israel and the arguments used against it are significant because they show the scope of post-Zionist penetration into Israeli society, define the issues at stake, and identify the pitfalls that a critical revision of history must avoid. In June 1994, Aharon Meged, one of Israel's most renowned authors and a leading figure of the Israeli Left, wrote a lengthy polemic entitled "Israel's Urge to Suicide," which signalled the beginning of a powerful backlash against post-Zionism.³⁸ In this contentious article, Meged accused Israel's intellectual and cultural elites of undermining Israel's national and moral right to exist. He also argued that post-Zionism strengthens anti-Israeli claims and weakens Israel's morale and basic beliefs. According to Yoram Hazony, the author of a widely publicised critical evaluation of post-Zionism, Meged's essay sparked "a volcanic outpouring of accusation, justification, rationalisation, and counter-accusation that continued to appear in the media in the years that followed."³⁹ The opposition to the

³⁴ Shlaim, A., *The politics of partition: King Abdullah, the Zionists, and Palestine, 1921-1951* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

³⁵ See Kimmerling, B., "Academic History Caught in the Cross-Fire: The Case of Israeli-Jewish Historiography," in *History and Memory*, 7:4 (1995) pp. 41-65.

³⁶ See Zimmerman, M., "Israels Umgang mit dem Holocaust" in Steininger, R. (ed.) *Der Umgang mit dem Holocaust: Europa-USA-Israel* (Vienna, Cologne and Weimar: Böhlau Verlag, 1994), pp. 387-406.

³⁷ Biale, D., "Power, Passivity" p. 70.

³⁸ Meged, A., "Israel's Urge to Suicide" in *Ha'aretz Weekend Supplement* 10 June 1994.

³⁹ Hazony, Y., *The Jewish State: The Struggle for Israel's Soul* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), p. 4.

post-Zionism project (or ideology, as the critics call it) of Israel's transformation from an ethnic to a civil state was inevitably also directed at the 'new historians,' who gave a historical justification to this claim. The 'new historians' were accused primarily of undermining the legitimacy of the Jewish State and of factual inaccuracy (or even fabrication of facts).⁴⁰ Although the two are related, neither the purpose nor the scope of this discussion allows for a review of the debate over historical facts. With regards to the ideological issue, Hazony, who was a former advisor to Binyamin Netanyahu, depicted post-Zionism as "a cultural threat."⁴¹ The author interpreted the critical historical investigations as being ideologically motivated, purposefully picking on the crimes and errors of the Zionist movement with the intent to delegitimise Zionism and thereby call into question the morality of having a Jewish state. Hazony also denounced the post-Zionist trends in the contemporary Israeli literature, regretting the lack of pride in their country and love for their people expressed by the country's most prominent authors – Amos Oz, A.B. Yehoshua, David Grossman, and Meir Shalev.

The most informative part of Hazony's account is his evaluation of the 'damage' (or success, depending on the point of view) that has already been done. The opponents of post-Zionism seem to be particularly concerned by "the undeniable fact that the ideology of the intellectuals, which had been considered so irrelevant for so long, had in the end succeeded in undermining – and then reversing – the worldview of the political leadership."⁴² What seem to be both surprising and infuriating to the likes of Hazony is the sudden and unprecedented political influence of the 'cynical clique of the literati whose opinions have so far never left the narrow confinement of the tiny cartel of universities and the Ha'aretz weekend supplement,' as the author scornfully described Israel's intellectual and cultural elite. Hazony dated the 'sickening tottering of the perennial theory of the political impotence of Israel's intellectuals' to the beginning of the peace process. The Oslo agreement, which he called "the *branja's* [Yiddish for experts] most spectacular political achievement ... was in fact only the tip of an iceberg."⁴³

⁴⁰ For a pedantic assessment of 'new history's' factual (in)accuracy, see Karsh, E., *Fabricating Israeli History: the 'new historians'* (London: Frank Cass, 2000).

⁴¹ Hazony, Y., *The Jewish State* p. 6.

⁴² Hazony, Y., *The Jewish State*, p. 5.

⁴³ Hazony, Y., *The Jewish State*, p. 5.

Since then, post-Zionism had grown impressively, spreading from the academia into the broader walks of Israeli life. Not only have the post-Zionist currents gained a particular hold on the Israeli literature, observed Meyrav Wurmser, but also 'infiltrated' the media and even the political and military establishment.⁴⁴ Wurmser thus regretted the fact that on the occasion of Israel's fiftieth anniversary jubilee, the official Israeli television channel broadcast of a special documentary called *Resurrection*, which criticized Israel for forcibly evicting the Palestinians in 1948 and for employing violent methods against the Palestinians during the Intifada. Furthermore, Wurmser recorded an alarming number of indicators that post-Zionism has also worked its way into Israel's political and military establishment. The inventory of post-Zionist utterances made by Israeli politicians include Micha Goldman's (former Deputy Minister of Education) proposal to replace Israel's national anthem and flag so that they reflect Palestinian nationalism,⁴⁵ Ehud Barak's (former Prime Minister) statement in a television interview that if he was a young Palestinian he would be a terrorist too,⁴⁶ and Shulamit Aloni's (former Minister of Education) call for a stop to all visits of Israeli high-school students to the Nazi concentration camps, because after such trips they become "too nationalist."⁴⁷ Moreover, the absence of any reference to either Zionism, Judaism or the love of the land in the new ethical code *The Spirit of the IDF* adopted by the Israeli military in 1994 caused great distress to the opponents of post-Zionism. Even more significantly, Hazony noted a fundamental change of attitude in the Israeli school curricula. According to the author, more and more young Israelis now receive a post-Zionist education, informed by the findings of 'new history.' Whereas Israeli education curricula used to strive to promote Jewish national identity, Hazony finds that the new civics textbook does little to promote the idea of Israel as a Jewish state, the new archaeology curriculum has abandoned the traditional emphasis on historical Jewish ties to the land of Israel, and new history texts de-emphasize Jewish history, the Holocaust, and Zionism in favor of a more "universal" focus.

⁴⁴ Wurmser, M., "Can Israel Survive Post-Zionism?" in *Middle East Quarterly* 6:1 (March 1999), pp. 3-15.

⁴⁵ Goldman quoted in *Haaretz*, 13 April 1995.

⁴⁶ Ehud Barak quoted in Wurmser, M., "Can Israel Survive Post-Zionism?" p. 6.

⁴⁷ Aloni quoted in *Ha'aretz*, 25 September 1992.

“How long can a country survive if its intellectuals are working to debunk the basic culture the country is built on?” Hazon asked in a recent interview.⁴⁸ This is an interesting question for a Zionist to ask, because Zionism itself broke with almost two thousand years of Jewish history including the unresolved Holocaust trauma. It denied the entire Diaspora culture without ever worrying about the consequences of such a rupture. Turning away from the traditions it abhorred, Zionism ended up reproducing its most cardinal myths in its own analysis: seeking to normalise Jewish existence in an independent Jewish state, it turned the Jewish state into a ghetto and repudiating the subservience of the Jews in the Diaspora, it made Israel dependent on the guilt of the Christian West. The contemporary criticism justifying critical historical investigation has been very successful in showing some of the effects of the Zionist ideology of rupture with the past. The extension of this criticism, the post-Zionist scholarship (‘new history’ and ‘critical sociology’) represents in my view an important and genuine attempt to put Israel’s history and the Jewish identity on different foundations. In doing so, however, makers of the new narrative need to be extremely careful not to reproduce Zionism’s biggest mistake: rupture.

A successful transition to normalcy will require a *healed* leadership holding a worldview devoid of post-traumatic burdens. Put differently, the Israeli critical intelligentsia has to be *realistic* in their assessment of the situation and in their expectations. It needs to consider two issues as a priority:

- Reality of Israeli power and its impact on ethical possibility
- Reality of Israeli traumatisation and its impact on the pace of normalisation

In his reflections on the ethics of Israeli power, Rabbi Irving Greenberg took upon himself a task of charting “a path beyond the innocence of powerlessness and within the reality of Jewish empowerment.”⁴⁹ The author began his account by establishing that the move from powerlessness to power represented a decisive change in the Jewish condition. This movement is for Greenberg historically and

⁴⁸ Quote in Tobin, J., “Post-Zionist Headache” in *Jewish World Review*, 5 May 2000. Internet edition: <http://www.jewishworldreview.com/cols/tobin050500.asp>. Last accessed, 25 September 2001.

⁴⁹ Ellis, M. H., *Beyond Innocence And Redemption* p. 18.

morally inescapable in the face of the Holocaust, because powerlessness is no longer compatible with Jewish survival. However, Greenberg warns that empowerment is pregnant with moral challenges:

Many people are devastated when they see Jewish hands dirtied with the inescapable blood and guilt of operating in the world. The classic Jewish self-image – the innocent, sinned-against sufferer – is being shattered. The traditional Jewish conviction of being morally superior which has sustained our self-respect throughout centuries of persecution is being tested. Who imagined the day that to re-establish order, Jewish soldiers would deliberately beat Arabs on the hands? Or smash arms and legs of some civilians, not just terrorists? ... Some recoil and wish Israel away; some lash out and blame particular leaders. Many yearn for an alternative to regain lost innocence. The truth is more painful and must be faced.⁵⁰

The truth is, according to Greenberg, that “power corrupts, absolute power corrupts absolutely, but absolute powerlessness corrupts even more”.⁵¹ The real test of morality therefore no longer resides in an upholding of a moral superiority stemming from powerlessness, but in a responsible use of power. Since the moral challenges of power are entirely different from the idealistic absolute moral codes (‘slave morality’ in Nietzsche’s terminology⁵²) developed by Judaism in the exile, the ideal standards cannot be used to judge Israel’s actions. Not surprisingly, “the higher standard of ethics has increasingly come into conflict with the morally compromising situations that Israel has entered.”⁵³ When the conflict had developed into a crisis in the aftermath of the Lebanon war, the window of opportunity was created for establishing a moral code compatible with the exercise of power. In his text, Greenberg proposed a classical version of an ethics of responsibility.⁵⁴ A responsible leadership must face the inescapable fact that in “an unredeemed world ... any exercise of power, no matter how well intentioned, will have inescapable ‘immoral’ side effects.”⁵⁵ The true political morality must therefore strike a healthy balance between the best results and

⁵⁰ Greenberg, I., “The Ethics of Jewish Power,” p. 1.

⁵¹ Greenberg, I., “The Ethics of Jewish Power” *Perspectives* (New York: National Jewish Centre for Learning and Leadership, 1988), p. 1.

⁵² See Nietzsche, F., *Zur Genealogie der Moral* (Munich: Goldmann Verlag, 1988).

⁵³ Greenberg, I., “The Ethics of Jewish Power,” p. 4.

⁵⁴ See Weber, M., *Politik als Beruf* (Stuttgart: Reclam Verlag, 1992).

⁵⁵ Greenberg, I., “The Ethics of Jewish Power,” p. 5.

the least morally compromising processes. Rabbi Greenberg provided the Israeli and the American Jewish communities with a moral compass, which, he hoped would guard the Jewish intelligentsia from “undermining Israel or abandoning it through excessive criticism and faulty judgements – or betraying Israel by giving it a moral blank check and uncritical love.”⁵⁶

The excessive criticism of some currents within the Israeli intelligentsia that Greenberg observed leads us to the reality of traumatisation. Even within the segment of the Israeli population that is most advanced in the recovery process, resistance to mourning is still found. Thus some contributions of post-Zionist scholarship still reflect the presence of the fantasy of compassion, whereby the former victim vilifies herself beyond any reasonable measure of self-criticism by immediately assimilating her slightest departure from the self-imposed (higher) moral standards with the evil that had been inflicted upon her. From the point of view of trauma, the fantasy of compassion represents the same obstacle to recovery, as does the fantasy of revenge, the occurrences of which are so fiercely denounced by this scholarship. The fantasy of compassion is relatively easily distinguished from real compassion: the former is characterised by a systematic imbalance of empathy in favour of other than oneself; the latter is a reflection of compassion for one's own victimised self. A psychological and historical understanding of Israel's traumatisation can help turn the fantasy of compassion into reality. Thus for example a reappraisal of certain Zionist leaders and actions in the light of the findings of this thesis would nuance their mistakes or flaws by situating them within the usual parameters of trauma response rather than see them as a proof of exceptionally manipulative characters or evil design. Such analysis not only does greater justice to the Zionist leaders but also maintains its connection to the nation's founders, thus avoiding the Zionist mistake of breaking with the past.

The critics need to be constantly aware of the ways in which their own traumatisation (to the extent that it may not yet be resolved) influences their scholarship and potentially compromises the project of collective normalisation. Furthermore, the architects of Israel's normalisation have the responsibility toward

⁵⁶ Greenberg, I., “The Ethics of Jewish Power,” p. 4.

their project to do everything to avoid exclusion of those who are unable (and that often rhymes with unwilling) to follow their lead at the same pace. Although a segment of the Israeli Jews has almost completed the process of recovery from trauma, this is far from being a generalised occurrence. For the majority of Israelis the prospect of relinquishing their victim identity is threatening, and this reluctance should be handled with understanding and support rather than dismissed as alarmist rhetoric. Those Israelis who see the attack by intellectuals on Israeli nationalism and Jewish particularism as a threat to the Jewish state and the Jewish nation are afraid of what will happen to their own identity which is entirely embedded in the shared history of destruction and redemption. Victim identity is indeed, as Michael S. Roth wrote, "painfully empty when attempting to establish a cultural identity."⁵⁷ Yet, to a trauma survivor who has not completed the process of healing, this is the only identity she has or knows. Therefore, attacking it, no matter how sensibly and how legitimately, will only reinforce her pessimism, increase her isolation, and ultimately prolong the healing process.

Whilst resistance to mourning and normalisation represent a significant frustration to the post-Zionist revolution, a potentially even greater challenge comes from the ultra-Orthodox community, which has only recently acknowledged their traumatisation and there is no way of knowing how they will deal with it. The ultra-Orthodox community suffered the worst devastation during the Holocaust: their centres of learning, the famous *yeshivot* (religious seminaries) in Poland, Lithuania, and Hungary were destroyed, their rabbis and other communal leaders killed, their synagogues and *shtetles* burned down, and close to three million of their members were exterminated by the Nazis. Despite, or possibly, because of this extensive destruction during the Holocaust, the ultra-Orthodox community has avoided the subject that until now had been too painful and too threatening to the community's beliefs. They excluded themselves from the collective reconstruction of trauma at the Eichmann trial in 1961 and they rejected the Zionist narrative of destruction and rebirth that emerged from the trial. According to Menachem Friedman, Bar-Ilan University sociologist and expert on ultra-Orthodox society, for the ultra-Orthodox community, the Holocaust and the Zionist victory represent two interlocking

⁵⁷ Roth, M. S., "Victims, Memory, History" in *Tikkun*, 9: 2 (March / April, 1994), p. 59.

tragedies.⁵⁸ The ultra-Orthodox consider the creation of the State of Israel by secular Zionists a sin because it interferes with the divine plan to re-establish the Kingdom of Israel when the Messiah comes. The majority of ultra-Orthodox continue to shun Israel's main Holocaust memorial institutions. However, recent years have seen an important change of attitude: a steady rise in interest in Holocaust studies among the ultra-Orthodox, the introduction of the Holocaust as a history subject in ultra-Orthodox high schools, and participation of 400 teachers at Yad Vashem seminars, are just a few examples of this shift. The ultra-Orthodox youth is more interested in the survivors' stories and the latter have recently begun to publish memoirs. Although these developments are still relatively marginal, it is conceivable that an ultra-Orthodox narrative of the destruction of their communities may in the future dispute the existing narrative of the Holocaust, as the community is becoming increasingly politicised as well as more willing to confront its past.

Post-Zionism has scored a tremendous success with the introduction of its message into the school curricula and the army, because that way, the school system and the military will stop perpetuating the traumatised view of the world and thereby reproducing the group of empathetic 'survivors' at the critical juncture marked by the gradual disappearance of the physical survivors. With regards to all those in Israel who still see themselves primarily as Holocaust survivors or who may be still in the process of emerging as a survivors' group, the leaders need to include them in the project of normalisation and assist them by adopting an attitude that transpires patience, compassion, understanding, and respect.

⁵⁸ See Gross, N. C., "Why Did God Do This To Us? Ultra-Orthodox Jews Finally Grapple with the Holocaust" in *The Jerusalem Report*, 8 May 2000, pp. 18-21.

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