

# **Ben-Gurion, Zionism and American Jewry**

1948–1963

**Ariel L. Feldestein**

# Ben-Gurion, Zionism and American Jewry

*Ben-Gurion, Zionism and American Jewry* examines David Ben-Gurion's influence on the relationship between the State of Israel, the Zionist Organization and American Jewry between 1948 and 1963.

This volume is divided into three parts in accordance with Ben-Gurion's terms as Prime Minister of Israel: Part I is concerned with the establishment and consolidation of the state from 1948 to 1953; Part II looks at the period from 1953 to 1955 when Ben-Gurion resigned from the premiership; and finally Part III discusses his second term in office from 1955 to 1963. Issues covered include:

- The relationship between the State of Israel and Zionist and non-Zionist Organizations
- The shaping and aims of the Independence Bonds campaign
- Ben-Gurion and USA
- The Sinai Campaign from the perspective of rallying American Jewry
- Ben-Gurion's ideology and his policy with regard to the question of "Who is a Jew"
- The capture and trial of Adolf Eichmann
- The relationship between the State of Israel and the Zionist Organization and American Jewish Committee.

*Ben-Gurion, Zionism and American Jewry* provides a fascinating insight into Israeli history and development during the period of Ben-Gurion's leadership. As such this book will be of great interest to scholars of Middle East studies, Jewish studies, Israel studies, and ethnicity and nationalism.

**Ariel L. Feldstein** is the Director of Academic Administration at Sapir College, Israel. His field of expertise is Zionist ideology, the Zionist Movement, and relations between Israel and Diaspora Jewry. His recent publications include: *Gordian Knot—David Ben-Gurion, The Zionist Organization and American Jewry 1948–1963*, Tel-Aviv 2003 (Hebrew); Hagidu "ken" Lazaken. Dialogue with the pioneering spirit, Tel-Aviv 2005 (Hebrew).

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# **Ben-Gurion, Zionism and American Jewry**

1948–1963

**Ariel L. Feldestein**

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**In Memory of  
Simy and Isaac (Issac) Ben-Dahan**





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# Preface

The main aim of this book is to examine David Ben-Gurion's influence on the nascent relationship between the young State of Israel, American Jewry, and the Zionist Organization. This examination necessitates an assessment of the character and modes of operation of the man who was Israel's prime minister (from the establishment of the state until December 1953 and from November 1955 until June 1963) and minister of defense (from the establishment of the state until December 1953 and from February 1955 until June 1963), the man who was central in shaping Israeli policy in the first two decades of statehood. By dint of his personality, prestige, and the positions he held, he left his mark on the institutionalization of Israel's political structures and substance. Therefore, the research focused on two tangential lines: clarification of Ben-Gurion's relevant ideological stances and analysis of major issues germane to the relationships under discussion.

Various researches discuss Ben-Gurion's ruling concept and the fact that he took for granted that he would determine the standard, obligatory principles of political conduct as the basis for a uniform state framework, thereby limiting the operations of the voluntary political organizations and sectors dating from the Yishuv [Jewish settlement in Palestine] period.<sup>1</sup> In this context, the fields under review included the disbanding of underground organizations and the establishment of the Israel Defense Force (IDF); the establishment of a state education system to replace the various streams; the establishment of state systems for employment and health care and the depoliticization of public services. This research attempts, on the one hand, to examine whether Ben-Gurion's concept of statehood influenced Israel's relationship with American Jewry and the Zionist Organization and, on the other hand, to assess the importance of this relationship in the concept of statehood.

Several studies of Ben-Gurion's leadership are based on the assumption that his main strength lay in the political implementation sphere as demonstrated by his talent for organization, his erection of a power structure and its skillful use in the political mobilization of opportune situations to further the Zionist aims favored by him. There are those who claim that Ben-Gurion's political method was essentially pragmatic. That is, he adapted his policies to the circumstances of a changing reality and directed them to exploit opportunities, even at the expense of ideological principles. As Israel Kolatt put it: "Any attempt to create a Ben-Gurion doctrine, that is, a methodical, well-stated ideological position guiding the deeds of the leader statesman, is doomed to failure. Ben-Gurion's strength is not

in the sphere of methodology, but of action. Ideological consistency and method are not to be found in him and it is doubtful whether he wanted them.”<sup>2</sup>

Two of the outstanding researchers examining Ben-Gurion’s policies, Yonatan Shapiro and Yosef Gorni, hold different opinions with regard to the ideological aspects of Ben-Gurion’s actions.<sup>3</sup> Shapiro emphasizes the power factor and the wish to maintain his personal authority within the party organization as the main elements of Ben-Gurion’s political behavior—hence his view that Ben-Gurion’s ideology was just a means to gain control and was, in any case, of secondary importance. Against this, Gorni emphasizes precisely the ideological aspect as the motivating factor in Ben-Gurion’s political activity and regards this aspect as the key to understanding and analyzing it.

The present research has been conducted against the background of the Shapiro-Gorni discussion with the aim of differentiating between the political motives that influenced Ben-Gurion’s ideology and the theoretical concepts that influenced his policies. In other words, it is an attempt to establish whether there was an ordered ideological infrastructure to Ben-Gurion’s political activity and to find where the line was drawn, if one existed, between ideology and political motivation.

The relationship between the state and American Jewry is an instructive test case for this purpose. Following the outbreak of the Second World War—when the Holocaust made it clear that he could no longer regard European Jewry as the major potential source of strength to establish the Yishuv as the foundation of the future Jewish state—Ben-Gurion gave special importance to the American Jewish community. Some researchers concentrate on the political motives of Ben-Gurion (and his colleagues) with regard to claims for political and economic aid.<sup>4</sup> Others emphasize the ideological argument between the two sides (which centered mainly on the conceptual significance of Diaspora and dispersed communities, the centrality of the State of Israel and the role of American Jewry in furthering the state’s interests).<sup>5</sup> In the course of the research, these two aspects were addressed both separately as well as in an attempt to combine them. This included examining the differences in Ben-Gurion’s approach to two groups—the leadership of the Zionist Organization of America (ZOA) and of the American Jewish Committee (AJC).<sup>6</sup>

At the same time and in a similar manner, the relationship between the State of Israel and the Zionist Organization was examined in context of the argument concerning the need to reform ideological configurations after the establishment of the state, as well as the political power struggles around the issue of the status, role, and authority of the Zionist Organization.

This organization, which was founded in 1897, had undertaken under the Basle Program to “establish a secure and recognized homeland for the People of Israel in Mandatory Palestine.” When this goal was achieved with the Declaration of Independence of the State of Israel, on May 14, 1948, the question arose as to whether the continued existence and operation of the Zionist Organization was necessary. Naturally, this question related equally to the ideological and the operational aspects. Furthermore, both aspects were connected to the confrontation between the concept of Zionism that had developed in American Zionist circles

and Ben-Gurion's concept of Zionism.<sup>7</sup> Against this background it was necessary, for example, to clarify whether Ben-Gurion represented or diverged from the Zionist concept prevalent in the state leadership. In light of his criticism and attacks against the Zionist Organization leadership, which he accused of not fulfilling the Zionist ideal, the question arises as to why Ben-Gurion never disbanded the organization he described as "flawed."

Stemming from the major subject—an examination of Ben-Gurion's influence on Israel's relationship with American Jewry and the Zionist Organization—this work also attempts to contribute to the clarification of the following three issues: (a) the changes that occurred in Zionist ideology; (b) the discussion surrounding the crystallization of Jewish national identity; (c) the centrality and symbolism of the State of Israel in the eyes of Diaspora Jewry.

As mentioned above, the time frame of the research is the first fifteen years of statehood, 1948–1963, when Ben-Gurion was at the helm apart from a period of less than two years. The study is founded on an examination of primary sources and its object is not to judge the man's political concepts, but to present and understand them.

On the conceptual plane, Ben-Gurion's expressions and opinions as portrayed in an array of letters, speeches, and essays are examined. On a different plane, the analysis of major events in chronological order and issues from three spheres are examined. The first sphere is directly connected to the central topic of the research, including the discussion relating to the "Separation of Functions" [Hafrada] question, the inauguration of the State of Israel Bonds campaign, the 23rd Zionist Congress (the first after the establishment of the state) and the "Zionist Organization and Jewish Agency Status Law." The second sphere encompasses subjects connected to Israel's internal policy, which also influenced the abovementioned relationships (for example, the "Law of Return" and the "Who is a Jew" debate). The third sphere includes subjects connected to foreign policy, such as: the Sinai Campaign, the Eichmann Trial, and the crisis concerning the development of nuclear weapons in Israel.

The approach is based on the assumption that as prime minister, Ben-Gurion's political activities in various fields were intertwined and, therefore, the empirical examination of the above relationships had to be anchored in the overall context of the historical development of the State of Israel.

The main material for this research—comprising a series of documents connected with Ben-Gurion, such as: correspondence, protocols of meetings, speeches and articles, personal diaries, and more—arrived from the Ben-Gurion archives [BGA] in Sede-Boker Campus. Documents from the Jewish Agency Executive meetings, the Coordinating Institute and the Organizing Department were examined at the Central Zionist Archives [CZA] in Jerusalem, as were the private archives of leading personalities.

Ben-Gurion's Mapai party was the country's major political party during the relevant period and documents pertaining to the party centre, the secretariat, the state committee, commissions, boards etc., were examined in the Israel Labor Party Archives [ILPA].

In the Israel State Archives [ISA] we examined the protocols of government meetings, recently made available to the public; documentation from Ben-Gurion's office when he was prime minister; files from the Foreign Office and Israeli representation in the United States; documented discussions in various Knesset committees.

Inspection of the AJC archives and of the YIVO archives in the United States helped us to understand this organization's various hesitations, discussions and decisions regarding Israel, its relationship with the ZOA, its relations with the American government and its sphere of activity.

Daily newspapers, manuscripts, and other printed sources published in that period contributed to completing the picture. The research literature on subjects relevant to this work was also useful.

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A. F.  
January 2006

# Introduction

## Ben-Gurion, Zionism, and American Jewry before statehood

Ben-Gurion immigrated to Palestine in 1906, thereby realizing the essential principle of Zionism. He and his comrades in the “Poalei Tzion” movement regarded themselves as a motivating force in the country. The main arena of Ben-Gurion’s activity until the early 1930s was the “Ahdut Avoda” party and the Histadrut (General Federation of Labor). In his opinion, although the Zionist Organization was an organizational, political, and financial instrument, it was certainly not the be all and end all in the process of realizing the Zionist ideal. In the early 1920s, circumstances led him and his comrades to consider founding an alternative organization on the grounds that the Zionist leadership was not doing enough, in their opinion, to develop the country as the home of the Jewish People. In the next decade, however, they abandoned this idea in favor of implementing their principles in the framework of the Zionist Organization. Ben-Gurion accordingly launched an extensive drive to enlist the blue collar sector of the community in order to enhance the power of his party, “Mapai,” and make it the major element in the Zionist Organization. These efforts were fruitful, as demonstrated by his election to the position of Chairman of the Zionist Executive, among other things.<sup>1</sup>

This election shifted the focus of his activities from the local labor scene to the national and international arena, raising him to the status of a national leader. On assuming his new position, Ben-Gurion wanted to turn the political power base on which the Zionist Organization leaned into an instrument with state authority. This was evident in his endeavor to restrict the power of the traditional political parties by enabling individuals to join the Histadrut without going through the parties, thereby enlisting the Jewish masses in the cause of a Jewish state.<sup>2</sup> However, the winds of war that were beginning to blow through Europe in 1938 set other priorities for Ben-Gurion. He saw the reality that was being created as an historic opportunity to further the cause of establishing a Mandatory Palestine state for the Jewish People. First, however, he had to overcome two major difficulties.

The first of these difficulties lay in British policy during the Second World War. Britain, the Mandatory power in Palestine, was opposed to the establishment of a Jewish state. It was also the only power standing against the armies of Nazi Germany in the primary stages of the war. Thus the question was, if the struggle

## 2 Introduction

against Britain should be suspended for the duration of the war, in favor of the general effort to defeat Germany and its allies. The second difficulty related to the bitter fate of European Jewry, regarded by Ben-Gurion as the main source of immigrants as well as the reservoir of financial and political assistance to the Yishuv. This vision was displaced the moment war broke out. The need to find a substitute for the Jews of Europe, together with the power and importance of the United States in the international arena, made him increasingly aware of the potential inherent in American Jewry and the American Zionist movement.<sup>3</sup>

However, American Jewry was neither mentally nor practically prepared to inherit the place of European Jewry—even if only because it had been hard hit in the “thirties by the worldwide economic crisis and growing antisemitism in the United States.” American Jewry’s limited ability to influence President Roosevelt and the pressing “dual loyalty” problem added to the difficulties.<sup>4</sup>

With the outbreak of the Second World War, Zionist Organization of America (ZOA)<sup>5</sup> established the Emergency Committee for Zionist Affairs in accordance with the decision taken at the 21st Zionist Congress, and invited the participation of the Hamizrachi, Hadassah, and Poalei Zion movements (but excluded representatives from non-Zionist organizations). The role of this body was to represent World Zionist leadership and to promote Zionist interests in the United States within the new reality, thereby serving as a political pressure group to strengthen government support for the realization of the Zionist enterprise in Mandatory Palestine.<sup>6</sup>

The activities of the Emergency Committee in the early stages were fairly limited, both because the President of the World Zionist Organization, Chaim Weizmann, was against adopting anti-British policies and because it was feared that antisemitism would increase as a result of accusations of “dual loyalty.” Ben-Gurion, who did not accept this situation, decided to go to the United States and change it.<sup>7</sup>

In the course of this visit to the United States, in 1940, Ben-Gurion was unable to enlist the committee’s support for his struggle to establish a sovereign Jewish entity in Eretz-Israel.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, he embarked on intensive involvement in the affairs of the Zionist establishment in the United States, by-passing the Emergency Committee in order to try to exert an influence on the Zionist leadership and shape the political character of its activities. To this end, he had meetings with the ZOA leadership, among others, to explain that a unique opportunity had been created and that to miss it for lack of a defined policy would be disastrous for the Jewish People. He declared that it was already time, while the war was in progress, to strive to create new political conditions in Eretz-Israel, since only a sovereign Jewish state could carry out the immigration and settlement plan. According to Ben-Gurion, the first step was therefore “to open a propaganda campaign among Jews and non-Jews, to persuade public opinion” of the need to establish a Jewish state in Mandatory Palestine to absorb millions of European Jews.<sup>9</sup>

In the subsequent discussion, Abba Hillel Silver expressed his support for Ben-Gurion’s main contention that it was necessary to spread the awareness that the problem of the millions of Jews forced to flee from Europe could be solved in

Palestine.<sup>10</sup> At the same time, Silver severely criticized the nature of the Emergency Committee's activities in the public relations sphere. He accused WZO leadership—that is, Chaim Weizmann—of not enabling American Zionists to fight for the maximal Zionist platform.

Stephen Wise, on the other hand, refrained from protesting openly against British policy in Palestine while they were fighting Hitler.<sup>11</sup> Ben-Gurion hastened to say that this was a mistaken stand even from the British point of view, adding that if the moral basis for the war was shaken, Britain's power to win the war would be weakened. He concluded the discussion with the proposal that a Zionist conference should be convened with the participation of all the bodies and organizations, to present a clear picture of the essence of Zionism to Jewish and general public opinion.<sup>12</sup>

The "Poalei Zion," "Mizrachi," "Hadassah," and ZOA executives met on the December 22, 1940, and passed a resolution condemning Britain's anti-Zionist policies.<sup>13</sup> Publication of this declaration marked a turning point that reflected the increased influence of the "more combatant" elements (Silver, Neumann, and Goldmann) who agreed with Ben-Gurion, and the decreased influence of the "moderates" (Wise, Brandeis, Frankfurter, and Ben Cohen).

One of the expressions of this new mood was the demand that the UJA increase the UPA's share of contributions. This was submitted by UPA's Chairman Silver, and its acting director, Henry Montor.<sup>14</sup> Behind the scene was Ben-Gurion, who wanted to use UPA funds for Zionist propaganda and to create an infrastructure for the absorption of Jewish refugees in Palestine when the war was over. In Ben-Gurion's terms, this was a tool for the Zionist movement to create the conditions necessary for establishing a Jewish "Commonwealth."<sup>15</sup>

Before returning home, Ben-Gurion sent a comprehensive letter to Nahum Goldmann,<sup>16</sup> representative of the Zionist Organization on the Emergency Committee. This letter lays out the Zionist plan of action formulated by Ben-Gurion during his stay in the United States. In part three (devoted to the fight against the White Paper that was being conducted at the height of the World War) and part four of the plan, Ben-Gurion's sympathy for America and American Jewry is fully expressed. In the final part, the Emergency Committee is asked to make a concentrated effort to sway public opinion in the United States in favor of the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine, crucial to the rescue of European Jewry.<sup>17</sup>

In his desire to make American Zionists aware of the need for a Jewish state after the war, and hoping that they would realize their potential to influence American foreign policy, Ben-Gurion overlooked the situation in which they found themselves. The "moderate" Zionist leaders were afraid they would be accused of harming America's national interests. As Wise remarked at the aforementioned meeting, they regarded Britain as the only power that could rescue the Jews from the German war machine and were of the opinion that raising the demand for a Jewish Commonwealth in Eretz-Israel, or organizing a protest against the policies of the Mandate would be perceived as sabotage against the war effort. The only way out of this trap was an official declaration that American Zionists supported Britain, even if this hindered their general political activity.

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In all, Ben-Gurion's visit to the United States in 1940 was very frustrating for him. In his view, whatever it had achieved had done nothing to blur the "general lack of courage," as he put it. However, he stated: "I believe that Zionist tension in this country will enlighten American Jewry as well as the few survivors in the rest of the Diaspora."<sup>18</sup> He recognized the special situation of the American Zionists and understood the difference between them and other Jewish groups. Nevertheless, he judged them according to standards of pioneering, unity, self-realization, and pioneer education—that is, according to the Zionist concepts prevalent in prewar Europe and Eretz-Israel—and criticized them severely without relating to the particular conditions of Jewish life in the United States.

A year later, in November 1941, Ben-Gurion made a return visit to the United States for the purpose of spending some time in Washington to study political activity in American government circles. On December 7, 1941, Japanese planes bombed the American fleet in Pearl Harbor and the United States declared war on Japan the following day. Germany and Italy immediately declared war on the United States. Unlike some of the American Zionist leaders, Ben-Gurion perceived that these developments would tip the scales in the war.<sup>19</sup>

He now crystallized his program of activity within the Zionist movement, the unaffiliated Jewish public and government circles in America. First, he wanted to implement organizational reforms in the Zionist movement and do away with prevailing internal, personal, and party differences in order to focus on one political target: the establishment of a Jewish "Commonwealth" in Eretz-Israel. The function of the Zionist movement in the United States was, in his opinion, to serve as the vanguard in the effort to rally American Jewry in support of Zionism. He also looked for ways to gain the support of American public opinion with a view to influencing the President and government to actively assist the program.<sup>20</sup>

Ben-Gurion asked the Jewish Agency in Jerusalem to finance an information office in Washington in order to realize his goals, supporting his request with the claim that only those familiar with the situation in Mandatory Palestine could properly maintain relations with senior government officials in the United States. He pointed out that this required personal, discreet activity unlike the "noisy publicity" of ZOA leaders.<sup>21</sup> In this he was motivated by his lack of confidence in the American Zionists' ability to act (which he constantly mentioned, together with his assertion that they lacked courage).

This initiative, predictably, aroused the opposition of the Emergency Committee.<sup>22</sup> Emanuel Neumann, who was in charge of relations with the United States government, was first to raise the subject for discussion.<sup>23</sup> The friction between the two men began when Ben-Gurion needed Neumann's Washington connections in order to meet various key people, which obliged him to include Neumann in these meetings against his wish to meet them alone. Ben-Gurion quickly called Neumann "a conscienceless trouble-maker" who tried to exploit the shaky internal situation of American Zionism as his springboard to leadership.<sup>24</sup> In response to Neumann and his colleagues' desire to retain sole authority in the sensitive and important sphere of communication with the American government, Ben-Gurion asserted that as Chairman of the Zionist Executive in

Jerusalem (which was the higher authority), he held superior status. Therefore, this gave him the right to absolute independence in political activity, including the freedom to make decisions using his own discretion as to whether or not to include the American Zionists in political processes. In this way, he sought to strengthen his own ability to operate independently, to bypass the Zionist establishment in the United States, as well as to reinforce its subjection to the authority of the Executive in Jerusalem (which he would head). Ben-Gurion's rivals repaid him for this by the Emergency Committee's decision to place him under the supervision of the steering committee.<sup>25</sup>

Neumann subsequently wrote in his memoirs that he was most disturbed by the lack of a permanent representative and staff of assistants in Washington, particularly in light of the news that officials in the US State Department were making basic preparations for the postwar peace agreements.<sup>26</sup> He added that his efforts to increase political activity in Washington had suffered from budgetary difficulties. From this it may be deduced that while he favored the idea of a Washington office, he was against appointing Ben-Gurion to run it. He defined the Zionist leadership in Washington as the Zionist movement's "State Department," on the same level as the offices in London and Jerusalem. He used the same sort of "state" terminology in describing the actions of the Emergency Committee. In his opinion, the functions of the latter did not come to an end when political services were handed over to the Zionist bodies. According to Neumann—and in total contrast to Ben-Gurion's view—these bodies were supposed to determine and implement Zionist policy.

Ben-Gurion was much more successful in his relations with the non-Zionist organizations, for example, in the November 1941 meeting attended by representatives of the American Jewish Committee—AJC,<sup>27</sup> "Bnei Brit,"<sup>28</sup> and the Jewish Labor Committee.<sup>29</sup> At this meeting, a two-part proposal was presented. The first part focused on ensuring equal individual and civil rights for world Jewry, financial assistance for the welfare of needy congregations and in support of the immigration of Jews who wished to leave their countries of domicile for economic and other reasons. The second part was devoted to Eretz-Israel and promised American Jewry's help to re-establish Eretz-Israel as a Jewish Commonwealth, by means of massive immigration and settlement in the shortest possible time. At the same time, it was clearly emphasized that the establishment of this entity would in no way harm the political and civilian status of Jews in other countries and that only those Jews who lived in Eretz-Israel would be counted as citizens of that country. It was also established that the population as a whole would enjoy equal rights without racial or religious discrimination.<sup>30</sup>

Ben-Gurion regarded this meeting and its decisions as an incentive to unite United States Jewry around his program. He found a common language with Morris Wertheim, President of the AJC and moved the negotiations onto an interpersonal plane.<sup>31</sup> This cooperation marked a clear change in his standing with the non-Zionist organizations. At the end of the 'twenties and the beginning of the 'thirties, Ben-Gurion had been among those opposed to an extended Jewish Agency and had called for the cancellation of cooperation between the Zionist

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Organization and the non-Zionist organizations.<sup>32</sup> Now, at the beginning of the 'forties, he discovered the latent political power of the non-Zionist Jewish population of the United States and decided to cooperate with it.

In May 1942, a meeting of American Zionists across the spectrum took place in the "Biltmore" Hotel in New York, during which two approaches emerged regarding the establishment of a "Jewish Commonwealth in Eretz-Israel."<sup>33</sup> In his speech, Chaim Weizmann, the ardent representative of the first approach, referred to the foreseeable situation of European Jewry after the war and estimated that 25 percent of the Jews of Central Europe were doomed to annihilation. A further 3 million, he said, were likely to have no home or country at the end of war. This population would be unable to be reabsorbed into its old environment. Therefore, the Jewish People would have to undertake a somewhat revolutionary mission: they would have to establish that Palestine, Eretz-Israel, was the only viable solution to the Jewish refugee problem. The term "Jewish Commonwealth" was twice casually mentioned in the speech. Actually, the speech was encompassing three major spheres: the tragedy of European Jewry, the need for the modernization of the Middle East and the need to initiate the unification of Jewry in order to establish a Jewish Commonwealth in Eretz-Israel.<sup>34</sup>

Ben-Gurion presented the second approach, devoting his speech to "Eretz-Israel as the solution to the Jewish problem." He pointed out that after the war, the rate and urgency of immigration would demand an unprecedented scope and speed of operation. There was also the central question of the nature of the regime in the country. Of course, he added, it was still too early to determine the exact political picture after the war, but it was necessary to lay down guiding principles for immediate political action by the Zionist movement with the aim of raising awareness of Zionism as the solution to both the Jewish problem and the problem of Eretz-Israel. The first principle: the problem of Eretz-Israel would not remain solely a problem of British imperialism. The United States and the USSR would have a great interest in the Middle East and would have some say in its future. The second principle: there was a possibility that the Allies would come to a political arrangement while the war was still in progress, therefore the Zionist solution should not be seen as a program to be presented to the peace conference after the war, but as a process that must immediately begin and be completed before a peace conference would be convened. The third principle: in light of the foreseeable reality, it was important to establish facts while the war was still in progress.<sup>35</sup>

The argument at the decisive stage of the Biltmore conference centered on the drafting of the clause calling for a Jewish Commonwealth. Weizmann and his supporters placed the primary emphasis on opening the country to free Jewish immigration and the cancellation of the other White paper clauses, while empowering the Jewish Agency to implement the immigration and settlement program. They also presented the matter of the Commonwealth as an overall political demand, a "maximal aim," to be proposed to the international community after the war. Ben-Gurion, however, insisted on immediately establishing that a Jewish Commonwealth had been the aim of the Zionist movement from the very

beginning—since, without the Commonwealth, it would be impossible to bring millions of Jews to Eretz–Israel and ensure their absorption—and was not just the end result of the immigration and absorption of millions of refugees.<sup>36</sup> In the end, a compromise was reached and it was established that “the ultimate aim” of Zionism was: “(a) to open the gates of Eretz–Israel to Jewish immigration; (b) to grant the Jewish Agency control over immigration and all the authority necessary for the building and development of the country, including the development of all unsettled fallow land; (c) to establish Eretz–Israel as a Jewish Commonwealth rooted in the new democratic structure of the world.”<sup>37</sup> Thus, the “ultimate aim” of Zionism was left open to interpretation. Those who wished, could define the phrase as three consecutive stages of development toward a Jewish Commonwealth; alternatively, it could be regarded as three parts of one concurrent development: it seemed to provide an emotional answer to the helplessness and impotence in the face of the tragic fate of European Jewry, to pave a way for the American Zionist leadership to extricate itself from its difficult dilemma regarding Britain and, in the end, to integrate with the array of programs that the United States was consolidating for the postwar world.

The conflict between Weizmann and Ben-Gurion intensified after the Biltmore conference.<sup>38</sup> The series of meetings between Weizmann and leading figures in the government caused Ben-Gurion to feel that he was being pushed aside. He was unable to further his plans, whereas Weizmann had become the chief spokesman for Zionism in the United States and was promoting stands that were not to Ben-Gurion’s liking.<sup>39</sup>

Meanwhile, before Ben-Gurion returned from his American trip to submit his report on the Biltmore conference to the Jewish Agency, his party institutions and the Yishuv, news of the magnitude of the destruction of European Jewry reached the country. At the end of September 1942, Richard Lichtheim, the Jewish Agency’s representative in Geneva, informed Itzhak Grunbaum, head of the Jewish Agency’s immigration department, about the Rigner cable.<sup>40</sup> This immediately gave rise to the question of how to rally American Jews in aid of the Jews of Europe.

Ben-Gurion responded to this within the executive frameworks as well as in public forums and he now also spoke out concerning his ambiguous relationship with American Jewry. At a Jewish Agency meeting in December 1942, he pointed out the latter’s shortcomings, on the one hand and, on the other, the need for their help in spite of everything. He was against sending a delegation from the Yishuv to the United States to stir up the Jewish population and instead suggested inviting delegations from the Diaspora to a conference on the imminent danger to European Jewry. That is, he indicated the centrality of Eretz–Israel in this sphere, too.<sup>41</sup> According to Ben-Gurion’s list of priorities, the rescue itself, of every soul, was of primary importance. Next in importance was a rescue operation with a different objective—the good conscience operation to rescue the honor of the Yishuv for future generations. Ben-Gurion favored a “small rescue” operation alongside the development of the Yishuv—not instead of it, or at its expense; he now worked even harder to crystallize a postwar program of operations, while



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pressing for more agricultural settlements, military training, and the establishment of various industries.<sup>42</sup>

When the war ended, President Harry Truman strongly requested British Prime Minister Clement Atlee to allow 100,000 Displaced Persons to enter Mandatory Palestine. Atlee did not agree to this request and instead suggested setting up an English–American investigatory committee to examine the problem of the Displaced Persons and Truman accepted his suggestion. After the committee examined the subject, it emerged that they were unable to agree to authorize the immigration of 100,000 Jews to Mandatory Palestine. Truman now began to exert pressure on Atlee, who agreed to accede to the request on condition that it be included in an overall program for the solution of the Palestine problem. Subsequently the Morrison–Grady plan was shaped on the basis of a federal regime, the creation of four districts (Jewish, Arab, Jerusalem, and the Negev) giving Britain arbitrary authority regarding security, foreign affairs, customs control, and immigration.<sup>43</sup>

The Jewish Agency then decided to send Nahum Goldmann to discuss the Morrison–Grady plan with the American government,<sup>44</sup> which Silver regarded as a serious blow to the status of American Zionism in general and himself in particular. Furthermore, he estimated that this implied an additional attempt on Ben-Gurion's part to bypass the ZOA and establish direct contact with the American government. However, Silver's connections in government circles and his status in the American Jewish community, as expressed in his struggle against Goldmann, made it clear to Ben-Gurion that, in the political reality of 1946, Silver could not be excluded. Thus, in an attempt to limit Silver's political power, Ben-Gurion was forced to agree to include him in the political activity of the Zionist movement in general, and particularly in the United States.<sup>45</sup>

On December 9, 1946, the 22nd Zionist Congress opened in Basel—the first since the outbreak of the Second World War and the Holocaust. This congress, which commemorated the tragic price paid by the Jewish People in the course of the Second World War, was defined as crucial in the history of the Zionist movement. The discussion was conducted on two planes: the path of Zionism and the leadership struggle. What happened on the first plane is usually defined as a struggle between activists and moderates with regard to key questions on the Zionist agenda: the level of cooperation with the British in relation to the struggle against them, the partition of the country, and the establishment of the state. On the second, personal plane, the focus was on the struggle between Chaim Weizmann, President of the World Zionist Organization, and Ben-Gurion, the Organization's Executive Chairman.

Ben-Gurion worked with Silver to prevent Weizmann's re-election in view of his support for Britain's policy in Mandatory Palestine and his demand that steps likely to harm this policy should be avoided.<sup>46</sup> One of the cornerstones of Silver's political activity in the American and Zionist arena was his opposition to Britain and its colonialist policy in the Middle East, and therefore, he was not prepared to come to terms with having someone like Weizmann at the head of the Zionist movement. This view was shared by Ben-Gurion, whose political guidelines in

the second half of the 'forties were based on his rift with Britain and his conviction that the future Jewish state would come about in the face of a sharp struggle with that country. Further, together with the fact that Weizmann's health was failing and he would not be able to cope with the intense political activity of the period, he was not backed by an organized political body.<sup>47</sup>

The process of deposing Weizmann had been planned before the congress in a way that left Weizmann with only a faint hope of succeeding against two such dominant Zionist figures.<sup>48</sup> Nevertheless, the great public sympathy that surrounded Weizmann and the recognition he received from Silver, Ben-Gurion and others with regard to his ability to contribute to the future of the Zionist struggle, forced those who wished to depose him to cover their tracks before the congress commenced.

A meeting of the Zionist General Council (ZGC) took place immediately after the congress and a nineteen-member executive board, including six from America, was elected on the basis of a three-way coalition: "General Zionists," Mapai, and "Hamizrachi." Ben-Gurion was elected chairman of the World Executive (as well as head of the newly created security department). Silver was appointed chairman of the Executive in the United States and Moshe Sharett (Shertok) was appointed head of the Washington State delegation.<sup>49</sup>

Meanwhile, matters concerning the future of Palestine were moving at a rapid pace in the international arena. The British government, unable to enlist America's support for its Palestine program, handed over the matter to the UNO. On April 28, 1947, a special session of the UN General Assembly decided to set up a special committee on Palestine (UNSCOP), with representatives from eleven countries, to examine the situation at first hand. Directly after this decision, Andre Gromyko, head of the Soviet delegation to the UN, declared that the suffering of the Jewish people during the Second World War justified the establishment of a Jewish State in Palestine and cited three necessary developments: first, the laying of the foundation for a majority vote in the Assembly in favor of the proposal to partition Palestine into a Jewish state and an Arab state; second, making the partition proposal a workable solution in the eyes of UNSCOP; and third, Soviet-American cooperation in promoting the partition solution.<sup>50</sup>

On August 31, the committee published its conclusions. The majority had recommended "Partition [of Palestine] with economic unity" into a Jewish zone and an Arab zone with Jerusalem as a "separate international entity." These conclusions were laid before the General Assembly a few days later and the debate lasted till the moment of voting on December 29, 1947.<sup>51</sup>

Under the circumstances created after the Second World War, when they had despaired of finding any kind of solution to the Displaced Persons problem, the AJC was prepared to support the partition of Palestine as a pragmatic solution. The committee's support rested on the willingness of the American government to test the Partition Plan, making it easy for the AJC, first and foremost for its president Joseph Proskauer, to declare that it was in no way harming the general interests of the United States.<sup>52</sup> Nevertheless, this did not mean changing the committee's central ideological concept with regard to American Jewry: they

belonged to the American nation and were loyal to it, they had a home, in any case, and were not in need of the proposed solution. However, they were also committed to Jews in distress and were entitled to come to their aid.<sup>53</sup>

This change in the committee's policy resulted in cooperation between it and Zionist circles. Thus, for example, when Proskauer learned that the United States delegation to the UN had been instructed not to persuade other delegations to vote in favor of the Partition Plan (nor to make any other attempt to win the required two thirds of the vote, pass the plan) he approached President Truman and asked him to exert his influence to cancel the instruction.<sup>54</sup> He took this action parallel to the work of Silver and his associates, who were putting increasing pressure on public opinion, members of Congress and Democratic Party leaders close to the President. In the end, the combined effort was crowned with success and Truman, at the last moment, ordered the US delegation to the UN to strive for a majority vote in favor of the Partition Plan. Had he not done so, it is doubtful whether the vote would have ended as it did on November 29, 1947: 33 in favor, 13 against and 10 abstentions (making up the two-thirds quorum).<sup>55</sup>

Ben-Gurion was in Palestine at the time, mainly occupied with consolidating the defense forces of the state on the way.<sup>56</sup> In addition to this, he was working together with the leaders of the parties to establish autonomous frameworks for the state to be. The ZGC, meeting in Tel-Aviv in April 1948, decided to establish a legislative and supervisory authority prior to the Declaration of Independence, to be called "The People's Council" and an operational authority to be called "The People's Administration." This authority was convened on May 12, 1948 for a significant meeting at which it was decided not to adhere to the American proposal and not to delay establishing sovereignty. Two days later, on Friday May 14, the People's Council convened for the meeting at which David Ben-Gurion declared the founding of a Jewish State in Palestine, "which is the State of Israel."<sup>57</sup>

In conclusion, it may be said that before the state was established, Ben-Gurion had emphasized the potential of American Jewry and had tried to enlist it in the fulfillment of the Zionist vision, on the one hand, but on the other, he had criticized the Zionist leadership in the United States, regarding it as the major factor preventing him from attaining this goal.<sup>58</sup>

Against this, the American Zionist leaders had feared being portrayed as acting against the interests of America. One of the main methods they adopted in order to avoid this image, was to demonstrate that the solution to the Palestine question was in keeping with American foreign policy and also actively contributed to consolidating America's status in the Middle East. As they saw it, any action contrary to American government policy would greatly hinder American Zionists in their efforts to achieve political gains for the Zionist movement, would endanger the acceptance of Jews into American society and would provide a useful tool for antisemitic and anti-Zionist elements in the United States. Against this background, Ben-Gurion feared that the Zionist movement "would change from a movement for self-liberation to a movement for aid and philanthropy," just when there was a need for a "supreme effort of creative power, an unprecedented

energetic and intense stand that could be put into effect only by pioneering Zionism and not, under any circumstances, by philanthropic Zionism.”<sup>59</sup>

Despite his criticism of the Zionist leadership and his reserved attitude to the Zionist Organization, Ben-Gurion thought that once statehood was achieved, continued cooperation would still be necessary, but with a division of functions.<sup>60</sup> As he put it, “The state will of course assume all the functions of the Mandate, but the Zionist movement’s role in the Diaspora, such as Hebrew education, national organization etc.—‘present work’—will not be transferred to it.” However, the Zionist Organization would retain its functions within the state, with immigration and settlement in the lead, under the supervision of the state and open to its intervention. The state, Ben-Gurion declared, would determine the immigration agenda and care for immigrants, whereas the Zionist Organization would be responsible for fundraising, immigrant absorption, settlement, and training. He limited this cooperation to a period of implementation and establishment—the first 10 years of statehood—until the Jewish population reached some 2 million and the Yishuv extended from Dan to Eilat.<sup>61</sup>

Ben-Gurion understood that it would be possible to enlist the aid of both Zionists and non-Zionists, with one clear difference: he had to engage in ideological discussion and political power contests with the former, whereas the latter agreed to give aid on condition that their activities were not presented as identification with the Jewish national entity. On the threshold of establishing a Jewish state in Palestine, one of the questions to be faced concerned the essence of the future relationship between Ben-Gurion, the Zionist Organization and American Jewry.



**Part I**

**Establishing and  
consolidating the State,  
1948–1953**



# 1 The first year of independence, 1948–1949

## 1 Zionist General Council session, August 1948—the “Separation” debate

With the establishment of the State of Israel the question arose as to whether the Zionist Organization of America and the Jewish Agency, which had worked for almost a generation to achieve that goal, were now redundant. The question created sharp disagreement between the leadership of the Zionist Organization of America (ZOA)—who were also among the leaders of the World Zionist Organization—and the Prime Minister of Israel, David Ben-Gurion.

On August 22, 1948, prior to the first meeting of the Zionist General Council after the Declaration of Independence, the British and American Zionist leadership, led by Abba Hillel Silver, Emanuel Neumann, and Selig Brodetsky, met to crystallize their stand on the “Separation” issue; they demanded absolute separation between Diaspora Jewry and the State of Israel, maintaining that the Diaspora should not be involved in the State’s politics, nor should the State be involved in the affairs of Jewish communities in the Diaspora. As a first step to implement the separation, they insisted on the resignation of members of the Jewish Agency Executive who were now Ministers in the Israeli government.<sup>1</sup>

The demand for separation stemmed not only from the problem of “dual-loyalty,” but also from the understanding that the Zionist Organization represented Diaspora Jewry—a necessary condition if the Organization was to continue after achieving statehood. Further, the Organization demanded to be recognized as the major factor in the Diaspora—in the nature of a “Jewish Government” outside Israel and parallel to the Israeli Government. Such an arrangement was meant to set norms of behavior between two bodies of equal status with regard to the connection between the State and Diaspora Jewry. It could also be seen as a recognition of the Organization’s need to create a distinct role in light of the new reality and thus justify its continued existence.

The Zionist leadership also concluded that the World Zionist Organization should concentrate its resources and invest them equally on two levels. On one level, enable the Organization to act within the State as the sole body with “status” in the immigration and absorption spheres. On the other level, in the Diaspora, ensure its status and centrality in Jewish communal life, while expanding



its sphere of influence. Thus, any proposal to dissolve the World Zionist Organization (WZO) was vigorously opposed, supported by the fact that over the years, the WZO had founded a series of organizations and institutions that belonged to the Jewish People as a whole. These organizations and institutions would be transferred to the State of Israel if the WZO were to be dissolved, with the result that their services would be limited to Israel, which then comprised only seven percent of the Jewish population worldwide.<sup>2</sup>

This statistic is also at the root of an ideological assertion by the leadership of the Zionist Organization of America. According to them, it proved the irrelevance of discussion on the issue of the “Ingathering of the Exiles,” that is, the erasure of the Diaspora through the immigration of all Jews to Israel. On the contrary, they claimed, the Jewish People had flourished culturally beyond the borders of Eretz–Israel, too. For example, in the period of the Sages, a thriving Jewish center existed in Babylon parallel to the center in Eretz–Israel. It was there, in the Diaspora, that the magnificent and immensely important Babylonian Talmud was composed. Likewise, history records the cultural achievements of the Jewish people throughout the centuries of their dispersal: the “Golden Age” in Medieval Spain, the literary treasures of Sholem Aleichem, Bialik, Tchernichowsky, and countless others in Europe and elsewhere.<sup>3</sup>

In the separation debate at the aforementioned meeting of the Zionist General Council, Ben–Gurion stated that although Israel’s statehood was a fact, it was hard to take its existence for granted as long as the outcome of the military confrontation with the Arab countries was undecided; at the time, late in August 1948, the War of Independence was at its height. He declared, therefore, that “the whole strength of the movement and of the nation in Israel and the Diaspora [must be concentrated] for our security and increased military power.”<sup>4</sup> In any case, he was against the Zionist Organization becoming a separate body headed by people who declared themselves unconnected to the new state’s ruling echelon. (He also feared that the separation process would place control of WZO in the hands of Neumann and Silver, the representatives of the General Zionist party, who would do as they saw fit. He felt that they were capable of preventing Zionist resources and services from being placed at the disposal of the State, and of publicly opposing government policy.) He was set against proposals that the Zionist General Council should consider organizational reforms and argued, on legal grounds, that only the Zionist Congress was authorized to judge this issue. Delaying the debate until the (still undecided) date of the Congress allowed him to maintain the prevailing situation. He stressed that only the State had the authority to fix the operational limits of the Zionist Organization within the State. He pointed out that the two bodies had to cooperate in the spheres of immigration, settlement, education, and pioneering.<sup>5</sup>

Ben-Gurion’s words reflected more than political pragmatism, they expressed, above all, an ideological concept regarding the relationship between Israel and the Jewish People. He was not prepared to bind the new state to a system of connections with the Zionist Organization alone. He declared that the state, in essence and mission, must be open to cooperation with every Jew who so desires. At the

same time, he opposed the belief that the Zionist Organization had attained its goal with the establishment of the State of Israel. He observed that the state was merely the means to fulfill the ultimate aim of Zionism—the ingathering of the Exiles. However, while it had become the main factor in this context, it still lacked the strength to bear the burden alone and needed the help of the entire Jewish People.<sup>6</sup> To put it differently, a national triangle had come into being—the State, the Zionist Organization, and the Nation—making it necessary to shape new concepts and reshuffle systems. However, the time was not yet ripe for this, owing to the country’s security situation, therefore, “Our main effort must be directed towards the strengthening and security of the State.”<sup>7</sup>

Naturally, Ben-Gurion rejected the proposal that the WZO center should move to the United States. In his opinion, the essential meaning of Zionism was immigration to Israel, which counter-indicated locating the movement’s center and leadership in another country. The location of the center could only be in the State of Israel, which symbolized the fulfillment of the vision for Jews, wherever they may live.<sup>8</sup>

Ben-Gurion had no difficulty in rallying his party, Mapai, in support of his opposition to the Separation proposal as formulated by the Zionist leadership in the United States and Britain, and to transferring the Zionist Executive to the United States. However, this support did not extend to the matter of the personal separation, whereby members of the Israeli government would not be able to continue as members of the Zionist Executive. At least some of the senior representatives of Mapai in the Zionist movement thought there was room for discussion.<sup>9</sup>

Selig Brodetsky, President of the “Zionist Federation of Great Britain and Ireland” and one of the leaders of the Zionist movement in Britain, eventually succeeded in persuading Ben-Gurion to resign as Chairman of the Executive of the Jewish Agency.<sup>10</sup> Berl Locker, who was appointed Chairman of the Executive in Jerusalem, said in this context: “Mapai, which denied the need for absolute separation, nevertheless recognized that it was impossible on a practical level to burden Government Ministers with the everyday tasks of the Zionist Organization.”<sup>11</sup> This was also the gist of the announcement published by the Zionist Organization.<sup>12</sup>

Actually, this applied only on the “practical level.” Ben-Gurion understood that the Zionist leadership outside Israel regarded the issue of personal separation as a matter of principle, to the extent that rejection of the proposal would lead to a split between Israel and the Zionist Organization at so crucial a time for the State. Because the matter of defense was the first priority, Ben-Gurion was prepared to give way and “deviate” from the stand he had taken on the matter at the meeting of the Zionist General Council.

Nevertheless, he continued to level criticism at the ZOA leadership for raising their demand “while the State, the soul of Zionism, is fighting a battle for its existence, not a battle of rhetorics in Cleveland [where Silver lived], but a real battle, a life and death battle, they have stabbed it in the back.”<sup>13</sup> The timing of the demand for separation and the necessity to agree to it under the circumstances, enflamed the struggle between Ben-Gurion and the ZOA leadership.

The grievance contributed to ideological differences and led to changes in policy and the hardening of the Israeli Prime Minister's attitude to this body.

Together with the decision on the Separation, the above mentioned meeting of the Zionist General Council. Ruled that monies from the Zionist Organization's fundraising drives would not be transferred directly to the Israeli government for any purpose whatsoever, and the Zionist Organization would be in charge of the economic aspects of the settlement and absorption of new immigrants in Israel.<sup>14</sup>

The leaders of the non-Zionist Jewish organizations followed the discussions of the Zionist General Council; Henry Montor and Henry Morgenthau, who headed the United Jewish Appeal, complained to Eliezer Kaplan about the decisions taken by the Committee.<sup>15</sup> A memo from the Jewish American Committee states: "Clearly, the Silver–Neumann management won a victory at the Zionist General Council session by using the dual-loyalty claim." It was also said that the ZOA leadership did not operate from ideological considerations, but from the wish to gain key positions, as proved by Silver's appointment as Chairman of the Zionist Executive in New York and Israel Goldstein's appointment as its treasurer.<sup>16</sup> From this it is easy to understand that the Committee regarded the ZOA as a rival factor likely to harm its status by being able to muster economic resources and supporters for ZOA policies, not to mention their fear that increased Zionist action among American Jews might destabilize their standing in American society and provoke accusations of dual loyalty.

## **2 The fundraising battle in the United States**

After the Zionist General Council session in August 1948, the focus of the struggle over the character and role of the Zionist Organization moved to the United States, owing to the crisis that had emerged in the United Israel Appeal (UIA).<sup>17</sup> This Appeal—in its first incarnation as the United Palestine Appeal (UPA)—was founded in 1925 at the request of the Zionist leadership in America, who wanted to coordinate all the fundraising efforts at the time in aid of the establishment of a Jewish national entity in Eretz–Israel. As mentioned in the Foreword, this was something of a reaction to the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) fundraising campaign to establish agricultural settlements for thousands of Jewish families in Russia's Crimean Peninsula.<sup>18</sup> In the following years, various efforts were made to unite the two Appeals, but the sides only reached an agreement and established the United Jewish Appeal (UJA) at the end of 1938, after the Kristallnacht events in Germany. This step did not put an end to their conceptual differences and failure to agree about the allocation of funds, and there were many difficulties in running the unified body.<sup>19</sup>

On September 10, 1948, Henry Montor, Executive Director of the UIA, announced his resignation to Israel Goldstein, the Chairman of the Appeal. He said that his main reason for doing so was because the Appeal did not faithfully reflect the strength of donors for Israel. He asserted that the Appeal "should be an instrument controlled by those who create the means. It should serve as a united pipeline to Israel. The Israeli public should participate in determining the most efficient use of the funds."<sup>20</sup>

Montor's resignation at the close of the Zionist General Council session was not unconnected to decisions that were made at this meeting. The struggle against ZOA control of Appeal funds preceded the conference in Jerusalem, but intensified thereafter.<sup>21</sup> The non-Zionist partners in the UJA were now apprehensive about the increased power of the ZOA and its control over all Israel-oriented activities, particularly fundraising, in the United States. This apprehensive feeling deepened after Emanuel Neumann and Abba Hillel Silver demanded that the UIA become an autonomous organization. Further, these two personages were against accepting decisions made by the Jerusalem Zionist Executive with regard to the allocation of Appeal funds, as well as the UIA's appointment of Montor as head of the UJA Actions Committee.<sup>22</sup>

A letter from Emanuel Neumann to Abba Hillel Silver in September 1948 concerning the objectives of the ZOA, gives proof of this attitude. Among other things, Neumann wrote that "they had to try for the position of Secretary General, or Vice-Secretary General, in the UPA and the UJA." He also expressed his opinion that, parallel to their efforts in the political sphere, they had to devote their energies to the process of bringing the Appeal under the control of their organization.<sup>23</sup> Silver replied that they had to obtain Montor's resignation, thereby making it possible to weaken the non-Zionists' control over the Appeal and strengthen the influence of the Zionist elements.<sup>24</sup>

Henry Morgenthau, Chairman of the UJA, arrived on a visit to Israel on October 20, 1948. He participated in Jewish Agency Executive meetings and also met with Ben-Gurion, to whom he expressed his opposition to the continuation of the ZOA's control over the UIA. Although Ben-Gurion agreed with him in principle, he claimed that structural changes in the Appeal would, above all else, "cause a three-sided separation in America—the JDC, the Friends of Israel and the Zionists would each establish their own Appeal." He added that, should his happen, it would have a direct effect on public opinion and the government in America. He went on to warn that, in addition, there was considerable concern "for the unity of world Zionism, because although the Jewish communities in South Africa, Canada, England, and other countries were prepared to support Israel without the Americans, the "Rabbis" [referring to Stephen Wise, Abba Hillel Silver and Israel Goldstein] would raise the cry that the Israeli government was harming Zionist patriotism abroad and particularly in America, a friend of Israel."

Ben-Gurion tried to prevent this situation because of the direct influence it would have on the chances of raising funds for the State's two super-missions: defense (meaning a ceasefire and an end to the war with the Arab countries) and immigration. He explained that the attainment of these goals "depended on two groups—one in the United States and one in Israel." More specifically, he said there was the beginning of a process, in American Jewry, "of convergence and erasure of disagreements between Zionists and non-Zionists, between supporters and non-supporters of the State." He observed that the driving force in this process was "the establishment of the State and the heroism of the Israeli army." Every action must be taken to prevent a "small group from taking control of American funds designated for Israel and thereby attempting to gain control of the country," but this had to be done with minimum damage to the State.<sup>25</sup>

On this basis—to de-emphasize the ideological borders between Zionists and non-Zionists in the United States—reprimands were directed at the ZOA leadership, while overtures were made to enlist the cooperation of the non-Zionists. At the time, however, Ben-Gurion gave the highest precedence to State security and, as in the Separation issue, he tended to act accordingly. Although he was clearly aware that the success of Silver and Neumann would have a direct effect on the transfer of funds to the State, he was anxious not to harm fundraising efforts during the war and so refrained from tipping the scale; he instead advocated negotiation between the two sides.

Meanwhile, the struggle between the two camps was continuing in the United States. Seeking to change the UIA into an unaffiliated body, Montor's supporters had organized as a group under the name "Donors and Activists for the Israel Appeal." They advocated transferring all funds raised in the United States for Israel directly to the Jewish Agency Executive in Jerusalem, which would bear sole responsibility for the way the money was used in Israel.<sup>26</sup> Israel Goldstein, who did not agree to this demand, favored appointing a committee to examine the matter. At this stage, there was also talk of appointing Eliezer Kaplan, who was Israel's Minister of Finance as well as Treasurer of the Jewish Agency, to arbitrate the dispute, but the ZOA leadership opposed the idea on the grounds that the Zionist leadership in Israel, mostly members of Mapai, were interested in fanning the flames of the dispute. The crisis was leading nowhere and it was soon obvious that the immediate outcome was the inability to organize the mobilization of funds for 1949.<sup>27</sup>

Ben-Gurion's nonparticipation in the dispute did not prevent him from expressing his opinions on the matter. At a joint session of the government and the Jewish Agency Executive, he reiterated his concern about the drop in income from fundraising drives. Referring to Silver and Neumann's opposition to allowing the Jewish Agency Executive in Jerusalem to be involved in the discussion, he said "The Congress did not appoint these five members to manage the affairs of Zionism... those who live in Israel decide Israeli matters... and those who live in America decide American matters."<sup>28</sup> It was not difficult for his listeners to understand that he was strongly against the establishment of two Zionist centers, regarded Israel as the one and only Zionist center and demanded that the essential decisions be made in Jerusalem and applied to all members of the Zionist Executive.

Parallel to these developments, the ZOA demanded that the Jewish Agency Executive in Israel express unconditional support for their stand on the fundraising issue, even reaching the point of a threat to resign from the Executive if their demands were not met. In response, a cable was sent from Jerusalem without Ben-Gurion's knowledge and without reference to the crisis: "We are particularly interested in expressing to the Agency Executive [in the United States] our acknowledgement of their past activity in the political struggle for the establishment of the State."<sup>29</sup>

At another meeting of the Agency Executive and the Israeli government to discuss the fundraising situation, Israel Goldstein accused the government and its representatives in the Zionist Organization of deliberate procrastination. He said

that government intervention “could have brought an earlier end to the crisis, possibly six weeks ago.” He remarked that the state of Israel should have opposed all attempts by Montor and his supporters to make changes in the fund drive. Ben-Gurion hastened to answer these assertions, saying that the “dispute could easily have been resolved” had the ZOA leadership understood that “Zionist Fundraising in America was the business of world Zionism and not of a particular party in America.” By adding “a particular party in America” Ben-Gurion clearly intended to identify Neumann and Silver with the “General Zionist Party” in Israel.<sup>30</sup> However, besides political considerations, what he said was founded on the ideological concept he had presented several times in the past. His diary entry about the meeting is evidence of this: After hearing what Goldstein said, I sent [Itzhak] Grunbaum a note saying:

Of course you won't agree with me—It's obvious that the Zion-ists [*sic*] have gone bankrupt with regard to Zionism (the reason is clear: the destruction of East European Jewry). At this great hour—perhaps the greatest in Jewish history—Diaspora Jewry has no leader worthy of the times and in the hour of Zionism's victory—the Zion-ists have failed.

In describing them as “Zion-ists,” Ben-Gurion implied that the ZOA leadership supported a nonimmigration ideology, that their whole aim was to conduct a power struggle for control in the movement, that in any case they were completely motivated by politics and were incapable of understanding the situation prevailing in the State of Israel. If they were truly steeped in the Zionist ideal, he asserted, they would abandon their wars over prestige and control and would do everything to continue the drive for funds that were so essential to the State of Israel. Instead, Ben-Gurion added, they were involved in pettiness. Since this was the case, it was no wonder that the “Zion-ists” had gone bankrupt and could no longer be seen as the Nation's representatives. Unlike them, however, the Nation “has not gone bankrupt and senses the greatness of the times. The Zion-ists are neither able nor qualified to guide the Jews. On the contrary: they stand as an obstacle between the State and the Jews.”<sup>31</sup>

That is, there is a power triangle formed by State, Movement, and Nation in which the Movement arm can safely be removed to create a direct relationship between State and Nation. The pact between the latter two is very strong and does not need a third factor to uphold it, certainly not one that hinders rather than secures the connection. In accordance with this idea, the foundations could soon be laid for closer connections with the non-Zionist organizations in general and the American Jewish Committee (AJC) in particular.

Eliezer Kaplan supported Ben-Gurion's position. He claimed that the ZOA had not hesitated to use any tactic to accuse the Israeli government of political considerations and portrayed themselves as the victim of this attitude. Nevertheless, Kaplan thought the times obliged them to seek every possible way to end the crisis. He called on all the sides to rise above the dispute in the interests of an important goal—the commencement of the 1949 fundraising drive. He asked the

Israeli government and the Agency Executive to join him in calling on all sides to resume negotiations in order to put an end to the dispute.<sup>32</sup>

Meanwhile, Berl Locker, Chairman of the Jewish Agency Executive, had traveled to the United States to resolve the fundraising dispute, without success. At a meeting between the Israeli government and the Jewish Agency on December 29, 1948, he said that the relationship between the two sides was marked by “mutual suspicion and mutual hatred” and proposed that cables be sent to both sides, demanding an end to the crisis. Ben-Gurion objected to this or any other involvement in the dispute on the following grounds: first, the State of Israel had no authority beyond its own borders and thus was precluded from direct intervention in the dispute; second, it was impossible to send cables demanding that the two sides end the crisis, after the cable in response to the ZOA’s demand. He stressed that, in order to reach a compromise, one of the parties should not be supported against the other because this would only encourage suspicion and hostility. Therefore, he proposed that the first cable should be balanced by one to the other side, prior to any further involvement in the dispute.<sup>33</sup> In the end, it was decided that a delegation headed by Kaplan should be sent to the United States in an attempt to resolve the dispute.<sup>34</sup>

Ben-Gurion met the delegates on the eve of their departure and presented his plan for ending the crisis. He proposed canceling the UIA and placing fundraising activities in the hands of the Jewish Agency and JDC and these two bodies would transfer the money directly to the State. He emphasized that “the key to success was in removing Silver and Neumann from the Board of Directors . . . since they did not listen to the Board.” With regard to Kaplan’s participation in the delegation, Ben-Gurion said this step was made obligatory by the need to wipe out the “Tammany Hall [synonymous with a corrupt political machine] of the ZOA leadership.”<sup>35</sup> This was a clear indication of the change that had taken place in Ben-Gurion’s stand. If he had thought, in the early stages of the crisis, that the dispute should be handled in the framework of the Zionist Organization, he now agreed that Ministers in the Israeli government should be on the delegation to do what had to be done in order to emerge from the tangle.

The delegation arrived in the United States at the beginning of February, 1949. According to Berl Locker’s report, “After serious internal arguments, we came to the conclusion that it was vital to the success of the fundraising drive that Henry Morgenthau be appointed as its Head assisted by Henry Montor, at his request. The majority of our delegation to the United States agreed to accept this decision.”<sup>36</sup> Kaplan more or less concurred: “The great majority agreed (it was unanimous apart from two of the Americans) without entering into an analysis of factors—that the Fund could not achieve success unless there was a partnership among the forces symbolized to a great extent by the partnership of Morgenthau and Montor.”<sup>37</sup> Neumann described the visit in a different light: “It was clear that [Locker and Kaplan] had agreed that Silver must be ousted at all costs.”<sup>38</sup> One way or another, this political struggle ended in victory for the delegation. Morgenthau was appointed Director General of the Appeal and Montor as General Manager of the Executive Committee; Silver and Neumann responded by resigning from the Jewish Agency Executive.<sup>39</sup>

This affair was examined in various contexts. Mark-Lee Raphael claimed that in this crisis, Ben-Gurion and Locker had worked against Silver because he supported the “General Zionist Party” in Israel and was against Mapai. Noah Orian, writing on the “Anatomy of Dismissal,” asserted that Ben-Gurion had worked in every possible way to bring about Silver’s dismissal from ZOA leadership and to replace him with Nahum Goldmann.<sup>40</sup> Although this view cannot be ignored, it appears that the ideological dispute between the two sides played its part.

In the beginning, Ben-Gurion indeed preferred to adopt a policy of non-intervention in the dispute, but at the same time he clearly indicated that he supported the demand for changes in the structure and function of the Fund drive, made by Morgenthau, Montor and their circle. Ultimately, the direct transfer of the money to the State of Israel would have freed him from having to depend on the ZOA leadership, who did not always see eye to eye with the Israeli government, in general, and the Prime Minister, in particular. However, in view of Israel’s difficult situation, he thought that the time was not ripe for a divisive struggle and elected to strive for unity. As a matter of fact, he was afraid of arousing the anger of Zionist Organizations in other countries and of the reaction of non-Zionist circles regarding the Israeli government’s intervention in an internal dispute of the American Jewish community. These considerations held good as long as the dispute remained internal and caused only marginal harm to the Appeal. However, as the rift continued to widen, Ben-Gurion could not go on accepting a situation in which the State of Israel had to comply with the dictates of external elements, all the more so in the case of Jews who were not committed to Zionist ideology and who were, in his opinion, no different from the non-Zionist sectors. He understood that the protracted dispute and failure to initiate the 1949 Fund Drive would have a direct influence on the situation in Israel, therefore he was in favor of sending the Jewish Agency delegation to the United States, knowing that this step could result in the resignation of Silver and Neumann. He felt that it was a price worth paying in order to cope with the demands of national security. Herein lay the roots of two future developments—establishing the State of Israel Bonds and strengthening connections with the non-Zionist organizations.<sup>41</sup>

### **3 The State, the Nation, and the Zionist Organization**

The longer the break lasted between Ben-Gurion and the Zionist Organization leadership, the closer the ties became with the non-Zionists. A clear sign of this closeness was Israel’s invitation to Yaacov Blaustein, the new President of The Jewish American Committee, and other members of the committee to visit the country.

In the course of the visit, which took place in April 1949,<sup>42</sup> the guests and Ben-Gurion had a number of meetings at which they discussed various subjects, mainly the nature of the relationship between the State of Israel and Diaspora Jewry, and economic aid to Israel. Blaustein explained that a propaganda campaign aimed at American Jews could damage their status if it drew comparisons



between their fate and that of German Jewry. Relying on prophesies of disaster as an incentive to immigration, he warned, caused bitterness in Zionist as well as non-Zionist circles. Ben-Gurion, on his part, explained the importance of the concept of the “ingathering of exiles.”<sup>43</sup>

In the report submitted by the delegation on their return to the United States, they spoke of the powerful feelings they experienced during their visit. They were surprised to hear how the Israeli army had overcome the Arab forces in the War of Independence and about heroic deeds, such as the defense of Kibbutz Negba. They met soldiers and new immigrants crowded in immigrant camps, they visited areas where they saw the establishment of infrastructures and industrial projects and found similarities between these and the history of America’s conquest of the frontiers, its struggle against the British for independence and its commitment to the pioneer ethic. The report included part of a discussion with Ben-Gurion, in which he was asked if the State of Israel could cope with mass immigration, to which he replied that the key to success lay in proper cooperation between the State and Diaspora Jewry. The citizens of Israel were prepared to make sacrifices, he said, but more than ever before, to carry out this task the state needed the help of “world Jewry in general and American Jewry in particular” in terms of both financial and moral support.<sup>44</sup>

The Jewish American Committee hoped for a sort of “verbal contract” to order the relationship between the state and the committee, based on the principle that the State of Israel represented only its citizens and was not authorized to intervene in the communal affairs of Jews outside its borders. In keeping with this, they made it absolutely clear that the Committee would contribute to Israel on condition that their status as American citizens was not compromised and that, whatever the case, there would be no conflict of interests between their American citizenship and their aid to the State of Israel. On the contrary, the aid would be given not only in a spirit of philanthropy, but as an integral part of the American socio-political principle of aiding those in need, particularly in the case of a democratic country that aspired to peace among the nations.

Ben-Gurion was ready for such an agreement on ideological grounds as well as for considerations of state and politics. On the ideological level, he thought that the role of the non-Zionist organizations was to aid the state in various spheres and, therefore, he made no demands on them in terms of individual action by their members. As a matter of fact, in 1949, he considered it most important to secure connections with these organizations—particularly the Jewish American Committee—because of the crisis resulting from the Zionist Organization’s inability to crystallize aims and achieve the goals set by him. At the same time, it was of primary importance to secure ties with the Nation, since this step was essential to the presentation of the State of Israel as the only body around which the entire Jewish People could be united and consolidated. The State and its citizens had to take on difficult tasks, but to do so they needed, more than ever, the moral and financial support of partners in the undertaking. Hence, Ben-Gurion’s attitude to the Jewish American Committee was very different from his attitude to the Zionist Organization. He considered the former body, not the

latter, to be a suitable partner regarding the division of tasks between itself and the State.

In his speech before the Zionist General Council in Jerusalem, a year after the establishment of the state, Ben-Gurion made do with stating the need for a change in the status of the Zionist Organization; however, he again proposed that this should be discussed at the Zionist Congress:

Our Independence released its [the nation's] latent pioneering and implementing energy. And the State has become the main force and impetus for the realization of Zionism. The State is no longer the end goal of Zionism. The goal is the Ingathering of Exiles. And the Ingathering of Exiles will not happen without the continuous, faithful and organized help of the Jewish People as a whole.

Two of the above terms—pioneering energy and the Jewish People—reflect the relevant foundations of Ben-Gurion's stand. The first is a call to everyone who defines himself or herself as a Zionist to immigrate to Israel and actively work to realize the Zionist goal. The second, the Jewish People, marks the new focus of Ben-Gurion's appeal: it is no longer the established Zionist Organization, placed like a dividing wall between the State of Israel and the Diaspora, but the Jewish People as a whole, including the sector outside the Zionist framework. The State of Israel is the enterprise of the whole Jewish People, therefore the leaders and citizens of the State are entitled to turn for help to the Jewish People, wherever they may be. Cooperation between State and Diaspora would be based on the principle that "the State is sovereign and its regime, laws and government will be determined only by the will of its citizens . . . however, the State does not represent world Jewry."<sup>45</sup> This statement was addressed to both the Zionist Organization leadership, who demanded the right to participate in shaping policy in various spheres of activity in the State, and to the Jewish American Committee, who were prepared to assist the State of Israel on condition that this did not compromise their loyalty to the United States and their identity as Americans.

In light of his desire to strengthen his connections with Diaspora Jewry, Ben-Gurion proposed that they should be encouraged to visit Israel. His assumption was that Jewish visitors from Western countries, particularly the students among them, would be enchanted by the realization of the Zionist enterprise and some might decide to settle in the country. In addition, he recommended that Hebrew be taught to the youth.<sup>46</sup> Nobody hearing him was left in any doubt about the deep rift between Ben-Gurion and the Zionist Organization.

Nahum Goldmann, Chairman of the Jewish Agency Executive in New York, recognized Ben-Gurion's stand as opposition to the continued existence of the Zionist Organization and declared that "the time has not yet come when the historic mission of Zionism will be placed in the hands of the anonymous masses." That is, the non-Zionists. He asserted, indeed, that the "anonymous masses" could perhaps be enlisted to raise money for defense, but there was no assurance that they would carry the continuing [defense] burden and the burden of

immigration and absorption over the years [if necessary].” In any case, the state could rely only on the Zionist Organization.

Goldmann’s stand was supported by other participants in the Zionist General Council. The President of Hadassah, Rose Halprin, was opposed to conducting propaganda among American Jewry to encourage them to immigrate to Israel, on the grounds that there were no “negative external conditions” in the United States.<sup>47</sup> She stated that it was out of place to promote pioneering aims and present them to contemporary American Jewish youth in the way they were presented to East European Jewish youth in the past, because of the basic differences in the two situations. She pointed out that American Jews regarded themselves as equal citizens of their country and had no intention of changing this situation. She was using the same points raised by the Jewish American Committee during their visit to Israel at Ben-Gurion’s invitation, thus lending force to his criticism of the American Zionists’ approach to the Zionist ideal. A few speakers related to the resignation of Emanuel Neumann and Abba Hillel Silver from the Agency Executive, agreeing that the Israeli government in general and Ben-Gurion in particular had been responsible for this step. One way or another, no decisions were taken at the congress concerning the spheres of action and status of the Zionist Organization.

The change in Ben-Gurion’s attitude to the non-Zionists was reflected also in the call for immigration. In the summer of 1949, the JTA Daily News Bulletin published a quotation from Ben-Gurion’s speech to a delegation of fundraisers from the American General Federation (of Labor): “Our next mission will not be any easier than was the establishment of the State of Israel; it is to bring all Jews to Israel. . . . We call on parents to help us to bring their children here. If they refuse to help us, we will bring the youth to Israel [without their agreement]. However, I hope this will not be necessary.”<sup>48</sup>

The critical response was not long in coming, from both Zionist and non-Zionist circles. Rose Halprin, for example, wrote a letter to Ben-Gurion raising two points: first, the call to establish an agricultural pioneering youth movement in the United States was unrealistic; second, a pioneering movement in the United States could not be a popular movement, but rather one that would incorporate only a few members. By nature, a movement of this kind had to be based on freedom of choice without any obligation.<sup>49</sup> As expected, the Jewish American Committee also regarded this as crossing a “red line.” “This statement is both unexpected and unsuccessful,” Blaustein wrote to Ben-Gurion. “In our conversation [in April] this year [1949], you explained that when you said you expected immigration from America to Israel, you meant mainly an immigration of experts [that is, not youth and certainly not against their parents’ wishes].”<sup>50</sup> Blaustein went on to emphasize that the relationship between the State of Israel and the Jewish American Committee had to be based on goal-oriented cooperation, not ideology.

Why did Ben-Gurion permit himself to make such remarks? Apparently, because he was delivering his talk in a predominantly Mapai framework of American General Zionist fundraisers. He hoped that, unlike most of American Jewry, they

would participate in pioneering projects—primarily immigration—through contributions made directly to the state. Accordingly, he did not see these remarks as out of the ordinary and did not respond to the condemnatory criticism. Instead he let the matter be handled by Eliyahu Elath, the Israeli Ambassador to the United States, and Abba Eban, Israel's delegate to the United Nations.

The American Jewish Committee, however, was not prepared to overlook the matter. At their Administrative Committee meeting, Blaustein submitted a report on the contents of his letter to Ben-Gurion and on his meetings with Eban and Elath, and recommended that no public announcements should be made before Ben-Gurion replied to the letter.<sup>51</sup> However, Proskauer, who was President of the Committee in the 1940s, did not agree and addressed Ben-Gurion directly. "I was certain", he wrote, "that your State would never conduct propaganda to encourage the immigration and naturalization of Diaspora Jewry in general and American Jewish youth in particular." He asked Ben-Gurion to retract his words in an official announcement.<sup>52</sup>

Proskauer's letter to Ben-Gurion remained unanswered, so he asked Blaustein to sharpen the Committee's reaction and demand a clear statement from Ben-Gurion on the immigration issue. If this declaration was not forthcoming, he added, the Committee had to take steps against the State of Israel and consider whether to continue their cooperation.<sup>53</sup> Blaustein agreed with Proskauer that Ben-Gurion's statements were unfortunate and harmful and that he should retract them, but he suggested that they should react with caution. He assumed that Ben-Gurion did not intend to take the radical steps he had mentioned and warned that overt and harsh criticism would bring results contrary to those the Committee wanted to achieve and harmful to the relationship that was being woven between the State of Israel and the Committee.<sup>54</sup>

Blaustein continued to send cables to Ben-Gurion, Elath and Eban requesting that Ben-Gurion issue a clear statement on the matter of immigration in order to win the members' support for Committee policy concerning Israel.<sup>55</sup> However, Ben-Gurion responded to all these cables with one sentence stating that, as he had pointed out to the Committee members on their visit to Israel, the State needed not only money, but also experts.<sup>56</sup>

He made an indirect reference to the subject a month and a half later, in a speech to the UJA, when he reiterated his two principles: the State of Israel represented only its citizens and acted only in their name; the State was interested in cooperating with the "Nation" in order to assist the immigration of "Jews who, for whatever reason, could not or did not wish to remain where they were and sought a safe future and a new haven."<sup>57</sup> That is, immigration was not obligatory for every Jew everywhere, but was a matter of choice.

Publication of these words smoothed the way to a resolution of the conflict with the Jewish American Committee. Blaustein was now empowered to inform the Committee that the matter was concluded.<sup>58</sup> It is worth noting that throughout the crisis, Blaustein had managed to keep it out of the press, so as not to damage the image of Israel in the eyes of the American public and, first and foremost, in the eyes of American Jewry. Furthermore, he understood that he could not turn

the Committee into the main organization among American Jews unless he secured the connection with Israel and he did not want to adversely affect this possibility.

Meanwhile, to clear the air, Ben-Gurion decided to answer Proskauer's letter. He began by explaining the difference between a Zionist and a non-Zionist by the fact that the former was committed to a defined normative framework in order to pour practical content in an ideological mould, which does not apply to the non-Zionist (implying that the demands he had made to the General Zionist Appeal committee were not the same as those he made to the non-Zionists). Observing that he had a great affinity with American values and concepts, Ben-Gurion went on to remark that Proskauer, like many other American Jews, had volunteered to serve in the Jewish Brigade in the First World War without compromising his American citizenship. In this way he tried to convince Proskauer that there was no contradiction between being an American citizen and the desire to help the State of Israel. He concluded the letter, saying "I have never demanded the immigration of all American Jews to Israel, because such a demand is contrary to my ideological stand."<sup>58</sup>

Writing to Rose Halprin, Ben-Gurion spoke about the need for pioneering forces to contribute to the construction and development of the State. The organizational strength behind this initiative, he said, should be drawn primarily from the ZOA leadership. He also pointed out that pioneering goals consisted of more than contributions to the building of the State, they also contributed to the consolidation of Jewish communities in the Diaspora. He added that this process could be established with the help of Jewish youth who would visit Israel for a year, "absorb the pioneering spirit," and return to educate a "generation of Americans and enrich American Jewry with spiritual, moral, and cultural values that would not harm their American [attributes] but enhance them."

Thus, he created a scale of pioneering possibilities headed by immigration. Immigration by choice. High capability and quality immigration that, he asserted, could come from the United States. He was not prepared to accept the claim that pioneering would harm the Zionist movement in the United States. Not only the State, but the Zionist Organization as a whole would derive benefit from this type of immigration. It could infuse the movement with a new spirit, contributing to its renewed consolidation and preventing its disintegration. Of course, he said, this process should not be stirred by intimidation, but should be based on the love for Israel that beats in Jewish hearts.<sup>60</sup> With these words, Ben-Gurion allayed Rose Halprin's fears of a propaganda campaign that could upset the social status of Jews; he also presented the demands inherent in the "pioneering" concept. Nevertheless, he was aware of the difficulties that lay in wait for him in the relationships with the Zionist Organization and the Jewish American Committee, difficulties that might hinder the stability of the State after the war and during the immigrant absorption project. Therefore, he decided to re-examine this relationship while looking for new avenues of support.

## 2 The way to the “State of Israel Bonds” campaign

### 1 Cooperation and dissent

The search for a suitable solution to the problematic relationships among the State of Israel, the Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency continued throughout 1950.

The subject was discussed at the beginning of the year, in a plenary session of the Jewish Agency in preparation for a joint meeting with the Israeli government. Eliyahu Dobkin, Chairman of the Agency’s organizing department, presented the plan due to be discussed at the joint meeting and declared that if the Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency were going to handle only fundraising, their organizations would gradually deteriorate. The only way to prevent this from happening, he said, was to secure relations with the state while maintaining the separate functions of each side. The Agency’s part, which would have legal status, would encompass immigrant absorption, capital investments, the promotion of tourism, and the development of Jerusalem. To give it substance on a practical level, the Chairman of the Agency Executive would regularly attend government and Knesset committee meetings handling vital, relevant issues. The discussion concluded with the decision to adopt Dobkin’s proposal and present it the following day at the joint meeting with members of the government.<sup>1</sup>

Ben-Gurion’s reply to this proposal was biting: “Let all the Zionists come to Israel, let them send their people to the government and then they will be the government.” He explained his opposition to any participation by the Zionist leadership in the institutions of government on the grounds that the state was sovereign and therefore could not permit the intervention of an external factor in its affairs. However, he did not oppose coordination between the two bodies as long as it was not by way of “cooperation.” In addition, he was against the demand to “grant the Zionist Organization a monopoly for activity in the state.”<sup>2</sup> He was not prepared to tie his hands and be prevented from cooperating with other organizations and his perception of the role of “Nation” in the power triangle ruled out the possibility of granting exclusivity to the Zionist Organization.<sup>3</sup> It was decided that Ben-Gurion would meet Locker to discuss setting up a committee to examine the proposals.

At the Zionist General Council (ZGC) session in April 1950, the discussion was not only about the proposals for cooperation among the state, the Zionist

Organization and the Jewish Agency, but primarily about the basic problems of the latter two bodies. In the end, it was decided that their role was “to continue, together with the State of Israel, to contribute to the historic mission to actualize the Zionist vision.”<sup>4</sup> Accordingly, they were called upon to assist the State of Israel economically and politically; to strengthen and enhance connections between the Diaspora and Israel; to encourage immigration of Jewish communities facing extinction and, finally, to focus Zionist activity on the promotion and consolidation of the pioneer movement throughout the Jewish world—by educating Jewish youth in the spirit of Zionism, by spreading the knowledge of Hebrew and by instilling the spiritual values of the People, past and present.

This definition of roles was intended to emphasize the importance of continuing the activities of the Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency as a bridge between Diaspora Jewry and Israel. It did not suit Ben-Gurion, who did not want to grant them an administrative monopoly in Diaspora activities, nor in the task of strengthening (Israel’s) ties with the “Nation,” without any mediating body. He remarked, on a critical note, that the ZGC session had discussed the goals of Zionism instead of discussing the goals of the Zionists and, “if they did not deal with immigration and settlement—their Zionism would be devoid of content.”<sup>5</sup>

At this meeting there was also a proposal to set up a Coordination Board—comprising delegates from among those present at the current meeting and the Jewish Agency Executive—to act in the fields of immigration, absorption, and settlement. The proposal was brought before the Israeli government and received a mixed reaction. Those in support of it claimed that the state needed to cooperate with the Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency, since it was unable to fill all the roles by itself. They also said that the Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency should be granted legal status and exclusivity. While most ministers agreed to regard these two bodies as senior partners of the state, they were against tying the state’s hands and preventing it from forming partnerships with other Jewish organizations. Further, they were critical of the mode of operation of the Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency, in general and of their ideological perception, in particular.

Ben-Gurion explained that he accepted the proposal to establish a Coordination Board because, in his capacity as Prime Minister, he had to take the prevailing reality into consideration and coordination was necessary in order to continue the immigration and absorption project. However, he said that as a Zionist he was against it: “Zionism is not undergoing a crisis, it is going bankrupt. The Zionists are bankrupt.” He remarked that this bankruptcy stemmed from the unclear borderlines between Zionist and non-Zionist and that the only difference between them was that “Zionists want to express their opinion in the country and ordinary Jews do not.”

Ben-Gurion promised to bring the matter of the Coordination Board before the Knesset on condition that this body would be authorized to take decisions only “after two institutions—the government and the Knesset—were in agreement on the general lines” and that government ministers in the Coordination Board would be solely responsible to the government. He also proposed that this Board be established before the Zionist Congress convened.<sup>6</sup>

The basis of his approach was, of course, the need for help from the Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency in immigrant absorption. At the time, no other Jewish organization agreed to cooperate with the government in the sphere of immigration and absorption and Ben-Gurion therefore preferred to postpone the ideological debate in favor of promoting this major goal of the state.

The government moved to establish a Coordination Board and sent representatives to a meeting with the Jewish Agency to summarize the operative principles. As a result, a "partnership and coordination committee" was appointed comprising four ministers, four members of the Agency administration (only from parties in the coalition government), and one representative of the Jewish National Fund. Its function would be "to coordinate planning and implementation in the fields of immigration, absorption, housing, and settlement of immigrants and the allocation of tasks between the two institutions" as well as handling budgets for these operations.<sup>7</sup> Ben-Gurion was against including members who did not belong to the coalition parties, fearing that they might try to pass resolutions contrary to government policy; he took an adamant stand on this matter throughout the discussions.<sup>8</sup> He personally drafted the proposal that was put before the Knesset, taking care to remove from it everything that was contrary to his stand.<sup>9</sup>

The proposed appointment of a joint body for "development and coordination" provoked criticism from the Opposition in the Knesset. The main complaint was that the proposal overlooked the need to grant legal status to the Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency. Also noted was the fact that, since this Coordination Board would be composed solely of members of the coalition parties, the influence of the rest of the parties in the Jewish Agency would be neutralized. Yet another complaint was that the Jewish Agency and Zionist Organization representatives in the institution would not include representatives from the Diaspora. Ben-Gurion's reply to the dissenters was that "the government of Israel is not bound by resolutions passed by the ZGC" and he expressed the hope that the new body would successfully deal with immigration and settlement and would "increase the pressure in favor of pioneering in the Zionist movement."<sup>10</sup> With these words, he was putting forward several principles: Israel is a sovereign state and any institution operating in its realm does so subject to its supervision; the Jewish Agency and Zionist Organization could not limit themselves only to providing economic aid to the state, but had to promote immigration and the pioneering enterprise; their connection with the state would enable them to draw sustenance at source from the materializing vision and the pioneer ideal.

The Zionist Organization could not find the way out of the blind alley in which it found itself even after this development and the Coordination Board was established, owing to the intramural power struggles for the presidency of the ZOA. The contestants in this struggle were Emanuel Neumann, Abba Hillel Silver, and Daniel Frisch, the representative of the Progressive Party, who was supported by Ben-Gurion.<sup>11</sup> Following Frisch's sudden death, Benjamin Browdy replaced him and was elected president in March 1950.<sup>12</sup>

Neumann would write in his diary: "Browdy didn't understand much about Zionist ideology and was not endowed with talent, apart from a certain measure



of slyness . . . With his election, the ZOA reached the lowest point in its history.”<sup>13</sup> He did not come to terms with the appointment and decided to go to Israel to meet Ben-Gurion and persuade him to retract his support. When they met, during April 1950, Neumann explained that the ZOA was suffering from “confusion, lack of leadership” and Silver’s return was the only thing that would change the situation.<sup>14</sup> Ben-Gurion rejected the request on the grounds that “it’s the business of ZOA and Hadassah and it’s out of my hands,”<sup>15</sup> but it was not difficult for Neumann to perceive that Ben-Gurion’s formal reason was secondary to his criticism of Silver on a personal as well as ideological level. He was unable to “forgive” Silver’s stand on the Separation question, for his part in the crisis in the Israel United Appeal (IUA) and his support of the “General Zionists” in Israel. Nor did he forget his sharp argument with Silver about the meaning of the Zionist concept and its practical aspects.

Meanwhile, Ben-Gurion continued to invest considerable effort in the search for ways to strengthen ties between Israel and American Jewry. To this end, in July 1950, he summoned Mapai ministers and members of Knesset together with Israel’s ambassadors to the United States and the United Nations and asked them what could be done to tighten contact with American Jewry and what could be done to raise their Jewish consciousness. The party-political nature of this meeting was in keeping with the custom, in those days, of discussing matters of principle with senior party members in Mapai institutions before bringing these matters before the government.

At the meeting, Moshe Sharett contended that the continuing existence of the Diaspora had to be accepted as hard fact. He claimed that instead of leveling criticism at Jews living in the Diaspora, it should be said that,

they had done great things and were it not for their political efforts and their political awakening the state would never have come into existence. Without their voluntary financial aid the settlement that was created in Eretz-Israel would not have been possible . . . nor would it have been able to cope as it did when tested.

He rejected Ben-Gurion’s assertion that only those who immigrated to Israel could be defined as Zionists and explained that the Zionist Organization could be expected to encourage immigration, but it was impossible to demand that only (potential) immigrants could belong. He suggested a different definition: a Zionist is someone who

identifies heart and soul with the State of Israel and can be relied upon—in times of financial or political crisis—to identify with Israel, while seeking ways to justify and balance this stand in relation to their present citizenship and formal allegiance to their government.

This is the essential difference, Sharett declared, between Zionist and non-Zionist and between the Zionist Organization and other, non-Zionist, Jews. In light of this view, Sharett proposed that the Zionist Organization should be regarded as the main organization, but opposed working only through it.

Abba Eban, then Israel's ambassador to the United Nations, agreed with Sharett that the State of Israel, assisted by its representatives abroad, needed to initiate educational, informational, and artistic projects in American Jewish circles. Eliyahu Dobkin declared that the main objective was to educate and prepare part of American Jewry for immigration during the coming decade. Contrary to Eban and Sharett, he thought that Israel's embassies were not capable of organizing such an enterprise without the full cooperation of the Zionist Organization. "No cultural attaché," he said "would be worth anything without a national movement."<sup>16</sup>

Apparently, the difference between the two approaches lay partly in the fact that Sharett and Eban were Foreign Ministry people, whereas Dobkin was a member of the Agency Executive. In any case, the participants in the discussion all agreed that it was necessary to work among American Jewry and accordingly they decided to establish a special branch, in Mapai, to examine methods of operation.<sup>17</sup> Parallel to the discussions in the various institutions with regard to finding a solution to the state's disrupted relations with the Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency, the connection with the American Jewish Committee AJC was growing stronger and reached a peak in the "Exchange of Views" between Ben-Gurion and Blaustein.

## **2 "Exchange of Views" between Ben-Gurion and Jacob Blaustein**

As mentioned earlier, the AJC had shown great interest in its relations with Diaspora Jewry since the state was established. The committee was more than once troubled by opinions expressed by Israeli representatives in general and Ben-Gurion in particular and their apprehension grew when the Knesset passed the "Law of Return" in July 1950. Further, the AJC had followed developments in the relationship between the Jewish Agency and the state and it was not pleased about the founding of the Coordination Board in May 1950—a process that was interpreted as having given official status to the Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency. They saw it as a blow to their own standing in the American Jewish community and as a statement concerning their future relationship with the state.<sup>18</sup> In the situation that emerged, Ben-Gurion had no option but to clarify these issues.

Against the background of the many economic difficulties stemming primarily from the defense situation and the absorption of masses of immigrants,<sup>19</sup> a number of meetings took place in June–August 1950 between Ben-Gurion, other ministers and American Jewish leaders to examine the possibility of raising \$1.5 billion over three years for the absorption of a million new immigrants. The government hoped that two-thirds of this amount would come from American Jews and the US government.<sup>20</sup> It soon became obvious that this goal would be achieved only if all Jewish organizations contributed to the campaign. First, in this context, the AJC was discussed, both in terms of its proven ability to raise funds from the American Jewish community and its government connections. At Ben-Gurion's invitation, Blaustein came on a visit to Israel in August 1950,

during which the two spent many hours in talks that led to the publication of the “Exchange of Views” on August 23.<sup>21</sup>

Ben-Gurion began by thanking American Jewry in general and Blaustein in particular for their material and political support of Israel. He went on to explain his reasons for inviting Blaustein. “With the establishment of the state,” he said, “confusion and misunderstandings arose with regard to the relationship between Israel and Jewish communities abroad, specially the community in the United States.”<sup>22</sup> If, in the past, disagreements were settled by extensive correspondence,<sup>23</sup> this time there was concern that “these misunderstandings might lead to a lack of sympathy, creating disharmony at a time when friendship and understanding are vital,” and therefore direct contact was preferable.

Referring to these “misunderstandings,” mainly the “dual loyalty” question, Ben-Gurion declared that American Jewry owed sole allegiance to the United States. He spoke about political separateness and pointed out that the State of Israel respected internal communal autonomy.

As to the question of immigration, he declared that Israel was in need of experts and again distinguished between the Zionists’ obligation to immigrate and the absence of such an obligation for non-Zionists, as he saw it. For the former, he said, the essence of Zionism was immigration to Israel, whereas the latter were free “to decide whether they wanted to come on a permanent, or a temporary basis.” However, he expressed the hope that non-Zionists would also decide to immigrate.<sup>24</sup>

Blaustein spoke about taming the wilderness and the settlement project in Israel, drawing parallels with American history. The settlers in Israel, he said, “display the same pioneering spirit that opened the great West of my own homeland.” His use of the phrase “my own homeland” was deliberate and intended to make it clear that he was speaking as an American citizen and that the AJC’s agreement to aid the young state was based on the American ethos. As an American citizen and a Jew, Blaustein pointed out, he was satisfied that “the Israeli nation wants democracy (and will not) accept any dictatorship or totalitarian regime from within or from without.” This contained more than a hint of his expectation that the State of Israel would adopt an international, western orientation and join the countries in the American bloc.

In continuation, Blaustein pointed to the connection between Israel’s great success in making the desert bloom and American Jewry’s financial contribution to the project. He then went on to speak about the desired relationship between American Jewry and the State of Israel. He said that it should be based on recognition of the fact that “for the Jews of America, America is home.” American Jews were not living in exile and had no intention of uprooting themselves to go and live in another country. The United States differed from other places where Jews had settled. Blaustein observed that the connection between various Jewish communities was via religious identity, a shared historical tradition, and common destiny, but was not on a national basis. He emphasized that any expression contrary to this perception was likely to affect “American Jewry’s willingness to participate to the full in building the State of Israel.” He expressed the hope

that the State of Israel would act in accordance with his and Ben-Gurion's statements.<sup>25</sup>

Was this "Exchange of Views" binding? Could it be seen, on Ben-Gurion's part, as a temporary withdrawal from his ideological viewpoint, or even a real turning point in pursuing the Zionist ideology? Did it have an influence on Ben-Gurion's attitude to the Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency?

It should here be noted that the "Exchange of Views" was not a signed agreement, but a platform to present policies and voice opinions. Ben-Gurion and Blaustein attributed great importance to the event, each hoping to further his own stand on the issues under discussion. Blaustein wanted an unequivocal statement from the Prime Minister regarding the essence of the relationship between the Israeli government and Diaspora Jewry. He wanted Ben-Gurion to elucidate—for American Jews in general and particularly for those members of the Committee who were against cooperation with Israel—the ideology and conditions prompting the appeal for economic and political aid to the Jewish state. He wished the American public to understand why the committee wanted to provide this assistance,<sup>26</sup> while Ben-Gurion needed close cooperation with the committee in order to raise the necessary capital for immigrant absorption. He hoped the committee would play a major role in getting donations from American Jewry and would influence the government to provide economic aid to Israel.<sup>27</sup>

Some researchers describe the "Exchange of Views" as proof of a change in Ben-Gurion's ideology. For example, in a biography he dedicated to Ben-Gurion, B. Litvinoff asserted that Ben-Gurion's "Exchange of Views" indicated his "rejection of the ideology in favor of the quest for expediency."<sup>28</sup> Similarly, Charles Liebman states that in his speech about immigration and the ingathering of the exiles, Ben-Gurion evaded mentioning his earlier declarations and ideological concepts. Charles Liebman attributes this change to Ben-Gurion's reaction to pressure from Diaspora Jewry, particularly from Jacob Blaustein during his visit in August 1950.<sup>29</sup> However, in light of the above, it seems that in the "Exchange of Views" Ben-Gurion did not diverge from his ideology. He had always differentiated between what he demanded of the Zionists and what he demanded of the non-Zionists and, therefore, regarded immigration from the United States as a matter of free, individual choice.<sup>30</sup> He admitted that there was no practical possibility of eradicating the Diaspora and sought ways to preserve its Jewish character and strengthen its ties with Israel.

The "Exchange of Views" took place without coordination or consultation with the Zionist Organization in general, or with the ZOA in particular (nor were Mapai institutions invited to negotiate with Blaustein). The Zionist Organization and Jewish Agency did not enjoy recognized status and their relationship with the state was not regularized; the existence of the "Exchange of Views" was actually something of an additional blow to their status and challenged their demand that connections between the State of Israel and the Diaspora should be conducted through them. The way was now open to begin the effort to mobilize for the State of Israel Bonds campaign.

### **3 “The State of Israel Bonds” campaign**

The absorption of the great wave of immigration during and immediately after the War of Independence required enough capital to provide housing and basic needs for the immigrants, as well as investment in infrastructures. In the second half of 1948, over 100,000 Jews arrived, swelling the Jewish population by 17 percent; in 1949, there were 240,000 new immigrants, followed by a slight drop in the next two years, bringing the number of immigrants to some 175,000 per year.<sup>31</sup>

Israel’s economy was on the point of collapsing in 1949. Local production capabilities could not meet demands, the foreign currency balance was too low to pay for imports of food products and basic raw materials. Food shortages of many kinds were clearly evident and considerable sectors of the population were unable to buy staples. At the same time, massive investment was needed to prepare the ground for settlements, for constructing apartment houses, for infrastructures, and, of course, for defense. It was very difficult for the young state to raise funds overseas, nor did it have a local fundraising apparatus. Organized tax collection was a pressing need, the money market was virtually nonexistent and a central bank, the instrument for conducting monetary policy, had not yet been instituted. The only alternative was “monetary extension,” that is, money printing and deficit financing of the government budget in order to cover the big expenses. Rationing was added and, in 1949, the government introduced the austerity regime to restrain private consumerism in favor of defense and development expenditure. The program was based on the war economy at home and on the government propaganda mode in Britain after the Second World War.<sup>32</sup>

This was the focus of the economic policy declared by the first Israeli government, elected in March, 1949. To implement the policy, Minister Dov Yosef was appointed head of the specially created Supply and Rationing Bureau whose task was to control prices and supervise the fair distribution of products that were in short supply. The success of the policy depended on the cooperation of the consumer public and business sector. That is, households buying consumer goods and industries investing in raw materials and assets would be protected against paying more than the listed price and would be prevented from buying supervised materials in quantities exceeding the official ration. At first, it seemed possible to achieve this. Until the end of 1949 prices were stabilized and in 1950 there was even a 7 percent drop in the cost of living index. However, consumer demand rapidly increased and the black market flourished. Furthermore, external factors such as price increases on the world market caused considerably higher prices for imports like food staples and raw materials for the production of food and clothing. These factors led to price rises on the legitimate market.

The government’s lack of success in raising money contributed to the increasingly serious state of the economy.<sup>33</sup> In the beginning, the income from the Israel IUA was expected to escalate and it was hoped that this would help the Israeli economy. Actually, however, there was a drop in income from this source, owing to the aforementioned fundraising crisis in 1949 and also because American Jewry felt that the state was now established and, therefore, there was less need to

assist the Zionist enterprise. Ben-Gurion and Kaplan, seeking possibilities for growth in the state's sources of income, returned to an idea that had been useful in the past: to issue bonds, starting in the United States.<sup>34</sup>

This initiative was the main topic during three days of discussion in Jerusalem early in August, 1950, with the participation of representatives of the upper echelons of Israeli government and American Jewish organizations. Ben-Gurion explained that

there are two types of Jews outside the State of Israel—we refer to them as Jews living in the "Exile" and those living in the "Diaspora"—the first don't have any alternative but to immigrate to Israel. This group includes Jews from East Europe and the Arab countries . . . it is the main problem facing the Jewish People and the State of Israel, the only place where they can live.

In other words, on this occasion he again divided the Jewish dispersal into two groups: the "distressed" Jewry of East Europe, Africa, and Asia who needed the state's help and who would immigrate to Israel impelled basically by their distress, and Western (particularly American) Jewry, whom the state needed both as a reservoir for pioneering development and as a source of aid in the spheres of politics, defense and the economy.

Consequently, Ben-Gurion presented an economic program centered mainly on the absorption of 700,000 immigrants over a four year period. He made it clear that it would cost 1.5 billion dollars to implement this program. The State of Israel would raise some 20 percent of the amount, Jews outside of the United States would help with an additional 20 percent and the task of raising the balance, about a billion dollars, would be allotted to American Jewry. It was clear to him that they were the only ones able to cope with this demand (and to work with the American government to obtain a long-term loan).

Henry Montor, Director General of the fundraising committee, stated that the ZOA numbered only 800,000 members, meaning that most American Jews were not members. However, he said, 90 percent of the Organization's members were interested in helping Israel and therefore a new organization should be formed to make it possible for them to do so more effectively by raising funds and working toward acquiring loans for Israel. "These people," he emphasized, "will provide a new incentive if they feel that Israel is interested in them and prepared to work together with them."<sup>35</sup>

The situation report submitted by Montor caused a storm. At least some of those present thought he was not influenced only by actual conditions in the field, but also by his relations with the ZOA and his past leadership in opposing the Zionist groups' control of the IUA. However, Ben-Gurion was enthusiastic about the idea of replacing the ZOA with a "Friends of Israel" organization. He called upon the Zionist organizations to take the initiative and be more active for Israel, or else "We will break them, smash them, whatever (wherever) they are."

Labor Minister Golda Meyerson claimed that the ZOA was not able to implement the said campaign because it was hampered by internal power struggles.

For this initiative to succeed, she explained, it was necessary to enlist keen young people who were willing to help and determined to succeed.

Rose Halprin, President of Hadassah, countered this by declaring that accusing the ZOA of working against Israel was a serious matter. She went on to say that Montor was well aware that fundraising for Israel would not have been implemented were it not for Hadassah and other Zionist organizations. Nahum Goldmann, Jewish Agency Chairman in New York, was against conducting a fundraising drive on the basis of 50 people. He estimated that in the event of a breakdown in relations between Israel and the United States, the Zionist leaders would be the only ones to stand by Israel, since “the ZOA is prepared to be the most loyal servant of the Israeli government.” Therefore, in his opinion, it was necessary to have a well-established, competent organization in charge of fundraising.<sup>36</sup>

From this and similar meetings, Ben-Gurion concluded that in order to raise the required funds he would have to enlist both Zionist and non-Zionist groups in fundraising drives, even though he preferred to cooperate with the non-Zionist groups (which had better connections with the American government and whose membership included major contributors). Accordingly, he resolved to call a conference of delegates from all the Jewish organizations in America.<sup>37</sup>

At the beginning of August 1950, the Israeli Government and the Jewish Agency invited the leaders of 50 American Jewish organizations and a number of Jewish financiers to attend a conference in Jerusalem, with the aim of mobilizing them to raise 1 billion dollars for Israel. Ben-Gurion explained to the assembled delegates that the Jews who must urgently be brought to Israel, were in imminent danger “of annihilation, material or spiritual destruction, or both.” He announced that the State of Israel, in spite of its difficult economic situation, would not limit the number of immigrants. The State, he said, had done everything in its power to absorb the 400,000 immigrants who had arrived in the country during the first two years of statehood. Now the state needed help from the Jewish People and the Jewish People must decide whether or not to bear this burden.<sup>38</sup> In Ben-Gurion’s opinion, the obligation applied to every Jew, Zionist, or non-Zionist, in accordance with their often expressed conviction that they had to assist the State of Israel in every possible way.

The agreed program defined the four mechanisms for raising the required funds: (a) the IUA; (b) Bonds for Israel, that is, sale of Israeli government bonds to Jews in the Diaspora; (c) a loan from the United States; and (d) private capital investment in Israel.<sup>39</sup>

The resolution to launch “The State of Israel Bonds” campaign raised the question of whether this could be harmful to IUA operations. In Ben-Gurion’s consultations with Kaplan, Meyerson, and Montor, the latter said that if they really wanted “The State of Israel Bonds” campaign, they would have to start organizing the matter as soon as possible and take care to avoid a clash between it and the IUA. Ben-Gurion observed that the Bonds would only begin to be issued in spring, 1951 and therefore suggested concentrating on fundraising efforts for the

IUA. However, he added that, "if the Bonds succeed . . . the fate of the IUA won't matter so much."<sup>40</sup>

Opinion has it that he preferred the Bonds to the IUA because this left the initiative with the state, which would take responsibility for issuing the bonds and would receive the whole payment directly (it would also determine exactly what was to be done with the money, in any case). In other words, launching "The State of Israel Bonds" campaign allowed the state to bypass the Jewish Agency and the Zionist Organization to mobilize the means for immigrant absorption and to reinforce its direct connection with American Jewry. The distribution of funds collected by the IUA was implemented by the Jewish organizations according to a specific key and some of the money never reached the state's coffers. As a matter of fact, Ben-Gurion feared that such an arrangement would enable interference with government policy, or with the transfer of contributions if its operations were contrary to what the partner organizations considered acceptable.<sup>41</sup>

At the end of October 1950, representatives of the community streams and organizations in the United States met to discuss the implementation of resolutions passed at the Jerusalem conference. One of the main speeches was that of Jacob Blaustein. He gave an in-depth account of the meeting with Ben-Gurion and promised that the AJC would make every effort to collect funds from American Jewry. In addition, Blaustein undertook to work within the US government circles to include Israel in American foreign aid schemes. Nahum Goldmann called on world Jewry in general and American Jewry in particular to participate in "The State of Israel Bonds" campaign and increase cooperation among the various organizations with the aim of helping Israel. The meeting concluded with the appointment of Henry Morgenthau and Henry Montor to head "The State of Israel Bonds" campaign.<sup>42</sup> In his report on the meeting, Teddy Kollek wrote to Ben-Gurion: "There has never before been a Jewish conference in America with such comprehensive, variegated participation. The success was mainly the result of Montor's immense effort and Eban's brilliant closing address."<sup>43</sup>



### **3 Zionism for the present time, 1951**

#### **1 The prime minister's visit to the United States**

The ground was being prepared for the “State of Israel Bonds” campaign at the end of 1950 and, by early 1951, the infrastructure was in place. As in previous fundraising campaigns in the American Jewish community, it was clear that prominent personalities must be sent to touch their hearts and prompt them to donate to the campaign. To this end, Minister of Finance Eliezer Kaplan presented the government with a program of visits by senior ministers, with Ben-Gurion's visit to the United States in pride of place.<sup>1</sup>

For the protocol, the visit was private. The President of the United States had not invited the Prime Minister of Israel and he was not given an official state reception. The reasons for this had to do with American foreign policy. At the beginning of the “fifties, Israel had opted for nonalignment or, as Uri Bialer defined it, a “knock on every door” strategy, and this prevailed until the government's decision, at the end of 1950, to side with the UN in support of American (and anti-Soviet) policy regarding the Korean War. Ben-Gurion notified the American government that Israel was prepared to stand with the United States should the fighting in Korea develop into a war between the two Blocs.<sup>2</sup> In so doing, he hoped to indicate Israel's willingness to be included in the economic framework of America's strategic planning in the Middle East.<sup>3</sup> However, the State Department regarded the Arab countries as the dominant factor in the Middle East and it was felt that strengthening ties with the “State of Israel” would hinder efforts to draw the Arab countries into the Western Bloc. Therefore, Israel was not included in America's plans for defense of the Middle East (Middle East Command—MEC and Middle East Defense Organization—MEDO) in order not to alienate the Arab countries in general and Egypt in particular.<sup>4</sup> In any case, the US government was inclined to keep a low profile in its dealings with Israel and was not eager to conduct ceremonies in honor of the Prime Minister.

However, such problems did not cloud the historic importance of the first visit by a Prime Minister of Israel to the United States. His hosts, the American Jewish Community, received him enthusiastically throughout the country. Ben-Gurion saw this as a means to strengthen ties with American Jews and enlist their aid in the spheres of defense and immigration. He therefore rejected appeals

from Israel's Embassy in Washington to refrain from embarking on such an "exhausting trip."<sup>5</sup>

One way or another, the primary aim of the visit was to kindle the "State of Israel Bonds" campaign. To this end, a number of prestigious events and dinners were planned, with invitations to donors according to a key provided by Teddy Kollek, who was then on the diplomatic staff of the Embassy in Washington. He planned two types of event: one attended by those who had purchased bonds worth a large sum of money ("In New York the level will be \$50,000 and more, but elsewhere this will be lowered according to the environment to a minimum of \$10,000), the other would be "large gatherings numbering about 20,000 people in New York, Boston, and Los Angeles. In these cases, the participants will be anyone who has purchased or sold at least one Bond."

Ben-Gurion arrived in America early in May 1951. He met unofficially with President Truman and high-level government officials, to whom he presented Israel's request for a grant in terms of Article 4 of the USA's Foreign Aid Plan. He also met with State governors and mayors. At his public appearances he emphasized the similarity between American and Israeli history. "The pioneering spirit," he said, "is the heritage of both our nations." With this, he also presented Israel's aims and goals: "In strengthening the State of Israel as a cultural, democratic, peace-loving, and progressive nation we will provide an educational model and an example for all its neighbors." This declaration was obviously meant to emphasize the nature of the new state and to indicate where it would stand in the struggle between the West and East Blocs, but Ben-Gurion's message was essentially: "We cannot ignore our defense requirements and we must constantly reinforce our military preparedness."<sup>6</sup>

His first speech to a Jewish audience was in Madison Square Garden, New York. In it he dwelled on the important developments on the path to establishing the state, the state's difficulties and its plans to solve pressing economic problems. Ben-Gurion concluded his speech with a declaration that Israel's citizens would honor their obligations as they had done in the past and he expressed the hope that American Jews would also undertake to help Israel live up to its principles and aspirations.<sup>7</sup>

This speech drew criticism from Emanuel Neumann, who subsequently wrote:

At Zionist Congresses and meetings of the ZGC, Ben-Gurion has always placed the emphasis on immigration as a Zionist obligation of primary importance . . . in this speech, he spoke in carefully chosen words about Jews living in countries where they are oppressed and of their need to find a home and a haven in Israel, without saying a word about immigration from the America. This was not Ben-Gurion's way . . . another thing disturbed me: throughout his rather lengthy speech, he did not once mention Zionism and Zionists; apparently they were unmentionable.<sup>8</sup>

It seems that Neumann chose to ignore the fact that in this speech Ben-Gurion was deliberately not addressing the Zionist movement, but American Jews

(“Nation”), whose primary duty, in his opinion, was to provide all possible aid to the “State of Israel.” Furthermore, Ben-Gurion apparently failed to mention the ZOA and the UJA because he was angry about their limited fundraising ability and their political power struggles, which were among the reasons for starting the “State of Israel Bonds” campaign. In any case, on the one hand, he did not want to provide a platform for any of these elements on the evening of the inauguration of the “State of Israel Bonds” campaign and, on the other hand, he was not interested in arguing with them on that important and celebratory occasion and thus risk spoiling the chances of success.

One of Ben-Gurion’s outstanding appearances in the United States was at Brandeis University. He spoke before students and staff and called upon them to come to Israel and contribute to the development of science, industry and technology.<sup>9</sup> He said that it was historically the right time, it was the peak of an unique opportunity for professionals to add direction and ground-breaking content to their lives. This time, too, he did not claim that immigration was obligatory, instead he presented two possibilities: to come to Israel for a designated period or to immigrate—that is, settle. He said that “volunteering” for this mission would be similar to pioneering in America in its early days; it would help them to be not only better Jews, but better Americans. He explained that this meant they were being given a chance to pour practical content into Israel while complying with the ideals of their country, America.<sup>10</sup>

The organizers of the “State of Israel Bonds” campaign were opposed to having Ben-Gurion address the UIA workforce and the Israel Embassy in Washington was unsuccessful in attempts to persuade them that he should address both organizations. Despite this opposition, when Golda Meyerson visited America in April 1951, she and the leaders of the fundraising drive agreed that Ben-Gurion should address them. This agreement was kept secret till after the abovementioned conference at Madison Square Garden.<sup>11</sup>

When the time came for his address to the Fund leadership, Ben-Gurion asked them to continue their fundraising work and acknowledged everything that they had done in the past. He defined their initiative as an expression of love for Israel and not as philanthropy or an act of charity. The three main issues confronting the state were defense, immigration, and settlement. The order of his presentation was deliberate. In emphasizing defense, he apparently wanted to point out that the state’s financial needs would not decrease even after the great wave of immigration had been absorbed and it would not be possible to dispense with the “State of Israel Bonds” or the fundraising drives.<sup>12</sup>

As in his address at the “State of Israel Bonds” inauguration, here, too, he made no reference to immigration as a personal commitment or to any other Zionist imperative. He refrained from expressing his views on fulfillment of the Zionist ideal, the essence of Zionism and the essence of the individual Zionist until his address to the ZOA gathering at the end of his visit. This was a calculated move to demonstrate the resentment and acrimony he felt towards them. In this speech, he repeated the principles of his ideological perception of the essence of Zionism, the difference between the state and the ZOA, and the future of the Jewish People in the Diaspora. He asked: What is the uniqueness of Zionism? What is the

difference between Zionist and non-Zionist? His answer was that the main difference lay in the Zionist's commitment to give his children a Hebrew education; to nurture the Hebrew language and culture, and to work towards establishing a pioneering movement—all with one aim in mind: to encourage and prepare the youth for immigration to Israel. In addition, he said, it was essential to encourage capital investment and the establishment of privately owned industry.

In the same speech, Ben-Gurion compared the state and the ZOA. The state, he said, is the common basis for identification among Jews wherever they may be—the uniting focus for the whole of Jewry. Its affinity with the Jewish People was integral to its very existence. Its gates were open to all Jews everywhere and, therefore, there was no need for a Zionist organization that created a split between the state and the Nation. He pointed out that the rule of the state applied only to its citizens and went on to observe that Jews in the Diaspora could not be involved in matters of state as long as they were not citizens. He criticized some among the ZOA leadership for interfering in internal matters of state and for their cooperation with political parties in Israel, referring to Emanuel Neumann and Abba Hillel Silver, who participated in the General Zionist Party's election campaign. Apart from the principle involved, he was furious about the damage this involvement caused to his own party, Mapai.<sup>13</sup>

Concluding his speech, Ben-Gurion related to the issue of the continued existence of the Diaspora. He observed that throughout Jewish history the Jewish People had never lived only in the Eretz-Israel and this was apparently destined to be the case in the present era, too. The Jews of America were not candidates for immediate immigration en masse. There was no point in predicting the outbreak of pogroms in their country to convince them to immigrate. However, the young state had potentially strong attractions that were not yet evident owing to the problems it still had to confront, but these would emerge in the future.<sup>14</sup>

During Ben-Gurion's visit, which lasted until the end of May, 1951, the "State of Israel Bonds" campaign succeeded in raising \$35 million, which was less than estimated. Nevertheless, the importance of the visit regarding stronger communication with the American government could not be ignored, particularly considering the State Department's attitude to Israel; but Ben-Gurion noticed another aspect. "The State of Israel," he wrote at the conclusion of his visit, "has bestowed on this community an invaluable blessing: enhanced status and respect in its own eyes and in the eyes of its neighbors... What American Jewry can contribute to Israel—can be done by no other power outside Israel."<sup>15</sup>

## **2 Ben-Gurion, Zionists and non-Zionists: act one**

The competition between the UJA and the "State of Israel Bonds" began in October 1950, toward the end of the inaugural Bonds conference in Washington. Henry Montor resigned from the UJA and was appointed Chairman of the "State of Israel Bonds" executive committee.<sup>16</sup>

ZOA leaders Emanuel Neumann and Abba Hillel Silver tried to prevent Montor's appointment on both objective and subjective grounds. Objectively, they feared that the Bonds would cause a drop in the income from the Fund.

Subjectively, they regarded Montor's efforts to persuade prominent operators to leave the UJA and come to work with him for the Bonds as an attempt to damage the UJA's operations. The "State of Israel Bonds" executive committee was appointed by the State of Israel and was therefore highly esteemed by the Jewish public, whereas UJA workers were community leaders; hence the fear that the status of the ZOA would be further undermined.

Of course, the establishment of the Bonds upset the Zionists' control over contributions and damaged their ability to influence how they were allocated in Israel. Neumann and Silver, who were absolute supporters of the General Zionists (and anti-Mapai), were not prepared to let this pass. Neumann referred to this issue in a letter to Silver: "We must work for the appointment of one of our people as Chairman of the UPA Board of Directors, [Rudolf] Sonneborn four main appointees give the progressives great power."<sup>17</sup>

Ben-Gurion's stand on the struggle between the Fund and the "State of Israel Bonds" can be deduced from his principles, as expressed above, and it stands to reason that he preferred the Bonds to the Fund. But his main aim was to find a financial source to assist in extricating Israel from its difficult economic situation. Therefore he used every means at his disposal to nurture both projects. His willingness to appear at events arranged by each of them during his United States visit seems to have stemmed from this consideration.

It should be mentioned that Zionist movement politics were also part of the background to all these happenings. The 23rd Zionist Congress, the first since the achievement of statehood, was due to take place in Jerusalem in the summer of 1951 and the Zionist parties in Israel were preparing for elections to the Congress (which would be swiftly followed by elections to the second Knesset). The General Zionists in Israel sought the help and support of Neumann and Silver and sent a delegation headed by Joseph Serlin to the United States to enlist other ZOA leaders in their cause. At the meeting with the delegation, Silver stressed the importance of a strong "civic" party in order to balance Mapai's socialistic strength and exert an influence on political and economic policies in Israel. Neumann spoke of the importance of such a party as the basis of democracy in Israel and later also attempted to initiate a union of parties in the Diaspora that defined themselves as General Zionists, with the aim of assisting the party in Israel.<sup>18</sup> He hoped this would be a "powerful propaganda victory and a heavy blow for the Progressives" (founded at the end of 1948 following a split in the General Zionist party in Israel).<sup>19</sup> He also proposed that he and Silver should visit Israel to further this initiative. However, Silver rejected the suggestion on the grounds that such a visit would have a negative effect on the electoral strength of the General Zionists in Israel. He feared that Ben-Gurion and Mapai would interpret it as interference in Israel's internal affairs and the General Zionists in Israel would be portrayed as welcoming such interference.<sup>20</sup>

Furthermore, at this stage Silver was trying to establish a dialogue with Ben-Gurion in the hope of returning to the ZOA Executive and playing a major role in the 23rd Zionist Congress. With this in mind, Silver asked Abba Eban, Israel's Ambassador to the United States, to approach Ben-Gurion with the suggestion

that he issue an official invitation to Silver to visit Israel.<sup>21</sup> Ben-Gurion adamantly refused to do so. “No invitation of any kind will be sent to Silver,” he wrote to Eban.<sup>22</sup>

The tension between Ben-Gurion and the ZOA was also discussed at the ZOA’s 54th Annual Convention in June, 1951. Silver severely criticized Ben-Gurion, supported by ZOA President Benjamin Browdy, and Israel Goldstein of the Jewish Agency Executive. His criticism focused primarily on the differences in the Israeli Prime Minister’s attitudes to the non-Zionist and Zionist organizations and on his assertion that political and economic aid to Israel was not solely the province of the ZOA. He complained that Ben-Gurion delivered a double message and thus it was difficult to decipher his true attitude to the ZOA. He protested against the demand that the ZOA be prevented from taking any part in Israeli politics. This restriction, said Silver, blurred the boundaries between the ZOA and the AJC.<sup>23</sup>

The convention concluded with three main resolutions: the first (329 votes in favor and 127 against)—called for the ZOA to identify with and aid the General Zionist Party in Israel; the second—called for bestowing special status on the WZO in Israel; and the third—called for the enlistment experts in the various fields of technology and industry and funds to cover their travel expenses and stay in Israel.<sup>24</sup>

Although the Convention was meant to demonstrate the strength and importance of the ZOA, one of its noticeable features was the drop in the number of delegates: only 500 compared to 800 in previous conventions. This was a clear expression of the decline in the organization’s membership, from 200,000 to 160,000.

In his report to Ben-Gurion, Benjamin Browdy refrained from mentioning the criticism leveled against him at the convention. He related mainly to the resolution concerning the enlistment and financing of technological and industrial experts.<sup>25</sup> If he had hoped to please the Prime Minister by this, he soon realized his mistake. In this resolution, the ZOA ignored Ben-Gurion’s call to promote immigration and pioneering among its members in general and among the youth in particular; the experts, too, were not encouraged to immigrate and settle in Israel, but only to stay for a time. In his meeting with Browdy, Ben-Gurion did not conceal his bitter disappointment regarding the ZOA’s decision to identify with the General Zionist Party. He wrote in his diary, “I rebuked him for the ZOA’s decision to identify. He apologized simply, saying that he was not strong enough to stand up to Silver.”<sup>26</sup>

Meanwhile, the dialogue between Ben-Gurion and the AJC continued. The Committee followed his remarks and expressions closely, hastening to point out deviations from the “Exchange of Views.” For example, when Ben-Gurion presented the Civil Defence Law to the Knesset with the explanation that the existence and security of the state were important not only to its citizens, but also to the “Jewish People all over the world” and, therefore, “the danger of war in Israel was a danger to every man and woman in Israel and each and every Jew in the world.”<sup>27</sup> *The New York Times* reported him as having said “the Jewish Nation”<sup>28</sup>

and AJC President Jacob Blaustein was quick to demand clarification from Abba Eban. Eban replied that there was no change in Ben-Gurion's position as expressed in the "Exchange of Views" in August 1950. He explained that Ben-Gurion had used the term "Jewish People" and certainly not "Jewish Nation"<sup>29</sup> "the misunderstanding lay in the translation from Hebrew to English". Blaustein accepted Eban's explanation and expressed his admiration for the Israeli Government in general and Ben-Gurion in particular, for their adherence to the "Exchange of Views" and willingness to examine their own statements.<sup>30</sup>

On analysis, this episode shows the AJC's extreme sensitivity regarding everything concerning Diaspora Jewry's connection to the "State of Israel." They protested vigorously against anything likely to upset their status as citizens of America. It is also instructive regarding the importance they attributed to the "Exchange of Views." They perceived this joint declaration as a binding legal document which the "State of Israel" was obliged to take into consideration so that acts or expressions contrary to the content of the document would be seen as a breach of contract—all of which far exceeded the scope of an "Exchange of Views" and did not entail the obligation to act in terms of its content, in Ben-Gurion's opinion. In Hebrew, the word for "Nation" and "People" is the same and Ben-Gurion had clearly used it in the latter sense, since he saw no legal connection between the "State of Israel" and Diaspora Jewry. In his view, Israeli law applied only to Israeli citizens. The essence of the connection between the state and the "Nation" was based on the fact that the state was Jewish and existed for any Jew who wanted to immigrate.

This discourse on the connection between the "State of Israel" and Diaspora Jewry would continue for a long time.

### **3 Ben-Gurion, Zionists and non-Zionists: act two**

As mentioned earlier, the General Zionist party gained considerable strength in the state's first municipal elections in 1950; two years earlier, in the elections for the preliminary session, the party had won a mere 5.22 percent of the votes. Therefore, the elections for the 23rd Zionist Congress in the spring of 1951 were more important than the WZO's intramural struggle, since they had become an additional yardstick for measuring the strength of the Israeli parties, which were in the midst of preparations for the elections to the second Knesset at the end of July, 1951.<sup>31</sup>

With this situation in mind, speaking to Mapai's Political Committee, Ben-Gurion stressed the political significance of the Congress elections.<sup>32</sup> He pointed out that the General Zionist's gain in strength would make it hard for his government to implement its policy. Therefore, he demanded that the Congress elections be regarded as the major issue on the Mapai agenda in Israel and abroad. The committee resolved to invest maximum effort in preparing for the elections.<sup>33</sup>

Nevertheless, the Mapai institutions also discussed the continued existence of WZO and the Jewish Agency and the question of their status occupied the party council at the March 1951 meeting. Party members with key positions in these

two bodies remained in office and they found themselves on the other side of the fence from Ben-Gurion. Agency Executive Chairman Berl Locker reiterated that the aim of Zionism at the time was the “ingathering of exiles” and that this could not be achieved without renewing and reinforcing the Zionist Organization. He said that it alone had the capability to carry out a multi-faceted national education project to encourage Jews living in the Diaspora to immigrate. He regarded the Zionist Organization as the second arm of the Jewish People and declared that in partnership with it, the “first arm”—the state—could meet Zionism’s primary imperative: the ingathering of the exiles. Locker went on to say that the state held the key to reinforcing the Zionist Organization and had to recognize “the World Zionist Organization as the representative of Diaspora Jewry in all matters relative to it in Israel.” In any case, the state had to grant exclusive special status to the Organization, stipulating that it represented the Jewish People in its connections with the state. In this it was easy to discern concern for the future status of the Zionist Organization in light of developments in the relationship between the state and the AJC.

Ben-Gurion was against Locker’s basic premise that the Zionist Organization’s situation stemmed from the absence of recognized status by the state. He said that, on the contrary, “the Zionist Organization’s main problem was not its status in Israel,” but rather, “it’s standing with the People—its status in the Diaspora.” He stressed that the Zionist Organization had to acquire the status of guide and mentor to organize and enlist the Jewish People in aid of Israel. That was the test which would establish its status among Diaspora Jewry. Whereas the state could grant it the desired status, it would have to earn status in the Diaspora by its own efforts.

Of course, this position stemmed also from the fear that the state would leave itself vulnerable to the dictates of the ZOA which, as mentioned, had a majority of General Zionist supporters. This fear increased after the Second Knesset elections at the end of July, 1951, when the General Zionist party won 20 mandates—13 more than it had in the First Knesset—making it the second largest party. Indeed, Mapai had maintained its strength and seniority on winning 45 mandates, but although he wished to establish a broad coalition, Ben-Gurion left the General Zionists in the Opposition, mainly because of their connection with his rivals in the United States.<sup>34</sup>

In the end, the abovementioned meeting of the Mapai council decided to work towards granting “special legal status to the Zionist Organization in matters concerning the fulfillment of its role in Israel.”<sup>35</sup> However, there was not the slightest mention of legal recognition of the Zionist Organization as the representative of the Jewish people in the Diaspora, or of exclusivity for its operations in Israel.

This resolution was also authorized by the “Ihud Olami” Conference convened close to the Zionist Congress.<sup>36</sup> The AJC, which had continued to monitor developments in the status issue, did not criticize the resolution, but in his address to the “Ihud Olami” Conference, Ben-Gurion did, in fact, relate to it. The Jewish Telegraphic Agency (JTA) quoted him as follows: “As a condition to granting special status to the Zionist Organization, we request Zionist organizations in all



countries to come to the aid of the State of Israel in any circumstances and under any conditions, even if such a step would be contrary to their obligations of loyalty to their home countries.”<sup>37</sup> What Ben-Gurion actually said was: “It is the duty of the Zionist Organization and the Zionist Movement to aid Israel in all situations and under all conditions.” He later added that only citizens of Israel could intervene in the affairs of the state, since they were subject to its authority and obligations as citizens, whereas Zionists living outside Israel had no right to intervene and “must aid the State of Israel, no matter what government was in power [there].”<sup>38</sup>

Blaustein hastened to dispatch a cable to Ben-Gurion warning him that this time he would not be satisfied with clarifications and that the Committee would “re-examine its obligation to aid Israel” if it emerged that the information was correct.<sup>39</sup> Ben-Gurion replied at once: “I have not seen the JTA article, nor the report in the *Times*. Therefore, I can neither confirm nor deny what was written. However, what I said at the conference was in perfect keeping with my declarations at our meeting in the King David [Hotel].” Ben-Gurion pointed out that his words did not contradict the “Exchange of Views,” not because he regarded these as valid and binding, but because he had no desire to start a lengthy argument with the AJC. He declared that the authority of the “State of Israel” applied only to its citizens and not to the rest of world Jewry. There was, however, a need for cooperation among Jews all over the world to help those Jews who wished to immigrate to Israel and, in this, Zionists and non-Zionists did not differ.<sup>40</sup> In the wake of this reply, Abba Eban met Blaustein in order to clear away obstacles and put an end to the disagreements.<sup>41</sup>

There was no change in the positions of the two men; Ben-Gurion persisted in his opinions and repeated what he had expressed in the “Exchange of Views.” The argument had developed because of the committee’s sensitivity to any expression by Ben-Gurion that could be interpreted as a divergence from earlier commitments. In retrospect, it seems that, like the ZOA leadership, Blaustein did not see that Ben-Gurion had a different understanding of the relationship between Israel and each of the two groups—Zionists and non-Zionists.

#### **4 The 23rd Zionist Congress**

In August 1951, the 23rd Zionist Congress—the first to be held after the establishment of the State—convened in Jerusalem. All the arguments preoccupying the Zionist Organization at the time, all the power struggles between Ben-Gurion and the ZOA, particularly with Silver and Neumann, drained into the proceedings of the Congress.<sup>42</sup> These two men arrived at the congress, but were not elected to any central role in it, since they were not members of the “Agency Executive” at the time.

Benjamin Browdy, President of the ZOA, persuaded Ben-Gurion to meet Silver in an attempt to clear away obstacles and Ben-Gurion invited Silver and Neumann for “a cup of tea,” but turned the visit into a social occasion. He spoke about Baruch Spinoza and made no reference to current events. Silver tried without

success to raise the issue of the status of the WZO.<sup>43</sup> Neumann would write about that meeting as follows:

I have often wondered about that strange situation. These were, after all, two prominent Zionist leaders with much in common . . . then why was there such an almost unconcealed animosity between them? Some said that Ben-Gurion sensed in Silver a powerful rival for the crown of the world Zionist movement; perhaps he was not pleased by Silver's prestige and great popularity. Perhaps he also feared that Silver might use his power against Mapai's status and influence. If he was nursing such fears, they were without any foundation.<sup>44</sup>

As it seems, Neumann did not get to the bottom of the problem. Beyond their political rivalry, they disagreed ideologically. As long as the state was not established, they had been able to cooperate in the effort to bring it about, despite their different conceptions of the essence of Zionism.<sup>45</sup> After the state was established, their ideological argument moved from questions related to statehood to discussions about the essence of Zionism and Zionists, making a break between them inevitable. Moreover, Neumann's opinion that Ben-Gurion had nothing to fear from Silver's political intentions does not stand the test of documentation. Neumann and Silver took every possible step to enhance the General Zionists' power in Israel and tried to secure controlling positions in the Fund Drive and the ZOA. This could not possibly be seen as anything but a struggle for political power and sources of control.<sup>46</sup>

In his address to the Congress, Ben-Gurion reiterated the list of tasks confronting the state: security, the ingathering of exiles and their acclimatization, the rapid construction and development of the country. On its own, the state could not carry this load, he said, and therefore it needed the help of the entire "Nation." He called on the Zionist Organization to hitch itself to this effort, because it was an organization "not confined to any sovereign or national sphere; its borders are the [Jewish] People everywhere and anywhere." However, he explained, in this also lay its weakness: "The Zionist Organization's dominance is subject to its members' willingness and desire to conform."<sup>47</sup> He concluded that the state could not confer legal status on the Zionist Organization in the Diaspora and that it had to acquire status by virtue of its own effort, enterprise and prestige.

In contrast to his party, Mapai, which agreed with Ben-Gurion's opinion and was in favor of conferring legal status on the Zionist Organization only for its activities in Israel, the delegates from other parties demanded a similar status in both the Diaspora and Israel. Yaakov Hazan, a Mapam leader, declared that "the Zionist movement must be Israel's only representative to the Jewish masses in the Diaspora." Emmanuel Neumann expressed the ZOA's stand that the government of Israel had to recognize the Zionist Organization as "the authorized representative" of the Jewish People worldwide and as Israel's agent in the Diaspora. Without this recognition, he said, all discussions about status were pointless. He agreed to Ben-Gurion's demand that in return for status, the Zionist Organization

would side with the state and would assist it in every way “at all times and under all circumstances.” Rose Halprin, President of the Hadassah organization, claimed that the Israeli government had wrongly diagnosed the postindependence reality. The assumption that it would be possible to rally the Jewish People to the cause of the state, she said, was mistaken. Therefore, it was not only impossible to dismantle the Zionist Organization, it was necessary to consolidate it by granting it status.<sup>48</sup>

Discussions between the Zionist Organization and government representatives led to the following decision: “The Congress deems it necessary for the State of Israel, by suitable legislation, to confer recognized status on the World Zionist Organization as the representative of the Jewish People in all matters connected to Diaspora Jewry’s organized participation in the development and building of Israel and immigrant absorption.”<sup>49</sup> Thus, the Congress decided by a majority to recognize the Zionist Organization as the representative of the Jewish People, leaving Ben-Gurion in the minority. The first round was won by the Zionist Organization, but it still had to wait for the legislative process in the Knesset, which was not obliged to act in accordance with Congress resolutions.

The Jerusalem Plan, which was supposed to replace the Basle Plan from the First Zionist Congress in 1897, was another bone of contention at the Congress. The new plan centered on the call for “the redemption of Israel by ingathering the exiles,” directed at the Jews in the Western world. The main question was whether these Jews must regard themselves as exiles—that is, temporary residents in their countries of domicile—obliged to do their utmost to immigrate to Israel. The delegates of the ZOA in general and Hadassah in particular were opposed to any phrasing that could damage their status as American citizens, any concept insisting on immigration and any portrayal of American Jewry as living in exile.<sup>50</sup> This position matched the AJC’s stand and rationale.

The version of the Jerusalem Plan accepted by the Congress was: “Zionism’s task is the creation of the State of Israel, the ingathering of exiles in Israel and the protection of the unity of the Jewish People.” The Plan was general and open to many interpretations. Like the Basle Plan, it contained certain compromises among the various differences of opinion. It spoke of tasks, but did not relate to the aims of the movement in the era of statehood.

In retrospect, there were no innovations at the Congress in the positions taken by the sides in the deliberations and argumentation. It was clear to everyone that the Zionist Organization still had a role to play and the discussion centered on the nature of this role. The ideological gap between Ben-Gurion and the ZOA remained intact. Each side presented its stand without convincing the other and the struggle between them became a “trench battle” with each side waiting for the other to withdraw.

## **5 Ben-Gurion, Zionists and non-Zionists: finale**

The AJC showed great interest in the deliberations of the Congress and, particularly, its resolutions. Attention was focused mainly on the decision to grant legal

status in Israel to the Zionist Organization and to recognize it as the representative of Jews living outside Israel.<sup>51</sup> To establish calm, Ben-Gurion composed a letter to the AJC clarifying Congress resolutions and, at the same time, asking Goldmann to refrain for the time being from making public statements regarding this issue.<sup>52</sup>

In his letter, Ben-Gurion reiterated the view that Israel represented only its citizens and did not presume to represent Jews who were citizens of other countries, or to intervene in the internal affairs of those countries. The status of the Zionist Organization, he asserted, would apply solely to activities within Israel and would have no connection with any activity beyond the borders of Israel. He concluded with the hope that cooperation between the State of Israel and interested Jewish organizations would continue.<sup>53</sup>

He saw this clarification as an opportunity to publish his commentary on Congress resolutions and it is possible that he also wanted to play down the feelings of triumph in Zionist circles with regard to the status issue. Apparently, he had decided to publish this statement in order to prevent a quarrel with the non-Zionists, since the "State of Israel Bonds" campaign was already underway in the United States.

Ben-Gurion's clarifications did not prevent the AJC Executive from calling a meeting to discuss the resolutions passed at the Zionist Congress. In a public statement at the conclusion of the discussion, the AJC declared that it regarded America as the country of the Jews living there and negated any claim that American Jews should see the State of Israel as the only country in which Jews could live with safety and respect. In other words, the AJC repeated its negation of the concept that Jews living in the United States were living in exile.<sup>54</sup> The AJC regarded the granting of special status in Israel to the Zionist Organization as a direct blow to its own status. As things were, the AJC could not request status from Israel, since it was not interested in creating identification between itself and Israel. The committee's activities within the American Jewish community and in aid of Israel were conducted as an American organization working locally in accordance with the basic concepts of the American nation.<sup>55</sup>

During this time, Ben-Gurion was constantly bothered by the ongoing fight between the "State of Israel Bonds" and the UJA. Goldmann suggested a time-sharing compromise. The UJA would raise funds from February to May and the Bonds would operate in the remaining months.<sup>56</sup> Ben-Gurion put this suggestion to the UJA and the Agency and they eventually agreed to adopt it.<sup>57</sup>

However, the fight continued and Israel's Ambassador to the United States, Abba Eban, was forced to intervene. Henry Montor, who headed the "State of Israel Bonds" campaign, saw this as interference in his affairs and sent a letter of resignation to Israel's Minister of Finance, Eliezer Kaplan. In an attempt to clear the obstacles, Ben-Gurion met Montor and asked him to withdraw his resignation. As a goodwill gesture he also invited him to attend a government session, during which Ben-Gurion thanked him for his work: "Not only do you work for Israel's economic independence, you also stimulate the close bonds between American Jewry and the young state."<sup>58</sup> This sentence also hinted at the rationale behind Ben-Gurion's support for the "State of Israel Bonds" campaign: over and above

financial considerations, he was looking for ways to strengthen the ties with the Diaspora Jewry and lower the barrier between it and the state. Since the Zionist Organization and the “Fund Drive” constituted such a barrier, Ben-Gurion preferred the Bonds connection, just as he preferred the connection with AJC in enlisting political and economic aid.

The inauguration and management of the “State of Israel” Bonds campaign in America placed Israel in an anomalous situation from a diplomatic point of view. As Ambassador, Eban was obviously Israel’s most senior representative in the United States, but Montor refused to be subject to him and decided to go over his head, directly to the government. Ambassador Eban was left with no power to influence and no authority in the matter. The problem was discussed at a meeting between Eban and Ben-Gurion, Kaplan, Sharett, and Meyerson, at which Eban demanded that the government direct the directors of the Bonds to accept his authority in all matters connected to the relationship between the State of Israel and the United States as well as the relationship between the state and American Jewry. Ben-Gurion acceded to this demand and decided that Montor must take orders from the Ambassador, although he was entitled to appeal to the government concerning orders he might consider unacceptable.<sup>59</sup>

In time, it emerged that the “State of Israel Bonds” campaign did not cause an appreciable drop in income from the Fund,<sup>60</sup> because the projects had different target populations. The Fund’s income was based mainly on small contributions whereas the bonds were sold to the wealthy Jewish sector. The bone of contention lay in the disputes among the state, the Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency and, particularly, in the individual ideological power struggles. The Fund people thought that they were being targeted by the Bond people, who were perceived as cooperating with a policy designed to weaken the ZOA. In the general context, this was the continuation of the battle between the Jewish Agency and the Zionist Organization over goals, definition of roles, legal status and spheres of activity within the state.

The harsh finale in the relationship between Ben-Gurion and the ZOA came late in 1951. Replying in the Knesset to a proposal to put immigration policy on the Knesset agenda, Ben-Gurion referred, among other things, to the American Zionists’ “non-immigration.” He remarked that immigration from the United States could not possibly be encouraged “by scolding American Jewry.” He went on to say that, as for the leaders of the ZOA, “they were bankrupted by the establishment of the state” and the fact remained that not one of them had immigrated to Israel since then. Had they done so, he observed, they would have proved that there was demonstrable significance in the fact that they were Zionists. Continuing his address, he said that what emerged was that there was no binding commitment in the connection between Zionist ideology and immigration to Israel. The major motivation behind Jewish immigration to Israel was, as he put it, “the whip” and in the face of this reality it was up to the Zionist Organization to look for ways to encourage immigration.<sup>61</sup>

Ben-Gurion’s censure raised a storm.<sup>62</sup> Goldmann asked him to retract, adding that such expressions would harm the income from the UJA, which was holding

its second conference at the time.<sup>63</sup> Eban reported to Ben-Gurion that “the summary of your address that appeared on the front page of the *New York Times* has caused a serious crisis in relations with the Jewish community, which has always been the main source of moral and material support for Israel. They have expressed their protest against the State of Israel in general and you in particular.”<sup>64</sup>

Ben-Gurion spoke of the bankruptcy of the leaders and not of the movement or the ideology. He meant that the movement had fallen into this situation because of a leadership that was incapable of introducing concrete content into the movement and of enlisting new forces to the cause. This examination of the relations between himself and movement’s leadership, and the views he had expressed, could be seen as the prelude to the debate on the Status Law.

## 4 Legislative issues

### 1 The Law of Return

The Declaration of Independence, on May 14, 1948, stated that “The State of Israel will be open for Jewish immigration and for the Ingathering of Exiles,”<sup>1</sup> thereby adding material content to the announcement that “We hereby declare the establishment of a Jewish State in Eretz–Israel to be known as the State of Israel,” that is, a Jewish state for the Jewish People, with the aim of returning the [exiled] People to its land. Accordingly, the People’s Council passed a resolution canceling the prohibition of Jewish immigration to Palestine under the British Mandate.<sup>2</sup> It seemed obvious that, in the absence of any legal restriction on [Jewish] immigration, all Jews had the right to settle in the State of Israel from the moment of its establishment. If so, what was the point in the Law of Return, passed in the summer of 1950?

The Citizenship Law was one of the first laws to be debated in the Provisional Government, but it met with many difficulties owing to the special situation prevailing in the early days of statehood and the need to find answers to questions regarding the character of the state.<sup>3</sup> Hence, the debate on the Citizenship Law was postponed and resumed only in April 1949, under the first elected government. Ben-Gurion then expressed the opinion that the law itself was superfluous. He said that the connection between the Jewish People and their state and the rights and obligations stemming therefrom did not require legal definition. On the contrary, granting citizenship by law went against the concept that the immigrant was returning to his land by historical right and that all Jews wishing to immigrate to Israel must be unconditionally enabled to do so, above all without having to relinquish their previous citizenship.

Apart from the principle involved, there was a practical basis to this proposal: the new state needed every Jew who wanted to immigrate and therefore had to avoid legislation that would reduce the number of immigrants—especially from the West—because most of them were reluctant to give up their old citizenship. As Ben-Gurion saw it, this consideration in itself was more important than any other legal problems likely to arise in the absence of the law.<sup>4</sup>

His opposition was also based on the fact that the population was not comprised only of Jews and that the state’s borders were neither finally

established nor internationally recognized. As he said, "When we issue a law and say that 'the State of Israel' means the whole area under Israeli law, we can evade the question of boundaries, but if we issue a Citizenship Law, we will again be stirring up these matters."

Most of the ministers did not accept his stand. For example, according to Justice Minister Pinchas Rosen, "The Citizenship Law is actually most sensitive to what is acceptable worldwide and is, in fact, part of international law." Government legal advisor Yaacov Shimshon Shapira backed this view, saying that "There can't be people in Israel who are joined at the navel to other countries."<sup>5</sup> Because of this disagreement, the Citizenship Law debate was postponed.

Six months passed before the Minister of Justice raised the subject again. The primary issue that now occupied the ministers was whether the Law should be Jewish, Zionist, or general in character. That is, whether it would grant immediate automatic citizenship [only] to Jewish immigrants or one that would not discriminate between Jewish and non-Jewish immigrants. Rosen claimed that there should not be any such discrimination. Although he agreed that the law should not make this discrimination, Ben-Gurion said that owing to the special character of the state, "the matter of immigration goes beyond state legislation; this state was established in order to absorb the immigration of the Jewish People." In other words, the very fact that Israel desired and hoped for Jewish immigration created the difference between Jew and non-Jew. A Jew immigrating to Israel did so by virtue of being Jewish and therefore did not need to be granted citizenship by law, whereas application for citizenship by a non-Jew would be judged according to law.<sup>6</sup>

Yehuda Leib Fishman (Maimon), the Minister of Religious Affairs, supported Ben-Gurion's position on the basis of accepted Jewish sources. Contrary to this view, Minister of Police, Bekhor Shitreet, was opposed to creating a racially discriminatory situation for democratic reasons and out of consideration for Jews living outside of Israel. "If we introduce a moment of religious, racial, or linguistic discrimination in a basic law," he said, "we will cause harm to Jews all over the world." As a compromise, Ben-Gurion proposed including a clause in the "Immigration Law," stating that Jewish immigrants would be granted Israeli citizenship even if they did not waive their previous citizenship and that, in any case, the 'Citizenship Law' would apply only to those who were not Jews. Since an agreement could not be reached, a ministerial committee was formed to crystallize suggestions for resolving the disagreement.<sup>7</sup>

This committee was also unsuccessful in bridging the gap between the Prime Minister and the Minister of Justice. Therefore, Ben-Gurion suggested passing two laws: "A special law to be known as the 'Law of Return,' which would establish the legal right of every Jew to immigrate to Israel," and a Citizenship Law, which would establish criteria for granting Israeli citizenship. Jews would be entitled to immigrate under the Law of Return, meaning the right to return to their homeland, so that those returning would not need to request citizenship, since it was being returned to them.<sup>8</sup>



This proposal was supported by the majority of ministers.<sup>9</sup> Two ministers from the religious parties—Mizrachi leader Yehudah Leib Fishman and Aggudat YIsrael leader Yitzchak Meir Levin—wondered what was meant by granting the right to “a Jew.” Ben-Gurion replied that there was no need to define “who is a Jew,” since what was important was not the definition, but the desire to be part of the Jewish People. As mentioned above, in his view the law was meant to facilitate immigration for as many Jews as possible, therefore he did not agree that their previous citizenship should be cancelled, preventing them from holding dual citizenship, nor that the issue of “who is a Jew” should be examined.

The ministers agreed that every Jew was entitled to immigrate, but allowed the state to withhold this right in cases of danger to public safety or health, or disturbance of the peace.<sup>10</sup> Alongside this, the government did not pass any resolution on the “who is a Jew” issue. The version of the proposed law placed before the Knesset read, “Every Jew is entitled to immigrate to Israel.”<sup>11</sup>

If Ben-Gurion was in the minority at the start of the debate on the Citizenship Law with regard to granting immediate, automatic citizenship to every Jew who immigrated to Israel, in the course of a year of debate he succeeded in convincing his colleagues to change their minds and give legal expression to the national–historical phenomenon of the return of the Jews to their Land, the supremacy of Jewish history and the Jewish experience over formal definitions of equality. He now had to win the Knesset’s approval.

In presenting the Law of Return and the Citizenship Law before the Knesset, Ben-Gurion said:

The Law of Return and the Citizenship Law now placed before you have an affinity and a mutual ideological source stemming from the historical uniqueness of the State of Israel, a past and future uniqueness, both inward and outward. These two laws establish the State of Israel’s singular character and aim as a state bearing the vision of the redemption of Israel.

This declaration expressed Ben-Gurion’s basic attitude to Diaspora Jewry and to the relationship between it and Israel: Israel is a Jewish state not only because of the fact that most of its inhabitants are Jews, but because of the fact that it was established for the sake of all Jews who wish to regard it as their state, that is, who want to immigrate and settle in it. There is an affinity between Israel and Diaspora Jewry, therefore the state is open to Jewish immigration and the ingathering of the exiles.

Should the aim be the ingathering of exiles, or the gathering of all the dispersed communities, that is, the end of the Diaspora? Ben-Gurion’s answer was that it was impossible to anticipate how the process would develop, but meanwhile, Jews immigrated because they were in distress, but also because they were enchanted by Israel. Thus, “The Law of Return is one of the foundation laws of Israel. It constitutes the central goal of our state—the ingathering of the exiles.” The Law of Return translates the historical affinity into a legal reality and the

Citizenship Law gives it solid content. The Law of Return defines the right of Jews to immigrate and the Citizenship Law defines their right to be citizens of Israel.

Almost all the members of the Knesset supported the actual idea of the Law of Return and regarded it as one of the major laws of the state. The factions also agreed not to prolong the debate on the proposed law and much effort was invested in bringing it to the second and third reading on July 5, 1950, the 46th anniversary of Herzl's death. Not one of the speakers during the first reading demanded a definition of "who is a Jew" in relation to the Law of Return. Some were sure that the definition was based on Halacha [ancient Jewish tradition] while others chose not to open the discussion for fear of causing dissent and frustrating the chance of keeping the debate as short as possible. The main criticism dealt with the authority given to the Minister of Immigration allowing him to prevent a Jew from immigrating in terms of one of the clauses.<sup>12</sup>

The "who is a Jew" issue is mentioned in the Constitution, Law, and Justice Committee debate on the proposed law after it passed the first reading, but the Committee accepted Ben-Gurion's stand that it was better at that stage to avoid dealing with this complicated and difficult question. In the wake of the success regarding the Minister of Immigration's power of restriction under the Law, the committee decided to establish a would-be immigrant's right to appeal in the Supreme Court against such a restriction. Mapam MK Bar-Yehuda demanded that the "Law of Return" include the stipulation that it could not be changed from the moment it was passed.<sup>13</sup>

In the second and third readings in the Knesset, Ben-Gurion replied to the request to prevent in advance alterations to or cancellation of the Law of Return, saying that no "principle involving national unity should be bound to a disputed principle—and bears no relation to immigration." At this stage, he was against discussing the essence of the authority to change laws and the required majority for doing so, on the grounds that it had not yet been decided whether Israel would have a Constitution. To those who feared the possibility of revoking the right to immigrate, Ben-Gurion pointed out that "nothing is better for the Israeli People than Zionism, but foolish Zionism is not good for the Israeli People."

Regarding this, he said that at the heart of the decision to immigrate lay the hope of fulfilling the wish to participate in the resurrection and independence of the "People of Israel." Therefore, the immigration of a Jew who was a threat to public safety and had to be incarcerated, could not be allowed. Although it was a natural right, from a practical point of view the aim was to direct this right along positive channels and not to use it in a negative way. According to Ben-Gurion's version: "Every Jew who leaves the Exile and comes to Israel to create a homeland, a culture and the Hebrew revival—and not to sit in jail as a menace to society—must be allowed to immigrate."<sup>14</sup>

The legislation of the Law of Return contained something of the fulfillment of the promise woven into the declaration of independence—the promise that the state would be open to Jewish immigration. When it was passed, the way was paved for discussion of the Citizenship Law.

## **2 The Zionist Organization—Jewish agency status law**

In 1922, the League of Nations granted Britain the Mandate over Palestine. Article 4 of the Mandate read:

An appropriate Jewish agency shall be recognized as a public body for the purpose of advising and co-operating with the Administration of Palestine in such economic, social and other matters as may affect the establishment of the Jewish national home and the interests of the Jewish population in Palestine, and subject always to the control of the Administration, to assist and take part in the development of the country.

It further stated that, in the absence of such a Jewish agency “the Zionist organization shall be recognized as such an agency.” The Jewish agency is also mentioned in Article 11, referring to additional aspects of cooperation with the Mandatory Administration: “the Administration may arrange with the Jewish agency mentioned in Article 4 to construct or operate upon fair and equitable terms, any public works, services and utilities and to develop any of the natural resources of the country.”<sup>15</sup>

In keeping with a resolution passed at the 17th Zionist Congress in 1929, the Jewish Agency was founded as the partnership between the Zionist Organization, on the one hand, and non-Zionist public figures and community institutions, on the other. The British Administration recognized the new body on August 6, 1930. The role of the Jewish Agency was determined as handling issues of policy and security in the Jewish Settlement in Palestine, as well as a range of tasks in the spheres of immigration and settlement, education and culture, the religious requirements, research and development, and investment promotion in trade and industry, among others.<sup>16</sup>

With the establishment of the state, the Mandate came to an end and so did the legal status that the Jewish Agency had derived from it. On the surface, it appeared that the legal basis for its continued existence was invalidated along with the functions that were the reason for its existence. However, it continued to exist in practice.<sup>17</sup> The Agency leadership was not particularly perturbed by the legal hiatus that had been created.<sup>18</sup> However, they demanded legislation to ensure the status of the Agency and of the Zionist Organization in Israel and in the Diaspora, “as representatives of the Jewish People in all matters connected with the organized participation of Diaspora Jewry in the development and construction of the country and immigrant absorption.”<sup>19</sup> They thought that such a definition would lend prestige to the Zionist Organization, whose informal status in the Jewish world had been deteriorating since the establishment of the state.<sup>20</sup>

### ***a The first reading***

The discussion about legal status began in the early days of statehood, but the actual debate took place in 1952. The Zionist Organization wanted to use the

debate to acquire far-reaching authority and the greatest possible status. The AJC, however, was against conferring special status on the Zionist Organization apart from a clearly defined field of activity inside Israel. With regard to the members of government, as Charles Liebman remarks in his research, most of them were ex-leaders of the Zionist Organization and their party connections, ideology and institutional loyalty could lead them to a stand that was very close, if not identical, to that of the Zionist Organization. He concludes that “if, in the end, the government came out against the Zionist Organization it did so only because of Ben-Gurion. He had framed a new ideology and outlook concerning the relationship between the state and the Zionist Organization and had succeeded in imposing his ideas on the government as well as the Knesset.”<sup>21</sup> Indeed, it looked like a power struggle, but in reality it was absolutely different.

In light of the rumors that Ben-Gurion had agreed to accept the demand to recognize the Zionist Organization as “the authorized representative of the Jewish People,” Jacob Blaustein met with Israeli Ambassador to the United States, Abba Eban, who then reported to Ben-Gurion that Blaustein was against the said recognition, because it did not reflect the situation and “the Agency did not represent those who did not belong to it.” Furthermore, the Knesset would be exceeding its authority since it “did not have the right to impose this status on organizations beyond Israel’s borders.”<sup>22</sup> Beyond reasons of principle, Blaustein clearly feared damage to the status of the AJC among American Jewry as well as to relations between the committee and the state. He quickly decided to approach Ben-Gurion directly. In his letter, he drew Ben-Gurion’s attention to the fact that the wording of the law, if it remained unchanged, would arouse the opposition of many non-Zionists at a time when the state needed them.<sup>23</sup>

Julian Freeman, President of the Council of Jewish Federation and Welfare Funds, also approached Ben-Gurion and requested him to clarify the issue of granting special status to the Zionist Organization. Ben-Gurion answered that “In the State of Israel, the Jewish Agency is responsible in certain areas of immigrant absorption and attending to immigrants’ needs, settlement and employment.” He added that the Knesset was “not interested in using its authority to anchor activities outside Israel in the law.”<sup>24</sup> An approach in similar vein came to him from Henry Montor.<sup>25</sup>

At a meeting between Eban and Maurice Boukstein, the Jewish Agency’s lawyer, it was decided that, instead of the version that read “The State of Israel recognizes the Zionist Organization as the representative of the Jewish People in Israel” the law should read, “The State of Israel recognizes the Zionist Organization as the official agency working in Israel in the name of the Jewish People to activate Jews everywhere”; that is, the “representative of the Jewish People” was replaced by an “official agency,” authorized to operate within the borders of the state, but not recognized as a representative body of Diaspora Jewry.<sup>26</sup>

Abba Eban, who played an important role in drafting the wording of the law, was against using the expression, “representatives of the Jewish People” for two reasons. In the first place, he said, this definition did not reflect the reality.

The moment the State of Israel was established, the Zionist Organization lost impetus. The Jewish People now regarded the state, its institutions and representatives as the organized manifestation of the national revival, whereas the Zionist Organization had “run dry.” It was more suitably defined as the official agency working for certain alignments in Israel, thus ensuring that it would not intervene in the work of the Jewish Agency and its diplomatic tasks.<sup>27</sup> In this context, Eban suggested a further change to Ben-Gurion: granting recognition to the Jewish Agency rather than the Zionist Organization. He explained that the Jewish Agency was capable of expanding to include the People as a whole, while the Zionist Organization would always be confined to one ideological sphere.<sup>28</sup> Eban also tried to enlist Sharett in the effort to persuade Ben-Gurion to accept his amendments to the wording of the law. “Could you clamp down on those words that don’t properly reflect the situation?” he wrote to Sharett.<sup>29</sup>

Ben-Gurion accepted Eban’s suggestion to recognize “the Zionist Organization as the authorized representative operating in Israel,” that is, within the borders of the state, thus avoiding the need to assert that “the Jewish Agency represents the Jewish People or Jewry.” He also agreed with Eban that the State of Israel was not obliged to cooperate only with the Zionist Organization, but would “continue to cooperate directly with any overseas Jewish body who so wished.” Ben-Gurion wanted to know if he should add that the reservation “followed consultation and verification with the Zionist executive”<sup>30</sup> and Eban replied that if the proposal could be sanctioned by the government “the crisis would end peacefully” and possible harm would be prevented.<sup>31</sup>

During the government debate on the wording of the law, Ben-Gurion said that by international law, Israel was not permitted to pass legislation applying to citizens or residents of other countries and, therefore, was not empowered to decide who would represent Diaspora Jewry. He repeated his opposition to placing a wall (the Zionist Organization) between the state and the Jewish People in the Diaspora and suggested adopting the version recognizing the Zionist Organization as “the official agency operating in Israel in the name of the Jewish People,” based on Eban’s recommendation. In conclusion, he explained that there were two Zionist conceptions: self-fulfilling Zionism and “congress Zionism.” Since the first had triumphed, the supporters of the second were looking for “quack medicines to strengthen Zionism.” Nevertheless, he pointed out, the law had to be passed with minimal damage to the state and observance of maximum agreement with the Zionist Organization’s delegates. As mentioned above, Ben-Gurion did not relinquish his hope that the Zionist Organization would help Israel to realize the vision of the “ingathering of exiles,” which was the core of his ideology and he expressed his awareness of the Organization’s willingness and ability to do so. He tried to maintain a balanced attitude in order not to offend non-Zionist circles, but he knew that they could not take the place of the Zionist Organization and that only an organization with a Zionist ideology could be the state’s partner in realizing this vision.

When Ben-Gurion concluded, Minister of Labor, Golda Meyerson, proposed passing the law giving the Zionist Organization special status in specific fields of

operation within the borders of the state: immigrant absorption, settlement and whatever the government decided to place in its hands. Minister of Religious Affairs Moshe Shapira stated that a balance had to be found between the Zionist Organization's demands and a situation in which "the law would not shut the door" to others. Dov Yosef, Minister of Development, was opposed to the Zionist Organization's demands because they "showed impotence and inability and complicated the whole matter; they had become the main point." Finance Minister Levi Eshkol, however, considered the attempt to alter the wording as "non-acknowledgment. I won't say ingratitude, but there is such a thing as the non-acknowledgment of a party, an organization, a body that stood at the head of the People's movement that led to the State of Israel." One way or another, the majority accepted the changes suggested by Ben-Gurion and he did not have to make much of an effort to win their support.<sup>32</sup>

Zalman Shazar, who was head of the Jewish Agency's Department of Information at the time, met Ben-Gurion in an attempt to find a compromise. Ben-Gurion suggested an introduction to the text, acknowledging the Zionist Organization and including a declaration of intention to re-establish an expanded Jewish Agency, thus enabling the Israeli government to connect with other organizations as long as the Zionist Organization remained unwilling to cooperate with those organizations. On presenting the proposal to the Jewish Agency Executive, Shazar encountered opposition from Emmanuel Neumann, who complained that "recognition of the status of the Zionist movement is now part of the introduction and not of the law itself."<sup>33</sup> He was supported by other members of the Executive and, in the end, Ben-Gurion's suggestion was rejected.

Foreign Minister Moshe Sharett continued his attempts to draw Ben-Gurion's attention to expected commentary on the recognition of the Zionist Organization as an organization working "in the name of the Jewish People."<sup>34</sup> Like Ben-Gurion, he suggested that an introduction praising the historical importance of the Organization's work would be satisfactory. He had two reservations: the first, similar to Blaustein's, was that if the state explicitly recognized the Zionist Organization's authority to represent the People as a whole, those Jewish organizations beyond the frame of the Jewish Agency would protest against the state as well as against the Agency itself; the second, conferring recognized status on the Zionist Organization overseas, would create a situation in which the state's diplomatic activity was carried out via the Zionist Organization.<sup>35</sup>

Sharett met Goldmann in an attempt to persuade him to accept his proposal and received the impression that Goldmann was willing to do so and would not regard the erasure of the words "in the name of the Jewish People" as ruining the law, as long as it appeared only in the introduction.<sup>36</sup> Goldmann later wrote about Sharett's stand: "Sharett's approach to the Zionist Organization and the question of the relationship between Israel and the Diaspora was in many ways similar to mine. Of course, as long as he was a government minister, he could not publicly support these ideas, certainly not in a government headed by Ben-Gurion."<sup>37</sup> At the time, however, things were different. Goldmann's wrote the above in the early "seventies, from a historical perspective, after the relationship between Sharett

and Ben-Gurion had run aground. In 1952, Ben-Gurion had not pressured Sharett to support him in the matter of the status law and Sharett was against accepting Goldmann's demands. He understood the problems involved in recognizing the Zionist Organization and hoped to avoid a rift with the non-Zionist organizations, whose cooperation was important to the state."

On Eban's advice, Ben-Gurion decided to recognize "the Zionist Organization as the authorized agency operating in Israel," without stating that "the Jewish Agency represents the Jewish people or Jewry." The wording did state that Israel did not undertake to cooperate only with the Zionist Organization, but "would continue to cooperate directly with any Jewish body abroad that wanted such cooperation,"<sup>38</sup> however, the state would do this "in consultation and coordination with the Zionist Executive."<sup>39</sup>

After lengthy discussion focussed on the wording of the first clause, the law was brought before the government for final approval prior to being presented to the Knesset. Ben-Gurion did not attend this session and Moshe Sharett, who was substituting for him, explained to the ministers: "The positive consideration was to give due acknowledgement to the World Zionist Organization in terms of its historic past, particularly regarding its practical work in the country. The above consideration was qualified by the decision not to grant the Zionist Organization status, authority or rights that were liable to offend other Jewish bodies, or even damage their relations with the state." This version of the law therefore swung between the two extremes. It was decided by a majority of eight to two to set up a ministerial committee including the Prime Minister, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of the Interior to crystallize a final version of the proposed law.<sup>40</sup>

### ***b The second reading***

In May 1952, Ben-Gurion presented the ministerial committee's redrafted version of the proposed law to the Knesset. He began by re-stating his view that Israel was a sovereign body representing its citizens, responsible to its citizens and not required to account for itself to any other body. He went on to say: "Jews living in other countries are citizens of those countries . . . and the State of Israel is not authorized to speak in their name or to direct their activities" a statement that was fully in accordance with the agreement between himself and Blaustein in the "Exchange of Views." Referring to the Zionist Organization's demand for recognition as the representative of the Jewish People, Ben-Gurion said: "A Zionist Organization that would place itself as a screen between the state and the Jewish People would be denying its source and soul." That is, an agreement to give it the role of go-between would damage the cooperation between the Nation and the state. The State of Israel and not the Zionist Organization, Ben-Gurion emphasized, was the highest institution uniting the Jewish People around itself and was consequently the highest authority in matters of Jewish commitment and loyalty. His proposal would enable the Zionist Organization to operate within the borders of Israel for "the development of the country and its inhabitants, for the

absorption of immigrants from the Diaspora.” It would operate in given spheres, in cooperation and coordination with the state. The stipulated cooperation and coordination in itself indicated that the state was the prime authority.

The opposition parties opposed this version of the proposal. They stated that it weakened the Zionist Organization, went against the Zionist Congress resolution, gave the state advantages, enabled the Zionist Organization to operate only within the spheres where the state needed financial help and was intended to fix the existing relationship between the two bodies. They asserted that its aim was to damage and ultimately erode the Zionist Organization’s authority. In addition to these objections in principle, this was a parliamentary attempt to criticize the functioning of the government and block proposed legislation. In his response, Ben-Gurion vetoed any possibility of recognizing the Zionist Organization as the representative of Diaspora Jewry and as the mediator between it and the State of Israel.<sup>41</sup>

Two clauses in the proposed law deserve special examination. The first clause—which declares that “The State of Israel, which represents only its inhabitants, regards itself as the creation of the Jewish People as a whole and its gates are open to every Jew desiring to immigrate”—embodies the idea that the state speaks only in the name of its citizens and might be in response to the AJC’s request. The fourth clause—“The State of Israel recognizes the World Zionist Organization as an authorized agency which will continue to operate in the State of Israel”—was the first clause in the first proposal of the law. This changed place indicates willingness to accede to the Zionist Organization’s requests, but as “an agency” and not as “the representative of the Jewish People,” as was first requested.

### *c The third reading*

Although the version of the law proposed to the Knesset did not recognize the Jewish Agency as “the representative of the Jewish People,” Blaustein continued to follow the process of legislation with concern. At a meeting with Chaim Greenberg, Head of the Agency’s Department of Education, he claimed that Ben-Gurion’s address to the Knesset amounted to breaking the gentleman’s agreement (as he called the “Exchange of Views”). As a result, his AJC colleagues were urging him “not to aid Israel in the political sphere.” He again described the harm likely to be caused if the status law was passed: “It will annoy and alienate various people and bodies in America and will again serve to strengthen the position of the ‘bastards’ [Lessing Rosenwald] in certain strata of American Jewry.”<sup>42</sup> Blaustein protested against Ben-Gurion’s Knesset address to Eban, too, primarily because he used the term “ingathering of exiles.” Eban replied that the use of this term was intended to describe Jewish communities living under insecure and discriminatory conditions and not those, like the Jewish communities in the United States, who lived in freedom.<sup>43</sup>

The status law debate in the Knesset clouded the May 1952 Zionist General Council session.<sup>44</sup> For the first time, regrets were expressed concerning the



Separation Agreement.<sup>45</sup> Shazar called it a great “transgression,” Locker referred to the need to gradually terminate the separation and even Goldmann said that the decision to separate had been hasty and ill-considered, adding that the status law should be seen as the first step toward termination. In his opinion, the law was an incentive to consolidate Zionism for the enhancement of both the state and the Zionist Organization. Neumann, one of the many who thought otherwise, asserted that the government should be asked to correct the wording of the law according to the Zionist Congress resolution.<sup>46</sup>

However, at this stage it was still not possible to halt the legislative process in the Knesset. When the law was passed at the first reading, the Constitution, Law, and Justice Committee discussed the wording of the various clauses and suggested a number of corrections. This incidentally resulted in a political pact between Mapam and Herut, who were not members of the government coalition, proving that the basis and background of the discussion were political and not ideological.<sup>47</sup> The discussions ultimately concluded with the introduction of slight changes to various clauses. Thus, in the first clause, for example, it was decided to add the words “according to its laws,” after “its gates open to every Jew desiring to immigrate.”<sup>48</sup> The only real change was introduced in clause 12, under pressure from Mapai’s Berl Locker, establishing that the government was committed to waive taxation and other obligatory payments in the case of the Zionist Organization and its institutions.<sup>49</sup>

At the second reading of the law in the Knesset, in August 1952, MK Bar-Yehuda, speaking for the Opposition, proposed returning to the version which said “representative of the Jewish People.” Bar-Yehuda’s version won. Using a parliamentary tactic, the government cancelled the reading of the proposed law.<sup>50</sup>

In view of the government’s defeat, Blaustein sent an urgent cable to Ben-Gurion:

I was shocked by the press reports of events in the Knesset...had this Knesset procedure been successful, it would have caused a serious crisis in the lives of American Jewry and would have harmed political and economic aid to Israel. I am satisfied that your initiative prevented this from happening.<sup>51</sup>

#### ***d From the end to the beginning***

On November 4, 1952, the government again brought the proposed law before the Knesset. In his address, Ben-Gurion repeated his opposition to recognizing the Zionist Organization as the representative of the Jewish People, reasoning that it was the Jewish People that created the Zionist Organization and not the other way around. Once more, he used the concept of the “Nation” in order to reduce the Zionist Organization’s power.

The Opposition fought a rearguard battle, reiterating the need to guard the Zionist Organization’s prestige, restore its status and try to prevent its “descent into the abyss.” They said it should be regarded as a buttress for the state and had to be granted preference over the non-Zionists.<sup>52</sup> Ben-Gurion, supported by his

own party, reasserted that it was the State of Israel that, by its own free will, conferred status on the Zionist Organization. He emphasized that the very fact that the Zionist Organization had approached the state with the request for status clearly proved which of the two bodies was the authority.<sup>53</sup>

In the following three weeks, until the law was ratified, a few last attempts were made to influence the wording. An example was the sentence “The State of Israel represents only its citizens” (which was inserted in the Legislative Committee debate and not by Ben-Gurion).<sup>54</sup> The AJC regarded this as a significant change and Blaustein asked Eban to inform Ben-Gurion of his objection to the change.<sup>55</sup> Eban, after clarifying with Ben-Gurion, replied to Blaustein: “The fact that the State of Israel represents its citizens is so obvious that there is no need to mention it in the law.”<sup>56</sup> Blaustein was not satisfied and decided to approach Ben-Gurion directly.<sup>57</sup> “The State of Israel is like any other state,” Ben-Gurion replied, “therefore there is no need to define who it represents.”<sup>58</sup>

The World Zionist Organization and Jewish Agency status law was finally passed in the Knesset on November 24, 1952. The operative clause stated: “Details of the status and mode of cooperation of the World Zionist Organization—represented by the Zionist Executive . . . with the government, will be established in Israel in a pact between the government and the Zionist Executive.”<sup>59</sup>

A closer reading of the law raises the question of whether it is legislative or declarative. Of the twelve clauses, only three have actual legal validity, while the remaining nine are mainly declarative. The law as a whole is therefore outstanding by virtue of the minimal number of pure, legally binding orders.<sup>60</sup>

Another question that arises is the extent to which Blaustein’s opposition influenced Ben-Gurion’s stand with regard to this law. Liebman’s research shows that, indeed, it did have an influence.<sup>61</sup> Nevertheless, it is difficult to establish to what degree. Ben-Gurion’s stand on the matter was clearly consistent and principled and to present the AJC as the decisive factor is not in keeping with the reality.

Furthermore, Ben-Gurion was not the only Israeli opposed to the Zionist Organization’s demands. This time, uncharacteristically, he was supported by most of the ministers as well as the Mapai faction in the Knesset, and worked in close cooperation with Abba Eban. In spite of the fact that many ministers had been senior members of Zionist Organization and Jewish Agency institutions in the past, as mentioned above, they were of one mind that it was impossible to accept the demands of the Zionist Organization. They were now representatives of the state and at least some of them thought that the state had to assume the goals and functions previously under the control of the Zionist Organization.

Together with Abba Eban’s important part in the legislative process, Moshe Sharett’s work on the frontline facing the Zionist Organization must be mentioned. He had several meetings with Goldmann and eventually managed to persuade him to agree to the version proposed by the government. Both Sharett and Eban were anxious about the effect possible interpretations of the law would have on relations with Diaspora Jewry, particularly the AJC. They kept Ben-Gurion up to date on any expression of opposition and relayed messages to

him concerning expected reactions. On the other hand, they tried to rebut such opposition and reach consensus on the passing of the law in its final version.

During 1952, there was nothing new in the ideological viewpoint presented by Ben-Gurion. He saw no need for the continued existence of the Zionist organization and was against creating a screen between the People and the state. However, he was aware of the differences between Zionist and non-Zionist organizations. On the ideological plane, only the first kind of organization could put shoulder to wheel in fulfilling the state's goal—the ingathering of the exiles. Accordingly, he finally agreed to pass the law with the inclusion of doctrinal changes in its content.

The argument around the status law reflected the confusion that prevailed in Zionist Organization circles in general, and in the Zionist Organization of America in particular, following the establishment of the state. For four years, American Zionism wavered between one extreme position and another; demanding absolute separation between the Zionist Organization and Israel, on the one hand and, on the other, demanding that the state grant them recognized status. Separation did not bring the hoped for benefit to the Zionist Organization nor to its enterprises. The Zionist Organization had taken upon itself a load it could not carry—the burden of immigrant absorption and settlement exceeded its financial resources. Thus, there was no practical possibility of a clearly defined boundary between its sphere of responsibility and that of the state.

The legislative context of the law had been completed, but this was not enough to create a lull in the argument between Ben-Gurion and the Zionist Organization. At a later stage, when the covenant between the state and the Zionist Organization began to be consolidated, Ben-Gurion again revealed his opposition to details in the wording as composed by Maurice Boukstein, the Agency Executive's lawyer. This version, Ben-Gurion claimed, actually established two governments in Israel and granted the Agency Executive rights without obligations.<sup>62</sup> In the end, the covenant was signed only in 1954, after Ben-Gurion resigned as Prime Minister and was succeeded by Moshe Sharett.<sup>63</sup>

## **Part II**

# **After resigning from the premiership, 1953–1955**



# 5 A Zionist preacher

## 1 Resignation

David Ben-Gurion resigned from the premiership in 1953 and joined Kibbutz Sede-Boker in the Negev. In doing so, he ended 18 years at the center of the political scene in Mandatory Palestine and the State of Israel. In 1935, he was elected to the most important position in the Yishuv in the Mandatory period, Chairman of the Executive of the Jewish Agency (and the Zionist Executive). His career peaked with the declaration of the establishment of a Jewish State in Mandatory Palestine, when he became the new state's first Prime Minister and Minister of Defense. In his first five years as Prime Minister (1948–1953) vital decisions were made in the spheres of defense, immigrant absorption, the economy, education, and foreign policy. This was the time when the foundations were laid and the character of the young state was determined for many years to come. The period was beset by frequent crises and difficulties rising from the process of forming stable coalitions and the existence of two general election systems.

Ben-Gurion's resignation was preceded by a three-month leave, which he devoted entirely to an investigation of the security situation and the army's state of preparedness, including meetings with upper echelons of the defense establishment and visits to IDF camps. At the end of October 1953, he presented the government with a detailed report on the security situation and a multi-phased plan of operation and goals for the next three years.<sup>1</sup> It was not surprising that Ben-Gurion placed the sole emphasis on defense matters. Politically, he regarded this subject as top priority since the Arab states were still eager for the opportunity to open another military offensive against Israel. As it happened, the main conclusion of the investigation was that Israel's security situation was good and there was no danger of a renewed war in the near future. It is possible that this conclusion enabled him to take a break from political life and hand the reins of government to Moshe Sharett, who disagreed with Ben-Gurion's defense policy.<sup>2</sup>

On November 2, 1953, when his leave ended, Ben-Gurion informed the President of his decision to retire from public life for a year or two, giving his reasons as mental strain and fatigue accumulated over the past twenty years, particularly in the period following the establishment of the state. In his letter to President Yitzhak Ben-Zvi he repeatedly mentioned that he was 62 years of age

when he undertook the premiership, as if trying to justify his decision not only to the President, but also to himself, adding:

For six years I have been working under extreme stress and tremendous physical effort. . . . You know that nothing in my world is more dear to me than the State of Israel, and there is no greater privilege than to serve it faithfully. . . . but for about a year now, I have felt that I no longer have the ability to cope with the mental stress of my work in the government—and without (this ability) I cannot and do not have the right to work.<sup>3</sup>

At the government meeting early in December, Ben-Gurion announced his final intention to resign. The ministers tried to convince him to change his mind and suggested that he take an indefinite leave of absence, but he rejected this on legal grounds: by law, a Prime minister may not take leave and appoint someone else in his place. When the discussion concluded, he announced: “I am leaving Jerusalem and the Prime Minister’s Residence. I am arranging my affairs in Tel-Aviv and hope to have found another place by next week.”<sup>4</sup>

His decision to resign caused a public stir and provoked a variety of reactions in the press. Discussion centered mainly on the question of why Ben-Gurion had decided to resign and why he had chosen Kibbutz Sede-Boker, in the remote, arid south of the country.<sup>5</sup> Ben-Gurion has not left any direct answer to this question in his writings. The entry in his diary states: “This morning I left Tel-Aviv and went to settle in Sede-Boker.”<sup>6</sup>

In an interview he gave to Herzl Rosenblum, editor of the daily *Yedioth Ahronot*, Ben-Gurion said:

I don’t understand all this fuss. What’s the matter?! I felt I had to stop for a while and so—I reviewed our security situation and found it to be in good shape; as for other, civic, government matters they will also be settled very soon—and I will leave.<sup>7</sup>

Two months after Ben-Gurion retired to Sede-Boker, the editor of *Maariv*, Azriel Carlebach, published an article in which he tried to find an answer to the above question. He concluded that Ben-Gurion took that step, because,

actually, the day he left Sejera, the vision ended. From then on he became a party worker, student, intellectual, writer, leader, and statesman—from then on he dealt with people and their intrigues and not with the land anymore. In his life, the day he left Sejera is like the day Adam was banished from the Garden of Eden. . . . and of his times, he was the one who had the understanding and yearning, who had the courage, and he got up and went. Went back to Sejera.<sup>8</sup>

Ben-Gurion’s personal secretary at the time, Yitzhak Navon, claims that when Ben-Gurion read this article, he confirmed that this was the reason for his decision to go to Sede-Boker.<sup>9</sup>

In his biography of Ben-Gurion, Michael Bar-Zohar also tries to answer the question. He states that,

1953 marks the end of the age of great decisions; there were no fateful decisions to be made in the foreseeable future. The diminished challenges and tests he was accustomed to facing lowered the level of enthusiasm he invested in his work, since he was not built for the managing of mundane tasks; he was the man of great tests.

In addition to this, Ben-Gurion became increasingly conscious of a sense of personal obligation to commit himself to pioneering activity before he could demand that others follow him and realize his vision.<sup>10</sup>

It stands to reason that Ben-Gurion consciously chose not to relate directly to his motives for resigning, in so irregular and unique a manner, from political life to go and live on a kibbutz in the Negev. Before he made the decision, he formulated the general idea in his mind; however, since its realization did not depend on himself alone, but also on those who would choose to follow in his footsteps, he refrained from making declarations. In retrospect, when he saw that he had not succeeded in mobilizing others to pioneer in the desert, he resolved not to relate directly to the subject.

Going to Sede-Boker was an attempt on his part to bring a change into the country's way of life, which he could not achieve in the formal, institutionalized framework of the political system and its complexities. He felt that coalition power struggles, which had produced one government crisis after another, would prevent him from implementing his ideas and he explained to his party that he could work to promote these ideas only outside the system.<sup>11</sup> The move to the Negev, remote from the center of the country would, he hoped, provide the example for many who would follow him and would justify his claims on others. In a broadcast to the nation on the eve of his resignation, he related to the supreme task facing Israeli society:

Our destiny will be carved on the internal plane . . . first and imperative on the internal plane are labor and settlement . . . the secret of pioneering is the claim a person makes on himself before he makes it on his fellow man . . . he does not preach his faith to others, he does not adopt a holier-than-thou attitude with serious claims on others, he does not look for blame in strangers, but carries out his beliefs in his everyday life, *he lives it*.<sup>12</sup>

From Sede-Boker, Ben-Gurion tried to rally the nation as a whole, and the youth in particular, to this mission.<sup>13</sup>

As an ordinary citizen living in Sede-Boker, in retirement from politics, Ben-Gurion was able to relate to events he could not permit himself to address when he was Prime Minister. Now, beside his work in the sheep pen, he had the time to re-examine his concepts. He wrote many letters and replies to the flow of letters he received and his articles were published almost weekly in *Davar*



(and, less frequently, in other newspapers as well). In these articles he tried to crystallize his Zionist philosophy, the affinity between the state and Diaspora Jewry (particularly American Jewry) and his attitude to the Zionist Organization after statehood, as described below.

This period also marks the beginning of a new phase in Ben-Gurion's dialogue with American Jewry and the Zionist Organization. The opening shot was heard on the eve of the Zionist General Council session in December 1953. Ben-Gurion had been invited to participate in this session, but did not accept the invitation. Instead of addressing the Council, he sent them a letter containing a very specific question:

Can there be a Zionist movement, after the establishment of the state, that does not include the individual's commitment to immigrate and if so—as some Zionist party workers overseas believe—what is the difference, if any, between Zionism without the commitment to immigrate and the affection for Israel shared by almost every Jew?

Continuing his letter, he presented two conclusions. The first,

Unless the ideological content and the obligatory, specific goal of this thing called Zionism is clear to the nation and to Zionists themselves, and unless the Zionist goal is personally incumbent on every member of the Zionist movement—there is no hope or possibility that Zionism will be an educational, guiding and fruitful force in the nation.

The second, “The Zionist Organization and its institutions are in danger—and the signs are already obvious—of becoming an apparatus for funneling money dedicated to building the state, donated by Jews all over the world.”<sup>14</sup>

## **2 An appeal**

### ***a Who is a Zionist? What is the essence of Zionism?***

During that period, Ben-Gurion constantly pointed out that the Jewish People existed before the Zionist Organization. The term “Zionism,” he remarked, was introduced by Nathan Birnbaum at the end of the nineteenth century, but it was nothing more than a new garment for an ancient idea rooted in the Jewish People throughout its history. The concept of national redemption crystallized in the minds and hearts of the People generation after generation, its content always clear. The philosophical innovations of thinkers like Herzl and Pinsker “consisted only of attempts to base the concept on the real needs of their generation of Jews and the search for practical ways to implement it.”<sup>15</sup>

Ben-Gurion went on to write that, during the period of Herzl's leadership the Zionist Organization consisted of members from two sectors of European Jewry who were different in “intellectual (spiritual) character, Jewish affinity and the

sources which fed their Zionism.” One of these branches, to which Herzl belonged, arose from among assimilated Jews in West European countries. They regarded themselves as an organic part of their countries of domicile and their decision to turn to Zionism stemmed from the incidence of antisemitism, that is, their Zionism took precedence over their Judaism. For them, the Zionist concept was by way of being “a deep spiritual and ideological revolution.” The second branch consisted of East European Zionists. They did not regard themselves as part of their countries of domicile and did not come to Judaism by way of Zionism. On the contrary—Zionism was the embodiment of their Jewish consciousness and emotions and immigration was something to be taken for granted. This sector produced the pioneers who laid the foundations of the renewed settlement in Eretz–Israel and “established the independent settlement with its economy and culture, its political system and military strength and, in fact, founded the State of Israel.”<sup>16</sup>

Further, Ben-Gurion explained that with the destruction of the Jews of Europe in the Second World War, including the Zionists among them, the power center of the movement in the Diaspora was transferred to America. There, a Zionism developed that was basically and essentially different from its European counterpart. American Zionists, unlike European Zionists, are “devotees of Zionism.” Their Zionism is “altruistic,” as opposed to the “egoistic” Zionism of East European Jewry. The motivating force of American Zionism was not a sense of living in exile and the desire or chance to leave this exile, but a feeling of solidarity with European Jews and the wish to help them to fulfill their dream in Eretz–Israel.

Neither Zionists nor non-Zionists in the United States saw a future for American Jewry in the Zionist enterprise in Eretz–Israel and they did not regard themselves as individual subjects of the enterprise. Both groups loved Eretz–Israel as Jews, but nobody intended to settle there personally. They saw themselves as involved in American life and the American culture, loyal citizens of their country, they saw the future of their children and their children’s children in America, “however, out of Jewish solidarity, they felt a commitment to help Jews—who, unlike them, had not attained a life of equality, prosperity, and liberty—to find a safe haven and also to establish a Jewish state in the Land of Israel.”<sup>17</sup>

The division between Zionists and non-Zionists fell away with the establishment of the State of Israel. The Zionists, exactly like the non-Zionists, wanted to remain rooted in their countries of domicile and the non-Zionists, like the Zionists, wanted the State of Israel to exist and prosper. The ideologues and party politicians in the Zionist Organization decreed that “the return to Zion is not a Zionist imperative and the Zionist Organization will no longer be misled by those who wish to impose this belief.”<sup>18</sup>

In view of the above, Ben-Gurion asked what was the ideological significance of the name Zionist, in the absence of its inherent personal commitment? What was the difference between “Zionism” without the individual’s obligation to immigrate and the devotion to the State of Israel that is common to Jews everywhere?<sup>19</sup>

Actually, the wave of immigration following the establishment of the state consisted mainly of “ordinary” Jews, whereas a very high percentage of prestate immigration consisted of “Zionists,” without any obligation to the Zionist Organization. “Both came because of two operative factors in Jewish history: distress and vision.” The force that established the state was immigration, “and the immigrants who will come will be its reinforcement and expansion—them alone.”

Israel withstood and won the battle against the Arab countries. It absorbed hundreds of thousands of immigrants from the four corners of the world and developed in the spheres of economy, culture, and defense. Despite all these achievements, not only did the “Zionist masses abroad fail to make a move—which is the way of the masses—but not a single Zionist leader in the Exile left his ease and possessions.” The conclusion is clear and unequivocal: “Without commitment to immigration, and there is no other commitment than personal, the name Zionist is emptied of creative, redemptive revolutionary content and is not a nice nickname for a friend of Israel.” There is no difference at all between a

Zionist close to his Exile residence and an “ordinary” Jew who also loves the State of Israel and wants it to prosper. Nor should we disregard the “ordinary” Jews. The name Jew preceded the name Zionist and it was not Zionist that gave birth to the Jewish People, but the opposite.<sup>20</sup>

All the rights acquired by the American Zionists in the past—and they are considerable—would be of no use to them if they continued to support the unsavory, empty concept of “a Zionist is a Zionist,” Ben-Gurion asserted. In the new reality, they had to delve into the primary sources that gave rise to Zionism. “The first source is—belief in the perpetuation of (the People of) Israel, that is, trepidation, anxiety and longing to preserve the People of Israel, to guard its unity and historical continuity and to participate in its redemption.” The personal, principled belief in the perpetuation of the People of Israel cannot exist without Hebrew education and without actualizing the pioneering concept.

In short, true Zionism, according to Ben-Gurion, is different from and superior to “ordinary” friendship for Israel.

Friendship towards the State of Israel is the fruit of instinctive Jewish solidarity, born of the sense of a common Jewish destiny, pride and trepidation. In addition to this, Zionism is guided by a historical concept and vision and is steeped in personal identification, present or future, with the renewed homeland.<sup>21</sup>

### ***b The State of Israel, the Zionist Organization and everything in between***

Ben-Gurion claimed that when the state was established a number of questions arose concerning the essence of the relationship between the state and the Zionist Organization, the character of the Organization and its functions in the new reality.

Was the state established, by an international organization of shekel-collectors going by the name of the Zionist Organization, or was it perhaps founded by pioneers who came to the country because of distress and to realize a vision? Does the Zionist Organization exist solely on the strength of its past and by right of its past, or is it perhaps motivated by renewed revolutionary aspirations that only skilled Zionists are capable of realizing? What is the obligatory ideological content and goal of a Zionist movement that does not oblige its members to immigrate?<sup>22</sup>

Herzel, the creator of the Zionist Organization, precisely and succinctly defined the Zionist concept as follows: "Zionism is the Jewish People on the way. That is, the Jewish People on the way to return to its country." Ben-Gurion declared that these words were twisted into an absurd phrase implying that the Zionist Organization was the state on the way. On the contrary, the State of Israel was established by immigrants in every generation and it will be the immigrants of the future who will build, enlarge, and strengthen it, whereas the Zionist Organization has not been and apparently cannot be an immigrants' organization. To this day, the Zionist Organization has never obliged its members to immigrate. Its aim was to rally Diaspora Jewry to the Zionist cause, to encourage operations in the spheres of education, politics, and economics, without which immigration would be doomed to failure, just as attempts to return to the country and build it had failed in the past.<sup>23</sup>

In Ben-Gurion's words, the Zionist Organization has every right to regard the revival of the State of Israel as clear proof of the correctness of its perceptions and the true reward for its efforts to "create the conditions for the establishment of the state and for providing moral, political, and economic aid to the Jewish Settlement and to the immigration from which the state grew."<sup>24</sup> However, the Zionist Organization would be making a fateful mistake and would be denying the truth of its ideology if it were to regard the State of Israel as an asset belonging solely to itself and not to the Jewish People as a whole.

The State of Israel is by way of being the dawn of redemption, but a state with a population of one and a half million can still not be seen as the redemption of Israel, since the decisive majority of the Jewish People is still scattered among the nations and the state is therefore just the instrument and means to redemption.

Ben-Gurion explains that "The Law of Return" states that the State of Israel is not only for its inhabitants, but for Jewry everywhere and the right to immigrate is not only at the state's initiative—as in every other country's immigration laws—but is based solely on the fact that the immigrant is a Jew and Israel is his or her destined country. The right of Jews to immigrate is not dependent upon the will of the citizens, but is given in advance and the state is there only to institute and ensure this right.<sup>25</sup>

The application of the process of immigration and absorption depends on the incentive of the Jewish People in Israel and the Diaspora; only by their concerted effort can it be made to happen. Without the constant participation of Diaspora Jewry in the mission to build and fortify the state, the state will not achieve a strong and secure future.<sup>26</sup> In spite of "the life and death affinity between the state and the People as a whole" Israel is a state like any other, sovereign within

its boundaries and limited to its boundaries. Jews living in other countries are citizens of those countries and are subject to their laws and policies, and the State of Israel has no authority to speak for them or direct their activities.

The state has become the main instrument for the realization of the Zionist vision that gathers and unites the Jewish People and, in Ben-Gurion's words, "Just as nobody envies his child or pupil, so there is no basis for the Zionist Organization to envy the State of Israel." Jewish history gives the State of Israel the mandate to act for the Jewish People—and to activate it—for its deliverance. No "covenant" has been made between the Nation and the state, nor has any law been passed giving Israel special "status" in the lives of world Jewry, but by its establishment and its very existence, the State of Israel has acquired a "status" that was not and will not be granted to any other Jewish body: the status of determinant factor in the Nation's future.<sup>27</sup>

Furthermore, as Ben-Gurion interprets it, Israel did not recognize any special status for the Zionist Organization within the Jewish People as a whole, seeing that the state did not and does not have the right to assume the authority to determine who represents the Nation. Since it is the creation of and for the Jewish People as a whole, the state cannot accept the Zionist Organization as a screen between it and world Jewry. The state recognizes the right of every Jew and every Jewish body to contribute to its building, sustenance and growth—and the great and dedicated help that has been given since its establishment has indeed come from all sectors of Jewry, Zionists, and non-Zionists alike. For this reason, by law and agreement, the Zionist Organization has the authority to operate only in Israel. The state authorized the Zionist Organization to conduct immigration and settlement operations because it is the organization with the greatest historical rights with regard to implementing the redemption concept and nurturing immigration and settlement projects in the country. It also has the experience and proper mechanism to run these projects, which no other Jewish organization possesses. However, it must be noted that even in this activity in Israel, the Zionist Organization not only does its own work, but is the emissary of all Jews who wish to help Israel.<sup>28</sup>

Let us imagine a situation, Ben-Gurion wrote, in which the Zionist Organization numbers not hundreds of thousands of Jews, but the entire Jewish People and that, according to the decision of the Zionist General Council (ZGC), "Zionism does not imply immigration by individuals." That is, it is enough for a Zionist to buy a shekel, take part in Zionist meetings, sing Hatikvah with enthusiasm, cheer the Zionist leadership and get elected to the ZGC. How, then, would the State of Israel have been established? Now, he continued, let us imagine the opposite situation. The word Zionism does not exist, as it has not existed for thousands of years. There is no Zionist Organization, no shekel debt, but masses of people are immigrating to Israel, where they

organize a military force, build an independent economy, revive the Hebrew language and culture and win their independence peacefully or by war. Would the State of Israel not have been established, as it was in the days of Joshua Bin-Nun and after the Babylonian exile—without donations and without an Organization of "Zionist" fundraisers?<sup>29</sup>

Thus, he concluded that the Zionist Organization “was destined to be weak, to lose its way and to fail,” if it did not clearly see the revolutionary permutations that have been taking place in the world and in Jewry since 1939 and if it did not draw the proper conclusions from them. “The Zionist Organization could be confronted with the same situation faced by many other instruments and means, once the goal they wished to serve became vague, vanished or was distorted: they became an aim in themselves.” Without a guiding ideal that suited the new reality and its needs—the Zionist Organization would become a sterile, parasitic mechanism demanding rights on the strength of its past.<sup>30</sup> The troubling problem was not the existence of an organization with no goal and function, but the existence of a goal and function with no implementing organization.

Ben-Gurion claimed that the State of Israel had not solved the existential question of the Jewish People, not even its own. The two fundamental problems of our generation are how to ensure the future of the Jewish People and how to ensure the future of the State of Israel. There is a fateful affinity between these two questions and the solution is the same—the classic Zionist solution of the return to Zion:

There is discussion as to whether the ingathering of exiles means assembling the entire Nation, the majority or considerable part of it in its homeland. This discussion will be decided only by history and the ideological discussion of the matter has nothing to add or subtract. However, one thing is clear, the ingathering of exiles does not mean the immigration of isolated individuals, the immigration of a chosen few, but mass immigration. This immigration is a vital necessity for the masses of people in the Exiles and it is also a vital necessity for the state.<sup>31</sup>

Only a Zionist Organization that will carry the vision of the ingathering of exiles will be able to ensure the future of the Jewish People and of the State of Israel.<sup>32</sup>

### *c The Jews of Israel and the Jews of the United States*

With regard to the relationship between the State of Israel and Diaspora Jewry, Ben-Gurion contemplated the essence of the affinity between Israeli Jews and Jewish communities abroad, but he first tried to answer some other questions: Were all Jewish communities in the Exile alike? Did they have a common denominator?<sup>33</sup>

The Jewish People is a unit whose reality, common will and destiny are beyond doubt; but this unit, by its nature, lacks a consolidated, obligatory, organized, and workable framework . . . all Jews, like all non-Jews, are subject to the laws and policies of their country, but their connections with their fellow Jews depend on their free will and personal inclinations.<sup>34</sup>

A basic knowledge of the situation of Jews in the Diaspora is enough, he explained, to reveal quantitative and qualitative differences in their material and

spiritual circumstances and their legal, political, and public status. These differences stem from Jewish history and tradition as well as from the type of regime and the cultural and socioeconomic conditions prevailing in their country of domicile. However, all Jewish communities in the Exile are equal in a certain respect. This is revealed in four basic, unchanging and unchangeable facts that fix the special situation of Jews in the wealthy, free, and democratic Exile, as much as in the wretched, poor, depressed, and totalitarian Exile.

Fact one—the Jews are a minority dependent on the majority. Fact two—the socioeconomic structure of exile Jews differs from the socioeconomic structure of the countries in which they live: in the main, the peasants and workers are the basis of all nations. This is not so among the Jews of the Exile. The number of Jews living on the land is far smaller than can be expected in proportion to their number in the general population of most countries and some countries have no Jewish farmers at all. Fact three—most Jews are urban dwellers. Fact four—exile Jews who wish to maintain their Judaism are subject to two authorities that are foreign and opposed to one another. As citizens and residents, the material and spiritual life of Jews is influenced by a foreign environment. They are enveloped in a non-Jewish atmosphere even when the society is not hostile to Jews. Jewish life is pushed into a humble corner, separated from the prevailing reality in which it has no roots, and its only sustenance is from its past and its spiritual heritage. A constant duality is created, consisting of Jewish authority and civic authority. As a result, “Jews are human dust, trying to stick together.” It is also impossible to observe a large part of the religious commandments, since Judaism is absolutely the seed of the Land of Israel and connected by its very existence to its origins. Therefore, ever since the establishment of the state when the gates were opened wide to receive every Jew who wishing to immigrate, every religious Jew who remains in the Exile is breaking the commandments and the Torah’s injunctions every day, as it is written: “Whoever resides outside the Land (of Israel) is as if he has no God.” These four fundamental principles separate the exile Jew from Jews in the State of Israel, where Jews are independent, rooted in the soil of the country, subject to a single authority and not torn between being a person and a Jew.<sup>35</sup>

The only factor that has the power to change the situation of Diaspora Jewry is the State of Israel. If the state is strong and stable and creates a high and rich cultural life, perhaps the Jews of Western countries would regard it as a home, the more so if it offered values and assets unavailable to Jews in other countries—complete freedom in the economic, political, and cultural spheres. However, the ingathering of exiles and the fostering of material, political, and cultural independence of the State of Israel will not be achieved without a creative partnership between the state and the Jewish People.<sup>36</sup> Obviously, a state is not built only on financial, political, and moral support, but primarily by people—which means immigration. As Ben-Gurion puts it, “Immigration established the state and immigration will maintain it.”<sup>37</sup>

We are neither able nor entitled to do without the participation of any Jewish community in building the state, Ben-Gurion declared. However, the future and

fate of Israel hang mostly on the courageous and loyal partnership between the state and American Jewry. This community is endowed with political and material capabilities that supercede those of any other community in the Exile, yet its importance does not lie only in its size, material capabilities and political influence. American Jewry is a storehouse of immense spiritual and creative talent in all spheres including Judaic subjects. Apart from Israel, it is the greatest and richest repository of Jewish scientific and intellectual power.<sup>38</sup>

In light of this uniqueness, any implied attempt to automatically transfer the relationship from Europe to America is likely to be disappointing. The New World was built over the last few centuries entirely by emigrants from various countries. The newcomers integrated to a large extent and the status of Jews in the United States is different from that of Jews in England or France, although Jews have equal rights in those countries, too. Relationships and political conditions in the United States are not like those that exist in European countries and a political ideology born in the nineteenth-century European reality cannot be mechanically transferred to the twentieth-century American reality. What happened in Europe could happen in America, but it need not do so. Zionism cannot be structured on this doubtful and undesirable speculation.<sup>39</sup>

### **3 Responses**

At the time, the press made almost no reference to Ben-Gurion's articles on the topic under discussion here. The Zionist Organization, as an organized body, refrained from any direct response to the criticism leveled at it. Instead, the Organization's executive body decided to publish three pamphlets under the title "The Discussion about the Essence of Zionism in Our Time," in which various articles by Ben-Gurion and some Zionist personalities in Israel and the Diaspora appeared without commentary or analysis.<sup>40</sup>

Eliezer Livneh<sup>41</sup> examined the question of whether the United States could be considered part of the Exile. "Exile," he said, "need not of necessity be identified with persecution or deprivation of rights... Exile is the Jews' perception of themselves—and the Gentiles' perception of the Jews—as 'Other.'" Like Ben-Gurion, he claimed that there are a number of identifying signs in proof of the fact that American Jews also live in the Exile: they are concentrated in specific urban areas in a pattern that does not match the characteristic dispersion of the general public; their socioeconomic structure is unique; they display psychological insecurity in spite of their economic situation and are sensitive to any suggestion that they are in the Exile. This being so, the Zionist Organization of America must be given the task of pressing for Hebrew studies, of opening Hebrew schools and of encouraging pioneering. He designated the Zionist Organization for this mission because he assumed that no other organization could undertake to perform the tasks he enumerated.<sup>42</sup>

Berl Locker, chairman of the Zionist Executive, objected to the criticism voiced against the Zionist Organization and the comparison between it and the non-Zionist organizations. In his opinion, they had to face the problematics of the



organization's functions after statehood. He stated that the organization still had not succeeded in mobilizing the Jewish masses and the Zionists among them to the supreme effort of "fortifying the State of Israel, ingathering the exiles, and ensuring the unity of the Jewish People." He tried to prove that the Zionist Organization was the only organization capable of laying the foundations for the Zionist education that would ultimately lead to immigration. The Organization's intense preoccupation with the immigration question was proof of the essential differences between it and the approach, however sympathetic, of the non-Zionists. He pointed out that the Organization's activity does not begin and end with words. It creates and maintains contact with its branches abroad and organizes special committees to encourage immigration and extend help in various ways to immigrants. The Department for Youth and Pioneer Affairs trains instructors for the Zionist youth and pioneer movements worldwide, mainly in the West, in order to promote the immigration concept among the youth. Were it not for these efforts, immigration from Western countries would be even more meager than it actually is.<sup>43</sup>

Locker did not agree with Ben-Gurion's assumption that the state should not give the Zionist Organization preference over the other organizations. If the state was interested in continuing the cooperation with the Zionist Organization, he explained, it had to make it absolutely clear that the existence and activity of the Zionist Organization were welcomed by the state and it had to encourage and support the Organization in the spirit of the Status Law. According to Locker's definition, a Zionist was not obliged personally to immigrate to Israel and it was enough that he or she encourage at least one family member to immigrate. This initiative, he felt, would foster "a spirit of Zionism in the Diaspora. There would then be unity among Zionists and conditions would be created for greater, more comprehensive immigration that was not limited to pioneer youth."<sup>44</sup>

Locker was effectively reflecting the viewpoint of Mapai's representatives in the upper echelons of the Zionist Organization, who found themselves in a discordant situation. On the one hand, they were unable to harm the status of the body to which they belonged. On the other, they had become the opposition within their party as well as opponents to Ben-Gurion's policy.<sup>45</sup>

Nahum Goldmann, the second chairman of the Zionist Executive, objected to Ben-Gurion's definition of a Zionist as, "only someone who immigrated to Israel and could only as such be a member of the Zionist Organization." Goldmann claimed that to accept such a definition would lead to the establishment of a "Sons of Zion" organization whose members wanted to immigrate, sooner or later, to Israel. The question was whether such an organization would be likely to execute the functions of the Jewish Agency and raise funds for Israel. He proposed that the Zionist Organization should undertake the exclusive missions that the non-Zionist organizations were not prepared to carry out.<sup>46</sup>

Baruch Zuckerman, "Ihud Olami" party representative on the Zionist Executive and in charge of matters connected to South American Jewry, was against making immigration the yardstick of Zionism, but he agreed that Zionism could not exist without the focus on immigration to Israel. The Zionist must promote immigration by means of education to that end, he said. He defined the

Zionist as “someone who accepts the principle that Jews in the free countries, too, must voluntarily become part of the process of ingathering the exiles.” He added that examples set by individuals were not enough in themselves to educate toward immigration—it was necessary to instill awareness of Jewish unity. This awareness would lead to the conclusion that the creative potential of Jewry would be ensured only when the majority of Jews resided in Israel.

He proposed two organizational frameworks for pro-Israeli activity in the Diaspora. The first would conduct operations aimed at strengthening Israel economically and politically, and would afford representation to all Zionist as well as non-Zionist Jewish organizations interested in achieving this aim. The second would be the Zionist Organization, which would act as economical and political consultants, but would not take any action (unlike the first framework).<sup>47</sup>

Itzhak Grunbaum, who had served as the first Minister of the Interior, was among the leaders of the General Zionist party, was now a member of the Jewish Agency Executive, and was against making immigration the criterion for being a Zionist, as Ben-Gurion had insisted. He defined the difference between Zionist and non-Zionist in terms of their attitudes to the Exile. In the case of the former, “his attitude to the existential conditions, situation and future of Jews had ceased to be ‘Jewish’ and exile oriented, given to a consciousness of weakness; he had begun to react to insult and persecution like a gentile, that is, like a free man.” He acknowledged the fact that there was no room for full equality in the Exile and that only in his own state could he have liberty and independence. The Zionist abhorred the humiliations of the Exile and aspired to a life of freedom, creativity, and physical labor. “In these he is also different from the ‘friends of Israel’, who regard the state as a means to regain their honor and as a precious ornament in their grey lives.”<sup>48</sup>

Emmanuel Neumann, of the ZOA leadership, was opposed to Ben-Gurion’s demand that the Zionist Organization oblige every Zionist to immigrate to Israel. Zionism, he asserted, was an instrument to ensure the continuation of the history of the Jewish People in all its parts. Zionists, whether they immigrate to Israel or remain in the Diaspora, are Jews; they are an important asset to the Jewish People and should not be relinquished because of a hasty, superficial, and metaphysical attitude.<sup>49</sup>

Rose Halprin, President of the Hadassah organization, in the early fifties and member of the Jewish Agency Executive, was against the claim that a Jew could not regard himself as an organic part of the country he lived in, but as a foreign implant, and must aspire to immigrate to Israel. It is possible to belong to the Jewish People, to love it and never forget it. “We were born in America,” she explained, “we have grown up in light of its ideologies, we study in its schools and universities and fight in its army—do you want us to forget all this and become second class citizens? We do not see the necessity for this.”<sup>50</sup>

#### **4 Epilogue**

On examining Ben-Gurion’s words during his Sede-Boker period, we find that his style did indeed become more open and direct, but the content remained largely

unchanged. On most subjects, he repeated what he had said in the past, based firmly on the essential difference between Zionist and non-Zionist. The former was committed to his own and his family's Hebrew education, active pioneering and immigration, while the latter was content to give political and economical aid to Israel.

In articles devoted to the Zionist Organization, he attempted to minimize its part in forming and realizing the national ideal. The concept of national redemption, sovereignty in the ancient homeland and the ingathering of the exiles, he declared, had crystallized in the accepted wisdom of the Jewish People over the generations. By skipping through Jewish history, Ben-Gurion attempted to bridge the gap between the biblical period and that of the early wave of pioneering immigration to Eretz-Israel, concluding from this depiction of history that there was actually no place in it for the Zionist Organization. The immigrants, he said, had come because of a vision they had absorbed from three sources: the revived influence of the bible, the national and social revolutions in Europe and the creative contact with the homeland. Since the Zionist Organization did not commit its members to immigration and self-realization, it could not regard itself as the initiating, organizing, and realizing force behind the ideal. It had not failed only in this, but also in its efforts to amalgamate the Jewish people around the state.

Why, then, did Ben-Gurion not propose the disbanding of the Zionist Organization? The answer is that Ben-Gurion perceived the goal of the state as realizing the vision of the ingathering of the exiles and he recognized the fact that the Zionist Organization had the tradition, experience and mechanism to run immigration and settlement projects on a scale unmatched by any other Jewish organization.

As Prime Minister, reasons of state prevented Ben-Gurion from discussing the differences in the lives of Israeli Jews and those living in the Diaspora. However, in his prolific correspondence with the American Jewish Committee he constantly referred to the essence of the connection between the state and Diaspora Jewry. After moving to Sede-Boker, he repeated that the State of Israel represented only its citizens, but now allowed himself also to discuss the essence of the aforementioned differences. He pointed out in the State of Israel the individual Jew was independent, rooted in the soil of his country, subject to a single authority and not torn between being a person and a Jew. The opposite situation prevailed in the Diaspora, he stated. His criticism was not only against the Zionists and non-Zionists in the United States, but also against the Religious Jewish community there. He wondered how they could ignore the traditional-religious precept that "everyone who lives outside (the Holy Land) is as if he has no God," and how they were able to practice the Jewish religion, which was built on commandments connected to the Eretz-Israel. He hoped that the establishment of the State of Israel would create a change of direction among the Jews in the free world. Even if Israel lacked the power to attract, he said, it had tremendous hidden potential. He claimed that in Israel the People's life had become, as in the biblical era, one complete experience framed by Hebrew and the Hebrew spirit.

The individual Jew's actual ability to live subject to Jewish authority without duality should be enough to stimulate immigration.

The AJC did not respond to Ben-Gurion's articles. Only when he returned to the premiership, did AJC president Jacob Blaustein approach Abba Eban, the Israeli Ambassador to the United States, requesting clarification of an article called "Netzah Israel," published in the 1954 Government Year Book. Blaustein was referring to one of the passages—"In most cases, an American or South African Jew, referring to our government, means the Israeli government, and Jewish communities in various countries regard our ambassadors as theirs"—observing that it was possible to understand from this that American Jews were loyal first and foremost to the State of Israel."<sup>51</sup> Ben-Gurion hastened to explain what he meant. Jews in the Western world felt a spiritual affinity to the State of Israel, he said, but their political affinity was to their country.<sup>52</sup> It is worth mentioning that this was the only direct response he ever made to critical commentary on his articles at the time. It is reasonable to assume that he chose this way because, now, having returned to serve as Prime Minister, he was influenced by the tense situation in the Middle East, his great appreciation of the AJC's work for the state, and the friendship between himself and Blaustein that had developed over the years.<sup>53</sup>

The criticism Ben-Gurion's articles evoked from the leaders of the Zionist Organization indicates the ideological confusion that prevailed in the Organization since the establishment of the state. Despite recurrent deliberations, the heads of the Organization were unable to provide it with new goals and content. They were constrained from accepting Ben-Gurion's ideological point of view, because this would inevitably result in the destruction of the Organization and the relinquishment of its attempts to continue to function in the new reality. At that times, the Zionist Organization did not succeed in overthrowing other systems and was already on the way out.

On February 17, 1955, Ben-Gurion wrote in his diary:

Towards evening, Golda (Meir) and Namir (Mordekhai) suddenly arrived. Security crisis. Lavon is definitely going and there is nobody... They suggest that I return. I was moved. I decided that I must accept the request and return to the Ministry of Defense. Security and the army take precedence over everything.

Ben-Gurion had left the government when there were no clouds of war on the horizon, but this was not the case when he returned.<sup>54</sup>



## **Part III**

# **Second term in office, 1955–1963**



# 6 The Sinai Campaign

## 1 Acts of reprisal

The ceasefire agreements between Israel and Arab countries after the War of Independence stipulated that it was “forbidden to cross the lines or to enter the area between the lines.”<sup>1</sup> However, within a short time, citizens of the neighboring countries began to cross into Israel for various purposes. This was a complex and many-faceted phenomenon,<sup>2</sup> which Israel approached in the broad context of the Israeli–Arab dispute and Israel’s political and security problems, thereby giving infiltration its main political status. The question of proper response had engaged the top levels of Israel’s political and defense establishments since 1951 and, during 1953, these internal discussions multiplied.<sup>3</sup>

Israel’s method of reprisal was dramatically demonstrated in the Kybia operation on the night of October 14–15, 1953, following the murder of a mother and her two children in Yehud, some 24 hours earlier. Troops from Commando Unit 101 (established in the IDF in the summer of 1953) attacked the West Bank village Kybia and three neighboring villages, blowing up a few score houses. According to the evidence, the dead numbered between 42–69 men, women, and children.<sup>4</sup>

The Kybia operation drew furious reactions worldwide, with those from Britain in the lead. In a sharp letter to Foreign Minister Sharett, Britain expressed its shock and pointed out the threat to peace in the area. The writers of the letter did not hesitate to remind Israel of Britain’s commitment to Jordan. They demanded that the Israeli government investigate the circumstances, pay compensation to the victims and pull back the IDF from the border zone. The US State Department issued a press release expressing deep sympathy for the victims and stressing the need to put those responsible for the action on trial and to prevent similar incidents in the future. The French dispatched a letter of protest to Israel, similar to the one from Britain, but in less sharp tones.<sup>5</sup> The Foreign Ministers of the three Western Powers, meeting in London at the time, called for an urgent meeting of the Security Council in order to discuss the high tension between Israel and its neighbors.

In view of these reactions, Israeli policymakers unanimously agreed on the necessity to denounce the one-sided stand taken by the powers. Headed by



Ben-Gurion on his return from a three-month leave, the government met—with the participation of the Chief of Staff—on October 18, to discuss the Kybia operation. Some ministers criticized the operation, expressing their regret that suitable steps had not been taken to prevent the killing of women, children, and civilians; they also protested strongly against the fact that the government had not been party to the decision to undertake such an extensive operation and favored a public statement regretting the incident. Others accepted the operation and its results. Most of the ministers supported Ben-Gurion's position that there should not be a public admission that the IDF had carried out the operation and left it to him to word the response from the government. This was published the following day.<sup>6</sup>

This did not prevent US Secretary of State John Foster Dulles from announcing, on December 20, that his government had decided to withhold the first payment, 26 million dollars, of the foreign aid allocation to Israel. He said that this step had been taken because of Israel's refusal to meet its obligations and comply with the demand made by the Chief of the UN Observers headquarters to cease work on the diversion of the waters of the River Jordan, in the North of the country.<sup>7</sup>

The Kybia operation created a new reality in relations between Israel and American Jewry. For the first time since statehood, they had to cope with an American decision to impose sanctions on Israel. They regarded themselves as loyal citizens of their country, America, which was now taking steps against Israel, the country whose interests were close to their hearts. Therefore, while the response of American Jewish community leaders was sharply critical of the military operation, it was also an attempt to persuade Dulles to change his mind.<sup>8</sup>

The Secretary of State, interested in influencing the American Jewish reaction to his decision, arranged a meeting between his aide for Near Eastern Affairs, Henry Byroade, and Joseph Proskauer, past president of the AJC. At the meeting, Byroade presented a copy of Dulles' statement of America's conditions for retracting the cancellation of aid to Israel. Proskauer criticized the contents of the statement, saying that its effect would be the opposite of what was expected, at which Byroade asked him to persuade the Israeli government to declare a temporary cessation of the work on the Jordan River so that the sanctions could be lifted. Proskauer subsequently advised Eban to adopt the American proposal in order to improve relations with it.<sup>9</sup>

At the same time, the Secretary of State met a delegation from Jewish organizations led by Senator Ives and member of the House of Representatives, Yavetz. The delegation criticized America's uneven treatment of Israel and the Arab countries and Dulles proposed publishing a joint statement detailing the chain of events and concluding with the hope that relations between the United States and Israel would continue to be friendly.<sup>10</sup>

The State Department subsequently suggested that Israel respond positively to the Security Council's request that Israel suspend work on diverting water from the Jordan River while the discussion about the dispute was in progress. In return the State Department would announce the resumption of aid to Israel.

Israel accepted the compromise and on October 27, Eban informed the Security Council that the work had been suspended.<sup>11</sup> On the following day, as agreed, the Secretary of State announced the release of the aid allocation.

The Israeli Foreign Office published a list of the conclusions drawn from the crisis with the United States, *inter alia*:

(a) American Jewry was neither mentally nor organizationally prepared for this crisis. Nevertheless, it rallied within a few days. (b) American Jewry was poorly informed, for example, about the security of Israel's borders, and did not understand what had happened. They complained everywhere and anywhere that our information and public relations services were faulty. (c) The organized Zionist movement, especially the ZOA, was in touch with only a very limited circle. The Zionist council network was found lacking in its ability to act. Among a number of Zionists we found an unwillingness, bordering on the extreme, to including non-Zionists in political activity. (d) Those members of the Jewish communities who were known for their political and information work, were completely disorganized and if they were to be found at all in an organized framework, it was in the welfare and congregational committees in the cities where these existed.<sup>12</sup>

The activities of Jewish organizations in the United States during the crisis, made it possible to measure their strength and status in the Jewish community and in the eyes of the government. As mentioned, the Zionist leadership claimed that the difference between them and non-Zionist bodies was loyalty to the State of Israel under any circumstances—that is, in times of crisis, they would be the only ones who would rally to the aid of the state and protect its interests—in the crises under discussion, the ZOA had not been able to send representatives to negotiate with the government and their place was taken by the organizations that exerted pressure. As mentioned earlier, the Secretary of State sent his aide, Byroade to negotiate specifically with Joseph Proskauer, a non-Zionist leader who had held senior positions in the US administration in the past and was, therefore, close to the executive level. The staff of the Israeli embassy also focused their activity on the non-Zionist leadership in general and the AJC in particular.<sup>13</sup>

## **2 Winds of war**

On December 7, 1953, Ben-Gurion submitted his letter of resignation to the President of Israel. On the following day, Moshe Sharett became Acting Prime Minister and Pinchas Lavon Acting Minister of Defense. On January 26, 1954, Sharett presented his government (with Lavon as Minister of Defense) to the Knesset and received their vote of confidence.<sup>14</sup>

The infiltration from Jordan continued during Sharett's term of office and terrorist activity increased.<sup>15</sup> Tension between the two countries escalated to the point of war. Meanwhile, the next crisis was already budding—this time along the Israeli–Egyptian border which, early in 1955, became the main arena for clashes.<sup>16</sup>

The Israeli–Egyptian crisis crested with the exposure of an Israeli network planning to place bombs in British and American installations in Cairo and Alexandria to disrupt relations between Egypt and the West. Members of the network were arrested in July 1954 and put on trial at the end of the year.<sup>17</sup> The results of the affair strained relations between Sharett and Lavon and the Mapai summit moved to dismiss Lavon and to make an attempt to persuade Ben-Gurion to return to the government. Ben-Gurion, who had kept in touch with events, accepted the challenge on the background of his dissatisfaction with Lavon's defense policy and Sharett's moderate approach to everything related to Egypt's growing military strength.<sup>18</sup>

With Ben-Gurion's return to the Ministry of Defense, there was a noticeable "stepping up" of the type and degree of reprisal. Earlier, under pressure from the army and his associates, Sharett had also authorized reprisals for infiltration and sabotage attempts, but now the level of response was intensified. On February 25, 1955, a few days after Ben-Gurion took up his old-new appointment, an Egyptian intelligence ring murdered an Israeli citizen near Nes Ziona. Ben-Gurion demanded a swift response in the form of an attack on Egypt, which he blamed for the murder. Sharett authorized an operation in Gaza, but only after the IDF promised that the attack would be on a limited scale with every effort to avoid heavy casualties.<sup>19</sup> However, in the end, the operation diverged from the restrictions placed upon it for circumstantial reasons and many Egyptian soldiers were killed.<sup>20</sup>

Now the United States and Britain were not satisfied with a public condemnation. Britain temporarily halted a shipment of tanks to Israel, and the United States suspended, "for at least two months," its "investigation" of Israel's defense requirements.<sup>21</sup>

This time, too, the Jewish organizations in America had to crystallize a stand and decide how to act in relation to their government. In light of the lessons learned in the past, the Israeli embassy launched an information campaign in the Jewish community, in order to win support for Israeli policy. This time, the emphasis was placed on the necessity to constantly reinforce "Israel's population, economy and defense" on the one hand and, on the other, its "desire for peace with the Arab countries."<sup>22</sup>

The fear that Egypt was really preparing to go to war against Israel and was about to begin a "second round" gained force at the end of September 1955, when details of the arms agreement between Egypt and Czechoslovakia became known. An Israeli government announcement expressed concern over these developments and warned that Israel would also investigate ways to acquire arms and ammunition for its defense.<sup>23</sup> As it was reported in the press, this announcement did nothing to allay anxiety at home.<sup>24</sup>

Concern over the future of the state and fear that there would be yet another war, naturally preoccupied the Jewish organizations in the United States. The Zionist organizations held a public meeting in Madison Square Garden in New York, attended by 20,000 people inside the hall and crowds outside listening to speeches over loudspeakers. Most of the speakers called on the American

government to sell arms to Israel and sign a defense pact with it. They expressed their anxiety about events in the Near East and their concern for Israel's security, as well as for the situation in the area as a whole. Abba Hillel Silver read a cable he had sent to President Eisenhower and, referring to its content, claimed that the United States had to act to strengthen Israel without making this dependent upon the signing of peace agreements between Israel and the Arab states. He voiced his concern over what he called the attempts of a few clerks in the US State Department to frustrate efforts to provide aid and support to Israel. Nahum Goldmann proposed that the American Congress should explicitly declare that the United States would preserve the balance of power in the Near East and safeguard the existing borders.<sup>25</sup>

Tension between Israel and its neighbors continued in 1956, a fact which forced the Israeli government to face several rather complicated tests. On the one hand, it had to maneuver between preserving the security balance, on the other, it had to continue its efforts to purchase arms and gain the sympathy of the United States and the UN.

That year, the 24th Zionist Congress took place in Jerusalem; its importance far exceeded intramural preoccupations and the attempts to find a solution to the Zionist Organization's situation. This congress was to mark the unity of the State of Israel and Diaspora Jewry and to mobilize the latter in support of the state. Ben-Gurion described the danger that faced the state: "They are striking not only at our independence, sovereignty and borders," he said, "but at our very existence—and there is a crucial difference between our opponents and ourselves." The key to Israel's ability to prevail in this battle, he pointed out, lies in "perpetuating immigration...the enhancement of moral and intellectual strength by absorbing people in the professions, sciences and humanities."

However, even then, Ben-Gurion did not refrain from emphasizing another aspect in his speech, an aspect that bore no connection to the current existential tension: the realization of the messianic vision, as he put it. He reviewed the concept that immigration was the main component in the reinforcement of the state, stating that it had its source in the messianic, not the Zionist, vision. This description was intended to stress his disappointment at the failure to realize the Zionist vision and to bolster his claim that this vision, in its institutional sense, had been emptied of all content. He preferred to use Jewish, rather than Zionist, terminology which lacked any dimension of fulfillment. In speaking of a possible way to instill this vision in the young, he emphasized the importance of the "Book of Books" and remarked that biblical instruction would help the young to "recognize their roots, sources, greatness, goals and future and would ensure their affinity with the People's hope that was crystallizing in sovereign Israel." He said that in the bible lay the strength to tighten the bond between the Nation and its past. In the biblical era, the roots that had accompanied the Jewish People throughout history, creating the affinity between the Jewish People and Eretz-Israel, had gained in strength. Unless this period is acknowledged, it will be difficult to draw the youth closer to the prevailing reality. These two historical eras—the early and the contemporary—will enable the Jewish People to "withstand the surge of

assimilation, will ensure the unity and completeness of Judaism throughout the world and will enhance the status, greatness and security of the State of Israel.”<sup>26</sup> It was beyond the power of the Zionist vision to achieve this transformation, he claimed.

Ben-Gurion refrained from calling for a pro-Israel political campaign organized by the Zionist Organization. He estimated that in times of need Israel would be able to rally Diaspora Jewry to its cause without a go-between. He also did not want to include the Zionist Organization in matters connected to foreign policy, so as to maintain the functional separation between it and the state. Beyond this, in order to spare non-Zionist groups from discomfort, he refrained from creating an impression that identified Diaspora Jews with Israel’s goals.<sup>27</sup>

However, delegates to the 24th Zionist Congress chose to ignore Ben-Gurion’s reservations on the subject of the Zionist Organization’s dynamic role and unanimously passed the following political resolution:

Lasting peace between Israel and the Arab countries will be achieved by free agreement . . . the Zionist Congress gratefully declares that Israel is not alone in these trying times. The Congress calls upon Jews wherever they may be to stand by their responsibility to the State of Israel by coming together and by mobilizing all their dedication and potency for its wellbeing, success and security.<sup>28</sup>

The Congress, therefore, called upon all Jews and not only the members of the Zionist Organization, to support Israel through political activity and economic aid. This resolution did not include any reference to immigration, nor to US policy toward Israel and the necessary action to influence the government. The placement of the resolution confirmed it on the declarative, not the practical plane.

### **3 The military campaign**

The tension between Israel and Egypt reached its peak in the summer of 1956. On the 24th of July, Egyptian President Gamal Abd el-Nasser announced the nationalization of the Suez Canal and thereby threatened not only Israel, but also regional and world order. Britain and France regarded the nationalization of the Canal as a challenge to their status in the region and to their imperial interests.<sup>29</sup>

These two countries resolved to attack Nasser close to the time of his nationalization of the Canal and were not inclined at first to include Israel in this battle. In the formative stages of the idea, they wanted to include the United States, but the Americans were opposed to the idea.<sup>30</sup> On October 13, 1956, after a Security Council debate, the USSR vetoed the proposal to impose the participation of the “Users Association” on the management of the Canal.

At this stage, a military plan that included Israel, France, and Britain began to take shape. Essentially, the local flare up between Israel and Egypt was singled out in the plan as the hook on which to hang the justification for the two powers’

takeover of the Suez Canal. The detailed sections of the plan were summarized in a document that has since become known as the Sevres Protocol.<sup>31</sup>

On October 29, 1956, after the government of Israel had authorized the plan, an Israeli unit was parachuted near the Mitla Pass deep inside the Sinai Peninsula. Additional IDF forces penetrated the Sinai Desert along other routes and, as agreed, waited for the expiry of the British and French ultimatum to Egypt and Israel. Before the two countries' bombardment in the Canal zone began, the IDF almost completed its conquest of the whole Sinai Peninsula. The battle went on for days, during which Ben-Gurion lay confined to bed suffering from an attack of fever and weakness.<sup>32</sup>

Eisenhower had already warned Ben-Gurion not to embark on a military operation against Egypt.<sup>33</sup> We may easily assume how great Eisenhower's fury and surprise were on learning, at the height of his campaign for a second Presidential term, of Israel's operation. He returned to the White House and summoned an urgent consultation with the State Department, the CIA, and the Pentagon. In the course of this meeting, he expressed his deep annoyance with Israel for the operation and for disregarding his pleas to refrain from making hostile moves. Those participating in the meeting were in complete agreement that the operation was timed deliberately to take place when the hands of the government and the president were tied owing to the elections and the government's reaction would have a direct influence on the election results. Years later, Eisenhower wrote in his memoirs that he had completely ignored these warnings (and had probably been interested at the time in giving the impression of one who would not under any circumstances allow elections to influence his thinking).<sup>34</sup> One way or another, after the consultation, the US President requested an impromptu session of the Security Council to call for an immediate end to Israel's military activities.<sup>35</sup>

Parallel to this, Eisenhower chose another channel to apply pressure on Israel. He instructed Sherman Adams, his campaign HQ chief, to pass the following message to Ben-Gurion via Abba Hillel Silver: "The President suggests that you voluntarily agree to return to the border since you have achieved your purpose, i.e. destruction of 'fedayeen' bases."<sup>36</sup> However, Ben-Gurion did not comply with this message and did not halt the military attack. The President continued to apply pressure. After asking Adams to contact Silver again, he finally telephoned him personally to find out if Silver had contacted Ben-Gurion and if Israel intended to pull back across the border. In fact, Silver had not approached Ben-Gurion directly, but had gone via Abba Eban because his relationship with Ben-Gurion had run aground.<sup>37</sup> Either way, Eisenhower chose this means of communication because he was unwilling to pressure Israel directly during his campaign for re-election. He was afraid that Israel would enlist the support of the Jewish organizations to put pressure on the administration and to exploit the President's situation in the interests of Israel. At the time, Silver was not in the front rank of American Jewish leadership, was not involved in pro-Israel activity and, therefore, could serve as a secret channel of communication. Further, Silver was identified with the Republican Party and was close to Robert A. Taft, the senior Republican senator.

The American press reflected the anxiety about the influence of the Jewish vote in the elections. For example, the *New-York Daily News* wrote that “The American Zionists have reported to Tel-Aviv that a Democratic government under Stevenson and Kefauver would be more helpful to Israel than the Republican government of Eisenhower and Nixon, with Foster Dulles as Secretary of State.”<sup>38</sup> Under the circumstances, the Jewish organizations were between the hammer and the anvil. On the one hand, they wanted to help Israel; on the other, they were very sensitive to the fact that public opinion would regard them as lacking in national loyalty and prepared to give their particular interests priority over American interests in general, as well as to exert political pressure in order to serve this preference. For this reason they chose to separate the two issues.

The day after the Sinai Campaign was launched, an urgent meeting of the Conference of Presidents of the major American Jewish Organizations was called. Those present had no information about what was happening on the battlefields and they were very confused. Nevertheless, they felt it necessary to crystallize an information policy. It was eventually decided that the Israeli attack should be presented as a response to the deteriorating security situation in the Middle East as a whole and to Egypt’s growing military strength in particular. It was also decided to issue a call to the American government to act “in a new spirit” to aid Israel.<sup>39</sup> In a cable to Ben-Gurion, Goldmann expressed the Conference of Presidents’ solidarity with the State of Israel and the promise that “the Jewish organizations in the USA will do their utmost to help Israel to achieve its goals.”<sup>40</sup>

The AJC, a body that was not a member of the Conference of Presidents, decided on a direct approach to the US Secretary of State, asking him to work through the UN to achieve a comprehensive peace agreement in the Middle East. In greater detail, they proposed that the UN take steps against countries refusing to be included in this process. The American Jewish Congress, too, presented Israel’s action as a response to Egyptian aggression and an attempt to halt Soviet expansion in the Middle East. The announcement read: “For the second time, Israel has been forced to take up arms to defend the lives of its citizens and its very existence. We hereby express our strong solidarity with our brethren and with their second struggle for life and liberty.”<sup>41</sup>

Apparently, Ben-Gurion did not at first correctly assess the size and significance of the international front, led by the United States that marshalled itself against Israel. Evidence of this can be found in a message from his sickbed on the occasion of the festive victory parade at Sharm e-Sheikh on November 6, in which he wrote to the soldiers of the 9th Brigade:

Destiny has presented you with an unique historical privilege: You have successfully concluded the greatest, most splendid military campaign in the annals of our people, one of the most amazing campaigns in the history of all nations... In a mighty, combined sweep by all IDF forces—you extended your hand to King Solomon who, three thousand years ago, opened the first Israeli port at Eilat and sent his galleons from there. Eilat will again be the main Hebrew port in the South and the Straits of the Red Sea will open to

Israeli shipping and Yotvath, called Tiran, which was an independent Hebrew state up to one thousand four hundred years ago, will again be part of the third sovereign Israeli state.<sup>42</sup>

For Ben-Gurion, the conquest of the Sinai Peninsula symbolized the closure of a cycle of Jewish history. From here began the process of the consolidation of the People and the saga of its return to the Eretz-Israel; now the Jewish People was once more sovereign in its land, after again triumphing over Egypt. The analogy between past and present enraptured Ben-Gurion and the Israeli public. By virtue of the military achievements, it seemed possible to establish the third Kingdom of Israel. However, this euphoria was limited to only one day.

On November 6, 1956, the Prime Minister of the Soviet Union, Nikolai Bulganin, sent a sharp note to Ben-Gurion demanding the immediate withdrawal of the invading troops. Ben-Gurion was perturbed, as he put it, by the Soviet message.<sup>43</sup> That same day, bluntly defying his doctors' orders, he went to the Knesset to announce the great victory. If he was indeed troubled by Bulganin's note, or by America's behavior, this was not evident in his announcement. He had nothing but praise for the IDF's great victory:

The Gathering at Mount Sinai, renewed in our times by the IDF's heroic momentum, is the focal point of our stronghold, our security and our internal peace and of our external relations in the world arena and the Middle East... Military historians well delve into the secret of the amazing campaign carried out by the IDF in a few days, in a vast desert area, facing an enemy armed to the teeth with the best, newest equipment from the Soviet Bloc and other countries.

He portrayed the deeds of the IDF troops as a mighty feat that brought the Nation close to "the supreme, most fateful moment in our ancient history, to the place where the Torah was given, where we became the Chosen People. And the eternal lines of our Torah rose before our eyes, relating the Exodus from Egypt and our forefathers' coming to the Sinai Desert."<sup>44</sup> He described the sequence of events that had led to the war to the members of Knesset who listened deeply moved by the greatness of the victory. He presented the battle as an act of self-defense. By their endless acts of sabotage, he said, Egypt and the Arab states were not just harassing Israel, but were striving to wipe it off the map. This speech was characteristic of Ben-Gurion—challenging the UN and the Powers, declaring that "we will not stand idle before the world's aggressors"; creating a link between the chronicles of Israel in ancient times and the history of the new state, between Israel's battles in the days of Moses and Joshua and the war in our times. In conclusion he established the conditions for continuing the talks between Israel and Egypt. Although he was such an astute and rational politician, aware of what the future held, here he was ready to be swept off his feet by waves of euphoria. Since the establishment of the state, he had feared the outcome of "the second round"; deep down, he had recognized this fear of Israel's failure to withstand another



military confrontation. However, it emerged that Israel, “dwelling alone” and, unlike the Arab countries, without extensive military aid, had not only defeated the Egyptian army in a matter of days, but had also succeeded in bonding with two Powers against the stand taken by the United States and the USSR.

The Prime Minister’s announcement to the Knesset was interpreted worldwide as a refusal on Israel’s part to withdraw from Sinai. The President of America, who had meanwhile been elected to a second term of office and was completely free to act as he saw fit, sent an urgent cable to Ben-Gurion clearly stating that Israel’s refusal to withdraw would harm the friendly relations between their two countries.<sup>45</sup> Abba Eban heard even more explicit threats from senior representatives of the American administration. He warned of impending USSR involvement and even remarked that the situation could deteriorate into a world war and the use of nuclear weapons.<sup>46</sup> Goldmann drew Ben-Gurion’s attention to the difficulties that could be anticipated if American Jewry was called upon to support Israel’s refusal to withdraw from Sinai: “If an open quarrel develops between Israel and the American government, I do not see any chance of enlisting American Jewry to our cause either politically or financially.”<sup>47</sup>

At this stage of the crisis, Ben-Gurion understood that Israel could not continue to hold Sinai and he instructed Eban to announce that Israel agreed to withdraw. Eban immediately initiated talks with the American government representatives and made it clear to Foreign Minister Dulles that Israel would withdraw when satisfactory arrangements were agreed with the UN.<sup>48</sup>

At the same time, Ben-Gurion informed Eisenhower that Israel had no intention of holding Sinai. He promised to honour the UN resolution on the matter and noted that Israel would always be America’s ally in striving for peace and justice in the world. Nevertheless, the letter made no mention of withdrawal from Gaza and the Straits of Tiran.<sup>49</sup> When Eisenhower received the letter, the White House announced that the United States was satisfied with Israel’s response. Ben-Gurion noted in his diary: “The President sent me a cable in appreciation of my response. Can I send him a cable in appreciation of his behaviour during this crisis?”<sup>50</sup>

Ben-Gurion’s policy at this stage was to slow down the withdrawal and postpone it as much as possible. The intention was to use the interval to launch a major information campaign in the Western world in general and the United States in particular, to prepare the ground for Israel’s struggle for its rights to the Eilat isthmus and Gaza. He presented the goals of this policy and the main goal of the Sinai Campaign to a conference of IDF officers, as follows:

Ever since [the War of Independence], we have had two central goals: ingathering the exiles and preparation for the second round . . . the aim is the existence and sovereignty of Israel for the purpose of gathering the exiles in an independent homeland . . . the world now recognizes that we are a considerable power . . . our People, the People of Israel after the Sinai Campaign, is not the same as the People of Israel before the Sinai Campaign, not in its own eyes nor in the eyes of the world . . . Since yesterday, every Jew can walk

holding his head higher than before. And every Jew abroad in America, England and every other country is proud of the Israel Defence Forces and the State of Israel.<sup>51</sup>

With these words, Ben-Gurion reasserted two major elements of his ideology, defense and ingathering the exiles. Defense was not an aim in itself, its purpose was to enable the State of Israel to attain its goal—the ingathering of exiles. The importance of the Sinai Campaign was not expressed only in its military aspect, but also in its moral and national aspects. It made it possible to prove again that the state had the power to defend its citizens and contribute to the self-esteem of world Jewry as a whole. Unlike the past, when there was no power in the world to defend Jews dependent on the goodwill of their countries of domicile, today there is a Jewish State with the power to do so.

#### **4 Withdrawal**

Britain and France completed the withdrawal of their troops from the Suez Canal on December 22, 1956. Israel, now alone in the battle, became the focus of all the pressure. On January 17, 1957, the American ambassador to the UN, Henry Cabot Lodge, began his struggle against Israel. He presented the General Assembly with the American decision calling on Israel to withdraw from “all Egyptian territory.”

Through their contact with the State Department, the Jewish organizations learned of the stand taken by the government and on January 17, 1957, two days after Israel had announced its willingness to withdraw from Sinai, the AJC initiated an urgent meeting with the chief of the Jordan–Israel desk, Donald Burgess, and convinced him, in principle, of the necessity to prevent Egypt from again closing the Straits of Eilat. However, the same discussion made it clear that the American government was determined that Israel should not be allowed to derive any direct benefit from its military operation; the Israeli conquest had to end in total withdrawal and only then would the United States be willing to address the circumstances that had caused the tension in the region.<sup>52</sup>

Following the meeting, the AJC sent Dulles a cable demanding that Israel should not be pressured into withdrawing without guarantees and requesting him to act to preserve the status quo in the region. In a circular to its branches, the AJC expressed the seriousness of the situation from the point of view of American Jewry: “The UN resolution in the matter of the Israeli withdrawal will return Israel to a critical situation. Therefore, Israel must refuse this demand as far as it possibly can and withdraw only if the situation becomes untenable.”<sup>53</sup>

The Conference of Presidents also embarked on an information campaign against the demand from the United States and the UN. They came out against returning the Eilat Straits to Egypt. They said that a return to the previous situation would halt the freedom of shipping and safe passage between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. An IDF withdrawal from Gaza would enable Egypt to place its troops there and would reactivate the Strip as a base for the fedayeen, whose function was to carry out murder and destruction on Israeli soil. The United States

must refrain from adopting a one-sided policy, since this would contribute to strengthening Egypt.<sup>54</sup>

The IDF completed its withdrawal from Sinai on January 22, 1957 and now only the Gaza Strip and Sharm e-Sheikh remained in Israeli hands. The UN and the United States persisted in their demand for withdrawal from all areas.<sup>55</sup> In light of Israel's refusal, Secretary of State Dulles announced that the United States would "seriously consider" supporting sanctions against Israel via the UN.<sup>56</sup> The Jewish organizations were shocked by this declaration and increased their activities. Representatives of the three religious streams of Judaism held an emergency conference and called for a Jews to hold a general strike because of the sanctions threat.<sup>57</sup> American Jewish Congress president Israel Goldstein sharply attacked the threat to impose sanctions and emphatically rejected the idea. The Conference of Presidents sent a cable of protest to President Eisenhower, the text of which was published in the *New York Times*.<sup>58</sup>

The State of Israel received support from another direction. Members of both parties in Senate and Congress did not challenge the demand for withdrawal, but they did oppose its implementation in the absence of any prior agreement or guarantees.<sup>59</sup> These objections brought the US government to an impasse: if the Afro-Asian bloc in the UN initiated a resolution calling for sanctions against Israel and the United States did not support it, it would lose all the political assets it had acquired during the crisis. However, if it did support the proposal, the President would face sharp challenges in both Houses. To avoid this, Dulles offered Israel a compromise: Israel would withdraw unconditionally, the United States would guarantee that the Straits would remain open to shipping and a UN force would be stationed in the Gaza Strip.<sup>60</sup>

Israel's announcement that it rejected the American offer created a sharp clash with the US government. From here on, it needed drastic political action with the help of all available centers of power and influence. These were embodied in the Senator from Texas, Lyndon Johnson (who was then leader of the Democratic majority in the Senate and destined to serve as President of the United States from 1963–1968). In mid-February 1957, Nathaniel Goudrin of the AJC and Cey Cannon of the American Zionist Committee for Public Affairs jointly approached him requesting help for Israel.<sup>61</sup> He acquiesced and sent an urgent letter to Dulles condemning the policy of imposing sanctions on Israel.<sup>62</sup> Johnson also conducted a campaign to change the President's policy via the Senate, which was then discussing authorization of the "Eisenhower Doctrine" for the Middle East.<sup>63</sup> He linked authorization of the document to US policy toward Israel and tried in every possible way to delay the hearings, the investigation and presentation of conclusions to Congress. Leaders of Jewish organizations invited to appear before the committee dealing with the subject also regarded this as an opportunity to influence a change of attitude to Israel, with a view to including it in a general agreement in the Middle East.<sup>64</sup>

However, the pressure on the president did not bear fruit. Eisenhower remained firm in his demand for Israel's unconditional withdrawal from all areas conquered in the fighting. In an urgent message, he informed Ben-Gurion of the seriousness

of the situation likely to be created by failure to withdraw.<sup>65</sup> That same evening, in his address to the nation, the president announced that America would support the UN resolution to impose sanctions on Israel.<sup>66</sup>

The US Secretary of State sought every possible way to circumvent the pressure from the Jewish organizations, with support from members of the Senate, on the government. He decided to call a meeting with eight Jewish leaders of his choosing, none of whom was a Zionist leader or a prominent public figure. The sole exception was Philip Klutznick, president of Benei Brit and, at the time, chairman of The Conference of Presidents. The State Department spokesman informed The *New York Times* correspondent that the aim of the meeting was to provide those present with up to date information on the situation in the Middle East, in the hope that they would use what he called their “helpful influence” on the Israeli government to consent to the withdrawal. This summons to the delegation aroused furious response from the Jewish organizations, mainly in Zionist circles. They saw this as an attempt by the government to use American Jewry as a tool to put pressure on the Israeli government.<sup>67</sup>

At the end of February 1957 the crisis reached a new peak when the Afro-Asian delegation to the UN called for economic and military sanctions against Israel. Added to this, was an announcement from the White House re-emphasizing the fact that Israel had not complied with the UN demand to withdraw from all the occupied territories. Henry Cabot Lodge also added his bit to the pressure when he proposed that the resolution be ratified again by the UN General Assembly. At this stage, the confrontation between the White House and the Senate and the House of Representatives reached an impasse. It was clear by now that the President was determined to pursue his the political path he had chosen, in spite of pleas from both Houses.<sup>68</sup>

The Jewish organizations were face to face with a reality that demanded a drastic response, as signified by an emergency mass rally that took place on February 25, in Madison Square Garden. The event was initiated by the American Jewish Congress, the Jewish ex-servicemen’s organization and a committee of rabbis from the three streams of Judaism. Many non-Jewish personalities joined the rally and telegrams of support from Eleanor Roosevelt, the widow of President Franklyn Delano Roosevelt, and many senators were read aloud.<sup>69</sup>

Despite these expressions of sympathy for Israel among the American Jewish public and both Houses of Representatives, in the end Ben-Gurion was forced to recognize Israel’s absolute isolation in the international arena. He had always stressed that Israel must never ever find itself in a situation where it had no friends or supporters and now, understanding that Israel had indeed fallen into such a situation, he drew the proper conclusions. He had no choice but to make do with promises and place his trust in America’s willingness to meet its obligations.<sup>70</sup>

On March 1, 1957, Israel’s Foreign Minister Golda Meir appeared before the UN Assembly and announced that Israel was prepared to withdraw.<sup>71</sup> As planned, the second speaker was the American delegate, Henry Cabot Lodge, who had an unpleasant surprise in store for Israel. The Arab States had meanwhile placed

pressure on the United States to avoid promises that were not in accordance with their commitment to prevent Israel from profiting politically from its aggression in Sinai. As a result—without Israel’s prior agreement—Henry Cabot Lodge added several remarks that clearly altered the meaning of the declaration.<sup>72</sup> On the same day, the State Department published an announcement, too, in confirmation of the declaration as presented to the Assembly.<sup>73</sup>

The conclusion reached in Jerusalem was that America had betrayed Israel’s trust. Ben-Gurion summoned the ministers to a special session, which took place on the Sabbath for the first time since the state was established. The decision taken at this meeting was to demand a “clear statement confirming that the Egyptians would not return to the Gaza Strip.”<sup>74</sup>

The Americans, meanwhile, were trying to establish calm. Henry Cabot Lodge’s speech was clarified at an urgent meeting between Eban and Dulles and it was agreed that Eisenhower would send an explanatory cable to Ben-Gurion.<sup>75</sup> Understanding that Israel could not retract its commitment, Ben-Gurion tried to acquire as many guarantees as possible that the United States would keep its promises to prevent Egypt from damaging Israel’s security.<sup>76</sup>

On March 6, 1957, UN troops entered the Gaza Strip and Israel returned to the ceasefire lines. Five days later, an announcement issued by senior delegates to the United Nations stated that it was beyond the ability of the organization to control the situation in Gaza and proposed that Egypt should maintain a minimal presence there. The Egyptians were content with this and decided to appoint a governor general in Gaza. Ben-Gurion had no alternative but to state: “The aim of the Sinai Campaign was to reinforce Israel’s security... and by breaking Nasser’s military power... we achieved everything possible under the circumstances, however, although we did not achieve all we wanted to achieve, we saw fit to withdraw.”<sup>77</sup>

Israel’s defense policy in 1953–1957 brought the state into direct confrontation with the United States for the first time. In discussing the country’s defense, Israel’s leaders had not only to carefully weigh their statements regarding relations with the Arab countries, but also reactions in the international arena in general and from the American administration in particular. American Jewry had to function within the mismatched policies of America and Israel. They had proved their ability to support Israel during the Sinai Campaign, even when this went against the stand taken by their country.<sup>78</sup>

The possible explanation for this lies in their ability to walk the tightrope between accusations of “dual loyalty” and legitimate activity to further the interests of a specific minority group in American society. In the first stage of the crisis they did not exploit the presidential election campaign to influence Eisenhower to change his policy toward Israel. In fact, their activity received legitimization from opposition in the two Houses to the President’s stand. Thus, American Jewry could continue their struggle even when Israel refused to consent to UN demands and was portrayed as an aggressive state threatening world order.

The struggle was conducted mainly by two organizations, each in its own way and according to its own outlook: the AJC and the Conference of Presidents. The AJC fought for Israel behind the scenes, avoiding public identification with it. The Conference of Presidents, by contrast, brought the struggle into the open. The crisis proved that the borders between Zionists and non-Zionists were less clearly marked when it came to extending aid to Israel in the political arena. Both did everything they could to modify government policy toward Israel. Once again, it was proved how important it was for Israel to maintain affinity and contact with all the Jewish organizations.

It is difficult to ascertain whether the actions of these organizations did indeed influence American government policy. Their success has to be measured not in terms of their ability to change this policy, but in terms of their willingness to stand by Israel even when this step went against government policy.

The Sinai Campaign ended in Israeli withdrawal. But its significance for the citizens of Israel as a whole and for Ben-Gurion in particular, went far beyond that of a military operation for territorial conquest. Since the establishment of the state, Ben-Gurion had been afraid that Israel's military capability might not withstand another round with the Arab countries. He could not be certain that they would shrink from opening another offensive to alter the facts established by the War of Independence. Yet Israel had stood that vital test. It had also met the country's major goal of ingathering exiles.

To Ben-Gurion, the Sinai Campaign was proof of Israel's military advantage over the Arab countries. The episode of handing back Sinai, the crucible of the Nation, reaffirmed his ideas about the historical connection between the biblical era and the establishment of the state. In both periods the Jewish People was independent and sovereign in its own state, in contrast to the exile period. His interest in this aspect allowed him to explore a new vision for the Jewish People to replace the Zionist vision that, in his opinion, was now emptied of content. Now that the defense situation was secure, he was at liberty to study the history of the Jewish People.

# 7 Ben-Gurion and the intellectuals

## 1 The ideological dialogue between Ben-Gurion and Nathan Rotenstreich

In September 1956, the daily newspaper *Davar* published an article called “Shemot ve techanin” (“Names and Contents”), by “Yariv’s Grandfather.” It soon emerged that the identity behind the pen name was Ben-Gurion.<sup>1</sup> This was his way of expressing his ideas and opinions as an ordinary person, specially to avoid being dragged into a sharp argument between himself as prime minister and the Zionist Organization on the eve of the Sinai Campaign.

In the article itself, Ben-Gurion tried to track the changes and permutations that had taken place in two concepts—Socialism and Zionism.<sup>2</sup> He opened with a cutting letter-of-divorce to the entire intellectual world of Socialism and Zionism alike: “Our generation has almost nothing to learn from Socialism and the Socialist classics of the nineteenth century, nor from the early mentors of Zionism a hundred, sixty, or fifty years ago.” Although he commenced with Socialism, he related most of what he said to Zionism.

“Since the establishment of the State of Israel,” he wrote, “the name ‘Zionism’ has lost its main, enriching meaning. It has become empty of all real, binding content and no longer says to our young generation here (as well as in the Diaspora) what it said to its creators and bearers sixty years ago and until the establishment of the state.” At first, the Zionist concept was accepted mainly by East European Jewry, for whom it symbolized negation of the Exile and the solution to the Jewish problem through immigration to Eretz-Israel. However, the course of Jewish history, the destruction of two thirds of European Jewry in the Second World War and the founding of the State of Israel, changed the meaning and content of the Zionist concept.

The definitive majority of immigrants arriving after statehood came from Islamic countries. They were not motivated by a desire to realize the Zionist ideal, but by the passage “May our eyes behold your return to Zion in compassion.” The idea that the Jews needed a homeland of their own and must return to Zion was meaningless to them as well as to the generation that had grown up in Israel; they did not relate to the Zionist ideal, but to its practical realization. However, in the Diaspora there was a nucleus of young people with the wish and ability to

participate in the enterprise for “the creative revolution and renewal of the Jewish People in its homeland,” but only Israel had the power to rouse them.

In light of the above, the young had to be educated “not in names and terminology that have sprouted and withered, but in living values fed by an ancient unfailing source, close to the vital and changing reality.” The roots of these lie in the Book of Books, which tells of the forefathers, the exodus from Egypt, the wars of Joshua Bin Nun, the lives of Saul, David, and Solomon. “They are closer, more instructive and had more vital sap for the generation born, growing up and living in Israel, than all the speeches and discussions at the Basle congresses.”<sup>3</sup>

Response to Ben-Gurion’s article followed immediately. Nahum Goldmann, President of the Zionist Organization, announced that he intended publishing a refutation, but later changed his mind because the article was published under a pseudonym.<sup>4</sup> Instead, he wrote Ben-Gurion a letter in which he attempted to prove that he was contradicting his own previously stated perception of the Zionist Organization’s role after statehood. Goldmann supported this claim with a quotation from an early speech by Ben-Gurion on the “way of the Jewish state,” on October 29, 1937:

The Zionist Organization will need the Jewish State no less than the Jewish state will need the Zionist Organization . . . They will have a common function: preparing the masses for immigration, bringing them and rooting them in the country. The immigration and settlement enterprise cannot be implemented without the assistance of the Jewish state and the Zionist Organization as one.<sup>5</sup>

Ben-Gurion replied that there was no contradiction between the quotation and the ideas expressed in his article. He remarked that Goldmann was overlooking the momentous, historical change that was the destruction of European Jewry, which was “the bearer of the true Zionist ideology,”<sup>6</sup> as well as its implementing force, until the Second World War. According to Ben-Gurion’s theory, it was the human mass that was to have been the foundation of the State of Israel.<sup>7</sup> And now, he asked Goldmann, after that destruction, “is the ‘Zionist’ Organization of America doing it?”<sup>8</sup> Goldmann replied that, indeed, the ZOA “was not fulfilling its functions with regard to educating the youth towards immigration,” but this fact “did not prove that the ZOA lacked intrinsic value.”<sup>9</sup>

Other leading personalities were also unsparing in their criticism of Ben-Gurion’s article, among them Rose Halprin, chairwoman of the Jewish Agency Executive in New York.<sup>10</sup> She was joined by Abraham Herman, head of the Jewish Agency’s information department, who informed Ben-Gurion of his objection to remarks about the collapse of the Zionist Organization, to which Ben-Gurion replied that the Organization had become empty of all “true Zionist content.”<sup>11</sup>

In his published response to the article by Yariv’s Grandfather, Nathan Rotenstreich, theorist and Hebrew University professor of philosophy, wondered about the assertion that it was not necessary to educate Israeli youth about the need for a homeland. The young generation’s roots did not go deep enough, he



wrote, because the state was still new. If the youth were not educated according to the Zionist concept and were not committed to Jewry as a whole, the result would be contrary to what was needed: “It would not deepen their roots in the natural, given homeland, but would, in fact, weaken those roots”—meaning that this process contained the danger of uprooting the young generation from its homeland and Nation. Ben-Gurion proposed a separation between Jewish ideational awareness and Zionist ideology, whereas Rotenstreich declared that such a separation would be tantamount to “a historic leap that should not be made.” A national movement could not skirt the recent past if it wished to grasp the remote past. It was not possible to claim that messianic consciousness was the main factor in the modern revival of Judaism, since it was precisely those who traditionally adhered to the messianic concept who saw themselves committed, to one extent or another, to distinguish between the real drive to find a solution to the Jewish problem and the messianic hope. The growth of a Jewish national movement was made possible because it confronted the problems connected to everyday reality and not because of the messianic idea. The claim that the young generation rejects the Zionist concept because it is rhetorical does not necessarily prove that they accept the messianic alternative. Rotenstreich concluded his article by pointing out the danger inherent in the attempt to gloss over history: “In belittling the image of the sources from which we have drunk and which still water our fields, we will create a Jew torn in the same way as the older generation.”<sup>12</sup>

In answer to this article, Ben-Gurion tried to point out the inaccuracies in Rotenstreich’s presentation of Yariv’s Grandfather’s ideas. He said that in order to strengthen its roots, the young generation should be educated on the basis of Jewish consciousness built on three elements: “The spiritual heritage of the Nation; affiliation of all sectors of the Jewish People; the Jewish and human vision of redemption.” The Zionist concept could not perform this function since it had developed as a result of circumstances unique to European Jewry and foreign to Israeli youth. When the state was established the concept became hollow, because Zionists “in the United States, England and the rest of the free world . . . drew a distinction between ‘Zionistics’ and immigration.” Regarding the question of the historic leap, Ben-Gurion claimed that this leap existed in fact. The establishment of the Jews’ State was a leap of hundreds of years. “The War of Independence took us closer to the time of Joshua Bin Nun, and the Joshua chapters became closer and more comprehensible to the youth than all the speeches at Zionist Congresses.” The search for the link between the present and the remote past was realistic necessity, since the recent past had been destroyed and disappeared together with the Jews of Europe. To unify the Nation and tighten the connection between the State and Diaspora Jewry, Jewish consciousness must be deepened [by]: “acknowledgement of the common destiny” and affinity with “the heritage of the past (and this heritage is above all the Bible) . . . the vision of redemption.”<sup>13</sup>

This was the beginning of an exchange of letters between Ben-Gurion and Rotenstreich; surprisingly enough, at the height of the political struggle following

the Sinai Campaign, Ben-Gurion found time to conduct a theoretical discussion on questions of historical continuity and the essence of the national concept.

In his letters, Ben-Gurion tried to prove that the messianic vision was a substitute for the Zionist concept and that it was possible to create leaps in history. He wrote that the European Zionists' affinity for Palestine was not based on the writings of Pinsker and Herzl, who made no connection between realizing the national ideal and the ancestral homeland, but rather on the "ancient spiritual reality connected to the Bible and the Eighteen Benedictions." The Zionist concept, he added, added nothing to encourage immigration, because this was done by the messianic "drive," that is, the ancient hope of redemption, the longing for the biblical homeland, the prophetic vision, the prayer "May our eyes behold your return to Zion in compassion." Indeed, it was beyond the power of the messianic vision to put the idea into practice—political, economic, and cultural factors contributed to this—but the very fact that it existed in the People's consciousness made it possible to crystallize and implement the Zionist concept. "No 'Zionist ideology' could have survived without nourishment from this ancient source."<sup>14</sup>

Ben-Gurion described the move from the Diaspora to Israel as a leap in space as well as a leap in time:

We have opened an entirely new chapter—not the continuation of Warsaw life . . . an essentially new beginning, but a beginning that of itself blends with the remote past, the past of Joshua Bin Nun, David, Uzzia, the early Hasmoneans.

This leap was possible thanks to the Bible, the link between the two periods: "The remote past ceased to be remote. The immediate past ceased to be immediate."<sup>15</sup> Educating the youth in Israel will be possible only through the Bible and the messianic vision because, for the youth, these are more relevant and actual than the Zionist concept, which grew in an environment foreign to it. In the biblical era "we lived and worked and created as a sovereign nation, and we were not like clay in the hands of foreigners." Statehood is the continuation of this reality and is an additional stratum in the approach to the "Kingdom of the Almighty," that is, the process of becoming a Chosen (treasured) People.<sup>16</sup>

Rotenstreich agreed that there had been a leap in history, but claimed that it was impossible to leap over a long period and thus disconnect the remote past from the present. The establishment of the state, he asserted, was an event anchored in the locality and reality of contemporary history. However, "we are reviving the biblical background as once-exiled sons, not as those for whom the Exile was a tolerable passive and unremarkable background." It is impossible to remove the Exile era from history, since this would lead to a "Karaitic state of awareness and present dissociation from Jewish common destiny."<sup>17</sup> He objected to Ben-Gurion's use of the term "messianic vision" as a substitute for the Zionist concept. The Zionist movement's self-image, he wrote, was as a secular movement founded on the ability to operate rationally within the modern world. Zionism had removed the metaphysical element from the idea of the return to Eretz-Israel and

had placed this return within the realm of the autonomous will and realistic capability of the Jews. The state was established due to the fact that “the Jews in Eretz–Israel identified themselves with the Jewish People per se and with its issues. It was only because exile Jewry acknowledged this identification that the meeting between the State and the Exile was possible.”<sup>18</sup>

To Rotenstreich, Ben-Gurion’s attempt to turn the messianic vision into the substitute, super-ideology of the State seemed both invalid and dangerous. Invalid because messianic consciousness was not the main factor in stimulating the modern Jewish revival. Dangerous because it introduced meta-historical tension and expectation into concrete reality, and invested the state with status that went beyond the here and now. He tried to explain the normative significance of the messianic vision concept to Ben-Gurion. This idea, he wrote, marks the “termination of history, the termination of life in real time, whereas we, setting up the Jewish state, are entering history.” From this stemmed his conclusion that after statehood the move from one phase of history to another took place, but the move from the historical to the super-historical plane did not occur and therefore the messianic concept did not replace the Zionist concept. If the goal was to root the youth, he concluded, they should not be educated in light of a super-historic reality but according to a historic continuity of events.<sup>19</sup>

Anita Shapira states

prior to the establishment of the state, Ben-Gurion regarded Zionism as a new, modern phenomenon in the annals of Israel, the antithesis of generations of yearning. Now he was declaring that the new immigration to Israel stemmed from the yearning of generations of Jews and their profound spiritual affinity with the ancient homeland that is as old as our People.<sup>20</sup>

In my opinion, the change that occurred in Ben-Gurion can be explained by examining the discussion that took place between him and Rotenstreich in its historical context. In the “thirties” Ben-Gurion thought that East European Jewry would be the consolidating force of the Zionist concept, that is, immigration to Eretz–Israel and the establishment of the state. When the Holocaust erased this possibility, he thought that Zionism had been emptied of its original content and sought a substitute, which he found in the messianic vision and the model of a historic leap. For him, the Bible, the messianic vision and the State of Israel were proof of pioneering, determination, resilience, and the yearning to create and realize. Ben-Gurion gave vent to these ideas after the Sinai Campaign because of what it symbolized for him. The return to Sinai, the place of the renewed covenant with God and the return to Eretz–Israel inspired him with the messianic concept, which crystallized an utopian perception free of historical ties and research obligations.<sup>21</sup>

## **2 The ideological assembly, 1957**

In August 1957, the acting chairman of the Jewish Agency Executive, Zalman Shazar, initiated a study assembly to bring together public figures and organizations

from Israel and abroad to discuss the essence of Judaism and Zionism. The session devoted to problematical issues of the state and the Jewish People aroused special interest, particularly after Ben-Gurion presented his theory regarding the Zionist concept.<sup>22</sup>

Ben-Gurion reiterated his assertion that the Zionist idea would not have succeeded in evoking much response from the Jewish People had it not already absorbed the messianic vision of redemption over many generations. The sense of alienation and foreignness expressed in the word exile was present, he said, in all the generations after the destruction of the Second Temple. In his account of history, Ben-Gurion skipped the period of Zionist Organization activity toward the creation of a Jewish state in Eretz-Israel, moving straight on to describe the transformation brought about by the establishment of the state. It was the State of Israel, he asserted, that succeeded in making the essential transformation of the image, status and way of life of the Jewish People. Only statehood closed the cycle of Jewish history and "our lives became as they were in biblical times—one united, complete spirit and one existential experience that, in the framework of Hebrew, encompassed the lives of the individual and of the Nation." It is the duty of the state, on one hand, to strive for the ingathering of exiles. On the other hand, it must strive to deepen Jewish purpose and unity by means of Hebrew education, by intensifying the individual's affinity for the state and for the messianic vision of redemption. In light of this analysis, he had reached the conclusion that "the name Jew now says, at least to me, far more than the name 'Zionist.'"<sup>23</sup>

As mentioned, perhaps it was not coincidental that this sharp criticism and the attempt to find a substitute both for the Zionist idea and the Zionist Organization were publicly and so biting expressed, after the Sinai Campaign. Ben-Gurion felt that Israel had been strengthened by the campaign and that its status in the international arena had improved. It became clear that the state had, actually, won political and economic support from the American non-Zionists, compared to which the Zionist Organization had to enlist new members in the cause of Zionism. As Ben-Gurion saw it, this was the right time to continue to delegitimize the Zionist Organization and find a broader base on which to create the connection between the state and Diaspora Jewry.

Many of those participating in the assembly did not favor this Ben-Gurionistic concept. Prominent among the critics was Mordecai Kaplan, a leading American Zionist intellectual who developed the concept of Jewish cultural Reconstructionism, advocating Ahad Ha'am's view that Judaism, as much as Jews, must be saved. To this end, he asserted the need for a spiritual center for world Jewry in Eretz-Israel. His lectures on the consequences of Zionism and the changing reality for Diaspora Jewry in light of the establishment of the State have been collected in his book, *A New Zionism* (1955). The main point in Kaplan's "New Zionism" is that the doctrine negating the Exile should be revoked. In his view, the crisis in Zionism was also a crisis in Judaism, which presented a threat to the State of Israel and the unity of world Jewry. The crisis was focused essentially on the harshly conflicting viewpoints of those against the existence of the Exile and those who affirmed it. "Unless Zionism is capable of building a base

for close cooperation between the Israeli Jewish community and communities in the Diaspora,” Kaplan warned, “the outcome will be absolutely different from what Herzl and Ahad Ha’am intended.” Whereas Zionism exists for the sake of Jews, he added, the Jews do not exist for the sake of Zionism, which must therefore adapt itself to what is possible and logical to demand from the Jews. If not, American Jewry is likely to distance itself from Israel and restrict its support for the structuring of the Jewish society there. Achieving statehood was only the first step necessary in the redemption and spiritual revival of the Jewish People. Completion of this historic process would be possible only if Zionism were to become a religious movement, too, in keeping with the spirit of the times.<sup>24</sup> In light of the claim to the right of return to Eretz–Israel and the wish for Jewish existence in the Diaspora to continue, there was no alternative for this Nation, but to connect with the ethics of the Jewish faith and a way of life suitable to it. Furthermore, as far as Jews are concerned, the building of the State of Israel is more than an act of political liberation, “it is religion in action.” Kaplan wanted to create a new, three-dimensional Zionist synthesis—Ahad Ha’am’s spiritual view; Herzl’s political approach; and his own religious-ethical-pragmatic theory. In this way, he evolved his own innovative concept of Jewish existence henceforth.

In his address to the assembly, Kaplan presented his perception of Israel as the temporarily central source for the dissemination of Jewish culture, until such time as the Diaspora catches up in this respect and true cooperation between them becomes possible. He stated that it was necessary to redefine, from the social and ideological points of view, the concept of “Jewish Peoplehood.” In terms of social structure, the Jewish People as a whole can be seen as a hub with spokes: the Jewish community in Israel is the hub and the Jewish communities in the Diaspora are the spokes. The tradition in all its aspects and with all its commandments is the hoop that holds the spokes radiating from the hub. The hoop of pluralistic faith is what will sustain the Israeli hub and the Diaspora spokes as one. That is, Kaplan visualized a universal Jewish entity comprised of the historic center in Eretz–Israel and Diaspora communities that did not have an absolute common identity, but a shared and equal status. As mentioned, he considered Zionism to be the sole guarantee of continued Jewish existence.<sup>25</sup>

Kaplan urged Zionist Organization leaders to devote themselves to “the existence and solidarity of the Jewish People everywhere” and not only to the security and status of the State of Israel. He called this initiative “Greater Zionism”—an ideology that ordered the Judaic culture on a universal basis. Because the future of Judaism was contingent upon its being based and ordered on the Judeo-Zionist culture, he marginalized the issue of the ingathering of exiles to such an extent in his address that he failed to mention it among the main points of his program. A major element in Kaplan’s “Greater Zionism” was the annulment of the vision of the ingathering not only because it was unrealistic, but because it was dangerous. To focus on the ingathering of exiles, which was an impossible goal even if the majority of Jews wanted it, could result in the neglect of activity toward the improvement and maintenance of Jewish life in the

Diaspora, so that—paradoxically and tragically—Zionism could become a factor contributing to Jewish assimilation into the surrounding cultures.

Therefore, said Kaplan, the ingathering of exiles concept had to be replaced by a universal Jewish way of life in which the relationship between the Jewish community in Israel and Diaspora Jewry would resemble that of the Sun and the planets in its orbit. While he rejected the aspiration to gather the exiles, he did not negate the immigration of “experts in various technical and academic fields who would settle in Israel and help to build the country.” Ben-Gurion’s approach placed the state in the center, whereas Kaplan regarded the whole of the People of Israel as the focal point and the Zionist movement as the major instrument to actualize the relationship between it and the state. Ben-Gurion perceived Jewish life only in various contexts of the State of Israel. Compared to this, Kaplan saw the uniqueness of Diaspora existence as a whole within the one framework of Judeo-Zionist culture. Therefore he was against its destruction and proposed renewing the major values. In order to breathe a new spirit into it, he said, it had to be founded on three goals: “(a) return to Jewish Peoplehood; (b) return to Eretz-Israel; (c) return to religious life.”<sup>26</sup>

Another concept of Zionism was put forward by the well-known analyst of Zionism, Ben Halpern of the American Zionist Labor Movement. He admitted that Zionism was losing its hold in America in every sense. It was not achieving the ingathering of exiles, its thinking was not original compared to other views of the historic unity of the Jews, or in its support of the State of Israel, nor had it shown itself able to turn Hebrew education into a significant, shaping factor.

In his opinion, he said, the exile concept was the most consistent Jewish idea, the most Jewish creation of the Jewish people, the symbolic expression of the historic experience of this Nation. The sense of exile has endowed Jewish existence and history with their significance and their special identity.<sup>27</sup> To negate the exile concept would be to rob the Jews of their group memory and identity and the motivating force of their existence. The idea of the Exile is not political at source, but religious. Thus, there is no ground for the discussion as to whether or not the United States is part of the Exile and the “Exile deniers,” the “Exile cancellers” together with all those who ignore it, are mistaken. From Halpern’s point of view, Zionism stems from acknowledging the exile phenomenon, therefore the whole intellectual point of Zionism is to reject it, not to negate it. Zionism’s vitality flows from its opposition to the Exile as a cult and to the dispersal as a mission. It exchanged these for its own historic-activistic interpretation of the concept of redemption. Hence, those who ignore the historic significance of the exile concept are robbing the Nation of its memory and consciousness. According to Halpern, the point of existence is three-dimensional: memory of the past, will to exist in the present and hope of redemption in the future. Therefore, he continued, the exile concept in our times is significant for the whole of Jewry even though it is religious at source. After all, it symbolizes the amazing historic enterprise of ingathering exiles in spite of all difficulties and expresses the acceptance of the fact that the process will be lengthy and will not end in the foreseeable future. According to Halpern, only the sense of Exile stirs the hope of

ingathering exiles and differentiates between the ordinary Jew and the Zionist in the Exile.<sup>28</sup>

In identifying with the ingathering of exiles, even if he does not immigrate to Israel for one reason or another, the Zionist shares the experience that is likely to determine the fate of the Jewish People. He understands that Zionism has no present significance for a Jew in the Diaspora, unless he perceives its historical significance as an idea and a movement bearing the traditional concepts of Exile and redemption and gives them a modern interpretation. Halpern adhered to the belief in the principle of ingathering the exiles as an ongoing, perhaps endless process, but he knew that this principle was not real for the majority of American Zionists, including himself. He therefore placed his hopes in the few young people, pioneers in the making, who regarded the Exile as a personal problem, but were unable to live with the compromises that had to be made by American Jewry.<sup>29</sup>

In this respect, he shared Ben-Gurion's view. Like him, he minimized the value of American Zionism as a leading force in Jewish public life, but differed from Ben-Gurion in that he did not regard this weakness as hypocritical, but as acceptance of their inability to cope with the reality. He also stressed the limited ability of the Zionist state to influence Jewish life in the spheres of education and society and, apart from keeping its gates open to all Jews, its inability to help them politically. Therefore, he dismissed Ben-Gurion's inclination to replace the Zionist Organization with another Jewish organization. In his opinion, wherever the state was unable to act for reasons of internal Jewish affairs, for example the issue of Jewish education, the Zionist Organization had to bear the burden.

Why the Zionist Organization and not other Jewish organizations that had proved themselves? Because, by virtue of its outlook and its organizational structure, the Zionist Organization was the most suitable body to represent the Jewish People worldwide. On the one hand, Halpern estimated that the decline and assimilation of the Jewish people was not imminent, even in the Exile. On the other hand, he noted, just as the Nation had taken on various shapes in the past, so might it change in the future. "Those who immigrate will become different from those who remain in the Exile, the assimilated will become different from those who are steadfast, etc." Nevertheless, by its very existence, over and above transient differences, the Jewish People tend toward unity. The desire for unity is stamped on the essence of Judaism, and this must be nurtured.<sup>30</sup>

The elected leadership of the Zionist Organization also voiced their criticism of Ben-Gurion's point of view. Nahum Goldmann, President of the World Zionist Organization, stated that the relationship between Jews living in Israel and those living in the Exile should be marked by "the closest cooperation, of partners and not of builders and helpers." This cooperation is of importance since the State of Israel "will not be able to achieve even part of what the Zionist dreamers and thinkers envisaged." He also objected to Ben-Gurion's saying that it is possible to skip historical periods: "A Nation cannot choose the parts of history it likes and discard what it does not like."<sup>31</sup> The danger in this perception is that the Jews of Israel will begin a new history that is disconnected from the splendid past of the

Jewish People. The exile era saw the development of the humanistic, social, philosophical and religious perceptions of the Nation and to skip this period would create a rift between the Nation and the state.

The majority of the Israeli politicians who participated in the Ideological Assembly supported the idea that there is a difference in essence and in principle between the State of Israel and the Exile. They said that, as they saw it, the Exile was everywhere and it included American Jewry. Golda Meir, for example, said that only pioneering Zionism expressed the Zionist vision.<sup>32</sup> “Why are we not allowed to say that after the establishment of the state, only someone who packs his bags and immigrates to Israel is a Zionist?” she asked. Providing the answer to her own question, she said: “Because if the Jews remain in America and continue to sing about the Negev year after year, the Negev will remain a desert.”

Most of the participants in the Assembly were unable to reach an agreement on the essence of Zionist ideology and the role of the Zionist Organization in the era following the establishment of the state. However, although convictions remained largely unchanged, the importance of such meetings did not lie in the successful shaping of a common ideological platform, but in maintaining the dialogue between the respective leaders of the state and the Zionist Organization, as well as in the fact that the participation of other Jewish organizations contributed to securing the connection between the state and Diaspora Jewry.



## 8 Who is a Jew

Research on the “Who is a Jew” discussion throws light on Ben-Gurion’s ideology and his policy with regard to the question, which has direct bearing on the essence of the relationship between the state and Diaspora Jewry. Clearly, the answer to this question—as the basis for government policy on registering nationality—defines the status of certain immigrants as well as the nature of immigration to Israel. The discourse also served to examine Israel’s image as a state based on freedom of religion and diverse interpretations of the Jewish religion.

The “Who is a Jew” question was first placed on the government agenda in 1950, during the Law of Return debate. Two ministers of the religious parties—Yehuda Leib Maimon (Fishman) of Mizrachi and Yitzhak Meir Levine of Agudat Israel—wanted to know what was meant in the wording of the proposed Law by the stipulation that every “Jew” had the right to immigrate. Ben-Gurion was against discussing this question and succeeded in persuading the government to accept the proposed version without debate.<sup>1</sup> A clear definition was avoided because of its potentially divisive nature. The ministers well understood that any attempt to force a detailed definition would create serious dissent, even a government crisis, and they therefore adopted a stand that enabled the coalition to continue.<sup>2</sup>

This approach was not unrelated to the debate on the Law of Return, which was conducted at approximately the same time. In 1950, two years after independence, the state’s existence was still seriously threatened by the Arab countries and by socio-economic instability at home. Therefore, the government as a whole and the Prime Minister in particular tried to avoid controversy likely to detract from the main effort—the shaping of the state and the absorption of immigrants. There was government consensus on the importance of the Law of Return as an expression of the Jewish character of the state and as a document consolidating its goal—a Jewish state to which every Jew had entry by natural right. Incidentally, the ministers from the religious parties were aware that the Law of Return had no direct bearing on legal interpretations of *Halachic* definitions and, apparently, this was also why they accepted Ben-Gurion’s view.

However, the ultimate question that had been bubbling below the surface broke through cracks in the consensus. In 1956 and 1957, immigration from East

Europe revived for a while, bringing with it mixed-marriage couples, that is, Jews married to non-Jews. This raised problems in the registration of these immigrants and their children in terms of the Population Registration Order, 1949 (requiring citizens of the state to register their religion and nationality). Special problems arose in cases of families where the woman was Jewish and the man non-Jewish—the women and children were registered as Jewish without question, whereas the men were registered as non-Jewish. However, difficulties also arose in cases of children whose mother was not Jewish, since they were not Jewish according to *Halachic* law.

At first, before the renewed immigration from East Europe, this matter was handled administratively. On January 26, 1955, a directive issued by Minister of the Interior Israel Rokach, of the General Zionist party, required that the religion and nationality of children from a “mixed-marriage” had to be registered on the basis of a declaration signed by the parents. Over two years later, on March 10, 1958, the incumbent Minister of the Interior Israel Bar-Yehuda of the Ahdut Avoda-Po’ale Zion party, issued the following directives: “(a) any person who could honestly declare himself a Jew, must be registered as such without having to provide any further proof; (b) both parents must declare that their children are Jews and that they regard this declaration as the children’s own legal declaration.”<sup>3</sup>

Ministers Hayim Moshe Shapira and Yoseph Burg, of the Mafdal (National-Religious Party) objected to these guidelines. A committee was appointed, consisting of the Ministers of Religious Affairs, the Interior and Justice, to discuss the problem and propose a suitable solution. Since the ministers could not come to an agreement, Ben-Gurion proposed slight changes in the directives, according to which the person declaring himself to be Jewish would be required to add the declaration that he did not also belong to another religion. He confirmed the directive concerning children of “mixed-marriages,” as earlier.<sup>4</sup>

This compromise declaration was not acceptable to the ministers from Mafdal, who demanded that the said children be registered in keeping with Halacha in cases that were doubtful according to rabbinical rulings. Ben-Gurion tried to explain to them that his proposal related to the population registry alone and that he did not intend to interfere in rabbinical matters, but this explanation did not reassure them.<sup>5</sup> On June 22, 1958, the government rejected the Mafdal ministers’ demand, although they were aware that this could lead to their resignation.<sup>6</sup> Ben-Gurion also wrote in his diary, that “the religious parties [won’t] return to the government soon” if it does not agree to accept “rule by the rabbis.”<sup>7</sup> Indeed, a few days later, the Mafdal ministers submitted their letters of resignation, in which they said, among other things: “In our opinion, the decision as passed by the government contravenes Torah Law and is likely to create a split in the Nation—in Israel as well as the Diaspora; it also constitutes a blow to the status quo on matters of religion as per the coalition agreement when the government was formed.”<sup>8</sup> Ben-Gurion immediately informed the Knesset.<sup>9</sup>

Basically, Ben-Gurion thought that his concept of Judaism was not less valid than that of the religious circles. Nevertheless, as far as possible, he wished to

refrain from an open clash of opposing points of view during that period. He chose instead to express his views by means of *Hasdarah*, “Regularization,” a political mode initiated and shaped largely by himself.<sup>10</sup> His policy regarding the “Who is a Jew” issue was influenced by a set of interwoven principles. On the one hand, he feared that if he were to accept the *halachic* interpretation, mixed-marriage families—a fairly common phenomenon in East European and Western countries—would be discouraged from immigrating. On the other hand, the principle of regularization and the will to prevent a split between the religious and secular elements in the population had to be taken into account.

One week after the resignation of the Mafdal ministers, Ben-Gurion wrote to Rabbi Maimon, a past Minister of Religious Affairs who was now regarded as the spiritual leader of Mafdal. In his letter, Ben-Gurion pointed out that since the establishment of the state, Israel’s governments—which had always included representatives of the religious parties—had applied laws that deviated from the spirit of *Halacha*, for example, granting women the right to vote. Despite this, he observed, the religious parties did not resign from government coalitions. He was trying to prove to Rabbi Maimon that the premise that Israel was a state governed by law and not by *Halacha* was accepted by the religious parties, too. He was therefore baffled by the ministers’ resignation. “The government had not intended to make a *Halachic* ruling,” he said, “nor does intend to make such rulings.” Whereas the Declaration of Independence proclaims the preservation of freedom of religion and conscience in the state, it does not establish that these will be controlled by the Rabbinate. On the contrary, the state cannot accept *Halachic* principles with regard to the issue of “Who is a Jew,” since “in matters of religion and custom there is no unification among the Jewish People; in America there are Orthodox, Conservative, Liberal, and Reform rabbis.” In view of this actuality, the Prime Minister concluded that decisions likely to lead to “religious wars” should be avoided.<sup>11</sup>

Rabbi Maimon replied that he agreed with the view that Israel was not a theocratic state, but it was the state of the Jews, “the continuation of our historic nation, connected to the unique, original, ancestral Jewish tradition. The rabbis of today do not decide who is a Jew. This is clearly established in our sacred literature and has been manifested in the lives of our Nation throughout the generations.”<sup>12</sup>

That is to say, Rabbi Maimon accepted freedom of religion on condition that it did not contravene *Halacha*. Ben-Gurion, however, claimed that there were a number of interpretations of Judaic tradition and the state was not obliged to function according to *Halacha*. The resolution concerning registration was presented again as an administrative decision that did not interfere with rabbinical ruling. “The main, definitive question,” Ben-Gurion wrote,

is whether the laws of the state are made by the Nation according to its understanding, needs and spirit as determined by the Nation, or whether the Nation is bound in advance to *Halacha* and not entitled to make laws that contradict *Halacha* . . . and the answer is that the state is authorized to pass a law even if the law contradicts *Halacha*.

He was of the opinion that religion is part of Judaism, but Judaism is not part of religion and therefore the assumption that a secular Jew was not a Jew was invalid. Jewish nationality was not based on *Halacha* nor on Jewish religion. The state had to meet the public's religious needs, but "it had to refrain from religious coercion of any kind" in order to prevent "cultural war that would, heaven forbid, lead to a split in the Nation."<sup>13</sup> In view of this, Ben-Gurion seldom related directly and explicitly to the question of Jewish identity, or to various religious or national definitions of the nature of the Jew.

Ben-Gurion, seeking additional channels for dialogue with the leaders of Mafdal, asked Pinhas Rosen, the Minister of Justice, to meet with them. In the course of this meeting, Rosen heard a compromise proposal centered on removing nationality from the population register and settling for religion. Rosen conveyed the proposal to Ben-Gurion, who swiftly rejected it. If the nationality clause was omitted from the register and there was no clause stating that the person registering was "Jewish," he claimed, a separation would be created between the Jews in Israel and those in the Diaspora. The former would be defined as "Israelis" and the latter as "Jews" and the common denominator would be only the religion and not the Nation. A decision of this sort would serve the supporters of a separation between Jews living in Israel and Jews living in the Diaspora, in keeping with the "Canaanite" philosophy.<sup>14</sup> Instead, Ben-Gurion accepted the compromise solution, suggested by Rosen, that the children of non-Jewish mothers in cases of mixed-marriages be registered as "adopted Jewish nationality."<sup>15</sup>

Naturally, the rift with the Mafdal ministers also had an influence on the stability of the coalition. Before this faction's resignation, the coalition rested on the support of 80 of the Knesset Members, whereas only 69 now remained. Because of this, the Mapai faction called for a discussion of the crisis, during which Ben-Gurion proposed that the sons of mixed-marriages be circumcised and then registered as Jews. He explained his proposal, saying that "even among the most heretical Jews and atheists circumcision is acceptable . . . if parents in all honesty say that the child is Jewish, it means that he is circumcised." However, he did not agree to a ritual immersion for girls since, "Judaism does not insist on immersion . . . if that's what the mother and father want, so be it and if not, not."<sup>16</sup> Many of the faction did not accept this proposal because they feared that the rabbinate would treat such girls as half-Jewish and would subject them to difficulties when it came to marriage, divorce, burial, and other services.<sup>17</sup>

While Ben-Gurion and his government were embroiled in the matter of registration, a revolution took place in Iraq and Kassem rose to power.<sup>18</sup> Ben-Gurion recorded in his diary that "In light of these dangerous developments, I have found it necessary to cancel the registration discussion and have composed a proposal which I have sent to all members of government." His proposal was to designate a committee composed of the Prime Minister and the Ministers of the Interior and Justice to phrase directions for the registration of children of mixed-marriages whose parents wish to register them as Jews. The proposal also stated that this ministerial committee would approach the "Savants of Israel" in Israel and abroad for their assessment of the subject. When the process concluded, a list would be made of "Registration Orders in keeping with accepted tradition in all

spheres of Judaism—orthodox and liberal—and under the special conditions prevailing in Israel as a sovereign Jewish state wherein freedom of conscience and religion are central to the ingathering of exiles.”<sup>19</sup>

It is reasonable to suppose that Ben-Gurion’s proposal was not prompted mainly by fear for the security of the state because of the revolution in Iraq, but that the revolution served as an excuse to bring back the Mafdal ministers and strengthen the coalition. Ben-Gurion was aware that agreeing to Mafdal’s demands would cause the resignation of the Mapam and Ahdut Avodah ministers, who opposed changes to the Interior Minister’s decision, and he hoped that the approach to the “Savants of Israel” would bypass this obstacle. The idea of approaching the “Savants of Israel” was unprecedented in Israeli politics and in Ben-Gurion’s opinion it showed the wide scope of possible interpretations of the “Who is a Jew” question. Further, it underlined the fact that this was an overall Jewish issue and not a religious question to be decided by the Chief Rabbinate of Israel. This step could satisfy all the coalition parties and obtain a noncommittal agreement, while showing Diaspora Jewry that the State of Israel protected freedom of religion and did not reject any stream of Judaism.

After consulting the Minister of Justice, Ben-Gurion proceeded to prepare his address to the Knesset. Minister of Foreign Affairs Golda Meir, however, advised him to “drop the speech and just present the government’s decision.” Minister of Education Zalman Aranne and Minister of the Interior Bar-Yehuda disagreed with her and were in favor of a long speech. In the end, Ben-Gurion opted for a short announcement and on July 15, 1958, he declared that the directives for registering mixed-marriage families were suspended pending an assessment of the matter by the “Savants of Israel.”<sup>20</sup> He emphasized that Israel is a state governed by law and not by *Halacha*, which protected freedom of conscience and religion. When he concluded his announcement, the Herut and Mafdal factions proposed a vote of no confidence in the government, but this was rejected.<sup>21</sup>

In view of the resolution, the letters were sent to the “Savants of Israel” during October 1958. The letters pointed out the importance of listing the religion and nationality clauses for reasons of national security and the nature of the Law of Return. In addition to an explanation of the background to this approach, the letters gave four guiding principles for the replies:

- 1 The Declaration of Independence and the basic guidelines for all the governments of the State of Israel guarantee . . . freedom of conscience and religion and prohibit any religious or antireligious coercion.
- 2 Today, Israel is the center for the ingathering of exiles. The immigrants come from East and West . . . the confluence of exiles and their casting in one national mold is one of Israel’s vital and most difficult missions and efforts must be made to enhance that which unites . . . and uproot that which separates and alienates.
- 3 The Jewish commune in Israel is unlike the commune of exile Jewry. We are not a minority here under the pressure of a foreign culture and here there is no fear of assimilation with non-Jews . . . while mixed-marriages

abroad are a decisive factor in total assimilation and departure from Judaism, those mixed marriage couples who come here . . . are blending completely with the Jewish People.

- 4 Nevertheless, the Jewish People in Israel does not regard itself as a nation apart from Diaspora Jewry, but the opposite.<sup>22</sup>

The hidden question, of course, concerned the standards for registering “religion” and “nationality.” Would a parental declaration be enough, or would an additional ceremony or act be required in order to complete the registration of minors as Jews.<sup>23</sup>

The government resolution did not publish the identity of the “Savants of Israel” who were asked to answer. A study of the names of the fifty recipients of the letter produced nothing to indicate by what standards they were chosen. The list included rabbis, religious-court judges, and yeshiva principals, scholars in the fields of the humanities and Judaism, writers and jurists in Israel, Europe, and the United States.

On the face of it, three main answers could be expected:

- (A) conventional orthodox answer, reflecting *Halachic* tradition with regard to the interpretation of Jewish identity, as tabled in the “Shulchan Aruch” (Table of Laws): the religion and nationality of children must be registered according to their mother’s registration.
- (B) nonorthodox religious answer based on the premise that a formal obligation must be met and anyone born to a non-Jewish mother must undergo conversion before being registered as a Jew.
- (C) secular-political answer provided by the state according to absolutely secular criteria in the clear knowledge that these criteria are not empowered or validated by *Halachic* norms according to any interpretation.

Forty-five of the fifty “Savants of Israel” approached by the government responded to the challenge. Thirty-seven (that is, over 80 percent) supported the orthodox-religious position in saying that *Halacha* is the basis for the definition of who is a Jew. The remaining eight answers did not fall in line with *Halacha*. The common denominator among those holding the orthodox-*Halachic* point of view was that they completely associated “religion” with “nationality” and their understanding of the concept of Jew. They stated that from the *Halachic* point of view, the only valid entry to Judaism was according to the ways established throughout the generations. Only a person born to a Jewish mother, or one who was converted strictly in accordance with the rules tabled in the “Shulchan Aruch,” is considered to be a Jew.<sup>24</sup> The common denominator among those who rejected the orthodox-*Halachic* answer was in their free thinking, secular perception of the State of Israel and its spiritual goals, as well as their concept of Jew.<sup>25</sup>

Parallel to his approach to the “Savants of Israel,” Ben-Gurion decided to appoint Rabbi Yaacov Moshe Toledano, who was considered to be a nonparty man, to the post of Minister of Religious Affairs. This appointment was intended

to give added expression to his view that neither the religious parties nor the Chief Rabbinate had exclusive authority in matters related to religion.<sup>26</sup> The Mafdal and Herut factions reacted by proposing another vote of no confidence and during the Knesset debate on the proposal, Ben-Gurion said that the state was committed not only to guard freedom of religion and conscience, but also to prevent “religious and anti-religious coercion.”<sup>27</sup> He again explained his opposition to the Mafdal ministers’ demand because, “in this era of ingathering exiles, we must not make final, fateful decisions that cause national dissent.”<sup>28</sup> He also made it clear that he was unable to agree on the political plane that the authority to make decisions on matters of state connected to religious affairs should reside anywhere but with the government: “There will not be two governments in Israel. One elected by the people, responsible to the people, and one established by the rabbis of the national-religious party.”<sup>29</sup>

The opposition to the directives given to the Minister of the Interior, to the approach to the “Savants of Israel” and to Toledano’s appointment did not come only from the Mafdal leadership. Rabbis and Torah scholars in Israel and throughout the Diaspora also entered the fray. For example, the Chief Rabbis of Israel, Rabbi Yitzhak Halevi Hertzog and Rabbi Yitzhak Nissim, and the Rabbinical Council in Israel declared: “These directives are counter to the laws of our sacred Torah and implementing them could lead to chaos in Israel’s families . . . creating a mixed multitude that has nothing to do with the historic image of the children of Abraham.”<sup>30</sup> The Mizrahi movement’s leaders in the Diaspora sent cables of protest to Israeli embassies worldwide.<sup>31</sup> The Union of Rabbis in the United States sent a delegation to Israel in order to examine the situation close at hand and to meet with Ben-Gurion.<sup>32</sup> They also sent letters to Ben-Gurion himself. His reply to these protests was:

I respect the Mizrahi movement’s national-religious outlook . . . however, I also respect Jews who do not live by *Halacha* and are dedicated to building the country . . . In these times, when we are only at the beginning of the redemption, we must treat the different opinions that prevail among us with respect . . . In this period of the ingathering, we must not make fateful social and spiritual decisions, instead we must seek compromise founded on tolerance and mutual respect and on freedom of religion and conscience.<sup>33</sup>

Other Jewish organizations, mainly in the United States, did not participate in the discussion, but waited for the government’s final decision on registration. It is worth mentioning that, at this stage, the question of the validity of Reform and Conservative conversions was not under discussion, therefore these organizations did not feel that the argument had a direct bearing on them.<sup>34</sup> The Jewish Press in the United States published a number of articles explaining the essence of the discussion, but only a few of these articles expressed the writer’s opinion.<sup>35</sup>

Meanwhile, another coalition crisis occurred which sidelined discussion on the answers from the “Savants of Israel” and the registration issue. In July 1959, Mapam and Ahdut Ha’avoda opposed the sale of Israeli arms to West Germany

and supported a vote of no confidence in the government. Ben-Gurion immediately resigned from the premiership and the government became transitional until elections to the Fourth Knesset, early in November 1959.<sup>36</sup>

On December 16, 1959, Ben-Gurion presented his new government to the Knesset. With regard to the clause on religion, the outline stated: "The government will prevent all religious and anti-religious coercion from any quarter . . . will establish freedom of religion and conscience . . . the government will maintain the status quo in religious matters."<sup>37</sup> Mafdal was a partner in this government and the head of the party, Hayim Moshe Shapira, was given the Internal Affairs portfolio. This party's return to the government was made possible, among other things, by an explicit promise from Ben-Gurion that the government would authorize new rules for registering religion, in the spirit of the claims made by the religious parties. This promise was noted in a letter from Ben-Gurion to the Minister of the Interior on January 4, 1960.<sup>38</sup> On assuming his duties, with no prior discussion or clear decision having taken place, Shapira published new directives to the registry clerks. They were ordered to register as Jews only those who were born to Jewish mothers and did not belong to any other religion, or those who had undergone conversion to Judaism according to *Halacha*. With regard to the children of mixed marriages, registration would be according to the mother's religion. Thus the stringent *Halachic* criterion for population registry came into effect even though the matter itself was not brought to the Knesset and did not have its approval. Nevertheless—and precisely because the new directives were not sanctioned by the law of the state and were not authorized by the Knesset—the assumption seems to be that the State of Israel is governed by law and not by *Halacha*.

Researchers into the subject of "Who is a Jew" are divided in their conclusions. Moshe Samet, for example, claims that it was possible to know in advance that at least 60 percent of the "Savants of Israel" who were questioned would side with the traditional point of view. From this he inferred that Ben-Gurion was not at all surprised by the answers given by the "Savants of Israel" and, as a matter of fact, had even invited them as a way out of his earlier opposition to Mafdal's demands. As he put it, "It is difficult to shake off the impression that the Prime Minister was forced to accept Mafdal's stand and was looking for an honorable way to justify his surrender to 'religious coercion'."<sup>39</sup>

Although this claim should not be rejected out of hand, it is difficult to accept it as the main explanation of the matter. Ben-Gurion could have found other excuses to retreat from his stand on the "Who is a Jew" question, without bothering the "Savants of Israel." Actually, Ben-Gurion's behavior in this affair reflects his tendency to digress when it came to questions of an absolutely political nature and issue an opinion, or even directives in matters of religious and spiritual principle. It is important to note that in the past, too, he frequently met with religious and spiritual leaders with whom he conducted discussions and arguments on weighty topics.<sup>40</sup>

Avner Shaki thinks that putting the "Who is a Jew" question to the "Savants of Israel" was meant to serve as "a demonstrative move by Ben-Gurion and his comrades in the government". According to Shaki, "The object of this



demonstration was to take a stand on principle . . . that the government did not regard the Chief Rabbinate in Israel as an authorized institution and certainly not as an obligatory institution” in questions touching on the identity and nationality of Jews in Israel and the Diaspora.<sup>41</sup>

Eliezer Don-Yehiya, like Shaki, sees Ben-Gurion’s approach to the “Savants of Israel”—an extensive and varied group of intellectuals in Israel and Diaspora Jewry—as a concrete expression of his oft repeated assertion that Judaism is pluralistic by nature and that the rabbis and traditionalists do not have the monopoly in deciding the technique and setting the criteria for being part of it.<sup>42</sup> Don-Yehiya adds—apparently correctly—that Ben-Gurion did not hold the concept of pluralism in the Western-liberal sense, which leaves religious decisions to the individual or the voluntary congregation without the state’s supervision or direction. Ben-Gurion’s perception of sovereignty did not come to terms with restricting the state’s involvement to providing services in the fields of defense and economics and so forth. As he saw it, sovereignty was centered on the concept of the “educative state,” the state as bearer of the mission and the purpose, shaping, and directing its citizens’ values and way of life—as the matter here under discussion also indicates.<sup>43</sup>

To this, we must also add Ben-Gurion’s wish to avoid any resolution that might prove to be an obstacle to immigration. Accordingly, the way he chose was similar to the one he used in the debate to crystallize the Law of Return.<sup>44</sup>

If Ben-Gurion chose to approach the “Savants of Israel” even though he knew that most of the answers would side with maintaining the attachment to the Jewish tradition in the matter of registration, this choice, apparently, was first and foremost because he wished to prove that different perceptions do exist. He thought that his concept of Judaism, which represented the morality of the prophets and identification with the State of Israel as the central and overt content of Jewish national existence, was a legitimate expression and commentary on Judaism, no less than the orthodox approach which perceived the *Halacha* as the main basis and content of Jewish existence.

The “Who is a Jew” debate was also connected to the political power struggles between Mafdal on the one hand and Mapam and Ahdut Ha’avodah, on the other, and Mapai. Out of concern for maintaining optimal national unity and coalition stability, Ben-Gurion handled this crisis by trying to achieve compromise. When Mafdal refused, he strengthened his ties with Mapam and Ahdut Ha’avodah, however when circumstances changed, he did not hesitate to go toward Mafdal.

In the end, on receiving the replies from the “Savants of Israel,” Ben-Gurion agreed to the changes in the Population Registry directives, as requested by the Mafdal Minister of the Interior. This step was influenced by considerations of state, related to mutual compromises and concessions designed to maintain national unity and, as far as possible, to prevent a “culture war” on a religious background. According to Ben-Gurion’s assessment in those days at the end of 1959, it was more important to abstain from confrontations and splits on religious grounds within the state, than to fight for the principle that belonging to the Jewish People was open to many interpretations.

## 9 The capture and trial of Adolf Eichmann

The founders of the state felt it their duty to cancel (in retrospect) the helpless situation of the Jews in Europe and Mandatory Palestine during the Second World War in the face of Nazi Germany's mechanism for the annihilation of the Jewish People.<sup>1</sup> In 1950, therefore, two laws were passed affirming the state's commitment to take steps to punish those responsible for the massacre of six million Jews: legislation for bringing Nazis to trial—1950, and legislation for the prevention of and punishment for the crime of genocide—1950. Apart from this, information was gathered about the leaders of the Nazi regime who had managed to find asylum in various countries and Israeli intelligence began to track them down.

Although international law did not permit Israel to intervene in other countries' policies with regard to their Jewish citizens, the state followed events in this sphere out of moral commitment and because of lessons learned in the past. On December 25, 1959, swastikas were drawn on the walls of a synagogue in Cologne, Germany, starting a wave of antisemitic incidents that spread rapidly through 32 countries worldwide and lasted until February 1960. In that period, swastikas were drawn on the walls of Jewish institutions and Jewish businesses, Jewish cemeteries were desecrated and antisemitic slogans appeared in many cities.<sup>2</sup> In the wake of these events, the Israeli government sent letters to the relevant governments expressing its shock.<sup>3</sup> Since these acts were the work of private individuals, Israel's response was not seen as intervention in the internal affairs of the respective countries, but as an expression of its moral right. A letter was also sent to the United Nations Sub-Committee for the Prevention of Racial Discrimination, which discussed the matter. Following its recommendations, the Human Rights Committee condemned the antisemitic disclosures and declared that they contravened the United Nations Charter and the Declaration of Human Rights. The committee called on the countries and UN institutions to take steps to prevent repetition of the acts and to punish the perpetrators.<sup>4</sup>

The Foreign Ministry instructed Israel's representatives abroad to keep track of antisemitic incidents, to hold meetings with government representatives and public figures to draw their attention to such incidents, as well as to work towards strengthening Jewish communities through meetings with community leaders and to take part in prayers "in synagogues that have been desecrated and publicize their visits."<sup>5</sup>

Israel's policy in this affair was based on the understanding that the state had to guarantee the safety of Jews wherever they were. This perception also provided the basis for the efforts to trap Nazi leaders and was implemented in a secret Mossad mission for the capture of Adolf Eichmann and his transfer to Israel to stand trial.<sup>6</sup>

On May 15, 1960, Ben-Gurion wrote in his diary: "This morning Isser's messenger arrived to notify me that Eichmann has been identified and captured [in Argentina] and that he will be brought here next week . . . if there is no mistake in the identification—after all, it is an important and successful mission."<sup>7</sup> On May 21, 1960, Eichmann was secretly put on an EL Al plane which was bringing home the Israel delegation to the 150th anniversary of Argentina's independence. Two days later, Ben-Gurion informed the Knesset:

A short time ago the Israeli security services exposed one of the greatest Nazi criminals, Adolf Eichmann, who was responsible together with the Nazi leadership for what they called "the Final Solution to the Jewish Problem"—that is, the annihilation of six million European Jews. Adolf Eichmann is already under arrest in Israel and he will soon stand trial in Israel in accordance with the law to bring Nazis and their helpers to justice—1950.<sup>8</sup>

Naturally, this announcement was immediately published in the press and caused a storm throughout the world, together with a discussion about Israel's right to judge Eichmann. The American prosecutor at the Nuremberg Trials, Telford Taylor, proposed renewing the international court that had tried the leaders of the Nazi regime at the end of the Second World War, for Eichmann's trial. Israeli judges, he claimed, would not be able to give a fair trial to a man who was responsible for the annihilation of millions of Jews.<sup>9</sup> Two important newspapers in the United States, the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times*, published editorials against holding the trial in Israel (although they were not against the fact that Eichmann should be brought to justice).<sup>10</sup>

While American Jews were amazed by the operation, they also expressed concern about its overall effect on the status of Jews in the Diaspora and their relations with Israel. One of the main questions in this context was whether the decision to try Eichmann in Israel would not create a precedent making the Jewish state the representative not only of its citizens, but also of world Jewry. First to raise this question was Judge Yosef Proskauer, who was, as mentioned, the president of the AJC at the end of the nineteen-forties. He emphatically demanded that Ben-Gurion must "find a way to return that person to West Germany, or put him on trial before an international court."<sup>11</sup> Attached to the letter was a copy of an editorial in the *Washington Post*, asserting that the State of Israel was not authorized to represent Jews living in other countries or to act in the name of an "imaginary ethnic Jewish unit." This statement reflected the opinion of the AJC leadership, who emphatically reiterated their view that Jews living in free countries in the Diaspora were first of all citizens of those countries and, therefore, the government of Israel had no right or authority to represent them, speak

for them or even try to defend them against antisemitic attacks.<sup>12</sup> This was a clear expression of the delicate situation encountered by the AJC in its attempt to strike a balance between maintaining its Jewish American identity and loyalty to the wellbeing of Israel.

Ben-Gurion answered Proskauer in a five-page letter in which he presented a range of reasons for holding the trial in Israel. First, he wrote, the murdered six million “believed and felt with all their might that they belonged to the Jewish People and that there was a Jewish People in the world.” Therefore, they are absolutely identified with the State of Israel, since it is the Jewish state established after the Second World War and the Holocaust, when it became clear that “the six million Jews did not have their own autonomous power to come to their rescue” in those horrifying times. The German government, Ben-Gurion noted, in agreeing to pay reparations to Jews who had suffered at the hands of the Nazis, recognized Israel as the representative of the Jewish People. Therefore, Eichmann would stand trial in Israel, the Jewish State, which is the “sole heir” of the six million murdered, because these millions “regarded themselves as part of the Jewish People . . . and the majority of those that remained alive immigrated to Israel.” The state not only had the moral right, but “historic justice obliges the Israeli government—as the Jewish government of millions of Jews who laid the foundations of the state and hoped it would come into being—to judge their murderers.” It is “an obligation to six million of our People who were murdered. We cannot relinquish this obligation; to do so would make us unworthy of being what we are.”<sup>13</sup> In this matter, Ben-Gurion’s strongly based perception of the significance of the state for the whole Jewish People was clearly evident and he did not give way, even to the AJC.

Meanwhile, it emerged that public opinion in the United States understood and was in the main, sympathetic to Israel’s intention to bring Eichmann to trial, but demanded that he be tried before an international panel of judges. Thus, because it was apprehensive about both American public opinion and the opinion of the Jewish community, the AJC preferred to abstain from taking a public stand and chose rather to observe the general mood of the American press in order to determine the right moment to declare its position.<sup>14</sup>

Zionist Organization President Nahum Goldmann also criticized the decision to hold the trial in Israel and, in an interview published in *Haboker*, proposed that Eichmann be tried by an international court.<sup>15</sup> Ben-Gurion reacted to this proposal in a sharp letter to Goldmann: “You have offended the feelings of the Jewish People. The publication of your proposal, knowingly or unknowingly directed at international public opinion, comes as a hard and serious emotional blow to the People in Israel (and not only in Israel, it seems to me).” He was not prepared to accept such criticism from the President of the Zionist Organization, who should have sided with the state, according to his outlook. Continuing the letter, Ben-Gurion affirmed the reasons for holding the trial in Israel. “It is the obligation of the State of Israel, the sole, sovereign authority of the Jews,” he declared, “specifically to expose this affair in all its dimensions and dreadfulness.”<sup>16</sup> The goal of the trial is to spread out “the sheet of horror and evil intrigue of the

Nazi regime against our People, not only Eichmann's deeds." This trial could only take place "in the sovereign Jewish state," which is the proof of Nazi Germany's failure.<sup>17</sup>

It bears mentioning that, at the time, negotiations were in process between the government and the Zionist Organization about expanding the latter's authority. Ben-Gurion was emphatically against this step and during related discussions in the Mapai Central Committee, he berated Goldmann: "You are neither Israeli nor American, you are a wandering Jew."<sup>18</sup>

The style of Ben-Gurion's letter to Goldmann, compared to that of his letter to Proskauer, was evidence of the difference in his attitude to them. Ben-Gurion did not expect the AJC to stand by Israel in every situation, but he made other demands on the Zionist Organization. Therefore he defined Goldmann's stand as an anti-Israel operation and even compared it to the stand taken by the well-known anti-Israeli organization, The American Council for Judaism. Furthermore, he took pains to publish his response in all the Israeli newspapers.<sup>19</sup>

Goldmann replied that he was not against trying Eichmann in Israel, but "because Eichmann and the Nazis did not destroy only Jews, it was worth inviting other countries whose citizens were murdered by Eichmann to send judges." If this suggestion was unacceptable, "at least lawyer-observers should be present in order to give the trial a straight and legalistic character."<sup>20</sup>

Hannah Arendt's direct criticism of Ben-Gurion's involvement in Eichmann's capture and trial is well-known.<sup>21</sup> She even accused him of staging the trial because his public image in Israel was threatened following the Lavon Affair.<sup>22</sup> Her main assertion, however, was that Ben-Gurion had used the trial as a means to consolidate Jewish awareness and unity by displaying the historic tension that exists between Jews and gentiles. She rejected this approach for two reasons: in the first place, since Hitler, antisemitism had stopped being acceptable in Western culture, therefore it could no longer be a reason for tension and separation between Jews and gentiles; in the second place, the establishment of the Jewish state cancelled the abnormal relationship that had existed between Jews and gentiles. This being so, according to Hannah Arendt, Ben-Gurion was knowingly nurturing the exile mentality in spite of being anti-Exile.<sup>23</sup> Her criticism of Ben-Gurion did not prevent Hannah Arendt from declaring that Israel had the authority to Judge Eichmann because it was the Jews' state: "Since the Jews have their own territory, the State of Israel, they have the right and the authority to judge the crimes that committed against them, just as the Poles have for crimes committed on Polish soil."<sup>24</sup> Nevertheless, she added, Israel had to explain the authority to judge stems from the fact that "territory," according to international law, is "a political-legal concept and not only a geographical one."<sup>25</sup>

Parallel to the debate about conducting the trial in Israel, the state had to handle a sharp dispute with Argentina, which regarded the Eichmann kidnapping as a serious offence against its sovereignty.<sup>26</sup> On June 1, Aryeh Levavi, Israel's ambassador to Argentina, was summoned to a meeting with Argentina's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Diogenes Taboada, and asked to officially answer whether it was true that an Israeli commando unit had entered Argentina's territory and

kidnapped Adolf Eichmann.<sup>27</sup> The Israeli ambassador asked the Foreign Office to send an explanation that would satisfy Argentina in order to prevent a situation in which “severed relations with Israel would be a critical blow to local Jewry and their activities for Israel, it would also threaten their status far and wide in Latin America, for a long time.”<sup>28</sup> Israel’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs replied: “When he was found, a group of volunteers brought him after he freely consented to come and stand trial in Israel.”<sup>29</sup> On June 8, 1960, Argentina’s Minister of Foreign Affairs informed the Israeli ambassador that the Government of Argentina demanded Eichmann’s immediate return, after which “the way is open for the Israeli Government to request that he be handed over, in accordance with International law.”<sup>30</sup>

In light of the complexity of the situation, Ben-Gurion decided to write a personal letter to Argentina’s President Arturo Frondisi. “I take a serious view of the formal offence against the laws of your country by those who found Eichmann,” he wrote, “but I’m sure that only a few people in the world will not understand our feelings and will not appreciate the higher moral validity of that operation.”<sup>31</sup> That is, Ben-Gurion estimated that Argentina would agree to an offence against its sovereignty because of the high moral importance of bringing Eichmann to stand trial.

However, Argentina brought the affair before the UN Security Council and requested a resolution that would reinstate its violated rights. The Security Council concluded its debate with the resolution that the kidnap of Eichmann was indeed an offence against Argentina’s sovereignty and Israel was asked to make “suitable compensation.” The delegates from the United States, Britain, and France declared that they regarded Israel’s apology to Argentina as “suitable compensation.”<sup>32</sup> In an attempt to overcome the difficulties between the two countries, efforts were made to arrange a meeting between Ben-Gurion, who was on a visit to Western Europe at the time, and the president of Argentina,<sup>33</sup> but Ben-Gurion refused since Argentina had approached the Security Council.<sup>34</sup> On July 23, 1960, the government of Argentina declared the Israel ambassador *persona non grata*, thus severing relations between the two countries.

Soon after, a wave of antisemitism broke out in Argentina’s press and slogans accompanied by swastikas appeared on the walls of Jewish institutions, declaring: “We demand Eichmann’s return” and “Death to the Jews,”<sup>35</sup> and a bomb was thrown into a Jewish culture club in La Plata.<sup>36</sup> The wave of attacks reached a peak when shots were fired at a group of Jewish high school pupils, critically wounding one of them. The latter attack was condemned by Argentina’s President, government, and congress as well as the press; however, no steps were taken against the perpetrators.<sup>37</sup> The Israeli government, which was striving to solve the crisis with Argentina at the time, did not raise the issue of antisemitism and the Jewish community in Argentina was left helpless. Naturally, these events lent weight to the concern expressed by Zionists and non-Zionists in the United States. They feared that a similar crisis in relations between Israel and the United States could lead to overt aggression toward the Jewish community.

Shabbtai Rosen, the Foreign Office's legal consultant, was sent to Argentina in July 1960, in an attempt to settle the crisis. He met the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the President, who informed him that Argentina had no objection to the trial, but could not accept the manner in which Eichmann's arrest was carried out. During his visit, Rosen also met fifty leaders of the Jewish community and the Zionist movement in Buenos Aires, bringing a message from the Foreign Minister—in which she expressed her admiration and acknowledgment of their proud stand throughout the crisis. Rosen attended the service at one of the synagogues on the eve of Tisha Be'Av. Together with the other meetings, this received coverage in the Jewish press, raising morale and allying the community's feelings of insecurity by demonstrating that they had the support of the State of Israel.<sup>38</sup> Finally, early in August 1960, the dispute was resolved and in December that year the new ambassadors to Israel and Argentina, respectively, presented their credentials.

The Eichmann trial opened on April 11, 1961. Robert Servatius, for the defense, requested the court to “disqualify itself because one of the judges [Benjamin Halevi, who was a judge in the Kastner trial] was prejudiced against the accused.” He added that, according to international law, the State of Israel had no authority to judge a person accused of committing crimes before it came into existence.<sup>39</sup> Dismissing these claims, the court dealt with the question of Israel's authority to try Eichmann. Basing itself on Israel's Declaration of Independence, the court declared that the Holocaust “was clear and renewed proof of the need to solve the problem of the Jewish People, deprived of independence and homeland,” by establishing a Jewish state whose gates would be open to every Jew.<sup>40</sup> As to the claim that Israel was not authorized to put Eichmann on trial because the crimes against the Jews were not committed within the sovereign borders of the state, the court replied: “The Nation and the crime are the same thing.” The aim was to annihilate the Jewish People and the Jews living in Israel were “part of the Jewish People that the accused, in terms of the charges against him, wanted to destroy.”

The judges' position can be summed up as follows: the State of Israel is obliged to place on trial those who worked for the destruction of the Jewish People in order to prevent them from becoming “a Nation who could be murdered without punishment.” Hitler and his minions exploited the lack of sovereignty and the vulnerability of Diaspora Jewry in their attempt to murder them in cold blood. The State of Israel was established, among other things, to correct, however minimally, the dreadful iniquity of the Holocaust. A means to this end is to punish the murderers who had done “Hitler's shameful work.” The court quoted international precedents which establish that a crime committed against a specific nation at a time when it lacked sovereign authority was open to trial after the event once the injured nation achieved territorial sovereignty, even when the crime had been committed in another country. Therefore, “the State of Israel, the sovereign state of the Jewish People is fulfilling its legislative duty in carrying out the right of the Jewish People to impose punishment.”<sup>41</sup>

The court also relied on precedent regarding the existence of the Jewish Nation in the global sense. The state that was declared to belong to this Nation was its

representative, in terms of international law and, therefore, Eichmann could be tried in Israel. This stand matched Ben-Gurion's principal claim that the Jewish People had a sovereign state with the authority to try the murderers of Jews.<sup>42</sup> On May 31, 1962, Eichmann was executed.

Ben-Gurion regarded the fact that the trial was conducted in Israel as a means to make a clear statement directed at four elements, the first being Diaspora Jewry, which had preserved its Jewish People hood, and the State of Israel, which was its representative and spokesman. In Ben-Gurion's words, "The State of Israel is the *state of the Jewish People*."<sup>43</sup> To the second element, the leadership of the Zionist Organization, he declared that since the establishment of the State of Israel, a change had taken place in Jewish history and it was no longer the Jewish organizations throughout the world who had to fight with meager resources for the rights and security of the Jewish People.

Henceforward, the protection of Diaspora Jewry was in the hands of the Jewish state, which guaranteed its security and welfare and was committed by all means and in every way to ensure that the events of the Holocaust would not fade into oblivion. There was no substitute for a state, therefore the leaders of the Zionist Organization must not expect to (continue to) conduct some of its activities in the international arena. To the third element, the countries of the world, he pointed out that it was impossible to dictate to the State of Israel where it may try the murderers of the Jewish People, nor who should judge them. History has proved that it was their unwillingness to stand up for and save the Jewish People that had indirectly contributed to Hitler's ability to implement his plan for the Final Solution. In the wake of the Holocaust, they were obliged morally and in the name of justice to assist Israel in bringing to trial those who planned to annihilate the Jewish people. To the fourth element, public opinion in Israel, he stressed the importance of the trial in the education of the young generation and those who had not heard about the horrors of the war:

To the new generation in Israel, who were born on the soil of the homeland and grew up in the free atmosphere of the Jewish state, never experiencing the taste of exile and perhaps knowing nothing about what was done to the Jewish People twenty years ago, this trial revealed the full tragic depths of a people in exile, dependent on the mercies of strangers and abandoned to the perverse hard-heartedness of tyrants who hated Israel.<sup>44</sup>

In this issue, Ben-Gurion succeeded in impressing his ideological perception of the existence of one Jewish nation. The State of Israel represented the overall interests of the Jewish People and was therefore qualified and obliged to try anyone who did injustice to the Jewish People. Since this was one of the foundations of his outlook, he refused to conduct the trial outside Israel's borders and was prepared to deliberately ignore the offense against the Argentina's sovereignty and to contravene international laws.



# 10 Two sides of the triangle

## 1 The Zionist Organization—The Jewish Agency

### *a Cooperation and discord*

The end of the first decade of statehood was a suitable time to examine the essence of the relationship between the State and the Zionist Organization. Since the Declaration of Independence the leadership of the latter had regarded close ties with Israel as the key to its status among Diaspora Jewry. This is the root of its demand for a Status Law, the signing of a “covenant” and participation in discussions connected with the Zionist Organization’s spheres of activity inside Israel. However, those at the helm, with Ben-Gurion in the lead, were against granting the World Zionist Organization special status and the recognition that it was the representative of Diaspora Jewry. As mentioned, Ben-Gurion insisted on a direct relationship between Israel and the Diaspora, without a go-between organization; thus the two bodies would cooperate in the zone between their opposing stands.

In March 1958, the Zionist General Council decided to establish a closer connection by creating “a methodical, consistent coordination between the activities of the government and the ZGC in those spheres where both were active.”<sup>1</sup> The Coordination Board, which was established in 1950 for the purpose of handling matters of immigration, absorption and settlement, failed to perform its tasks. It met only three times during 1957 in spite of the fact that the agreement stipulated monthly meetings. In the meetings that did take place, the discussion centered on the technical aspects of immigrant absorption and settlement, instead of functional guidelines for carrying out various tasks. The breakdown was not seen only in the Coordination Board, but also in the lack of coordination between the various government office, Jewish Agency departments, Israeli embassies all over the world and the representatives of the Zionist Organization in relevant countries. On the part of the government, projects in various spheres were implemented in cooperation with the Jewish Agency and with non-Zionist organizations, at times.

The reasons for the lack of cooperation between the government and the Jewish Agency were both objective and subjective. The Jewish Agency’s annual deficit

stood at \$300 million. The Agency's income was far below this sum, while expenses continued to grow. The drop in income stemmed from a general drop in contributions to the Appeals and the Agency's decreased ability to mobilize them, compared to other Jewish organizations, resulting from the Jewish Agency's loss of status mainly among American Jewry. However, as time passed the State was less in need of help from the Jewish Agency and managed to mobilize resources on its own and to carry out everything connected to immigrant absorption and it took control of these spheres of operation. Subjectively, Ben-Gurion's opposition to cooperation with the Jewish Agency and his criticism of the Agency leadership led to cooperation between government offices and other Jewish organizations; which gradually supplanted the Agency's in its traditional functions. Power struggles and Ben-Gurion's influence with the Zionist Organization also contributed to this situation.<sup>2</sup>

In light of the ZGC's decision (above) a committee was convened under the chairmanship of Giora Josephthal to consolidate a program for cooperation.<sup>3</sup> They were essentially seeking a change in the workings of the Coordination Board. They decided to set up two secondary committees, one to handle activities in Israel and the other to handle those conducted abroad. Other proposals were that the Institute should be authorized to study and suggest changes to government legislation relating to the Agency's activities; that the president of the Zionist Organization or the chairman of the Agency Executive be authorized to bring problems of principle and special significance before the government; that overseas representatives of Israel maintain constant close communications with the Zionist organizations; that the Foreign Minister should regularly convey information to the Agency Executive regarding everything to do with Israel's foreign policy.<sup>4</sup>

These proposals were presented during the Committee's meeting with Ben-Gurion. At the conclusion of the meeting, he asked those present whether they intended to place obligations on the Jewish Agency, too. First and foremost, he criticized the activities of the president of the World Zionist Organization, Nahum Goldmann. "I do not know," he said, "when he is acting as the president of the Jewish Congress, the president of the World Zionist Organization, or the private individual." He explained that the prime minister is open to the criticism of his ministers and the Knesset, whereas in the case of the president of the Zionist Organization, it is difficult to know the extent of his authority and obligations, since he is also the head of other organizations.

With this criticism, Ben-Gurion was mainly objecting to Goldmann's political activities in the cause of Jewish emigration from the USSR, the immigration of Moroccan Jewry, talks between Israel and Arab countries and ties with West Germany.<sup>5</sup> He acted without coordination with the Israeli government and more than once in contradiction to its policies. Ben-Gurion also opposed closer cooperation with the Zionist Organization because of the need and wish to enlist every "willing and able Jew, however little he is worth, since he can contribute more than an important Jew who is unwilling to help and can only do harm."

Ben-Gurion based this attitude on the fact that political and economical aid to Israel came mainly from non-Zionist organizations and on the idea that Israel could maintain relations with any Jewish organization, since “Israel has one ally—the Jewish People.” He estimated that even after the Sinai campaign, the danger from the Arab countries still existed and had even intensified owing to the characteristic instability of regimes in those countries. Israel’s top foreign policy aim was to gain America’s friendship and support in the political and economic spheres. Since relations between the two countries had run aground during the Sinai Campaign, new ways had to be found to reach American government circles.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, practical considerations were of considerable importance in Ben-Gurion’s attitude to the Zionist Organization, but his ideological position regarding allocation of roles between the Organization and the state, as well as the matter of the state’s seniority in this relationship, is not to be ignored.

Ben-Gurion’s opposition to cooperation with the Zionist Organization was also based on his claim that this body had not succeeded in attracting members from the young generation, therefore “it is virtually impossible to find any members under the age of fifty in the Zionist Organization.” The said lack of success, he said, stemmed from the fact that the Zionist Organization had not initiated an operation geared to attract the youth to Hebrew education with the focus on the bible and the spiritual heritage of the Jewish People. He asserted that only the state had the power to create an affinity “with the sources of Judaism, the knowledge of the Hebrew language and literature and, above all, with the Book of Books in the Hebrew original”; to enlist the young “in support of Israel’s political struggles and the development of its absorption projects.”<sup>7</sup>

An additional explanation for his opposition lay in the leadership crisis in the Zionist Organization of America. In October 1958, Emmanuel Neumann’s term as president of the Organization ended and a candidate had to be found for the position. Goldmann worked to promote Irving Miller—who had held the post in the past—and Miller agreed to stand for election on condition that Abraham Redelheim, the other candidate, waived his candidacy. When Redelheim refused, Miller withdrew and Redelheim was elected president, with Neumann as honorary president.<sup>8</sup> That is, the Organization failed to elect a prominent Jewish public figure who would try to lay down a course of action to change the situation. At the end of the fifties, the Organization was increasingly involved in its struggle to continue to exist, instead of looking for ways to restructure itself in general. Its status relative to other Jewish organizations diminished and the spheres of activity that had been its exclusive domain gradually opened to all the organizations.

Ben-Gurion’s opposition to the Jewish Agency’s proposals did not prevent him from presenting them to the government. The proposals were approved by the ministers, apart from those that would allow the Jewish Agency leadership to intervene in government activities in any sphere.<sup>9</sup> The committee regarded this decision as “basic amendments that, for example, change the entire content” of its proposals. Therefore, it asked Ben-Gurion to “bring the matter before the government again and notify” the committee of the final decision.<sup>10</sup>

Since difficulties had arisen concerning the initiative for closer cooperation between the government and the Jewish Agency, Goldmann looked for additional ways to enhance the Agency's status. Among other things, he proposed setting up an advisory committee alongside the Agency's New York Executive, with the participation of the non-Zionist Jewish organizations.<sup>11</sup> Ben-Gurion said, "This is a caricature of Weizmann's idea for enlarging the Agency." He refused to assist implementation of the proposal, since such a step was contrary to the interests of the state; it would be forced to communicate indirectly, instead of directly, with the non-Zionist organizations. Goldmann's proposal was tabled and passed by the government, in spite of Ben-Gurion's opposition.<sup>12</sup> On the basis of this resolution, the Coordination Board announced that it would seek "a joint way to establish strong mutual relations in accordance with the 1954 covenant."<sup>13</sup>

The controversy between Ben-Gurion and Goldmann continued to occupy them even after a solution was found for strengthening cooperation between the government and the Jewish Agency; the personal aspect contributed to the split between the state and the Zionist Organization. Their argument about the president of the Zionist Organization's right to act in matters relating to Israel was the continuation of past disputes and Ben-Gurion continued to reject Goldmann's claim, as he had rejected similar claims made by Emmanuel Neumann and Abba Hillel Silver. Ben-Gurion suggested that, if he wished to operate independently, Goldmann should resign. It was a serious matter, he said, therefore if it was not "settled clearly and decisively, there was no possibility of a partnership between the government and the president of the Zionist Organization."<sup>14</sup>

Goldmann responded that it was Ben-Gurion who had persuaded him to accept the presidency of the World Zionist Organization, even promising to give him state information and consult him on all the major political problems—a promise he failed to keep. Goldmann wondered why Ben-Gurion was demanding his resignation, when he himself expressed the opinion that "the Zionist Organization was superfluous, harmful and unnecessary." These declarations, Goldmann continued, were clearly contradictory to the pact and the old, recurrent resolutions passed not only by Mapai, but by the whole government.<sup>15</sup> To which Ben-Gurion replied, "Your demands on the government are groundless, according both to the law and to the pact."<sup>16</sup> It is worth noting that Ben-Gurion was using a rationale similar to the one used by Goldmann when he wanted to criticize the Zionism of the leaders of Zionist organizations in the Diaspora, to explain the need for immigration, to compare Jews living in Israel to those living in the Diaspora and so forth. Such expressions had more than once drawn criticism from leaders of Jewish organizations in the United States, and he responded with the claim that he had the right to express such opinions as a private individual and not as the prime minister, but this explanation was not sympathetically received.

Now a realistic, renewed argument developed around the question of the right of Jewish organizations throughout the world to intervene in Israeli policies that were likely to influence their status in their countries of domicile. Faithful to his sovereign outlook, Ben-Gurion opposed any kind of intervention that might influence resolutions contrary to the sole interests of the state. He stated that every Jew

had the right to intervene in matters of state as long as they immigrated to Israel, or shared its obligations. The leaders of American Jewish organizations countered with the declaration that Israel was obliged to take into account the expected influence (of Israel's resolutions) on their status. In the first decade of statehood, this was a main component of the dialogue between the state and American Jewry.

### ***b The 25th Zionist Congress***

Although, on the organizational plane, Mapai was one of the members of the "Ihud Olami" of Zionist Socialist parties, it was actually the major element in that body and dictated its ideology, its functions and its operational capabilities in the arena of the Zionist Organization.<sup>17</sup>

Generally, Mapai's involvement in matters connected with the Zionist Organization diminished considerably after the state was established and its institutions spent little time discussing them. However, prior to the 25th Zionist Congress, which took place in 1960, the Mapai Central Committee met to discuss the relationship between the state and the Zionist Organization, with particular reference to two subjects: the Zionist Organization's demand for closer cooperation between itself and the government and the inability to expand the Jewish Agency to include representatives from the non-Zionist Jewish organizations.

During this discussion—with the invited participation of Nahum Goldmann, president of the World Zionist Organization—it became clear that the majority of members of the Mapai Central Committee did not agree with Ben-Gurion's concept and policy. The party leaders, Levi Eshkol among them, were against looking for a different organizational framework, claiming that "we have no other heir today and we want to expand the framework to encompass the Jewish People as a whole." Naturally, party members holding senior positions in the Zionist Organization also opposed Ben-Gurion's stand. For example, Berl Locker, chairman of the Agency Executive from 1948–1956 and chairman of the Zionist General Council between 1959–1961, objected to Ben-Gurion's use of the term "scaffolding" in describing the Zionist Organization, meaning that "the Zionist Organization built the state before it existed, it built settlement, it built immigration, it built absorption," and therefore it was impossible to deny its deeds and replace it with another organization and to claim that it was redundant.<sup>18</sup>

Professor Nathan Rotenstreich, who had conducted a conceptual debate on the essence of Zionist ideology with Ben-Gurion,<sup>19</sup> now suggested his own definition of the Zionist concept: "A Zionist is one who acknowledges the existence of the Jewish Question and not only one who acknowledges the existence of the State of Israel." That is, a Zionist not only aids the state, but also recognizes the existence of Jewish nationality. Moshe Sharett adopted the opposite extreme of Ben-Gurion's stand and called upon "comrade Ben-Gurion and the prime minister to refrain from using derogatory terms in this matter," giving his definition of a Zionist as one who "could speak of the Jewish People and the concept (of Jewish Peoplehood) with due respect." In other words, Sharett, once openly

against naming the Jewish Agency “the representative of the Jewish People” in the Status Law, now became the main supporter of this definition, not only because he had revised his thinking, but also in light of accumulated experience and the complex relationship between himself and Ben-Gurion.<sup>20</sup>

Ben-Gurion listened to the criticism directed against him for ten hours and when he went to the podium, answered each of his critics. There was nothing new in what he said. He repeated his definitions of the obligations of the Zionist and the functions of the Zionist Organization. He reiterated his definition of the Zionist Organization as the “scaffolding of the structure” and stated that once the reality had changed, it was necessary to “remove this cladding” and set about replacing it with organizations of Jews who would be occupied with “Hebrew education, affinity with Israel, immigration to Israel, investment in Israel.”<sup>21</sup> It should be noted that while Ben-Gurion was raising his criticism to new heights, he refrained from going all the way and proposing that the “scaffolding” should be completely dismantled. Why? It seems that Ben-Gurion was not certain that a new organization, should one be established, would be capable of taking on the functions of the Zionist Organization as well as realizing the true Zionist enterprise. At this stage, he had not succeeded in crystallizing a complete, detailed program concerning the image of the new organization and the identity of the Jewish bodies that it would include. He was aware of the difficulty in breathing the spirit of Zionism and pioneering into America’s new generation and drawing Jewish organizations into the framework he envisaged. Therefore, for the time being, he preferred not to come out with an unequivocal demand to cancel the Zionist Organization and spoke only of an attempt to blend it into a new organizational framework.<sup>22</sup>

The press, at the time, described his outward appearance as follows:

Ben-Gurion waves both his thin hands in the air, his white hair disheveled, his short-sleeved, light coloured shirt open to the second button as he turns towards Dr. Goldmann, who sits in his buttoned-up white shirt and tie, hiding his face in the palm of his hand, his white hair perfectly groomed.<sup>23</sup>

The contrast between them, however, went much deeper. As mentioned above, the tension that prevailed between them had reached a peak after Goldmann publicly opposed holding the Eichmann trial in Israel.<sup>24</sup> Now, Ben-Gurion told him to his face: “You are not an Israeli! You are not an American! You are a wandering Jew!”<sup>25</sup>

Some time later, when Ben-Gurion received a delegate’s card to the Zionist Congress, he asked Mapai secretary Joseph Almogi to relieve him of the honor, for the following reason: “I can’t see it as a ‘Zionist’ organization, as I have understood the meaning of the term all my life and according to which I have acted.” He went on to explain that “Zionism that does not include immigration is devoid of content.”<sup>26</sup> This step was meant to demonstrate his displeasure with the Zionist Organization, rather than unwillingness to participate in the congress. He knew that the nonappearance of the prime minister at the Zionist

Organization's most important event would be interpreted as provocation. Nevertheless, despite his sharp criticism, he was obliged to participate in the congress and to differentiate completely between his personal conceptions and his function as prime minister. Therefore, he agreed to attend, but tried to avoid delivering a lecture to the assembly. Instead, he sent a summary of his lecture to Zalman Shazar, the Executive Chairman of the Jewish Agency, with the following letter:

I'm prepared to talk about the state and the Jewish People, in the course of which I will declare that the Zionist Organization has no Zionistic value . . . I will stress my position that a Jew who does not immigrate to Israel—does not deserve to be called a Zionist, unless the word Zionist is empty of all content.

In an additional letter, having reconsidered the content of his lecture, he asked Shazar to “release me from this unpleasant, useless duty,” since he had come to the conclusion that “the fleshpots are tremendously attractive, so why the sterile argument?”<sup>27</sup>

The 25th Zionist Congress opened in Jerusalem on December 27, 1960. Ben-Gurion delivered the opening address and, as promised, spared nothing in his criticism of the Zionist Organization's leaders. His main comments were devoted to the Zionist Organization's lack of action with regard to immigration and the provision of Jewish education to the young generation. He called on the delegates to decide if they were ready and able to “activate and ensure the necessary immigration to Israel in increasing measures.” The state, he said, needed the immigration of pioneers, the wealthy, scientists, Hebrew teachers, and writers, “to come here and invest their strength and fortunes in building the homeland by creating its culture, by increasing its security through enhancing its international weight and value.” He protested that it was not only the Zionists who were emptying the Zionist concept of all content by not being prepared to immigrate or work towards their children's immigration to Israel. Observant Jews, too, were “contravening the Torah of Israel by remaining in the Exile,” because “Israel's Faith is connected to Eretz-Israel through observance of the commandments (since) a large part of the commandments can not be observed in a foreign country.” In proof of this, Ben-Gurion quoted “our sages of blessed memory,” who said, “those who reside outside (Eretz-Israel) are like those who have no God.”

In the second part of his speech he compared the life of Jews in Israel to that of Jews in the Diaspora. “There aren't two authorities in Israel—the special Jewish authority for matters of custom and religion, and the common, human authority for the economy, science, work, general culture,” he said. Jewish life in the totalitarian countries as well as in the free democracies is pushed into a corner. In light of this reality, the former can expect “death-by-strangulation” and the latter, “the kiss-of-death—the gradual, unnoticed sinking into the abyss of assimilation.” If the Zionist Organization wished to change this situation, its movement had to center its activities on “the study of the Hebrew language,

Hebrew education, the history of Israel, bible studies, and Hebrew literature for the young generation.” Only by consolidating a program based on Hebrew education, the vision of messianic redemption and immigration, would it be possible to “protect it in the Diaspora and increase the success and security of the State of Israel.”<sup>28</sup>

There was obviously no innovative content in Ben-Gurion’s words, they were a repetition of the ideas he had presented on various other occasions. Nor was there anything new in their intensity. He spoke about the danger of the “kiss-of-death” at the Benei Berit conference in Jerusalem in May 1959.<sup>29</sup> He used the quotation from “our sages of blessed memory” about the importance of settling in Eretz-Israel in his essay “Zikah Le-Netzah Israel,” published in 1954.<sup>30</sup> This time, however, his words provoked criticism during and after the congress from other Jewish organizations as well as the Zionist Organization.<sup>31</sup> When all is said and done, the Zionist Congress had always been the Zionist Organization’s most important event. It was a demonstration of power and prestige, as well as a public display of what the Organization had achieved—and precisely on this occasion, against the background of hope that the state would help to improve the Organization’s situation, the prime minister voiced his unmitigated, negative criticism of it.

Irving Miller, chairman of the American Zionist Council declared that, “the Zionist movement in America, in its entirety—and I emphasize: in its entirety—is still the most impressive sector of American Jewish life . . . don’t damage this potential, don’t weaken it, don’t treat it with contempt and don’t undermine it.” Mordecai Kirshblum, president of the Mizrahi party in the United States, related to Ben-Gurion’s comments about the nonobservance of religious commandments by living in the Exile. “Hundreds, even thousands of years ago,” he said, “we accepted the basic idea of immigration (to Eretz-Israel) as essential to the spiritual and physical existence of the Jewish People.”<sup>32</sup> However, neither he nor any of the other speakers were able to take credit for any growth in the rate of immigration, nor could they present any plans in progress, and thus Ben-Gurion, who was demanding action and not ideological discussion, had the advantage over them.

Avraham Harman, Israel’s ambassador to the United States, drew Ben-Gurion’s attention to the echoes his words had called forth from American Jewry. “Every word has been received here as if the Prime Minister had directed them to each American Jew as a Jew and not specifically to those who called themselves Zionists.” He agreed with the view that the Diaspora Jew’s soul was split, but he wondered “whether this truth needed to emerge from the mouth of the Prime Minister himself, even if he said that he was speaking as a private Jew and not in the name of the Israeli government?” Harman also pointed out what influence the speech could be expected to have on the possibility of mobilizing the help of American Jewry in the spheres of politics, defense, and economics; he suggested considering whether there was any point in argument for argument’s sake or, “whether we should live with it as best we can, while making important use of it to further these matters.”<sup>33</sup>



The 25th Zionist Congress finally resolved that:

Immigration must be at the center of Zionist life in Jewish settlements wherever they may be. The Congress calls on the Jewish People far and wide to immigrate in their masses to Israel, in order to live a full Jewish life, to build the country and be built by it. The Zionist Organization must regard as their major objective the increase in immigration of all kinds: pioneers, members of the middle class, craftsmen, members of the free professions, the wealthy and so forth.<sup>34</sup>

Such resolutions had been passed in the past, too. However, they were and remained on the level of declarations and had no practical content.

### *c Encouraging immigration from the United States*

The establishment of a sovereign political entity which would offer rescue and refuge—for body and soul—to Jews wherever they may be, was one of the foundation stones of Zionist ideology from the beginning. Ben-Gurion, who never for a minute ceased to present the ingathering of exiles as “the point of the State of Israel’s existence,” was one of the proponents of immigration, immediately and at all costs. This was expressed with absolute clarity by the three principles—the ingathering of exiles, settlement, and national security—which he laid down at the outset, with immigration and absorption as the first priority.

Since the establishment of the state, most immigrants have come as a result of hardship, not choice. The majority arrived from East Europe, North Africa, and Asia. In the first decade of statehood, immigrants from the United States numbered 2,720 (some 0.3 percent of the total 906, 864).<sup>35</sup> Over the years, Ben-Gurion repeatedly stressed the importance of encouraging the immigration of American Jewish scientists, intellectuals, professionals, pioneers, and financiers, so that they could contribute to the stability of the state and participate in the effort to create a modern country that would blend with the Western world. However, the Jewish Agency, which was the main body handling immigration, failed in the task of encouraging American Jewry, as mentioned above. This was one of the reasons for Ben-Gurion’s disappointment in the Jewish Agency and why he did whatever he could to change the situation. Help came from an unexpected source.

Moshe Davis, Dean of the Teachers Training Institute of the Rabbinical College in the Theological Seminary in New-York, paved the way for the immigration of 150,000 Jews over a decade. In his opinion, the key to encouraging immigration lay in Israel’s ability to understand the unique character of the United States and the need for tools that were different from those being used to stimulate immigration from distressed countries. “We must,” he declared, “develop a program for persuading individuals for whom such immigration would be beneficial—in the sense of their actual human and personal enhancement.”<sup>36</sup> Davis presented his program to Nathan Rotenstreich, who recommended showing it directly to Ben-Gurion.

In concept, Davis' program matched Ben-Gurion's understanding of the need for immigration that would assist the state in "attaining the peak of contemporary intellectual, scientific, technical, and humanistic potential." Both of them regarded students and young university graduates as a potential nucleus of this type of immigration. Ben-Gurion wrote to Davis, saying that the state would take care of accommodation and employment, although not on the same level as in the United States. He went on to say that Israel offered the pioneering challenge of "taming the wilderness and the forces of nature . . . by shaping a new, exemplary society and by giving expression to the independent, original Hebrew genius in the sciences and humanities—ultimately ensuring the survival of Israel, the sovereign Hebrew nation casting its light on the Diaspora."<sup>37</sup>

Davis met with Philip Klutznick, president of the Benei Berit Organization; Nahum Goldmann, president of the Zionist Organization; and Israel Goldstein, president of the World Jewish Congress. They consented to join the founding committee of the body that would implement the program.<sup>38</sup> They decided first of all to try settling the young immigrants in Ashdod and to finance the operation by means of "landlords who are middle-aged and over."<sup>39</sup>

This Organization worried Shlomo Zalman Shragai, head of the Jewish Agency's immigration department. He decided to write to Ben-Gurion and remind him of the current effort to encourage immigration from the United States and to inform him of the difficulties it entailed. "When I arrived in the United States three years ago and began speaking about immigration," he wrote, "I encountered intense opposition, on the one hand, because I might swallow up American Jewry if I spoke about immigration . . . and, on the other hand, I was ridiculed for believing that there were Jews in America who were willing to immigrate."<sup>40</sup> In his reply, Ben-Gurion ignored the question of who would be responsible for encouraging immigration and reiterated its importance and contribution to both Israel and American Jewry.<sup>41</sup> Nahum Goldmann was afraid that this new initiative would cause further erosion in the status of the Zionist Organization and he therefore proposed that Ben-Gurion should appoint Giora Josephthal, a Mapai member, as head of the Agency's immigration department. By this he hoped to persuade Ben-Gurion to involve the Jewish Agency in the matter and then transfer it to the Coordination Board, for implementation.<sup>42</sup>

Opposition from the Zionist Organization was not the only cause of the difficulties encountered by Davis' program. It was of primary importance to find someone of senior status in American Jewry who was willing to run the project, harness the support of Jewish institutions, raise the necessary funds and create the conditions to encourage and spur educated young people to relinquish careers in the United States in favor of immigrating to Israel. The Coordination Board met to discuss the program only in May 1959, more than a year after Davis' initiated the project. They decided to form a committee with the participation of government ministers and representatives of the Jewish Agency to work on crystallizing conditions for the absorption of immigrants from the United States.<sup>43</sup> Moshe Davis proposed allocating the work as follows: in the United States, a committee would be formed to encourage immigration from the professional sector.

Candidates who passed the initial stages would move on to the Jewish Agency's immigration department, "which would take care of them from then until they were settled in Israel." In Israel, the government, the Jewish Agency and the entrepreneurs would determine suitable places of employment for them, to ensure their successful absorption.<sup>44</sup>

Once the work program was laid down, Bertram Loeb, the American entrepreneur who established the "Supersol" supermarket chain in Israel, was elected chairman of the committee handling the project in the United States. Moshe Davis assumed the position of vice-chairman of the committee in Israel.<sup>45</sup> The first committee meeting took place at the beginning of January 1960, two years after the program began to take shape. The meeting was devoted to finding new methods and changes in the customary approach to encouraging immigration from the United States.<sup>46</sup>

The committee's work, however, encountered many obstacles. Employment to match the talents and qualifications of the immigrants was hard to find in Israel, high level accommodation was not available in the center of the country and sources of finance for the candidates' immigration and settling-in expenses were not forthcoming.<sup>47</sup> The American committee's inability to overcome these difficulties resulted in the appointment of Ester-Herlitz, past Israeli consul in New York, as chairperson. Shragai, who saw this as the right time to take the initiative into his own hands again, demanded that Herlitz use the New York office of the Jewish Agency as her operational headquarters, otherwise he would take steps to cancel her appointment.<sup>48</sup> She refused to comply with his demand and stated that the basic assumption was that "the Jewish People and Israel are more important than any institution or organization, and not the other way around."<sup>49</sup> Minister of Labor Giora Josephthal, who was responsible for implementing the project in Israel, wrote a stern letter to Shragai: "I'm afraid I did not want to believe that questions of prestige were more important than other questions... It's time to do some soul-searching."<sup>50</sup>

Reports sent by Herlitz to Israel give a picture of the difficulties involved in offering Jewish professionals financially and professionally suitable alternatives and in finding ideological explanations to cover these difficulties. In addition, the problem of mobilizing investors to establish industrial enterprises that would absorb immigrants continued to cloud the project's progress. Alongside these objective difficulties, the Jewish Agency persisted in concocting problems, with prestige and the allocation of jobs in mind. "They are so busy doing nothing," Herlitz wrote, "that it is harder for me to arrange an appointment with the local executives than with extremely busy businessmen."<sup>51</sup>

In the end, Davis' original program never materialized. It is a fact that there was no change in the number of immigrants from the United States during 1960–1963. The decision, in 1963, to establish a "superior authority for immigration from the affluent countries... jointly with the government of Israel and the Jewish Agency, in the framework of the Coordination Board" to deal with all subjects bearing on immigration, was proof of the failure of yet another attempt to increase Jewish immigration from the United States.<sup>52</sup>

Parallel to these attempts, Ben-Gurion used his visits to the United States in 1960 and 1961 to encourage immigration from among the young generation and to try and move them to participate in realizing the pioneering concept offered by Israel.

#### ***d The Prime Minister's visits to the United States***

After the Sinai Campaign, America's attitude to Israel's practical requirements continued, to a considerable extent, to be a function of its relations with the Arab world in general and with the United Arab Republic—the Egyptian–Syrian union—in particular. Nevertheless, the American government had to take internal factors into account, including Jewish public opinion and the status of American Jewry, which contributed to a positive attitude to Israel. As a rule, Israel's requests were measured against anticipated Arab reactions and, in any case, the American government tended to limit its response to these requests, sometimes responding favorably only on condition that their agreement was hidden from the Arab states. This was the background to Israeli–American contacts relative to two major subjects: arms acquisition and plans for the exploitation of Israel's natural water resources.

With regard to arms acquisition, the most sensitive area in relations between the two countries, senior United States officials claimed that agreeing to Israel's request was likely to have a bad influence on America's relations with the Arab countries and, in addition, could harm the American's efforts to ease tension in the Middle East. Washington also feared that supplying arms to Israel would cause the Soviet Union to increase its arms supply to the Arab countries and escalate the arms race.

However, the active participation of the Soviet Union in the accelerated supply of arms to the Arab countries—the UAR in particular—was a source of great concern to Israel. The problem of air defense was especially troubling, all the more so in the event of a coordinated attack by Arab forces. In an attempt to extricate himself from these difficulties, Ben-Gurion sought every possible way to meet with President Eisenhower.<sup>53</sup>

Since the American government did not invite Ben-Gurion on an official visit, Israel's Foreign Office and representatives of the state in the United States sought a pretext for an unofficial visit. The opportunity came in 1960, when Brandeis University bestowed an honorary doctorate on Ben-Gurion. On March 9 that year, for the first time in nine years, he visited the United States. His visit lasted eight days, during which time he met President Eisenhower and high ranking government officials and requested military aid. At his meeting with the president, he unfolded his views on various subjects beginning with the Middle East and ending with the relations between the two Blocs. Eisenhower listened almost without interrupting the flow, but when Ben-Gurion came to the arms issue, he replied that the United States would not accept the role of "chief arms supplier" to the Middle East. He suggested acquiring the wanted arms from West European countries.<sup>54</sup> Ben-Gurion was disappointed, but took some comfort in Secretary of State

Christian Herter's promise that Israel's request for ground to air missiles would be favorably considered.<sup>55</sup>

Although Ben-Gurion's meeting with the president and officials of the United States government was not productive, his secret talk with German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer in New York was most fruitful. During their meeting, which marked the official reconciliation between the Jewish People and "the other Germany," Ben-Gurion gave a detailed account of Israel's efforts to rehabilitate the remaining survivors of the Nazi Holocaust and asked his interlocutor to give him credit for 40–50 million dollars a year, for a period of ten years, which would be devoted mainly to the development of the Negev. He also requested defense aid. The Chancellor, who was very interested in meeting the leaders of the Jewish state, regarding this as a further stage in the purification of Germany, consented to the request in principle.<sup>56</sup> Ben-Gurion rewarded him for this by declaring to the press that "Germany today is not the Germany of the past."<sup>57</sup>

In his address to lecturers and students at Brandeis University, at the ceremony marking his honorary doctorate, Ben-Gurion dwelled on the importance of immigration from Western countries to strengthen Israel. He stressed the importance of a superior spirit, "conscience and morality," whose highest expression in the State of Israel was achieved through pioneering. He also emphasized the fact that this was to be attained through the active ingathering of exiles. For this to happen, he said, the youth had to rally to the cause.<sup>58</sup> The young were fertile ground for the concept of individual pioneering and fulfillment—for immigration to strengthen Israel.

Ben-Gurion also delivered his Brandeis address to the Conservative Rabbinical Seminary, to the Orthodox Yeshiva University and to the Reform Hebrew Union College. At Yeshiva University, he spoke for the realization of the vision of Israel's prophets, "a Jewish and human vision that believes in the high destiny of the Jewish People" and he stressed that the State of Israel needed immigration of the best of the youth in order to fulfill this vision. He spoke in similar vein to the other institutions.<sup>59</sup>

Ben-Gurion did meet with ZOA and Jewish Agency leaders during his visit and Rose Halprin, Chairperson of the Agency's Executive in New York, objected to this as well as to Ben-Gurion's criticism of their operations with regard to promoting immigration.<sup>60</sup> Ben-Gurion explained that this failure was due to a faulty itinerary and added that he was entitled to present his ideas concerning immigration to Jewish youth in America.<sup>61</sup>

Before Israel could derive any benefit from Ben-Gurion's achievements during his visit, a new issue arose to threaten relations between the two countries—Israel's atomic reactor in the Negev. Following information received in Washington, Israel's Ambassador Avraham Harman was asked to provide suitable explanations. The prime minister tried to calm the situation by asking a leading question in the Knesset on December 21, 1960. The said reactor, he announced, was for peaceful purposes and served the needs of industry, agriculture, medicine, and science.<sup>62</sup>

The revelation of Israel's atomic activities created serious dilemmas for the United States. The commitment to work against the proliferation of nuclear

weaponry in countries that had not yet joined the “nuclear club” was a major issue in the presidential election campaign that ended in November 1960, with John Kennedy’s victory. The new president and his supporters asserted that prevention of the spread of nuclear weapons throughout the world, particularly in the Middle East, was of supreme importance in American foreign policy.<sup>63</sup> Fearing that the dispute over this issue would escalate into a comprehensive confrontation between the United States and Israel, certain circles in Jerusalem concluded that a high priority meeting between Ben-Gurion and Kennedy was essential. Again, in the absence of an invitation to Ben-Gurion to come on an official visit to the United States, the Foreign Office tried to find a suitable excuse for an unofficial visit.

Although Ben-Gurion gave great importance to such a visit, he doubted the likelihood of a meeting with Kennedy. In his instructions to Israel’s Ambassador to the United States, he wrote:

The idea of a doctorate doesn’t appeal to me (although it is not out of the question)... A meeting with the leaders of American Jewry sounds better as an excuse—a short meeting devoted to clarification of basic problems connected to Israel and its relationship to the Diaspora, American Jewry in particular.<sup>64</sup>

Ultimately, following approaches by Jewish personalities led by the honorary president of the AJC, Jacob Blaustein, President Kennedy consented to meet Ben-Gurion at the end of May 1961, however, he refused to issue an official invitation. Ben-Gurion therefore accepted an invitation from Prime Minister John Diefenbaker to spend five days on an official visit to Canada, after which he met Kennedy in New York. During this meeting they discussed the situation in the Middle East with emphasis on the nuclear reactor.<sup>65</sup>

Ben-Gurion also met leaders of Jewish organizations during this visit, this time including a meeting with ZOA leaders, at which he reiterated his claim that Zionists should immigrate to Israel. Appearing before the Conference of Presidents, Ben-Gurion gave a political overview of Israel’s situation and tried to settle the difficulties that arose with members of the Conference following their criticism of the agreement he signed with Jacob Blaustein in April 1961.<sup>66</sup>

Once again, his itinerary was dictated by concern over Israel’s security and the need to settle relations with the American government. For this reason, disagreements were pushed aside and attempts were made to discuss matters of common, uniting interest and to enlist the greatest possible support. In fact, matters went so far as to include a meeting between Ben-Gurion and Lessing Rosenwald, of the American Council for Judaism.<sup>67</sup>

## **2 The American Jewish Committee**

### ***a Visit of the First delegation***

The AJC played a major role in Israel’s political struggle with the United States during the Sinai Campaign.<sup>68</sup> With the end of the military campaign and

Israel's subsequent withdrawal from the Gaza Strip in March 1957, the AJC felt that the situation presented an opportunity for Israel to invite them to send a delegation on an official visit. This would be a way of repaying a debt of gratitude to the AJC for the help they had extended during the crisis. However, the Israeli consul in New York, Ester Herlitz, thought that this might offend the leaders of other Jewish organizations—particularly the ZOA—who had not yet been officially invited to visit Israel. Foreign Minister Golda Meir and Ambassador Abba Eban replied to Herlitz that she “should not flinch from annoying the others” and that they (the AJC) “certainly deserved an invitation from the Israeli government.”<sup>69</sup> In the end, the Israeli government sent an official invitation to Irving Engel, the president of the AJC at the time.<sup>70</sup>

The delegation arrived in June 1957 and had two appointments to meet with Ben-Gurion. At the first meeting, the discussion turned to the essence of the relationship between the State of Israel and American Jewry and Ben-Gurion reiterated his concept that the gates of the country were open to every Jew who decided to immigrate. He explained that the state could not limit Jewish immigration, since Jews were not coming to a foreign country, but to the country that has belonged to them for 3,000 years, since the time of Abraham. The Law of Return, he added, was the legal expression of this principle. However, he said, there was no connection between this concept and the fact that the State of Israel represented only its citizens. As the discussion progressed, the members of the delegation objected to the fact that matters of marriage and divorce in Israel were in the hands of the Chief Rabbinate, which ruled in accordance with its orthodox interpretation of Halachic principles. Ben-Gurion replied that this situation was dictated by reality; the state was in the process of social crystallization and it was essential to establish a norm that provided a common base to the spectrum of immigrants. He suggested to his interlocutors that they organize the immigration of 50,000 Reform Jews and promised that if they did so, he would provide them with Reform synagogues and appoint Reform rabbis. At the same time, he did not go deeply into questions related to Israel's foreign policy and opposed the return of Arab refugees. “The refugees cannot come back,” he said, “just as those who fell in the War of Independence cannot come back to life.”<sup>71</sup> He wrote in his diary: “About ten members of the AJC approached me with a volley of questions.”<sup>72</sup>

At the second meeting, Ben-Gurion presented his perception of the differences between the lives of Jews in their own state and that of Jews in the Diaspora. He said that the latter, including American Jewry, were constantly worried about the gentiles' reaction to whatever they did and, therefore, they were not free. He went on to state that the AJC could not demand that the State of Israel should act according to American Jewish norms of behavior. The state was not obliged to consider what influence its policies might have on the American government, nor to adapt to its demands. Israel operated in the light of the principles of “Our teacher Moses and other prophets.”<sup>73</sup>

Nevertheless, in spite of these declarations, wanting to mollify the delegation, Ben-Gurion published the following clarification of his words:

There is no need to declare again that Israel represents only its own citizens and is in no way the representative or spokesman of Diaspora Jewry. The affinity between Diaspora Jewry and the State of Israel is based on a shared spiritual and cultural heritage and the historical affinity with Eretz-Israel.<sup>74</sup>

In January 1958, shortly after the delegation's departure from Israel and seven years since his last visit, the honorary president of the committee, Jacob Blaustein, arrived in Israel. He discussed the same subjects with Ben-Gurion as those that were raised during the delegation's visit, with particular emphasis on the latter's statements about the connection between Israel and Diaspora Jewry and the essential differences between Jews living in Israel and those living in the United States.<sup>75</sup> This incidentally consolidated the friendship between the two men. "We concluded that I would call him Yaacov (not Jacob) and he would call me David," Ben-Gurion wrote in his diary.<sup>76</sup> Indeed, from then on, Ben-Gurion used the Hebrew form of Blaustein's name in their correspondence. No other American Jewish leader achieved such a close relationship with Ben-Gurion.

However, Blaustein's expectations that Ben-Gurion and the other Israeli leaders would refrain from expressions that could affect the status of American Jews were unfulfilled. Following declarations by Moshe Dayan and Golda Meir, the Ministers of Agriculture and Foreign Affairs respectively, Blaustein asked Ben-Gurion for an explanation. He even said that the AJC would continue its aid to Israel only if the country's leadership would refrain from making public statements about the nature of relations between the State of Israel and Diaspora Jewry.<sup>77</sup> Ben-Gurion was prepared to meet this condition, in clear contrast to his attitude to the Zionist Organization. The explanation was and is obvious: the AJC was not prepared to interfere in what was happening in Israel; their aid to Israel was contingent on their right to continue to be American citizens. Compared to which, the Zionist Organization demanded that the state grant them "status," authority, the right to participate in decisions and to the right to represent Diaspora Jewry. The practical choice in this case, in Ben-Gurion's opinion, was absolutely clear.

### ***b In the wake of the 25th Zionist Congress***

Blaustein's letter had barely arrived, when Ben-Gurion's speech created a storm at the 25th Zionist Congress. His words about "the kiss of death" that awaited the Jews in western countries and the obligation to immigrate prompted the AJC to publish a statement saying: "This expression is contravenes to the 'Exchange of Views' between Ben-Gurion and Jacob Blaustein. Immigration to Israel must be a matter of free choice. He has no right at all to speak in the name of Diaspora Jewry."<sup>78</sup> The committee was not content just to publish the statement, but asked



Israel's ambassador to the United States to receive clarification. The new president of the AJC, Herbert Ehrmann now asserted that relations between Israel and American Jewry over the past two years had declined in light of statements made by Israel's leadership. He demanded that the State of Israel recognize the right of Diaspora Jews to continue to live in the countries of domicile and that it cease to encourage them to immigrate to Israel.<sup>79</sup> The main conclusion reached by Benjamin Eliav, the Israeli consul in New York, as noted in his report to the Foreign Office after the meeting, was as follows:

As long as we need material and political assistance from American Jewry as a whole, our official spokesmen must avoid two main things: 1) prophesying the demise of American Jewry—whether by a “kiss of death” or by any other means, 2) ridiculing the religious sincerity of American Jewry—by making comparisons between the sincerity of the orthodox and the hypocrisy of the other streams, or in any other way.<sup>80</sup>

The Committee's sensitivity to expressions of this sort reflected their fear that these expressions would have an influence on their own status in the Jewish community, as well as in American government circles. When all is said and done, Arab propaganda in the United States portrayed American Jews as harmful to the interests of the country. The American Council for Judaism also put pressure on the State Department to halt all aid to Israel because of its interference in the internal affairs of the United States. In any case, identification with Israel and with expressions in the abovementioned spirit could hurt efforts to continue aid to Israel.<sup>81</sup>

Blaustein hastened to send an emotional letter to Ben-Gurion, asking him to explain his Congress address and Ben-Gurion responded with an invitation to Blaustein to meet him in order to straighten out the disagreements that had arisen.<sup>82</sup> At the same time, Ben-Gurion wrote to Herbert Ehrmann, president of the AJC, repeating his belief that a full Jewish life is not possible for Jews except in the sovereign, free Jewish state. Nevertheless, he stated that these words did not contravene the 1950 “Exchange of Views” with Blaustein and that this “Exchange of Views” did not prohibit him from expressing his ideas in public, the more so since it was impossible to interpret his words to mean that the government of Israel spoke in the name of the Jewish people. Concern for the fate of Jews living in the Diaspora directed government policy, he said, and not the will to interfere in the internal affairs of other countries.<sup>83</sup>

Abraham Harman, Israel's ambassador to the United States, through whom the letter was sent, decided on the unusual step of holding it back with the recommendation that Ben-Gurion insert a few changes. He stated that it was impossible to compare Israel's right to intervene and work for the good of Diaspora Jewry with the rights of the AJC. Israel was a state, whereas the AJC was a voluntary organization whose members were permitted to express opinions on any subject because it had no international status and its operations were not regarded as intervention in the affairs of foreign countries, as distinct from what occurred

when the state expressed opinions. It was therefore impossible to use the claim that Ben-Gurion had the right to express his opinion as a private individual. The Jewish community and the world “do not regard you as a private individual, nor can they regard you as a private individual.” That is, the prime minister’s public life blended with his private life and was indistinguishable. Such a demand was exceptional and no other examples could be found.<sup>84</sup> If Ben-Gurion accepted Harman’s corrections, apparently the explanation lay in his unwillingness to exacerbate his relations with the Committee at a time when President Kennedy was pressing tough demands regarding the refugees and the reactor. He now needed all possible help in order to modify the president’s position and try to meet him.<sup>85</sup>

### *c The Ben-Gurion–Blaustein Agreement*

In April 1961, following the exchange of letters between Ben-Gurion and Blaustein, the latter arrived on another visit to Israel. The two men had two lengthy meetings during which they tried to reach agreement on issues connected to the relationship between Israel and Diaspora Jewry as a whole and American Jewry in particular. Blaustein described the delicate situation in which the Committee found itself as a result of comments by Ben-Gurion and other Israeli personages. Ben-Gurion reiterated his view that there was a difference between Jews living in Israel and those living in the Diaspora. He expressed the hope that pioneering youth from the United States would immigrate to Israel, but added that he did not anticipate a massive wave of immigration from there. They concluded their talks with the decision to publish their relative views in a document composed and signed by them.<sup>86</sup>

The document stated that “it is absolutely natural that differences of opinion regarding the essence and significance of Judaism and the Jewish experience should exist,” and stressed that “it is unacceptable that holders of these different opinions should break this agreement by their actions.” Ben-Gurion undertook to do whatever he could “to see to it that the spirit and word of the agreement would be kept and to inform other responsible members of the Israeli government of his wish that the spirit and content of the agreement be honored to the fullest extent.” The main points of the subjects already agreed upon in the “Exchange of Views” in 1950 were listed at the foot of the document.<sup>87</sup>

However, the document signed in 1961 differed in principle from the “Exchange of Views,” primarily in that it was a signed agreement and not just a public, joint declaration. The fact that it was signed ratified and validated the speeches delivered at the time of the “Exchange of Views” in 1950 and made their content binding. Not only did Ben-Gurion undertake in writing to keep the promises he made more than ten years earlier, he also promised to act to prevent the expression of views that contravened the signed agreement. What’s more, he signed the document as the Prime Minister of Israel and not as a private individual, thereby committing not only himself, but also everyone under his authority and those who would succeed him and, indeed, it was ratified by Prime Minister Levi Eshkol in 1963 and Golda Meir in 1970.<sup>88</sup> As happened in the past,

Ben-Gurion consented to sign the agreement because of the need to ensure the cooperation of the AJC. He was aware of the power and ability of the committee, particularly of Blaustein, to pave the way for talks with President Kennedy in his coming visit to the United States.<sup>89</sup>

The agreement was also another step towards curbing the leaders of the Zionist Organization, particularly Nahum Goldmann. In fact, the agreement was signed when the Zionist General Council was holding a conference in Jerusalem. It is reasonable to suppose, however, that events in the international arena and not in the inner circles of Zionism, dictated the timing. On his return to the United States, Jacob Blaustein wrote to President Kennedy to inform him of his visit to Israel and to request that he invite Ben-Gurion to visit America.<sup>90</sup> In so doing, he fulfilled his part of the agreement and had but to wait for Ben-Gurion to do likewise.

When the agreement was published it created a storm among Jewish organizations in America. Goldmann published a declaration in which he described the difference in Ben-Gurion's attitudes towards the Zionist Organization and the AJC, respectively; he defined the actions of the prime minister of Israel as a gross contravention of the Status Law and the "covenant." He asserted that the agreement helped to reinforce the status of the AJC among American Jewry and frustrated efforts to include Jewish organizations in the Jewish Agency, and was therefore "in opposition to all attempts to unite the Jewish People and strengthen the concept of its unity."<sup>91</sup>

Leibel Katz, head of the Conference of Presidents at the time, also protested to Ben-Gurion against his agreement with Blaustein. He claimed that it was an insult to the Conference and reminded him that this body, not the AJC, represented the main Jewish organizations in the United States and was at the center of activities in aid of Israel.<sup>92</sup> Ben-Gurion replied that the agreement had no bearing on the AJC's status in American Jewry and was only meant to clarify declarations made by heads of state who were opposed to the 1950 "Exchange of Views."<sup>93</sup>

The agreement was criticized in the Knesset, too. Peretz Bernstein, Liberal Party chairman, wondered in a question to the prime minister, why it was necessary to have signed an agreement with a marginal organization, just when the ZGC was holding a conference. Israel Bar-Yehuda, of *Ahdut Havodah-Po'ale Zion*, claimed that the agreement was a continuation of the contempt for the Zionist Organization and the "search for ways to harm it in public." Emma Talmi, of *Mapam*, portrayed the agreement as proof of the "Prime Minister's constant attacks on democracy in regularly by-passing the government on questions of internal policy, foreign policy or defense." Ben-Gurion's reply to his critics was: "The tragedy is that American Jewry is not united and has no spokesman."<sup>94</sup>

#### *d Visit of the second delegation*

Even after the agreement was signed, the AJC kept track of comments by Israeli prime ministers. As reinforcement, the committee adopted a policy of close ties

with Israel on the assumption that it could thus help to modify declarations that had hurt it in the past. In this framework, the committee opened an office in Israel in 1961 and sent delegations for the purpose of maintaining an ongoing dialogue with the heads of state.<sup>95</sup>

The delegation that arrived in Israel at the end of 1962 came to discuss the tension between Israel and the American government. In describing the difficulties weighing on the relationship, Ben-Gurion focused on the State Department's stand and the president's policies with regard to the Palestinian refugees and nuclear development. He explained that if the AJC was interested in maintaining the Jewish presence in the United States, it would have to concentrate on Jewish education. He urged his visitors to send groups of young people to Israel on study programs or visits in order to enhance their affinity with the Jewish people.<sup>96</sup> Once again, the difference between Ben-Gurion's attitudes to the AJC and to the Zionist Organization was blatantly expressed. In the past he rejected the demands of Zionist leaders for a review of Israel's foreign policy, negated proposals related to closer cooperation in this sphere and sharply criticized Goldmann's involvement and intervention in such matters. In contrast to this he now consented to discuss foreign affairs with the delegation, after coming to the conclusion that the leaders of the committee could help to modify President Kennedy's demands on Israel.

Not surprisingly, this meeting raised bitter criticism on the part of Jewish organizations in the United States. Irving Miller, president of the Conference of Presidents protested directly to Ben-Gurion about his meeting with the AJC delegation, his discussion of subjects related to Israel's foreign policy and the fact that he ignored the Conference of Presidents.<sup>97</sup> Teddy Kollek, director general of the prime minister's office, for Ben-Gurion, replied that all Jewish organizations were invited to send delegations to Israel, "with the aim of maintaining direct contact with Jewish communities in the Diaspora." He denied subjects related to foreign policy were discussed and stated that the discussion centered on questions "related to Jewish life, Jewish education, the Hebrew language, and Israel."<sup>98</sup> When Ben-Gurion learned that the Conference of Presidents was convening a special conference to discuss the meeting with the AJC delegation, he sent the following statement to the conference: "As the citizen of a free country, I reserve the full right to talk to any visitor or group of visitors, Jewish or non-Jewish, from the United States or any other country, on matters of interest to my visitors or myself."<sup>99</sup>

Ben-Gurion replied in the same spirit to Moshe Sharett, now chairman of the Jewish Agency Executive, who requested a meeting with the Coordination Board to discuss the status of the Conference of Presidents in America.<sup>100</sup> Ben-Gurion answered that the government had no interest in discussing the status of that body and did not know "who the Conference of Presidents is, what its status is, and by what law or decision this institution has 'status'."<sup>101</sup> Sharett took the trouble to explain to Ben-Gurion that

it is the only body in the United States that unites in itself almost all Jewish organizations that are wholeheartedly for the State of Israel and stand ready

to come to its assistance. It serves as an instrument for the great majority of American Jews to express their affinity for the State of Israel and works in full cooperation with the Israeli Embassy in Washington.

In light of the Conference's importance and its contribution, Sharett proposed that the government of Israel should act to strengthen contact with it.<sup>102</sup>

The AJC was not satisfied with the fact the Ben-Gurion had responded to the criticism of his meeting with its delegation. Some of the committee saw it as the prime minister's readiness "in general, to apologize to other bodies for his meeting with the committee and for inviting it to visit Israel."<sup>103</sup> Blaustein expressed his objection to the matter in a personal letter to Ben-Gurion.<sup>104</sup> Since Ben-Gurion was ill, Kollek answered the letter and tried to explain the meaning of Ben-Gurion's response. He also pointed out the importance of the contact with the AJC.<sup>105</sup>

Blaustein was not satisfied with the manner of Kollek's letter and informed Israel's Ambassador in Washington, Avraham Harman, of his dissatisfaction. He warned the ambassador that if Ben-Gurion's reply would be in similar vein to that of Kollek, he would cease to be involved in the controversy with President Kennedy. Harman attempted to explain that the fuss was about nothing, but Blaustein continued to claim that Israel had "justified itself to Katz and Miller regarding the invitation to the committee, its contacts with the committee and the contents of its talks with the committee,"<sup>106</sup> Ben-Gurion now decided to approach Blaustein in an attempt to persuade him that he was mistaken in his interpretation of the matter. With their personal friendship in mind, he wrote to explain that he had no right to determine the status of "various Jewish bodies in the United States or any other country," since "the government of Israel speaks solely in the name of its citizens and represents only them." It was the duty of the prime minister to meet the leaders of any Jewish organization, he wrote, in order to tighten the bonds between them and the state, but this there was nothing in this to damage the status of the AJC. Meetings, he said, were no indication that he personally identified with the outlook of one or another organization; they stemmed from his wish to express his appreciation for the organizations' work for Israel. In light of this, he addressed Blaustein as "My brother Yaacov—do you truly think that I do not appreciate the AJC?"<sup>107</sup>

# 11 End of the Ben-Gurion era

## 1 Resignation

On June 16, 1963, David Ben-Gurion informed the government of his intention to resign from the premiership and, on the following day, informed President Zalman Shazar. Thus ended fifteen years of service as prime minister (apart from the period between December 1953 and November 1955) and Minister of Defense (apart from the period between December 1953 and February 1955). He gave “personal necessities” as the reason for his resignation and refused to the end of his days to elaborate on the nature of these necessities. Therefore, there were a number of interpretations of the act itself and its suddenness.

In his biography of Ben-Gurion, Bar-Zohar claims that “The reasons for his resignation had been ripening a long time, but the act was impulsive, the result of an extreme urge.” According to him, Ben-Gurion’s decision to resign was due to intense mental stress and irrational motivations. He lost the will to fight for his ideals and was no longer prepared to cope with the obstacles in his path. Bar-Zohar is of the opinion that there was no definite political reason for the resignation, so that it can be laid down to Ben-Gurion’s general state of mind at the age of 76.<sup>1</sup> Yitzhak Navon, Ben-Gurion’s bureau chief and close associate at the time, agreed with this opinion. He also felt that this decision was connected with a fear of mental instability, particularly loss of memory.<sup>2</sup>

In his study of Israel’s nuclear policy, Avner Cohen makes a connection between Ben-Gurion’s resignation and the pressure President Kennedy was exerting on him with regard to this policy. In Cohen’s opinion, Ben-Gurion feared that if he continued in office, it would sabotage the effort to develop the Israeli bomb, and so he chose to resign and make way for Levi Eshkol, who was more likely to succeed in changing the relevant American policy, to replace him.<sup>3</sup>

Yehiam Weitz states that Ben-Gurion’s resignation stemmed from a weakness in a number of spheres. In the first place, the personal: Ben-Gurion was tired of the routine work of government and was turning more and more to the contemplation of philosophical and metaphysical questions. To this was added a growing sense of isolation arising to a large extent from the force of the opposition to his stand on the issue of the German scientists in Egypt. The fact that, apart from the customary opposition from “Herut” and “Ahdut Haavodah,” now Golda Meir and

Isser Harel were also opposed to it, made him realize how isolated he was. He feared that he was facing a partnership between elements in the Labor and Herut parties that could lead to a change of regime in Israel, which he compared to the situation in Germany before Hitler's rise to power.<sup>4</sup>

The daily newspaper *Davar*, the party mouthpiece, made do with a laconic announcement: "D. Ben-Gurion tendered his resignation from the premiership and the Knesset... In his announcement to the government, the prime minister gave the reason as personal needs unconnected to any problem of state or event."<sup>5</sup> *Haaretz* newspaper added to the discussion, providing its readers with an explanation of the motives that led to the resignation as: "a string of events, both inside Mapai and in the inter-party sphere, events that made Mr. Ben-Gurion 'sick of them'."<sup>6</sup> Writing in *Yedioth Ahronoth*, Yeshayahu Ben-Porat explained the resignation as the outcome of "the disruption of mutually friendly relations among the members of the Mapai summit since the Lavon Affair and mutual lack of trust among party leaders."<sup>7</sup>

As mentioned, Ben-Gurion has not left any direct reference to his resignation in his writings and memoirs of that period. In his diary, he describes the Mapai ministers' reactions on hearing his decision to resign, before he notified the government:

Eshkol, Moshe Dayan and others said it was unthinkable. I told them it was a heavy responsibility and I couldn't carry it. They claimed that the "timing" was not good. I told them that the bad timing was the reason for several delays, but I realized that the time would never be right or more convenient for me.

This indicates that the Mapai ministers tried to dissuade Ben-Gurion from resigning on the grounds that he had to wait for an improvement in the country's situation, especially in the contacts with the United States on the nuclear issue. This reaction differed from the ministers' reaction in 1953, when Ben-Gurion announced his resignation and was told that there was no substitute for him and therefore he should take indefinite leave and then return to his duties.<sup>8</sup> On the same page of his diary, Ben-Gurion wrote:

I made this decision two and a half years ago when the hypocrite [Pinchas Lavon] managed to turn all the parties against us, but I was afraid of destroying the party if I resigned at that time... a lack of foresight shared by Eshkol and Golda that resulted in the breakdown of the party personality and the establishment of a blackmail coalition—since each of the minority parties (Ahdut Haavoda and Mafdal) could destabilize the government. Therefore, I decided unwillingly to coopt the "Club of Four" (Ahdut Haavoda, Mafdal, Mapam and the Liberals) into the government, because although their combined membership equaled the number of their elected representatives, their inclusion would prevent blackmail... We could be sure that no social and administrative rulings detrimental to the workers would be passed and, in the

fields of Foreign Affairs and Defense, we could be sure that no “leftist” resolutions would be passed. The Liberals began to deteriorate because they remained in the opposition and, although the majority was against it, the party was drawing closer and closer to Herut. Mapam was also helping Herut and the “Duce” [“Leader”—Menachem Begin] felt himself gaining power. His insolence also increased and he began violently to impose himself on the Knesset, as proved in the Foreign Policy discussion and the resulting scandal (this time without stone-throwing by the mob outside) that concentrated the Liberals and Mapam around him. Regarding the question of the German scientists (while I was still in Tiberias) a none-too-simple decision was made to consider the Foreign Minister’s announcement that Herut had given her its agreement; only a blind person (and there are many such among us, in the Ahdut Haavoda and even more in Mapam) could fail to see the beginning of the takeover by the “Duce.”<sup>9</sup>

Even if Ben-Gurion refrained from directly discussing his resignation, this entry in his diary contains more than a hint of the solution to the mystery. We have a summary of his feelings and opinions about his party as they crystallized from 1960. What began with the re-awakening around “The Rotten Business” reached a peak in the political discussion in the Knesset, in May 1963. Ben-Gurion understood that he could no longer continue to lead his party and serve as prime minister while the dispute deepened and his policy received no backing, not only from the other parties to the coalition, but from his own party.

In 1960, public interest in “The Affair” revived against the background of a seemingly unrelated matter.<sup>10</sup> The commander of the intelligence network in Egypt, Avraham Zeidenberg (Avri Elad), who became known as “The Third Man,” was accused of having contact with Egyptian intelligence. He testified during his trial that the head of Israeli army intelligence (AMAN), Binyamin Gibli, and the commanding officer of the network in Egypt, Mordechai Bentzur, had asked him to lie to the Olshen-Dori committee investigating the “Rotten Business.” This reinforced Pinhas Lavon’s claim that Gibli and other intelligence officers had a hand in fraudulent deals, withholding documents and concealing evidence—all in order to place the responsibility for the “Rotten Business” on him. In September 1960, Ben-Gurion ordered the Chief of Staff to form a military committee of investigation headed by Supreme Court Judge Haim Cohen, to clarify the suspicions raised against the two IDF officers by Zeidenberg at his trial. Almost at the same time, Lavon (now Secretary of the Histadrut) demanded that Ben-Gurion clear his name absolutely and without any legal investigation. Ben-Gurion rejected his demand on the grounds that only a legal authority was entitled to pass judgment in a matter of this sort.

On October 30, owing to the pressure imposed by Lavon, the government decided to establish a ministerial committee which would propose a procedure for handling the matter. This committee—the Committee of Seven—concluded its work at the end of December 1960. However, it did not confine itself to establishing procedure, but exceeded its authority and cleared Pinhas Lavon of



any involvement in the “Rotten Business.” Ben-Gurion rejected the committee’s recommendations and came out strongly against this damage to the principle of separate authorities, as expressed by the fact that an executive body had taken upon itself to carry out a judicial mission. When the government sanctioned the committee’s decision, Ben-Gurion announced his resignation on December 25, 1960, but he sent the resignation letter to President only on January 31, 1961.

During this period, Ben-Gurion was the target of many darts of criticism. In addition to the press, various groups within the political system, public figures and intellectuals denounced him.<sup>11</sup> His struggle to place the discussion of “The Affair” and its accretions in the hands of a legal authority was described as personal vendetta against Pinhas Lavon who, it seemed, had merely wished to clear his name.

Ben-Gurion’s rude opposition to the conclusions of the Committee of Seven and even more so, his harsh words against its members, which were interpreted as an attack on their integrity, shook the coalition and produced a new government crisis. Criticism from within Mapai was no less severe and for the first time in the history of Ben-Gurion’s leadership, cracks appeared in his authority. He failed in his energetic attempts to convince his fellow party members that this was not a personal dispute or private vendetta against Lavon. If this was not enough, for the first time there were echoes in Mapai of calls to dispense with Ben-Gurion in order to save the government.

When Ben-Gurion’s absolute determination not to budge from his opinion under any circumstances became obvious, many senior members of Mapai realized that it would be better to dispense with Lavon and not Ben-Gurion.<sup>12</sup> Although some felt that Ben-Gurion was imposing his opinion on them and forcing them to go against their conscience, they accepted the decision. On February 4, 1961, the Mapai center decided that “Under the circumstances prevailing in the state and the party, Lavon will not be able to represent the party as Histadrut Secretary.” However, this dismissal, irregular and assertive as it was, did not restore calm.<sup>13</sup>

In the elections for the fifth Knesset in August 1961, Mapai lost five of the 47 mandates it had held in the previous Knesset. Ben-Gurion formed the government and led it for close to two years, until his resignation. For a while things went smoothly in the country and interest in “The Affair” waned. Ben-Gurion himself neglected the handling of the matter for the duration of his premiership, but the tensions among himself, the Mapai leadership and the other parties in the coalition continued to simmer below the surface, until the cracks appeared and allowed them to re-emerge.

July 1962 saw the beginning of the events that were to affect Ben-Gurion’s status and start the chain of developments that led to his final resignation. The first was the announcement in the Israeli press of the test firing of rockets in Egypt. In the following months it was reported more than once that the rockets had been developed with the aid of German scientists, who were also assisting the Egyptians in establishing a jet aircraft industry. Within a short time, the affair of the German scientists became a major topic of public discussion. The German government was accused not only of allowing German citizens to assist new

plans for the destruction of Jews, but of its failure to take steps to prevent them from doing so and possibly even encouraging this harmful behavior in secret. The anti-German feelings surfaced again.

The argument soon became an issue in Mapai, against the background of the Mossad's secret operations against the German scientists and their families. Golda Meir and some of her fellow top ranking members of the party supported this initiative, as did members of the opposition parties. Ben-Gurion, on the contrary, was strongly against this line of action and Isser Harel therefore resigned from his post as head of security services (on April 1, 1963).<sup>14</sup>

Harel's resignation contributed to the force of the public's attack on Ben-Gurion's policy with regard to the German scientists and fanned the argument in the Knesset. Ben-Gurion reviewed the political and defense situation in the Knesset early in May, saying, among other things: "I have never shared the views of Mr. Landau ['Herut'] and his friends with regard to Germany. I did not share them when they praised and glorified Hitler and saw him as an example."<sup>15</sup> These words caused an uproar in the Knesset and the Herut members responded with cries of "You made an agreement with Hitler!," "Informer!," "Collaborator!." Ben-Gurion faced this "Herut" attack alone, without any assistance from the members of his party in the Knesset.<sup>16</sup>

This lack of support testified to the nature of the relations that had developed between the Mapai elite and Ben-Gurion and their dissatisfaction with his policy regarding the issue of the German scientists and the dispute with the United States over nuclear development. Responses to the foregoing were also published in the party mouthpiece, the daily newspaper *Davar*. In his column, "On the Agenda," parliamentary reporter Dan Horowitz wrote: "Had Ben-Gurion's speech not contained those three and a half sentences [the criticism of 'Herut'] that were anyhow erased in the end, the storm would not have happened at all, or would have been much more contained." That is, however subtly, Horowitz placed the blame for the unprecedented uproar squarely on Ben-Gurion. The report went on to describe the Knesset Chairman's futile attempt to persuade Ben-Gurion to retract. Another article in the same edition described the relationship between the Ben-Gurion and Foreign Minister Golda Meir, which had run aground:

It may be assumed that Golda Meir is dissatisfied with the relationship that has developed between her office and other government elements connected to foreign affairs... the Foreign Minister's wish to resign is the direct result of developments following the resignation of the head of security services.<sup>17</sup>

This attitude to Ben-Gurion was also revealed in *Davar's* editorial on May 15:

It is easy to be amazed by the sentences, spoken by the prime minister, which provoked such a raw and unprecedented outburst from the 'Herut' members, [sentences] which were so out of step with the need for a united political response, as far as possible, from the Knesset in these grave times.<sup>18</sup>

The hint to the readers was that Ben-Gurion had acted against the national interest, which was to unite the Knesset around government policy, and had chosen narrow party politics over what the state required in the difficult times at the height of the crisis around the German scientists and when the president of the United States was applying heavy pressure, as yet generally unknown, with regard to nuclear development.

In another article, Dan Horowitz continued the criticism against Ben-Gurion, comparing the latter's response to "Herut's" stormy reaction to that of Levi Eshkol:

Many quotations were heard in the Knesset on Monday and yesterday. Ben-Gurion quoted Achimeir and himself... Levi Eshkol also ended with a quotation, but different in spirit from those that had gone before, with a pinch of incredulous irony. When he had finished his address and was about to step down, he apparently remembered something, turned back and said: "Perhaps you will permit me to quote from today's *Al Hamishmar*... 'Is it really a fact that Revisionism in its time was suckled at the sources of fascist ideology'. Turning to Begin, he added with an ironical smile: 'Yet another quotation' and everybody understood."<sup>19</sup>

The hint to the readers was clear: there is a difference in the approach and character of Ben-Gurion's leadership and that of Eshkol.

If happenings surrounding "The Affair" marked the beginning of the rift between Ben-Gurion and the upper echelons of Mapai, the events during May 1963 made it clear to Ben-Gurion just how deep and real this rift was. Ben-Gurion easily understood that his fellow party leaders no longer agreed with his policy and ideology. Not only were they unwilling to support him, they were also prepared to oppose him even if this meant supporting a stand by opposition parties. This reality surely contributed to his conclusion that the time had come for him to resign.

Ben-Gurion was disappointed not only with his party, but also with the public that failed to support him and treated his stand as a vendetta with the aim of furthering his personal interests. The "Founding Father," aged 76, understood that he was no longer able to rally the "Nation" to the challenges he had placed before them over the years. The Nation had tired of the weight it had been carrying since the establishment of the state. For a change, Israel was not in need of a charismatic leader, but one who could now lead it in the accepted "normal" manner of other democratic countries. Unlike his resignation in 1953, when he stepped down in 1963 he did not receive hundreds of letters from citizens urging him to return to office. This was another sign that the Nation accepted his decision and wished to find a different leader.

Thus it seems that there is no basis for the claim by Weitz and Bar-Zohar that Ben-Gurion had been frightened by the challenge and had therefore surrendered, nor is there room for the suggestion that he saw reality as a figment of his own imagination.<sup>20</sup> On the contrary, he understood that he could not continue to conduct his struggles as prime minister. For this reason, he chose to resign and

operate from outside the official framework of state. At first, he attempted to enlist members of Mapai to his cause, but on failing to do so, he made up his mind to start anew. In 1965, he founded a new party, Rafi (Israeli Workers List) together with the majority of young members of Mapai, with Moshe Dayan and Shimon Peres in the lead. The fact that this new party won only 10 seats in the elections held that year did not discourage him. He continued his battle with his successor, Levi Eshkol, and with the Mapai elite.<sup>21</sup>

This struggle became Ben-Gurion's main occupation between 1963–1967.<sup>22</sup> Ben-Gurion only came to terms with the new reality in 1970 and he then resigned from the 7th Knesset (to which he had been elected by the “HaReshimah Hamamlachtit”) as well as all other political activity, finally devoting himself to writing. He had only four years to fulfill his ambition to write a history of the Jewish People that had succeeded in establishing an independent state for itself in Eretz-Israel. In this period he wrote his book *Medinat Yisrael Hamechudeshet* (The Restored State of Israel).<sup>23</sup> In the same period he also published collections of the articles he wrote and the speeches he delivered over sixty years of public activity. However, his intense preoccupation with writing did not succeed in softening his sense of grief and isolation.<sup>24</sup>

## **2 A Zionist preacher in retirement**

Ben-Gurion's resignation from the premiership in 1963 had a direct influence on his relations with the heads of Jewish organizations in the United States. In the first years after his resignation, his connections with them were still maintained, but they weakened as time passed. The fact that Ben-Gurion no longer held a senior public post created a loss of interest in his opinions, including those relevant to American Jewry. Ben-Gurion himself was less occupied with these matters, since he was devoting most of his time to arguments with the Mapai elite and, later, to his writing of the history of the State of Israel.

In December 1964, the 26th Zionist Congress took place in Jerusalem and Moshe Sharett, who had been chairman of the Jewish Agency Executive since 1961, invited Ben-Gurion to participate. The invitation was refused. Knowing that he would not succeed in persuading the congress to accept his ideological views, Ben-Gurion used the fact that this time he was not in an official position and therefore need not attend the event. He chose instead to express himself via the press. As mentioned, he had done the same after his first resignation from the premiership.<sup>25</sup>

In his article, “On the Essence of the Zionist Concept” Ben-Gurion quoted from “The Conduct of the Jewish State,” the lecture he delivered in 1937 immediately following the publication of the Peel Commission's conclusions: “A Jewish state will not fulfill its mission unless it rests on the strength of the Jewish People as a whole.” In his opinion this concept was still valid “seventeen years after the establishment of the state and twenty seven years after it [the concept] was expressed.” The state, he wrote, must be based on “the strength of the Nation” and not on “the strength of the Zionist Organization,” since the strength of the

latter had weakened due to the fact that “most of its leaders did not fully identify with the Zionist vision.”<sup>26</sup>

Ben-Gurion called for changes in the Zionist ideology created in Europe “against the background of the European Jewish reality” which was not relevant anymore. After the Second World War, the center of the Jewish People moved to the United States, in a manner “unprecedented in the entire history of the Jewish Exile, starting from the time of the First Temple until the present.” The Jews over there “know neither the economic nor the political distress that was the lot of European Jewry.” The establishment of the Jewish state also contributed to the change:

The Jewish state has joined almost the whole of Jewry to Israel with bonds of pride and love and the desire to give material and spiritual assistance to the state has ceased to be the sole province of the Zionist Organization and is now shared by all Jewish sectors in free and prosperous countries.<sup>27</sup>

In light of these outcomes, it is necessary to work in every possible way to strengthen the State of Israel “by elevating its material and intellectual level, reviving its spirit, integrating the ethnic streams and shaping a new, exemplary culture.” The State of Israel could help to “safeguard Diaspora Jewry and deepen its Jewish consciousness.” This mission would be carried out primarily by “instilling Hebrew education in the young generation in the Diaspora... and by reinforcing their spiritual affinity with Israel.”<sup>28</sup>

In 1967, Ben-Gurion decided to go on a private visit to the United States, in order to speak directly to Jewish youth and students, in an attempt to persuade them to immigrate to Israel. The Jewish organizations found it difficult to invite him officially, because they did not wish to be involved in the argument between him and Eshkol. His visit was justified by the wish to celebrate his 80th birthday and his presence at the inauguration of the 1967 United Jewish Appeal.<sup>29</sup>

In the course of the three-week visit, which began in March 1967, Ben-Gurion visited five cities, addressed UJA functions and met with Jewish community leaders, youth and students.<sup>30</sup> He requested three commitments from his young interlocutors: the study of Hebrew, the study of the bible and immigration to Israel in order to assist its development in general and particularly to develop the Negev.<sup>31</sup> He spoke to the leaders of the Jewish organizations about the importance of maintaining the contact between Israel and American Jewry and on continuing their vital function of providing economic and political aid to Israel, but he also spoke about the immigration of experts who would contribute to the shaping the state on a strong foundation in view of the dangers that threatened it.<sup>32</sup>

After the visit, Ben-Gurion said he was very impressed with the American Jewish students and youth and found that there was strong feeling for Israel among them, but he complained that this affinity was expressed mainly financially and not as a wish to immigrate to Israel. He held the Israeli government

responsible for this situation, since it had given the Zionist Organization the authority to handle immigration, although it could not handle the task and despite his opposition, when he was prime minister. Once again, he suggested a direct approach to the young generation, urging them to immigrate. He said, Jewish education had to be encouraged in order to combat assimilation. Next, the youth must be enlisted in efforts to develop the state, with emphasis on the Negev; in this they would contribute not only to Israel, but also to the consolidation of the Jewish community in the United States.<sup>33</sup>

At the time, American Jewry was rallying to Israel's cause against the background of the political-economical situation that was becoming more complicated owing to the imminent outbreak of the Six Day War.<sup>34</sup> In the three weeks of waiting that preceded the war, pro-Israel sympathy reached a peak that was unprecedented on several planes. On the first, for example, there was a spontaneous upsurge of young volunteers for work in Israel, mainly on kibbutzim, to help the economic situation created by the mobilization of army reserve units. On the second plane—political activity on a massive scale—public demonstrations and a flood of letters and cables to American politicians were organized. On the third and most important plane, funds were collected in the framework of the Israel Emergency Fund Drive, under the auspices of the “Bonds.” In the crisis period alone, the Drive collected \$100 million—800 percent more than in the whole of 1966—an increase not only in the sum that was contributed, but in the number of contributors.<sup>35</sup>

Israel entered the Six Day War in an atmosphere of trepidation and emerged from it in a state of supreme euphoria. The extent of Israel's military success was stunning. The IDF had fought on three fronts against the armies of Jordan, Syria, and Egypt with decisive victories on all three. The two sectors of Jerusalem were united under Israeli rule; the blue and white flag was raised in a string of historically symbolic areas.

When the battles had subsided, there was a great increase in Jewish visitors from Western countries (including the United States, of course) who wanted to experience and share the uplifted Israeli spirit. Ben-Gurion regarded this as the right time in history for great waves of immigration, from the West in particular, and questioned whether it was necessary for the Zionist Organization to continue in the role of promoting immigration. He concluded that it was not. The changes brought about by the Six Day War, he stated, had created the opportunity to transfer this function to the state.<sup>36</sup>

This decision matched his longstanding conviction, certainly since his resignation. He continued to speak about the goal of the state and the importance of immigration from the United States; he persisted in criticizing the Zionist Organization for its lack of practical and realistic Zionist content and relentlessly opposed its recognition as “the representative of the Jewish people.” However, his demand for the transference of immigration matters to the state was the same as demanding to distance the Zionist Organization from all actual commitment and to turn it into a “friends of Israel” organization that was no different from other Jewish organizations.

The 28th Zionist Congress convened in Jerusalem at the beginning of 1972. Ben-Gurion was invited to participate in a session to mark his 85th birthday. In his brief address, after listening to the opening speeches, he said:

I don't know why I have been invited to the Zionist Congress in our country, since I am no longer a member of any Israeli party nor of any Zionist organization, apart from my connection to Ertetz-Israel and the Jewish People throughout the world.

This sentence incorporated the principles of his concepts and his stand. He waived being defined as a Zionist, on the grounds that this concept had been drained of all practical content, and was content to call himself a Jew. Ultimately, the sentence was a reassertion of his concept of the direct affinity between the State of Israel and the whole of Diaspora Jewry. Nevertheless, he was not asking the Zionist Organization to disband, but presented it with three missions: the immigration of five million Jews, settlement of the Negev and establishing peace with the Arab countries.<sup>37</sup> In light of his relationship with the Zionist Organization, it is doubtful if he really thought the Organization would achieve any of them.

# Conclusion

This book examines Ben-Gurion's influence on the relationships between the State of Israel and American Jewry and between the State of Israel and the Zionist Organization. The discussion proceeds along two tangential lines: clarification of Ben-Gurion's ideological stand and examination of the issues central to the abovementioned relationships.

Integral to the aim of establishing a Jewish state, as Ben-Gurion saw it, was to enable Jews to exercise their "natural right" to immigrate to Eretz-Israel and to live there under Jewish sovereignty. Hence, the state was the means to fulfill the ultimate goal of Zionism—the ingathering of exiles. Ben-Gurion understood that this goal could not be attained without help from the Jewish People, including those sectors who were not organized within Zionist frameworks. He also believed that it could be asked for help directly and not only via the organized and established Zionist Organization, which stood like a screen between the Diaspora and the State of Israel.

Ben-Gurion perceived the post-Holocaust Diaspora as an entity divided into two groups. One comprised the "Jewry in distress" of East Europe, Africa, and Asia (those Jews who lived in exile), in need of Israel's help and likely to immigrate mainly because of hardship. The other group consisted of Western, particularly American, Jewry (Diaspora)—whom the state needed as a source of aid to consolidate its strength in the political, economic, and defense spheres.

Accordingly, Ben-Gurion differentiated between "Zionists" and "the Nation" (that is, non-Zionist Jewry). He claimed that being a Zionist meant recognizing that Jews were not part of the nations of their domicile, that they were living in exile and that the Zionist sought the return to Zion. In this spirit, he distinguished between the demands he made of Zionists and the demands he made of the Nation. The latter were asked to give all possible assistance to Israel. Addressing them, he spoke of sending experts in various fields and of immigration by choice—quality immigrants who would contribute their expertise to the state—but he did not speak of mass immigration. In contrast to this, when he addressed Zionists, he demanded individual pioneering effort, active participation in realizing the Zionist vision. He also urged them to give their families a Hebrew education with the objective of developing a national consciousness in the next generation and to enhance their personal commitment to the Zionist ideal.



Close scrutiny of remarks made by Ben-Gurion between 1948–1953 shows that he refrained from judging or disparaging Jews living in the Diaspora during the times that he held high-ranking posts. However, during his Sede-Boker period (December 1953–February 1955) he unrestrainedly emphasized the negative aspect of the continued existence of Jewish communities in the West. He stated that in Israel, as opposed to the Diaspora, the Jew was his own master, rooted in the land, subject to one authority and not torn between his individuality as a Jew and a human being. He remarked that, as in biblical times, life in Israel was a whole experience inherent in the Hebrew language and spirit. Actually, while his style became more open and direct during his Sede-Boker period, the essence of what he was saying remained unchanged. He was reasserting, albeit more emphatically, the opinions he had expressed in the past.

He continued to do so when he reassumed the premiership and also in the last decade of his life, from the time of his final resignation until his death. His criticism of the leadership of the Zionist Organization and the Zionist Organization of America was extremely sharp in those years, especially after the conquest of the Sinai Peninsula in the Sinai Campaign, in 1956.

The Sinai Campaign was the closing of a cycle of Jewish history, for Ben-Gurion. It was at Sinai that the Nation and the visionary journey of return to Zion had begun to crystallize and now, it was to Sinai that the Jewish People had returned as a sovereign nation, again to defeat Egypt. The experience of this return to Sinai, the crucible of Jewish nationhood, reinforced Ben-Gurion's ideas about the historical connection between the biblical era and the establishment of the state. In both periods the Jewish People was independent in its own sovereign state, in contrast to the era of its exile among the nations of the world. For this reason, Ben-Gurion allowed himself to attempt to bridge the gap between the two periods and gloss over a considerable part of Jewish history.

This historical connection served Ben-Gurion as proof of his claim that the original Zionist vision had become drained of content, making it necessary to change Zionist terminology, which lacked the dimension of materialization, and replace it with Jewish terminology. The modern Zionist concept, Ben-Gurion declared, was first accepted mainly by East European Jewry for whom it symbolized the negation of the Exile and the solution to the "Jewish problem" through immigration to Eretz-Israel. However, in view of the changes taking place in the history of the Jews, above all the destruction of the great majority of European Jewry in Second World War and the founding of the State of Israel, the original concept of Zionism was invalidated. Most of the immigrants to Israel after the state was established came from Islamic countries, not in order to fulfill the Basel plan, but because of the axiom "and we will behold your return to Zion with compassion." From the historiographic aspect, there was no room for a Zionist Organization that did not oblige its members to immigrate and personally implement the Zionist idea, nor could it be seen as an initiating factor able to rally the Jewish People to the cause of the state.

It is widely known that Ben-Gurion emphatically and consistently, even stubbornly, worked towards everything that went with his perception of

“mamlachtiut” (unified state authority). Accordingly, he opposed the existence of secondary—movement—centers operating parallel to the state authorities. He therefore also disbanded the underground organizations, abolished the system of political streams in the education system and the civil service, while instituting state systems to handle employment and health care. Nevertheless, although this “unified state authority” concept did not sit well with the continued existence of the Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency, he did not actually take the steps that were implicit in his remarks.

The reason he refrained from dismantling what he called the “scaffolding” was practical, not ideological. The state needed the funds coming from the UIA in order to finance the defense and immigrant absorption efforts—funds which were channeled through the Zionist Organization. Furthermore, the United States tax exemption granted to contributions to the Appeal was conditional on their being used for philanthropic purposes, therefore money was not transferred directly to the treasuries of foreign countries. This being so, donations to the “Appeal” were declared to be for purposes of immigration and settlement and, therefore for the sake of expediency, the Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency continued to handle those matters.

The Zionist Organization could have been dismantled and replaced by a “Friends of Israel” type of organization to deal with fundraising in the United States and immigrants in Israel, as Henry Morgenthau had suggested in 1949. However, Ben-Gurion was focused on the “ingathering of exiles” and acknowledged the fact that the Zionist Organization possessed the experience, tradition, and mechanism to cope with the immigration and settlement enterprise to a greater extent than any other Jewish organization. If a new framework were to be established that would include non-Zionist organizations, he feared they would interfere with his vision.

Even so, he did not cease to attack the Zionist Organization, insulting its leaders, limiting its scope of authority while demanding far more than it could give. First and foremost, he was against recognizing it as the only “official representative of the Jewish People” in Israel.

He wanted to find ways to strengthen the direct connection with American Jewry and was also looking for substitutes to take over the Zionist Organization’s functions of fundraising and political support. An example was his attempt in 1951 to bypass the Zionist Organization in raising funds for immigrant absorption by establishing the State of Israel Bonds Campaign (known as the Bonds). Here the initiative remained completely with the state. It alone was responsible for the distribution and payment of the bonds and the state treasury received the money directly. The relevant institutions of state were able to decide what was to be done with the money, with no interference from outside. This clearly did not enhance the status of the Jewish Agency and the Zionist Organization, which, although deprived of much of their authority, were still intact.

Since the establishment of the state, Ben-Gurion had worked in every way possible to prevent the ZOA from intervening in Israeli policy. His dispute with the leaders of that Organization, Abba Hillel Silver and Emmanuel Neumann,

who were associated with the General Zionist party in Israel, included issues of prestige, power, politics, and control of monetary sources, not to mention profound ideological differences. As long as the British Mandate held sway, the two sides could cooperate in the effort to establish a sovereign Jewish state despite the differences in their concepts of Zionism. With the achievement of statehood, however, these differences gained strength and questions touching on the essence of Zionism and definitions of the Zionism became a “trench war,” with each side trying to win by waiting for the other to withdraw. Obviously, Ben-Gurion’s primary concern was the ongoing struggle to shape and stabilize the state; resolving Israel’s relationship with the Zionist Organization and the ZOA was low on his list of priorities.

Be this as it may, although Ben-Gurion was aware of the nature of American Zionists and how they differed from other Jewish communities, his criticism was based on the criteria of Hebrew education, pioneering spirit, solidarity, and self-fulfillment rooted in the Zionist ideology prevalent in Europe and Eretz-Israel prior to the Second World War and he failed to take the special existential situation of American Jews into consideration.

In this context, it is pertinent to ask what would have happened had the Zionist Organization adopted Ben-Gurion’s concept of Zionism and the inherent commitment to immigrate to Israel. In this hypothetical case, would Ben-Gurion have consented to grant them exclusive status as the representatives of Diaspora Jewry? One may reasonably assume that the answer would be negative, even if only because the essence of the Ben-Gurionist ideology lay in direct relationship between the State of Israel and the Nation.

Ben-Gurion was not alone in his opposition to the Zionist Organization’s demands to be recognized as the “representatives of the Jewish People.” His stand on the Status Law won the support of Mapai cabinet ministers and members of Knesset (in spite of the fact that most of the Mapai cabinet ministers as well as some of the others had held senior positions in the Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency). They, too, were of the opinion that the state now performed the functions and objectives previously undertaken by the Zionist Organization.

Actually, this ambiguous situation affected the Zionist Organization leadership as well as Ben-Gurion. With the founding of the state, the former were also obliged to cope with the question of whether their Organization had become redundant and with the ideological dilemma of the Zionist movement in the era of statehood. In adopting the American Zionist concept—the noncommitment to personal immigration—it was difficult for them to refine the differences between themselves and the non-Zionists. They tried to extricate themselves from this distressing situation by ignoring its outcome and carrying on in the pattern of their prestate operations. They held various conferences where outdated, repetitive discussions took place regarding the need to crystallize a new ideology, resulting in nothing but further evidence of their failing ability to influence events.

The Organization’s demand for legislation of the Status Law provides a clear example of their confusion. It arose out of their hesitation between two extreme positions—the demand for absolute separation between the Zionist Organization

and the State of Israel, and the opposite demand for state-endowed status. When this separation (*hafradah*) actually came about it did not result in the desired efficiency. In agreeing to handle immigrant absorption and settlement, the Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency had taken on a burden that was too heavy for them and beyond their financial capabilities. At the same time, they could not find a clear definition of the boundaries of their respective responsibilities and those of the state.

The Zionist Organization's operations were also adversely affected by the reduced status of the Zionist Congress. Prior to the establishment of the state, the Zionist Congress was regarded not only as the most important institution of the Zionist Organization itself, but also of the "State on the Way." It was the venue for political decisions and the planning of operations for the founding of the Jewish national entity in Eretz-Israel. Those attending the Zionist Congresses after the establishment of the state continued to discuss political issues, but their decisions were not binding on the government. In actuality, the Congress became the arena for debate on the essence of Zionist ideology and the indecisive, dead-end search for a new path. Some of the power struggles among Israeli political parties were also transferred to it and, for Ben-Gurion, this was yet another arena in which to defend Mapai's status and limit the General Zionist party's strength as much as possible, as well as to block decisions that were contrary to government policy.

Whereas Ben-Gurion's relationships with the Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency had run aground, his contact with the AJC was becoming ever closer. This relationship was founded mainly on the committee's willingness to help Israel and their agreement not to interfere with the one another's internal affairs. The AJC hoped for a sort of verbal agreement confirming the terms of the relationship, based on the principle that the State of Israel represented only its citizens and was not entitled to intervene in the affairs of other Jewish communities. They stipulated that their aid to Israel was dependant upon the understanding that Israel would not harm the Jewish community's status as American citizens. This agreement coincided with Ben-Gurion's ideology and, without any doubt, suited his political considerations. As he saw it, the role of the non-Zionist organizations was to assist Israel in various spheres, but there was no room for making demands on them for personal action. At the same time, being aware of the fact that there was no practical possibility of eliminating the Diaspora, he sought ways to preserve its Jewish character and strengthen its ties with Israel—the only body, to his way of thinking, that could unite the Jewish People around itself.

This was the background to the Exchange of Views between Ben-Gurion and Blaustein in 1950, followed by the agreement they signed a decade later. The understandings they reached were not an expression of Ben-Gurion's surrender to external pressure; to his mind, they did not represent any departure from his ideological principles.

The AJC, on its part, regarded this cooperation with Israel and the personal ties with Israel's prime minister as a means to consolidate its own position in the

American Jewish community. Because Ben-Gurion refused to meet the Zionist Organization leadership, criticized their actions and rejected the Organization's demand for special status as the "representative of Diaspora Jewry," his attitude to the AJC was congenial. Actually, he was not motivated as much by the wish to contribute to the status of the AJC, as by the wish to serve Israeli interests in encouraging donations from American Jews and obtaining economic and political help from the government of the United States. In the "fifties, the attitude of the American government towards Israel's" practical needs was, to a considerable extent, influenced by its relations with Egypt and the Arab world in general. The government was therefore inclined to limit its response to Israeli requests for economic and military aid and refrained from inviting Ben-Gurion on an official visit to the United States. In light of this situation, Ben-Gurion sought all possible ways to create a change in the US government policy regarding Israel and called on the AJC to help him in this matter.

This problematic relationship created a dilemma for the leaders of the AJC on several occasions. They regarded themselves as loyal American citizens in every respect, but they were also concerned for Israel's welfare. They were critical of Israel's foreign policy, but were committed to do their best to encourage the US government to aid Israel.

The Sinai Campaign is an example of this situation. During the crisis in the relationship between Israel and the American government, the AJC succeeded in walking the tightrope between accusations of "dual allegiance" and legitimate social activity to further the particular interests of a minority group. The crises revealed that the line between Zionists and non-Zionists was blurred when it came to sensing an affinity with Israel and the willingness to lend political support. The Zionist bodies claimed that the difference between themselves and the non-Zionists lay in their own unconditional loyalty to Israel. They claimed that they would be the only ones to stand by Israel and defend its interests. However, in the hour of crisis, the ZOA was unable to muster public figures from among its members to conduct negotiations with the American administration and was conspicuously absent from the ranks of those organizations that were applying pressure on the administration. It was again obvious to Ben-Gurion that the power of that Organization was declining and its influence in the Jewish community was limited. Therefore, it was important for the State of Israel to cultivate the bonds of sympathy and communication with all the Jewish organizations.

In conclusion, let it be said that Ben-Gurion introduced simultaneous dimensions of ideological dissent and cooperation into his relations with the Zionist Organization and American Jewry, based on Israel's pressing economic and political interests. This led to ambiguous, problematic inter-relationships and resulted in a "Gordian Knot" that they all attempted to unravel.

# Notes

## Preface

- 1 D. Horowitz and M. Lissak, *Origins of the Israeli Polity*, Tel-Aviv: Am Oved, 1977; N. Yanai, "Ben-Gurion's Concept of Statehood," *Cathedra*, 45, 1987, 169–189; A. Bareli, "Hamamlachtiut vetnuat ha'avodah bereshit shnot hahamishim: hanachot mivniot," in M. Bar-On (ed.) *Challenge of Independence: Ideological and Cultural aspects of Israel's First Decade*, Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi Press, 1999, pp. 23–44; C. S. Liebman and E. Don-Yehiya, *Civil Religion in Israel*, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1983; M. Cohen, *Zion and State: Nation, Class, and the Shaping of Modern Israel*, Oxford: B. Blackwell, 1987; P. Y. Medding, *The Founding of Israeli Democracy, 1948–1967*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1990.
- 2 I. Kolatt, "Was Ben-Gurion a Socialist," in Avineri, S. (ed.), *David Ben-Gurion—His Image as a Leader of the Workers*, Tel-Aviv: Am Oved, 1988, p. 118.
- 3 Y. Shapiro, *The Formative Years of the Israeli Labour Party*, Tel-Aviv: Am Oved, 1976; Y. Gorni, *Israeli Labour Movement: Ideological Principles, Social Tendencies and Economic Methods*, Tel-Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1974.
- 4 M. Brecher, *The Foreign Policy System of Israel*, London: Oxford University Press, 1972; C. S. Liebman, *Pressure without Sanctions*, Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1977; S. Halperin, *The Political World of American Zionism*, Maryland: Information Dynamics Inc, 1985.
- 5 Y. Gorni, *The Quest for Collective Identity*, Tel-Aviv: Am Oved, 1990; G. Shimoni, "Reformulations of Zionist Ideology since the Establishment of the State of Israel," *Studies in Contemporary Jewry*, XI, 1995, 11–36; B. Halpern, *The Idea of the Jewish State*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969 (Second Edition).
- 6 Until now one major research on the AJC has been published: N. W. Cohen, *Not Free to Desist*, Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1972.
- 7 For outstanding researches on the uniformity of the Zionist concept in the USA, see: E. Friesel, "The Influence of American Zionism on the American Jewish Community 1900–1950," *American Jewish History*, 75, 2, December 1985, 130–183; A. Gal, "Independence and Universal Mission in Modern Jewish Nationalism: A Comparative Analysis of European and American Zionism (1897–1948)," *Studies in Contemporary Jewry*, 5, 1989, 242–274; B. Halpern, "The Americanization of Zionism 1880–1930," *American Jewish History*, 69, September 1979, 15–33; Y. Shapiro, "The Zionist Faith," *American Jewish Archives*, 18, 2, November 1966, 107–127; M. L. Urofsky, "Zionism: An American Experience," *American Jewish Historical Quarterly*, 63, 3, March 1974, 215–243.

## Introduction: Ben Gurion, Zionism, and American Jewry before statehood

- 1 In the voting for the 18th Zionist Congress, Mapai won 132 delegates (representing 44 percent of the votes) compared to the 75 delegates (representing 29 percent of the

- votes) they won for the 17th Congress. Y. Gorni, "From Zionist ideology to Zionist vision: on Ben-Gurion's attitude to Zionism 1906–1963," in S. Almog (ed.), *Transition and Change in Modern Jewish history*, Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar center, 1987, pp. 324–326; S. Teveth, *David's Lament—The Earth is on Fire*, Jerusalem and Tel-Aviv: Shoken, 1987, p. 53.
- 2 Ibid., pp. 62–63; Gorny, "From Zionist ideology to Zionist vision," pp. 327–328.
  - 3 Address to the Haganah, 8.9.1939; Speeches and articles, BGA; Ibid., National Committee Meeting, 17.9.1939; Mapai Central Committee, 12.9.1939, file no. 23/39, section 2, ILPA.
  - 4 L. P. Gartner, "The Midpassage of American Jewry, 1929–1945," *Gesher*, 109, 1983, 73; L. Dinnerstein, *Antisemitism in America*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1994, pp. 128–149; D. S. Wyman, *The Abandonment of the Jews, America and the Holocaust 1941–1945*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1984; M. Kaufman, "American Zionism and United States Neutrality from September 1939 to Pearl Harbor," *Studies in Zionism*, 9, 1, 1988, 28.
  - 5 Eastern European Jewish immigrants to the United States in the 1880s brought the Zionist concept with them. In 1890 they established the Hovevei Zion Organization in the main cities and in 1898 the Federation of American Zionists was founded in New York. In 1918 the name was changed to the Zionist Organization of America. The conceptual and organizational character of this body was shaped mainly by Louis Brandeis, who headed it between 1914–1921. He tried to create a blend between the recognition of the national ideal and aid toward building the national home in Palestine, and the understanding that the United States was the home of the Jews who lived there. Brandeis declared that involvement in Zionism would, in fact, strengthen the Americanism of American Jewry.
  - 6 Hadassah—Zionist women's organization in the United States, founded in New York in 1912 on the initiative of Henrietta Szold. Among its aims: social, cultural, and Zionist activity among American Jewish women; improvement of health conditions in Mandatory Palestine; encouragement of Jewish institutions and enterprises in Mandatory Palestine. After World War I, Hadassah invested much effort in the development of health and medical institutions in the country. M. Kaufman, *Non-Zionists in America and the Struggle for Jewish statehood*, Jerusalem: Hassifriya Haziyonit, 1984, p. 40; A. Ilan, "Predictions of the Jewish State and It's Founding," 1941–1949, *Zionism*, X, 1985, 280–299.
  - 7 A. Gal, *David Ben-Gurion: Preparing for a Jewish state*, Sede Boker Campus: Ben Gurion Research Center, 1985, p. 45; BGD, 10.10.1940, BGA; see also: Ibid., Ben-Gurion to Paula Ben-Gurion, 9.11.1940, correspondence.
  - 8 BGD, 12.11.1940, BGA; D. Shapiro, *The Role of the Emergency Committee for Zionist Affairs as the Political Arm of American Zionism 1938–1944*, PhD diss., Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1979, pp. 183–184.
  - 9 Participants at the meeting were: Israel Goldstein, Nahum Goldmann, Louis Lipsky, Robert Szold, Tamar De Sola Pool, Abba Hilel Silver, and Stephen Wise. BGD, 5.12.1940, BGA.
  - 10 Abba Hillel Silver (1893–1963) was the Rabbi of the Cleveland Reform congregation and a Zionist leader. He was president of the Central Conference of American Rabbis from 1945–1947. From 1938 to 1944 he headed the United Jewish Appeal and the UPA. Between 1946 and 1948 he was Chairman of the Executive of the Jewish Agency in the United States.
  - 11 Stephen Wise (1874–1949) Reform Rabbi, among the important leaders of the Zionist movement in the United States. From 1936 to 1938 he was President of the ZOA and from 1943 to 1945 was head of the Emergency Committee. Wise was a close associate of President Roosevelt from the time Roosevelt stood for election to the post of Governor of New York State.

- 12 BGD, 5.12.1940, BGA; Gal, *Preparing for a Jewish State*, pp. 101–103.
- 13 *Ibid.*, p. 169.
- 14 The UPA was founded in 1925 for the purpose of uniting under one roof the management of the following funds: Keren ha-Yesod, Jewish National Fund (Keren Kayemet Le'Yisrael), Hadassah, Hebrew University Fund, and the Mizrahi. In the same year, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) began running an extensive fund for settling Jews in the Crimean Peninsula, and the Zionist leadership in America decided to join forces to compete with the JDC's Fund, fearing that it would damage fundraising for the Zionist enterprise in Eretz-Israel. Stephen Wise headed the UPA in the beginning. Its activities came to a halt in 1930, but were renewed by Keren ha-Yesod and Keren Kayemet in 1936. In 1938, the UJA was established as a result of cooperation between UPA and JDC. M. L. Raphael, *A History of the United Jewish Appeal 1939–1982*, Brown University, 1982, pp. 13–19.
- 15 BGD, 8.1.1941, BGA; see also: Meeting of the Executive of the Jewish Agency, 16.2.1941, S100, CZA.
- 16 Nahum Goldmann (1894–1982), Zionist leader. From 1935 to 1939, Zionist Organization representative in Geneva. Member of Jewish Agency Executive and Director of its office in Washington during the Second World War. Appointed Jewish Agency Chairman in New York, in 1949; was also Chairman and President of the World Jewish Congress.
- 17 Ben-Gurion to Goldmann, 17.1.1941, correspondence, BGA.
- 18 Jewish Agency Executive meeting, 16.2.1941, S100, CZA; Ben-Gurion said the same at the Mapai Central Committee, 19.2.1941, file no. 23/41, section 2, ILPA.
- 19 BGD, 7.12.1941, BGA; Shapiro, *The Emergency Committee*, p. 367.
- 20 BGD, 18.12.1941, BGA.
- 21 *Ibid.* 21.12.1941.
- 22 *Ibid.* 23.12.1941.
- 23 Emanuel Neumann (1893–1980) American Zionist leader. In 1910 he was the editor of the Young Judaean magazine. Head of the ZOA Education Department (1918–1920). In 1925 took part in founding the UPA. Between the years 1940–1942 served as director of the Emergency Committee's Department of Public Relations. Between the years 1947–1949 served as President of the ZOA.
- 24 BGD, 23.12.1941, 26.12.1941, BGA; these words contradicted Ben-Gurion's opinion of Neumann on his previous visit to the United States.
- 25 *Ibid.* 28–29.12.1941; Jewish Agency Executive meeting, 4.10.1942, S100, CZA.
- 26 E. Neumann, *In the Arena*, Jerusalem: Hassifriya Haziyonit, 1977, pp. 183–184.
- 27 The AJC was established in 1906 with the aim of defending Jews against discrimination. Its founders were respected Jewish public figures, mainly of German origin. The committee remained a relatively small body, known for the consistent activities of its professional staff and its widely influential members. The committee had connections with the American government, which tended to regard it as the most important representative of non-Zionists in the United States.
- 28 The biggest Jewish brotherhood in the United States, founded in 1843, and the veteran among the existing Jewish organizations. Officially, it took a neutral stance in the ideological dispute among Jews, but its leaders were always pro-Zionist and supported the Zionist enterprise in Eretz-Israel. The organization's sphere of activity was the struggle against antisemitism and for Jewish rights worldwide.
- 29 The Jewish Labor Committee, the roof organization of Jewish labor organizations, whose members included Zionists, non-Zionists, and anti-Zionists. It was founded at the beginning of the Second World War to help the victims of the Nazi regime. Until the middle of 1947, the committee refrained from taking a stand on the political future of Mandatory Palestine, but supported the struggle to cancel the White Paper as well



- as massive immigration to Mandatory Palestine. It also maintained relations with the General Federation of Labor in Eretz-Israel (the Histadrut).
- 30 BGD, 3.12.1941, BGA.
- 31 Ibid. 18.12.1941.
- 32 Teveth, *David's Lament*, p. 63; Gorny, "From Zionist ideology to Zionist vision," p. 329.
- 33 A. Ilan, *America, Britain and Palestine*, Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi Press, 1979, p. 91; Y. Buer, *Diplomacy and Underground in Zionism*, Merhavyah: Sifriyat Hapoalim, p. 198.
- 34 M. Kedem, *Chaim Weizmann During the Second World War*, Jerusalem, 1983, pp. 106–107; M. I. Urofsky, *A Voice that Spoke for Justice*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1982, p. 314.
- 35 D. Ben-Gurion, "Mivchan Habitzua," in D. Ben-Gurion, *Campaign*, 4, Tel-Aviv, 1957, pp. 30–38; BGD, 17.9.1942, BGA.
- 36 Y. Gorni, *Partnership and Conflict*, Tel-Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1976, pp. 130–131; Kedem, *Chaim Weizmann*, p. 108.
- 37 Shapiro, *The Emergency Committee*, p. 355.
- 38 Ibid., p. 394; Teveth, *David's Lament*, p. 415; M. Bar-Zohar, *Ben-Gurion: A Biography*, A, Tel-Aviv: Am Oved, 1987, p. 447.
- 39 Weizmann's line for achieving the aim of a Commonwealth was clear and consistent with his years of political activity: to continue the pact with Britain. Kedem, *Chaim Weizmann*, pp. 96–101; Gorny, *Partnership and Conflict*, pp. 130–131; Shapiro, *The Emergency Committee*, p. 396.
- 40 Teveth, *David's Lament*, p. 432; D. S. Wyman, *The Abandonment of the Jews*, Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1993, p. 48. At the beginning of August 1942, Gerhard Riegner, representative of the World Jewish Congress in Geneva, received information from a German industrialist concerning the Nazis' plan for the annihilation of European Jewry.
- 41 Jewish Agency Executive meeting, 6.12.1942, S100, CZA.
- 42 In research circles it is argued by some that the Jewish Settlement in Mandatory Palestine, with Ben-Gurion in the lead, had abandoned European Jewry through certain indifference and from ideological motives and did not do everything possible to come to their aid. Others argue that Ben-Gurion worked tirelessly for their rescue, but that in reality it was impossible to do much to prevent the massacre of Jews and he therefore devoted himself to creating a program for the postwar era. See: D. Porat, *An Entangled Leadership: the Yishuv & the Holocaust, 1942–1945*, Tel-Aviv: Am Oved, 1986; T. Friling, *Arrow in the Dark: David Ben-Gurion, the Yishuv Leadership and Rescue Attempts During the Holocaust*, Sede Boker Campus: The Ben-Gurion Research Center, 1998; T. Segev, *The Seventh Million—The Israelis and the Holocaust*, Jerusalem: Keter, 1991.
- 43 Ilan, *Palestine*, pp. 186–197.
- 44 Goldmann memo, 3.8.1946, Z6/2759, CZA.
- 45 Z. Ganin, "The Partition Plan and Dr. Nahum Goldmann's Mission to Washington in the Summer of 1946," *Zionism*, V, 1978, 225–262; M. Avizohar, *Towards the End of the Mandate*, Tel-Aviv: Am Oved, 1993, pp. 98–99; E. Elath, *The Struggle for Statehood*, Tel-Aviv: Am Oved, 1982, pp. 379–390.
- 46 Neumann, *In the Arena*, p. 284.
- 47 Avizohar, *Towards the End of the Mandate*, p. 59; Elath, *The Struggle for Statehood*, p. 453.
- 48 Ibid., p. 448.
- 49 Bar-Zohar, *Ben-Gurion*, pp. 558–561.
- 50 Ilan, *Palestine*, pp. 270–272.
- 51 Z. Ganin, *Truman, American Jewry and Israel 1945–1948*, New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1979, pp. 128–134.

- 52 Joseph Proskauer (1877–1971), American jurist and Jewish leader. New York State High Court of Appeals Judge (1923–1930). Joined the AJC at the beginning of the Nazi era. Was President of the AJC from 1943 to 1949. Advisor to the United States delegation to the San Francisco Conference (1945). Chairman of the War against Crime Committee in New York State (1951–1953).
- 53 M. Kaufman, “The State of Israel as Conceived by the American Jewish Committee 1947–1948,” *Yahadut Z’emanenu*, 3, 1986, 171–172.
- 54 Kaufman, *Non-Zionists*, p. 197.
- 55 M. J. Cohen, *Truman and Israel*, California: University of California Press, 1990, pp. 164–167.
- 56 Bar-Zohar, *Ben-Gurion*, pp. 645–665.
- 57 A. Feldestein, “Three Days in May 1948—A Fresh Look at the Historical Documents,” *Iyunim Bitkumat Israel*, 8, 1998, 354–374.
- 58 See: “Ben-Gurion al America, Yehudeha veatid Eretz–Israel,” 9.10.1942, *Haaretz*; “Hayahadut haamericait atirat hakoach shomeret emunim lemifal hayehudi be Eretz–Israel,” 9.10.1942, *Davar*; Ben-Gurion, *Campaign*, 4, pp. 43–56, “Tochnit peula tzionit veyahadut america,” ZGC meeting, 15.10.1942; D. Ben-Gurion, *Campaign*, 5, Tel-Aviv, 1957, pp. 45–68, “Devar Yisrael be artzu,” appearance before the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry, 11.3.1946; *Ibid.*, pp. 153–176, “Hamaaracha hatzionit veyayishuv,” National Council meeting (Va’ad Le’umi), 1.4.1947.
- 59 *Ibid.*, pp. 68–88, “Halutzit, maavak, medina,” Mapai Board, 1.4.1946.
- 60 In this context see: Gorny, *the Zionist vision*.
- 61 D. Ben-Gurion, *Campaign*, 5, pp. 255–272, “Leyisud hamedina,” Mapai Central Committee, 13.12.1947; see also: “Halchot hamedina hayehudit,” 29.10.1937, Speeches and articles section, BGA; Ben-Gurion, *Campaign*, 4, pp. 102–103, “Tochnit Biltmore vemitnagdeha,” Mapai Board, January 1944.

## 1 The first year of independence, 1948–1949

- 1 E. Neumann, *In the Arena*, Jerusalem: Hassifriya Haziyonit, 1977, pp. 288–289; N. Goldmann, *Memories*, Jerusalem: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1972, pp. 292–293; E. Neumann, *The Turning Point*, New York 1948; E. Stock, *Chosen Instrument*, New York: Herzl Press, 1988, pp. 23–24.
- 2 The 51st Annual Convention of the ZOA, Pittsburgh, July 1948, FA 2388/26, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ISA; Second Jewish Agency Executive Session, 19.8.1948, S100/54, CZA; Neumann, *Turning Point*.
- 3 *Ibid.*, for discussion on existence of two centers, see: G. Shimoni, “Two Concepts of Israel’s Centrality,” *Gesher*, 34, 118, Fall 1988, 17–26.
- 4 S5/323, CZA.
- 5 *Ibid.*, Jewish Agency (JA) Executive session, 18.8.1948, S100/54; in his speech, Ben-Gurion did not differentiate between the Jewish Agency and the Zionist Organization. The Zionist Organization was founded by Benyamin Zeev Herzl at the First Zionist Congress, held in Basle in 1897. In 1929, after much effort, the Jewish Agency was established inter alia on the basis of the Palestine Mandate awarded to Britain in 1920 and ratified in 1922. Clause 4 of the document establishes that a “Jewish agency” would represent the Jewish People to the Mandatory government and would cooperate with it to establish the Jewish national home in Palestine. See below, Chapter 4, which discusses the Status Law.
- 6 See: Y. Gorni, “From Zionist ideology to Zionist vision: on Ben-Gurion’s attitude to Zionism 1906–1963,” in S. Almog (ed.), *Transition and Change in Modern Jewish History*, Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar center for Jewish history, 1987, p. 330; M. Rivlin, “Ben-Gurion’s Zionist Teachings,” *Betfutsot Hagolah*, 17, 1975, 52.

- 7 Jewish Agency Executive session, 18.8.1948, S100/54, CZA.
- 8 *Ibid.*, Second Jewish Agency Executive session, 19.8.1948; see also World Conference of “Ihud Olami” debate, August 13–20, 1948, file 15/48, section 3, ILPA.
- 9 See also speeches by Eliyahu Dobkin and Berl Locker at the Zionist General Council (ZGC) Session, August 1948, S5/323, CZA.
- 10 Neumann, *In the Arena*, p. 291. He describes the meeting as follows: “He, Brodetsky, really cannot return to his position as chairman of Zionist Federation of Great Britain and preach in defense of the situation. Hearing this, Ben-Gurion finally withdrew his opposition and the Separation was decided upon”; the following announcement appeared in *Haaretz* newspaper, 30.8.1948: “Prof. S. Brodetsky, trying to find a meeting point, visited D. Ben-Gurion and persuaded him to retract, but none of this has yet produced the desired solution.” Ben-Gurion’s diaries make no mention of this meeting.
- 11 B. Locker, “After the ZGC session,” *Davar*, 10.11.1948; Eliezer Kaplan continued to serve as JA Treasurer.
- 12 FA 130/2389/5, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ISA.
- 13 *Ibid.*, Provisional Government Meeting, 10.11.1948; Ben-Gurion made a similar claim also to the Mapai secretariat, 22.4.1949, file 24/49, section 2, ILPA ; see also: BGD, 21.4.1949, BGA.
- 14 S5/324, CZA; 16.9.1948, *Die Welt*, 47.
- 15 Kaplan reported to Ben-Gurion, who recorded in his diary: “Kaplan informs that Montor phoned to tell him that the American press announced that at the ZGC there was an absolute capitulation to the ZOA, by the Israeli government—and Morgenthau and others were down.” BGD, 7.9.1948, BGA.
- 16 Report on Meetings of Zionist Actions Committee in Israel, 17.9.1948. RG-314.17 Gen-12, Yivo.
- 17 Following the establishment of the state the name of the Fund was changed from the UPA (United Palestine Appeal) to the UIA (United Israel Appeal).
- 18 The JDC was founded in 1914 in the United States with the aim of helping Jews whose countries had taken part in the First World War. The Organization assisted Jews in all these countries, including Palestine. However, the Organization’s leadership objected to the Zionists’ claim that Palestine was the only solution to the Jewish problem.
- 19 E. Stock, *Partners and Pursestrings*, Lanham: University Press of America, 1987, p. 226.
- 20 *Ibid.*, p. 134; *Haaretz*, 14.11.1948; 3494 C-5533, section 43, ISA.
- 21 BGD, 13.7.1948, 17.8.1948, BGA.
- 22 Eliezer Kaplan reported to Ben-Gurion that Henry Montor was disappointed when he read the American press reports on the Israeli government’s surrender to the American Zionist leadership. *Ibid.*, 7.9.1948.
- 23 14.9.1948, A123/223, CZA.
- 24 *Ibid.*, Silver to Neumann, 22.9.1948.
- 25 BGD, 21.10.1948, 25.10.1948, BGA.
- 26 *Ibid.*, 25.10.1948; JA Executive meeting, 26.10.1948, S100/55, CZA.
- 27 Provisional Government meeting, 27.10.1948, ISA.
- 28 Joint meeting of the Israeli government and the JA, 1.11.1948, S100/502, CZA.
- 29 Cable from the JA Executive in Jerusalem to American section, 15.12.1948, FA 86/2, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ISA; BGD, 14.12.1948, BGA.
- 30 Joint meeting of the Zionist Organization, the JA Executive and the Israeli government, 21.12.1948, S100/502, CZA.
- 31 BGD, 21.12.1948, BGA.
- 32 Joint meeting of the Zionist Executive and the JA Executive with the Israeli government, 21.12.1948, S100/502, CZA.
- 33 *Ibid.*, Joint meeting of JA Exec. with Israeli government, 29.1.1949.
- 34 *Ibid.*, JA Exec. meeting with presidency of the ZGC, 26.1.1949, S100/56.

- 35 BGD, 26.1.1949 BGA.
- 36 ZGC session, 5–15.5.1949, S5/326, CZA.
- 37 Provisional government meeting, 6.3.1949, ISA.
- 38 Neumann, *In the Arena*, p. 296; Peretz Bernstein, one of the “General Zionist” leaders in Israel, in a letter to Neumann, tried to investigate the cause of the crisis in the Fund. He claimed that “splitting the General Zionists has long been an aim of Mapai” and explained that Ben-Gurion was behind the crisis, trying to carry out this plan in every possible way. Peretz Bernstein to Neumann, 30.1.1949, A123/367, CZA.
- 39 *Haaretz*, 21.2.1949; *Davar*, 21.2.1949.
- 40 M. L. Raphael, *Abba Hiller Silver*, New York: Holmes&Meier, 1989, pp. 176–177; N. Orian, *Leadership of Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver on the American-Jewish Scene, 1938–1949*, PhD diss., Tel-Aviv: Tel-Aviv University, 1982, p. 506: “This affair was planned and well exploited to get rid of the too independent leadership of the ZOA, which was apparently an obstacle to the absolute imposition of the Israeli government’s will on the movement in the United States, as understood by the dominant factor then in power.”
- 41 In 1949, the UJA collected \$103 million (the first \$50 million: 60 percent UPA and 40 percent JDC; an additional \$25 million: 70 percent UPA and 30 percent JDC; the remaining sum: 75 percent UPA and 25 percent JDC); in 1950 the Appeal collected \$80 million; in 1953 it collected \$60 million. By comparison, in 1949 the Keren ha-Yesod collected \$96 million (worldwide); in 1953 it collected \$42 million (in the United States). M. L. Raphael, *A History of the United Jewish Appeal 1932–1982*, Brown University 1982.
- 42 Jacob Blaustein (1892–1970) Jewish American leader and financial magnate who had succeeded greatly in the oil industry in America. In 1949–1953 he served as President of the AJC, after which he became Honorary President of the Organization; the relationship between Ben-Gurion and the AJC leadership had developed during World War II. See Introductory chapter.
- 43 BGD, 17.4.1949, 6.4.1949, BGA.
- 44 Report on trip to Israel, 29.4.1949, RG-347.7 FAD 1, Yivo; the Foreign Office published a report on the delegation’s visit, FA 373/15, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ISA; see also: J. Blaustein, *Israel through American Eyes*, New York, 1949; Executive Committee Meeting, 7–8.5.1949, RG-2 BDS-28, Blaustein Library.
- 45 ZGC session in Jerusalem, 5–15 May 1949, S5/326, CZA. Words in similar vein by Ben-Gurion when he presented the first government to the Knesset. See: Session 7, 8.3.1949, *Knesset Minutes*.
- 46 ZGC session in Jerusalem, May 5–15, 1949, S5/326, CZA. Ben-Gurion in similar vein, writing to the Benei Berit Organization, 3.1.1949, correspondence, BGA.
- 47 ZGC session in Jerusalem. May 5–15, 1949, S5/326, CZA. Rose Halprin (1897–1978) Zionist leader in America. President of Hadassah Organization between 1932–1934 and 1947–1952. Head of the medical delegation of the organization in Mandatory Palestine between 1934–1939.
- 48 JTA Daily News Bulletin, 1.9.1949, FA 366/18, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ISA; *Ibid.*, 3940 C-5561, section 43; on one of the inside pages of *Davar* daily newspaper, there was a piece about the meeting, as follows: “D. Ben-Gurion said: I speak to you and through you to the Jewish People in America and specially to the Jewish youth in your country: ‘Help us to conquer the People for the Land: to bring the Jewish People to Israel’,” *Davar*, 31.8.1949; David Remez, the Minister of Transport, was quoted, too “We need your children... American Jewry will give its children to the country, which needs them.” *Ibid.*
- 49 Rose Halprin to Ben-Gurion, 23.9.1949, 3940 C-5561, section 43, ISA.
- 50 *Ibid.*, Blaustein to Ben-Gurion, 19.9.1949, 4011 C-5563; Moshe Sharett, Foreign Minister, recommended to Ben-Gurion to word his reply to Blaustein in a manner that would make it publishable. *Ibid.*, 3937 C-5563.

- 51 Administrative Committee, 4.10.1949, RG-2 BDS-20, Blaustein Library.
- 52 Proskauer to Ben-Gurion, 5.10.1949, Correspondence, BGA.
- 53 11.10.1949, RG-347.7.1 FAD-1, Yivo.
- 54 *Ibid.*, Blaustein to Proskauer, 12.10.1949.
- 55 15.10.1949, 4011 C-5563, section 43, ISA.
- 56 19.10.1949, RG-347.7.1 FAD-1, Yivo.
- 57 18.10.1949, Speeches and articles, BGA.
- 58 Executive Committee, 22–23.10.1949, RG-2 BDS-28, Blaustein Library.
- 59 Ben-Gurion to Proskauer, 1.11.1949, Correspondence, BGA; in his reply, Proskauer wrote requesting permission to publish Ben-Gurion's letter, so that his ideological stand would be known to the public. Proskauer to Ben-Gurion, 8.12.1949; 3937 C-5561, section 43, ISA.
- 60 Ben Ben Gurion to Rose Halprin, 2.11.1949, 30.11.1949, Correspondence, BGA.

## 2 The way to the “State of Israel Bonds” campaign

- 1 The following demands were added to Dobkin's proposal: tax exemption for the organizations, consultation on legislation connected with Jewish Agency spheres of activity, increased cooperation between Israeli embassies and Jewish Agency representatives and granting of special legal status to Zionist bodies in Israel. Executive Meeting of the Jewish Agency, 21.1.1950, S100/63,CZA; see also: The Organization Department, *Problems of the Zionist Organization after Statehood*, Brochure C, Jerusalem: the executive of the Zionist Organization, 1950; B. Locker, *Jewish Survival and Revival*, Jerusalem: The Bialik Institute, 1963, pp. 183–193.
- 2 S100/505, CZA.
- 3 Prior to this meeting, Ben-Gurion wrote in his diary, “I do not have a complete answer to all the questions that the establishment of the state raises, with regard to the Zionist movement, but these assumptions are decisive: (1) The state cannot implement the Zionist vision by itself. The whole nation's help is needed and the existence of the Zionist Organization is needed. (2) Everything done in state spheres is subject to the state and what the state is not authorized or unable to do, is done by the Zionist Org. (3) The Zionist Organization does not block the state's way to the various sectors of the Diaspora nor does it intervene in the state's fields of operation. (4) The representatives of the Zionist Org. in the State of Israel are given ambassadorial status.” BGD, 21.1.1950, BGA.
- 4 Zionit General Council session, April 19–28, 1950, S5/327 CZA; 3976 C-5562, section 43, ISA.
- 5 BGD, 19.4.1950, BGA.
- 6 Government meeting, 3.5.1950, 10.5.1950 ISA.
- 7 BGD, 8.5.1950, BGA; 10 C-5388, section 43, ISA.
- 8 With reference to the joint meeting of Jewish Agency and government representatives, Ben-Gurion noted: “seated around one table at this meeting were—Shechterman, Zerubavel, Berkson, Grossman, Rabbi Gold, Werfel, Shragai. How goodly and how pleasant for brother fascists-revolutionaries-clerics to sit together!” BGD, 21.1.1950, BGA.
- 9 *Ibid.* 14.5.90.
- 10 A. Avihai, *David Ben-Gurion: Designer of the State*, Jerusalem: Keter, 1974, pp. 177–178; 139th meeting, 15.5.1950, 140th meeting, 16.5.1950, *Knesset Minutes*; 533–537 C-5388, section 43, ISA; *Davar*, 17.5.1950; *Haaretz*, 16.5.1950.
- 11 Neumann to Silver, 17.1.1950, A 123/222, CZA; *Ibid.*, Kollek to Goldmann, 21.2.1950, Z6/2359; *Ibid.*, Goldmann to Kollek, 3.3.1950.
- 12 Ben-Gurion sent a congratulatory telegram to Browdy, 31.3.1950, correspondence, BGA.

- 13 E. Neumann, *In the Arena*, Jerusalem: Hassifriya Haziyonit, 1977, pp. 296–297.
- 14 BGD, 9.4.1950, BGA.
- 15 Ibid. 28.4.1950.
- 16 Meeting in Prime Minister's office, 25.7.1950, 4012 C-5563, section 43, ISA; see also: Meeting of the Knesset faction with Mapai secretariat, 23.7.1950, file no. 24, section 2, ILPA; Meeting between Ben-Gurion and overseas representatives of Israel, 21.7.1950, protocols of the meeting, BGA.
- 17 See: E. Liebenstein, "The American Diaspora and its Future," *Beterem*, June 1950; Memo of Moshe Prager to Ben-Gurion, 22.1.1950, correspondence, BGA.
- 18 See: Memos about implications of the Zionist General Council session on 25.4.1950 and 20.6.1950, Yivo, 347.17.10; Ibid., RG-347.7.1 FAD-1; see also: Executive Committee, 29–30.4.1950, RG-2 BDS-28, Blaustein Library; Ibid., Steering Committee, 20.4.1950, RG-2 BDS-36.
- 19 Direct expenses of the war—at home and for overseas purchases—came to \$273 million. Some three-quarters of this sum was raised from internal sources, while external aid amounted to about one quarter of total outlay. Y. Greenberg, "Funding Sources for the War of Independence," in M. Naor (ed.) *First Year of Independence 1948–1949*, Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi Press, 1988, pp. 105–115; Jewish Agency budget proposal for 1949 was based on estimated income from Keren ha-Yesod, JNF, and Fund Drives in the amount of IL 32 million; outlays for the months of October 1948–March 1949 reached close to IL 15 million while total income for the period reached only IL 10 million. D. Hakohen, *Immigrants in Turmoil: the Great Wave of Immigration to Israel and its Absorption, 1948–1953*, Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi Press, 1994, p. 90.
- 20 See sub-chapter dealing with The State of Israel Bonds Campaign.
- 21 On 28.7.1950, Ben-Gurion cabled an invitation to Jacob Blaustein to visit Israel. 4011 C-5563, section 43, ISA; C. S. Liebman, "Diaspora Influence on Israel: The Ben-Gurion Blaustein 'Exchange' and its Aftermath," *Jewish Social Studies*, 36, July–October, 1974, 274–275.
- 22 "The Blausteiuin—Ben-Gurion Agreement," *Tefutsot Yisrael*, 14, 1976, 115; file 3C10, Topic folders, BGA.
- 23 See above the discussion surrounding Ben-Gurion on the issue of encouraging immigration among American youth, September 1949, sub-chapter "The State, the Nation and the Zionist Organization."
- 24 File 3C10, Topic folders, BGA; C. S. Liebman, *Pressure without Sanctions*, Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1977, pp. 118–125.
- 25 File 3C10, Topic folders, BGA; N. W. Cohen, *Not Free to Desist*, Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1972, pp. 312–314; the dual loyalty issue preoccupied United States Jewry. See: A. Hertzberg, "American Jews through Israeli eyes," *Commentary*, IX, January 1950, 1–7; E. Berkovits, "Dual Loyalty?," *Jewish Spectator*, March 1950, 12–14; D. Thompson, "America Demands a Single Loyalty," *Commentary*, LX, March 1950, 210–219.
- 26 Executive Committee, 14–15.10.1950, RG-2 BDS-28, Blaustein Library; Ibid., Steering Committee, 3.10.1950, R2-2 BDS-36.
- 27 A memo from the committee delegation records that Ben-Gurion wanted aid in the economic and political spheres, and emphasizes US policy towards Israel. Notes on third meeting with Mr Ben-Gurion, 26.8.1950, RG 347.7.1. FAD-1, Yivo; see also: Foreign Office memo about "Exchange of Views," 25.8.1950, 3614 C-6380, section 43, ISA.
- 28 B. Litvinoff, *Ben-Gurion of Israel*, New York: Praeger, 1954, p. 15; In a letter to Litvinoff, Ben-Gurion pointed out the many errors in the book. Ben-Gurion to Litvinoff, 8.7.1954, Correspondence, BGA.
- 29 Liebman, *Pressure without Sanctions*, pp. 125–127. Liebman relied on a letter from Simon Segal, a member of the AJC delegation, who described his meeting with

- Ben-Gurion: "It was all the time touch and go; we had ups and downs until last night we still did not know whether or not we will get a satisfactory letter . . . You may note that Mr. Ben-Gurion is definitely stating that Jews of America are not, exiles by implication, that all their campaigns of 'ingathering of exiles' do not apply to American Jews. This was a point very hard for him to accept but he finally did agree."
- 30 See his letter to Proskauer (2.11.1949) compared to his letter to Rose Halprin (2.11.1949), Correspondence, BGA.
- 31 D. Shaham, *Israel—40 Years*, Tel-Aviv: Am Oved, 1991, p. 72.
- 32 M. Naor, "Hatzena," in M. Naor (ed.) *Edan 8—The World of Immigrant Camps 1948–1952*, Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi Press, pp. 97–110; *Ibid.*, D. Gehinovsky, "The Austerity Policy—Economic Aspects," pp. 111–114; H. Barkai, *The Beginnings of the Israeli Economy*, Jerusalem: The Bialik Institute, 1990, pp. 33–35; N. T. Gross, "The Economic Regime during Israel's First Decade," in I. Troen, N. Lucas (eds) *Israel—The First Decade of Independence*, New York: State University of New York Press, 1995, pp. 231–241.
- 33 N. Halevi and R. Klinov-Malul, *The Economic Development of Israel*, Jerusalem: Academ, 1975; D. Horowitz, *Economy of Israel*, Tel-Aviv: Massada, 1954, pp. 139–157.
- 34 BGD, 16.10.1949, BGA.
- 35 Meeting in Prime Minister's Office, 31.7.1950, 4012 C-5563, section 43, ISA.
- 36 *Ibid.*, Meeting in Prime Minister's Office, 1.8.1950.
- 37 Meeting of members of government with Jewish Agency Executives and representatives of the UJA in America, 2.8.1950, Protocols of the Meeting, BGA.
- 38 *Ibid.*, 3.9.1950; Z6/362, CZA; *Davar*, 4.9.1950; *Haaretz*, 4.9.1950.
- 39 3.9.1950, Protocols of meetings, BGA; Barkai, *The Israeli Economy*, pp. 58–59; *Davar*, 7.9.1950; *Haaretz*, 7.9.1950.
- 40 BGD, 8.9.1950, BGA.
- 41 See above, Ben-Gurion's stand during the IUA crisis in 1949.
- 42 Slawson to Goldmann, 16.10.1950, Z6/416, CZA; FAD-1, RG-347.7.1, Yivo; H. Lehman, "A Billion Dollars for Israel," *Commentary*, December 10, 1950, pp. 518–529.
- 43 30.10.1950, Correspondence, BGA; the Jewish press in Yiddish gave wide coverage to this conference. See: "National Planning Conference for Israel" as reflected in the Yiddish Press, RG-347.7.1, FAD-1, Yivo.

### 3 Zionism for the present time, 1951

- 1 Government meeting, 8.3.1951, ISA.
- 2 U. Bialer, "Ben-Gurion and Israel's Foreign Policy Orientation, 1948–1956," *Cathedra*, 43, March 1987, 154–159; M. Bar-Zohar, *Ben-Gurion: A Biography*, b, Tel-Aviv: Am Oved, 1987, p. 902; M. Brecher, *Decisions in Israel's Foreign Policy*, London: Oxford University Press, 1974, pp. 111–173 .
- 3 M. Brecher, *The Foreign Policy System of Israel*, London: Oxford University Press, 1972, pp. 263–269.
- 4 *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1951, vol. V: The Near East and Africa, Washington, 1982, pp. 185–186.
- 5 Teddy Kollek to Ben-Gurion, 13.3.1951, FA 337/4, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ISA; In a cable from the US Desk to the Ambassador in Washington: "The Prime Minister is usually over-polite about accepting people, therefore it is essential to find a fierce person to protect him from pressure coming from Mr. Montor and other Jewish circles, as well as from himself. The Prime Minister's honor must be guarded and it must be ensured that he will meet only those people who merit being received by the Prime Minister, that is that the privilege of meeting him should not be a common matter." *Ibid.*, Bendor, 3.4.1951.

- 6 Speech at Washington airport, 3.5.1951, Speeches and articles, BGA; *Ibid.*, Speech at the National Press Club in Washington, 8.5.1951; Report by Press Advisor, Levin, 11.5.1951, FA 2/337, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ISA.
- 7 Speeches and articles, 10.5.1951, BGA.
- 8 E. Neumann, *In the Arena*, Jerusalem: Hassifriya Haziyonit, 1977, pp. 297–299.
- 9 In their correspondence before the visit, Kollek explained to Ben-Gurion: “Brandeis University is a new institution . . . a lecture of that sort will no doubt draw academics, and we are interested in reaching them.” Kollek to Ben-Gurion, 13.3.1951, FA 337/4, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ISA.
- 10 Speeches and articles, 16.5.1951, BGA; In 1915, Louis D. Brandeis, a leading American Zionist, in one of his articles: “Every American Jew who helps the settlement of Jews in Palestine, even if he thinks that neither he nor his offspring would ever be there, thereby becomes a better human being and American.” A. Hertzberg, *The Zionist Idea*, Jerusalem: Keter, 1970, p. 397.
- 11 Kollek to Ben-Gurion, 21.4.1951, FA 337/4, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ISA.
- 12 *Ibid.*, Speech to UJA members, 27.5.1951, FA 337/2.
- 13 Towards the end of 1950, the first municipal elections were held. In these elections, the General Zionist party became much stronger. The national results showed that the party had 80 thousand votes, some 25 percent of the total. Mapai won only 27 percent of the votes. D. Shaham, *Israel—40 Years*, Tel-Aviv: Am Oved, 1991, p. 64.
- 14 Speeches and articles, 29.5.1951, BGA.
- 15 15th meeting, 5.11.1951, *Knesset Minutes*.
- 16 E. Stock, *Partners and Pursestrings*, Lanham: University Press of America, 1987, p. 138.
- 17 Neumann sent a number of letters to Silver concerning this issue: 3.1.1951, 11.1.1951, 16.1.1951, A123/206, CZA.
- 18 *Ibid.*, Neumann to Silver, 11.1.1951; 16.1.1951; Press release, 16.3.1951 FA 124/2, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ISA.
- 19 Neumann to Silver, 19.4.1951, A123/206, CZA.
- 20 *Ibid.*, Silver to Neumann, 19.4.1951.
- 21 *Ibid.*, Neumann to Eban, 26.3.1951, A123/330.
- 22 Ben-Gurion to Eban, 28.3.1951, Correspondence, BGA.
- 23 The 54th Annual Convention of the Zionist Organization of America, 14–17.6.1951, 347.17.10, Yivo; Silver’s address to the Convention, FA 118/16, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ISA.
- 24 The 54th Convention, 347.17.10, Yivo; see also: critical articles on the convention in the Yiddish press. *Ibid.*, RG-347 Gen-12; *Haaretz*, 17–18.6.1951; *Yedioth Ahronoht*, 17.6.1951; *Haboker*, 17.6.1951; S. Halkin, “American Zionism in the Light of the Jewish State,” *Bitzaron*, 6, May 1950, 75–92.
- 25 Browdy to Ben-Gurion, 25.6.1951, 3937 C-5561, section 43, ISA.
- 26 BGD, 6.8.1951, BGA.
- 27 208th meeting, 2.1.1951, *Knesset Minutes*.
- 28 *The New York Times*, 29.1.1951.
- 29 Eban to Blaustein, 15.2.1951, FA 345/28, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ISA.
- 30 *Ibid.*, Blaustein to Eban, 22.2.1951; see also: Blausteins speech to the Executive Committee: Executive Committee, 5–6.5.1951, RG-2 BDS-28, Blaustein Library.
- 31 Mapai Central Committee, 8.5.1951, file no. 23, section 2, ILPA; *Ibid.*, file no.26, Political Committee Meeting, 16.5.1951.
- 32 *Ibid.*, 21.11.1950.
- 33 *Ibid.*, 28.12.1950; see also: *Ibid.*, The 7th Conference of Mapai, 15–19.8.1950. Results of elections to the congress were: Mapai—93 delegates (“Ihud Olami” won a total of 161 delegates); General Zionist—118 delegates; Hamizrachi and Hapoel Hamizrachi—69 delegates; Mifleget Hapoalim Ha meuchedet (Mapam)—60 delegates; Berit Hatzohar-Herut-33 delegates.
- 34 Shaham, *Israel*, pp. 65–66; S. H. Abramov, *A Party that Failed, its Idea Prevailed*, Tel-Aviv: Devir, 1995, p. 33; BGD, 8.3.1951, BGA.



- 35 Mapai—The 40—Meeting of the Board, 16–18.3.1951, ILPA; see also: *Ibid.*, Mapai Political Committee Meeting, 5.8.1951, file no. 26, section 2; D. Ben-Gurion, “‘Two Campaigns’, ‘Ihud Olam’, Conference, 8.8.1951” in D. Ben-Gurion, *Vision and Way*, 3, Tel-Aviv: Am Oved, 1957, pp. 177–190.
- 36 Decision from the “Ihud Olami” Conference, 13.8.1951, S41/132, CZA; *Davar*, 13.8.1951.
- 37 8.8.1951, Z6/466, CZA.
- 38 Ben-Gurion’s speech to the “Ihud Olami” Conference, FA 345/38, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ISA.
- 39 *Ibid.*, Blaustein to Ben-Gurion, 10.8.1951, 4011 C-5563, section 43. See also: *Ibid.*, Blaustein to Ben-Gurion, 14.8.1951, FA 2388/23, Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Blaustein to Ben-Gurion, 15.8.1951, Correspondence, BGA; Blaustein to Ben-Gurion, 20.8.1951, 4011 C-5563, FA 43, ISA.
- 40 *Ibid.*, Ben-Gurion to Blaustein, 12.8.1951; Ben-Gurion to Blaustein, 20.8.1951, 29.8.1951, Correspondence, BGA.
- 41 FA 345/37, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ISA.
- 42 For the ideological argument on the eve of the Congress, see: *Zionism Today*, Jerusalem, 1951.
- 43 BGD, 15.8.1951, BGA; Neumann, *In the Arena*, p. 299.
- 44 *Ibid.*
- 45 See Introductory chapter.
- 46 In his diary, Ben-Gurion noted his opinion of Silver’s leadership: “He has two positive traits—courage and motive power; and two negative traits: lack of political judgment and lack of ability to work with friends as friends, he’s the boss.” BGD, 21.8.1951, BGA.
- 47 *The 23rd Zionist Congress—Stenographic Report*, Jerusalem, August 14–30, 1951; see: *Haaretz*, 15.8.1951.
- 48 *Stenographic Report; Haboker*, 16.8.1951. See: JA Executive Meeting 5—6.8.1951, S100/74, CZA.
- 49 *Stenographic Report*.
- 50 See speeches to the Congress by Rose Halprin and Israel Goldstien. Before the Zionist Congress, a committee was appointed for the wording of proposals concerning the status of the Zionist Organization and its structure. S5/1937, CZA; this committee discussed the various versions of the Jerusalem Plan which had taken shape in the period between the establishment of the State and the Zionist Congress. See: *Ibid.*, Secretariat of the committee for preparation of proposals to the 23rd Zionist Congress, 12.4.1951, S5/2797. See: I. Goldstein, “The next Zionist Congress,” *Congress Weekly*, May 1951, pp. 5–6; T. Weiss-Rosmarin, “Is America ‘Galuth?’” *Jewish Spectator*, Jan. 1951, pp. 7–11.
- 51 AJC report on Congress discussions, see: 347.17.10, Yivo; Goldmann to Ben-Gurion, 27.9.1951, Z6/466, CZA; Proskauer to Ben-Gurion, 28.9.1951, 4001 C-5563, section 43, ISA.
- 52 BGD, 29.9.1951, BGA.
- 53 FA 117/20, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ISA; *Ibid.*, section 43, 4011 C-5563; cable from Ben-Gurion to Israeli Embassy in Washington, 30.9.1951, Z6/466, CZA. Contents of the cable were also published in *Haaretz* newspaper, 11.10.1951; Ben-Gurion sent a letter to Proskauer in which he repeated the main points of his letter to the Committee, 29.10.1951, Correspondence, BGA; Proskauer’s reply, 21.11.1951, 4011 C-5563, section 43, ISA; Goldmann was also hitched to the effort and sent a cable to Proskauer, 13.10.1951, Z6/494, CZA.
- 54 Executive Committee, 13–14.10.1951, RG-2 BDS-28, Blaustein Library; see: 14.10.1951, FA 345/38, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ISA; Blaustein sent Ben-Gurion the decisions, 30.10.1951, 4011 C-5563, section 43, ISA; Administrative Committee, 19.11.1951, RG-2 BDS-2, Blaustein library.

- 55 The developments in the relationship between the State of Israel and the AJC during the year were summed up by Blaustein during the Organization's annual conference. See: Report of the Forty-Fifth Annual Meeting, 25–27.1.1952.
- 56 BGD, 4.9.1951, BGA.
- 57 Ibid., 4.10.1951, Correspondence.
- 58 Ibid., BGD 27–28.11.1951; Government meeting, 5.12.1951, ISA.
- 59 BGD, 30.12.1951, BGA.
- 60 During 1951, the UJA raised some \$80 million, compared to about \$89 million in 1950. *American Jewish Year Book*, 54, 1953, p. 190; in the first seven months of the State of Israel Bonds campaign the sum of about \$80 million was raised.
- 61 31st meeting, 12.12.1951, *Knesset Minutes*.
- 62 The JTA press agency quoted parts of Ben-Gurion's address, 12.12.1951, Z6/460, CZA; *Haboker*, 17.12.1951; *Herut*, 17.12.1951.
- 63 Goldmann to Ben-Gurion, 14.12.1951, Z6/659, ISA.
- 64 Yivo, RG-347 Gen-12, 14.12.1951; A memo concerning this issue from the Israeli Embassy in Washington said: "In private conversations, people have even begun to question the Prime Minister's health, they refer to his age and the lengthy period in which he has carried the burden, and to nervous collapse," 17.12.1951, FA b/2393/19, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ISA; the Embassy reported on reactions in the American press to Ben-Gurion's address. Ibid., FA 106/22, 28.12.1951.

#### 4 Legislative issues

- 1 With regard to the Declaration of Independence, see: A. Feldestein, "Three Days in May 1948—A Fresh Look at the Historical Documents," *Iyunim Bitkumat Israel*, 8, 1998, 354–374.
- 2 According to clause 12 of the government ruling [see: pekudat sidrei shilton vehamishpat, 1948] it was established that: "any Jew who immigrated to Mandatory Palestine at any time, contrary to the laws of the Mandatory government, was to be regarded in every respect as a legal immigrant retroactive to the date of his/her immigration." A. Shaki, *Who is a Jew*, Jerusalem, 1976, pp. 138–139; H. Cohen, "The law of return," *Gesher*, 18, 3–4, 1973, 97.
- 3 The special situation stemmed from a number of factors: a. The state borders had not yet been finally defined and were not internationally recognized; b. the population included non-Jews; c. The War of Independence gave rise to the problem of Arab refugees wanting to return to their previous places of domicile; d. the population included Jews with foreign citizenship.
- 4 In the first place, it would be impossible to lay down rules for granting citizenship; taxation, army service etc. could not be imposed; passports could not be issued.
- 5 Government meeting, 21.4.1949, ISA.
- 6 Ibid., Government meeting, 9.1.1950; The Minister of Justice relied on the opinion of Benjamin Akzin, Hebrew University Professor of State Law, who stated: "The solidarity of Israel must be developed against a cultural, economic, social, national and religious background. Any attempt to create this solidarity against a legislative background cannot but be harmful."
- 7 The committee consisted of Ben-Gurion, Sharett, Rosen and Shapira. Ibid., Government meeting, 3.5.1950.
- 8 BGD, 16.5.1950, BGA. Hayim Cohen, the legal advisor to the government, worded three principles for receiving Israeli citizenship: a. a Jew who had immigrated to Israel; b. who was counted in the census; c. who had received citizenship by law. By this method, the Citizenship Law was only meant to establish the conditions for citizenship for those who did not fall under a. and b. (Cohen held this post from the beginning of 1950.)

- 9 Government meeting, 24.5.1950, ISA.
- 10 Ibid., Minister Levin defined “who is a Jew” as follows: “a. one born to a Jewish woman; b. one who has entered the Covenant of the Forefather Abraham.” The ministers accepted the principle that all Jews who immigrated with the intention of settling could receive citizenship; an Israeli citizen was entitled to hold foreign citizenship and could waive Israeli citizenship within the first year.
- 11 Ibid. 7.6.1950, ISA.
- 12 The 160th meeting, 3.7.1950, *Knesset Minutes*.
- 13 Constitution, Law, and Justice Committee meeting, 5.7.1950, 21/k, section 60, ISA. Bar-Yehuda repeated his stand in the Knesset debate, too. “I suggest adding, after the clause establishing that every Jew is entitled to immigrate, the following words: “This clause is not open to change in Knesset voting.” The 162nd meeting, 5.7.1950, *Knesset Minutes*.
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 M. Medzini (ed.), *Documents, Laws, Agreements in the History of the State*, Jerusalem: Ministry of Defence, 1981, p. 24.
- 16 Y. Elam, *The Jewish Agency: Formative Years*, Jerusalem: Hassifriya Haziyonit, 1990; D. Horowitz and M. Lissak, *Origins of the Israeli Polity*, Tel-Aviv: Am Oved, 1977, pp. 284–288; A. Levi, *The Status and Role of the Jewish Agency in Eretz-Israel Prior to Legislation of the WZO-JA Status Law 1952 and Thereafter*, MA thesis, Jerusalem: the Hebrew University, 1958.
- 17 Ibid., p. 17; H. Klinghoffer, *Constitution Law*, Jerusalem: The Hebrew University Press, 1963, pp. 80–81.
- 18 Ibid., Levi, *Status and Role*, p. 23. It should be mentioned that the ZOA and Hadassah were not bothered by the accusation of “dual loyalty” as a result of being granted “status” by the state.
- 19 *The 23rd Zionist Congress— Stenographic Report*, Jerusalem, August 14–30, 1951.
- 20 Reinforcement of this claim can be found in the words of Yehaoshua Freudenheim, legal advisor to the Jewish Agency: “I know that legal significance is not the motivation behind the Zionist Organization’s demand for legal status, but considerations of prestige and wider powers of operation. However, I do not see any reason to prevent us from using the opportunity in order to arrange the legal side of the problem, since the necessary attention has not yet been paid to the request and the fact that it is still not seen in the correct light is a very painful aspect.” Freudenheim to Lauterbach, 13.5.1951, S5/11125, CZA.
- 21 C. S. Liebman, *Pressure without Sanctions*, New Jersey: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1977, pp. 132–133.
- 22 Yivo, RG-347 Gen-12, 16.12.1951; for Goldmann’s response to this meeting, see: Goldmann to Ben-Gurion, 18.12.1951, ZS/659, CZA; see also: BGD, 3.3.1952, BGA.
- 23 Blaustein to Ben-Gurion, 3.3.1952, FA 384/2a, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ISA; The American Jewish Committee discussion: Administrative Committee, 4.3.1952, 1.4.1952, RG-2 BDS-20, Blaustein Library.
- 24 Ben-Gurion to Freeman, 4.2.1952, 3956 C-5561, section 43, ISA; see also: Ibid., Freeman to Ben-Gurion, 17.1.1952.
- 25 Montor to Ben-Gurion, 11.3.1952, Correspondence, BGA.
- 26 Ibid., BGD, 21.12.1951; draft proposal, 21.12.1951, Z6/498, CZA.
- 27 Eban to Ben-Gurion, 21.12.1951, correspondence, BGA.
- 28 Government meeting, 23.12.1951, ISA.
- 29 Ibid., Eban to Sharett, 2.1.1952, FA 2388/26b, Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- 30 Ibid., Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Eban, 7.3.1952, FA 384/2a. See also: BGD, 8.3.1952, BGA; Ibid., Ben-Gurion to Eban, 18.3.1952, correspondence.
- 31 Eban to Ben-Gurion, 11.3.1952, 3956 C-5561, section 43, ISA.
- 32 Ibid., Government meeting, 23.12.1951.

- 33 JA Executive meeting, 14.1.1952, S100/77, CZA; see also: *Ibid.*, Klinov to Locker, 15.1.1952, S41/68.
- 34 *Ibid.*, Sharett to Ben-Gurion 12.12.1951 A245/82; “Received from Moshe, responses to Goldmann’s proposals for the ‘status’ law. Moshe consulted Arthur, who feared an emphatic negative response from non-Zionist circles in America, not only the AJC but also Fund supporters and others, to any arrangement that could be interpreted to mean that the Agency represents them to the Israeli government even if only in Israel,” BGD, 17.12.1951, BGA.
- 35 Sharett to Ben-Gurion, 3.3.1952, FA 2388/26b, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ISA; Eban conveyed the following message to Ben-Gurion: “Several Jewish elements, all having esteemed roles in financial and political aid to Israel, have hotly and justifiably expressed concern with regard to the status issue.” BGD, 8.3.1952, BGA.
- 36 Sharett to Ben-Gurion, 3.3.1952, FA 2388/26b, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ISA; At the meeting of the Agency Executive, Goldmann retracted his willingness to alter the wording of the clause: “I’m furious that the Prime Minister has rejected the assumption that the Zionist movement represents the Jewish People, I agree that the wording should not include ‘in the name of the Jewish People’, but what are his reasons for objecting to the expression ‘The Jewish Nation’?” Jewish Agency Executive meeting, 6.3.1952, S100/78, CZA.
- 37 N. Goldmann, *Memories*, Jerusalem: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1972, p. 295.
- 38 Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Eban, 7.3.1952, FA 384/2a, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ISA; see also: BGD, 8.3.1952, BGA; *Ibid.*, Ben-Gurion to Eban, 18.3.1952, correspondence.
- 39 Eban to Ben-Gurion, 11.3.1952, 3956 C-5561, section 43, ISA.
- 40 *Ibid.*, Government meeting, 27.4.1952; see also: BGD, 28.4.1952, BGA.
- 41 76th meeting, May 5–6, 1952, *Knesset Minutes*; see also: *Davar*, 7.5.1952; *Haaretz*, 6.5.1952.
- 42 Hayim Greenberg to Ben-Gurion, 10.5.1952, correspondence, BGA.
- 43 Eban to Blaustein, 14.5.1952, FA 384/2a, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ISA.
- 44 *Zionist General Council Session in Jerusalem*, May 7–15, 1952, Jerusalem; see also: *Haaretz*, 12.5.1952; *Davar*, 12.5.1952.
- 45 See sub-chapter dealing with the Separation.
- 46 *Zionist General Council Session*; see also: Report by Chaim Yachil, Information Department Director, on ZGC Session, 4.6.1952, FA 384/3a, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ISA.
- 47 *Ibid.*, Meeting of the Constitution, Law, and Justice Committee, 21.5.1952, 11.6.1952, 63/k.
- 48 *Ibid.*, 2.7.1952, see also: Locker to Goldmann, 11.7.1952, S41/542, CZA.
- 49 Meeting of the Constitution, Law, and Justice Committee, 2.7.1952, 63/k, ISA.
- 50 118th meeting, 11.8.1952, *Knesset Minutes*; 31 voted in favor of the amendment, 27 against. That is, less than half the total 58 MKs attended the session. See also: *Haaretz*, 12–13.8.1952; *Davar*, 13–14.8.1952.
- 51 Blaustein to Ben-Gurion, 15.8.1952, 4011 C-5563, section 43, ISA; see also: Executive Committee 25–26.10.1952, RG-2 BDS-28, Blaustein Library.
- 52 132nd meeting, 4.11.1952, *Knesset Minutes*; see also: *Haaretz*, 5.11.1952, *Davar*, 5.11.1952.
- 53 134th meeting, 5.11.1952, *Knesset Minutes*.
- 54 Memo to Teddy Kollek, 17.11.1952, 4011 C-5563, section 43, ISA; *Ibid.*, Constitution, Law, and Justice Committee debate, 13.11.1952, 63/k.
- 55 Blaustein to Eban, 6.11.1952, FA 384/2a, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ISA; *Ibid.*, Blaustein also sent a cable to Kollek, 8.11.1952, 4011 C-5563, section 43; *Ibid.*, and to Goldmann, 8.11.1952, FA 384/2a, Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- 56 *Ibid.*, Eban to Blaustein, 8.11.1952, FA 2388/26b; *Ibid.*, Blaustein’s reply, 11.11.1952, FA 384/2a.

- 57 Ibid., Blaustein to Ben-Gurion, 8.11.1952, 4011 C-5563, section 43.  
 58 Ibid., Ben-Gurion to Blaustein 24.11.1952.  
 59 *Haaretz*, 25.11.1952; *Davar*, 25.11.1952.  
 60 Levi, *Status and Role*, p. 26.  
 61 “Ben-Gurion refused to grant the Zionist Organization the right to consultation and coordination outside Israel and did as he pleased from the start. However, there was a certain implied change of stance which, it stands to reason, Ben-Gurion was obliged to adopt in accordance with the Congress resolution. In this case, there is no reason to doubt that the AJC’s emphatic objections to the Congress resolution influenced his position and strengthened his leanings from the beginning.” Liebman, *Pressure without Sanctions*, pp. 139–140.  
 62 Ben-Gurion to Rosen, 23.11.1952, Correspondence, BGA.  
 63 Government meeting, 25.7.1954, ISA.

## 5 A Zionist preacher

- 1 Government meeting, 20.10.1953, ISA.  
 2 See Chapter 6, which discusses the Sinai Campaign.  
 3 Ben-Gurion to President Yitzhak Ben-Zvi, 2.11.1953, FA 390/16, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ISA.  
 4 Ibid., Government meeting, 6.12.1953.  
 5 See: *Herut*, 20.11.1953; *Hatzofe*, 13.11.1953; *Ma’ariv*, 30.11.1953; *Davar*, 10.12.1953.  
 6 BGD, 14.12.1953, BGA; D. Ben-Gurion, *The Restored State of Israel*, A, Tel-Aviv: Am Oved, 1975, p. 448.  
 7 H. Rosenblum, “90 Minutes with Ben-Gurion,” *Yedioth Ahronot*, 20.11.1953.  
 8 Rabbi Ipcha Mistabra [Azriel Carlebach], “BeSde-Boker,” *Maariv*, 12.2.1954.  
 9 Interview with Yitzhak Navon, 1.7.1996.  
 10 M. Bar-Zohar, *Ben-Gurion*, B, Tel-Aviv: Am Oved, 1987, p. 949. See also: Y. Weitz, “David Ben-Gurion’s First Resignation,” *Iyunim Bitkumat Israel*, 8, 1998, 298–319.  
 11 Mapai Central Committee, 16.9.1954, file 25/54, section 2, ILPA.  
 12 Parting words to the nation, 7.12.1953, Speeches and articles, BGA.  
 13 Ibid., Speech at students’ conference, Sheikh Munis, 10.6.1954; Ibid., speech at meeting with youth leaders, Beer Sheba, 19.7.1954.  
 14 Ben-Gurion to Lauterbach, secretary of the Zionist Executive, 21.12.1953, correspondence, BGA.  
 15 D. Ben-Gurion, “Yeudei hatzionut beyamenu,” *Davar*, 29.1.1954; Ibid., “Shalosh hatemurot,” 22.1.1954; Ibid., D. Ben-Gurion, “Likrat tzionut mechudeshet,” 3.9.1954; Ibid., D. Ben-Gurion, “Haraayon ve hamaase,” 19.2.1954; see: D. Ben-Gurion, “The New Zionist Tasks,” *Jewish Spectator*, January 1953, 8–10.  
 16 D. Ben-Gurion, “Yisrael bamim,” *Israel Government Year Book*, 1953–1954; Ben-Gurion, “Likrat Tzionut”; Ben-Gurion, “Haraayon.”  
 17 D. Ben-Gurion, “Tzionim ve hovevei tzionut,” *Davar*, 15.1.1954.  
 18 D. Ben-Gurion, “Shalosh Hatemurot.”  
 19 D. Ben-Gurion, “Lama ragshu,” *Davar*, 1.1.1954.  
 20 D. Ben-Gurion, “Nireh Nachocha,” *Davar*, 8.1.1954; Ibid. D. Ben-Gurion, “Yitrona shel Yisrael,” 17.9.1954.  
 21 D. Ben-Gurion, “Zikah le netzah Yisrael,” *Davar*, 5.2.1954; Ben-Gurion, “Tzionim.”  
 22 D. Ben-Gurion, “Medina Le mofet—matarah ve’emtzai,” *Davar*, 10.9.1954; Ibid., D. Ben-Gurion, “Tnua lelo yeud veyeud lelo tnua,” 20.8.1954; Ben-Gurion, “Ragshu.”  
 23 Ben-Gurion, “Yisrael.”  
 24 Ben-Gurion, “Yitrona shel Yisrael”; Ben-Gurion, “Shalosh hatemurot”; see: D. Ben-Gurion, “Israel—People and State,” *Jewish Spectator*, May 1953, 10–12.  
 25 D. Ben-Gurion, “Kibbutz galuot ve medina lemofet,” *Davar*, 22.10.1954.

- 26 Ben-Gurion, "Likrat tzionut"; Ben-Gurion, "Medina lemofet."
- 27 Ben-Gurion, "Yisrael"; Ben-Gurion, "Yitrona shel Yisrael"; see: D. Ben-Gurion, "Israel's Achievements," *Jewish Spectator*, May 1954.
- 28 Ben-Gurion, "Tnua lelo."
- 29 D. Ben-Gurion, "Ve shuv—al tzionut ve aliya," *Davar*, 16.4.1954; Ben-Gurion, "Zika lenetzah"; Ben-Gurion, "Nireh."
- 30 Ben-Gurion, "Tzionim"; Ben-Gurion, "Shalosh hatemurot."
- 31 Ben-Gurion, "Al tzionut"; Ben-Gurion, "Yisrael."
- 32 Ben-Gurion, "Tnua lelo."
- 33 D. Ben-Gurion, "Bein Yisrael la golah," *Davar*, 8.10.1954.
- 34 Ben-Gurion, "Yisrael."
- 35 Ben-Gurion, "Bein yisrael"; D. Ben-Gurion, "Hamedina kematarah ukeemtzai," *Davar*, 5.3.1954; *Ibid.*, D. Ben-Gurion, "K'chol hagoyim," 26.11.1954; *Ibid.*, D. Ben-Gurion, "Am segulah," 29.10.1954; Ben-Gurion, "Bein Yisrael"; Ben-Gurion, "Likrat tzionut."
- 36 Ben-Gurion, "Yisrael"; see: D. Ben-Gurion, "Reflections on Zionism," *Jewish Spectator*, April 1954, 10–12.
- 37 Ben-Gurion, "Zika lenetzah"; D. Ben-Gurion, "Haika," *Davar*, 19.3.1954; *Ibid.* Ben-Gurion, "Kitrug shel yadid," 2.4.1954; *Ibid.*, D. Ben-Gurion, "Al 'chet' kibbutz galuot," 9.4.1954.
- 38 Ben-Gurion, "Yeudai hatzionut."
- 39 Ben-Gurion, "Yisrael"; Ben-Gurion, "Zika lenetzah."
- 40 The organizing department of the Zionist Organization, *The Discussion on the Essence of Zionism Today*, Issues 1–3, Jerusalem, 1954.
- 41 Livneh Eliezer (1902–1975). Israeli public figure and editor. In 1923 he joined the kibbutz En Harod and later became active in political work. He was a Mapai member of the First and Second Knessets (1949–1955). A prolific writer, Livneh published numerous pamphlets, articles and books on general and Israeli political questions.
- 42 E. Livneh, *State and Exile—A Study of the Future of the Zionist Movement*, Jerusalem, 1952–1953; see:—"The Future of the Zionist Movement," *Jewish Frontier*, July 1953, 5–10;—"The Meaning of Zionism," *Jewish spector*, June 1954, 7–10.
- 43 B. Locker, "Bein tzionim leohadim," *Davar*, 5.3.1954; *Ibid.*, B. Locker, "Histadrut tzionit o Machshirim acherim?," 26.2.1954; *Ibid.*, B. Locker, "Mah oseh hahistadrut hatzionit?," 8–9.3.1954.
- 44 B. Locker, "Hamedinah ve hatzionut mashlimot zu et zu," *Davar*, 14.3.1954–16.3.1954; *Ibid.*, B. Locker, "Haaliyah me-amerika," 1.3.1954.
- 45 A. Feldestein, *The Party of Ihud Olami 1948–1954: Alterations in the Light of the Changing Status of the Zionist Organization following the Establishment of the State of Israel*, MA thesis, Jerusalem: The Hebrew University, 1994.
- 46 *Zionist General Council Session in Jerusalem*, December 24–31, 1953.
- 47 B. Zuckerman, "Who is Zionist," *Jewish Frontier*, February 1954;—"Tziyonim vechovevai Yisrael stam," *Yiddishe Kampfer*, 26.2.1954.
- 48 I. Grunbaum, "Tzioni mah hu?," *Al-Hamishmar*, 5.1.1954; *Ibid.*, "Chazon vetochnit," 2.2.1954; see also: M. Keren, "Tzioni hu tzioni," *Haaretz*, 8.1.1954.
- 49 E. Neumann, lecture at ZOA House "American Jewry and the Zionist ideal," 21.1.1954. Published in *Haboker*, 22.1.1954; see: M. Samuel, "Miseducation and Mr. Ben-Gurion," *Congress Weekly*, 21, May 19, 1954, 5–9; B. Weiser, "Ben-Gurion's Dispute with American Zionists," *Commentary*, August 18, 1954, 93–101; S. Baron, "The Future of American Jewry," *Gesher*, 2–3, December 1954, 9–17.
- 50 *Zionist General Council Session in Jerusalem*, December 24–31, 1953.
- 51 Eban to Ben-Gurion, 9.8.1956, FA 107/5, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ISA.
- 52 Ben-Gurion to Blaustein, 9.8.1956, correspondence, BGA.
- 53 *Ibid.*, BGD, 2.10.1956.
- 54 *Ibid.*, 17.2.1955; "Moshe [Dayan] brought a plan for a strike against Egypt in Gaza—the camp on the outskirts of the city. I asked him to come to Jerusalem with me to

consult the P. M. After M. D. explained his plan accompanied by a detailed map of Gaza's surroundings, saying that possibly up to ten Egyptians would fall, the P. M. agreed to the operation," *Ibid.*, 3.3.1955.

## 6 The Sinai Campaign

- 1 M. Rosen (ed.), *Book of Contracts for the Middle East*, Tel-Aviv, 1956, p. 12; M. Bar-On, "The Struggle for the Achievements of 1948—Israel's Defence Policy," in T. Tsameret, H. Yablonka (eds) *The First Decade 1948–1958*, Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi Press, 1997, pp. 15–16.
- 2 Prominent among the infiltrators were Palestinians who had fled or been expelled from the zones of the battles that broke out immediately following the United Nations resolution to partition Palestine, on November 29, 1947. These refugees were housed in temporary camps to await the end of the war and the chance to return to their homes. When it became clear the Israel was not prepared to allow their return, they remained in the camps that had been organized to absorb them, without any serious, fundamental solution to the problem. Some tried to return to their abandoned homes, either to try and remove belongings they had left behind, or to maintain their property. Other infiltrators were residents on the periphery of the new border that separated them from their lands and livelihood. Those who refused to accept the new situation and were determined to work their lands and orchards had to cross the border to do so. Other infiltrators came from Jordan and the Gaza Strip at the instigation of political elements, for example, the Mufti of Jerusalem, formerly Haj Amin Al-Husseini, who tried to organize sabotage and murder raids inside Israeli territory in order to create constant military tension along the border, to prevent the ceasefire lines from becoming a permanent reality and to perpetuate the dispute and the problem. Palestinian organizations such as The Military Organization for the Liberation of Palestine and the Black Hand operated alongside the Mufti. There were also incursions by infiltrators motivated purely by revenge against Israeli citizens. The "political," infiltrations were a small part of the overall phenomenon and most of the infiltrators acted out of economic distress. B. Morris, *Israel's Border Wars, 1949–1956*, Tel-Aviv: Am Oved, 1996, pp. 50–60.
- 3 Z. Shalom, *David Ben-Gurion, the State of Israel and the Arab World, 1949–1956*, Sede Boker Campus: Ben-Gurion University Press, 1995, pp. 148–157; D. Tal, *Israel's Day-to-Day Security Conception: Its Origin and Development, 1949–1956*, Sede Boker Campus: Ben-Gurion University Press, 1998, p. 25; Memo from Israeli government to USA government, 12.6.1953, FA 130/16, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ISA; in February, after mining a train near Kalkilya; in May, after shots were fired on the Jerusalem-Tel Aviv highway and at a train; and in June, after the murder of a number of civilians in several incidents during the same week; see also: Government meeting, 4.2.1953 and 11.6.1953, ISA.
- 4 Tal, *Security Conception*, pp. 80–82; Morris, *Border Wars*, pp. 274–277.
- 5 *Ibid.*, pp. 278–280; 18.10.1953, FA 130/16, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ISA; *Ibid.*, Pierre Silber, Israeli Ambassador in France, to the Foreign minister, 19.10.1953, FA 130/2.
- 6 *Ibid.*, Government meeting, 18.10.1953; see also: A. Bendar, "This is how Ben-Gurion ordered government ministers to lie," *Ma'ariv*, 18.4.1997; Ben-Gurion denied IDF involvement in the operation and claimed that not one IDF unit was absent from base that night. He said, "We made a thorough investigation and it was absolutely clear to us that not one military unit, large or small, was absent from camp on the night of the attack on Kybia." He placed responsibility for the event on the border settlements whose patience had run out. He expressed the government's regret that innocent people had been harmed. Prime Minister's statement, 19.10.1953, Speeches and articles, BGA. See also: "We will not agree to forfeit our citizens' lives," *Davar*, 20.10.1953.

- 7 *Foreign Relation of the United States—Vol. IX: 1952–1954*, Washington, DC, 1986, pp. 1369–1371.
- 8 “American Jewry and our political struggle during the past six months,” 23.2.1954, FA 382/12, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ISA.
- 9 *Ibid.*, Eban to Sharett, 24.10.1953, FA 130/9.
- 10 Representatives from the following organizations participated in the meeting: United Synagogues of the USA, the AJC, the American Zionist Council and “Benei Berit.” *Ibid.*, Israeli embassy in Washington to Foreign Office USA desk, 26.10.1953, FA 130/9; see also: FRUS, Vol. IX, pp. 1384–1387.
- 11 Government meeting, 25.10.1953, ISA.
- 12 *Ibid.*, “USA Jewry and our political struggle during the past six months,” 23.2.1954, FA 382/12, Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- 13 See: *Ibid.*, Memo from Moshe Rivlin, “ZOA Convention,” 1.7.1954, FA 384/3A; Report of the 57th Annual Convention of the Zionist Organization of America, July 1, 1954, RG-347 Gen-12, Yivo.
- 14 See Chapter 5: A Zionist preacher.
- 15 On the night of the March 17, 1954, terrorists ambushed a civilian bus climbing a steep, winding road (Ma’alei Akrabim) on the way from Eilat to Tel-Aviv. In this attack, the most serious act of terrorism against Israelis since 1949, the terrorists fired at the bus and then burst into it and massacred 11 passengers in cold blood. On the March 27 Jordanian infiltrators penetrated Kissalon, a farming community in the Jerusalem Corridor, with the intention of stealing cattle. When they encountered the guards, they opened fire and killed one of them. Morris, *Border Wars*, pp. 322–328; Tal, *Security Conception*, pp. 144–145.
- 16 *Ibid.*, pp. 159–161; Morris, *Border Wars*, pp. 331–341.
- 17 Sharett knew nothing at all about the operation—neither before the network began to operate, nor after it collapsed. The affair was only reported to Sharett at the beginning of October, when Cairo radio broadcast news of the capture and trial of the network’s members. The “disgraceful affair,” as it was called, later developed into the affair of “who gave the order?” which became the Lavon Affair. On this subject, see: N. Yanai, *Political Crises in Israel*, Jerusalem: Keter, 1982; M. Bar-Zohar, *Ben-Gurion: A Biography*, C, Tel-Aviv: Am Oved, 1987; S. Teveth, *Calaban*, Tel-Aviv: Am Oved, 1992; E. Kafkafi, *Pinchas Lavon—Anti-Messiah*, Tel-Aviv: Am Oved, 1998. The network consisted of Jewish Egyptian citizens. Two of those arrested died before they were brought to trial: Yosef Carmon was tortured to death and Major Max Binett, an officer in Unit 131 of military Intelligence, committed suicide. A female member of the network, Marcelle Ninio, attempted suicide, but lived. Moshe Marzuk and Shmuel Azar were sentenced to death. The others received severe sentences. Morris, *Border Wars*, pp. 347–348.
- 18 *Haboker*, 2.2.1955; BGD, 17.2.1955, BGA.
- 19 M. Sharett, *Diary*, 3 (1955), Tel-Aviv: Ma’ariv Press, 1978, p. 805; Sharett to Ben-Gurion, 1.3.1955, correspondence, BGA; *Ibid.*, Ben-Gurion to Sharett, 1.3.1955.
- 20 The operation, called “Black Arrow,” was carried out on the night of February 28. There were 8 deaths and 13 wounded on the Israeli side. Casualties among the Egyptian soldiers in the camp, the pumping station and the train station were 14 dead and 15 wounded; 2 civilians also lost their lives. Morris, *Border Wars*, pp. 353–355; Tal, *Security Conception*, pp. 181–184; B. Michelson, “The Gaza Operation—Planning, execution and lessons learned,” in M. Golani (ed.) *Hetz shachor: Gaza Raid & the Israeli Policy of Retaliation During the Fifties*, Tel-Aviv: Maarchot, 1994, pp. 12–17.
- 21 Sharett, *Diary*, pp. 837–838, 12.3.1955.
- 22 A. Harman, consul general in New York, “The Gaza Operation,” 31.3.1955, FA 2440/6, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ISA.
- 23 *Haaretz*, 4.10.1955.



- 24 *Ma'ariv*, 2.10.1955; *Yediot Aharonot*, 14.10.1955; *Herut*, 29.9.1955; *Davar*, 2.10.1955.
- 25 E. Herlitz, "Public gathering in Madison Square Garden," 15.11.1955, 23.11.1955, FA 150/15, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ISA; see: *Ibid.*, Y. Maroz, First Secretary, Israeli Embassy in Washington, "Emergency conference of Jewish organizations, 17–18.1.1956."
- 26 *The 24th Zionist Congress—Stenographic Report*, Jerusalem, April 24–May 7, 1956; with regard to Ben-Gurion's perception of history, see Chapter 7: Ben-Gurion and the Intellectuals.
- 27 An item in *Haaretz*, 10.9.1956, announced that Nahum Goldmann had called for a dynamic foreign policy to achieve peace with the Arab states. Ben-Gurion sent Goldmann a critical letter: "I approve the strong desire for peace and a settlement—but till now I have not heard, from you or anyone else, the secret of 'the initiative and flight of imagination' that will bring about a settlement, and I am sorry to have heard those words from the president of the Zionist Organization." Ben-Gurion to Goldmann, 10.9.1956, correspondence, BGA; see: *Ibid.*, Goldmann's reply, 13.9.1956.
- 28 *Stenographic Report*.
- 29 Britain wanted to oust Nasser because he had directly hurt its interests in the Suez Canal and because his intervention in the affairs of Arab states, such as Jordan and Iraq, harmed British control over them. France regarded Nasser as a direct and indirect factor in the destabilization of its regime in its North African colonies. M. Bar-On, *The Gates of Gaza—Israel's Road to Suez and Back 1955–1957*, Tel-Aviv: Am Oved, 1992, pp. 212–223; M. Golani, *There will be War Next Summer: The Road to the Sinai War, 1955–1956*, Tel Aviv: Maarchot, 1997, pp. 175–183.
- 30 Bar-On, *The Gates of Gaza*, pp. 212–217.
- 31 During September 1956, French-Israel cooperation tightened. Shimon Peres, Executive Secretary of the Ministry of the Defence, went to Paris twice for discussions and returned with clarifications concerning France and Britain's cooperation with Israel in deposing Nasser. Golani, *There will be War*, pp. 259–274 and also 363–374; Bar-On, *The Gates of Gaza*, pp. 231–239 and also 275–293.
- 32 *Ibid.*, pp. 304–305; Bar-Zohar, *Ben-Gurion*, pp. 1262–1263.
- 33 Military preparations and mobilization of reserves were already underway when Eisenhower sent two forceful letters of warning to Ben-Gurion, which also contained a subtle threat that the United States would not sit idle if Israel initiated a war against Egypt. *Foreign Relations of the United States—Vol. XVI: 1955–1957*, Washington, DC, 1990, pp. 795, 801.
- 34 D. D. Eisenhower, *Waving Peace*, New York: New American Library, 1965, p. 74.
- 35 A. Eban, *The Political Struggle in UNO and USA following the Sinai Campaign*, Washington, 1957, pp. 13–14.
- 36 Eban to Ben-Gurion, 30.10.1956, correspondence, BGA.
- 37 *Ibid.*, Eban to Ben-Gurion, 31.10.1956; M. Fox, "Backing the 'good guys': American Governmental Policy, 'Jewish Influence', and the Sinai Campaign of 1956," *American Jewish Archives*, Vol. XI, April 1988, 86–87.
- 38 *The New York Daily News*, 30.10.1956.
- 39 The Conference of Presidents of the major American Jewish Organizations was founded in 1955 by the heads of 17 Jewish organizations for the purpose of discussing aims and goals common to the Jewish communities in the United States in general, with reference to Israel in particular. Nahum Goldmann was president of the club until 1959. M. Rainer, "Reactions to the Kadesh Campaign from Jewish Organizations in the USA," *Kivunim*, May 11, 1981, 106; Eban, *The Political Struggle*, p. 16.
- 40 Goldmann to Ben-Gurion, 6.11.1956, Z6/1090, CZA; an additional cable was sent by Mordecai Kirshblum, president of the Mizrahi organization in the United States, 5.11.1956, correspondence, BGA; the American Orthodox community also organized

- in support of the State of Israel: "Last Sabbath was declared a day of prayer for Israel and, in addition, psalms are recited every morning." Report Moshe Rivlin, Information Center New York. 8.11.1956, FA 133/13, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ISA.
- 41 Middle East Arab Israel conflicts, Sinai Campaign, 1.11.1956, RG-347.7, Yivo; "Message to Israel," *Congress Weekly*, 23, 12.11.1956; The American Jewish Congress was founded in 1922 in order to defend the rights of Jews in all countries, to preserve their national rights and to strengthen Jewish interests in Palestine. In the beginning it was headed by Judge Louis Brandeis. The Organization completely identified itself with the Zionist Organization.
- 42 6.11.1956, correspondence, BGA.
- 43 *Ibid.*, BGD, 7.11.1956.
- 44 The 182nd meeting, 7.11.1956, *Knesset Minutes*.
- 45 FRUS, Vol. XVI, pp. 1063–1064.
- 46 BGD, 8.11.1956, BGA.
- 47 *Ibid.*, Goldmann to Ben-Gurion, 8.11.1956, correspondence; In cabled reply to Goldmann, Ben-Gurion related to the withdrawal issue: "I did not declare that we would or would not withdraw from Sinai, nor did I declare that we would hand over positions in Sinai to an international force." *Ibid.*, 8.11.1956.
- 48 Eban, *The Political Struggle*, p. 55; Parallel to this, Ben-Gurion broadcast Israel's consent to withdraw. Radio broadcast, 9.11.1956, Speeches and articles, BGA.
- 49 FRUS, Vol. XVI, pp. 1095–1096.
- 50 BGD, 9.11.1956, BGA.
- 51 *Ibid.*, Speech to IDF Officers, 29.11.1956, Speeches and articles; "Yesterday, Teddy [Kollek] returned from the USA (he spent half a day in England). The American Jews are excited about the IDF campaign. Filled with pride, donating generously to the State of Israel bonds campaign and Fund drives. Blaustein, Proskauer and others have become active." *Ibid.*, BGD, 24.11.1956.
- 52 A. J. C. Mid-East U.S. Organizational Statements, Memorandum of Conversation, 16.1.1957, RG-347.7, Yivo.
- 53 A. J. C. News Letter, No. 6, 18.1.1957, Blaustein Library.
- 54 The Conference of Presidents, which was appointed as an emergency committee for American Jewry, 10.1.1957, S38/39, CZA.
- 55 *Foreign Relations of the United State*—Vol. XVII: 1955–1957, Washington, DC, 1990, pp. 83–84.
- 56 *The New York Times*, 6.2.1957.
- 57 *Ibid.*, 8.2.1957.
- 58 *Ibid.*, 9.2.1957.
- 59 Bar-On, *The Gates of Gaza*, p. 348.
- 60 Eban, *The Political Struggle*, p. 210.
- 61 Rainer, *The Jewish Organizations*, p. 112. The American Zionist Committee for Public Affairs was founded in 1954 with the aim of influencing American policy in the Middle East as a whole and its attitude to Israel in particular.
- 62 FRUS, Vol. XVII, pp. 139–140.
- 63 M. A. Fitzsimons, "The Suez Crisis and the Containment Policy," *The Review of Politics*, 4, October, 1957, 419–445; with the crisis, circles in the Eisenhower government became conscious of the need to draw up a document examining US policy in the Middle East. Guidelines for the program were set in "The Eisenhower Doctrine," which was brought before the Senate committee in January 1957.
- 64 Rainer, *The Jewish Organizations*, p. 113; On the stand taken by the different organizations, see: The American Jewish Committee: R. Langum, "The American Mind in Foreign Affairs," *Commentary*, April 23, 4, 1957, pp. 301–308; The American Jewish Congress: W. Maslow, "Was Eisenhower Doctrine Necessary," *Congress Weekly*, 18.2.1957; the Conference of Presidents, appointment of American Jewish emergency committees, 10.1.1957, S38/39, CZA.

- 65 FRUS, Vol. XVII, p. 226.  
 66 Eban, *The Political Struggle*, pp. 236–237.  
 67 *The New York Times*, 22.2.1957; Bar-On, *The Gates of Gaza*, p. 354.  
 68 Bar-Zohar, *Ben-Gurion*, p. 1301.  
 69 *The New York Times*, 26.2.1957.  
 70 FRUS, Vol. XVII, pp. 308–309; on February 24, 1957 Eban met Dulles and a compromise proposal was drafted: Israel would notify the UN Assembly unilaterally of its withdrawal from Sharm e-Sheikh and Gaza, whereas the United States would notify the Assembly that it regards the Straits of Eilat as an international waterway and takes note of Israel's declaration in the matter of its right to defend itself.  
 71 M. Medzini (ed.), *Israel's Foreign Relations—Selected Documents 1947–1974*, Jerusalem: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1976, pp. 308–309.  
 72 *Ibid.*, p. 608.  
 73 Eban, *The Political Struggle*, p. 288.  
 74 Bar-On, *The Gates of Gaza*, pp. 366–367.  
 75 FRUS, Vol. XVII, pp. 604–608.  
 76 The 256th meeting, 6.3.1957, *Knesset Minutes*; Ben-Gurion to Eisenhower, FRUS, Vol. XVII, p. 379.  
 77 The 280th meeting, 2.4.1957, *Knesset Minutes*.  
 78 N. W. Cohen, *American Jews and the Zionist Idea*, New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1975, pp. 100–109; H. M. Sachar, *History of the Jews in America*, New York: A. A. Knopf, 1992, pp. 724–729.

## 7 Ben-Gurion and the intellectuals

- 1 Yariv was the name of Ben-Gurion's grandson, the son of his daughter Geulah.  
 2 "I have begun to clarify, in writing, the 'terms and contents' of Zionism and Socialism—what once was said and now is not said." BGD, 6.9.1956, BGA.  
 3 D. Ben-Gurion, "Shemot ve techanin," *Davar*, 14.9.1956, 19.9.1956.  
 4 BGD, 13.9.1956, 22.9.1956, BGA.  
 5 *Davar*, 25.9.1956.  
 6 Ben-Gurion to Goldmann, 25.9.1956, Z6/1419, CZA.  
 7 See Introductory chapter.  
 8 Ben-Gurion to Goldmann, 25.9.1956, Z6/1419, CZA.  
 9 *Ibid.*, Goldmann to Ben-Gurion, 10.10.1956.  
 10 *Ibid.*, 22.9.1956.  
 11 BGD, 13.9.1956, BGA.  
 12 N. Rotenstreich, "Consciousness of the need for a state," *Molad*, 14, January–December 1956, 400–403.  
 13 Ben-Gurion to Rotenstreich, 9.1.1957, correspondence, BGA.  
 14 *Ibid.*, Ben-Gurion to Rotenstreich, 13.1.1957.  
 15 *Ibid.*, Ben-Gurion to Rotenstreich, 28.3.1957.  
 16 *Ibid.*, Ben-Gurion to Rotenstreich, 29.4.1957.  
 17 *Ibid.*, Rotenstreich to Ben-Gurion, 11.1.1957.  
 18 *Ibid.*, Rotenstreich to Ben-Gurion, 17.1.1957.  
 19 *Ibid.*, Rotenstreich to Ben-Gurion, 3.4.1957.  
 20 A. Shapira, "Ben-Gurion and the Bible: The Creation of an Historical Narrative?" *Alpayim*, 17, 1997, p. 224.  
 21 See Chapter 6: The Sinai Campaign.  
 22 *Davar*, 13.8.1957.  
 23 D. Ben-Gurion, "The State of Israel and the Future of the Nation," *Hazut*, 4, 1958, 141–143, 167.  
 24 M. M. Kaplan, *A New Zionism*, New York: Herzl Press, 1959, pp. 13–26.  
 25 M. Kaplan, "Zionism's Renewal," *Hazut*, 4, 1958, pp. 32–34.

- 26 Ibid., “Chidush Hatzionut,” pp. 290–291; see also: Y. Gorni, *The Quest for Collective Identity*, Tel-Aviv: Am Oved, 1990; A. Hertzberg, “The Jewish Perception of Mordecai Kaplan,” *Yahadut Z’emanenu*, 3, 1986, pp. 19–24; G. Shimoni, “Reformulations of Zionist Ideology Since the Establishment of the State of Israel,” *Studies in Contemporary Jewry*, XI, 1995, p. 11–36; J. J. Cohen, “Mordecai M. Kaplan,” in C. S. Kessner (ed.) *The “Other” New York Jewish Intellectuals*, New York: New York University Press 1994, pp. 291–312.
- 27 B. Halpern, “Exile,” *The Jewish Frontier*, April 1954.
- 28 B. Halpern, *The American Jew—A Zionist Analysis*, New York: Theodor Herzl Foundation, 1956, p. 149, pp. 158–159.
- 29 B. Halpern, *The American Jew—A Zionist Analysis*, Jerusalem: Hassifriya Haziyonit, 1988, pp. 103–105.
- 30 B. Halpern, “The State of Israel as a Zionist State,” *Hazut*, 4, 1958, pp. 161–162; see also: A. A., Goren, “Ben Halpern: ‘At Home in Exile,’” in C. S. Kessner (ed.) *The “Other” New York Jewish Intellectuals*, New York: New York University Press, 1994, pp. 71–100.
- 31 N. Goldmann, “Israel and the Jewish People,” *Hazut*, 4, 1958, pp. 148, 154–155.
- 32 G. Meir, “Our Claims on Diaspora Jewry,” *Hazut*, 4, 1958, pp. 204–207.

## 8 Who is a Jew

- 1 Government meeting, 24.5.1950, 7.6.1950, ISA; See Chapter 4, Law of Return.
- 2 D. Horowitz, M. Lissak, *Trouble in Utopia—The Overburdened Policy of Israel*, Tel-Aviv: Am Oved, 1990, pp. 26–27; A. Cohen, B. Zisser, “Bein heskemiut shevirah le shvirat hahezkemiut: tmurot beyachasei dat vemedina—Bein konsocionalism le hachraah,” in M. Mautner, A. Sagi, R. Shamir (eds) *Multiculturalism in a democratic and Jewish state*, Tel-Aviv: Ramot, 1998, pp. 67–701.
- 3 A. Shaki, *Who is a Jew*, Jerusalem, 1976, pp. 98–101; A. Avihai, *David Ben-Gurion: Designer of the State*, Jerusalem: Keter, 1974, p. 83; E. Don-Yehiya, “Judaism and Statism in Ben-Gurion’s Thought and Politics,” *Zionism*, 14, 1989, p. 83.
- 4 The proposal was raised during June 1958. Shaki, *Who is a Jew*, pp. 100–101.
- 5 BGD, 24.6.1958, BGA; “In the evening, Shapira rang saying he had something urgent. I told him to come . . . Shapira informed me that they would have to leave the coalition if the government did not change their decision on the registration of Jews. I explained that we do not establish Halacha for the rabbis, but order for the state—not acceptable.”
- 6 Shaki, *Who is a Jew*, pp. 100–101.
- 7 BGD, 1.7.1958, BGA.
- 8 Ibid., Moshe Shapira to Ben-Gurion, 29.6.1958, correspondence; a letter in similar vein was also sent by Yosef Burg. Ibid., Yosef Burg to Ben-Gurion, 29.6.1958.
- 9 484th meeting, 1.7.1958, *Knesset minutes*.
- 10 “The politics of *Hasdarah*—Regularization—is an attempt to regulate divisive problems and conflicts where there is only minimal agreement. The line is to ‘invent’ pragmatic solutions for all problems, including those with religious and ideological emphases, where opposite stands appear impossible to balance and threaten to divide the country. The method is to waive one-sided majority resolutions and to incorporate representatives of the major groups in government institutions and policy-making procedures.” E. Don-Yehiya, *Politics of Accommodation: Settling Conflicts of State and Religion in Israel*, Jerusalem: The Floersheimer Institute for Policy Studies, 1997, p. 7.
- 11 Ben-Gurion to rabbi Maimon, 30.6.1958, correspondence, BGA.
- 12 Ibid., rabbi Maimon to Ben-Gurion, 3.7.1958.
- 13 Ibid., Ben-Gurion to rabbi Maimon, 7.7.1958.
- 14 Ibid., BGD, 7.7.1958.
- 15 Ibid., 9.7.1958; Meeting between Ben-Gurion and Wahrhaftig, 9.7.1958, 28 A-7266, section 43, ISA.

- 16 The Mapai meeting, 13.7.1958, section 2, ILPA.
- 17 Ibid., BGD, 13.7.1958, BGA.
- 18 The July 14 revolution was carried out by the underground group of "Free Officers" led by Abed el-Karim Kassem and Abed e-Salem Aref. They killed King Faisal II and the heir to the throne (who was Regent) in their palaces. Kassem declared the establishment of a "People's Republic."
- 19 BGD, 14.7.1958, BGA.
- 20 Ibid., 15.7.1958.
- 21 The 494th meeting, 15.7.1958, *Knesset Minutes*.
- 22 Content of the letter to the "Savants of Israel," 27.10.1958, correspondence, BGA.
- 23 Ibid., see also: *Maariv*, 30.11.1958; *Yedioth Ahronoth*, 30.11.1958; *Haaretz*, 30.11.1958; *Al-Hamishmar*, 30.11.1958.
- 24 "The mother determines the holiness [purity] of the newborn and his acceptance into the Community of Israel... hence it is impossible for young or old to be considered or to be registered as a Jew if his mother is a gentile, and he has not converted according to the Law of Moses and Israel. A declaration by the parents, or the adult himself, makes no difference." Yosef Dov Halevi Solevetzick, New York, in: *Opinion on the Subject of "Who is a Jew,"* Jerusalem, 1958.
- 25 Ibid., Haim Hazaz, the writer stated, among other things: "There is no religious rule whose whole power lies in the authority invested willingly in the individual. Therefore it seems to me... that *Halacha* has no hand in the Population Register, but only the law of the state."
- 26 539th meeting, 24.11.1958, *Knesset Minutes*.
- 27 Ibid., 543rd meeting, 1.12.1958.
- 28 Ibid., 547th meeting, 3.12.1958.
- 29 Ibid., Ben-Gurion spoke to the same effect to Bar-Yehuda and Toledano. BGD, 1.2.1959, BGA; see also: Ibid., Ben-Gurion to Eban, 4.1.1959, correspondence.
- 30 The wording of the resolution is quoted in Shaki, *Who is a Jew*, pp. 102–103.
- 31 14.7.1958, FA 327/10, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ISA; *Hatsofe*, 24.11.1958.
- 32 David Rivlin, Israeli Consul in New York, to Yitzhak Navon, 2.1.1959, Correspondence, BGA: "More than six hundred rabbis belonging to this union, who serve about a million members of Jewish congregations... whose loyalty to Israel is beyond doubt... the recent religious shocks... have not passed without having an influence"; Ibid., BGD, 14.1.1959.
- 33 Ibid., Ben-Gurion to Mordecai Kirshblum, 2.2.1959, correspondence.
- 34 Executive Board, 25.10.1958, RG-2 BDS-20, Blaustein Library; at the Directors' meeting of the Executive Committee of the AJC it was decided to follow developments in the affair, and not to take a stand until the state reached a decision.
- 35 D. Shofet, "Who is a Jew", *Jewish Spectator*, September 1958, pp. 8–11; W. Roth, "Who is a Jew" *Jewish Spectator*, December 1958, pp. 18–19; "Ben-Gurion to Jewish Scholars: Who is a Jew?," *Congress bi-Weekly*, January 5, 1959, pp. 5–7; J. Kaufman, "The Great Debate: Are they Jews or Not?," *Congress bi-Weekly*, January 19, 1959, pp. 5–6.
- 36 D. Shaham, *Israel—40 Years*, Tel-Aviv: Am Oved, 1991, p. 176.
- 37 9th meeting, 16.12.1959, *Knesset Minutes*.
- 38 Ben-Gurion to Shapira, 4.1.1960, correspondence, BGA.
- 39 M. Samet, "Who is a Jew," *The Jerusalem Quarterly*, 36, 1985, p. 90.
- 40 See Chapter 7: Ben-Gurion and the intellectuals.
- 41 Shaki, *Who is a Jew*, p. 135.
- 42 Don-Yehiya, *Politics of Accommodation*, p. 56.
- 43 Ibid., p. 57.
- 44 See Chapter 4, Law of return.

## 9 The capture and trial of Adolf Eichmann

- 1 Some researchers claim that the Jewish Settlement in Palestine, with Ben-Gurion in the forefront, abandoned the Jews of Europe and did not do everything in its power to save them, because they lacked compassion and were motivated by ideology. Others claim that Ben-Gurion worked tirelessly to save European Jewry, but in reality it was impossible to do anything to rescue them. Therefore he devoted himself to develop plans for the postwar future. See: D. Porat, *An Entangled Leadership: the Yishuv & the Holocaust, 1942–1945*, Tel-Aviv: Am Oved, 1986; T. Friling, *Arrow in the Dark: David Ben-Gurion, the Yishuv leadership and Rescue Attempts During the Holocaust*, Sede Boker Campus: The Ben-Gurion Research Center, 1998; and compare: T. Segev, *The Seventh Million: The Israelis and the Holocaust*, Jerusalem: Keter, 1991.
- 2 M. Brecher, *The Foreign Policy System of Israel*, London: Oxford University Press, 1972, p. 237; I. Harel, *Security and Democracy*, Tel-Aviv: Idanim, 1989, p. 299.
- 3 23rd meeting, 5.1.1960, *Knesset Minutes*; Y. Tzur, Acting director, to Israel's overseas representatives, 7.1.1960, FA 130 3356/23, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ISA.
- 4 *Ibid.*, press release from Israel's permanent delegation to the UN, 11.1.1960.
- 5 *Ibid.*, H. Yachil, Deputy Director of the Foreign Office, to Israel's overseas representatives, 6.1.1960.
- 6 The first reliable information that Eichmann was in Argentina was given to Eliezer Shenhar, head of the Israeli delegation in West Germany, by Fritz Bauer, the Attorney General of the Hessen Province. Shenhar immediately passed the information to the head of the Mossad, Isser Harel who in turn reported at once to Ben-Gurion. The latter suggested that Harel ask Bauer "not to tell anybody and not to demand his arrest, but to give us his address and if we find him there—we will catch him and bring him here." BGD, 6.12.1959, BGA; see also: M. L. Urofsky, *We are One—American Jewry and Israel*, New York: Anchor Press, 1978, p. 318; I. Harel, *The House on Garibaldi Street*, Tel-Aviv: Maariv library, 1975.
- 7 BGD, 15.5.1960, BGA.
- 8 The 99th meeting, 23.5.1960, *Knesset Minutes*.
- 9 *Davar*, 26.5.1960.
- 10 The editorials of these newspapers are quoted in *Haaretz*, 3.6.1960.
- 11 Proskauer to Ben-Gurion, 31.5.1960, correspondence, BGA.
- 12 See sub-chapter on "Exchange of Views" between Ben-Gurion and Blaustein.
- 13 Ben-Gurion to Proskauer, 7.7.1960, correspondence, BGA.
- 14 "Summary of AJC's Concern with Impact of Eichmann Trial," 1960, RG 347.17.12, Yivo; *Ibid.*, "The Public Relations Aspects of the Eichmann Trial," 7.12.1960.
- 15 *Haboker*, 2.6.1960.
- 16 Ben-Gurion to Goldmann, 2.6.1960, correspondence, BGA.
- 17 *Ibid.*, see also: *Ibid.*, Ben-Gurion to Goldmann, 8.8.1960.
- 18 *Yedioth Aharonot*, 3.6.1960; see also: M. Keren, "Ben-Gurion's Theory of Sovereignty: The Trial of Adolf Eichmann," in R. W. Zweig (ed.) *David Ben-Gurion—Politics and Leadership in Israel*, London: Cass, 1991, pp. 40–41; See Chapter 10.: Two sides of the triangle.
- 19 The American Council for Judaism was founded in 1943, by a group of Reform rabbis. This was the only Organization in the American Jewish community that actively opposed Zionism and the State of Israel and rejected any attempt at a national definition of the Jewish collective in the United States.
- 20 Goldmann to Ben-Gurion, 2.6.1960, correspondence, BGA; Goldmann repeated this stand of his in an additional letter to Ben-Gurion, 22.8.1960; *Haaretz*, 3.6.1960.
- 21 Discussion of Hannah Arendt in this work relates only to her stand on everything connected to holding the trial in Israel. Her book, *Eichmann in Jerusalem—A Report on the Banality of Evil*, raised a public outcry. For a summary of her outlook

- see: Y. Gorni, *Between Auschwitz and Jerusalem*, Tel-Aviv: Am Oved, 1998; J. Robinson, *And the Crooked Shall be Made Straight*, Jerusalem: The Bialik Institute, 1966; R. J. Bernstein, *Hannah Arendt and the Jewish Question*, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1996.
- 22 L. Kohler and H. Saner (eds), *Hannah Arendt, Karl Jaspers—Correspondence, 1926–1969*, New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1992, p. 423.
- 23 H. Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem—A Report on the Banality of Evil*, New York: Viking Press, 1963, pp. 10–11.
- 24 *Ibid.*, p. 259.
- 25 *Ibid.*, p. 263.
- 26 BGD, 7.6.1960, BGA
- 27 *Haaretz*, 3.6.1960.
- 28 Levavi to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2.6.1960, FA 130 2295/9, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ISA.
- 29 *Ibid.*, FA 130 3351/23.
- 30 D. Ben-Gurion, *The Restored State of Israel*, B, Tel-Aviv: Am Oved, 1975, pp. 653–654.
- 31 Ben-Gurion to Argentinean President, 8.6.1960, correspondence, BGA.
- 32 Ben-Gurion, *The State of Israel*, p. 655.
- 33 “Frondisi is most interested in meeting Ben-Gurion in Paris. I was amazed.” Levavi to the Foreign Affairs Ministry, 11.6.1960, FA 130 2295/9, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ISA.
- 34 *Davar*, 19.6.1960, 26.6.1960.
- 35 *Ibid.*, 16.6.1960.
- 36 *Ibid.*, 23.6.1960.
- 37 H. Avni, “Jewish Leadership in Times of Crisis: Argentina during the Eichmann Affair (1960–1962),” *Studies in Contemporary Jewry*, XI, 1995, 124; N. W. Cohen, *Not Free to Desist—The American Jewish Committee 1906–1966*, Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1972, pp. 547–548.
- 38 Report from Shabtai Rosen, 8.8.1960, FA 130 3352/23, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ISA; BGD, 16.8.1960, BGA.
- 39 H. Barles (ed.), *Holocaust and Trial—The Eichmann. Trial and the Holocaust Period*, A, Jerusalem: Diaspora Encyclopaedia, 1961, p. 12.
- 40 *Ibid.*, C, Jerusalem, 1963, p. 25.
- 41 *Ibid.*, p.26.
- 42 For discussion about whether this was a criminal trial, an historic trial or a show trial, see: H. Yablonka, *State of Israel vs. Adolf Eichmann*, Tel-Aviv: Yedioth Ahronoth, 2001.
- 43 “Mivtza Dorainu Umesimato,” 3.9.1961, Speeches and articles, BGA; *Ibid.*, Speech at the 23rd Independent Day, May 1961.
- 44 *Ibid.*, “Mivtza Dorainu Umesimato,” 3.9.1961; see also: *Ibid.*, Ben-Gurion to Galili, 26.5.1960, correspondence; *Lamerchav*, 29.5.1960; *Davar*, 27.5.1960.

## 10 Two sides of the triangle

- 1 *Zionist General Council Session in Jerusalem*, 18–27.3.1958.
- 2 Meeting of the committee for cooperation with the government, 7.4.1958, S38/8, CZA.
- 3 The committee consisted of ten representatives of the parties which were members of the Agency Executive.
- 4 Meeting between the Prime Minister and representatives of all the Zionist parties, 15.6.1958, 4701 C-5594, section 43, ISA.
- 5 N. Goldmann, *Memories*, Jerusalem: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1972, pp. 272–280.

- 6 See sub-chapter dealing with Ben-Gurion's visit to the United States in 1960. The prime minister's meeting with representatives of Zionist parties, 15.6.1958, 4701 C-5594, section 43, ISA; BGD, 15.6.1958, BGA.
- 7 Ibid., 20.4.1958; Ibid., the prime minister's speech at the ceremony for the Szold Award, 12.6.1958, Speeches and articles; Ibid., Ben-Gurion's address at the laying of the cornerstone for the Rabbinical College, 29.7.1958; Ibid., Ben-Gurion's speech at the World Jewish Youth Congress, 30.7.1958.
- 8 M. Veron, Consul General in New York, to G. Avner, in charge of the USA Desk at the Foreign Office, 5.11.1958, FA 492/17, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ISA.
- 9 Ben-Gurion to Shazar, 29.6.1958, correspondence, BGA.
- 10 Ibid., Josephthal to Ben-Gurion, 11.9.1958.
- 11 Goldmann to Ben-Gurion, 15.1.1959, Z6/2359, CZA.
- 12 BGD, 31.12.1958, 7.2.1959, BGA.
- 13 Coordination Board meeting, 17.5.1960, S100/505, CZA.
- 14 Ben-Gurion to Goldmann, 8.8.1960, correspondence, BGA.
- 15 Ibid., Goldmann to Ben-Gurion, 22.8.1960.
- 16 Ibid., Ben-Gurion to Goldmann, 24.8.1960.
- 17 A. Feldestein, *The Party of Ihud Olami 1948–1954: Alterations in the Light of the Changing Status of the Zionist Organization following the Establishment of the State of Israel*, MA thesis, Jerusalem: the Hebrew University, 1994.
- 18 Mapai Meetings of the Central Committee, 2.6.1960, file 23/60, section 2, ILPA.
- 19 See Chapter 7: Ben-Gurion and the intellectuals.
- 20 See Chapter 4: Legislative issues.
- 21 Mapai Meetings of the Central Committee, 2.6.1960, file 23/60, section 2, ILPA.
- 22 See sub-chapter discussing encouragement of immigration from the United States.
- 23 Y. Ben-Porat, *Yedioth Ahronoth*, 3.6.1960.
- 24 See Chapter 9: The capture and trial of Adolf Eichmann.
- 25 Y. Ben-Porat, *Yedioth Ahronoth*, 3.6.1960.
- 26 Ben-Gurion to Almogi, 26.10.1960, A11/63, CZA.
- 27 Ben-Gurion to Shazar, 23.11.1960, 28.11.1960, correspondence, BGA.
- 28 *The 25th Zionist Congress—Stenographic Report*, Jerusalem, 27.12.1960–11.1.1961.
- 29 *Haaretz*, 28.5.1959.
- 30 D. Ben-Gurion, "Zikah Le-Netzah Israel", *Davar*, 5.2.1954.
- 31 See sub-chapter dealing with the relationship with the AJC.
- 32 *Stenographic Report*.
- 33 A. Harman, Israel Ambassador in Washington, to Ben-Gurion, 23.1.1961, FA 4308/14, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ISA.
- 34 *Stenographic Report*.
- 35 *Shnatot statisti le'yisrael*, Jerusalem, 1963, p. 110.
- 36 Moshe Davis to Natan Rotenstreich, 14.2.1958, A364/309, CZA.
- 37 Ben-Gurion to Davis, 11.3.1958, 10.4.1958, correspondence, BGA.
- 38 Ibid., Davis to Ben-Gurion, 2.6.1958; see: Ibid., BGD, 28.7.1958.
- 39 Ibid., Davis to Ben-Gurion, 18.9.1958, correspondence.
- 40 Ibid., Shragai to Ben-Gurion, 1.7.1958.
- 41 Ibid., Ben-Gurion to Shragai, 8.7.1958.
- 42 Ibid., Goldmann to Ben-Gurion, 11.3.1959.
- 43 Ibid., BGD, 25.5.1959; The joint committee consisted of four government representatives (L. Eshkol, Y. Bar-Yehuda, P. Sapir, P. Rosen) and four Agency representatives (S. Z. Shragai, E. Dobkin, L. Dulzin, D. Yosef). Joint committee for the absorption of immigrants from Western countries, 8.6.1959, 3862 C-5550, section 43, ISA.
- 44 Ibid., Planned immigration from the United States, letter from A. Yaffe, Information Center, New York, to S. Pratt, Consul General New York 20.10.1959, FA 504/16, Ministry of Foreign Affairs.



- 45 Davis to Ben-Gurion, 24.11.1959, correspondence, BGA.
- 46 Davis Committee meeting, 5.1.1960, 3556 C-6378, section 43, ISA.
- 47 *Ibid.*, meeting in the prime minister's office, 23.5.1960.
- 48 Shragai to Herlitz, 8.6.1960, Z5/9270, CZA.
- 49 Herlitz to Josephthal, 10.6.1960, 3553 C-6378, section 43, ISA.
- 50 *Ibid.*, Josephthal to Shragai, 13.6.1960.
- 51 *Ibid.*, Herlitz to Davis, 28.6.1960.
- 52 Guidelines for the establishment of a joint immigration authority, 16.1.1963, S65/194, CZA.
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- 63 Z. Shalom, "US and Britain's Reactions Following the Exposure of the Israeli Nuclear Reactor in Dimona," *Iyunim Bitkumat Israel*, 4, 1994, p. 141.
- 64 BGD, 29.3.1961, BGA.
- 65 Shalom, *US and Britain's Reactions*, pp. 167–169.
- 66 *Davar*, 1.6.1961, see below sub paragraph dealing with the AJC committee.
- 67 Documents dealing with this visit are missing from the Ben-Gurion archives. It cannot be established whether Ben-Gurion failed to make his customary orderly notes, or whether the material was removed from the archives over the years. One way or another, it is hard to describe the process of the visit and his meetings with American Jewish community leaders.
- 68 See Chapter 6: Sinai campaign.
- 69 Ester Herlitz to the Prime Minister's Office, 15.5.1957, correspondence, BGA.
- 70 The delegation prepared a document which included subjects for discussion with the Israeli leadership in general and Ben-Gurion in particular: a. relations with Israel; b. the Law of Return; c. the refugee question. See: 7.6.1957, 4011 C-5563, section 43, ISA; Points to be discussed with Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion, 18.6.1957, RG-347.7.1 FAD-1, Yivo.
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- 83 *Ibid.*, Ben-Gurion to Harman, 15.3.1961.
- 84 Harman to Ben-Gurion, 22.3.1961, 3614 C-6380, section 43, ISA.
- 85 "Harman announces a meeting between Blaustein and K. [Kennedy] 'A good talk also with regard to K's attitude to us as well as regards Nasser'," BGD, 16.4.1961, BGA.
- 86 *Ibid.*, 20.4.1961, 22–23.4.1961.
- 87 *Ibid.*, 23.4.1961, Speeches and articles.
- 88 C. S. Liebman, *Pressure without Sanctions*, Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1977, p. 130; N. W. Cohen, *Not Free to Desist*, Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1972, p. 315; Y. Beilin, *Death of the American Uncle*, Tel Aviv: Yedioth Ahronoth Books, 1999, pp. 128–129.
- 89 See sub chapter dealing with Ben-Gurion's visit to the United States in 1961.
- 90 Blaustein to Kennedy, 23.5.1961, correspondence, BGA.
- 91 Nahum Goldmann response, 2.5.1961, S80/112, CZA; see also: *Ibid.*, Y. Bankouver, Zionist General Council member, to Y. Tzur, chairman of the Zionist General Council, 2.5.1961, S65/82.
- 92 Katz to Ben-Gurion, 5.5.1961, 3614 C-6380, section 43, ISA.
- 93 *Ibid.*, Ben-Gurion to Katz, 5.5.1961.
- 94 The 274th meeting, 17.5.1961, *Knesset Minutes*.
- 95 This initiative met with resistance from the Foreign Office: "The establishment of such an office in Israel will only increase the organization's interference in our 'problems'." "Proposal to open an office of the AJC in Israel," P. Eliav, deputy director, USA desk of the Foreign Ministry, to A. Harman, Israel's Ambassador in Washington, 17.1.1960, FA 505/7, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ISA; Ambassador A. Harman recommended nonintervention in the committee's decision and sympathetic reception of its final decision. *Ibid.*, Harman to Eliav, 20.1.1960.
- 96 Meeting between AJC delegation and Ben-Gurion, 18.12.1962, K11/63/6, CZA.
- 97 Miller to Ben-Gurion, 24.12.1962, correspondence, BGA.
- 98 *Ibid.*, Kollek to Miller, 26.12.1962.
- 99 *Ibid.*, Ben-Gurion to Harman, 30.12.1962.
- 100 *Ibid.*, Sharett to Ben-Gurion, 2.1.1963.
- 101 Ben-Gurion to Sharett, 13.1.1963, 401 C-6273, section 43, ISA.
- 102 *Ibid.*, Sharett to Ben-Gurion, 14.1.1963.
- 103 *Ibid.*, Argov to Kollek, 31.1.1963, 3614 C-6380.
- 104 Blaustein to Ben-Gurion, 21.1.1963, correspondence, BGA.
- 105 Kollek to Blaustein, 5.2.1963, 3614 C-6380, section 43, ISA.
- 106 *Ibid.*, Harman to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 17.2.1963.
- 107 *Ibid.*, Ben-Gurion to Blaustein, 22.6.1963.

## 11 End of the Ben-Gurion era

- 1 "On the 16th of June he behaved unlike himself, like someone who saw the shadow of mountains as mountains—and escaping from them; slamming the door behind him and getting out at exactly the most difficult moment, convinced that the danger of 'a fascist takeover' lurked within, and on the outside—the threat of attack and destruction by Nasser and his evil cohorts." M. Bar-Zohar, *Ben-Gurion—A Biography*, C, Tel-Aviv: Am Oved, 1987, pp. 1555–1559.

- 2 Interview with Yitzhak Navon, 1.7.1996; interview with Teddy Kollek, 23.7.1996.
- 3 Cohen relied on the testimony of ministers in Ben-Gurion's government: "Israel Gallili, leader of Ahdut HaAvodah, was certain that Ben-Gurion's responsibility for the confrontation between Israel and the USA concerning the Dimona issue, was among the reasons leading to his resignation." A similar explanation came from Yuval Neeman, who was the director of the Shorek Center for Nuclear Research. A. Cohen, "Kennedy, Ben-Gurion and the battle about Dimona: April–June 1963," *Iyunim Bitkumat Israel*, 6, 1996, pp. 143–144.
- 4 "We are witnessing the blurring of his consciousness of the difference between Israel in the 'sixties and the realities of the 'thirties... his disassociation from reality in exchange for an illusory, fictional reality." Weitz concludes that "His resignation was by way of being a kind of act of protest against an apocalyptic process that existed in his consciousness and only there." Y. Weitz, "Ben-Gurion's final resignation in 1963," in A. Shapira (ed.) *A State in the Making*, Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar center, 2001, pp. 73–107.
- 5 *Davar*, 17.6.1963.
- 6 *Haaretz*, 17.6.1963.
- 7 Y. Ben-Porat, "The 24 Hours Preceding Ben-Gurion's Resignation," *Yedioth Ahronoth*, 29.5.1964.
- 8 See Chapter 5: A Zionist preacher.
- 9 BGD, 16.6.1963, BGA; see also: D. Ben-Gurion, *The Restored State of Israel*, B, Tel-Aviv: Am Oved, 1969, pp. 730–731.
- 10 In July 1954, a Jewish sabotage network was uncovered in Egypt. The members were mostly local Jews and the operators were Israel agents. The network attempted to harm relations between Egypt and Western countries by a series of acts of sabotage against American installations in Egypt and the creation of public panic. The main aim of such operations was to prevent the British from withdrawing from the Suez Canal zone, a possibility that was being discussed at the time. The network did not manage to achieve much, its members were caught and two were executed. The Israeli public knew nothing of the dispute that erupted between Minister of Defense Pinhas Lavon and the head of AMAN Benjamin Gibli. The question of responsibility—in other words "Who gave the order" [to operate the network]—which would be at the center of "The Affair," was already being discussed. In November 1954, Prime Minister Moshe Sharett, who had known nothing about the network, appointed a two-man committee to investigate the matter: Yitzhak Olshen, President of the Supreme Court, and Yaacov Dori, ex-Chief of Staff. They concluded their investigation with the statement that they were unable to establish beyond doubt whether Lavon or Gibli bore responsibility for the actions. Criticism of Pinhas Lavon increased in the senior ranks of Mapai and some of them went to consult Ben-Gurion in Sede Boker. In February 1955, Pinhas Lavon announced his resignation from the government and Ben-Gurion returned to serve as minister of defense. This ended the first stage of the Affair, in which Ben-Gurion was only marginally involved. See Chapter 6: Sinai Campaign. On the subject of "The Affair" ("Haparasha"), see: N. Yanai, *Political crises in Israel*, Jerusalem: Keter, 1982; Bar-Zohar, *Ben-Gurion*; S. Teveth, *Calaban*, Tel-Aviv: Am Oved, 1992; E. Kafkafi, *Pinchas Lavon—Anti-Messiah*, Tel-Aviv: Am Oved, 1998.
- 11 On January 12, 1961, 150 artists and intellectuals published a statement denouncing Ben-Gurion for rejecting the decisions of the Committee of Seven. The signatories did not hesitate to call him a "dictator who harmed democracy." *Haaretz*, 12.1.1961.
- 12 Ben-Gurion did not change his mind about resigning. Therefore he wrote President Yitzhak Ben-Zvi as follows: "My state consciousness forbids me to bear responsibility for the resolution passed by the government on 25.12.1960, since this

- resolution negates the justice and law which are the foundation of the state, however, I have no doubt that my comrades passed it in all innocence and in the understanding that they were witnessing nothing but justice.” Ben-Gurion to Ben-Zwi, 31.1.1961, correspondence, BGA.
- 13 The members of the Mapai coalition refused to come to terms with the insults and accusations Ben-Gurion leveled at them and rejected the proposal that they rejoin the government led by him. On February 26, 1961, in a letter addressed to “Members,” he tried to release his party from the obligation to support him. In view of the opposition to his leadership among factions in the coalition, he proposed to the Mapai Central Committee that Levi Eshkol be appointed to the premiership. The main aim of this step was to prevent immediate elections at a time when public sentiment was anti-Mapai and its leader, on the background of “The Affair.” *Ibid.*, Ben-Gurion to the Mapai Central Committee, 26.2.1961.
  - 14 D. Shaham, *Israel—40 Years*, Tel-Aviv: Am Oved, 1991, pp. 206–208.
  - 15 *Davar*, 14.5.1963.
  - 16 These events were erased from the protocols of that Knesset meeting. The record stated: “At this point the Prime Minister said something that provoked many interjections from members of the Herut faction.” The 246th meeting, 13.5.1963, *Knesset Minutes*; the speech was published in full in the press.
  - 17 *Davar*, 14.5.1963.
  - 18 *Ibid.*, 15.5.1963.
  - 19 *Ibid.*, 16.5.1963; see also: A. Wolfensohn, *The Party Press in the Political Process*, PhD diss., Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1979.
  - 20 Documents referring to the nuclear matters were secret and therefore it was impossible to relate to Cohen’s assertion.
  - 21 Mapai and “Ahdut Haavodah,” founded the, “Campaign for the Unity of the Workers of Eretz-Israel”—a political pact that won 45 seats in the elections to the 6th Knesset. Shaham, *Israel*, p. 227.
  - 22 This can be learned from documentation in the Ben-Gurion archives. The major portion deals with subjects connected to the relationship between Ben-Gurion and Levi Eshkol, his successor and the Mapai elite. People close to him at the time, Haim Israeli and Yitzhak Navon, also claim that Ben-Gurion devoted most of his energy to these subjects. Interview with Yitzhak Navon, 1.7.1996; interview with Haim Israeli, 12.8.1996.
  - 23 D. Ben-Gurion, *The Restored State of Israel*, Tel-Aviv: Am Oved, 1969.
  - 24 Z. Tsahor, *Vision and Reckoning: Ben-Gurion—Ideology and Politics*, Tel-Aviv: Yedioth Ahronoth, 1994, pp. 235–240.
  - 25 “Hartaah shelo nismeah,” 1964, Speeches and articles, BGA; see also: *Ibid.*, BGD, 29.12.1964; see above Chapter 5: A Zionist Preacher.
  - 26 D. Ben-Gurion, “Al mahut hahazon hatziyoni,” *Davar*, 29.12.1964.
  - 27 *Ibid.*, “Hatemurot sheyesh lekahtan beheshbon,” 30.12.1964.
  - 28 *Ibid.*, “Shalosh Mesimot,” 31.12.1964; see also: “Hartaah shelo nismeah,” 1964, Speeches and articles, BGA; *Ibid.*, “Im hapanim lagolah—oh hafnayot hatefutza leyisrael,” 9.2.1965.
  - 29 “Ben-Gurion’s visit in U.S,” 9.9.1966, 7227, A–70, section 43, ISA; “David Ben-Gurion to Begin, Three-Weeks Tour of U.S.,” 26.1.1967, Z5/9270, CZA.
  - 30 *Haaretz*, 2.3.1967.
  - 31 *Davar*, 3.3.1967, 7.3.1967.
  - 32 *Ibid.*, 15.3.1967, 20.3.1967; *Ibid.*, S. Shafir, “Ben-Gurion’s USA journey,” 24.3.1967.
  - 33 Protocols of Meetings section, 31.3.1967, BGA.
  - 34 On the eve of Independence Day on May 26, Egyptian forces crossed the Suez Canal and began to take up positions in the Sinai Peninsula. Within a matter of days, Israel mobilized its Reserve units. The leaders of the Arab states, particularly Egyptian

President Gamal Abd al-Nasser, announced the “destruction of Israel.” In the waiting period, which lasted until the battles began on June 5, more than a few Israelis feared that this was going to be the “Destruction of the Third Temple.” Shaham, *Israel*, pp. 247–251.

35 M. Kaufman, “Under the influence of the Six Day War on the development of the United Jewish Appeal,” *Yahadut Z’emanenu*, 9, 1995, pp. 209–217.

36 “Immigration from affluent countries,” 9.8.1967, Speeches and articles, BGA; *Ibid.*, “Individual opinion,” 22.9.1967.

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