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The History of Zionist Historiography From Apologetics to Denial

The First Generation of Zionist Historians

The writing of history cannot be separated from the era in which it is written. Changing perspectives define scope, fields and focal points, attitudes toward the objects of study, and even methodological developments. This essay attempts to trace the growth of Zionist historiography, that is, the writing of the history of Zionism (The Zionist movement and ideology, the prestate Jewish community in the Land of Israel, and the State of Israel), as well as the writing of Jewish history by Zionist historians. Within the context of its time frame, Zionist historiography itself becomes part and parcel of the history of Zionism.

Early historians of Zionism were, on the whole, amateurs—Zionist activists who under certain circumstances became historians. Thus, Nahum Sokolow, Adolf Böhm, and Yizhak Gruenbaum all wrote in the 1920s comprehensive histories of Zionism, followed by Richard Lichtheim, a prominent Zionist diplomat who became the first historian of German Zionism. A few professional historians with a Zionist background and education, such as N. M. Gelber, also chose to study the history of the movement, although their research did not enjoy academic recognition at the time.

The writing of Zionism's history ensued from the movement's political success in obtaining the 1917 Balfour Declaration and was clearly affected by it. The declaration, and subsequent achievements of the Zionist delegation at the Peace Conference in Versailles, put Zionism on the international map and attested to its historical vitality. For the English-reading public interested in the new phenomenon, Nahum Sokolow wrote his two-volume *History of Zionism*. Its preface was written by Lord Balfour, who reiterated the Zionist arguments against the movement's Jewish opponents: the assimilationists, the territorialists, and the advocates of emigration to places other than Palestine (such as the

United States, South Africa, Australia, and Latin America). Balfour maintained that Jews needed a national home and that this home could be established only in Palestine.¹

According to Sokolow, the history of Zionism began with the return of the Jews to England in the mid-seventeenth century and the man who promoted it, Rabbi Menashe Ben Israel. Sokolow's account ends in 1918. Faithful to the spirit of the age and to the new British-Jewish alliance embodied in the Balfour Declaration, he contended that the roots of Zionism were primarily English, deriving from a profound affinity for the Bible and its language as evinced in English literature from Shakespeare through Milton, Byron, Shelley, and Browning to George Eliot.

Sokolow devoted most of his voluminous work to the long-standing British interest in the Holy Land and the various revelations in the Anglo-Saxon world relating to the restoration of the Jews to their homeland. This ancient, vague idea, he told his readers, later spread from Britain to France. In the mid-nineteenth century, it took the form of a small-scale, philanthropic, colonizing endeavour linked to such figures as Sir Moses Montefiore and Adolphe Cremieux. Given the plight of the Jews in the Russian Pale of Settlement after the 1881 pogroms and the obstacles to mass emigration, the idea of Jewish restoration to their ancient land became an immigration and colonization enterprise centered on a national goal. It attracted Jewish millionaires, such as Baron Edmond Rothschild and Baron Maurice de Hirsch, and marked an interim phase between philanthropy and nationalism.

Sokolow regarded Herzl's Zionism as "New Zionism," devoting to him less than 10 percent of his first volume. That space dealt also with the general historical background of Herzl's diplomatic efforts—the decay of the Ottoman Empire and British policy in the Near East. The second volume described mainly the lobbying and diplomatic activity that led to the Balfour Declaration, with the underlying message conveying the legitimacy of the Zionist idea and its political expression. At the same time, it stressed that Zionism supplemented, but did not supplant, emancipation.

A few months after Sokolow's book appeared in London in 1919, the first volume of Adolf Böhm's *Die Zionistische Bewegung* came out in Berlin, describing the history of the Zionist movement up to Herzl's death. The second volume, published in 1921, reviewed the decade from Herzl's death to the outbreak of World War I. An epilogue dealt with the war years and the Peace Conference.²

Böhm's approach to the history of Zionism was radically different from Sokolow's. He ignored the biblical, millenarian, and messianic roots that were central to Sokolow's search for legitimacy and, apart from quoting Balfour's famous letter ("Declaration") to Lord Rothschild, did not mention the Zionist-British bond, suggesting, evidently, that this connection at that juncture would not have enhanced Zionism's popularity among the German-reading public. Moreover, it would have situated the Zionist movement in the camp of Germany's defeat.

Böhm took as his point of departure the realities of Jewish life in the nineteenth century: emancipation and its consequences, cultural assimilation, demographic growth, the transformation of economic and social conditions in the wake of modernization, and the subsequent disparity between the Jewish communities in Western and Eastern Europe. According to his emphasis, Zionism was essentially an internal Jewish development, and his narrative focused on the growth of the movement: its organizational consolidation in institutions and parties, Zionist ideologies and intellectual trends, the emergence of Hebrew culture, domestic controversies, and the tension between concern for the Jewish public in the diaspora and the onset of the settlement enterprise in Palestine. Zionist diplomacy, by contrast, received marginal treatment.

For Sokolow, the Zionist leader and statesman who later chaired the Zionist organization (1931–35), the Zionist idea stood at the heart of its history. For Böhm, the core of Zionist history was the movement, its institutions and actions. Common to both men was the search for legitimacy. Sokolow directed this search at the outside world, Böhm at the Jewish people.

Both works were pioneering attempts to write a comprehensive history of the Zionist movement. Another attempt (albeit of a different nature) was made by Yizhak Gruenbaum in the mid-1920s. Under the title *The Development of the Zionist Movement*, Gruenbaum published a series of lectures that he had delivered at a seminar of HeHalutz (Zionist pioneering youth) counselors in Warsaw. Neither a study nor a compilation, this didactic textbook was a first effort to teach early Zionist history to the new generation of Zionist youth. Gruenbaum's innovation was the organic link he forged between Zionism and the historical Jewish messianic movements and his definition of Zionism as "secular messianism."³

Besides defending Zionism against its opponents and critics, Zionist historiography throughout the 1920s and 1930s aspired to gain both domestic (Jewish) and international legitimacy and recognition. Whereas Sokolow had identified the roots of Zionism in seventeenth-century

England, N. M. Gelber discovered that the idea of Jewish restoration had emerged also in Germany, France, and Denmark. He linked the growth of the idea to the nineteenth-century European debates on the Jewish Question and Palestine, from the Vienna Congress in 1815 to the Berlin Congress in 1878.⁴

Covert apologetics continued throughout the next decade. In 1934, Sokolow published *Hibbat Zion*, in which he reviewed the metamorphoses of the pre-Zionist idea of “love of Zion” from George Eliot and Benjamin Disraeli to Moses Hess, Rabbi Zvi Hirsch Kalischer, Leo Pinsker, Ahad HaAm, Baron Rothschild, and Rabbi Samuel Mohilewer.⁵

A second *Hibbat Zion* appeared almost at the same time. Written by Benzion Dinaburg (later Dinur), it described the development of the Hovevei Zion [Lovers of Zion] movement in the Russian Pale after the pogroms of 1881. Dinur drew on the three volumes of original documents that had been collected and published by Abraham Droyanov on the Jewish press in Russia, as well as on private diaries and letters gathered by the Jewish National Library in Jerusalem.⁶

Dinur did not regard “Love of Zion” as an old idea that had survived through the ages due to the quirks of visionaries. Rather, it was the outcome of Jewish disappointment and disillusionment with the Russian government’s reactionary policies, a major setback after the liberal reforms of the late czar, Alexander II, who was assassinated in 1881. Dinur approached Zionism as an inner force of Jewish history, stemming from the search for a solution to the existential problems of Eastern European Jewry.

In his later studies, Dinur elaborated on this approach. He looked for the early roots of the Zionist phenomenon and summed up his theory in two articles that placed Zionism in the context of modern Jewish history. Dinur’s chronological structure and thematic emphasis differed from those of the earlier Jewish historians—Leopold Zunz, Heinrich Graetz, and Simon Dubnow—who had written comprehensive histories of the Jews. The Zionist historian and founder of the Jerusalem School of Jewish historiography suggested a new unifying power—the nation’s affiliation with its homeland. In Dinur’s view, the continuity of this bond from ancient times through the Middle Ages to the modern era was the principal inspiration for Zionism and consequently the main driving force of modern Jewish history.⁷

Their differences notwithstanding, both Sokolow and Dinur dated the beginnings of Zionism some centuries back: Sokolow, to mid-seventeenth-century England and Dinur to 1700 and the immigration to

Eretz-Israel of Rabbi Yehuda the Pious and his followers, which he saw as the start of the modern age and a harbinger of the ancient land's centrality in the nation's history. Dinur's approach to Zionist history was denoted by the focal role he assigned the country, whereas his colleagues stressed the roles of the idea (Sokolow), organization (Böhm), social processes (Ya'acov Katz), or political sovereignty (Ben Halpern).⁸

Dinur's historiographic approach distinguished between the history of the Zionist movement in the diaspora and the history of the Zionist enterprise in the prestate Yishuv. It shifted the emphasis from a stirring ideology and Zionist organization in the diaspora to the realization of Zionism in Palestine.

Apologetics characterized also the early historiography of Zionism's implementation. Kurt Nawratzky and Arthur Ruppin's pioneering books on the history of Zionist agricultural colonization in Palestine and later Alexander Bein's works in this field were written primarily to convince the reader that settling in Palestine was a feasible proposition—agriculturally, economically, socially, and politically—and met the contemporary needs of the Jewish people. These works strove to allay doubts among both Jews and non-Jews as to the prospects of the Zionist enterprise. The first agricultural colonies' jubilee books, which appeared in the 1930s and 1940s, and the volumes that celebrated the twenty-fifth anniversary of the first kibbutzim and moshavim also aimed at this goal.⁹

The absorption of immigrants from Central Europe in the 1930s extended the meaning and history of the concept of "building up the country" beyond agricultural settlement. Thus, several economists—not historians—began to write the economic history of the Zionist enterprise. Alfred Bonn , David Horowitz, and Abraham Ulitzur endeavored to demonstrate the economic prospects in Palestine and the role of the Zionist enterprise in developing the country. Their works were written to support Zionist arguments in the polemics over Palestine's part in alleviating the plight of European Jewry and over the solution to the Palestine problem, but at the same time they laid the foundation of Zionist economic historiography, which was later developed by Nahum Gross and others.¹⁰

Moshe Medzini's studies of Zionist diplomatic history tried to persuade readers that, despite disappointment with British policies after the Balfour Declaration and bewilderment in the face of Arab opposition to the Zionist enterprise, Zionism still had political prospects. Medzini wrote his first book in the late 1920s during the severe socioeconomic crisis that overtook the Yishuv in the wake of the fourth immigration

wave. Displaying a combination of criticism and hope, the book reflected the perplexed atmosphere of those years.¹¹

Medzini wrote his second book after the shock of the 1929 riots and Chaim Weizmann's forced resignation from the leadership of the (world) Zionist Organization. The Zionist movement was preoccupied with the domestic strife between Labor and the Revisionists. The author reminded his public that the movement had endured serious crises in the past and recovered thanks to its immense inner power, meaning that Zionism would not achieve its goals by means of diplomatic accomplishments but through internal unity, self-fulfillment, and hard work.¹²

In a monograph on the Balfour Declaration, N. M. Gelber analyzed the political power of the Zionist movement and its ability to maneuver politically and take advantage of international circumstances. The book appeared in 1939 after the Zionist leadership had lost its bargaining position among rival powers and had become totally dependent on Britain. The result was Zionism's major political defeat, as embodied in the British White Paper of May 1939, which curtailed Zionist immigration to Palestine and land purchases.¹³

Gelber's book was the first in a series of scholarly works on the formation of the British-Zionist political alliance, a topic that engrossed several scholars in the years to come. He relied mostly on Zionist archival material, his access to British and other foreign sources being limited, and the resulting picture was necessarily partial. A dozen years later, when British archival material was made accessible after World War II, Leonard Stein was able to present a considerably fuller picture.¹⁴ Mayir Vereté also spent many years examining British motives for issuing the Balfour Declaration, and the topic has now apparently been exhausted with Yesha'ayahu Friedman's comprehensive description and analysis.¹⁵

The historiography of the apologetic era culminated in a comprehensive, collective project, the ESCO Foundation's two-volume *Palestine: A Study of Jewish, Arab, and British Policies*, published by Yale University Press in 1947-49. Most of the chapters had been written during World War II, in anticipation of the postwar struggle over the fate of Eretz-Israel. Some of the contributors were active Zionists; others were academics sympathetic to Zionism, such as the archaeologist William Foxwell Albright, who wrote about relations between Christians and Muslims in Palestine. Joel Carmichael, the expert on Arab affairs of the ZOA, contributed a chapter on the Arab national movement in Palestine. The orientalist Gustav von Grinbaum, of Vienna, wrote the chap-

ters on the Arab world. The Polish Jewish historians Isaac Levitatz and Bernard Weinreb, provided the chapters on the Yishuv's political and socioeconomic history. One of the contributors, James McDonald, a professor of history and international relations, had served as the League of Nations' high commissioner for refugees and was soon to be appointed the first American ambassador to Israel.

The project was aimed primarily at the American public and reflected the transformation of Zionist historiography during the interwar period. The British millenarian forerunners, in the early days of Zionism prior to World War I, were mentioned only in the introduction. Three lengthy chapters analyzed the promises, claims, rights, and policies of the three parties to the Palestine problem—Jews, Arabs, and Britons—from World War I to the Peace Conference, and the granting of the Palestine Mandate to Britain. The rest of the book described the development and accomplishments of the Jewish National Home despite Arab resistance and Britain's retreat from its commitments.

True to the spirit of the period, the chapter on the Middle East during World War II stressed the Yishuv's contribution to the Allied war effort, contrasting Jewish cooperation and assistance with Arab shirking and disloyalty. The concluding chapter reviewed various past proposals for Palestine and analyzed the stances of the parties toward each of them. The apologetics of Zionist historiography, which initially had addressed domestic opponents within Jewish ranks, applied itself, after the Palestinian revolt of 1936–39 and World War II, to British and Arab arguments.

The Second Generation: From the History of Zionism to the History of the Yishuv

Statehood changed the trend of Zionist historiography. Jewish alternatives to Zionism—assimilation, Bundism,¹⁶ and religious orthodoxy—had disappeared during the Holocaust, and Zionism's success in establishing a Jewish state three years after the war, even if not in all of Palestine, appeared to vindicate the movement's original justification. The military achievements in the War of Independence allayed fears about the ability of the Zionist enterprise to survive Arab hostility and British intrigue. Under the new circumstances, the writing of Zionist history lost its apologetic tone and—moving to the opposite pole—began to distribute laurels to the victors.

For many years, the euphoria in the wake of the Zionist triumph

blurred the central issue of modern Jewish history—the Holocaust. A typical example is the revised version of Dinur’s essay on the modern period of Jewish history.¹⁷ Dinur divided the new era into three subperiods, the last one dating from 1881 to 1947. In his view, these years were “the age of political uprising, self-defense, and national strengthening,” which had begun with the Jewish reaction to the pogroms and ended with Jewish statehood. He did not mention the Holocaust.

In 1948, the history of Zionism became the history of the State of Israel, its domestic growth and its relations with the world, diaspora Jewry, and the Arab surroundings. The historiography moved from comprehensive histories that emphasized Zionism’s common features to the story of Zionism’s unique development in individual countries. In a sense, it was a way of commemorating a movement that had vanished in the Holocaust or, as in the Soviet Union, even earlier, its history there a thing of the past. During the first decades of statehood, a number of new books told the history of Zionism in Central and Eastern Europe: Richard Lichtheim’s work on the Zionist movement in Germany, N. M. Gelber’s study of the Zionist movement in Galicia, Israel Klausner’s and Itzhak Maor’s studies on Russian Zionism, and Zvi Zehavi’s book on the roots of the Zionist movement in Hungary.¹⁸ Veterans of HeHalutz and other Zionist youth movements also documented their history, especially that in Poland, in volumes such as *Sefer HeHalutz* and *Sefer HaShomer HaTza’ir*, although a comprehensive history of the Zionist movement in Poland has yet to be written.¹⁹

In time, the history of the Zionist movement in Europe lost much of its attraction. On the one hand, research and writing in the field dwindled. On the other, the study of Zionist history in Muslim countries such as Iraq, Egypt, Syria, and the states of North Africa had not yet begun. Zionist historiography after Israel’s establishment focused on the history of the Yishuv at the end of the Ottoman era, during the British Mandate, and during early statehood. The story of Jewish awakening in the diaspora and the Zionist experiment in Palestine during the first third of the twentieth century was transformed, in the next third, into a tale of Zionist triumph. But the enormous toll paid for victory was consistently avoided by Zionist historians.

Triumph, evidently, has many fathers, and the historians of the Yishuv have spent plenty of time looking for them. The heterogeneous Yishuv society was a jumble of Zionists, non-Zionists, and anti-Zionists; an “organized Yishuv” and its dissidents; immigrants from a variety of countries of origin and different waves of immigration; rival ideologies

that developed both inside and outside of the Zionist movement; political organizations, parties, and movements; paramilitary organizations; and competing economic interest groups. Each of these elements claimed recognition for and even monopoly over the overall accomplishment. Each, in retrospect, attempted to justify its position in the numerous disputes that had characterized prestate history. Controversial issues in the history of the Yisuv proceeded to take their place in its historiography: Who drove the British out of the country? Who built the country? Who shaped Jewish military power? Who broke through the British blockade of the country? Who had warned of the catastrophe of European Jewry?

One outcome of these historiographic debates was a series of history projects on paramilitary organizations, political parties, trade unions, and other groups. The comprehensive history of the Zionist labor movement was the subject of three studies.²⁰ Several projects were devoted to the history of the Yishuv's paramilitary organizations. The first to appear, in 1953, commemorated the youngest force—the Palmah. Next came a history of the Haganah, at the time the most comprehensive historiographic project in the history of the Yishuv. A few years later, the prestate, right-wing, underground of Irgun Zva'i Le'umi (Etzel) responded by publishing its own historical study.²¹ Some of these “establishment” books were written by individual historians. Others were the products of collaboration. All had editorial boards behind them composed of involved veterans and exerting an enormous influence on the writing and even the selection of source material.

The early writing of the history of the War of Independence also belongs to this period. The work on the war by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) History Department was summed up in a work by Netanel Lorch. Alongside this effort, veterans wrote histories of several of the IDF brigades during the war. Some of these brigade histories are no more than collections of testimonies and memoirs; others—such as Abraham Ayalon's study of the Giv'ati Brigade—are the products of serious research.²²

The Third Generation: Historiography in Academia

Questions of academic legitimacy overshadowed Zionist historiography from its inception. The reigning spirit at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (HU) at the time maintained that “Zionist agitators” had no

place in the university and the subjects of their propaganda even less so. For almost two generations, Zionist historiography developed and flourished outside of academia. Throughout the 1930s, the university treated Zionist historians as suspect and sought to avoid the ideological and academic complications entailed in the study of Zionism on campus.²³ All these historiographic and commemorative research projects were initiated, written, and published outside of Israeli academia. Only in the early 1960s did the study of the Zionist movement and the Yishuv penetrate the Hebrew University and subsequently its younger sister universities.

The academic study and research of the history of the Yishuv brought scholars and history makers face to face. Many of the saga's heroes were still alive, filling high-ranking posts in various walks of life. Young scholars who had made this their field of study naturally disputed axioms that had taken root in the public consciousness. Furthermore, they subjected to critical examination the consensus created by the earlier official and factional histories written outside of academia. They, and certainly their supervisors, had been educated in the light of this consensus and under the shadow of these axioms. The process of liberation from these traditions—or of challenging these myths—has been slow and is still incomplete.

Academia's scholarly apparatus has gradually transformed Zionist historiography. Prevalent trends in Western historiography as to goals, subject matter, and methods of historical research also influenced the study of Zionism. The substance of Zionist history, previously written in an epic, romantic style in the manner of Leopold von Ranke or Jules Michelet, was apparently incompatible with the universal, absolute concepts and values that Western historiography increasingly borrowed from the social sciences via the school of *Annales* or from Edward Carr's relativism. The disparity showed up the precarious status of Zionist historiography in the academic world and the dilemmas involved in its penetration, consolidation, and acceptance.

Israel Kolatt—a pioneer in the research and teaching of the history of the Yishuv—summarized this chapter of evolving Zionist historiography in a painstaking essay, "On the Research and Researcher of the History of the Yishuv and the Zionist Movement," which was written in the early 1970s and reprinted in 1976.²⁴ Kolatt linked the penetration of Zionist historiography into universities to the broader change of generations in Israeli academe and indicated the difficulties that academic research was to anticipate in this still untouched minefield.

This project of uncovering the past buried under heaps of stereotypes, images, memoirs, polemics and phraseology is a huge enterprise. . . . Even harder is the scholar's intellectual need to overcome inherited concepts, examine his prejudices, experiences, memories, feelings and preferences and regard the research object as a historical phenomenon. The burden of Zionist ideology and apologetics has turned the reassessment of Zionist history into a complex and delicate process.²⁵

Almost a generation before the "post-Zionist" controversy broke out, Kolatt forecast the condemnation of Zionism by revisionist historians. He linked their emergence to Arab anti-Zionist propaganda and the ideas of the European and American New Left. He also identified a widening gap between dominant concepts in Western universities and the roots of the Israeli phenomenon. Enlightenment, progress, and liberalism notwithstanding, the

unique connection between the Jewish religion and Jewish nationalism deviates from the conventional definitions of national movements. The Jewish bond with the land of Israel . . . is not the normal bond of a people to its land. The international character of Jewish existence and the close tie to the State of Israel felt by Jews who are citizens of other countries mystify many people, and mysteries are always open to libelous interpretation.²⁶

Besides the lasting ideological confrontation between Zionism and its adversaries, Kolatt pointed out the difficulty of reconciling the needs of Zionist historiography with current trends in Western historiography.

As far as the respect for the facts, the unbiased appreciation of the truth and the rejection of utilitarian myths are concerned—we are part of the Western world. However, the character and level of development of the Yishuv's historiography make it difficult to adapt the new methods that have developed in the West to the subjects that stand at the center of Zionist and Yishuv history. . . . Western historiography now gives preference to the critical and cognitive over the constituent role. The needs of Zionist historiography are different.²⁷

A generation later, Kolatt's observations and predictions on the development of Zionist historiography under pressure from the social sciences, the media, the impact of Western historiography, and the influence of postmodernist trends appear almost prophetic.

The growth of research on the history of the Yishuv has depended on the opening of the archives of political parties, kibbutz and other movements, organizations, institutions, and persons, primarily the Central Zionist Archives, the Israel State Archives, and the IDF archives. This has been a lengthy process, and new archives, or new sections in existing archives, are still being discovered. They cast new light on domestic issues and processes and Yishuv relations with Britain and the Arabs.²⁸

The opening of the documents in the British Public Record Office enabled scholars to study Zionist-British relations from both viewpoints. They were thus better able to understand the decision making of the Palestine government and the cabinet in London and to delve deeper into the motivations, sentiments, and considerations that had guided British policies in Palestine. Naturally, the result was a more balanced view of Britain's role in Palestine during the Mandate years. Scholars such as Bernard Wasserstein, Gabriel Cohen, Michael Cohen, and Ronald Zweig were less affected by the local stereotype formed of the British during the anti-British struggle after World War II.²⁹

Until the opening of the archives, and sometimes even afterward, researchers of Yishuv history were greatly dependent on interviews and thus susceptible to the sway of the actual makers of history. These figures not only had a direct impact on the study of history, by publishing their diaries and memoirs, but also had an indirect impact, by passing on their version of events to historians, who, in so small a society as that of Israel, may well have been unduly influenced by these dominant personalities.

Very few national histories have been as based on oral history as Israel's "state in the making." The extensive use of oral history is commonly explained by the claim that a substantial chunk of the events took place under clandestine or semiclandestine conditions and secrecy prevented their proper documentation. But this claim hardly holds water since very few underground activities in world history have been as amply recorded as those of the Haganah fighting force, illegal immigration to Palestine in face of the British blockade, and other covert operations in Yishuv history.

The historiography, to date, has not found a satisfactory solution to the problem of individual memory—the handling of oral testimonies.³⁰

Psychological research, too, has focused mainly on quantitative parameters of memory—how much people remember and for how long. Only recently have psychologists resumed a systematic study of memory's qualitative properties such as accuracy, bias, foreign impact, autosuggestion, distortion, and so forth. The results of these studies, as far as the link between memory and truth or accuracy is concerned, are not encouraging.³¹ The problem of oral testimonies becomes aggravated as historical research expands into microhistory—the recording and study of undocumented fields, such as small settlements or military units, or of societies, tribes, clans, and families whose traditions are predominantly oral. In these novel fields, individual memory and oral traditions are the principal sources, and there are usually very few, if any, alternative sources for comparison and verification.

Apart from individual testimonies based on dubious memory, it has become conventional to use the vague phrase “collective memory.” Daniel Gutwein has defined revisionist criticism of Zionist and Israeli historiography as the “privatization of collective memory”—a phenomenon that he rightly perceives as one of many privatization processes that Israeli society has been undergoing.³² However, definitions of the “collective,” and consequently of its “shared memory,” are obscure. If the collective is Israeli, does it include only Jews or also Arabs and other non-Jews? If it is Jewish, excluding Israel's minorities, does it include non-Israeli Jews? What about those who continually join the collective such as the young and new immigrants? Is collective memory an aggregate of private recollections or is it detached from individual memory with an independent nature of its own? Who decides which memory is collective and which is not? The government? The media? Academia?

The closest relative of collective memory seems to be that old familiar “myth.” Like the myths of other nations, Zionist and Israeli myths conceal failures or excuse fiascos. True achievement and triumph speak for themselves and require no myths. Myths are shaped and propagated by various agents: persons involved in the making of history who try to affect the way they will be remembered by posterity; and chroniclers, biographers, poets, dramatists, journalists, writers of fiction, filmmakers, curriculum planners, teachers, and radio and television producers. More recently, the Internet has become a significant medium for the creation and dissemination of old and new myths, a role that is likely to grow in the empire of information. Historians currently are engaged in deconstructing long-established myths, which has made it unfashionable to create new ones. Instead, as agents, they now shape collective memory.

Essentially, however, they are doing exactly what they did before the coining of the phrase.

History is not equivalent to memory—on neither the individual nor the collective level—and Zionist history is no exception. Categories of source material such as memoirs, oral testimonies, and coverage by the media, fiction, or the arts can, at best, tell us how events have been memorized, remembered, commemorated, conceived, or represented; they cannot tell us how the events themselves took place. However, the lack of access to official and personal archival material compels Israeli and other historians to rely on such sources.

Consequently, the study of the history of memory has been rapidly expanding. A growing number of scholars are researching the roots and development of Israeli myths, images, and stereotypes. They study the background from which the myths emerged, the reasons for their emergence, the motives behind their expansion, and the methods of their cultivation.³³ The study of myths is part of cultural history. Significant as it is, this work should not be confused with researching historical events and processes—political, diplomatic, military, or social. Virtual history, or the representation of history through fiction, poetry, art, films, or other popular means, is not a substitute for the real history of people, nations, organizations, institutions, societies, ideas, and other features of human activity.

The Historiography of Zionism and the Holocaust

The Six Day War in 1967 marked a turning point in the development of Zionist historiography. Missing pieces of the puzzle of the ideological, diplomatic, and domestic-political history of the Yishuv were increasingly filled in. The study of fields that had been virtually taboo in the 1950s and early 1960s marked a shift in focus; historians now turned their attention to Zionism's attitude toward the plight of European Jewry before, during, and after the Holocaust and to Jewish relations with the Arab world. These two topics, along with the transition from the melting pot concept to that of a multicultural society, still play a leading role in Israeli historiography.

Benzion Dinur—among his many other achievements, the sponsor of the Yad Vashem Heroes and Holocaust Memorial—and Yehuda Bauer—a pioneer of Holocaust research in Israel—separated Zionist and Yishuv history from the Holocaust. In his first book, which deals with

Zionist diplomacy during World War II, Bauer wrote only one sentence on the Yishuv's attitude toward the Holocaust.

The response of the Yishuv (and world Jewry in general) to news of the extermination of the European Jews is one of the most crucial and dreadful issues to confront modern Jewish historiography. Certain aspects of this issue have not been clarified yet, to say nothing of being settled.³⁴

A number of comprehensive histories of the Yishuv, written during the 1960s and even the 1970s, also steered clear of the issue. At most, they contended that the Yishuv had not known what was taking place in Europe at the time and in any case had been preoccupied with its own predicament in the wake of the Arab Revolt and the British White Paper of May 1939.³⁵

The early chapters in the historiography of the Yishuv's attitude toward the Holocaust were written by journalists who had covered well-known Holocaust trials in Israel: Shalom Rosenfeld on Israel Kastner and Haim Guri on Adolf Eichmann.³⁶ The Eichmann trial is commonly regarded as a crossroads in the development of Israeli society's attitude toward the Holocaust and as a source of inspiration for the younger generation of Holocaust researchers, including those who studied the Zionist movement's performance during the Holocaust. It nevertheless was another twenty-five years before the first monograph on the subject was published—Dina Porat's *Hanhagah BeMilkud*.³⁷

In the interim, noxious weeds shot up in this uncultivated historiographic field of the Yishuv's attitude toward the Holocaust, reviving prewar diaspora polemics—religious-Orthodox, Bundist, communist, and assimilationist anti-Zionist—as well as the domestic arguments between labor and revisionist Zionism.³⁸ These early critics fiercely attacked both the Yishuv in Palestine and the Zionists in occupied Europe—leaders along with rank and file. The anti-Zionists portrayed their ideological rivals as Nazi collaborators in theory and practice, who, for the sake of their own Zionist agenda, had abandoned the masses of believers (in the Orthodox version) or the masses of workers (in the communist and Bundist version) to their fate.

Shabtai B. Beit-Zvi's book, published in the mid-1970s, accused the Zionist movement of having obstructed rescue efforts that were not linked to, and could not advance, the Zionist enterprise.³⁹ This study, though written by an amateur, was the first to raise a series of

uncomfortable questions about the stance of the Zionist leadership on the eve of and in the course of the Holocaust. Beit-Zvi's "answers," however, lacked a sound basis. Israeli academe, at the time, chose—in my opinion, wrongly—to ignore not only his answers but also his questions.

Academic research had been mute on the accusations for a long time. Only in the early 1970s did scholarly research into the Zionist movement's attitudes and actions during the Holocaust begin in earnest. Bauer's and Ettinger's students in Jerusalem, and Daniel Carpi's in Tel Aviv, began studying such issues as the Yishuv's representation in Istanbul, the actions of the Yishuv Rescue Committee, and how and when the Yishuv learned of the extermination of European Jewry or the Transfer Agreement.⁴⁰

In the mid-1980s, Dina Porat published *Hanhagah BeMilkud*, her pioneering monograph on the policies of the Zionist leadership. In its wake, two studies analyzed the position of Mapai, the leading party in the Yishuv. Others focused on immigration during the war years and on the Yishuv's mission on behalf of the survivors after the war.⁴¹ Only a few years earlier, most of these studies would have been perceived as critical, even revisionist. By the time they were published, however, the climate had changed, and their critical and revisionist conclusions now appeared almost orthodox and apologetic.⁴²

The Historiography of the Arab-Jewish Conflict

On the whole, Zionist scholars were interested in the Arabs of Palestine as an independent, neighboring society rather than in the context of their relations with the Yishuv. Comprehensive historical projects and monographs on Zionist policies did discuss Jewish-Arab relations but as ancillary to the principal topic—the political and military struggle of the Zionist enterprise. Here historiography reflected policy. Zionist leaders believed that the fate of Zionism would be decided in London, New York, and Washington, not in Baghdad, Cairo, Damascus, or Nablus. Similarly, the historiographic effort focused on Zionist-British relations, in which Arabs occupied a minor place. One exception to this rule was the historiography sponsored or inspired by the Marxist Party, HaShomer HaTza'ir. Historians with this ideological background and a belief in the brotherhood of nations gave more emphasis to Zionist relations with the Arab world, and their studies, earlier than others, diverged from the subject's common presentation.⁴³

The disappearance of the Palestinians from the military and political arenas after the war of 1948 removed them also from the eyes of historians. Between 1949 and 1967, the only monographs to deal with the Palestinians considered the problem of the refugees.⁴⁴ Israel's relations with Arab states were too new and current for discussion. They lacked historical perspective, although they did attract the attention of political scientists such as Yehoshafat Harkabi and Nadav Safran.⁴⁵

After the Six Day War, the changing character of the conflict stimulated new interest in the Palestinians. Their return to the forefront of the conflict following the 1973 war, when relations between Israel and the Arab states stabilized, encouraged research into their plight and generated a new historiography of the Yishuv and the State of Israel. The history of Zionism thus became, quite late, an integral part of the history of the modern Middle East (in addition to the Jewish context and the general historical framework).

The third generation of historians on Zionism and the Yishuv shifted the emphasis from the movement, its policies, and the colonizing enterprise to the new society that Zionism had striven to build in Palestine, the origins of its social vision, and the implementation of its social revolution. Anita Shapira, a dominant historian in this field since her studies on the Labor Battalion and the struggle for the "conquest of labor," followed these up with a biography of Berl Katzenelson and a book called *Land and Power*, which examined the Zionist movement's attitude toward power and the use of force.⁴⁶ Yosef Gorny researched various political, diplomatic, and social aspects of the Labor Zionist movement, Zionist attitudes toward the Arab question, and Zionist utopian visions. Ya'acov Shavit studied the social and colonization ideology of the Zionist revisionist movement.⁴⁷ A few monographs and collective projects inquired into the various immigration waves, analyzing their part in shaping Yishuv society.⁴⁸ Moshe Lissak and Dan Horowitz created a comprehensive framework in which to probe the development of Yishuv society and institutions, while Yonathan Shapira explored the survival and transformation of Zionist social ideologies through changing generations.⁴⁹

Biographies must also be mentioned. These include the as yet incomplete biography by Shabtai Teveth of Ben-Gurion (and its appendixes on the murder of Mapai leader Chaim Arlosoroff, on Ben-Gurion and the Arab question, and on the Lavon Affair—the 1954 intelligence mishap in Egypt);⁵⁰ Eyal Kafkafi's controversial biography of labor leader and minister of defense Pinhas Lavon; Ruth Bondy's important biographies of

Enzo Sereni, the pioneer and parachutist who was executed by the Nazis, the Theresienstadt Ghetto Jewish leader Jakob Edelstein, Dr. Chaim Shiba, founder of Israel's state medical system, and Pinhas Rosen, the leader of the German Aliyah; Gabriel Sheffer's biography of Foreign Minister Moshe Sharett; and Yehuda Reinharz's work in progress on Chaim Weizmann, the leader of the Zionist Organization.

In addition to a long list of dissertations and monographs, the academization of Yishuv history has generated diverse documentation, research, and publications: journals, such as *Cathedra* and *Studies in Zionism*, annual volumes such as *Ha-Tziyonut* (Zionism) and *Yahadut Zmanenu* (Contemporary Jewry), the series on Weizmann's letters, the interuniversity project on the *Ha'apala* (illegal immigration), the series of documents on Israel's foreign policy published by the Israel State Archives, the series of documents from Ben-Gurion's archives and diaries of 1948, and Sharett's diary from 1953–56. The intended flagship of this energetic output is the comprehensive history project on the Yishuv undertaken by the Israel National Academy of Arts and Sciences. So far three volumes have been published and two others are forthcoming.

The third generation also integrated history with other disciplines and used new research methods developed in the social and political sciences. These writers have been more critical of, and less involved in, the objects of study than their predecessors were. At the same time, however, they developed an image of "establishment historiography" that was soon challenged by a new school of revisionist historians.

The Changing Historiography of the Arab-Jewish Conflict

New scholarly trends that emerged in the 1980s have again shifted the emphasis, this time from Zionism's triumphs and achievements to its costs and failures. Revisionist historians (and "critical" sociologists) focus on three major fields of Zionist ideological and political history: its attitude toward the Arabs, the Holocaust, and the immigrants of early statehood. This combination has mounted an assault on the legitimacy of Zionism and Jewish statehood in three separate systems of relations: Israel and its surroundings, Israel and the Jewish people, and Israel and those of its citizens who allegedly received unfair treatment.⁵¹

To date, the first of these—the history of the Arab-Jewish conflict—has been the most popular and complex since the conflict is ongoing.

None of the problems involving Jews and Arabs that emerged before, during, and after the 1948 War of Independence has been resolved. Every word written or uttered about that war, the subsequent major military confrontations, and the endless skirmishes on both sides of Israel's borders may have actual ramifications and is often interpreted and discussed outside of its historical context and in terms of the present struggle. In this sense, the historiography of the Arab-Jewish conflict is as unparalleled and unprecedented as the conflict itself.

In the 1970s, attitudes toward Israel in Western academe began to change. The same Palestinian slogans that had made little impression on European public opinion between the two world wars and in the aftermath of 1948 now found fertile ground in Europe's newfound postcolonial guilt. The process was encouraged by Arab petrodollars and other forms of funding and spread to American universities and later even to Israel. Early signs of the change in attitude appeared in the late 1980s with the emergence of the so-called New Historians, whose principal contribution to the study of the Arab-Israeli conflict has been to deflect the focus from Israeli accomplishments to the Palestinian ordeal. Palestinians are portrayed as hapless objects of violence and Israeli oppression, Israeli-Transjordanian collusion, and treacherous British and Arab diplomacy.⁵² Some describe Israelis as intransigent, merciless, and needlessly callous usurpers who cynically exploited the Holocaust to gain world support for Jewish statehood at the expense of Palestinian rights to their country.⁵³

In characterizing the New Historians, Anita Shapira has stressed the differences among them that make generalization difficult if not impossible. She has suggested age (biological and scholarly) as a common denominator, but this explanation, too, is unsatisfactory; while there are substantial age differences among them, several of the New Historians or sociologists are not much younger, if at all, than colleagues who do not lay claim to the title.⁵⁴

What is particularly irritating about the self-proclaimed title New Historians is an implied objectivity and open-mindedness said to have been lacking in allegedly involved, partisan, Old Historians.⁵⁵ The New Historians have indeed revised the traditional presentation of the 1948 war and its aftermath, but their (different) methodological approaches, practical performances, and analyses have been no less open to criticism than those of their predecessors.⁵⁶ Nor is there cause to assume that the revisionists are impartial and free of ideological bias. Some have rendered an invaluable service to the Palestinian charge that Israel was "conceived

in sin” by sketching the Palestinians of 1948 and after as innocent victims of conspiracies and atrocities. This simplistic approach is unconvincing to anyone familiar with the sources—unless the reader is utterly prejudiced.⁵⁷

Nevertheless, what appeared to be a common front of revisionists challenging a virtual establishment of Old Historians has gradually disintegrated. Ilan Pappé, Avi Shlaim, and others have radicalized their anti-Israeli stances, while Benny Morris has gained wide acceptance and recognition in Israel. At the same time, he has been sharply criticized by Palestinian historians and radical American Jews, such as Norman Finkelstein, for not being radical enough.⁵⁸

When the revisionist historians first appeared on the scene in the late 1980s, they were outsiders attacking the historiographic and sociological “establishment.” Today most belong to the academic world in Israel or abroad, with university positions and tenure, and the polemics between Old and New Historians have been extended from research and writing to teaching and supervising.

Face to Face with Palestinian Historiography

After several decades of separate, independent development, the current trend of positive discrimination toward the “other” has brought Israeli historiography face to face with its Arab and Palestinian counterparts. Arab narratives of the 1948 war and its consequences—usually polemics or apologetic memoirs and propaganda, rarely scholarly research—have concentrated on assigning guilt rather than analyzing events and processes. Since it was inconceivable that the tiny Yishuv could have single-handedly routed the Arabs, it was essential to mitigate the defeat by suggesting accomplices. The Arabs accused Britain of betrayal, blamed the United States for supporting its Zionist protégé, and vilified King Abdullah of Transjordan, the only Arab ruler to benefit from the general debacle.⁵⁹

Arab historiography has typically been obsessed with the question of injustice and unfairness. Arab scholars have largely ignored the full context; they have scarcely endeavored to find out what really happened—the how, when, and why of things. Instead they have dwelt on right or wrong, legitimate or illegitimate claims, ascribing undue significance to official, judicial, and declarative documents such as UN resolutions and disregarding the huge corpus of archival source material on the war.

One exception worth mentioning—despite its apologetic charac-

ter—is Arif al-Arif's six volumes on the war written in the 1950s. Unfortunately, this work has not been translated and is inaccessible to most readers, Israeli or otherwise. Recent Arab works on the conflict may be more sophisticated, using the fashionable jargon of Western universities, but none approximates al-Arif's thoroughness, self-critical method, and accuracy.⁶⁰

The recent Arab writings invoke postmodern terminology and theorization but still suffer from extraordinary factual and chronological errors. Often they are based on a single dubious or unreliable source (such as a book of memoirs), adopting arguments without bothering to verify what is behind them.⁶¹ One wonders what findings Arab New Historians will come up with should they ever emerge in Arab countries or among the Palestinians.

Some Israeli historians think that Palestinian historiography, as representative of the other, deserves equal treatment with Israeli historiography—despite its propagandist nature and poor professional standards. Palestinians, however, tend to insist that their narrative be accepted in advance, before any serious discussion of the evidence (or lack thereof). The demand to discuss the evidence first is seen as a typical reflection of arrogant orientalism.

The Colonialist Paradigm of Zionism

Palestinian scholars have been joined by Israeli revisionist sociologists, jurists, geographers, and historians in an attempt to prove Zionism's colonialist (as distinct from colonizing) nature, especially in post-1967 Israel.⁶² Deriving from current theories on colonialism, this claim relies on a bare minimum of historical evidence—which on the whole shows the opposite—and far more on tendentious interpretations that confuse past and present and serve primarily as a propagandist and ideological weapon in the persisting Arab-Jewish conflict.

The association of Zionism with colonialism did not begin with the New Historians, sociologists, or geographers. It is as old as the conflict itself, dating back to the first Palestinian congress in Jerusalem in early 1919 if not before, as Rashid Khalidi has recently shown.⁶³ Put simply, Zionism essentially required immigration and colonization—just as the Spanish settled in South America and the Pilgrims and others in North America, followed by a long line of Europeans who occupied and settled in America, Southeast Asia, Australia, and Africa. Like them, Zionism, for

a while, was assisted by an imperialist power, Britain, though the reasons were more complex than pure imperialism. Here, however, the similarity ends, and when the colonialist paradigm confronts reality it fails to adequately explain the Zionist phenomenon.⁶⁴

Unlike the conquistadors and their successors, Jewish immigrants to Eretz-Israel did not come armed to the teeth and made no attempt to take the country from the native population by force. If we take a semiotic approach, until 1948 the Hebrew word *kibbush* (occupation, conquest) referred to taming the wilderness and mastering manual labor and the arts of grazing; in its most militant form, it is referred to guarding Jewish settlements. Terms such as *g'dud* (battalion) or *pluga* (company) referred not to military but to labor units.

Economic theories of colonialism and sociological theories of migration movements are equally deficient when applied to the Zionist experience. Palestine differed from typical countries of colonialist emigration primarily because it was underdeveloped and poor. Europeans had emigrated to countries rich in natural resources and poor in manpower in order to exploit them; in contrast, Jewish immigrants came to a country that was too poor to even support its indigenous population. At the end of the Ottoman period, natives of Palestine—Jews and Arabs—were emigrating to America and Australia. Zionist ideology and the import of Jewish private and national capital compensated for the lack of natural resources and accelerated modernization. Two factors that were absent in all other colonial movements were ideology (not the missionary kind, which did not exist in Zionism) and the import of capital. In contrast, imperialist powers generally exploited the colonies for the benefit of the mother country and did not invest beyond what was necessary for that exploitation.

Until 1948, the Zionists did not conquer but—unparalleled among colonial movements—bought land in Palestine. Sellers included all the prominent clans of the Palestinian elite. Palestinian and some revisionist Israeli scholars tend to lay the blame for the eviction of Palestinian tenant farmers on foreign landowners such as the Sursuq family of Beirut, concealing the role of the resident elite families who led the Palestinian national movement.⁶⁵ Upon statehood, state lands were requisitioned and private lands were sometimes expropriated. But the state compensated private owners, and individual Arabs continued to sell their holdings. By the same token, during the Mandate and in the early years of statehood Jewish immigrants competed with (Arab) natives in the urban and rural manual labor markets—which was inconceivable in colonial countries.

A cultural appraisal, too, eliminates Zionism from the colonialist paradigm. Contrary to the colonialist stereotype, Jews who immigrated to Eretz-Israel severed their ties to their countries of origin and their cultural past. Instead they revived an ancient language and, on the basis of Hebrew, created a totally new culture that spread to all spheres.⁶⁶ Furthermore, all over the world colonialist emigrants either quested after a lucrative future or sought to escape a dreary present. Jewish immigrants to Eretz-Israel shared these motives, but their primary, unique impulse, which distinguished them from the immigrants of colonialist movements, was to revive an ancient heritage.

The above should suffice to refute the identification between Zionism and colonialism. The seemingly historical argument, however, impinges significantly on the present. Palestinian argumentation has always adopted the paradigm of a national liberation movement (Palestinian) struggling against a colonialist power (Zionism). Long after most other national liberation movements have achieved their goals and thrown off colonialism, the Palestinians—who have enjoyed far greater international support—are still in the same place. This fact alone should have led Palestinian intellectuals and their Western and Israeli sympathizers to reexamine their traditional paradigm. Instead, by cultivating the Zionist-colonialist prototype, Israeli historians and social scientists continue to provide the Palestinians with an excuse to avoid such reexamination and encourage them to proceed along a road that apparently leads nowhere.

The Holocaust and Jewish Identity

The position and actions of the Zionist movement and the Yishuv during the Holocaust and the attitudes toward the plight of European Jewry before World War II and toward the survivors in its wake have been another major concern of the New Historiography. Similarly, the impact of the Holocaust on Israeli society, identity, and even politics has gradually grown from a secondary field into a major issue.

During World War II, Zionist leaders or the Yishuv at large were minor players and could hardly do more than they did. But after the war their attitude toward and treatment of the survivors became a domestic Zionist issue that could not be dismissed with excuses. Tom Segev and particularly Idith Zertal have accused the Zionist leadership of manipulating the survivors after the war to promote political goals, of ignoring their war experiences, and of turning a blind eye to their suffering.⁶⁷

As a pillar of Israeli distinctiveness, the Holocaust has been mobilized by Israel's detractors. Anachronistically and antihistorically, the critics project onto the past the concepts, values, and realities of the present, attributing to the leaders of the "state in the making" the values, powers, and capabilities of the present Jewish state. Moreover, they evaluate the conduct and attitude of Ben-Gurion and his colleagues according to our own frame of reference, not that in force at the time.⁶⁸

As a basic component of postmodern Jewish and Israeli identity, the Holocaust feeds impassioned arguments among Israelis and Jews outside of Israel. Are its essence and lessons chiefly universal or uniquely Jewish? Are they humanist or nationalist? Israeli historians have entered the fray, whether by choice or because they were expected to. Sixty years after assimilated, emancipated, socialist, and religious-Orthodox Jews perished in the extermination camps, the axiom that the Holocaust was the ultimate justification of the Zionist solution to the modern Jewish Question can no longer be taken for granted. Zionism's prewar ideological opponents, who had seemingly receded after the Holocaust, suddenly reemerged under the modish guise of "post-Zionism": religious-Orthodox, leftists-liberals, or assimilationists. Both in Israel and elsewhere, non- and anti-Zionists have condemned Zionism's "monopolization" of the Holocaust and the emphasis placed by Israeli leaders and historians on its uniqueness.

Two elements have been prominent in this condemnation of the Zionist approach. One, dating back to Hannah Arendt in the 1950s, portrayed the Holocaust as a crime against humanity rather than against Jews. In terms of Jewish relations with non-Jews, the issue was German-Jewish—not European-Jewish, not world-Jewish. The second element lumps the Holocaust together with other genocides of the twentieth century from the persecution of the Armenians by the Turks in World War I to the wars in Cambodia, Bosnia, or Chechnya. The first element is immediately apparent to anyone visiting the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, where there is a palpable absence of reference to French, Dutch, Romanian, Hungarian, Croat, Slovak, Polish, Lithuanian, and Ukrainian anti-Semites and collaborators who helped the Nazis kill the Jews. This evasion, typical also of Daniel Goldhagen's best-selling *Hitler's Willing Executioners*,⁶⁹ is understandable in a country with large communities of Eastern European ethnic origin. In the United States, most American Jews and American Jewish historians are more comfortable with a limited concept of the Holocaust. But this is no reason for Israeli historiography to adopt a narrow interpretation; on the contrary,

it should continue to emphasize the crisis of emancipation and integration along with the crisis of traditional Jewish society.

The second element is even more significant. Treating the Holocaust as one genocide among many denies its uniqueness and sustains the assimilationist approach of concealing or blurring any Jewish distinctiveness. This concept flies in the face of the widely accepted periodization of the Holocaust from 1933 to 1945. How many Jews were murdered—what genocide took place—in 1935, 1938, or even 1940? Yes, the Holocaust was genocide, but it was much more than mass killing. It is precisely this increment that relativist historians, in Israel and elsewhere, aim to repudiate by likening the Holocaust to other atrocities under the trendy slogans of comparative and interdisciplinary studies.

The comparative tactic becomes stretched beyond reason when applied to Israel's attitude toward the Palestinians since 1948 and particularly after 1967. The radical Left, in Israel and abroad, introduced this linkage into its daily jargon as early as the 1970s, beginning with Israeli philosopher-scientist Yeshayahu Leibowitz's catchphrase, "Judeo-Nazis," and similar pearls. Israeli historians first joined the barrage in the summer of 1982, when Israel Guttman began a sit-down strike at the entrance to Yad Vashem to protest the war in Lebanon. HU historian Moshe Zimmerman attacked Jewish settlers in Judea and Samaria by calling their youth Hitler Jugend and comparing the Bible with *Mein Kampf*, another landmark in promoting an apparent analogy between Israel's policies toward the Palestinians and Nazi persecution of the Jews.⁷⁰

Ilan Pappé's has been the most extreme voice in drawing analogies between the lot of the Palestinians and the Holocaust. To avoid dealing with violent Palestinian opposition to Zionism and massacres of non-Zionist Jews in Hebron and Safad, he ignores the pre-1948 phase of the Arab-Jewish conflict and argues that the Palestinians, too, were victims of the Holocaust. His ostensibly evenhanded treatment of the Holocaust and the Nakba degrades the Holocaust by the very comparison with isolated atrocities, which took place amid mutual fighting in 1948 and after, and comes very close to denying the Holocaust. The ulterior motive behind these allegations is the idea that the world deprived the Palestinians of their homeland in order to compensate the Jews for the Holocaust and it consequently needs to redress this historical injustice.⁷¹

The analogies between Zionism and Nazism drawn by Leibowitz, Zimmerman, and others are hardly original. As far back as 1942, radical organs of bitter, disappointed German immigrants in Palestine used terms and phrases such as *Yishuvnazim*, *Nazionismus*, and the "spirit of

Der Stürmer in the Yishuv.” Robert Weltsch resorted to similarly extreme expressions during the anti-British struggle in 1945–47.⁷² In 1943, hostile British officials compared Zionism with Nazism and the Palmah with the German SS. British journalists employed the same terminology in 1948. All these examples, however, only demonstrate a hatred of Zionism; they did not, at that time, have anything to do with Palestinians.⁷³

From Melting Pot to Multicultural Society

The third key issue in Israeli history—the absorption and integration of the mass of immigrants who arrived in the 1950s and shaped post-Yishuv Israeli society—is still in the early stages of research. In the 1960s and 1970s, sociologists such as Shmuel Eisenstadt, Moshe Lissak, Rivka Bar-Yosef, and Reuven Kahane described and analyzed immigrant absorption and integration. In recent years, members of a school of new or critical sociologists have reproached their teachers for concealing ulterior motives behind the processes of immigration and absorption and ignoring the immigrants’ cultural repression. Rebelling against the older generation, critical sociologists (*critical* in this case stands for *anti-Zionist*) have diverted the focus of sociological research from mainstream Israeli society to its peripheral groups; they condemn the veteran nucleus of Yishuv society for every possible crime from deliberate discrimination toward fellow Jews to militarism toward Arabs. They have even suggested extending the colonialist paradigm to Zionism’s handling of Jewish immigrants from Islamic countries.⁷⁴

Sociologists are not committed to history’s research methods, and they are certainly entitled to their own professional views and conclusions. Their findings, however, are not history, nor are their allegations about the absorption of the mass of immigrants. The few historical studies that have dealt with the same period and issues categorically refute all suggestion of a deliberate conspiracy against the immigrants, whether Holocaust survivors or Jews from Islamic lands. The relatively few new studies do, on the other hand, describe the many mistakes at the time, albeit innocently and under dire conditions, which the critical sociologists—not unintentionally—ignore.⁷⁵

The melting pot concept, today, may appear to have been a fiasco, especially since the winning catchword is now *multiculturalism*. The present quandaries of Israeli society, however, shed very little light on the past. The rise of a multicultural society is due not to the failure of ab-

sorption but to a variety of processes that have affected Israeli society in the past two decades: decreasing external pressures, new waves of immigration, an influx of foreign laborers, a growing minority consciousness, and a widening economic gap.

Concluding Remarks

Israeli historiography based on archival documentation has more or less reached the period ending with the 1956 Sinai Campaign. Limitations and delays in releasing important subsequent archival material, beyond the dictates of the ongoing Israeli-Arab conflict, have impeded research on later years. Nevertheless, historical forerunners on later issues have already appeared,⁷⁶ and scholarly works dealing with the road to the Six Day War and the background of the Yom Kippur War are under way.⁷⁷ In view of the commotion aroused by the critical examination of the first—relatively consensual—decade (1948–58) of Israeli history, one can imagine the ruckus likely to be caused by the scrutiny of the second and third decades (1958–78), a period in which every measure, every policy, and every utterance were instantly controversial and fired public debate and whose events were veiled beneath an ever-growing barrage of irresponsible media coverage. Then, again, the incessant discussion from the time of the events to the time of their historical study will possibly have cushioned the shock by the time historians publish their research findings.⁷⁸

The main threat to Israeli historiography, however, is not the agreement or disagreement of historians, or of historians and academics in other disciplines. Harmony is no less detrimental than rivalry, and disagreement may well enhance scholarship. The main threat is that Israeli historiography has lost its common disciplinary base, its common language. And there can be no reasonable, constructive debate without an agreed terminology and shared principles and ethics. These, unfortunately, seem to have evaporated in the heat of the recent destructive polemics on the history of Israel's first decade.

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28. A few examples are the hundreds of files in the political department's section of the Central Zionist Archives (S 25, number 22,000ff.), which were made accessible in the early 1990s; the files of the Jewish Agency and the National Committee's Joint Bureau for Arab affairs in the CZA (section J 105), opened in the late 1980s; the Arab department of the Shai (Sheirut Yediot, the Haganah Intelligence Service) files in the Haganah Archives (section 105), opened in the early 1990s; and the Criminal Investigations Department (of the Palestine Police) files, which were transferred from the General Security Service (Shabak) to the Haganah Archives and have been open since the mid-1990s (section 47).

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30. Cf. Yoav Gelber, “Eiduyot be'al-peh ke-makor histori” [Oral Testimonies as a Historical Source], *Dapim LeHeker HaShoah VeHaMered*, no. 7 (1987): 165–71; Zvi Dror, “Ha-'eid ve-ha-'eidut” [The Witness and the Testimony], *Dapim LeHeker HaShoah VeHaMered* 7 (1987): 173–92; Stephen E. Everett, *Oral History: Techniques and Procedures* (Washington, DC, 1992).

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63. Yehoshua Porath, *The Emergence of the Palestinian-Arab National Movement* (London, 1974), 39–63; Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity*, 96–111.

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68. Yosef Grodzinsky, *Homer Enoshi Tov: Yehudim mul Zionim, 1945–1951* [Good Human Material: Jews versus Zionists, 1945–1951] (Or Yehuda, 1998).

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70. See Zimmerman's interview in the *Yediot Aharonot* network of local newspapers, 28 April 1995.

71. Pappé, *The Making of the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, 12–13; Pappé, interview with Yona Hadari, *Yediot Aharonot*, 27 August 1993.

72. Gelber, *Moledet Hadasha*, 565, 583–97.

73. Minute by John Bennet, 7 January 1943, PRO, FO 921/58. See also Clare Hollingworth's report from Jerusalem in the *Scotsman*, 1 June 1948.

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77. Emmanuel Gluska, “Ha-derekh le-Milhemet Sheshet ha-Yamim: Ha-pikud ha-tzva'i ve-ha-hanhagah ha-medinit shel Yisrael lenokhah be'ayot ha-bitahon, 1963–1967” [The Road to the Six Day War: Israel's Army Command and Political Leadership in the Face of Security Problems, 1963–1967], PhD diss., HU 2000; Uri Bar-Yosef, *Ha-Tzofeh she-Nirdam* [The Watchman Who Fell Asleep] (Tel Aviv, 2001);

Michael B. Oren, *Six Days of War: June 1967 and the Making of the Modern Middle East* (New York, 2002).

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