Reverberations from "the Earthquake": Collective Memory and Why Mizrahi Israelis Vote for the Israeli Right

Avery Weinman
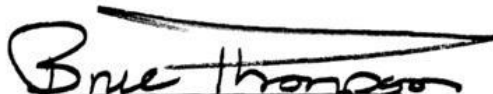
University of California, Santa Cruz

Department of History

March 22, 2019

_____

Professor Alma Heckman

Professor Bruce Thompson

This thesis has been completed to departmental standards and is submitted in partial fulfillment of the degree of Bachelor Arts in History

Abstract

This thesis examines why Mizrahi Israelis – Jews who trace their pre-Israeli heritage to the Middle East and North Africa – have consistently voted for Israel's Likud party and the Israeli Right since Menachem Begin's "Earthquake" election in 1977. To address this question, this thesis examines the relationship between Mizrahi Israelis and the Israeli Right through the lens of collective memory. Collective memory amplifies the emotional dimension of how Mizrahi Israelis understand of their relationship to the Israeli Right within the framework of a greater understanding of their role and history in the state of Israel. Through this exploration of collective memory, this thesis articulates the core elements that bolster Mizrahi Israelis' and the Israeli Right's continued political partnership, and demonstrates how these core elements continue to produce a potent impact on Israeli politics today. In this thesis, I conclude that Mizrahi Israelis' collective memory of their relationship to the Israeli Right – and the ways in which this collective memory is integral to Mizrahi Israelis' sense of pride, dignity, agency, and identity – is a major factor in why Mizrahi Israelis have historically voted and continue to vote for the Israeli Right.

Table of Contents

<u>Introduction</u>

On the evening of May 17th, 1977, Yehuda Avner was, like millions of other Israelis,

glued to his television set as he watched popular Channel 2 news anchor Haim Yavin announce

Menachem Begin and the Likud party's electoral victory for the ninth session of the Knesset.[1]

Yavin, an anchor so ubiquitous to the world of Israeli cable news that he was playfully

nicknamed "Mr. Television,"[2] proclaimed Begin and the Likud's triumph as the first right-wing

government in the state of Israel's history after twenty-nine years in opposition and nine

consecutive lost elections with a phrase that quickly became one of the most famous declarations

in the canon of Israeli politics: "Ladies and Gentlemen – an Earthquake!"[3] In a single election,

Begin disrupted decades of political hegemony from the powerful Labor Zionist governments

that had hitherto dictated the political culture of both the state of Israel and the pre-state Yishuv

largely unchallenged.[4]

Avner, who had already made his career as an advisor and speechwriter to the prime

minister's office and had worked closely with prime ministers and Labor Zionist titans Golda

Meir, Levi Eshkol, and Yitzhak Rabin, quickly grasped the significance of Likud's win beyond

the realm of just electoral politics. As he watched the frail and bespectacled Ashkenazi Begin,

whom he described as both "like a Hasidic rabbi, rhapsodized," and "pale from a recent heart

attack," perform his victory speech to an ecstatic crowd of mostly Mizrahi Israelis – Jews whose

families had come to Israel not from European cities like Warsaw, Odessa, Vilna or Kiev but

from Middle Eastern and North African cities like Rabat, Tunis, Cairo or Baghdad – Avner

---

[1] Yehuda Avner, "The Great Emancipator," *The Jerusalem Post,* May 17, 2007, accessed May 17, 2018, https://www.jpost.com/Opinion/Op-Ed-Contributors/The-great-emancipator.
[2] Calev Ben-David, "Analyze This: A Typically Classy Send-Off for 'Mr. Television,'" *The Jerusalem Post*, *February* 7, 2008, accessed April 30, 2018, https://www.jpost.com/Israel/Analyze-This-A-typically-classy-sign-off-for-Mr-Television-91391.
[3] Anita Shapira, *Israel: A History* (Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 2012), 331.
[4] Elfi Pallis, "The Likud Party: A Primer," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 21, No. 2 (Winter 1992): 44.

understood that Israel had undergone an irreversible metamorphosis. [5] The next morning, when

the elections commission finalized the voting results and it was an inevitable fact that Likud

would be able to successfully form a coalition and a functioning government, an article titled

"Earthquake" (in Hebrew, "Mahapach") by Yehoshua A. Gilboa appeared in the popular Israeli

daily newspaper *Ma'ariv*. In it Gilboa assessed, "On May 17, 1977, Israel experienced its first

political earthquake. You may cheer for it; you may bemoan it. You cannot disregard it."[6]

The tectonic shift of this election – colloquially known in Israel as *HaMahapach*, literally

either "the Earthquake" or "the Upheaval" in Hebrew – was revolutionary in terms of pure

politics, but also revolutionary in its implications for Israeli society. With this election, Mizrahi

Israelis – the demographic majority of Israeli Jews since the late 1950s – solidified themselves as

the stalwart electorate of the Israeli Right, establishing a political phenomenon and voting trend

that continues to this day.[7] And while Gilboa warned the day after *HaMahapach* that this

political shift must not be disregarded, I argue that, to a large extent and to the great detriment of

an unobscured understanding of Israeli politics, it has been. Mizrahi Israelis' widespread support

for the Israeli Right has been the subject of a deluge of political theory, history, sociology and

beyond, but these texts generally focus on more the traditional and clinical assessments of

political and social histories.[8] There is a dearth of scholarship that forgoes these conventional

---

[5] Avner, "The Great Emancipator."

[6] Yehoshua A. Gilboa, "Earthquake," *Ma'ariv,* May 18, 1977 quoted in Yechiam Weitz, "The Road to 'Upheaval': A Capsule History of the Herut Movement, 1948-1977," *Israel Studies* 10, No. 3 The Right in Israel (Fall, 2005): 81.

[7] Bryan K. Roby, *The Mizrahi Era of Rebellion: Israel's Forgotten Civil Rights Struggle, 1948-1966* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2015), 1.

[8] For texts that address the relationship between Mizrahi Israelis and the Israeli Right, see: Benjamin Acosta, "The Dynamics of Israel's Democratic Tribalism," *Middle East Journal* 68, No. 2 (Spring 2014): 268-286; Sami Shalom Chetrit "Mizrahi Politics in Israel: Between Integration and Alternative," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 29, No. 4 (Fall 2000): 51-65; Michal Shamir and Asher Arian, "The Ethnic Vote in Israel's 1981 Elections," *Electoral Studies*, No. 1 (1982): 315-331; Daniel L. Smith, "The Second Israel: Peace in the Middle East and the Implications of Militant Oriental Jewish Ethnicity," *Dialectical Anthropology* 16, No. 2 (1991): 153-166; Shlomo Swirski, *Israel: The Oriental Majority*, translated by Barbara Swirski, (London and New Jersey: Zed Books Ltd, 1989); Mark Tessler, "The Political Right in Israel: Its Origins, Growth, and Prospects," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 15, No. 2 (Winter

understandings in favor of an empathetic approach that explores perspective and memory to

strikes at the question at the heart of this thesis – why do Mizrahi Israelis consistently vote right-

wing? And why does this trend continue today – through the eyes and minds of its participants.

Through the theoretical lens of collective memory – meaning how a group constructs and

understands a shared notion of their own history – this thesis articulates what I argue constitutes

the essential components of Mizrahi Israelis' collective memory of their relationship with the

Israeli Right. I will provide an in-depth assessment of what I argue comprises the four essential

emotional-aesthetic poles that best embody the ethos and zeitgeist of Mizrahi Israelis' collective

memory of their relationship to the Israeli Right: a shared sense of mistreatment by the Israeli

Left, a warm recollection of the Jewish Diaspora, an emphasis and veneration of Jewish pride,

and a shared liberal understanding of Israeli identity as predicated primarily on a flexible

understanding of Jewishness.

These four poles play into a greater framework regarding the ongoing battle over what

different types of Jews and different types of Zionists argue constitute an "authentic" Israeli

identity. Long-standing and consistently unresolved fierce debate over what it means to be Israeli

has and continues to exacerbate conflict between Israelis and Jews of different political, cultural,

social, ethnic, and religious backgrounds based upon what any given group promotes as the

truest or solely legitimate way to be Israeli. This idea of authenticity and how it continues to

dictate Israelis' political affiliations and foment conflict within Israeli society is a central concern

and context of this thesis.

After determining these four emotional-aesthetic poles as both the social and political

historical context in which this thesis takes place and the foundational components of Mizrahi

---

1986): 12-55; Alan S. Zuckerman, Michal Shamir, and Hanna Herzog, "The Political Bases of Activism in the Israeli Labor Party and Herut," *Political Science Quarterly* 107, No. 2 (Summer 1992): 303-323.

Israeli memory of their relationship to the Israeli Right, I will demonstrate how collective memory produces a tangible and observable impact in Israeli politics today to make a conclusive argument about how collective memory helps to explain *why* Mizrahi Israelis continue to consistently vote right-wing. I will do this through dissecting four events and trends from recent Israeli history: radical changes across the full spectrum of Israeli life post mid-1980s, the 2011 social justice protests in Tel Aviv, anti-Mizrahi racism in contemporary left-wing Israeli media, and the most recent elections for the twentieth Knesset in 2015.

Throughout the two major halves of this thesis – which cover the initial creation of Mizrahi Israelis' collective memory of their relationship to the Israeli Right and how this collective memory impacts contemporary Israeli politics respectively – I propose a consciously empathetic approach to Mizrahi Israelis' collective memory of their relationship to the Israeli Right. This approach explicitly challenges overly simplistic or underdeveloped assessments of both Mizrahi Israelis and the Israeli Right in the existing historiography and amongst contemporary political voices. In centering an empathetic framework that actively requires submersion in experiences that a bulk of the American Jews who constitute the core readership of this thesis are unlikely to have shared or even known about, I hope to reveal previously obscured readings of Israeli politics and Israeli history that complicate the Jewish-American, Ashkenazi-centric understanding.

For instance, for those with an unnuanced and solely negative perception of the Israeli Right, the idea of empathizing with figures like Menachem Begin seems like an uncouth, even repulsive, endeavor. Begin – former "terrorist no. 1" in British Mandatory Palestine and the so-called "Butcher of Deir Yassin"[9] – was the first Israeli prime minister to make settlements in the

---

[9] Daniel Gordis, *Menachem Begin: The Battle For Israel's Soul* (New York: Nextbook-Schocken, 2014), 43; "Israeli Elections: MERIP Interviews Fawzi El-Asmar and Nadav Katz," *MERIP Reports*, No. 58 (June 1977): 10.

occupied West Bank and Gaza a bonafide national priority, and to introduce fatal

dehumanization of Palestinians into the mainstream Israeli political vocabulary by referring to

Yasser Arafat and members of the Palestine Liberation Organization as "two-legged animals."[10]

But through the empathetic intervention of this thesis, I advocate for a more complicated

understanding of the Israeli Right that also incorporates its historical role as a consistent civically

liberal voice in Israeli politics, its passionate advocacy for intra-Jewish social and economic

egalitarianism and anti-racism between Jews of different ethnic groups, and as a mutual partner

for Mizrahi Israelis to redress decades of institutional racism and discrimination.

Additionally, I aim to use this empathetic lens as a corrective to address a critical lack of

focus on and understanding of Mizrahi Israelis within the academic and Jewish-American

political space. For all of the relentless plethora of commentary about Israel and Palestine, it is

all too rare to find a genuine focus on Mizrahi Israeli voices and how they complicate

constructed and objectively unreal characterizations of the state of Israel as solely a European

colonial endeavor or white apartheid ethnostate when their voices are not accounted for. In

centering Mizrahi Israeli voices and perspective, I aim to upend understandings of Israeli politics

that consistently fail to incorporate the Mizrahi Israeli experience, and provide focus on Israeli

Mizrahim beyond relegation to an ancillary footnote or a superfluous tragi-tourist stop in Sderot.

There are dozens, if not hundreds, of Mizrahi histories that could contradict some of the

conclusions I have drawn about the content of Mizrahi Israelis' collective memory of their

relationship to the Israeli Right in this thesis. But attempting to extract a single definitively true

and universally experienced memory from history – the history of Israeli politics especially – is a

---

[10] Oren Yiftachel, *Ethnocracy: Land and Identity Politics in Israel/Palestine* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 64; Avi Shilon, *Menachem Begin: A Life*, translated by Danielle Zillerberg and Yoram Sharett (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 223.

fool's errand. The aim of this thesis is not to argue that the narrative of the collective memory that I have articulated here is true for all Mizrahi Israelis or uniformly experienced, but to demonstrate that the narrative and the collective memory exist, produce a significant sociopolitical impact, and is therefore vital to understanding why Mizrahi Israelis vote for the Israeli Right and worthy of rigorous academic study.

Lastly, I note that my source base was limited to texts that either originally appeared in English or that were translated to English from either Hebrew or Arabic. While acknowledging the limitations this language constraint put on this thesis, I also note that it is further indicative of the necessity of an increased focus on Mizrahi Israeli histories.

<u>Historiographical Interventions and Theoretical Framework</u>

  Before proceeding to core sections and arguments, some elaboration on the theoretical

framework and historiographical interventions of this thesis are necessary. I will begin by

clarifying collective memory and memory studies as my theoretical framework: providing

background on the development and application of memory studies in relation to the historical

discipline with particular focus on the three texts from Yael Zerubavel, Alon Confino, and Tuvia

Friling that most closely informed my academic approach to memory for this thesis. After

establishing my theoretical framework, I will address the interventions in the existing

historiography that I make in this thesis. First, I will dispel pre-existing monolithic

representations of Zionism, Mizrahim, and the Israeli Right by providing essential context and

nuance for all three categories. Then, I will address and contextualize the main existing

arguments in the historiography that have attempted to answer why Mizrahi Israelis have voted

for and continue to vote for the Israeli Right to situate my thesis in relation to the existing

historiography. After foregrounding these clarifications and contexts, I proceed to the arguments

of my thesis.

<center>*Collective Memory*</center>

  Academic interest in collective memory and memory studies as a discipline date to the

latter half of the nineteenth century and stretch across a number of fields including history,

sociology, feminist studies, and ethnic studies. While the field of memory studies itself hosts a

number of different theories about the role of memory among individuals and groups, memory's

relationship to history, and the degree to which memory produces palpable sociopolitical

impacts, my interest in collective memory lies in its ability to function from the assumption that

human beings consistently act based on emotion more so than they do based on pragmatism or

logic. Memory studies embraces the concept that human beings generally make their decisions based more on their own perceptions, memories, and pre-held ideas than from rational and comprehensive deductions. In the context of the historical discipline, memory studies allows the historian to extend this reasoning to emphasize the emotional-aesthetic dimension of history by highlighting how people understand histories as sources of truth or legitimacy, construct histories of themselves and their communities as authorities on identities and authenticity, and then employ these constructed histories in the world as sociopolitical change. A framework of collective memory encourages an empathetic approach that centers these constructions and processes, and prioritizes attempting to discern the different perspectives through which different groups of people view and experience the world. As such, I argue that it is the ideal method through which to derive an empathetically meaningful understanding of why Mizrahi Israelis vote for the Israeli Right beyond the disciplinary confines of social and political histories.

The three texts I am most closely using as my touchstones for theories and arguments about collective memory are Yael Zerubavel's 1994 text "The Death of Memory and the Memory of Death: Masada and the Holocaust as Historical Metaphors," Alon Confino's 1997 text "Collective Memory and Cultural History: Problems of Method," and Tuvia Friling's 2009 "A Blatant Oversight? The Right-Wing in Israeli Holocaust Historiography."[11] From Zerubavel, I accept two fundamental assertions. The first, that collective memory recasts history to function as a narrative: relegating the objectivity and totality of a comprehensive historical record to be subservient to a selective and teleological interpretation that produces the desired sense of

---

[11] Yael Zerubavel, "The Death of Memory and the Memory of Death: Masada and the Holocaust as Historical Metaphors," *Representations*, No. 45 (Winter 1994): 72-100; Alon Confino, "Collective Memory and Cultural History: Problems of Method," *The American Historical Review* 102, No. 5 (December 1997): 1386-1403; Tuvia Friling, "A Blatant Oversight? The Right-Wing in Israeli Historiography," *Israel Studies* 14, No. 1 (Spring 2009): 123-169.

story.[12] The second, that invoking this historical narrative is an essential way in which sociopolitical and cultural movements assert legitimacy.[13] Combined, these two assertions produce an understanding of the relationship between memory and history that accounts for the incongruity between the historical narrative and the nuanced historical reality by emphasizing how groups, including political parties, utilize historical selectivity as a tool with which to make an implicit argument about legitimacy or authenticity.

The very memorable slogan for United States President Barack Obama's 2008 election campaign – "Yes, we can" – exemplifies how Zerubavel's assertions on memory, history and politics operate in reality. As a direct translation of the "Si, se puede" slogan used by Cesar Chavez and the United Farm Workers during their strikes and demonstrations for farmer workers' rights in the mid-1960s, Obama's "Yes, we can" slogan succeeded in the dual achievement of casting Obama as the natural heir of the historical narrative of post-1960s American Progressivism, and in invoking the history of Chavez and the United Farm Workers to provide the Obama campaign with added legitimacy among potential voters who remembered Chavez and the United Farm Workers positively. The fact that Obama was younger than ten years old for a majority of the United Farm Workers' activities, and did not possess an actual physical relationship to the history that his campaign invoked, was wholly unimportant; the slogan's effectiveness came from the thematic and narrative content of the memory it used, and not from an objective sense of historical reality.

From Confino, I accept the critique that not all instances of collective memory or memory studies should be regarded as equally valid or useful measurements for how a majority of any given group actually conceives of themselves. As a corrective against representing fringe

---

[12] Zerubavel, "The Death of Memory and the Memory of Death," 75.
[13] Ibid, 92.

or unpopular memories as representative of the majority of any given group, Confino argues that memory studies should be simultaneously linked within the context of larger overall historical questions and trends, and measured against the collective memory's ability to produce a sociopolitical or cultural impact.[14] In Confino's words, "to make a difference in society, it is not enough for a certain past to be selected. It must steer emotions, motivate people to act, be received; in short, it must become a socio-cultural mode of action."[15] Mizrahi Israelis' collective memory of their relationship to the Israeli Right easily meets these criteria. as it is both linked to a greater historical context and held widely enough to produce significantly impactful social change and political trends. Specific evidence of how this collective memory effects sociopolitical change is the central focus of the second major half of this thesis.

From Friling, I accept that self-conceptualized identity is the primary motivator for how a particular group identifies which memories are selected as sources of narrative, legitimacy, and sociopolitical motivation. Friling writes, "memory nourishes identity: the latter determines the objects of memory while the former supplies it with content and orientation, thereby creating a closed circuit."[16] Under Friling's formulation, identity and memory exist in circular rotation: consistently informing one another in an isolated fashion designed to reinforce the legitimacy of pre-held views and understandings. In terms of the relationship between history and memory, Friling's formulation explains how identity plays a major role in what Zerubavel positioned as memory's resilience to objective reality. More specifically to this thesis, Friling's formulation explains how the strength of memory as enforced by identity and vice-versa has become such a powerful element in why Mizrahi Israelis continue to vote for the Israeli Right. As will be

---

[14] Confino, "Collective Memory and Cultural History," 1389-1390.
[15] Ibid, 1390.
[16] Friling, "A Blatant Oversight?" 133.

explained in depth in this thesis, Mizrahi Israelis' understanding of their own identities and pasts are linked to their memories of the ascension of the Israeli Right on a deep, sometimes even biologically or genetically self-described, level: indicating the degree to which the loop between identity and memory strongly influences political affiliation and sociopolitical action.

In taking the approach of centering memory and emotion over what may be a more conventional social or political history approach, I aim to provide a new perspective on why Mizrahi Israelis have historically voted and continue to vote for the Israeli Right that prioritizes how Mizrahi Israelis and affiliates of the Israeli Right may think instead of what Mizrahi Israelis and affiliates of the Israeli Right have literally done. As such, a rigorous and empathetic reconstruction of the elements that make up the collective memory of Mizrahi Israelis' relationship to the Israeli Right is fundamental to answering the question that I set out to address, and for anyone attempting to discuss Israeli politics in a serious way.

Dispelling Zionist, Mizrahi, and Israeli Right Monoliths

Portraying movements, ideologies, groups, and phenomena as monolithic, which is to say as a uniform entity in which dissimilar ideas or experiences are minimized or omitted entirely is misrepresentation of the nuanced historical record. Deconstructing Zionist, Mizrahi, and Israeli Right monoliths in the existing English language historiography will correct the ultimately incomplete assertions of works from authors that that construct monolithic entities in their arguments. Additionally, these corrections will provide the lens of nuance and diversity of historical facts, figures, movements, groups, and phenomena that this thesis should be viewed with going forward.

Several works in the historiography – including but not limited to Yehouda Shenhav's *The Arab Jews* (2006), Oren Yiftachel's *Ethnocracy: Land and Identity Politics in*

Israel/Palestine (2006), and essays collected in Ella Shohat's *Taboo Memories, Diasporic Voices*

(2006) – all utilize "Zionism" as a singular monolithic entity without acknowledging the

ideological diversity that Zionism as a broad category encompasses.[17] As a result, the evidence

and arguments presented in these works read as representative of all Zionisms, but are frequently

only veritably applicable to Labor Zionism. For instance, when Shenhav states, "The Zionist

movement was flagrantly hostile to religion, and national ideology was constructed in part

through the negation of religious life and all it entailed,"[18] he makes an argument that can be

reasonably applied to the Labor Zionist movement, which did in fact largely take a negative view

of traditional Jewish religiosity because of its association with the Jewish Diaspora that Labor

Zionists openly sought to negate.[19] But, Shenhav's assertion does not apply to the likes of other

Zionist movements, including the Revisionist Zionist movement that factors so heavily into the

arguments presented in this thesis, and certainly not to Religious Zionists like Rabbi Abraham

Isaac Kook, who saw Zionism as merely a political means to an ultimately messianic end.[20]

      Zionism is not a monolithic entity, but rather a collection of wildly different ideologies

held by different factions in variant strains and subgroups of Labor Zionism, Revisionist

Zionism, Political Zionism, Cultural Zionism, and Religious Zionism who have consistently

found and continue to find themselves in open ideological and physical rivalries. For example,

the Labor Zionists imagined the end goal of Zionism to be the creation of a socialist Jewish state,

envisioned the "New Jew" as an agrarian pioneer, would compromise on territorial boundaries,

---

[17] Yehouda Shenhav, *The Arab Jews: A Postcolonial Reading of Nationalism, Religion, and Ethnicity* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2006); Oren Yiftachel, *Ethnocracy: Land and Identity Politics in Israel/Palestine* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006); Ella Shohat, *Taboo Memories, Diasporic Voices* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006).

[18] Shenhav, *The Arab Jews*, 89.

[19] Nathan Yanai, "The Citizen as Pioneer: Ben-Gurion's Concept of Citizenship," *Israel Studies* 1, No. 1 (Spring 1996): 128; 137.

[20] Mark Tessler, "The Political Right in Israel: Its Origins, Growth, and Prospects," 15.

and believed in an adherence to *mamlahtiut* (in Hebrew, most closely meaning "statism") or the idea that the individual should be subservient to the goals of the state.[21] Conversely, Revisionist Zionists believed that the end goal of Zionism should be the creation of a sovereign capitalist Jewish state on both banks of the Jordan River, envisioned the "New Jew" to be a sort of philosopher-soldier, opposed partition of any kind, and espoused a veneration of liberalism and individualism that at times was so absolute that it teetered on anarchism.[22]

The rivalry between the Labor Zionists and the Revisionist Zionists frequently manifested physically. A left-right fist-fight broke out at the eighteenth World Zionist Congress in 1933, which led to the Revisionist Zionists leaving the World Zionist Organization altogether to form their own completely separate New Zionist Organization in 1935.[23] In the interwar period, Labor Zionist supporters pelted Revisionist Zionist leader and founder Vladimir "Ze'ev" Jabotinsky with rocks at a rally in Brisk, and Revisionist Zionist supporters threw stink bombs and bricks at Labor Zionist leader David Ben-Gurion in Warsaw.[24] And in 1948, just after the announcement of the creation of the state of Israel, a skirmish between Labor Zionist affiliates of the Haganah (in Hebrew, "The Defense") militia – which incorporated into the Israel Defense Forces following the state's establishment – and the Revisionist Zionist affiliated militia Irgun Zvai Leumi (in Hebrew, "National Military Organization") – most commonly referred to as just Irgun – broke out over the arrival of the arms ship *Altalena*; the fighting left sixteen Irgunists dead and an additional forty wounded as well as three IDF soldiers dead and fifteen wounded.[25]

---

[21] David Ben-Gurion, "The Imperatives of the Jewish Revolution (1944)," in *The Zionist Idea: A Historical Analysis and Reader*, edited by Arthur Hertzberg (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1997): 613; Nathan Yanai, "Ben-Gurion's Concept of 'Mamlahiut' and the Forming Reality of the State of Israel," *Jewish Political Studies Review* 1, No. ½ (Spring 1989): 151.

[22] Pallis, "The Likud Party: A Primer," 41-42; Micah Goodman, *Catch-67: The Left, the Right, and the Legacy of the Six-Day War*, translated by Eylon Levy (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), 23; 29.

[23] Hillel Halkin, *Jabotinsky: A Life* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2014), 190; 196.

[24] Ibid, 191.

[25] Shilon, *Menachem Begin: A Life*, 128.

Bearing such evidence in mind, the existence of a Zionist monolith must be considered thoroughly discredited.

The second monolith that must be disrupted is the concept of a singular Mizrahi Israeli identity. Throughout this thesis I will be using the term "Mizrahi" and "Mizrahi Israelis" for the sake of consistency to describe the Jews who came to Israel from all across the Middle East and North Africa, while accepting that this too is a manufactured monolith that flattens a wildly diverse plurality of experiences into a single demographic category. The demographic in question has been designated by a variety of different terms across the historiography – including Oriental Jews, Sephardic Jews, Mizrahi Jews, and Arab Jews – each with their own specific distinctions and implications. These separate and distinct groups of Middle Eastern and North African Jews who traced their pre-Israeli citizenship origins to Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, Iraq, Iran, and more, experienced a wide range of dissimilar encounters pertaining to Arab nationalism, Communism, Zionism, European colonialism, language, religious culture, and socioeconomic background – all of which played foundational importance to these groups' diverse experiences upon arrival to the state of Israel.

For instance, the Jews of Iraq arrived in Israel having more or less preserved the entirety of their Jewish community: the near totality of which was airlifted out of Iraq between 1950 and 1951 as part of Mossad Operation Ezra and Nehemiah.[26] The United Kingdom was the European colonial superpower that dominated the Iraqi region of the Middle East, Iraqi Jews spread widely across the political spectrum, and they experienced only light contact with the Second World War.[27] Conversely, the Jews of Morocco immigrated to Israel as a fractured community over a

---

[26] Shapira, *Israel: A History*, 199.

[27] Norman A. Stillman, *The Jews of Arab Lands in Modern Times* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2003), 47; 115.

protracted period of more than a decade during which its wealthy and intellectual classes

consistently emigrated to France instead of Israel, which contributed heavily to the extremely

negative reputation as violent gangsters that Moroccan Jews garnered in the first few decades of

the state.[28] France was the European colonial superpower that dominated North Africa, not

Britain, and where the Jews of Iraq had relatively little contact with the Second World War, the

Jews of Morocco were directly subjected to discriminatory anti-Jewish laws under the Nazi-

sponsored Vichy government.[29]

      As with Zionism, the idea of a monolithic Mizrahi category is too simple to accurately

reflect the fullness of Mizrahi Israeli experiences in Israel and how those experiences relate to

differing levels of attachment to the collective memory between Mizrahi Israelis and the Israeli

Right. Understanding the nuances and variations touched on here cursorily helps to explain why

this collective memory is generally much more of a North African story than it is a Middle

Eastern one. As a consequence of the fact that the Jews of North Africa largely struggled more to

stabilize and integrate into Israeli society over a longer period of time than the Jews of the

Middle East, North African Mizrahim – who still comprise the majority of Mizrahim in Israel –

are generally more likely to be passionate supporters of the Likud and the Israeli Right.[30]

      The last monolith that needs to be disrupted is the idea of a consistent ideology within the

Israeli politics and the Israeli Right itself. Israel has a parliamentary government system,

meaning that Israeli citizens vote for parties in general elections, and not for individual

politicians. The complex web of Israel's many, many political parties is itself a testament to the

---

[28] Shamir and Arian, "The Ethnic Vote in Israel's 1981 Elections," 321; Avi Picard "Building the Country or Rescuing the People: Ben-Gurion's Attitude Towards Mass Jewish Immigration to Israel in the Mid-1950s," *Middle Eastern Studies* 54, No. 3 (May 2018): 393.

[29] Stillman, *The Jews of Arab Lands in Modern Times*, 115.

[30] Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, "Jews by Country of Origin and Age," *CBS, Statistical Abstract of Israel, 2009*, Chart No. 2.24, 2009: 156.

lack of coherency across Israeli politics. For the sake of clarity, I have attempted to describe the deluge of different political parties by demarcating which original overarching strain of Zionism a particular political party draws its heritage from. For example, I preface both the Mapai party (the acronym for Mifglet Poalei Eretz Yisrael meaning "Workers' Party of the Land of Israel" in Hebrew) – which existed from 1930 in the pre-state era to 1968 – and the HaMa'arach party (in Hebrew, "The Alignment") – a unity party of different individual leftist Israeli parties which existed from 1965-1968 and again from 1969-1991 – as Labor Zionist parties. By qualifying Israeli political parties in this way, I aim to clarify the evolution of Israel's political strains in spite of the torrential proliferation of new party names and party players over time. The particular strain of the Israeli Right in question at the center of this thesis traces its origins to the Revisionist Zionism first espoused by Jabotinsky and can be traced through the following political entities: Betar founded in 1923, the Irgun founded in 1931, Herut ("Freedom") founded in 1948, Gahal (the acronym for "Herut-Liberals Bloc") founded in 1965, and finally Likud ("The Consolidation") founded in 1972 and existing to the present day.[31] Both Gahal and Likud are merger-coalitions of different center-right Israeli parties, and Herut concurrently existed as a separate entity within both of them up until its total dissolution in 1988. As I have done with the various parties that trace their heritage to Labor Zionism, I specify which right-wing Israeli parties trace their heritage to Revisionist Zionism for clarity.

    I argue that instead of regarding this Revisionist Zionist strain as populated by politicians who shared a coherent ideology – no matter how tempting it may be to make sense of an already extremely overburdened glut of Israeli political parties – Revisionist Zionism should be regarded as comprised of two main different rival strains. The first, which includes Menachem Begin, the

---

[31] Pallis, "The Likud Party: A Primer," 42; Weitz, "The Road to 'Upheaval,'" 73.

so-called "fighting family" of the Irgun underground during the anti-British revolt of the 1940s, and eventually a majority of Mizrahi Israelis, prioritized a sort of liberal-egalitarian Jewish ethos over the high-intellectual content of Revisionist Zionism. The second – which includes the likes of the self-professed "intellectual elite" of the Revisionist Zionist camp like Eri Jabotinsky (Vladimir Jabotinsky's son), Hillel Kook, Shmuel Tamir, Moshe Arens, Ehud Olmert, and Benzion Netanyahu (father of current Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu) – prioritized the original ideological content of Revisionism over a liberal-egalitarian Jewish ethos.[32]

Because of this divergent prioritization, the second strain clashed with Menachem Begin over what they perceived to be betrayals of the Revisionist Zionist ideals. The most prominent example of this can be found in the fallout over Menachem Begin's role in closing the 1978 Camp David Accords which outlined a peace settlement between Israel and Egypt and for which Begin received the Nobel Peace Prize jointly with American President Jimmy Carter and Egyptian President Anwar Sadat.[33] While Begin's role in the settlement improved his image to the world at large from fanatical fascistic terrorist to a center-right moderate compromiser, the Camp David Accords caused severe backlash and a litany of resignations amongst members of his own party who viewed the settlement as a capitulation to Israel's enemies and an ideological betrayal of the hawkish militarily maximalist "Iron Wall" principle laid out by Jabotinsky in 1923.[34]

The identification of this substratum in Revisionist Zionist history is not necessarily a new intervention in the historiography and has been the focus of several histories of the political

---

[32] Shilon, *Menachem Begin: A Life*, 112; 132.

[33] Yechiam Weitz, "From Peace in the South to War in the North: Menachem Begin as Prime Minister, 1977-1983," *Israel Studies* 19, No. 1 (Spring 2014): 150.

[34] Vladimir Jabotinsky, "The Iron Wall," *Rasviet*. April 11, 1923 accessed through Jabotinsky Institute on January 13, 2019, http://en.jabotinsky.org/media/9747/the-iron-wall.pdf.

Right in Israel throughout the latter half of the twentieth century and early twenty-first century including among historians Mark Tessler, Yechiam Weitz and Elfi Pallis.[35] However, there has been a revival in interest regarding this dynamic within Revisionist Zionism among historians and writers like Avi Shilon in his 2012 biography of Menachem Begin and Anshel Pfeffer in his recent in-depth biography of Benjamin Netanyahu as part of a greater overall trend of renewed interest in the many complex legacies Menachem Begin and his 1977 victory left behind.[36]

Interventions in the Historiography

I have identified two main theses in the existing historiography pertaining to how and why Mizrahi Israelis became the principle demographic base of the Israeli Right. The first – coined "the barbarian formula" by Middle East Research and Information Project writer Kenneth Brown in his May 1983 essay "Iron and A King: the Likud and Oriental Jews" – identifies the argument that attributes the Mizrahi vote for the Israeli Right as derived from Mizrahim being illiberal and culturally backwards, drawn to a strong paternalistic-authoritarian leadership, and possessing an insatiable bloodlust towards Arabs and Palestinians.[37] In short, "the barbarian explanation" repackages racist and Orientalist stereotypes of Mizrahim and passes them off as legitimate arguments. This position is most frequently found amongst political theorists, journalists, and amongst the Israeli Left both in the Begin era of the 1970s and 1980s and through to the present day. Arguments that stem from the barbarian formula range from the lightly uncouth overreliance on stereotype like *Washington Post* journalist William Claiborne's

---

[35] See Mark Tessler, "The Political Right in Israel: Its Origins, Growth, and Prospects," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 15, No. 2 (Winter 1986): 12-55; Yechiam Weitz, "From Peace in the South to War in the North: Menachem Begin as Prime Minister, 1977-1983," *Israel Studies* 19, No. 1 (Spring 2014): 145-165; Elfi Pallis, "The Likud Party: A Primer," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 21, No. 2 (Winter 1992): 41-60.

[36] Avi Shilon, *Menachem Begin: A Life*, translated by Danielle Zillerberg and Yoram Sharett (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012); Anshel Pfeffer, *Bibi: The Turbulent Life and Times of Benjamin Netanyahu* (New York: Basic Books, 2018).

[37] Kenneth Brown, "Iron and a King: The Likud and the Oriental Jews," *MERIP Reports*, No. 114 Israel Divided (May 1983): 3-4.

deduction that "moreover, Begin, at 68, has adopted an almost patriarchal aura that has appealed to many Oriental Jews from Arab countries where patriarchal structure was strong,"[38] to the openly racist like that of political theorist Bernard Avishai who asserted in his 1981 essay "The Victory of the New Israel" that the Mizrahi embrace of Likud could be attributed to the fact that "[Mizrahim] refused to shed their cultural traditions and warmhearted patriarchal families for the sake of Labor Zionist theories they could barely understand."[39]

The second traditional argument proposes that the Mizrahi vote for the Likud should be read primarily as a moment of rapturous political opportunism. In this argument, utilizing the Likud to unseat the Labor Zionists was the closest thing that Mizrahi Israelis could do as a collective rebellion against the Labor Zionist hegemony in an Israeli political culture that made ethnic Mizrahi organizing unviable. This argument first entered the historiography during the boom in interest and publication of Mizrahi histories and sociologies that occurred in the late 1970s and 1980s, and is present in groundbreaking works from Israeli academics like Sammy Smooha's 1978 *Israel: Pluralism and Conflict* and Shlomo Swirski's 1989 *Israel: The Oriental Majority*.[40] Swirski summarized the ethos of this argument succinctly and memorably in paraphrasing Asher Idan's 1982 *On War and Equality,* which adopts the same position: "the Orientals strengthened the hyena – the Likud – in order to weaken the bear – the Labor Party."[41]

While these works were revolutionary and innovative additions to the academic canon in their time – and still produce essential and rigorous explorations of systemic anti-Mizrahi racism in Israel across economic, social, educational, and political planes – their arguments suggesting

---

[38] William Claiborne, "Begin Finds New Political Base Among Israel's Sephardic Jews," *The Washington Post*, June 29, 1981, accessed April 9, 2018, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

[39] Bernard Avishai, "The Victory of the New Israel," July 8, 1981 in *A New Israel: A Democracy in Crisis 1973-1988, Essays* (New York: Ticknor & Fields, 1990), 114.

[40] Sammy Smooha, *Israel: Pluralism and Conflict* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978); Shlomo Swirski, *Israel: The Oriental Majority*, translated by Barbara Swirski, (London and New Jersey: Zed Books Ltd, 1989).

[41] Swirski, *Israel: The Oriental Majority*, 53.

the Mizrahi-Likud vote should be read as opportunistic have been discredited by very recent

additions to the historiography. Works like Uri Cohen and Nissim Leon's 2014 "The Mahapach

and Yitzhak Shamir's Quiet Revolution: Mizrahim and the Herut Movement," and Amir

Goldstein's 2018 "Partial Establishment – Menachem Begin, Gahal, and the Black Panthers,"

demonstrate how the Mizrahi-Likud vote functioned as a mutual, ground-up political

movement.[42] These recent interventions clarify Mizrahi organizing for the Likud party and Likud

responses to the needs of Mizrahi Israelis by providing evidence indicating a genuine political

movement in which Mizrahi Israeli activism and involvement in the Israeli Right was the

primary mode through which Likud achieved its 1977 victory, and that right-wing Israeli politics

were a pivotal avenue in Mizrahi Israelis' assertion of their individual political agency and

currency. In light of the revelation of these new additions to the historiography, both sets of

traditional wisdoms – the barbarian formula and strengthening the hyena to weaken the bear –

prove either null or incomplete.

---

[42] Uri Cohen and Nissim Leon, "The Mahapach and Yitzhak Shamir's Quiet Revolution: Mizrahim and the Herut Movement," *Israel Studies Review 29*, No. 1 (Summer 2014): 18-40; Amir Goldstein, "Partial Establishment – Menachem Begin, Gahal, and the Black Panthers," *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 17, No. 2 (2018): 236-251.

<u>Part 1: Identifying the Emotional-Aesthetic Poles of the Mizrahi Israeli Collective Memory</u>

Before examining how collective memory effects contemporary Israeli politics, I must first provide a comprehensive analysis of what I argue are the four main emotional-aesthetic poles of Mizrahi Israelis' collective memory of their relationship to the Israeli Right. The four poles are as follows: 1. a shared sense of mistreatment between Mizrahi Israelis and the Revisionist Zionists by the Israeli Left; 2. a shared warm recollection of the Jewish Diaspora between Mizrahi Israelis and Revisionist Zionists; 3. a central focus on the restoration and cultivation of pride; 4. a liberal conceptualization of Israeli identity and what kind of country Israel could and should be. My dissection of these four emotional-aesthetic poles services two main goals. One, to provide a social and political history of the development of the relationship between Mizrahi Israelis and the Israeli Right. And two – while reiterating that I am not arguing that this collective memory is either uniformly true or universally understood by all Mizrahi Israelis – to explain the main elements of Mizrahi Israeli collective memory of their relationship to the Israeli Right that impact Israeli politics in the present day.

1. "Just Like We Suffered You in Silence": Shared Mistreatment by the Israeli Left

The two major facets of Mizrahi Israelis' collective memory of a shared sense of mistreatment with the Israeli Right at the hands of the Israeli Left are humiliation and vilification. In this section I will first provide a historical overview of the origins and development of the humiliation and vilification components of this collective memory. Then, I will provide some examples for how this sense of mistreatment subsequently catalyzed sociopolitical change in Israel between the state's foundation and the end of the Begin era in the mid-1980s.

Mizrahi Victimization

Initial Mizrahi migration to the state of Israel is typically referred to as "The Great Aliyah."[43] This amorphous designation is understood to encompass Mizrahi immigration from all points of geographical origin across the entirety of the Middle East and North Africa over the space of roughly two decades from the late 1940s to the mid-1960s.[44] In a more nuanced and comprehensive sense, the Great Aliyah must be broken down into several distinct waves of immigration correlating to the unique contexts of each Mizrahi sub-group to more fully reflect the variety of the Mizrahi experience upon arrival to the state of Israel. Overall, however, the Great Aliyah represents the foundational period for formative Mizrahi memories of victimization, humiliation and deprivation at the hands of the various apparatuses controlled by the hegemonic Labor Zionist Mapai party.[45]

The rise of Nazism in Europe and post-Holocaust reality of the depth of the destruction of European Jewry decimated Labor Zionists' initial goal of populating a socialist Jewish state with Ashkenazi Jews from Europe.[46] But, needing a citizenry with which to populate a Jewish state, Labor Zionist leadership reprioritized and turned their attention on facilitating immigration for Jews from across the Middle East and North Africa beginning in the early and mid-1940s.[47] While Labor Zionist perceptions of these Mizrahi Jews are best described as ambivalent, they were also profoundly characterized by both Orientalism[*] and racism.

---

[43] Shapira, *Israel: A History*, 197.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Orit Bashkin, *The Impossible Exodus: Iraqi Jews in Israel* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2017), 106.
[46] Shenhav, *The Arab Jews*, 20; 26.
[47] Ibid, 31.
[*] Palestinian-American scholar Edward Said popularized his theory of Orientalism in his 1978 book of the same name. In the book, Said argues that the colonial era Western "Occident" constructed itself in contradistinction to the Eastern/Arab "Orient," and outlines the various tropes and stereotypes this construction entails.

Mizrahi immigrants to Israel were commonly referred to as "dust," "human debris," or "poor human material" in the official documentation of the Jewish Agency.[*][48] This pejorative terminology, and the idea that Mizrahim were to be regarded as lesser quality "human material," was commonplace across Labor Zionist party leadership. David Ben-Gurion, who helped to co-found and run both the Jewish Agency and the Histadrut – the enormously powerful Israeli workers union – before becoming the first prime minister of Israel in 1948, stated in a 1949 meeting "Even the immigrant from North Africa who looks like a savage, who has never read a book in his life, not even a religious one, either wittingly or unwittingly has behind him a spiritual heritage of thousands of years."[49] The attitude amongst Labor Zionist leadership that Mizrahi Jews were to be regarded as primitive, backwards, and generally inferior to Ashkenazim – with the exception of Holocaust survivors, who were also subjected to similar negative terminology and perception – extended beyond the official party leadership and into the minds of the Israeli public.[50]

Mizrahim were frequently described as "kushim" or "schwartz," both Hebrew correlations of the n-word in the American context, by Ashkenazi Israelis.[51] Treatment was especially poor from the self-described sabras:[†] inhabitants of the pre-state Yishuv frequently associated with Labor Zionism and the socialist agrarian communes known as kibbutzim.

---

* The Jewish Agency, a para-governmental institution established in 1929 and heavily controlled by Labor Zionists in the early-to-mid twentieth century, focuses on facilitating and overseeing immigration and settlement of Jews in the state of Israel in addition to a variety of other responsibilities and programs.

[48] Shapira, *Israel: A History*, 204.

[49] "Ben Gurion's Meeting With Writers," November 10, 1949, Divrei Sofrim, State Archives in Tom Segev, *1949: The First Israelis* (New York: The Free Press, A Division of Macmillan, Inc, 1986), 156.

[50] Segev, *1949: The First Israelis*, 116.

[51] Bashkin, *The Impossible Exodus*, 6.

† This term for an Israeli Jew born in Israel derives from the Hebrew name of a type of prickly pear that is hard and thorny on the outside but soft and sweet on the inside in an allusion to Israelis' reputation for having an initially unfriendly and clipped demeanor. But, more than just a comment on Israelis' disposition, the idea of the *sabra* plays on the Labor Zionist idea that a Jew born in Israel and of the land of Israel is fundamentally different than non-Israeli Jews from either the Jewish past or a location somewhere in the Jewish Diaspora.

Although the ethos of the kibbutz theoretically prescribed an emphasis on communal living and egalitarianism, members of kibbutzim were often patently racist towards Mizrahi immigrants. In the early and mid-twentieth century, local kibbutz governing boards refused to admit Mizrahim to their communities, and sometimes even shut off water access to Mizrahim settled nearby.[52] In one memorable instance, an orange grower sent a series of letters directly to the office of the prime minister demanding the army be brought in to protect him from Mizrahi immigrants whom he described as "something between a gang of gypsies and a swarm of locusts."[53]

This consistently detrimental and insulting type of treatment from both the government and the citizenry had a profound impact on Mizrahi Israelis' emotional self-perception. Mizrahim drew on an American understanding of racism to reimagine themselves as the blacks of Israel in contradistinction to the whites of the Ashkenazi Labor Zionist establishment: projecting their sense of humiliation into an articulatable racial distinction.[54] This phenomenon is evident in an anecdote recalled by Egyptian-Israeli writer Jacqueline Kahanoff who, upon seeing an Ashkenazi beggar who refuses to take charity from an elderly Moroccan-Jewish Mizrahi woman in Beersheva in 1959, witnessed the indignation of young Mizrahi men present for the incident.[55] These young men told Kahanoff, "You see how they purposefully offend us. It is below the dignity of even an Ashkenazi beggar to take alms from one of us blacks."[56] In another

---

[52] Rachel Shabi, *We Look Like the Enemy: The Hidden Story of Israel's Jews from Arab Lands* (New York: Walker Publishing Company, 2008), 40.

[53] Segev, *1949: The First Israelis*, 149.

[54] Avraham Shama and Mark Iris, *Immigration Without Integration: Third World Jews in Israel* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Schenkman Publishing Company, 1977), xi.

[55] Jacqueline Kahanoff, "Israel: Ambivalent Levantine," in *Mongrels or Marvels: The Levantine Writings of Jacqueline Kahanoff*, eds. Deborah A. Starr and Sassoon Somekh, (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2017), 193-194.

[56] Ibid, 194.

instance, also recounted by Kahanoff, when a young Mizrahi boy was asked what he wanted to be when he grew up, he replied, "Ashkenazi."[57]

In addition to the emotional dimension of humiliation that Mizrahi Israelis experienced in the racist and Orientalist tones of their early encounters with the Labor Zionist state, the Labor Zionist establishment's insistence that new Mizrahi arrivals become farmers or laborers added an overtly observable dimension to Mizrahi victimization.[58] Keeping in line with Labor Zionism's veneration of the agrarian peasant and its intrinsic desire to turn every new Israeli into a laborer with a physical connection to the land, the ideological infrastructure of the Labor Zionist establishment expected Mizrahi immigrants to commit to the Labor Zionist vision of the national Zionist project by becoming farmers or laborers.[59] However, this Labor Zionist idea of what constituted aspirational work held a fundamental incongruity for Mizrahi arrivals. As Israel Defense Forces Army Colonel and Yemenite Jew Ami Gluska later put it: "In Arab countries, the one who works the land is the lowest in the hierarchy, the *felah*. The whole ideology of the Labor movement and [that] Zionism was to bring people back to the land and make people work the land."[60] Compelling Mizrahi immigrants to do what a majority of Mizrahim considered demeaning or undesirable work reserved for the lowest hierarchical economic class – and, for more affluent immigrants from Egypt or Iraq, was also a déclassement from the merchant class – was a physical manifestation of victimization and humiliation by the Israeli Left.[61] Additionally, the fact that before arriving to Israel the vast majority of Mizrahi Jews lived in lively major cities

---

[57] Jacqueline Kahanoff, "Gesher el 'Ole Ha-Mizrahi," *Al Ha-Mishmar*, May 11, 1956 in "Bridge to the Oriental Immigrants," *Modern Middle Eastern Jewish Thought: Writings on Identity, Politics, and Culture, 1893-1958*, edited by Moshe Behar and Zvi Ben-Dor Benite (Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 2013), 193.
[58] Swirski, *Israel: The Oriental Majority*, 8-10.
[59] Bashkin, *Impossible Exodus*, 8.
[60] David K. Shipler, "Sephardim are Transforming Israel's Political Map," *The New York Times*, April 11, 1983, accessed April 9, 2018, https://www.nytimes.com/1983/04/08/world/sephardim-are-transforming-israel-s-political-map.html.
[61] Shama and Iris, *Immigration Without Integration*, 43.

across the Middle East and North Africa, not sparse agrarian communes, furthered the

incongruity of Mizrahi life before and after arrival to the Labor Zionist dominated state of Israel

during the Great Aliyah.[62]

Labor Zionist settlement of Mizrahi immigrants in Israel's peripheral and relatively

dangerous, neglected, and undesirable locations compounded the observable physical dimension

of Mizrahi Israelis' victimization by the Israeli Left. In Israeli cities like Jerusalem, Tel Aviv,

and Haifa, Mizrahi neighborhoods were decidedly more liminal, more impoverished, and less

safe than Ashkenazi neighborhoods.[63] The heavily Moroccan Mizrahi Musrara neighborhood in

Jerusalem – one of the easternmost Israeli neighborhoods in West Jerusalem where the Israeli

Black Panthers were founded in the early 1970s – embodied the plight of urban Mizrahi Israeli

neighborhoods.[64] Built on the ruins of what was previously a wealthy Palestinian Christian

neighborhood before Israel's War of Independence in 1948, Musrara was cramped with

inadequate, poor quality housing and frequently unsafe due to near daily sniper fire from

Jordanian soldiers stationed just feet away beyond the No Man's Land that divided East and

West Jerusalem until after the Six-Day War in 1967.[65] State-created moshavim – agrarian

communes similar to kibbutzim, but more economically privatized and much more heavily

Mizrahi in demographic than the Ashkenazi dominated kibbutzim – were more likely to be

located in the Israeli hinterland where the land was not as fertile or productive in yielding

crops.[66] Most notably, the heavily Mizrahi populated, semi-permanent *ma'abarot* (from the

Hebrew "ma'avar," meaning "transit") that replaced the state's initial transit camps in the early

---

[62] Sami Shalom Chetrit, *Intra-Jewish Conflict in Israel: White Jews, Black Jews* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), 20.

[63] Swirski, *Israel: The Oriental Majority*, 22.

[64] The State of Israel, Jerusalem Municipality, "Musrara," accessed February 16, 2019, https://www.jerusalem.muni.il/en/Absorption/OlimAbsorbingCommunities/Pages/Musrara.aspx.

[65] Ibid.

[66] Swirski, *Israel: The Oriental Majority*, 10.

1950s served as the starkest example of the observable expression of Mizrahi Israelis'

victimization by the Israeli Left.[67]

     Ma'abarot were settlements of various sizes built in peripheral locations throughout

Israel, frequently on the sites of Palestinian towns or villages abandoned in the 1948 War of

Independence.[68] By 1951, *ma'abarot* housed a combined population of over two hundred

thousand immigrants across sixty-two locations: approximately 80% of this population was

Mizrahi.[69] *Ma'abarot* were generally comprised of single-unit family housing made from cheap

and expedient construction materials like tarpaulin, wood, or tin and were not connected to

electricity or water.[*70] Instead, bathrooms, showers, and sinks were in communal buildings

meant to service the entire population of any given *ma'abara*, where the population could have

been in the several hundreds or even in the low thousands.[71] In an October 1950 edition of the

Israeli newspaper *Davar*, Yitzhak Yakobi recalled the sanitary conditions of *ma'abara* Midgal

Gad: which later evolved into the Israeli city of modern Ashkelon.[72] He wrote, "In the whole

camp there were two faucets for everyone. About a thousand people. The toilets had no roof and

were infested with flies. Corrugated iron buildings or showers had been erected, but in the

absence of water they too had been turned into toilets."[73] Because *ma'abarot* were located on the

frontier of Israel's borders, its residents were more likely to be the victims of violence or terror.

For instance, residents of *ma'abarot* in southern Israel near the Gaza Strip were the most

frequent targets of violence and terror stemming from Palestinian *fedayeen* (in Arabic, "those

---

[67] Shapira, *Israel: A History*, 200.
[68] Shama and Iris, *Immigration Without Integration*, 46.
[69] Shapira, *Israel: A History*, 200 and Chetrit, *Intra-Jewish Conflict in Israel*, 45.
* In Israeli slang, *ma'abarot* housing – as well as housing in Mizrahi neighborhoods of major cities – was
sometimes sarcastically referred to as "asbestonim" to indicate the shoddy workmanship and poor conditions.
[70] Segev, *1949: The First Israelis*, 137.
[71] Shapira, *Israel: A History*, 200.
[72] Yitzhak Yakobi, *Davar*, October 10, 1950 in Ibid, 200.
[73] Ibid.

who sacrifice themselves") crossing from Gaza into Israel in the 1950s.[74] As such, the

ma'abarot-Mizrahi periphery acted as a physical barrier of bodies buffering danger to Israel's

more Ashkenazi center: the legacy of which continues to inform the map of sites of violence,

terrorist attacks, and warfare in Israel to this day.[75]

In terms of Mizrahi Israeli relationships and interactions with the Labor Zionist

establishment, the *ma'abarot* exemplified Mizrahi Israelis' sense of deprivation and lack of

agency against the impenetrably bureaucratic and callous systems of the hegemonically Labor

Zionist, Ashkenazi-dominated apparatus. Unlike in the original temporary transit camps set up

after the creation of the state of Israel and the War of Independence in 1948, residents of

ma'abarot were responsible for obtaining their own income.[76] To earn an income, a *ma'abarot*

resident had to secure work through the previously mentioned Labor Zionist controlled

Histadrut: the gargantuan Israeli workers' union that had an unchallenged monopoly on

employment opportunities during the *ma'abarot* period in the 1950s through the early 1960s.[77] In

accordance with the Labor Zionist ideology, the Histadrut almost solely provided the kind of

agrarian or manual labor that Mizrahim largely deemed as humiliating and undesirable work.[78]

The wages of these types of jobs were consistently too low for a single breadwinner to be able to

support an entire family, and, as a result, the entrance of more than one family member into the

workforce was necessary to sustain a household in the *ma'abarot*.[79] This disrupted the previous

economic norm for Mizrahi Jews, fractured the patriarchal family structure of most Mizrahi

---

[74] Shama and Iris, *Immigration Without Integration*, 135.
[75] Swirski, *Israel: The Oriental Majority*, 22.
[76] Shapira, *Israel: A History*, 200.
[77] Bashkin, *Impossible Exodus*, 106.
[78] Ibid.
[79] Shama and Iris, *Immigration Without Integration*, 37.

families that had previously existed before their arrival to the state of Israel, and further

exacerbated Mizrahi Israelis' sense of humiliation and lack of agency.[80]

For Mizrahi Israelis living in the *ma'abarot*, the vast web of hegemonically Labor Zionist

institutions controlled far more than just employment opportunities. Between the various state-

official ministries and extra-governmental apparatuses, the Labor Zionist establishment

controlled housing, education, healthcare, construction, and transportation – each of which also

further exacerbated Mizrahi Israelis' sense of victimization by the Israeli Left.[81] In her 2017

book *Impossible Exodus: Iraqi Jews in Israel*, Orit Bashkin recalls a representative and chilling

example of the convergence of several of these aspects across multiple state and state-adjacent

institutions:

> Iraqi writer Yosef Za'rur, a resident of the transit camp of Tel Mond, wrote in Arabic to
> the Ministry of Health that on May 7, 1952, a woman from his camp had gone with her
> sick one-year-old baby to seek help from the director of the camp. The baby's condition
> was worsening and the doctor on call was away. The woman then walked six kilometers
> to the nearby camp but no doctor was on call. She walked to another moshav, Kfar
> Hess, where she found a doctor, but he refused to take care of her and her child. He told
> her to walk to Netanya, a city quite far from Kfar Hess,[*] and in the morning, the baby
> died.[82]

In the 1960s, the *ma'abarot* dissolved as they either closed down or evolved organically

into larger cities or what came to be known as development towns.[83] Like *ma'abarot*, these

development towns were overwhelmingly Mizrahi. By the mid-1980s most development towns

averaged approximately 70% Mizrahi, with specific development towns like Beth Shean, Beth

Shemesh, Ma'alot, Kiryat Shemona, and Sderot reaching as much as 80% Mizrahi.[84] But even as

---

[80] Ibid.
[81] Bashkin, *Impossible Exodus*, 106.
[*] It would take approximately three and a half hours to walk to Netanya from Kfar Hess without stopping.
[82] Ibid, 41-42.
[83] Yiftachel, *Ethnocracy*, 214-218.
[84] Swirski, *Israel: The Oriental Majority*, 21.

the fragile housing structures and dingy communal buildings gave way to more permanent and developed edifices, the *ma'abarot* produced a sustained and poignant legacy in both the social-political organization of the state of Israel and in Mizrahi Israeli collective memory. In his 1989 text *Israel: The Oriental Majority*, Shlomo Swirski provided in-depth evidence demonstrating how early Mizrahi encounters with the Labor Zionist establishment in the state of Israel had a profound impact on the development of Mizrahi Israeli life well beyond the end of the era of hegemonic Labor Zionist control of the state of Israel. In an anecdote about development town Kiryat Shemona, Swirski showed the lingering influence of Mizrahi victimization by the Israeli Left during the period of the Great Aliyah even as development towns replaced *ma'abarot*:

> For example, inhabitants of Kiryat Shemona, a largely Oriental development town, were employed in the drainage of the Hula Valley, creating 40,000 dunams of good agricultural land; the land itself was then parceled out to the surrounding kibbutzim, which used it to establish large farms. These farms employed people from Kiryat Shemona – as hired hands – to grow crops, which profited the kibbutzim.[85]

This one example covers three of the main components of the Mizrahi sense of victimization by the Israeli Left: humiliation in the type of labor, peripheral location, and subjugation vis-à-vis the Labor Zionists. The Mizrahi role as the workers doing the most physically demanding work clearing the valley and as day laborers demonstrates the continuation of Mizrahi Israelis' humiliating role as the source of low-class manual labor. Kiryat Shemona – a former *ma'abara* which later became famous for the endless torrent of Katyusha rockets launched at it by the Palestine Liberation Organization from inside Lebanon in the 1970s and 1980s – indicates the peripheral location of Mizrahi settlement. Lastly, the Mizrahi role hired-out additional hands who did not reap equal economic profit to kibbutzniks on the same parcel of land indicated subjugation vis-à-vis the Labor Zionist establishment.

---

[85] Ibid, 11.

The culmination of these interactions with the Israeli Left during the period of the Great Aliyah cemented Mizrahi Israelis' sense of emotional humiliation and physical discrimination that would become one of the community's defining memories of the Israeli Left, especially amongst the second-generation Mizrahi Israelis who would go on to directly catalyze the Israeli Right's rise to power in 1977. In the Mizrahi Israeli collective memory, the period of arrival to Israel and initial settlement became synonymous with a period of injustice and indignity stemming from their experiences with the Labor Zionist establishment. The deep scars of this memory of humiliation and victimization became a foundational cornerstone in Mizrahi Israeli collective memory, and one of the facets of their collective memory to most consistently be converted into the impetus for sociopolitical action.

Revisionist Victimization

The vicious and storied rivalry between the Labor Zionists and the Revisionist Zionists began in the early twentieth century in Europe, well before the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948. As mentioned earlier in this thesis, singularly bad relations between both the leadership and membership of competing visions of Labor Zionism and Revisionist Zionism transcended European origin, taking root in both pre-state British Mandatory Palestine and throughout the history the state of Israel. Similar to the independent Mizrahi sense of victimization by the Israeli Left, Revisionist Zionist victimization by the Labor Zionists contains both emotional and physical dimensions: the foundational memories of which took place primarily in the pre-state era of the anti-British Jewish revolt in the mid-1940s and in the immediate aftermath of the founding of the state.

The most obvious examples of the emotional dimension of the Israeli Left's humiliation of the Revisionist Zionists are the invective with which the Israeli Left described Revisionist

leaders – with particular vitriol reserved for Menachem Begin – and the schadenfreude with which Labor Zionist leaders spoke about Revisionist Zionist failures or tragedies. David Ben-Gurion frequently compared the admittedly histrionic and emotional Begin to Adolf Hitler – something he had also done for Jabotinsky, whom he called "Vladimir Hitler"[86] – but which took on an added sting when applied to Begin, whose father, mother, older brother, sister-in-law, and infant nephew were all murdered in the Holocaust.[87] Ben-Gurion's animosity towards Begin, derived from both their terse political rivalry and Ben-Gurion's personal disgust at Begin's diasporic character and flair for violence and demagogic theatrics, continued after the foundation of the state and the formation of the Knesset. When Begin requested to speak during Knesset sessions after becoming a member of the Knesset and head of the Herut party following the party's establishment in 1948, Ben-Gurion refused to identify him by name, calling him only "the man sitting next to MK[*] Bader."[88]

For Revisionist Zionists, the most emotional instance of victimization at the hands of the Israeli Left came in the fallout of the *Altalena* Affair. In June 1948, the *Altalena*, a ship procured by the Revisionist Zionists, arrived in Israel carrying people and armaments slightly over a month after the state of Israel and the Israel Defense Forces were founded in May of that same year.[89] Ben-Gurion – who saw the arrival of an arms ship procured by a militia of a rival ideological strain that was still not fully integrated into the state's official military as a potentially dangerous separatist challenge to the authority of the state – ordered the newly founded IDF to fire on the ship itself and on the beach where Irgunists had gathered to unload the

---

[86] Steve Posner, "Begin's Ploy," in *Israel Undercover: Secret Warfare and Hidden Diplomacy in the Middle East* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1987), 94.
[87] Ibid, 90.
[*] MK is the commonly used abbreviation for Member of the Knesset or Minister of the Knesset.
[88] Gordis, *Menachem Begin: The Battle for Israel's Soul*, 102.
[89] Ehud Sprinzak, *Brother Against Brother, Violence and Extremism in Israeli Politics from Altalena to the Rabin Assassination* (New York: The Free Press-Simon & Schuster Inc., 1999), 17.

ship's armaments and passengers.[90] Sixteen Irgunists and three IDF soldiers were killed, with the

number of wounded on both sides reaching double digits.[91] A shell launched by the IDF struck a

critical blow to the *Altalena* that destroyed the armaments on board, caused the ship to sink, and

forced the passengers – many of whom were Jewish refugees from the Holocaust – to jump

overboard.[92]

Shortly after, Ben-Gurion took the spotlight in the Knesset to proclaim victory. His

concluding remarks on the *Altalena* Affair remain one of the most visceral instances of

emotional victimization for Revisionists: "Blessed is the gun which exploded this ship… When

we build the Temple, that gun should be placed by the main gate."[93] In elevating what came to be

known in Israeli pop-culture as "the holy cannon" to a status of mythic, borderline Messianic

importance, the Israeli Left canonized what remains one of the most contested sites of political

rivalry in Israel to this day. The ongoing tug-of-war over the historical narrative of the *Altalena*

and whether or it should be remembered as the sovereign state's strong rejection of potential

separatism or as an unforgivable calamity of Jews killing Jews is further indicative of the lack of

consistency within Zionism and Israeli politics.[94]

While the *Altalena* remains the pinnacle of the emotional-physical axis of the Israeli

Left's victimization of the Israeli Right, it exists in the framework of an established, consistent

pattern of Labor Zionists' physical victimization of their Revisionist Zionist rivals. In the pre-

state period, Jabotinsky lashed out at the Labor Zionist institutions for hoarding the lion's share

of the funds procured by Keren Hayesod – the principle fundraising body of the Yishuv – and for

---

[90] Ibid, 25.
[91] Shilon, *Menachem Begin: A Life*, 128.
[92] Ibid.
[93] *Davar*, June 24, 1948 in Shilon, *Menachem Begin: A Life*, 130.
[94] Gershom Gorenberg, *The Unmaking of Israel*, Amazon Kindle Edition (New York: HarperCollins, 2011), location 333; 296.

prioritizing the funding and immigration of their own constituents over members of different

Zionist movements, including the Revisionists.[95] After the 1948 War of Independence, Irgun and

Lehi[*] fighters were not honored for their role in the war like Haganah fighters were, and, unlike

the Haganah fighters, did not receive pensions or allowances.[96]

During the anti-British revolt in the mid-1940s, a period known as the *Saison* (from the

French, meaning literally "season," and also sometimes referred to as "The Hunting Season")

broke out from November of 1944 to March 1945, during which members of the Labor Zionist

affiliated militia Haganah assisted the British in arresting members of the Revisionist Zionist

affiliated Irgun and the extremist Lehi.[97] Irgun intelligence officer Yaakov Tabin was one of the

Irgun members targeted by the Haganah in this time.[98] He later recalled being kidnapped by

Haganah members and held captive in a cave just north of Kibbutz Givat Hashlosh for six

months during which Haganah members kept Tabin chained to a bed, and periodically told him

he would be executed if he did not give up information.[99] Victimization during the *Saison*

extended beyond the rivalry between these two militias to a systemic and institutional context as

members of the Irgun and Lehi and their children were dismissed from or prevented from

completing their educations.[100] This was the case for Lehi member and future Likud MK Geula

[95] Halkin, *Jabotinsky*, 160.

[*] The Lohamei Herut Israel, (in Hebrew, "The Freedom Fighters for Israel") known more commonly by their acronym, Lehi, was one of the three major Jewish militias operating in pre-state Israel in the 1940s along with the Labor Zionist Haganah and the Revisionist Zionist Irgun. Unlike the Haganah and the Irgun, the Lehi was not formally allied with a clearly distinguishable political arm or ideology, and its members espoused both left-wing and right-wing views. Instead of pursuing a tangible vision for a future Jewish state, the Lehi focused almost solely on the objective of removing the British from Palestine through often extreme and violent measures. The Lehi were responsible for the assassinations of British Minister Resident in the Middle East Lord Moyne in 1944 and Swedish United Nations mediator Folke Bernadotte in 1948, as well as for instigating the "Deir Yassin Massacre" in tandem with the Irgun in April 1948.

[96] Shapira, *Israel: A History*, 332.

[97] Gordis, *Menachem Begin: The Battle for Israel's Soul*, 45.

[98] Shilon, *Menachem Begin: A Life*, 72.

[99] Ibid.

[100] Ibid.

Cohen, a Mizrahi Israeli with heritage from Yemen, Morocco and Turkey, who was physically prevented from entering the room where she was scheduled to take her final accreditation test at Tel Aviv Teacher's College where she had been studying by Haganah members.[101]

As with the Mizrahi Israeli sense of victimization by the Israeli Left, these encounters informed the resentment with which the various Revisionist Zionists of the Israeli Right perceived the Israeli Left. In both the years spent in opposition to the Labor Zionist hegemony and after the ascent of the Israeli Right post-1977, memories of the *Altalena*, the *Saison*, and the general antagonism between the two Zionist camps remained powder-kegs of tension which influenced the character and actions of right-wing Israeli politics, and the ongoing battle over the narrative of Israel's metaphorical soul.

<div align="center">

Shared Sense of Victimization

</div>

Having established Mizrahi and Revisionist victimizations as independent entities, I now explore of how these victimizations overlapped through Labor Zionists' punishing Mizrahim for association with Revisionist Zionism, and through Labor Zionists' using Revisionist Zionists' association with Mizrahim as a slight. That Mizrahi Israelis and the Revisionist Zionists both imagined their victimization by the Israeli Left to be a shared experience is a pivotal factor in why the Israeli Right eventually became the political home of choice for Mizrahi Israelis, and informs why Mizrahi Israelis continue to vote right-wing through to today.

Mizrahi punishment for association with Revisionist Zionism is best understood through the lens of how the Labor Zionist establishment used the vast powers of both official state ministries and departments and non-governmental bodies like the Jewish Agency and the Histadrut to police the Mizrahi Israelis' everyday lives. As previously established, between the

---

[101] Ibid.

official ministries, the Jewish Agency, and the Histadrut, the Labor Zionists controlled

essentially every aspect of life in the state of Israel during the first few decades of the state

including education, housing, transportation, and employment.[102] For Mizrahi arrivals to the state

of Israel already facing varying degrees of linguistic, social, and economic barriers, being in the

good graces of the Labor Zionist hegemony was more than a political choice; it was tantamount

to success and survival.

Given the fierce rivalry between the Labor Zionists and the Revisionist Zionists, it is not

surprising that the Labor Zionist ministries and organizations in contact with Mizrahi Israelis

actively sought to prevent or punish both real and perceived association with Revisionist

Zionism and the Herut party.[103] As a result, in the 1950s Mizrahi Israelis feared attending Herut

rallies out of potential retaliation from the Labor Zionist apparatus which included arrests, police

beatings, withholding food or housing, transfer to a different *ma'abara*, or prevention from

securing work.[104] The threat of these consequences was more than just a scare tactic, as one

Mizrahi Herut member recalled years later, "We lived in Ramat Gan, and my father simply had

no work. They wouldn't give him work. I remember myself, when I was a boy… I can never

forget what they told him: 'You are a Revisionist. You have no work.'"[105] Mizrahi Israelis who

decided to risk the potential punishments and formally affiliated themselves with Herut were

stymied at the organizational level by a political structure that consistently sought to prevent

their ability to set up a local headquarters or meeting space.[106] In at least one instance, Mizrahi

---

[102] Bashkin, *Impossible Exodus*, 106; Swirski, *Israel: The Oriental Majority*, 12.
[103] Roby, *The Mizrahi Era of Rebellion,* 134.
[104] Bashkin, *Impossible Exodus*, 134-135; Roby, *The Mizrahi Era of Rebellion*, 13.
[105] Zuckerman, Shamir, and Herzog, "The Political Bases of Activism in the Israeli Labor Party and Herut," 310.
[106] Bashkin, *Impossible Exodus*, 135.

Herut members who were denied the ability to set up a formal local party chapter held their meetings in a cemetery instead.[107]

For the Labor Zionist establishment, Mizrahi Israelis' association with Revisionist Zionism and the Herut party was justification for a double punishment. The first layer of this double punishment constituted the reality of the deprivation and humiliation that they already experienced independently as Mizrahim in the racism and Orientalism of their encounters with the state and citizenry. The second layer of this double punishment factored in additional victimization by proxy to both real and perceived relationship to the Israeli Right through things like the additional threat of withholding food or work on top of pre-existing difficulty vis-à-vis Labor Zionist institutions. The consolidation of these two layers ultimately served to solidify the shared victimization of Mizrahim and the Israeli Right at the hands of the Israeli Left.

Conversely, Labor Zionists attempted to insult Revisionist Zionists by positioning the Revisionist Zionists' association with Mizrahim as degenerative. Labor Zionist leadership and general membership represented the higher percentage of Mizrahi members in the Irgun than in the Haganah negatively in attempts to tarnish the Irgun's reputation: implying that the higher percentage and interest intrinsically indicated inferiority. In his memoir *The Revolt*, Menachem Begin recalled this sentiment,

> Wishing to belittle us, these gentlemen whispered, or said aloud, that the *whole* of the Irgun consisted only of Yemenites. Our enemies, who disseminated tales about "black Yemenites" on one hand and "the scum of Eastern Europe" on the other, were trying to besmirch us. It is a pity that our Jewish political opponents stooped to this nasty "racial" invective so beloved of anti-semitic propagandists between the wars. The Nazis used to say: "Maybe not all Jews are Communists, but all Communists are Jews." Similarly, some Zionists said of us: "Not all Yemenites are Irgunists, but all the Irgun people are Yemenites."[108]

---

[107] Ibid.

[108] Menachem Begin, *The Revolt*, Nash Edition (Los Angeles: Nash Publishing, 1972), 78.

For Begin, this invective was a spectacular failure. Begin, who estimated that anywhere

between twenty-five to thirty-five percent of the Irgun as a whole consisted of Jews of

"Sephardic"* background and was quick to provide a laundry list of Sephardic Jews who

achieved the highest roles possible in Irgun's hierarchy,[109] also wrote, "The 'smear' with which

our enemies and opponents tried to belittle us was to us a source of pride. People who had been

humiliated and degraded became proud fighters in our ranks, free and equal men and women,

bearers of liberty and honor."[110] Begin's warmth and respect towards Jews of all backgrounds

was one of the defining features of his popularity amongst Mizrahi Israelis, and will be covered

more extensively in upcoming sections.

These layered victimizations at the hands of hegemonic Labor Zionism – Mizrahi

punishment for association with Revisionism and Revisionist slights for association with

Mizrahim – facilitated that the whole of victimization to be sorted into a singular memory of

shared oppression. Encounters that objectively constituted independent experiences not shared

among Mizrahim and Revisionists, such as Mizrahi spatial relegation to the periphery, or the

Saison – which occurred well before a majority of Mizrahi Israelis came to Israel – were

reimagined by both Mizrahi Israelis and Revisionist Zionists to be synonymous.

This is evident in a passage from Amos Oz's 1983 nonfiction work *In The Land of Israel*

in a diatribe delivered by one of the many Mizrahi Likud voters Oz met in the heavily North

African development town Beth Shemesh,

> For thirty years you [Labor Zionists] treated [Menachem Begin] like a dog. Not one of
> his people ever got a government post. No memorial day for [Irgun] fighters. Nothing.

---

* It is important to note that what Begin refers to as "Sephardic" in *The Revolt* does not match exactly with the
largely Arab and Islamic heritage of Mizrahi Jews. Instead, Begin's use of Sephardic more closely means both
Mizrahi Jews and the totality of Jews exiled from Spain in 1492. Geographically, Mizrahi Jews are typically
associated with just the Middle East and North Africa, but the whole range of Sephardic Jews could span all over the
globe to include places like Brazil, Puerto Rico, or Greece in addition to the Middle East and North Africa.
[109] Ibid.
[110] Ibid, 79.

> You put him down and shut his mouth. Here in Beth Shemesh, when Begin came to speak, the Labor Council would cut off the electricity in the auditorium – let him speak in the dark like a dog. So what did he do? Did he run off to America to bad mouth you? Did he incite the soldiers against the country? Exactly the opposite: he suffered in silence, just like we suffered you in silence.[111]

This passage incorporates several of the key points outlined in this section: pointing out independent victimization of the Irgun, hinting at Mizrahi double punishment for association with Revisionist Zionism, and, most importantly, demonstrating how in the Mizrahi Israeli collective memory of their relationship to the Israeli Right victimization is imagined as a shared experience. At Menachem Begin's victory rally in 1977, a young Moroccan waiter echoed this sentiment and logic, telling a reporter, "[Labor] treated [Begin] the way they always treated us – like scum."[112]

I argue that the logic of this collective memory operates through a notion of proto-intersectionality. Although the political alliance between Mizrahi Israelis and the Israeli Right predated the explicit formulation of an intersectional model by several decades, the notion of a similar or shared experience versus a singular power infrastructure produced an intersectional-type grounds for Mizrahim and Revisionist Zionists to pursue a mutually beneficial partnership through which to address shared grievances. This proto-intersectional formulation explains how a political partnership between Mizrahi Israelis and Revisionist Zionists developed as a conceptual and pragmatic avenue through which to challenge the Israeli Left. In emphasizing layered victimization and flattening independent victimization into a category of mutual experience, Mizrahi Israelis and Revisionist Zionists were later able to convert this collective memory of victimization into sociopolitical action by creating what Sami Shalom-Chetrit

---

[111] Amos Oz, *In the Land of Israel* (New York: Harcourt, 1983), 38.
[112] Avner, "The Great Emancipator."

identified as an "alliance of the oppressed" united against their shared enemy: the Israeli Left.[113]

Having established how Mizrahi Israeli collective memory of their relationship with the Israeli

Right incorporated and comprehended a shared sense of victimization, I turn now to the second

facet of the overall umbrella of shared mistreatment by the Israeli Left: representation as a shared

menace.

<div align="center">Creation of a Shared Menace: Wadi Salib and the Fourth Knesset Elections</div>

Labor Zionists represented Mizrahim and Revisionist Zionists as two linked elements of a

dangerous threat to Israeli society dating back to the pre-state era and the earliest waves of

immigration in the Great Aliyah. In 1949, the Israeli daily newspaper *Ha'aretz* published a series

of exposés on life in the transit camps from journalist Arye Gelbaum.[114] In one of his reports,

Gelbaum provided his assessment of the new Mizrahi immigrants:

> The peculiar tragedy with these immigrants is that there is nothing to hope for from their children, either. To raise their general standards from their communal depths would take generations! Perhaps it is not surprising that Mr. Begin and Herut are so eager to bring all these hundreds of thousands at once – they know that ignorant, primitive, and poverty-stricken masses are the best raw material for them, and could eventually put them in power.[115]

Gelbaum's postulation was emblematic of Labor Zionists' condemnation of Mizrahim and

Revisionism as a shared menace. From this Labor Zionist perspective, Herut's politics would

culminate in the creation of a fascist state that would destroy Israeli society, and the Mizrahim

would be the base through which they would do it. To further understand how Labor Zionists

presented Mizrahim and Revisionists as a dual menace, the application of this logic can be

---

[113] Chetrit, *Intra-Jewish Conflict in Israel: White Jews, Black Jews*, 38.
[114] Segev, *1949: The First Israelis*, 119.
[115] Arye Gelbaum, *Ha'aretz*, April 22, 1949 in Segev, *1949: The First Israelis*, 159-161.

viewed through the lens and context of one representative historical incident: the Wadi Salib "riots"[*] of 1959.

On the evening of July 8, 1959, Israeli police arrived in the heavily Moroccan Wadi Salib neighborhood in Haifa – known for its cramped housing and high rates of unemployment – to investigate a report of disturbing the peace.[116] When they arrived on the scene, they found Moroccan-born Yaakov Elkarif erratic and drunk, stumbling through the neighborhood streets. Israeli police tried to arrest Elkarif, who, in turn, became belligerently frustrated and began throwing empty glass bottles at them.[117] In response, the police shot him.[118] Elkarif survived the shooting, but rumors that he had been shot and killed by the police – seen by Mizrahim in the Wadi Salib and across Israel as the ultimate violent expression of anti-Mizrahi police brutality – spread like wildfire around the neighborhood.[119] Immediately after Elkarif's shooting, an anonymous pamphlet titled "Manifesto to the Residents of Wadi Salib" proliferated throughout the neighborhood.[120] It stated, "the shooting of Yaakov Elkarif, as though he were an enemy, wounded the entire Moroccan community," and proposed a wide-scale Mizrahi demonstration to protest Israel's intra-Jewish ethnic inequality.[121] The next night, on July 9, neighborhood frustration exploded: protestors threw rocks through storefront windows, set parked cars on fire, and sacked the Mapai Club building and the Worker's Council Headquarters.[122] Dozens were

---

[*] Although the Labor Zionists actively positioned Wadi Salib as a riot – a designation that was also commonplace in the historiography up until fairly recently – the fallout from Elkarif's shooting should be re-evaluated through the lens of a more nuanced understanding of ethnic and racial protests and how these kinds of protests have historically been categorized as riots as part of a greater trend of ethnic-based fearmongering.

[116] Chetrit, *Intra-Jewish Conflict in Israel: White Jews, Black Jews*, 65.

[117] Ibid.

[118] Ibid.

[119] Ibid.

[120] Sara Kahn-Nisser, "Nationalism, Identity, and Rebellion: An Interpretation of the Wadi Salib Events," *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 16, No. 3-4 (2010): 387, DOI:10.1080/13537113.2010.526919.

[121] "Manifesto to the Residents of Wadi Salib" in Ibid.

[122] Chetrit, *Intra-Jewish Conflict in Israel*: *White Jews, Black Jews*, 65.

arrested and wounded. Similar protests erupted across Israel: from Akko in the north, to Beersheva in the south.[123]

While on the surface the Wadi Salib "riots" in 1959 might seem like a clear-cut expression of widespread frustration towards the Labor Zionist establishment that would have logically preceded a decline in the Labor Zionist Mapai Party's grip on power in the upcoming elections for the fourth Knesset in November of that same year, it was not. In the 1959 elections Mapai garnered 38.2% of the vote and increased its number of seats in the Knesset from 40 to 47 – the record high for a Labor Zionist party up to that point.[124] Mapai achieved this victory in no small part *because* of Wadi Salib, and through the efficiency through which they were able to represent what they portrayed as dangerous "riots" as the apex of the Herut and Mizrahi shared menace.

By the mid-1950s, negatively linking Herut and the Mizrahim was a standard position within Mapai. An article titled "First Tally" that appeared in the July 28, 1955 edition of *Ha-Dor*, the evening newspaper for the Mapai party, demonstrated this precedence; "It was the slums, the transit camps, the shantytowns, and the neglect [that] caused this rotten fruit – the re-ascendency of the Fascist menace in the form of Herut – to ripen."[125] Mapai extended this logic in the immediate aftermath of Wadi Salib, suggesting that Herut was popular amongst Wadi Salib's Mizrahi residents, and that Herut was responsible for fostering a propensity for violence and destruction in the neighborhood.[126] Herut MK Yohanan Bader – of "the man sitting next to MK Bader" fame – later recalled in his 1979 memoir, *The Knesset and I*, that Mapai used Wadi

---

[123] Ibid.
[124] The State of Israel, Knesset, "Elections to the Fourth Knesset," accessed January 27, 2019, https://www.knesset.gov.il/description/eng/eng_mimshal_res4.htm.
[125] "First Tally," *Ha-Dor*, July 28, 1955 in Weitz, "The Road to 'Upheaval,'" 63.
[126] Weitz, "The Road to 'Upheaval,'" 68.

Salib to rebrand itself as the "law and order" party of Israel that could protect its largely middle-to-upper class Ashkenazi voting base from what Bader argued Mapai characterized as "the menace of Wadi Salib."[127] The "menace" in question, was very clearly meant to implicate both the Herut and the Mizrahim as the double-edged sword that threatened the Labor Zionist understanding of an orderly and collectivist Israeli society then undeniably controlled by Labor Zionist affiliated Ashkenazim.

Mapai's application of this same shared menace narrative to a key event during the 1959 campaign season itself would be the death knell for Herut's election hopes that year. At one of his campaign stops in the heavily Mizrahi neighborhoods of South Tel Aviv, Menachem Begin appeared in an open-top black Cadillac, as he usually did for his campaign stops dating back to the early 1950s, but this time with two added armed security motorcycles in his motorcade.[128] Local Mizrahi teens joined in the procession, falling in behind Begin's Cadillac and his new security detail as he slowly toured neighborhoods much like Wadi Salib.[129] When pictures came out in the press the next day, the damage was decisive. Ashkenazi voters compared Begin to Hitler and Mussolini, claiming the images of Begin rolling through South Tel Aviv in an armed motorcade flanked by masses of enthusiastic young Mizrahi supporters resembled fascist triumphal tours.[130] Herut performed dismally in the elections for the fourth Knesset: winning just 13.5% of the vote and only gaining two more seats up from the fifteen it secured in the previous elections in 1955.[131]

---

[127] Yohanan Bader, *The Knesset and I* (Jerusalem 1979), 122-123 in Weitz, "The Road to 'Upheaval,'" 68.
[128] Shilon, *Menachem Begin: A Life*, 189.
[129] Ibid.
[130] Shapira, *Israel: A History*, 332.
[131] The State of Israel, Knesset, "Elections to the Third Knesset," accessed January 27, 2019, https://www.knesset.gov.il/description/eng/eng_mimshal_res3.htm

As a representative example, Wadi Salib and the fourth Knesset elections of that same year demonstrated how the Israeli Left presented Mizrahim and Revisionist Zionists as the bipartite threat against Israeli society. In particular, the allegation from the Israeli Left that both Mizrahim and Revisionist Zionists were fundamentally illiberal and posed an existential threat to Israeli democracy became one of the most commonly employed canards against the various Revisionist Zionist parties in subsequent electoral competitions, and, as a consequence, one of the most effective facets of the Mizrahi Israelis' collective memory of their association with the Israeli Right for catalyzing sociopolitical action.

From Ma'abarot to HaMahapach: Elections 1977 and 1981

While Wadi Salib and the elections for the fourth Knesset in 1959 provided an early example of how the shared menace invective factored into the political content of the Israeli Left, later elections for the ninth Knesset and tenth Knesset in 1977 and 1981 respectively represented the solidification of this invective as a hallmark of the Israeli Left's campaigns, and defined the form it would assume within the collective memory of Mizrahi Israelis' perception of their relationship to the Israeli Right. This section examines how the Israeli Left weaponized the menace invective in these two election cycles, as well as how this menace invective combined with a shared sense of victimization to culminate in Mizrahi Israeli and Revisionist Zionists' repurposing this shared sense of mistreatment into sociopolitical change.

While both in the press and in academia the elections for the ninth Knesset in 1977 are considered a watershed moment, at the time Likud's victory was also simultaneously considered to be somewhat of a fluke. Journalists and political theorists attributed the Revisionist Zionist Likud's victory to a perfect confluence of developments *against* the Labor Zionists much more

than to a genuine success *for* Likud.[132] Going into 1977, the Labor Zionist party HaMa'arach (in Hebrew, "the Alignment"), was crumbling under the weight of a series of political catastrophes: Israelis still had not forgiven Labor Zionist leadership for failing to prevent the near disaster of the 1973 Yom Kippur War, the party was fraying over factionary in-fighting, and the then-current government headed by Yitzhak Rabin was beset by scandal including the revelation of Rabin's own illegally maintained offshore bank account.[133] The arrival of a new political party called Democratic Movement for Change – known by its Hebrew acronym Dash and headed by well-liked former IDF Chief-of-Staff and archaeologist Yigael Yadin[*] – split the traditional voter base of the dominant Labor Zionist parties.[134] And, to top it all off, Menachem Begin – whose personal magnetism and electric oratory had long been a major source of Revisionist Zionists' marginal political success – did not even campaign; he was sidelined by a heart attack.[135] When the elections commission finalized the results for the elections, they confirmed that Likud won with 43 seats to Alignment's 32 seats.[136] Likud had only gained five seats total from their previous loss in 1973, but Labor had dropped a full twenty one seats down from their previous 53.[137]

Although the 1977 elections get the credit as the start date of the Israeli Right's ascension to power, it was a much more of a muted victory than a powerful moniker like "The Earthquake" suggests. The campaign season for 1977 did, however, feature a number of expressions of Labor

---

[132] Don Peretz, "The Earthquake: Israel's Ninth Elections," *Middle East Journal* 31, No. 3 (Summer 1977): 251.
[133] Ibid 251; 253; 255 and "Israeli Elections: MERIP Interviews Fawzi El-Asmar and Nadav Katz," 9.
[*] Yadin served as the first Chief of Operations in the Israel Defense Forces during the 1948 War of Independence. He then served as IDF Chief-of-Staff from 1949 to 1952 before retiring from the military to focus on his career as an academic and an archeologist. As an archeologist, Yadin oversaw some of the most significant national-archaeological projects in the modern state of Israel including the excavation of the Qumran Caves (the site where the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered) and the excavation of the Masada Fortress.
[134] Tessler, "The Political Right in Israel," 28.
[135] Cohen and Leon, "The Mahapach and Yitzhak Shamir's Quiet Revolution," 30.
[136] Weitz, "From Peace in the South to War in the North," 146.
[137] Ibid.

Zionists' positioning Mizrahi Israelis and Revisionist Zionists as a duel menace to Israeli society and democracy. This is evidenced by an election poster put out by the Citizens' Rights Movement – a sub-faction of the Labor Party – that ominously warned "the right-wing frightens you – and rightly so,"[138] and by the fact that by 1977 Labor Alignment voters had maliciously nicknamed Mizrahi Israeli voters as "*primitivim*."[139] But, while the election campaign in 1977 featured some less-than-conspicuous use of the menace invective in the Labor Alignment's campaigning, it was the next election campaign for the tenth Knesset in 1981 that featured the proliferation of the menace invective in earnest as a salient part of Labor Alignment's campaigning and in the Israeli Left in general. The elections in 1981 was an undeniable political tête-a-tête between the Likud and the Labor Alignment, and, as such, was the decisive moment for Mizrahi Israelis and Revisionist Zionists to convert their shared sense of mistreatment into definitive sociopolitical results.

The election cycle in 1981 featured a Menachem Begin on the campaign trail at the height of his powers going up against a Labor Alignment united behind wunderkind and former hand-picked protégé to David Ben-Gurion: Shimon Peres.[140] Yigael Yadin's Democratic Movement for Change – which picked up a key 15 seats in 1977 – had already abandoned the Likud coalition arranged in the ninth Knesset, and disincorporated entirely: leaving pivotal seats up for grabs.[141] Perhaps most importantly, essential data collected in an article by Alan Zuckerman, Michal Shamir, and Hanna Herzog for *Political Science Quarterly* after the election demonstrated that Herut's registered base – heavily composed of Mizrahim– increased by half since 1977: producing a palpable sense that this election would be a battle fought along ethnic

---

[138] Citizens' Rights Faction Poster in "Israeli Elections: MERIP Interviews Fawzi El-Asmar and Nadav Katz," 8.
[139] Tessler, "The Political Right in Israel," 47.
[140] Shilon, *Menachem Begin: A Life*, 350-353.
[141] Tessler, "The Political Right in Israel," 28; Chetrit, *Intra-Jewish Conflict in Israel: White Jews, Black Jews,* 142.

lines.[142] The coincidental factors in 1977 that suggested Likud's victory may have been more of

a temporary rupture in Labor hegemony were gone. The outcome of elections for the tenth

Knesset in 1981 would be an authoritative indication of the future of politics in Israel.

The campaign season, described in the Israeli press as "The War Between the Jews," was

undeniably tense.[143] Likud supporters threw rotten tomatoes at Labor speakers, slashed car tires,

vandalized Labor election offices, and frequently disrupted rallies with heckling. [144] By the end

of the campaign season Israeli police had arrested more than two hundred people involved with

campaign related incidents.[145] The fact that a majority of these arrested Likud supporters were

young Mizrahi men was not lost on either the general public or Labor campaigners, and,

predictably, the invective that Labor employed with great success after Wadi Salib again became

a hallmark of the anti-Likud campaign in 1981. But this time around, the invective that Mizrahi

Israelis and Revisionist Zionists constituted a bipartite existential threat to Israeli society and

liberalism had shed any illusions of subtlety, and instead manifested in barely veiled language of

racism and Orientalism.

At a Labor Alignment rally in June, following an earlier incident in Petah Tikvah in

which Likud supporters rolled a trashcan filled with flaming garbage into an assembled Labor

Alignment crowd, Shimon Peres became flustered at the presence of young Mizrahi Likudniks

interrupting his speech, and asked the Labor crowd angrily, "Do you want this Khomeinism to

take over Israel with idol worship?"[146] In comparing Mizrahi Likudniks to the youths that

catalyzed the Iranian Revolution just two years earlier and suggesting that their draw to Likud

---

[142] Zuckerman, Shamir, and Herzog, "The Political Bases of Activism in the Israeli Labor Party and Herut," 309.
[143] Brown, "Iron and a King," 4.
[144] Claiborne, "Begin Finds New Political Base Among Israel's Sephardic Jews."
[145] Ibid.
[146] Richard Weitz, "Begin's Inconclusive Mandate," *Harvard International Review* 4, No. 1 (September 1981): 11.

was little more than a form of idol worship, Peres struck a raw chord that conjured the stereotype

of Mizrahi Israelis as culturally backwards, illiberal, and dangerous. Additionally, Peres'

described Mizrahi Likudniks not as Israelis, but as Iranian Khomeinists coming to "take over"

Israel, effectively otherizing Mizrahim from his implied Labor Zionist understanding of

authentic Israeli identity and behavior. Chairman of the Election Commission, Israeli Supreme

Court Justice Moshe Etzioni, delivered a similar assertion in an interview in *Jerusalem Post*,

warning that parts of the Israeli electorate were "hot-tempered, and still unfamiliar with

democracy."[147] Peres' and Etzioni's statements demonstrate the prevalence of the shared menace

invective in the highest echelons of actual political stations in charging that Mizrahi illiberalism

could potentially lead to an undemocratic Revisionist Zionist government, but their statements

paled in comparison to the invective that appeared in the media.

In a 1981 article called "Revisiting Zionism" for the *New York Times Review of Books*,

Gershom Schocken – former *Ha'aretz* editor and father of current *Ha'aretz* publisher Amos

Schocken – argued "The mass immigration from the underdeveloped Muslim countries is [to

blame] for the unholy combination of religious extremism and nationalist fanaticism which does

not figure in Zionist doctrine."[148] In this statement, Schocken assigned Mizrahim blame for the

most extreme elements of the first Likud government regardless of the fact that the loftiest

ideological elements in right-wing Israeli coalitions generally originated amongst Jews of

Ashkenazi heritage.[149] A Labor Alignment campaign pamphlet that read "Will this be an Israel

that is beautiful and beloved? Or one raped, held by force?" conjured imagery directly out of

---

[147] Don Peretz and Sammy Smooha, "Israel's Tenth Knesset Elections: Ethnic Upsurgence and the Decline of Ideology," *Middle East Journal* 35, No. 4 (Fall 1981): 515.

[148] Gershom Schocken, "Revisiting Zionism," *New York Review of Books*, May 28, 1981, accessed January 19, 2019, https://www.nybooks.com/articles/1981/05/28/revisiting-zionism/.

[149] Smith, "The Second Israel," 154.

classical European racism: casting Mizrahi Israelis in the role of the sexually depraved non-white

"native" that threatened the purity of a feminized white state. [150] A June 19, 1981 editorial that

appeared in *The Jerusalem Post* reproduced the shared menace invective of this campaign season

in representative form,

> A not inconsiderable segment of the population takes a dim view of the country's system of democracy, and would be happy to see it scrapped and replaced with an authoritarian 'strong-man' regime… to most of them Begin is as hero: Begin, King of Israel. He speaks their minds and articulates their thoughts. No wonder then, that the more he moves around on the hustings rattling his sabre over missiles and nuclear reactors, laying into [Syrian President] Hafez Al-Assad ('chicken'), and [West German Chancellor] Helmut Schmidt ('Nazi') and Shimon Peres ('saboteur,' although the word could also mean 'terrorist') – the more eagerly they lap up his message.
>
> Entranced by his platform fireworks, it is not surprising that hooligans have been stimulated to knock out the Alignment's election rallies…
>
> [Sensible voters] prefer to think of this as but a momentary lapse in judgement, or at worst the sort of election antic that is packed away and forgotten as soon as the polling booths close down… [but Begin] feels the helm firmly in his hand, and he has served notice that disagreement with his policies will in future be tantamount to disloyalty. And the street mobs who cheer him on would certainly be willing to enforce such intolerance. [151]

This editorial summarizes every essential element of the Mizrahi Israeli collective memory of

being portrayed as a shared menace with the Revisionist Zionists. The author represents

Mizrahim as unintelligent, illiberal, naturally violent, and easily swayed by – if not intrinsically

drawn to – authoritarianism. Menachem Begin is portrayed as nothing less than an

uncomplicated would-be tyrant eager to use passive Mizrahi Israeli voters as the base with which

Revisionist Zionists would destroy democratic Israel and replace it with a fascist state.

The heated campaign season and the impassioned, violent, and frequently offensive tone

in which it was conducted climaxed on June 27, 1981 – just three days before Israelis were set to

go to the ballot box. That evening, comedian and television host Dudu Topaz, acting as emcee at

---

[150] *Mahar*, June 29, 1981 in Brown, "Iron and a King," 7.
[151] *Jerusalem Post*, June 17, 1981 in Peretz and Smooha, "Israel's Tenth Knesset Elections," 516.

a massive Labor Alignment rally of more than one hundred thousand people at Malachai Yisrael Square in Tel Aviv, attempted to joke about the Likud's relationship with the IDF.[152] He said: "Those chach-chachkim [a derogatory term for Mizrahim most closely meaning "riff-raff"] over there in [Likud Headquarters] Metzudat Ze'ev, those guys barely serve in the guard booths in the army, and that's if they serve at all… Here are the fighters and the commanders. Here is the beautiful land of Israel!"[153] Topaz's ill-timed quip at the culmination of the campaign season could was disastrous for a Labor Alignment party already fully aware that the election would be decided by a razor-thin margin.

The pejorative Topaz used – chach-chachkim – was a well-known offensive insult at the time that mocked the hard-consonant pronunciation common to the Mizrahi Hebrew accent, and would have been universally recognized by all kinds of Israelis throughout the country. In joking that Mizrahi Israelis only served in guard booths in the IDF, Topaz retreaded the trope that Mizrahim were stupid, lazy, and incapable while also irritating the volatile subject of military service in the Mizrahi Israeli community. A pre-existing record of deviancy is one of the only things that can disqualify an Israeli Jew from otherwise mandatory army service.[154] Because Mizrahi neighborhoods and towns were policed at higher rates than Ashkenazi neighborhoods and towns, Mizrahim were disproportionately barred from IDF service.[155] It is important to note that in Israel serving in the army is far more than just a mandatory civil service for young Israeli Jews and Israeli Druze, and is instead an integral thread in the very notion of Israeli identity itself. Service is part right-of-passage, part universal social experience, and – for Jews especially

---

[152] Seth Frantzman, "'They Will Take the Country from Us': Labor Zionism, the Origins and Legacy of the 'Other' in Israeli Mass Media, and Hegemonic Narratives," *Digest of Middle East Studies* 23, No. 1 (2014): 178.
[153] Topaz's Speech Translated in Frantzman, "'They Will Take the Country from Us,'" 178.
[154] Shama and Iris, *Immigration Without Integration*, 123.
[155] Ibid.

– part national-spiritual confirmation. The impact of this phenomenon of Mizrahi Israeli

exclusion from the IDF was most evident in the context of the 1967 Six-Day War, when

exclusion from participation produced a deep sense of having been "outsiders during a crisis"

and detached Mizrahim from fully sharing the euphoric narrative of the eventual Israeli

victory.[156] Lastly, Topaz rehashed the most visceral memories of Mizrahi humiliation by the

Israeli Left in the era of the Great Aliyah by juxtaposing the commanders so commonly

associated with the kibbutzim and the beautiful, Ashkenazi land of Israel against the Mizrahi

experience of having been made to feel like the peripheral, unwanted, ugly land of Israel.

The next day, Menachem Begin read a transcription of Topaz's speech in the morning

edition of *Ha'aretz*, and shrewdly recognized the speech's significance as the culmination of the

ethnic tension that characterized the campaign season.[157] That night, Begin took the stage in the

exact same spot in Malachai Yisrael Square where Topaz hosted the Labor Alignment rally the

very night before to a group of one hundred thousand spectators of his own, and delivered one of

the most famous speeches in the canon of Israeli politics, reproduced here:

> Last night, at this square, stood a young actor; what's his name? Dudu? Yes, his name is Dudu, David Topaz… Dudu Topaz, in front of one hundred thousand HaMa'arach (Labor Alignment) members, said the following: 'The chach-chachkim are at Metzudat Ze'ev. They're barely *Shin Gimelim* [an IDF soldier whose job is merely to guard the entrance to the army camps and bases]. The soldiers and commanders of the combat units are here [at the Labor rally].'
> I confess to you that until this morning I had never heard the word 'chach-chachkim,' and I did not know what it meant… In the underground, in the days of Resistance, as we were planning actions against the British rule, [Israel] Galili from the Haganah, after consultation with Natan Yellin-Mor from Lehi, asked me, 'How do you solve the problem of Mizrahim in Etzel?' And I looked at him and I said to him, 'Israel what are you asking? What problem?' And he said: 'What, don't you know? Haven't you heard? The problem of the Sephardic Jews.'
> So I said to him, 'What problem? We do not have a problem! We are all brothers; we are all Jews; we are all equal, all of us! One of our great area commanders – a Yemenite! – Uzi was Sephardic. Gidi, who executed the historic operation at the King

---

[156] Ibid.

[157] Shilon, *Menachem Begin: A Life*, 353.

David Hotel, was Sephardic. The man in charge of all the prisoners at Latrun Prison was a Yemenite, and all the boys stood at attention before him! What problem? We do not have one!'

But listen, when – what's his name? Du-du To-paz made his foolish, empty, and spiritually devoid comment, the entire crowd that was here last night cheered. Now I'll tell Dudu Topaz who he was referring to. Our Sephardim were warriors, heroes. Even in the underground. Some of them were among the Olei Hagardom [members of the Jewish underground that were executed by hanging by the British during the Revolt of the 1940s, but literally meaning 'those who ascended the gallows'], who up until their last minute alive sang 'Hatikvah' and amazed an entire world with their bravery. They went to prison, to concentration camps;[*] they fought and did not break; they cried out to British judges, 'We do not recognize your rule. The British must leave this place, the land of Israel!' Feinstein was of European origin – what's it called? An Ashkenazi. Moshe Barazani was a Sephardi from Iraq.[†]

Ashkenazim? Iraqi? Jews! Brothers! Warriors!

Can every actor hired by HaMa'arach stand here and utter blasphemy in vain? Sephardim are the best fighters in the IDF; they, along with Ariel Sharon, crossed the Suez Canal and moved over to the other side on the Yom Kippur War.[§] He commanded them, the best fighters in Israel! Yes! Blasphemy! And the audience cheered. And where was Mrs. Shoshana Arbeli Almozlino [an Iraqi Jew and member of the Labor Party who attended the rally in question], placed second on HaMa'arach's list? And where were the others? Why did they not leave the rally in protest? No one has hurt the dignity of an entire tribe of Israel as HaMa'arach did last night at this place.

I ask you, tomorrow, from morning till evening, take a phone and call your friends. Just tell them what Dudu Topaz said here. All the people of Israel must know of this, just one sentence: 'The Chach'chachim are at Metzudat Ze'ev.' And I say: I'm happy and proud that they are at Metzudat Ze'ev![158]

Even for a politician like Begin, whose talent as a public speaker used to clear the Knesset

hallways and cafeteria as the whole building gathered to watch him deliver addresses in the main

chamber, and whose political career was largely defined by famous and memorable speeches

---

[*] During the *Saison*, over one hundred members of the Irgun and the Lehi that were captured by the British were sent to concentration camps in Eritrea as punishment.

[†] The Israeli Right heavily mythologizes the story of Meir Feinstein, a Polish Irgunist, and Moshe Barazani, an Iraqi member of the Lehi. After the two were captured by the British and sentenced to death by hanging, they committed suicide with a hand-grenade smuggled to them in an orange inside their cell instead of allowing the British to exact the sentence. Their deaths became emblematic of both Jewish resistance to British colonial presence during the anti-British revolt, and a symbol of brotherhood between Jews from different ethnic groups in the Israeli Right.

[§] Then-IDF General Ariel Sharon's risky decision to have his troops cross behind Egyptian forces by doubling back to the Suez Canal enabled his forces to encircle the Egyptian Third Army. Sharon's successful gamble turned the tides of the Yom Kippur War in Israel's favor, and began the process of the war's de-escalation. Because of his daring strategy and tremendous success, Sharon was one of the few establishment figures whose reputation was not tarnished by the 1973 Yom Kippur War.

[158] Shilon, *Menachem Begin: A Life*, 353-354.

dating all the way back to his teenage years in Poland, this speech was a unique accomplishment of political skill worthy of a close reading.[159]

What is most striking about this speech in relation to the questions at the center of this thesis is how swiftly and effectively Begin demonstrated how to use memory – in this specific case, Mizrahi collective memory of shared mistreatment by the Israeli Left – as a momentous agent of sociopolitical change. Begin highlighted the shared experience of the Revisionist Zionist militia Irgun and its Mizrahi members, and addressed directly what I identified earlier as layered victimization by pointing out how Haganah commander Israeli Galili implied that the presence of Mizrahim in the Irgun should be a problem for the organization. In turn, Begin turned the logic of victimization by the Israeli Left on its head, refuting that Mizrahi membership in any way constituted a problem for the Irgun by highlighting Mizrahi Irgunists who were integral, high-ranking members in the group's operations, and invoking the mythology of Mizrahi *Olei Hagardom*. And in his closing remarks, Begin inverted the original negative connotation of Topaz's "the chach-chachkim are at Metzudat Ze'ev" by adding his own "And I am happy and proud that they are at Metzudat Ze'ev!": turning what from the Israeli Left read as memories of shared mistreatment into a new shared Mizrahi Israeli and Revisionist Zionist memory of pride. The speech was a masterclass in how to effectively transmute memories into sociopolitical currency, and, delivered just two days before votes for the tenth Knesset were cast, it also helped propel Likud to their final surge to victory.

When all the votes were tallied, Likud had received 718,941 votes to Labor Alignment's 708,536 votes – earning 48 seats to Labor's 47 – and giving Likud the victory by a margin of a single Knesset seat.[160] To this day it is the closest Israel has ever come to a two-party election,

---

[159] Gordis, *Menachem Begin: The Battle for Israel's Soul*, 21.
[160] Weitz, "Begin's Inconclusive Mandate," 8.

with the two parties earning a combined 95 seats out of 120 Knesset seats possible. But while in

a teleological sense the elections for the tenth Knesset in 1981 might feel like the closing chapter

for decades of shared mistreatment by the Israeli Left, after the election the use of the menace

invective actually became more common in the political content of the Israeli Left, amongst

journalists, and in the academic reasoning of what Shlomo Swirski called the "liberal-to-left

intelligentsia."[161]

For instance, the menace invective appeared from politicians of the Israeli Left in 1983,

when Labor MK Shulamit Aloni spoke before the Knesset after the murder of Peace Now

protestor Emil Grunzweig[*] and said

> The barbarous tribal forces are here, and they exist in the streets. Our prime minister
> inflamed them. We saw during the last elections how he succeeded in making a thinking
> public shed their individual responsibility and be driven like a flock with tom-toms. He
> spoke and they replied, 'Begin! Begin!' exactly like a roll of tom-toms in a savage tribe.
> We'll survive only if we return to civilized responsibility.[162]

And it re-appeared in the media in this excerpt from Amnon Dankner's book *Berman, Why Did*

You Do That to Me? in which Dankner sarcastically outlined his ideas to mend the gap between

Ashkenazi and Mizrahi Israelis, "We must build a bridge to the development towns, to bring the

population closer, so that these strong, black men, these animals, these monkeys, can come and

flood our lawns, and suck us dry, have intercourse with our wives and daughters and erase our

---

[161] Swirski, *Israel: The Oriental Majority*, 51.

[*] Peace Now is an Israeli activist group that advocates for a diplomatic solution to the Arab-Israeli and Israeli-Palestinian conflicts. The group was founded as a widespread call for diplomatic resolution in 1978 in response to the commencement of the Camp David talks between Israel and Egypt. Although Peace Now is not formally associated with the Israeli government, it is typically associated with the Israeli Left. Yona Avrushmi, a right-wing extremist counter protestor, murdered Peace Now protestor Emil Grunzweig on February 10, 1983 when he threw a hand grenade into a crowd of Peace Now protestors that had assembled to protest Israel's role in the Sabra and Shatila Massacre during the First Lebanon War.

[162] David K. Shipler "Peres Bids Begin to Discuss Israeli Violence," *The New York Times*, February 13, 1983, accessed April 30, 2018, https://www.nytimes.com/1983/02/13/world/peres-bids-begin-meet-to-discuss-israeli-violence.html.

faces, and have their Mimouna and Seharane[*] celebrations by the kibbutz dining room."[†][163] If

anything, the ugliness of the campaigning in 1981 and the even uglier content of its aftermath

only confirmed further that a sense of shared mistreatment by the Israeli Left – in both shared

victimization and the production of a shared menace – would remain an integral component of

the Mizrahi Israeli collective memory of their relationship to the Israeli Right.

<div align="center">Mizrahi Laborites</div>

There is one major discrepancy that must be addressed when exploring the narrative of

Mizrahi mistreatment by the Israeli Left: Mizrahi members of the Labor Zionist parties. In 1981,

the Labor Alignment actually ran more Mizrahi Israelis and at higher spots on their list than the

Likud party, and, while Mizrahi Israelis supported Likud in large numbers, support was certainly

not uniform.[164] To understand this apparent contradiction in the Mizrahi Israeli collective

memory of their relationship to the Israeli Right, I will provide a cursory overview of its main

elements: intra-Mizrahi rivalry between Iraqi Jews and Moroccan Jews, the perception of

Mizrahi Laborites as co-opted by the establishment, and the differences in Labor and Likud party

structures.

As I touched on in the "Historiographical Interventions and Theoretical Framework"

section of this thesis, Iraqi Jews and Moroccan Jews had very different experiences arriving in

Israel. Where a majority of Iraqi Jews arrived over the span of two years, Moroccan Jews arrived

---

* Mimouna is a Jewish feast holiday that falls the day after Passover that originated in North Africa in which Jews celebrate the recommencement of eating leaven bread with their non-Jewish neighbors in their Middle Eastern and North African countries of origin. Seharane is a nearly identical holiday with roots in ancient Jewish religious tradition, but is more commonly associated with Kurdish Jews. In the Israeli context, Mimouna has become a popular national holiday celebrated by millions of Israelis: Mizrahi and non-Mizrahi alike. Sub-textually, Israeli Mimouna celebrations – which have become unofficially mandatory for the Israeli President and the Israeli Prime Minister – are intrinsically linked to the cultural, social, and political position of Mizrahi Jews in Israel.

† Dankner became the Editor-in-Chief of *Ma'ariv* – the second most circulated newspaper in Israel – in 2002, *after* making these comments.

[163] Chetrit, *Intra-Jewish Conflict in Israel: White Jews, Black Jews*, 159.

[164] Weitz, "Begin's Inconclusive Mandate," 10; Shipler, "Sephardim are Transforming Israel's Political Map."

in a protracted period over the span of more than a decade.[165] Where the Iraqi Jewish community

remained largely intact, the Moroccan Jewish community fractured as its elites and affluent

consistently chose to emigrate to France instead of Israel.[166] And, while the Labor Zionist

establishment and Ashkenazim subjected all Mizrahi Israelis to racist and Orientalist treatment

and stereotyping, North Africans got the worst reputation of all Mizrahi arrivals while Iraqi Jews

were perceived to be more educated and high class than other Mizrahim.[167] Together, the Iraqi

and Moroccan Jewish populations composed 51% of the entire population of Mizrahi

immigration to Israel between 1948 and 1979 – with 34% from Morocco and 17% from Iraq

respectively.[168] That prominent Mizrahi Labor party politicians like Shlomo Hillel and Shoshana

Arbeli Almozlino were Iraqis and prominent Mizrahi Likud party politicians like David Levy

and Meir Sheetrit were Moroccans reveals much about how intra-Mizrahi differences impacted

the perception of both parties.[169] That Labor's most prominent Mizrahi politicians were Iraqi

alienated other Mizrahi Jews – especially North Africans – who did not share the more

privileged and expedient assimilation process attributed to Iraqi Jews. This reinforced the

perception that Labor's Mizrahim were token elevations that allowed the Labor Zionists the

appearance of satiating Mizrahi Jews without having to provide representation across the entirety

of the Mizrahi population.[170] Conversely, the fact that Likud's most prominent politicians in the

1970s and 1980s were Moroccan helped to bolster the Likud's image as the Israeli party that

provided a political home for all Mizrahi Israelis, especially the average Mizrahi who had been

---

[165] Shapira, *Israel: A History*, 199.
[166] Shamir and Arian, "The Ethnic Vote in Israel's 1981 Elections," 321.
[167] Shapira, *Israel: A History*, 201-202.
[168] Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, "Immigrants, By Period of Immigration, Country of Birth and Last Country of Residence," *CBS, Statistical Abstract of Israel, 2009*, Chart No. 4.4, 2009: 237-238.
[169] Swirski, *Israel: The Oriental Majority*, 49.
[170] Peretz and Smooha, "Israel's Tenth Knesset Elections," 513.

historically excluded by the Labor Zionist hegemony, and not for the most assimilated Mizrahi

elites.

For instance, Likud politicians like Levy – a former construction worker with a high-

school education and twelve children from development town Beth Shean who arrived to Israel

from Rabat, Morocco in 1957 – embodied a more genuine proximity to the average Mizrahi

experience than Labor's Mizrahi politicians, who these Mizrahi Likud-voters dismissed as out-

of-touch establishment shills appointed in symbolic overtures.[171] In the interview section of

Shlomo Swirski's *Israel: The Oriental Majority* former parliamentary aide Na'im Giladi tells a

story about former Minister of Police and Speaker of the Knesset Shlomo Hillel that perfectly

demonstrates the "Ashkenized" reputation of Labor's Mizrahi politicians,

> The minister was to appear [in Ramat Gan] on Saturday night, and invitations were sent
> to all the Iraqis in town, including the deputy mayor, who was also an Iraqi. How many
> of them do you think showed up? The room was packed – 600 persons – all of them
> Ashkenazim… There were only six Iraqis, among them yours truly. The guest of honor
> [Shlomo Hillel] asked 'Why didn't the Iraqis come?' And I replied, 'Don't you know
> why? You really have become an Ashkenazi. There is a musical program featuring
> [wildly popular Egyptian diva] Umm Kalthoum on television this evening. Even if
> 20,000 Shlomo Hillels were to come to town, they would be ignored.[172]

Likud's reputation as the authentic political home of Mizrahi Israelis also derived from

major changes it made in the organization of its internal party structure that inverted the typical

political structure of Labor Zionist parties. In Labor Zionist parties, political appointments were

made from the top down: producing a sort of neo-colonial system in which the Labor politicians

holding elected offices in Mizrahi neighborhoods and development towns rarely actually resided

in or came from those neighborhoods or towns.[173] More often they lived in more affluent

---

[171] Avi Shilon, "David Levy, Likud Stalwart, Should Run for Israeli President," *Ha'aretz*, February 26, 2014, accessed April 30, 2018, https://www.haaretz.com/opinion/.premium-david-levy-for-israeli-president-1.5326447; Peretz and Smooha, "Israel's Tenth Knesset Elections," 513.

[172] Swirski, *Israel: The Oriental Majority*, 118.

[173] Ibid, 140.

Ashkenazi neighborhoods, towns, or cities and used their appointments in Mizrahi populated

neighborhoods and development towns as necessary stepping stones in their way up the party

ladder.[174]

In 1973, Herut politician and future prime minister Yitzhak Shamir took control of the

Herut Central Committee and started what Uri Cohen and Nissim Leon identified as "the quiet

revolution" in Israel: a massive reorganizing of the party's structure that rebuilt the Herut party

from the ground up by replacing the traditional top-down appointments committee with a

bottom-up liberal-meritocratic model that gave more power to local leadership and local

governments.[175] Under Shamir's adjustments, Mizrahi Israelis who had previously been alienated

by the impenetrability of the Labor Zionist bureaucracy now stood an actual chance to run for

and win elections in the towns and neighborhoods where they lived. As one Mizrahi Herutnik

recalled, "In Herut everything is open… You can stand for any office. There is no appointments

committee. If you want to compete, you can. The opportunities are wide open. Everyone has the

same chance. A professor at Tel Aviv University and a garbage collector are equal."[176] This

change produced a tangible sense of actual representation in a major government party and the

possibility for real upward political mobility.

But while all three of these factors illuminate social and political histories that help to

explain why Mizrahi Laborites did not fracture the Mizrahi Israeli memory of shared

mistreatment by the Israeli Left, the best answer as to why they had little effect lies in the nature

of collective memory itself. Collective memory is not derived from objective and nuanced

historical reality, but instead from a highly selective reading of the historical record that

---

[174] Ibid.
[175] Cohen and Leon, "The Mahapach and Yitzhak Shamir's Quiet Revolution," 19.
[176] Zuckerman, Shamir, and Herzog, "The Political Bases of Activism in the Israeli Labor Party and Herut," 110.

highlights certain historical moments while diminishing or omitting others based on the narrative needs of the community that constructs the memory.[177] The existence of Mizrahi members of the Israeli Left both in the historical and current context has little bearing on the function of the Mizrahi Israeli collective memory of their partnership with Israeli Right. Within the Mizrahi Israeli memory of their relationship to the Israeli Right, the Israeli Right functions as the sole Israeli political space that provides an authentically representative political home for all echelons of Mizrahi Israelis unblemished by any sort of capitulation or indulgence to the Israeli Left. As such, the existence of Mizrahi members of the Labor Party or affiliated with the Israeli Left can be effectively dismissed as inauthentic in relation to the Israeli Right for their implicit acceptance of decades of mistreatment at the hands of the Labor Zionist establishment. Since the nature of memory allows for Mizrahi Laborites to be efficiently sidelined as less than legitimate or even as traitors to the Mizrahi Israeli community, they do not serve as a strong enough disruption to impede the narrative of Mizrahi Israeli collective memory of their relationship to the Israeli Right.

2. "We Have Not Forgotten These Our Brethren": Recollections of the Jewish Diaspora

Having defined shared mistreatment by the Israeli Left as one of the core emotional-aesthetic poles of Mizrahi Israelis' collective memory of their relationship to the Israeli Right, I now move to an exploration of the three-remaining emotional-aesthetic poles. These three remaining poles and sections move away from the components of the Mizrahi collective memory largely defined by shared antagonism with the Israeli Left in favor of examining the elements that drew Mizrahi Israelis and the Israeli Right together to forge a shared political relationship. I

---

[177] Zerubavel, "The Death of Memory and the Memory of Death," 73.

shift now to discern what ideologies and conceptualizations Mizrahi Israelis and Revisionist

Zionists agreed upon that made Begin's Israeli Right an organic political home for Mizrahim: the

first of which is a warm understanding of the Jewish Diaspora.

<p align="center">*Labor Zionists' View on Diaspora and Its Impact on Mizrahi Israelis*</p>

Before explaining the warm understanding of the Jewish Diaspora as an integral period

and locale of Jewish history to be respected and upheld shared between Mizrahi Israelis and the

Israeli Right, I must first establish how the Labor Zionist hegemony that a majority of Mizrahi

Israelis encountered upon their arrival to the state of Israel regarded the Jewish Diaspora. Within

Labor Zionism, the Jewish Diaspora is traditionally positioned as the embodiment of the

"degeneration" of a unified Jewish culture and collective Jewish will brought on by the collapse

of Jewish sovereignty.[178] As such, Labor Zionists imagined the Diaspora as a sort of meta-

category that represented the totality of the negative experiences and traits derived from the

absence of Jewish statehood – including humiliation, timidity, lack of agency, and physical

weakness – that summarized everything that Labor Zionists actively sought to negate.[179]

Labor Zionists sought to reverse the consequences of the Diaspora by establishing a

sovereign Jewish state in the land where Jewish sovereignty began, and which would restore

what they imagined to be a unified Jewish culture, a singular Jewish identity, and a collective

Jewish will.[180] The form in which all of this was to be accomplished would be the establishment

of a socialist Jewish state that emphasized agrarian and physical labor and organized itself

around collective spatial and political arrangements like the kibbutz and a strong centralized

government. The goals of Labor Zionism were lofty and demanding: attempting to make a

---

[178] Yanai, "The Citizen as Pioneer," 147-148.
[179] Bashkin, *The Impossible Exodus*, 4.
[180] Yanai, "The Citizen as Pioneer," 137.

collective whole out of what it acknowledged were vastly fragmentary parts by espousing a rigorous program of total physical, linguistic, geographic and political transformation. And, for Mizrahi immigrants to a Labor Zionist dominated Israel that did not share a wholesale commitment to these ambitious goals, it posed an insurmountable barrier to successful integration.

Whether these Mizrahi arrivals immigrating to the hegemonically Labor Zionist Israel during the Great Aliyah should or should not be considered refugees is the subject of fierce ongoing debate.[*] For instance, Iraqi Jews who immigrated to Israel following the establishment of a March 1950 Iraqi denaturalization law – which temporarily permitted Iraqi Jews to emigrate under the stipulation that Iraqi Jews renounce their Iraqi citizenship, and, after another law passed in March 1951, that they forfeit their assets to the Iraqi state – technically did so of their own volition.[181] But, factoring in the coercive nature of the law, the escalating threat of popular violence against Iraqi Jews, and the increasing anti-Semitism stemming from anti-Zionism in the Iraqi government, Iraqi Jews also theoretically meet the standards of refugee status under the qualification that electing to remain in Iraq may have been fundamentally unsafe or unviable.[182] However, regardless of whether or not Mizrahi Israelis should be qualified as refugees, it can be easily accepted that a majority of Mizrahi arrivals to Israel did not immigrate to Israel because of

---

* Whether Mizrahi Israelis should be qualified as refugees – and, if they are, whether or not they are therefore entitled to reparations from their respective pre-Israeli points of origin – plays an interesting role in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In his 2016 book *The Arab Jews*, Yehouda Shenhav argues that Israeli pursuit of reparations for Mizrahim would be a cynical play to diminish Israel's own potential need to pay reparations to Palestinians displaced by the 1948 War of Independence (132). However, Shenhav's opinion is heterodox in relation to the position of both a majority of Mizrahi Israelis and the official state position of the Israeli government, and discussions for reparations for Mizrahi Israelis remain ongoing. Most recently, in January 2019, Minister of Social Equality Gila Gamliel – a Likud member with Yemenite and Libyan heritage – hinted that Israel may sue Tunisia, Libya, Morocco, Iraq, Syria, Egypt, and Iran for a combined total of $250 billion US dollars as a pre-requisite of any conclusive diplomatic settlement between Israel, Palestine, and the Arab world.

[181] Shenhav, *The Arab Jews*, 117.
[182] Stillman, *The Jews of Arab Lands in Modern Times*, 11.

a devotion to the ideals of Labor Zionism. The majority of the Mizrahi Jews who arrived to Israel during the Great Aliyah did so primarily for a combination of socioeconomic or political reasons – such as attempting to escape de facto economic boycotts on Jewish businesses or fleeing the threat of physical mob violence – as the Palestinian Question became more and more central to Arab nationalism, as pre-existing European colonial systems collapsed, or as the product of periods of increased tension correlating to any one of Israel's five wars with various Arab states.[183]

And while Mizrahi immigrants to Israel shared Labor Zionists' connection to and fascination with the land of Israel itself, their interest is best described as derived from a national-religious spectrum. Within this national-religious conceptualization, the significance of the land of Israel – especially Jerusalem – comes from an amalgamation of both a religious understanding of Jewish messianic redemption and from its continuous historic importance in Jewish culture, ceremonies, and society: not from the Labor Zionist desire to physically connect to and work the land.[184] As previously established, many Mizrahi immigrants found the agrarian work-based Labor Zionist understanding of connection to the land to be demeaning, humiliating, and traditionally reserved for the lowest rungs of society across the Middle East and North Africa.[185] Evidence of the lack of popularity of Labor Zionism amongst Mizrahi immigrants and the frustration that the imposition of Labor Zionist ideology produced in Mizrahi arrivals to Israel is apparent in this song that was popular amongst Iraqi-Jewish arrivals to Israel in the 1950s:

> What did you do Ben-Gurion?
> You smuggled all of us.
> Because of the past we waived our citizenship and came to Israel

---

[183] Ibid, 147; 169.
[184] Shama and Iris, *Immigration Without Integration*, 43.
[185] Bashkin, *The Impossible Exodus*, 46.

> Would that we had a donkey and hadn't arrived yet.
> Woe, what a black hour it was.
> To hell with the plane that brought us here.[186]

Since Mizrahi arrivals to Israel did not share the dedication to Labor Zionism that the culture of the state demanded, the imposition of Labor Zionism's stringent ideology was traumatic and not revolutionary, destructive instead of transformative. Nowhere is this more evident than in the deviation on views of the Jewish Diaspora.

Labor Zionists applied their view of Diaspora, outlined at the beginning of this section, to new Mizrahi immigrants: seeking to integrate them into their conceptualization of a collective Israeli whole. Just as with their understanding of the Ashkenazi Diaspora as a time of defect, the Labor Zionist controlled state saw the diversity in the numerous distinct groups of Mizrahi arrivals during the Great Aliyah as something to be eradicated.[187] But for Mizrahi immigrants who did not share this perspective, the state's desire to remove what they considered to be the fundamentals of their cultures produced dissonance between Labor Zionists and Mizrahim that compounded with the sense of victimization outlined in the previous section.

Two interviews that initially appeared in Swirski's *Israel: The Oriental Majority* in 1989 show this sentiment. The first, from a Mizrahi man named Bezalel, demonstrated the jarring initial clash in the Mizrahi encounter with Labor Zionists' conceptualization of Diaspora. He recounted: "When immigrants came from North Africa, Yemen, and Iraq, in the fifties, what were they told? 'The fact that the baggage you brought from abroad is worthless, your folklore is worthless, everything is worthless."[188] The second, an interview with a Moroccan playwright

---

186 Smith, "The Second Israel," 153.
187 Shenhav, *The Arab Jews*, 31.
188 Swirski, *Israel: The Oriental Majority*, 70.

named Haim, articulated the emotional-psychological impact this deviation over Diaspora

produced in the Mizrahi Israeli community:

> A rabbi, a 'wise man' – all those things are worthless, marginal, even contemptible; and all virtues connected to them are of little esteem: your modesty is considered timorousness, your decency becomes weakness, your humility is viewed as a defect, lowering of the eyes, a pathology. Suddenly your muscles go slack! You are Samson transformed into a cockroach![189]

Both statements illustrate the psychological toll deviating views on the Diaspora between

Mizrahim and Labor Zionists produced in the Mizrahi Israeli community. Having established

that the Labor Zionists adopted a hostile sense toward the Jewish Diaspora that they applied to

new Mizrahi immigrants to Israel during the Great Aliyah, which, in turn became a core root of

the tension between the Labor Zionist state and Mizrahi Israelis and a major factor in their sense

of victimization, I turn now to explore a warm understanding of the Jewish Diaspora on the

Israeli Right.

Menachem Begin of the Old World

The fundamentally different conceptualization of the Jewish Diaspora on the Israeli Right

that ultimately connected with and motivated Mizrahi Israelis derived heavily from the

worldview of one man: Menachem Begin. Having led the Revisionist Zionist parties for the near

entirety of their time in opposition – with just one brief interlude in 1951 – the public image and

content of the Israeli Right in Begin's time was inexorably linked to his own public image and

ideology as an individual leader.[190] The centrality of Begin as a defining character and the way in

which his real and perceived connection to the Diaspora influenced both his reception by the

public and his political decisions are essential to discerning how a warm understanding of the

---

[189] Ibid, 141.
[190] Shilon, *Menachem Begin: A Life*, 163.

Jewish Diaspora figures into the Mizrahi Israeli collective memory of their relationship to the

Israeli Right.

The degree to which Begin embodied the archetypal Ashkenazi Diaspora Jew is perhaps

best explained by a joke I heard in Israel in the summer of 2018. According to the joke, a man

who knows nothing about Ashkenazi Jews decides to consult the encyclopedia to learn more, but

when he reaches the spot where there should be a listing for "Ashkenazi" he finds no text, no

history, no facts, and no figures – just a full-page picture of Menachem Begin. With his slight

frame, heavy Yiddish accent and lifelong chronic illnesses that included diabetes and multiple

heart attacks, Begin the obsessively formal bourgeois Polish lawyer was practically an

Ashkenazi Diaspora stereotype come to life.[191] His instantly recognizable glasses, with their

black frames so thick that they always cast shadows on his cheeks and lenses so strong that they

magnified his eyes to cartoonish proportions, were so synonymous with the nerdiness and

physical weakness often negatively attributed to Ashkenazi Jews that they achieved the ultimate

pop-culture canonization: a joke on *The Simpsons*. In the season five episode "The Last

Temptation of Homer," Marge takes Bart to an optometrist to correct a vision impediment that

she hopes will improve his eternally poor performance in the fourth grade. When the optometrist

prescribes Bart a pair of huge black glasses that Bart complains will get him bullied mercilessly,

the optometrist remarks "Menachem Begin wore a pair just like 'em!"[192] For the rest of the

episode, the newly uncool Bart gets picked on relentlessly after his transformation from the laid-

back class clown into a nerdy pariah.

---

[191] Shilon, *Menachem Begin: A Life*, 215 and 38; Amos Perlmutter, *The Life and Times of Menachem Begin* (Garden City, New Jersey: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1987), 253.
[192] *The Simpsons*, "The Last Temptation of Homer," directed by Carlos Baeza, written by Frank Mula, December 9, 1993, (Los Angeles: Fox Broadcasting Network, 1993), 05:00.

In the Israeli context, the potency of Begin's diasporic aura was a challenge to the Labor Zionist ideal of negating the Jewish Diaspora and replacing it with a new state of Israel. Begin's very presence in Israel and in the world of Israeli politics disrupted the sense of reinvigorating collective transformation that the Labor Zionists saw themselves as trying to cultivate by acting as a physical manifestation of the Diaspora Jew in the Israeli sphere. Begin biographer Amos Perlmutter – himself born in Bialystok, Poland – described this intervention,

> I heard Begin give his maiden speech in the Knesset [in 1948] and I was struck by the Polish accent and the meticulous Hebrew, which struck a familiar chord in me. I realized Begin reminded me very much of my old grammar school Hebrew teacher. So close was the resemblance, and so strong was the feeling that I almost expected Begin to point his finger at me and say "Perlmutter, you, of course, did not memorize Bialik by heart."[193]

In Perlmutter's memory, he describes Begin as almost like a time traveler, someone whose sense of being of the Diaspora was so strong that it ruptured the carefully crafted Israeliness of the Knesset. Perlmutter elaborated on the effects that Begin's diasporic persona produced amongst his Labor Zionist rivals later on in his biography. He wrote, "Begin was someone to be mocked, a social throw-back, an old world, courtly Jew wearing ill-fitting clothes, speaking with a strong accent."[194] It is not surprising, then, that amongst the Israeli Left and his other political detractors that Begin's association with the Diaspora became a primary mode through which his opponents sought to insult him.

In the Israeli press, popular newspapers like *Yedioth Ahronoth*, *Ha'aretz*, and *Ma'ariv* ran pieces that printed Begin's name as "Beigin": adding an extra "I" to make his name sound more Yiddish, thereby distancing him from his identity as an Israeli by emphasizing he was of the so-called "old world" of Jewish Europe.[195] The American press reproduced this strategy,

---

[193] Perlmutter, *The Life and Times of Menachem Begin*, 253.
[194] Ibid, 393.
[195] Shilon, *Menachem Begin: A Life*, 150.

occasionally also purposefully misspelling his name "Beigin" while additionally being more

overt in their efforts to distance Begin from Israeliness and emphasize him as a diasporic

Ashkenazi Jew.[196] A 1978 *Time* magazine profile of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat that came

out during the Camp David negotiations identified Begin as a "inverted sabra," very clearly

making the active effort to remove him from the Labor Zionist version of what being an Israeli

meant.[197] A much more infamous instance also appeared in *Time* magazine in a 1977 profile of

Begin after his election titled "Kind…Honest… Dangerous" that began, "Begin (it rhymes with

Fagin)," alluding to the villain in the Charles Dicken's novel *Oliver Twist* and subsequently

making no reference to Fagin again in the rest of the profile.[198] This second instance is doubly

interesting in that it tied Begin to the Diaspora through comparing him to Fagin: a classic

example of the archetypal European anti-Semitic vision of the Jew who over the course of the

novel is driven by his relentless greed and defined by his cowardice. Through this comparison,

the author of the *Time* piece seemingly internalized the Labor Zionist view of Diaspora as

something to be judged negatively as the root of all the deficiencies of the Jewish people.

  Negatively connotated descriptions of Begin as diasporic also appeared outside of the

press. During the 1977 election season voices in the Labor Alignment party derided Begin as

"Hanavi Menachem (In Hebrew literally, Menachem the Prophet) … out of step with the spirit of

the time and the people… floating on a cloud that's still hanging pathetically over Poland."[199]

And while this type of invective is perhaps expected from the Israeli Left, Begin's proximity to

the Diaspora was also used as an insult against him from within his own party. Immediately after

---

[196] Scott D. Johnson, "The Politics of the Right: The Herut Movement," *Social Science* 40, No. 2 (April 1965): 107.

[197] "Man of the Year: Anwar Sadat. Architect of a New Middle East," *Time*, January 2, 1978, accessed February 26, 2019, http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,915853,00.html.

[198] "The World: Kind…Honest…Dangerous," *Time*, May 30, 1977, accessed February 26, 2019, http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,914950,00.html.

[199] Sarah Honig, "Menachem Begin – the Republican Monarch," *The Jerusalem Post*, March 13, 1992, accessed May 5, 2018, ProQuest.

the *Altalena* Affair, Begin delivered what came to be known as the "crying speech" on the radio where he wept openly about the events and the loss of life, future Herut MK and Revisionist Zionist Shmuel Katz chastised Begin's show of emotion, calling him a "Yiddishe mamme."[*200] In fact, Begin's association with the Diaspora was one of the main roots of dissention from within his own political party about his ability to lead the Revisionist Zionists. After the conclusion of the Jewish underground following the dissolution of the British Mandate in Palestine, Begin's Revisionist Zionist detractors like Hillel Kook, Eri Jabotinsky, and Shmuel Tamir moved to replace Begin as leader of the opposition over what they considered to be his diasporic and weak capitulation to Labor Zionist hegemony and willingness to betray Vladimir Jabotinsky's original Revisionist principles.[201]

But for Begin himself, proximity and closeness to the Jewish Diaspora was not a source of weakness or shame, but rather a source of strength and an exaltation of what Begin perceived to be an integral part of Jewish history from which there was no need to deracinate. Begin's specific worldview was peculiar amongst his Zionist contemporaries; for him, all conceivable facets of Jewish life were fused and refracted through a widely encompassing national-liberalist paradigm.[202] Religious and secular life, all time periods of Jewish history ranging from the Bible to the Diaspora to Zionism, and Jewish cultures from every geographic points of origin were all equal components of a much bigger umbrella of what Begin conceived that it meant to be a Jew. There was no need to separate Israel and Diaspora into a binary as the Labor Zionists had done.

---

* American Jews Jack Yellen and Lew Pollack immortalized the stereotype of the Yiddishe Mamme in their popular English-Yiddish vaudeville song "My Yiddishe Momme" written in the early 1920s. The song, made famous by Ziegfeld Follies performer Sophie Tucker, is the bitter and melancholy diatribe of an Ashkenazi Jewish mother who sorrowfully recounts her nostalgia for the "Old World" of Jewish Europe and her unhappiness with her new life in Jewish America.

[200] Gordis, *Menachem Begin: The Battle for Israel's Soul*, 96.
[201] Weitz, "The Road to 'Upheaval,'" 57.
[202] Shilon, *Menachem Begin: A Life*, 115.

After all, the Diaspora both organically led to the rise of Zionism and the creation of the state of Israel, and was the site of innumerable contributions to Jewish life and Jewish knowledge. Begin's adherence to this worldview was obvious in the wide breadth of Jewish memories he drew on throughout his career.

At Camp David in 1978, when American President Jimmy Carter pressed Begin on why he refused any potential partition of Jerusalem, Begin explained his position not through a Biblical story, but through a Talmudic story about the eleventh century Rabbi Amnon of Mainz in which Rabbi Amnon begs the Catholic Archbishop of Mainz to cut out his tongue for even considering converting to Christianity.[203] And, after his election in 1977, Begin frequently told one of his favorite jokes about his own long-running electoral failures, "They say that we hired an old Jew to call out every morning, 'Begin to power! Begin to power!' and when they asked why he had chosen this job, he responded that it was a job for life!"[204] This joke is a permutation of a popular Yiddish joke about the town beggar whose job it is to sit at the town's entrance and watch the road so that if the Messiah comes, he can warn the town so they will be adequately prepared. When travelers to the town ask him why he would want such a menial and boring job, the beggar replies, "It's true, the pay is low – but the work is consistent!" Both of these instances clearly demonstrate that not only was Begin's understanding of Jewish life not divorced from the Diaspora as was typical of Labor Zionism, but that it fundamentally relied on Diaspora as an integral source of Jewish memories, motivations, and rationales.

Begin's connection to the Diaspora also extended beyond the memories that he invoked directly to his political positions. During the era of the Labor Zionist hegemony in both the pre-

---

[203] Gordis, *Menachem Begin: The Battle for Israel's Soul*, 173.
[204] Arye Naor *Begin in Power: A Personal Testimony* (Israel: Yedioth Ahronoth, 1993), 27 in Shilon, *Menachem Begin: A Life*, 191.

state and early post-state periods, the Labor Zionist establishment pressured Israelis to Hebraize

their names as a conscious act of rejecting their old Diasporic, non-Israeli identities.[205]

Hebraization was an unofficial mandate for the whole of Israeli society – including for Mizrahim

– but especially for politicians and government officials. David Grün renamed himself David

Ben-Gurion (in Hebrew meaning literally "David son of the lion"), Golda Meyerson became

Golda Meir, and Symon Perski became Shimon Peres.[206] But Menachem Begin refused to

Hebraize his name, and remained simply Menachem Begin for the entirety of his life. In 1983,

near the end of his career, Begin introduced himself as "Menachem Ben Ze'ev Dov ve-Chasia

Begin" (in Yiddish, "Menachem, son of Ze'ev Dov and Chasia Begin") – a thoroughly diasporic,

old world way for an Ashkenazi Jew to give their name by identifying themselves in relation to

their parents – for his testimony before the Kahan Commission investigating his government's

complicity in the Sabra and Shatila Massacre during the First Lebanon War.[207] Begin's refusal to

Hebraize, especially his assertion of his Yiddish naming, was very much a deliberate decision to

refuse to deracinate himself from his pre-Israeli Jewish past, and a statement about the central

role Begin believed the Jewish Diaspora should play in steering the Israeli future.

The most notable single instance of the Diaspora's centrality to Begin's politics was in

his reaction to the debate on whether or not Israel should accept Holocaust reparations from

West Germany in 1952.[208] The very question of whether or not Israel should accept the money

from West Germany placed the Israeli future in conflict with the Jewish Diaspora past: Israel

desperately needed money to build its infrastructure, but the moral implications of accepting

what many Jews considered to be blood money represented a society-wide reckoning for the

---

[205] Gordis, *Menachem Begin: The Battle for Israel's Soul*, xiv.
[206] Ibid.
[207] Ibid.
[208] Gordis, *Menachem Begin: The Battle for Israel's Soul*, 103.

Israeli public.[209] Begin very clearly sided with the Jewish past; as a refugee from the Holocaust himself, the debate on reparations brought him out of a very brief retirement from politics in 1951 and placed him center stage as the main political voice vehemently opposing what he conceived of as high treason to the entire Jewish people.[210] In response to the proposed reparations, Begin delivered a now famous speech at Zion Square in Jerusalem on January 7, 1952 that featured him at his most passionate, and also at his most demagogic.[211]

Before a crowd of fifteen thousand, Begin proclaimed "How will be look when our disgrace is exposed, as we turn to our father's murderers to receive money for their spilled blood?"[212] As the crowd became increasingly volatile throughout his speech, Begin made no qualms about fanning the already highly emotional atmosphere of the rally.[213] When a clash between protestors and police broke out – with protestors throwing stones and police dispersing tear gas which incensed protestors who immediately drew a connection between the Israeli police's use of gas and the death camps of the Holocaust – Begin led the crowd to the Knesset where protestors stoned the building and attempted to break inside.[214] For his role in inciting the violence, he was banned from the Knesset for three months.[215] And while this example is the most dramatic way in which the Diaspora informed Begin's political actions, it very clearly indicates the intensity with which Begin regarded the Diaspora as a primary motivator of his politics.

---

[209] Ibid, 102.
[210] Ibid, 102-103.
[211] Shilon, *Menachem Begin: A Life*, 169.
[212] Ibid.
[213] Ibid, 168-170.
[214] Ibid, 170.
[215] Ibid, 173.

During his premiership, Begin also venerated the Mizrahi Diaspora specifically in a 1979, telecast delivered directly to the Jews of Syria. [216] Begin said to these Syrian Jews, who were at the time facing a dictate from Syrian President Hafez Al-Assad that gently loosened the previously near total travel restrictions on Syrian Jews by allowing them to emigrate out of Syria, provided that they go anywhere other than Israel, "I can tell you, my friends, that we have not forgotten these our brethren, some four thousand souls of an ancient Jewish community which has made prodigious contribution to Jewish knowledge and wisdom over the course of hundreds of generations and thousands of years."[217] That Begin would specifically celebrate the contributions of the Mizrahi Diaspora plays a large role in understanding how Begin's Israeli Right behaved as a natural organic political home for Mizrahi Israelis. As established earlier in this section, the Labor Zionist establishment derided Mizrahi immigrants' attachment to their memories and traits of the Diaspora that Mizrahim brought with them to Israel and sought to keep as new Israelis in accordance with Labor Zionists' overall desire to negate the Diaspora entirely. But, within Begin's paradigm there was ample space for Mizrahi Israelis to retain their warm memories and closeness to the Diaspora while simultaneously being accepted as fully a part of the state of Israel.

Erez Bitton as the Mizrahi Perspective on Diaspora

To close out this section on how a warm understanding of the Jewish Diaspora forms one of the four main poles of Mizrahi Israelis' collective memory of their relationship to the Israeli Right, I will turn to a poem from the unofficial poet laureate of the Mizrahi Israeli community, Erez Bitton, to show how Menachem Begin and Mizrahi Israelis viewed the Diaspora through a

---

[216] "Telecast to the Nation" May 1, 1979, Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs Digital Archives in Gordis, *Menachem Begin: The Battle For Israel's Soul*, 146.
[217] Ibid.

similar lens. Bitton's poem "Zohra El Fassia," which first appeared in his 1976 collection *A Moroccan Offering* and is based on the real-life famous North African diva of the same name, deals thematically with Mizrahi Israelis' desire to connect to their Diaspora roots as well as the jolt Mizrahi Israelis felt as a consequence of the Labor Zionist establishment's intervention in their Jewish culture and history. Using this poem as a capstone, I confirm that Mizrahi Israelis and Menachem Begin's Israeli Right both viewed the Jewish Diaspora as integral and not to be repressed, and that this shared perspective forms a major component of why Mizrahi Israelis came to identify with the Israeli Right as their political home.

Bitton is a Moroccan Jew who was born in Oran, Algeria in 1942 and immigrated to Israel in 1948 where his family settled in Lod: one of the three cities that makes up the colloquially known "North African Triangle" along with Ashdod and Beersheva.[218] At age 10, Bitton picked up an unexploded hand grenade while playing nearby his house that he accidentally triggered; the explosion cost him his eyesight and his left arm.[219] Like most Mizrahi Israelis, Bitton personally experienced the victimization from the Israeli Left outlined in the previous section of this thesis, including the rejection of his Moroccan Jewish culture which the Labor Zionist establishment derided doubly from both the racist and Orientalist perspective as well as from the perspective that it was Diasporic and should thus be negated. Bitton later recalled this in an interview with Kenneth Brown,

> I thought there was nothing to learn from Morocco, that whatever came from there was bad, primitive, useless, and that whatever came from the Ashkenazim is good, progress, beautiful… [but] when I came home I spoke Arabic and ate Moroccan food. I thought everything from home was bad, primitive. But inside myself I loved the things of home.[220]

---

[218] Kenneth Brown, "'Sometimes I Have a Feeling of Foreignness': A Conversation with Erez Bitton," *MERIP Reports*, No. 92, Israel's Uncertain Future (November-December 1980): 25; Brown, "Iron and a King," 10.
[219] Brown, "'Sometimes I Have a Feeling of Foreignness,'" 25.
[220] Ibid, 26.

In this interview, Bitton touches on the fact that even though the overwhelmingly Labor Zionist culture in Israel at the time of his youth pressured him to forget about his Moroccan past, he clung to his memories formed in the Diaspora and had no wish to negate them.

Bitton applied this mindset directly to his poetry, which made him an anomaly amongst other Israeli poets of his time. As Israeli scholar Eli Kirsch – who wrote the preface for the first English language collection of Bitton's poems, *You Who Cross My Path* – explained, "the mere fact of [Bitton's] wishing to recall his non-Israeli past was alien and menacing, as it touched upon the Diaspora with a great sense of commitment and longing, the same Jewish past that had to be negated."[221] Bitton's desire to retain his Diasporic past, and his effective translation of that desire into his body of work, demonstrates that his understanding, and the Mizrahi Israeli understanding by extension, resembles the conceptualization of the Diaspora espoused by Menachem Begin. This is clearly evident in Bitton's poem "Zohra El Fassia,"

> Zohra El Fassia
> a singer at the court of King Muhammad the Fifth in Rabat, Morocco.
> it is said that when she sang
> soldiers drew their knives
> to push through the crowds
> and touch the hem of her dress
> kiss her fingertips
> express their thanks with a rial coin.
> Zohra El Fassia.
> These days she can be found in Ashkelon,
> In the poor section of Atikot C,
> near the welfare office,
> the odor of leftover sardine tins
> on a wobbly three-legged table,
> splendid kingly rugs stacked on a Jewish Agency bed,
> and she, clad in a fading housecoat,
> lingers for hours before the mirror
> wearing cheap makeup
> and when she says: "Muhammad the Fifth, apple of our eyes"
> it takes a moment before you understand.

---

[221] Eli Kirsch, introduction to *You Who Cross My Path*, translated by Tzipi Keller (Rochester, New York: BOA Editions, Ltd., 2015), 13.

Zohra El Fassia has a husky voice,
a pure heart, and eyes
awash with love.
Zohra El Fassia.[222]

Bitton begins the poem with a honeyed recollection of Zohra El Fassia's life in Morocco

that imagines the Diasporic setting not as negative or the site of depravity, weakness, or

humiliation, but positively, as a time of cultural richness and success. He then moves from the

romanticized Diaspora to the dim reality of the Mizrahi experience in Israel; making direct

allusions to déclassement in drawing the distinction between Zohra El Fassia's success as a

singer in North Africa and the poverty of her life in Israel, the peripheral location of Mizrahi

Israelis in the site of Ashkelon which, in its modern incarnation, began as Migdal Gad *ma'abara*,

and in Mizrahi Israeli contact with the Labor Zionist establishment in mentioning the Jewish

Agency.[223] But, Bitton finishes the poem by asserting his desire to remember the Diaspora. He

represents Zohra El Fassia's yearning for her Moroccan past not as an outdated, unacceptable

mode of thinking to be disposed of or diminished, but with warmth, drawing attention to her

loving aura and implicitly arguing that her closeness to the Diaspora is something to be upheld,

not repressed.

Bitton's paradigm, used here as a representative example for the Mizrahi Israeli

paradigm, very closely aligns with Menachem Begin's paradigm. Both share the understanding

that the Jewish Diaspora should not be ancillary to the lives of Israelis, but that it should be

prominent and its memories and values integrated into Israeli life and memory. Reading both in

tandem reveals that both shared a similar conceptualization of Jewish Diaspora, and confirms

---

[222] Erez Bitton, "Zohra El Fassia," *You Who Cross My Path*, translated by Tzipi Keller (Rochester, New York: BOA Editions, Ltd., 2015), 170.
[223] Roby, *The Mizrahi Era of Rebellion*, 43.

that this shared understanding comprises a core emotional pole of the Mizrahi Israeli collective memory of their relationship to the Israeli Right.

3. "My Parents Can Stand Up Straight": The Israeli Right and Mizrahi Israeli Pride

Mizrahi Israelis' and Revisionist Zionists' shared central focus on the restoration of Jewish pride is, like a warm conceptualization of the Jewish Diaspora, a major emotional-aesthetic pole of Mizrahi Israelis' collective memory of their relationship to the Israeli Right. This section explores how a focus on the restoration and cultivation of Jewish pride originated in Revisionist Zionism, and how this focus manifested in the Irgun's actions during the anti-British revolt of the 1940s. After establishing how the Revisionist Zionists' emphasis on pride influenced their actions during the anti-British revolt, I provide an examination of how this same concept of pride – this time applied specifically to Mizrahi Israelis – influenced the form of the Likud housing endeavor Project Urban Renewal in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Then, I turn to focus on how the restoration of lost pride became a primary motivator for Mizrahi Israeli attraction to Revisionist Zionism as a political home. Finally, I explain how in Mizrahi Israelis' collective memory, their understanding of their own pride became intrinsically linked to the success of the Israeli Right. I argue that this last component – that Mizrahi Israelis' sense of restoration of pride is intrinsically linked to Likud's victory in 1977 and beyond – may be the single most significant factor in understanding why Mizrahi Israelis continue to vote for the Israeli Right to this day.

Hadar: Pride in Revisionist Zionism

As is typical of nearly all nationalist movements, Revisionist Zionism places the restoration of a lost sense of pride and self-determination in a central position in its ideology.

Vladimir "Ze'ev" Jabotinsky provided the framework for the specific notion of Jewish pride that

Revisionist Zionism espouses in his 1934 essay "The Idea of Betar," which outlined the

ideological aims for Betar: the first physical incarnation of Revisionist Zionism.[224] Jabotinsky

wrote,

> Every man must be a lord unto himself, the Jew especially… We Jews are the most
> "aristocratic" people on earth… Behind every one of us stand seventy generations of
> ancestors who could read and write, and who spoke about and inquired into God and his
> history, peoples and kingdoms, ideas of justice and integrity, humanity and its future.
> Every Jew is in this sense a "prince."[225]

Jabotinsky summarized this notion of Jewish pride in what he called "*hadar*" – a Hebrew phrase

that has no exact English correlation but means a mix of majesty, pride, honor, and dignity. [226]

Hadar, in turn, became the defining ideal to which every Revisionist Zionist was meant to

aspire.[227]

It was with this idea of *hadar* in mind that Menachem Begin planned and organized the

Irgun's actions during the anti-British revolt of the 1940s. Begin's goal for the organization was,

in his own words, to turn British Mandatory Palestine into a "glass house," in which the Irgun

would remove British control and restore Jewish sovereignty and pride through a series of

actions designed to simultaneously humiliate the prestige of the British Empire and evoke Jewish

pride and self-determination.[228] In line with this philosophy, the Irgun coordinated actions based

primarily around their symbolic content, with pragmatic military action in an ancillary position.

For instance, the Irgun's bombing of the King David Hotel on July 22, 1946 was pragmatically

designed to destroy files the British had obtained that could have been used to arrest and execute

---

[224] Pallis, "The Likud Party," 42.
[225] Vladimir Jabotinsky, "The Idea of Betar," 1934 in Halkin, *Jabotinsky*, 147.
[226] Ibid.
[227] Ibid.
[228] Begin, *The Revolt*, 56.

several members of the Jewish underground – including future Prime Minister Golda Meir – but

was far more of a symbolic blow to what was then the headquarters of British operations in

Palestine.[229] The Irgun implemented similar major attacks on symbolically significant sites –

with the Irgun's assault on Acre Prison in May 1947 being the most notable example – but for

the interests of this section the most relevant example of the impact of pride on the actions of the

Revisionist Zionists can be found in what Begin described as "the floggings."[230]

In the escalation between the British Empire and the Irgun in the wake of the King David

Hotel bombing in 1946, the British arrested sixteen-year-old Irgunist Binyamin Kimchi who they

sentenced to eighteen years in prison, and, eighteen lashes with a whip.[231] In his memoir *The

Revolt*, Begin commented on Britain's sentencing by connecting Kimchi to a greater framework

of Ashkenazi Jewish history, "These lashes would wound the soul of Eretz Israel. For seventy

generations, in seventy lands we had suffered the lashes of our oppressors. The Polish barons

whipped their Jewish 'proteges,' and the German barons whipped their 'protected Jews.' Was an

oppressor now to whip us in our own country?"[232] Begin also connected to Kimchi's whipping to

his own childhood memory of watching prominent Jews being whipped by Polish troops for their

supposed sympathy for Bolshevism.[233] Recalling this memory, Begin argued that one of the

whipped Jews, who later died from his injuries, had died "more, I am convinced, from shame and

humiliation than the physical effects of the floggings."[234] The British Empire's threat to whip

Irgunists drew directly upon what Begin conceived of as a lengthy history of Jewish humiliation

and deprivation of agency by more powerful non-Jewish entities. As such, how to respond to

---

[229] Gordis, *Menachem Begin: The Battle for Israel's Soul*, 48-51.
[230] Begin, *The Revolt*, 231.
[231] Gordis, *Menachem Begin: The Battle for Israel's Soul*, 57.
[232] Begin, *The Revolt*, 231.
[233] Ibid, 232.
[234] Ibid, 232.

Britain's floggings was to Begin and the Revisionist Zionists nothing short of a fundamental question of Jewish pride.

In retaliation for Kimchi's flogging, and to reassert Jewish pride in the face of British humiliation, the Irgun ordained a flogging expedition of their own. Irgunists in Petah Tikvah, Rishon Letzion, and Netanya captured, stripped, and flogged British officers, exacting the same eighteen lashes the British had sentenced on Binyamin Kimchi.[235] As an added sting, the Irgunists who whipped the British officer in Netanya refused to give him his pants back, chiding that the Irgun might need them someday.[236] The Irgun's retaliation placed the emotional component of pride and humiliation well above any military content; whipping a handful of British officers did not represent a significant practical challenge to the unquestionable dominance of British power in Palestine. But, as a symbolic action, a rag-tag group of loosely organized Jews humiliating the honor of what was then still the most powerful empire on earth posed a significant challenge to British prestige, while simultaneously affirming the Irgun's steadfast position on Jewish pride and self-reliance. In a radio address after this escalation, Begin touched upon his dedication to this ethos and the centrality of pride explicitly, as he spoke directly to the British, "We now warn: if the oppressors dare to injure the body, or the personal honor of young Hebrews, we will not respond with whip: we will respond with fire."[237]

Begin himself was especially fascinated with the restoration of Jewish pride, in no small part, as already touched upon briefly, because of his childhood in Brisk, Poland. In the 1920s when Begin grew up, Brisk had a large population of both Jews and non-Jews, and tension between the two was common.[238] Begin often cited a story from his childhood as a formative

---

[235] Shilon, *Menachem Begin: A Life*, 93-94.
[236] Chaim Gilad, *In the Shadow of the Gallows* (Israel: Hadar, 1978), 7-20 in Shilon, *Menachem Begin: A Life*, 94.
[237] Gordis, *Menachem Begin: The Battle for Israel's Soul*, 58.
[238] Ibid, 4-5.

memory in his lifelong quest to restore Jewish pride. He recalled that his father – Ze'ev Dov –

came upon a Polish officer who was harassing a local rabbi by attempting to cut off his beard;

when Ze'ev Dov saw what was happening, he raised his walking cane – topped by a silver

embossed bust of Emile Zola of "*J'Accuse*," fame – and struck the Pole in the head.[239] While the

story is no doubt embellished, that this is the version that Begin chose to remember and recount

demonstrates his particular vision of Jewish pride as something to be practiced on a daily basis,

in any situation, as an assertion of the sacred Revisionist dictate of Jewish pride that Jabotinsky

outlined when he explained *hadar*. In turn, Begin's insistence on and conceptualization of Jewish

pride in the face of humiliation heavily informed his idea of Israeli and Jewish identity.

Extending his understanding of Jewish pride to the Israeli context, Begin – and by extension the

Revisionist Zionists – saw the inequality between Israeli Mizrahim and Ashkenazim as an affront

to what they imagined to be a hallowed fraternal bond between Jews that mandated the rejection

of prioritizing one Jew's pride over another Jew's pride on the basis of ethnic difference.

<center>*Project Urban Renewal*</center>

After his election in 1977, Begin announced – with great fanfare – plans for a new Likud

policy called Project Urban Renewal: an ambitious effort to improve housing conditions in

dominantly Mizrahi "distressed neighborhoods" in Israeli cities and urban centers.[240] Like the

Irgun's actions against the British, Project Urban Renewal was part pragmatic policy to improve

quality of life, part ideological vision designed to center Jewish pride, dignity, and agency – this

time explicitly for Mizrahi Israelis – in line with the Revisionist Zionist tenets of *hadar*. While

unfortunately Likud's economic policies largely failed to produce long-standing significant

change to the systemic issues of housing and economic injustice that plagued and continue to

---

[239] Ibid, 6.
[240] Swirski, *Israel: The Oriental Majority*, 96.

plague Mizrahi Israelis, and frequently made these systemic problems worse, the intention of

Project Urban Renewal serves as an excellent example of how the Revisionist Zionist ethos of

Jewish pride extended to policy interactions between Mizrahi Israelis and the Israeli Right.[241]

Under Project Urban Renewal, Begin's government identified one hundred and twenty-

seven neighborhoods consisting of approximately one hundred thousand residents as distressed

neighborhoods that qualified for the program.[242] In the interview section of Shlomo Swirski's

1989 book *Israel: The Oriental Majority*, a Mizrahi activist named Sammy described the

conditions of some of the Mizrahi residences in one of the designated distressed neighborhoods

before Project Urban Renewal:

> We went into homes on those streets where families live. It was a real catastrophe! Old
> beds, not even a decent table, everything about to fall apart. You felt sorry for the
> family… we visited families with 12 children, they were living below the poverty line.
> From one end to the other, the rooms had nothing but beds.[243]

Well-liked Moroccan-born Likud politician David Levy, who served as Minister of Immigrant

Absorption and Minister of Housing and Construction during the first four years of Begin's

premiership when Project Urban Renewal first began, successfully lobbied Begin to organize

Project Urban Renewal based around housing improvements explicitly designed to improve

Mizrahi Israelis' sense of self-worth as the best route to community improvement.[244] He argued

"it is impossible to encourage one to do homework when five or six people have to share the

same room."[245] Begin agreed with Levy's argument, and, combining Levy's suggestions with his

own pre-existing Revisionist Zionist ethos, organized Project Urban Renewal around an

---

[241] Shilon, *Menachem Begin: A Life*, 328.
[242] Shilon, *Menachem Begin: A Life*, 327 and Swirski, *Israel: The Oriental Majority*, 96.
[243] Swirski, *Israel: The Oriental Majority*, 96.
[244] Shilon, *Menachem Begin: A Life*, 327.
[245] Ibid.

improvement-based program that vested a majority of the decision making power about what

improvements should be made with the local neighborhood residents themselves.[246]

Project Urban Renewal functioned through a tripartite process. First, the government

would assemble a budget that reflected the funding that could reasonably be allocated to each

respective neighborhood in the program. Then, a locally assembled steering committee made up

primarily of town residents and local officials would itemize the improvements they wanted for

their neighborhood based on the total funds available. Finally, the local steering committee

would submit their itemized list back to Begin's government, who would execute their requests

through their various governmental ministries.[247] Under local control, a significant number of

requested improvements were cosmetic in nature, and designed to help the residents of each

respective neighborhood feel proud about they place they lived in.[248] In one instance, a Mizrahi

activist named Eddie from the Katamon neighborhood in Jerusalem suggested that their Project

Urban Renewal funds go towards the construction of a tennis court for community use.[249] When

the local steering community initially challenged him on such a seemingly superfluous

improvement, Eddie countered that that was precisely his point: the cosmetic improvement was

more about asserting the Mizrahi community's pride, self-respect, and equal worth to more

affluent Ashkenazim than solely a pragmatic achievement.[250] Like Eddie, several local steering

committees elected to request cosmetic improvements like public parks and greenery,

refurbished facades for houses and apartment buildings, updated lighting fixtures and recobbled

---

[246] Fred A. Lazin, "Citizen Participation: Project Urban Renewal in Israel," *Journal of Urban Affairs* 18, No. 3 (1996): 312.
[247] Ibid.
[248] Rachelle Alterman, "Opening Up the 'Black Box' in Evaluating Neighborhood Problems: The Implementation Process in Israel's Project Urban Renewal," *Policy Studies Journal* 16, No. 2 (Winter 1987): 356.
[249] Swirski, *Israel: The Oriental Majority*, 104.
[250] Ibid.

roads in addition to more major improvements like the creation of new housing units.[251] Project Urban Renewal repackaged the spirit of Irgun's reprisals against the British that contained both pragmatic and symbolic content for a new Mizrahi Israeli context: applying the same sort of reasoning and ethos of Jewish pride and self-respect through the expression of Project Urban Renewal's cosmetic and systemic improvement opportunities.

Project Urban Renewal's unique method of fundraising also provided evidence of how the Revisionist Zionist ethos on Jewish pride and Jewish fraternity informed Mizrahi Israeli and Revisionist Zionist policy interactions. Project Urban Renewal was funded by partially by pre-allocated funds set aside by the Israeli government, but also partially by charitable funds raised via the Jewish Agency by the Jewish Diaspora.[252] This fundraising model, which Begin formulated himself as part of his dream of using Project Urban Renewal to foster worldwide fraternity between Jews, paired Israeli communities selected for improvement in a type of sister-city program with affluent Jewish communities all around the world.[253] For example, Beth Shemesh partnered with the Jewish community of Indianapolis, Indiana in the United States, who raised between three and three and a half million dollars that the local steering council in Beth Shemesh used to construct a functioning child daycare center among many other improvements.[254] South African Jews paired with development town Ofakim raised funds that the Ofakim steering community used to purchase computers for their public school system.[255]

As with the funds allocation process, the overarching Revisionist Zionist ideas on Jewish pride, fraternity, and dignity informed Project Urban Renewal's unique fundraising formula by

---

[251] Gordis, *Menachem Begin: The Battle for Israel's Soul*, 153.
[252] Lazin, "Citizen Participation," 312.
[253] Ibid.
[254] Fred A. Lazin *Politics and Policy Implementation: Project Renewal in Israel* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1993): 61.
[255] Ibid, 69.

breaking the fundraising into both a pragmatic and conceptual endeavor. As a representative example, Project Urban Renewal – at least in ethos if not in execution – clearly indicated how Revisionist Zionist notions of pride extended to the policy relationship between Mizrahi Israelis and the Revisionist Zionist Likud government under Menachem Begin; confirming that the centrality of pride in Mizrahi Israeli collective memory of their relationship to the Israeli Right extended to physical implementation.

"I Got My Pride Back": Linking Mizrahi Israeli Pride and Likud's Ascension

Just as the Revisionist Zionists sought to restore and assert Jewish pride in the face of pre-Holocaust European anti-Semitism and against the British Empire, Mizrahi Israelis were similarly driven to the Israeli Right as a potential outlet to redress the humiliation they had experienced from the Labor Zionist establishment. As previously established, Mizrahi Israelis' sense of shared mistreatment by the Israeli Left positioned the Revisionist Zionist political parties to act as a route for the restoration of Mizrahi Israeli pride: Likud's political victory could simultaneously symbolize Mizrahi Israeli victory, and act as a rebuff of decades of mistreatment by the Israeli Left. This section examines how the same notions of Jewish pride that originally motivated the Revisionist Zionists also motivated Mizrahi Israelis to join the Israeli Right, and confirms how Mizrahi collective memory of the absence of pride and the need to restore it translates into a major factor of why Mizrahi Israelis continue to identify with the Israeli Right.

When I was researching for this thesis, I was genuinely struck by the frequency in which second-generation Mizrahi Israelis or Mizrahim who arrived in Israel when they were still very young cited the humiliation of their parents upon their arrival to the state of Israel as formative experiences in their childhoods and in their own understanding of their identities as Mizrahi Israelis. These young and second-generation Mizrahi Israelis – who would have been young

adults primarily between the 1960s through the 1980s when the Israeli Right first became

politically ascendant – were the first Mizrahim to only know life in Israel, and to have limited to

no contact with the pre-Israeli Mizrahi past. Erez Bitton, whose poem "Zohra El Fassia" featured

prominently in the previous section on the Diaspora, recalled "When [my father] arrived here,

he'd never done any physical work, and suddenly he was to clean toilets, to do very dirty work.

That pains me – the type of work and the fact that there wasn't enough work. I remember his

face when he worked on the railroad, lifting tracks."[256] Two of the men Amos Oz interviewed in

Beth Shemesh said similar things. The first said,

> My parents came from North Africa; all right, from Morocco. So what? They had their dignity, didn't they? Their own values? Their own faith? Me, I'm not a religious man. [I] travel on the Sabbath. But my parents – why did you make fun of their beliefs? Why did they have to be disinfected with Lysol at Haifa port?[257]

The second said, "it says in the Bible that whoever doesn't stand on his dignity has no dignity.

I'd forgive you for everything – everything except the loss of my dignity, and my parents'

dignity, and my community's dignity."[258] In his 2010 book *Intra-Jewish Conflict in Israel: White

Jews, Black Jews*, Sami Shalom Chetrit even identifies what he calls the "sobbing" motif of

young and second-generation Mizrahim watching their parents break down in tears at some point

during their initial arrivals to Israel as a central formative memory for Mizrahi Israelis in

understanding their own identities and relationship with Israel.[259] It is not surprising, with these

statements in mind, that the Revisionist Zionist parties did better among second-generation

Mizrahi Israelis than it did amongst their parents.[260] In 1963, before a majority of these young

and second-generation Mizrahi Israelis would have been old enough to vote, the Revisionist

---

[256] Brown, "'Sometimes I Have a Feeling of Foreignness,'" 26.
[257] Oz, *In the Land of Israel*, 34.
[258] Ibid, 39.
[259] Chetrit, *Intra-Jewish Conflict in Israel: White Jews, Black Jews*, 57.
[260] Shamir and Arian, "The Ethnic Vote in Israel's 1981 Elections," 318.

Zionists only garnered 20% of the overall vote in heavily Mizrahi development towns; by 1981

that number had rocketed up to 50%.[261]

Since Likud and the Revisionist Zionist parties were so effectively othered by the Labor

Zionist hegemony – and possessed a pre-existing framework on the restoration of pride that

Mizrahi Israelis could apply to their own specific experience to – Mizrahi Israelis' identification

with the Israeli Right became to dominant avenue for Mizrahi Israelis to seek to restore their

pride. Building upon their shared sense of mistreatment by the Israeli Left and their similar

conceptualizations of Diaspora and identity, Mizrahi Israelis could again fuse their experiences

and perspectives with the experiences and perspectives of the Israeli Right: imagining the Israeli

Right's ascendancy to be their ascendancy too.

A television interview with a Moroccan Jew who identified himself as Marcel at the

victory rally for Menachem Begin's first 1977 victory, puts this concept into words:

> In Casablanca my father was an honored member of the community. He was the patriarch
> of our family. He had *kavod* – respect… Everybody gave him *kavod* because he ran his
> own spice shop in the Casbah. Now what does he do? He breaks his back on a building
> site. Who's going to give him his *kavod* now? In Morocco only Arabs work on building
> sites. His *kavod* has been stolen. [In Morocco] I was a bookkeeper. That's an occupation
> of *kavod*. In Morocco only Arabs are waiters. My *kavod* has been trampled upon.
> Menachem Begin has given me back my *kavod*.[262]

When Marcel finished his speech, the crowd of other young Mizrahi men who had gathered

around him and had intermittently chimed in in agreement during his interview exploded in

celebration, kicking off the chant "Begin, Melech Yisrael" – literally Begin, King of Israel – that

featured prominently amongst Begin's supporters in both 1977 and 1981.[263] Marcel's speech

covers the essential components in the Mizrahi Israeli collective memory that I have outlined

---

[261] Yiftachel, *Ethnocracy*, 246.
[262] Avner, "The Great Emancipator."
[263] Ibid.

thus far – déclassement, humiliation of parents, warm memory of the Diaspora, loss of pride –

but more importantly it directly articulates that Begin's victory and the Israeli Right's victory

was synonymous with the restoration of Mizrahi Israeli pride.

Marcel's speech is just one of several sources in which this notion is evident. Another

Beth Shemesh man Amos Oz interviewed for *In the Land of Israel*, stated,

> The Mapainiks just wiped everything that was imprinted on a person. As if it was all
> nonsense. And then they just put what *they* wanted into him. From that ideology of theirs.
> Like we were some kind of dirt. Ben-Gurion himself called us the dust of the earth… but
> now that Begin's here, believe me, my parents can stand up straight, with pride, and
> dignity. I'm not religious, either, but my parents are; they're traditional, and Begin has
> respect for their beliefs.[264]

In 1988, more than a full decade after *HaMahapach*, *Chicago Tribune* journalist Stephen

Franklin garnered a similar response from Yoram Tzidkihayu – a pickle merchant in Jerusalem's

old city *shuk* who was born in Iraqi Kurdistan – who told Franklin that when Begin won in 1977,

"I got my pride back."[265]

The immensity of Mizrahi Israelis' understanding of Likud's ascension as tantamount to

the redemption of their own pride and their triumph over their experiences with the Labor Zionist

establishment plays an enormous role in the Mizrahi Israeli collective memory of their

relationship to the Israeli Right. *HaMahapach* in 1977 is mythologized as the year of Mizrahi

triumph; not just a political reversal, but a society-wide victory for a community that imagines its

past up to that point to be one of victimization, repression, and loss of dignity. Internalizing this

is essential to understanding why, in the world of contemporary Israeli politics, attacks on the

Likud party are often read sub-textually as attacks on Mizrahi Israelis themselves.

---

[264] Oz, *In the Land of Israel*, 34.
[265] Stephen Franklin, "Likud Party's Success Driven By Sephardim: Voting Block Now a Majority in Israel,"
Chicago Tribune, October 9, 1988, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

4. "Am I A Subject of the State of Israel? Whom Do I Belong To?": Israeli Identity

The fourth and final emotional-aesthetic pole of Mizrahi Israelis' collective memory of their relationship to the Israeli Right is centered around a shared understanding between Mizrahi Israelis and Menachem Begin's Revisionist Zionism about what it means to be Israeli and what kind of country Israel should be. Unlike Labor Zionists' conceptualization of Israel and Israeliness which centered around a radical transformation, the Mizrahi Israeli and Revisionist Zionist understanding of who is Israeli and what kind of country Israel should be derived from a national-liberal structure that provided much greater accessibility in its definition of what being an Israeli meant by privileging a lenient and flexible understanding of Jewishness as the main predicate for Israeli identity. First, I outline the origins of the national-liberal paradigm in Menachem Begin's Revisionist Zionism. Then, I demonstrate this paradigm's subsequent permeability to Mizrahi Israelis through both a political lens that emphasizes the paradigm's application to election campaigning, speeches, and movements, and through an emotional lens that emphasizes the impact of the paradigm on Mizrahi Israelis' emotional sense of their own identities.

The Revisionist Zionist Political Paradigm

When the post-Revolutionary French leaders were debated whether or not to emancipate French Jews and grant them French citizenship at the end of the eighteenth century, Count Stanislas de Clermont de Tonnere delivered a memorable appeal in favor of emancipation to the French National Assembly: "The Jews should be denied everything as a nation, but granted everything as individuals."[266] Menachem Begin's Revisionist Zionist national-liberal paradigm

---

[266] "Debate on the Eligibility of Jews for Citizenship (December 23, 1789)," *The Jew in the Modern World: A Documentary History*, third edition, edited by Paul Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 124.

mimicked the logic of this archetypical liberal axiom to produce an understanding that can be similarly articulated as the idea that Mizrahi Israelis should be denied everything as an ethnic group, but granted everything as Jews. As explored in the previous section on the Diaspora, Begin espoused a unique blend of a Jewish national-liberal ideology that flattened differences between secular and religious, Israel and Diaspora, or Ashkenazi and Mizrahi into a singular idea of an amorphous Jewish whole.[267] For Begin, pride in and devotion to a flexible understanding of what it means to be a Jew superseded any meticulous Zionist structure. Regarding Mizrahi Israelis, and Israeli Jews of all different backgrounds, Begin's paradigm nullified ethnic distinctions. Simply put, to Begin an Israeli was a Jew who lived in Israel; identity as an Israeli was not stringently correlated to characteristics, but derived from geographical consequence.

Evidence of Begin's conceptualization of Israeli identity in this manner dates back to the pre-state period, and remained consistent throughout his career. In *The Revolt* – copyrighted in 1948 and originally published in 1951, but which largely details the pre-state era – Begin wrote,

> In the Shock Units and in all the divisions of the Irgun we had members who came from all Jewish communities and of all classes. We had people from Tunis and Harbin, Poland and Persia, France and Yemen, Belgium and Iraq, Czechoslovakia and Syria; we had natives of the United States and Bokhara, of England, and Scotland, Argentina and South Africa, and most of all, of Eretz Israel itself. We were the melting pot of the Jewish nation in miniature. We never asked about origins: we demanded only loyalty and ability. Our comrades from the eastern communities felt happy and at home in the Irgun. Nobody ever displayed any stupid airs of superiority toward them; and they were thus helped to free themselves of any unjustified sense of inferiority they may have harbored. They were fighting comrades and that was enough.[268]

Begin very quickly translated this pre-state ideology into his political content following the creation of the state of Israel and the formation of the Revisionist Zionist Herut party that same

---

[267] Yoram Bilu and André Levy, "The Elusive Sanctification of Menachem Begin," *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 7, No. 2 (Winter 1992): 303.
[268] Begin, *The Revolt*, 78.

year.[269] In a July 1955 speech Begin delivered to a mainly Iraqi Jewish crowd in the Yemenite

Quarter of Tel Aviv, Begin reiterated the same paradigm evident in *The Revolt* – intentionally

drawing on the pre-state days of the Jewish underground – while also adding sensitivity to

Mizrahi Israeli mistreatment by the Labor Zionist establishment and adjusting his speech

accordingly.[270] He said,

> Do you remember how we walked together, armed rows of Yemenites, Sephardim, and
> Ashkenazim? Do you remember how we expelled one thousand British troops from the
> country?... Here they (indicating the Mapai Party) come, inventing a false theory, as if
> there is Yemenite blood, Ashkenazi blood, and Sephardic blood. I tell you: it's a lie.
> There is no separate blood. We all have one blood: Jewish blood.[271]

Begin maintained this national-liberal paradigm throughout his career. Far from cynical

political opportunism to court a potential Mizrahi Israeli voter base in the late 1970s and early

1980s, Begin consistently employed this language and idea of intra-Jewish ethnic egalitarianism

well before the conclusion of the Great Aliyah, and certainly well before the arrival of a majority

of the Moroccan Jews who would go on to form the core of his base.[272] In this way, Begin's

famous declaration "Ashkenazim? Iraqi? Jews! Brothers! Warriors!" in his rebuff of Dudu

Topaz's "chach-chachkim" speech in 1981 was the culmination of decades worth of coherent

politics.[273]

The application of this paradigm also extended beyond speeches and campaigning to the

practical structure of the Revisionist Zionist parties themselves. As previously discussed, the

Herut Central Committee transformed its organizational structure under Yitzhak Shamir in 1973

to more closely resemble a physical manifestation of Begin's ideological content. Uri Cohen and

---

[269] Pallis, "The Likud Party," 42.
[270] *Ha'aretz*, July 25th and 26th 1955 in Shilon, *Menachem Begin: A Life*, 181.
[271] Ibid.
[272] Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, "Immigrants, By Period of Immigration, Country of Birth and Last Country of Residence," *CBS, Statistical Abstract of Israel, 2009*, Chart No. 4.4, 2009: 237-238.
[273] Shilon, *Menachem Begin: A Life*, 354.

Nissim Leon – whose 2014 article "The Mahapach and Yitzhak Shamir's Quiet Revolution: Mizrahim in the Herut Movement" provides an in-depth look at the process that led to this reorganization and its impact on the Israeli Right and Mizrahi Israeli organizers – argue "Shamir rejected the notion that Mizrahim needed to receive some sort of compensation for their inferior status vis-à-vis other groups in the party."[274] They propose instead that Shamir's inversion of the typical top-down appointments model for Israeli political parties in favor of a bottom-up liberal meritocratic model for the Herut party based party members' ability to produce an impact on their talent and zeal to organize in their local communities independent of their ethnic background.[275] In theory, Shamir's model for palpable party impact nearly exactly mirrored the ideological content of Begin's speeches; Mizrahi success and inclusion would not be derived from their ethnic difference but from their equal treatment as Jews.

Permeability of the Political Paradigm to Mizrahi Israelis

Having now established the political form of Begin's Revisionist Zionist national-liberal paradigm, I will now demonstrate that this paradigm was attractive to and adopted by Mizrahi Israelis. The inherent accessibility of Begin's paradigm for Mizrahi Israelis as based primarily on their Jewishness was especially attractive in contradistinction to the Labor Zionist hegemony, whose fundamental understanding of Israeli identity as based on transformation and deracination from the Diaspora held little appeal for Mizrahi Israelis who largely did not share their ideology. This section outlines both the attractiveness of the Revisionist Zionist national-liberal paradigm vis-à-vis the Israeli Left, and confirms the widespread adoption of this paradigm amongst Mizrahi Israelis by using Revisionist Zionist and Mizrahi Israeli political interactions as representative examples.

---

[274] Cohen and Leon, "The Mahapach and Yitzhak Shamir's Quiet Revolution," 33.
[275] Ibid, 19.

Over the course of two days on May 14th and May 15th of 1974, terrorists from the Democratic Front for the of Liberation of Palestine murdered thirty-two Israeli citizens in the development town Ma'alot in the frontier of northern Israel. Out of those thirty-two, twenty-three were Mizrahi Israeli ninth and tenth grade schoolchildren mostly between fourteen and sixteen years old from the nearby city Tzfat who had been in Ma'alot for a field trip before being taken hostage.[276] Even in the 1970s, when attacks from Palestinian terror organizations operating from inside Lebanon were common, this attack – which came to be known as the Ma'alot Massacre – was particularly egregious, and catalyzed a discussion amongst the heavily Mizrahi Israeli communities of Israel's peripheral north regarding the Labor Alignment government's apparent apathy about their lives.[277]

One Mizrahi Israeli Herut member and Ma'alot resident named Dahan used the Herut Central Committee as a platform to speak about his continued frustration over Mizrahi Israeli treatment by the Labor Zionist establishment after the Ma'alot Massacre, with a specific focus on the long-term lack of safety in Israel's Mizrahi dense peripheral areas;

> We want a chance to live, a chance to develop, and a chance to grow and raise our children to be proud that we live in Ma'alot, and a chance to be proud that we are Mizrahim. In Morocco, I fought for the right to be Jewish, and here in Israel I have to fight for my right to be Israeli, fight for my right to show up on the map of Eretz Israel, and fight for my right to bear my Israeli identity with pride. Am I a subject of the state of Israel? Whom do I belong to?[278]

Dahan's appeal demonstrated two important facets of Mizrahi Israelis' interest in and adoption of Begin's Revisionist Zionist liberal political paradigm. First, it demonstrated that the Herut Central Committee – having already undergone Shamir's reorganization by the time of the Ma'alot Massacre in 1974 – served as a successful alternative political platform to the

---

[276] Ibid, 22.
[277] Ibid.
[278] Herut Central Committee Meeting, June 12, 1974, Jabotinsky Institute Archives in Ibid, 23.

institutions set up and presided over by the Labor Zionist establishment. Second, Dahan's understanding of who is Israeli and what it means to be Israeli was much closer to Begin's understanding than to the Labor Zionist understanding of Israeli as collectivist agrarian pioneer. Dahan did not connect his Israeli identity to any sort of characteristic transformation, but through his status as a Jew who lives in Israel and who is therefore Israeli.

A second example that also demonstrates the attraction to and adoption of Begin's Revisionist Zionist national-liberal political paradigm can be found in the experience of a Mizrahi Israeli from Beth Shemesh named Nissim. Nissim's experience was similar to Dahan's, but where Dahan's experience came from Mizrahi Israelis' experience in the geographical periphery, Nissim's came from Mizrahi Israelis' struggle to achieve upwards economic mobility within the structure of the highly bureaucratized Labor Zionist infrastructure. Nissim recalled his encounter with two Ashkenazi workers for the Histadrut when he went to apply for an "approved enterprise" benefit for his business;

> During these discussions, two Jews who didn't like the whole business asked me, "What ethnic group do you come from?" I said "Excuse me I don't understand your question. Who am I? A Jew! Ah you're talking about from where I immigrated? If it's so important to you, I'm Moroccan. And proud of it! I don't know why you asked this question. Is there something bothering you? Is something wrong? I haven't got a tail! I haven't got a knife? I'm talking about my rights, the rights of an Israeli citizen here."[279]

In his appeal, Nissim identified himself as a Jew, a Moroccan, and an Israeli: indicating the presence of a flexible notion of identity. And, like Dahan, he emphasized his Jewish identity as the primary mode through which he determined he was deserving of complete equality as an Israeli citizen. Both instances show that the loose notion of Israeli identity predicated on Jewishness and the political lens of a national-liberal paradigm applied in Menachem Begin's Revisionist Zionism permeated amongst Mizrahi Israelis.

---

[279] Oz, *In the Land of Israel*, 84.

The last example I will use to confirm the permeability of this national-liberal political lens among Mizrahi Israelis is in Revisionist Zionist and Mizrahi Israeli reactions to the Israeli Black Panthers. Founded by a small group of young Moroccan Jewish men, the Israeli Black Panthers grew out of the poor Musrara neighborhood in Jerusalem and began organizing protests in 1971.[280] While the Israeli Black Panthers had no major ties to the American Black Panthers outside of their name – which founder Israeli Black Panther founder Saadia Marciano deliberately chose to exacerbate then Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir[*] – they imagined themselves to be a parallel of the American movement, renamed Musrara "Musrara-Harlem," and adopted the American Black Panther's Third Worldist conceptualization and emphasis on specific ethnic grievances.[281] The Israeli Black Panthers' largest protest – the May 18, 1971 "Night of the Panthers" – drew several thousands to Davidka Square in downtown Jerusalem.[282] Israeli police cracked down on the protestors with clubs, water hoses, and mass arrests; in turn, protestors fought with police and threw rocks, bottles, and Molotov cocktails.[283] Unsurprisingly, the Night of the Panthers, and the very existence of the Israeli Black Panthers themselves, was controversial and ignited passionate discussion all across Israel. But, for the focus of this, I zero in on the response they garnered from Herut and Herut-affiliated Mizrahi Israelis.

In the upper echelons of the Herut party, responses to the Israeli Black Panthers were a mix of apathy and ambivalence, but grassroots Mizrahi Israeli Herut organizers and leaders of Herut's student cells were very receptive to the Israeli Black Panthers' grievances regarding

---

[280] Chetrit, "Mizrahi Politics in Israel: Between Integration and Alternative," 52.

[*] Golda Meir and the Israeli Black Panthers had a uniquely antagonistic rapport. In a meeting between Meir and Israeli Black Panther co-founder Saadia Marciano, Golda infamously remarked that the Israeli Black Panthers were "not nice boys": angering Mizrahim across the political spectrum. In 2011, a group of Mizrahi activists renamed an unmarked alleyway in Musrara "Not Nice Alley" with a commemorative plaque to poke fun at her words.

[281] Chetrit, *Intra-Jewish Conflict in Israel: White Jews, Black Jews*, 99-102.

[282] Ibid, 104.

[283] Ibid, 103-104.

economic injustice and racial discrimination while simultaneously opposing the Panther's form

of ethnic separatism.[284] Herut student organizers in major Israeli cities and at major Israeli

universities actively sought ties to local Israeli Black Panther activists and offered to co-sponsor

events in impoverished Mizrahi communities in conjunction with the Israeli Black Panthers,

hoping to both improve these communities while also introducing more Mizrahi Israelis to the

ideas of the Herut party.[285] A report submitted to the Herut Eleventh Congress in 1972 read,

> The student's cells maintained strong bonds with Black Panther organizations in Israel, while aiming to influence their paths in a positive manner, introducing them to our movement's ideological and political ideals and acting within low-income families in rundown communities in order to pull them out of their situation. These kinds of activities were launched by our members in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv and Haifa, in low-income communities and among youths at risk.[286]

This tension between the Israeli Black Panthers and the Herut party produced a challenge for the

Herut's national-liberal political paradigm; even though both groups agreed on the problems

facing Mizrahi Israelis and that these problems needed to be addressed, they departed on whether

those problems should be solved through ethnically specific politics or through overarching

liberal politics.[287]

Herut affiliate David Levy – the Moroccan Jew from Beth Shean widely considered to be

the most visible of Herut's Mizrahi Israeli politicians at the time – called the Israeli Black

Panthers "*Les Misérables*," and while he admitted to commiserating with their grievances, he

wholly decried their form, proposing instead that the challenges facing Mizrahi Israelis would be

much more effectively addressed through the national-liberal paradigm.[288] Menachem Begin

---

[284] Goldstein, "Partial Establishment – Menachem Begin, Gahal, and the Black Panthers," 239.
[285] Ibid, 243.
[286] Ibid, 243.
[287] Ibid, 243-244.
[288] Shilon, "David Levy, Likud Stalwart, Should Run for Israeli President," and Goldstein, "Partial Establishment," 244.

adopted a similar stance. Begin was passionately averse to even the hint of association between the Israeli Black Panthers and the American Black Panthers due to the latter's connection to the political arm of the Palestinian Liberation Organization – Fatah – but he empathized with the Israeli Black Panthers' grievances.[289] Begin thought that the Israeli Black Panthers' conceptualization of Zionism as rooted in European colonialism was a fundamental misreading of Zionism, and, in keeping with his understanding of Zionism as a Jewish national movement with no inherent geographical roots outside of Israel itself that he maintained consistently throughout his career, proposed an alternative solution.[290] He wrote to Israeli Black Panther founder Saadia Marciano directly and proposed that the group change its name to "the Black Jewish Lions" instead.[291]

And, while this might seem like the suggestion of a fundamentally uncool old man, local Mizrahi Israelis actually formed a Black Jewish Lions group that held a protest in May 1971 in the Kfar Shalem neighborhood of south Tel Aviv.[292] In addition to the formation of an actual Black Jewish Lions group, Israeli Black Panther activist Eddie Malka split from the original Israeli Black Panther leadership to form his own "Blue-White Panthers" faction – named after the Blue-White Herut subdivision of the Histadrut where David Levy had gotten his political start[293] – with implied financial backing from the Herut party.[294] In the elections for the eighth Knesset held in 1973, the first elections after the creation and protests of the Israeli Black Panthers, the Likud party won 39 seats: a record high for the Revisionist Zionists up to that point

---

[289] Ibid, 241.
[290] Ibid, 246.
[291] Chetrit, *Intra-Jewish Conflict in Israel: White Jews, Black Jews*, 99.
[292] Shama and Iris, *Immigration Without Integration*, 147.
[293] Shilon, "David Levy, Likud Stalwart, Should Run for Israeli President."
[294] Shalom Cohen and Kokhavi Shemesh, "The Origin and Development of the Israeli Black Panther Movement," *MERIP Reports*, No. 49 (July 1976): 20.

and an increase of seven seats from the previous elections in 1969.[295] The Israeli Black Panthers

ran their own list, separate from Malka's Blue-White Panthers, which gathered 13,332 votes and

failed to earn a Knesset seat.[296] The Israeli Black Panthers dissolved in the mid-1970s after its

failure to remain a unified political body, but some of its founders – including Charlie Bitton,

Saadia Marciano, and Reuven Abergel – went on to become influential Israeli activists and, in

Bitton's and Marciano's cases, members of the Knesset in other left-wing Israeli political

parties.[297] And, although the Israeli Black Panthers themselves never achieved massively

influential seats of power within the Israeli government, they were very successful in shifting

national attention to housing inequality effecting Mizrahi Israelis and steered redressing the

inequity into a governmental priority.

<p style="text-align:center;">*"He's Our Father": Emotional Lens of the Revisionist Paradigm*</p>

Having established how Begin's Revisionist Zionist national-liberal paradigm functioned

in a political, policy sense, I turn now to an examination of the emotional impact of the national-

liberal paradigm on both Mizrahi Israeli understandings of the Israeli Right and of themselves.

Since this thesis is, at its core, a meditation on the formation and impact of memory, emotion

should justifiably constitute a central point of interest. In this section, I take specific interest in

Menachem Begin's own particular Israeli identity and how the emotional application of Begin's

national-liberal paradigm redefined what it meant to be Israeli.

In the middle of Begin's celebratory rally for Likud's victory in 1977, a reporter asked

what kind of governing style the Israeli public should expect from the first right-wing party

---

[295] The State of Israel, Knesset, "Factional and Government Make-Up of the Tenth Knesset," accessed February 15, 2019, https://www.knesset.gov.il/history/eng/eng_hist8_s.htm and Matthew Ries, "Israel," in *Elections in Asia and the Pacific: A Data Handbook,* Volume 1: Middle East, Central Asia, and South Asia, edited by Dieter Nohlen, Florian Grotz, and Christoff Hartmann (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2001): 119-125.

[296] Ibid.

[297] Smith, "The Second Israel," 161.

elected in Israel's history.[298] Begin paused, thought, and replied simply "in the style of a good

Jew."[299] Unlike all the Labor Zionist prime ministers before him, who saw themselves primary as

Israeli first and Jewish second, Begin saw himself as Jewish first and Israeli as a matter of

temporal and geographical coincidence.[300] For Begin, to be an Israeli was not a dramatic

departure from what it meant to be a Jew in any other time, but the contemporary manifestation

of what he conceptualized as a linked chain of Jewish continuity spanning across millennia and

all over the globe.[301] But what did it mean to be Jewish to Begin? Though he was frequently

described as traditional, I argue that Begin's conceptualization of Jewishness was thoroughly

heterodox amongst Zionists of his time, and that understanding the nuance of his view on Jewish,

and by extension Israeli, identity is essential to understanding his emotional appeal for Mizrahi

Israelis.

In a Jewish context – and especially in a contemporary Israeli context – the idea of being

a traditionalism is inherently bound to the idea of religious observance. Traditionalism is

measured against the degree to which a Jew is punctiliously *halachic,* or the degree to which

they literally observe Jewish law. Menachem Begin can by no means be described as stridently

halachic. He fasted for Yom Kippur while interned in the Kotslav gulag in Siberia in 1941, but

always brushed his teeth every Yom Kippur morning because, as his father Ze'ev Dov would

remind him, it would in fact be God he would be talking to all day in synagogue.[302] On Shabbat

Begin refrained from smoking and declined to use a microphone to address the assembly of

Herut's Saturday meetings, but he also refused to stop listening to his beloved BBC or to cancel

---

[298] Gordis, *Menachem Begin: The Battle for Israel's Soul*, 141.
[299] Israeli Broadcasting Authority, May 30, 1977 in Ibid.
[300] Segev, *1949: The First Israelis*, 118.
[301] Shilon, *Menachem Begin: A Life*, 451.
[302] Gordis, *Menachem Begin: The Battle for Israel's Soul*, 31; 5.

the Herut meetings altogether.[303] As with his political paradigm and view on the Jewish

Diaspora, Begin applied a relaxed and liberal worldview to Jewish identity that treated religion

and nation as two equal components of an overarching idea of Jewishness. In this way Begin

regarded the Jewish identity in an almost performative way; he picked and chose certain aspects

to uphold and other aspects to let go of, and his traditionalism derived more from his desire to

express his overall pride in being a Jew than it did from a literal or legalistic interpretation.

In terms of impact on Mizrahi Israelis and Israelis of all backgrounds who did not align

themselves with the idea of Israeliness outlined in Labor Zionism, Begin's conceptualization of

what it meant to be Israeli represented a dramatic change in ability to achieve a form of identity

equality. Before Likud's victory in 1977, Labor Zionists' hegemony across all facets of Israeli

life meant that Israeli identity was very synonymous to collectivist agrarian pioneering, which, as

I have already established, Mizrahi Israelis not only generally lacked interest in but frequently

saw as the embodiment of their humiliation and oppression. Likud's victory in 1977 represented

a physical shift away from the monopoly of this identity towards Begin's understanding of what

it meant to be an Israeli that was inherently more accessible to Mizrahi Israelis.

Begin's victory and the subsequent mainstreaming of his conceptualization of what it

meant to be Israeli that it represented produced an immediate emotional reaction in Mizrahi

Israelis. Recall any of the examples from this thesis' section on pride – from Marcel who cheered

that Begin's victory restored his personal honor,[304] to the unnamed Beth Shemesh man who

stated Begin's victory restored his parent's lost dignity,[305] to Yoram Tzidkihayu who eleven

years after *HaMahapach* credited Begin's win as the moment he got his pride back.[306] All of

---

[303] Shilon, *Menachem Begin: A Life*, 154.
[304] Avner, "The Great Emancipator."
[305] Oz, *In the Land of Israel*, 34.
[306] Franklin, "Likud Party's Success Driven By Sephardim."

these emotional appeals came to some degree from the fact that Begin's idea of the Israeli

identity made room for the variety of their experiences and provided them with the inherent

value as Israeli citizens that they had not experienced under the Labor Zionist governments. The

Labor Zionist governments' persistent Orientalist and racist assessments of Mizrahi Israelis and

their literal physical relegation to the Israeli periphery, meant that their Israeli identities were

constantly in question.[307] In an emotional sense, the political shift in 1977 was a rejection of the

exclusion from Israeli identity that Mizrahim had experienced under Labor Zionism, and an

assertion of Mizrahi Israelis' full validity as Israeli citizens.

The depth of Mizrahi Israelis' emotional attachment to this departure in conceptualizing

Israeli identity post-1977 frequently manifested in emotional attachment to Menachem Begin

himself. Begin was frequently represented to be a part of Mizrahi Israelis' personal families or

even an extension of themselves, as was the case of one of the Beth Shemesh men Amos Oz met

who stated "Most of us are Begin, he's our father."[308] And while these familial designations were

certainly not meant to be interpreted literally, the intensity of the allegory demonstrates the depth

of Mizrahi Israelis' emotional connection to Menachem Begin and the conceptualization of

Israeli identity that he represented.

Nowhere was the depth of this emotional connection more evident than in Mizrahi

Israelis' presence at Menachem Begin's funeral after his death on March 9, 1992.[309] Begin's

funeral was a highly performative event ripe with layered symbolism. In his will, Begin

requested that all state honors and ceremony typically bestowed upon an Israeli prime minister

after their death be cancelled in favor of a short, traditional Jewish service.[310] He was buried not

---

[307] Swirski, *Israel: The Oriental Majority*, 22.
[308] Oz, *In the Land of Israel*, 47.
[309] Bilu and Levy, "The Elusive Sanctification of Menachem Begin," 297.
[310] Ibid, 303.

on Mount Herzl, as is typical of major Israeli political and military figures, but on the Mount of

Olives: arguably the most important Jewish cemetery in the world for its geographical, religious,

and historical significance whose roots predate the state of Israel by several thousands of

years.[311] Even the location of Begin's specific burial plot carried its own symbolic importance;

he was buried next to his wife Aliza, and adjacent to the burial plots of Meir Feinstein and

Moshe Barazani – the two Ashkenazi and Mizrahi members of the Jewish underground that had

chosen to kill themselves in prison rather than be executed by the British that Begin memorably

invoked in his "Jews! Brothers! Warriors!" speech in 1981.[312] Begin explicitly requested to be

buried near Feinstein and Barazani in one of his final written wishes to longtime friend and

personal aide Yechiel Kadishai, in which Begin wrote:

> Dear Yechiel,
>
> When the day comes, please read this request to everyone I love, friends and comrades
> alike. I ask to be buried on the Mount of Olives, next to Meir Feinstein and Moshe
> Barazani, and I am grateful to you and anyone else who carries this wish into effect.
>
> Yours with love,
> Menachem Begin[313]

Begin's funeral was attended by many tens of thousands of mourners, among which were

many thousands of Mizrahi Israelis.[314] Strong hagiographic tradition amongst Mizrahi Israelis –

Moroccan Jews especially – and Mizrahi Israelis' transformation of Begin's burial site into a

type of saintly shrine the evening of his funeral led the Israeli media to anticipate that Begin was

on the verge of canonization into Jewish sainthood.[315] This anticipation proved unsubstantiated,

---

[311] Ibid, 306.
[312] Ibid, 304.
[313] "The Begin Center Museum – a Multimedia Trip Through a Leader's Life," Tour, Menachem Begin Heritage Center, July 12, 2018.
[314] Bilu and Levy, "The Elusive Sanctification of Menachem Begin," 303.
[315] Ibid, 309.

instead Begin's mourning cult subsided after a week and was not revived on the anniversary of his death.[316] But while the response in the Israeli media was to anticipate canonization in a literal sense, I propose an alternative reading of the undeniably religious form of Mizrahi Israelis' mourning at Begin's funeral. I argue that the religious form of Mizrahi Israelis' mourning for Menachem Begin was not literal, just as previous representations of Begin as a member of their families or an extension of themselves had not been literal, but rather that it was a highly dramatized performance of the most distilled factor that had united them both as Israelis: their Jewishness.

Begin never represented himself as a religious leader, and the second-generation Mizrahi Israelis most responsible for his electoral victories were often, by their own admission, not stringently religious and certainly less religious than their parents.[317] And yet Mizrahi Israelis' mourning for Begin – like, for instance, a book of Psalms left at Begin's makeshift shrine that was inscribed "to the elevation of the soul of our great and holy teacher, master, and leader, Menachem Begin"[318] – adopted an overtly religious tone. But instead of interpreting this religiosity literally, I point out that placing Judaism and Jewishness in such a central position in mourning Begin functioned as an intentional highlighting of the type of Israeli identity that both Begin and Mizrahi Israelis adopted. In specifically performing Judaism as the primary form of mourning, Mizrahi Israelis emphasized the component of Begin's national-liberal paradigm for Israeli identity that treated Jewishness is the main predicate for being an Israeli. Within the Labor Zionist conceptualization of Israeli identity, the religiosity with which Mizrahi Israelis mourned Begin – complete with hagiographic tradition lifted directly out of the North African diaspora –

---

[316] Ibid, 314; 324.
[317] Oz, *In the Land of Israel*, 34.
[318] Bilu and Levy, "The Elusive Sanctification of Menachem Begin," 314.

would have been either humiliated or expunged. But in the post-Begin, post-*HaMahapach* Israel, an Israeli identity that upheld the Diaspora and took no shame in religion was now mainstream enough to be practiced openly at the funeral for the man who had held the highest governmental office in the entire country.

From an emotional standpoint, Begin's national-liberal paradigm on who is Israeli and what kind of country Israel should be redefined Israeli identity to make Israeliness accessible to Mizrahim in a way that it hadn't been under the Labor Zionist hegemony. The parts of Mizrahi identities that had been wholly excluded under the Labor Zionist idea of what an Israeli should be were acceptable, and often celebrated, within the notion of Israeli identity first achieved in a tangible political victory by the Israeli Right. Just as the political lens asserted Mizrahi Israelis' full legitimacy as Israeli citizens entitled to equal political treatment and opportunity, the emotional lens provided Mizrahi Israelis with legitimacy to feel fully Israeli in their identities.

Part 2: Mizrahi Israeli Collective Memory and Contemporary Israeli Politics

The second part of this thesis examines how Mizrahi Israelis' collective memory of their relationship to the Israeli Right impacts contemporary Israeli politics. In this part of the thesis, I use the four emotional-aesthetic poles of memory outlined in the first part of this thesis as the context through which contemporary Israeli politics should be situated and understood. To demonstrate how Mizrahi Israelis' collective memory continues to impact Israeli politics and Mizrahi Israelis' affiliation with the Israeli Right, I have isolated for events or trends from recent Israeli history that clearly demonstrate memory's intervention in the reality of the present day. These are: the transformation of Israel after Menachem Begin's resignation, the 2011 social justice protests in Tel Aviv, anti-Mizrahi racism in left-wing Israeli media, and the most recent elections for the 20th Knesset in 2015. Through examining how Mizrahi Israelis' collective memory informs these four events or trends from recent Israeli history, I affirm my argument that that an empathetic approach to understanding collective memory is a valuable and necessary heuristic.

5. **The End of (Israeli) History? The Landscape of Israel Today**

In 1989, United States State Department deputy Francis Fukuyama published an article in *The National Interest* titled "The End of History?"[319] With the Soviet Union on its deathbed and liberalism having seemingly trounced both fascism and Communism, Fukuyama pondered whether or not the world was on the precipice of stability and continuity, with nothing left to do but float off into monotonous post-historical bliss.[320] At the end of the essay Fukuyama lamented the doubtless "centuries of boredom" that he believed the world to be moving into in the 1990s

---

[319] Francis Fukuyama, "The End of History?" *The National Interest*, No. 16 (Summer 1989): 1.
[320] Ibid, 14; 3.

and the twenty-first century as traditional, recognizable conflicts between states and armies subsided.[321] Fukuyama's assumption, already initially grounded in fundamentally ahistorical reasoning, would be roundly and comprehensively disproven. Not only was the world not on the brink of stability and continuity, but the 1990s and the beginning of the twenty-first century heralded a series of consequential changes across nearly every conceivable facet of human life that comprehensively reformulated the organization of the world. These drastic changes, and the stark reality that, contrary to Fukuyama's fantasy, history is not a novel and never ends, was perhaps nowhere more evident than in the state of Israel.

By the beginning of the twenty-first century, the state of Israel would be thoroughly transformed from what it was when Mizrahi Israelis helped catapult Menachem Begin and the Likud into political power for the first time in 1977. Seismic shifts in the state of Israel economically, demographically, religiously, politically, diplomatically, and militarily in the mid-1980s through the early 2000s arguably transformed the reality of the country entirely; and yet Mizrahi Israelis continue to consistently vote for Likud and other right-wing parties in large numbers. In this section, I identify the most consequential revolutions in Israeli life for the concerns of this thesis, and emphasize the depth of these revolutions' deviation from the Israel of 1977. In demonstrating how transformations all across Israeli life have had little impact on Mizrahi Israelis' collective memory of their relationship to the Israeli Right and on how this memory continues to produce sociopolitical impact, I confirm memory's constructed nature and resilience to destabilization by a complex nuanced reality and reassert the value of its comprehension to discern why Mizrahi Israelis vote for the Israeli Right.

---

[321] Ibid, 18.

The New Israel

For Mizrahi Israelis, the most directly consequential revolutions between the mid-1980s and the early 2000s were demographic, economic, and cultural. Between 1990 and 2006, nearly one million Soviet Jews and approximately seventy-nine thousand Ethiopian Jews immigrated to Israel; a fifty-five percent increase in Israel's total population from 1989.[322] These immigrations transformed the demographics of Israeli neighborhoods, towns, and cities. Before these immigrations, affluent Ashkenazi locales like Rehavia in Jerusalem or the kibbutzim and low-to-middle-class Mizrahi locales like Musrara or development towns like Beth Shemesh delineated the spatial arrangement of Israeli demography into a fairly tidy contrast between "white" Ashkenazi Israel and "black" Mizrahi Israel. But in the last three decades, the formerly black and white map of Israeli demography has exploded into technicolor as Soviet, Ethiopian, and Haredi Israelis dramatically altered what had previously been nearly entirely Mizrahi communities.

Beth Shemesh, the development town where the entirety of Amos Oz's interviews for *In the Land of Israel* took place, was once almost entirely North African Mizrahi, but is now approximately 40% Ashkenazi Haredim.[323] Ashkelon, once the largely North African and Yemenite *ma'abara* Migdal Gad, doubled its population from seventy-four-thousand in 1983 to one-hundred-forty-nine-thousand in 2008 as the city became a major hub for new Soviet and Ethiopian immigrants.[324] Musrara, the once overcrowded and dilapidated North African neighborhood that produced the Israeli Black Panthers, has recently begun to gentrify as French Jews who have immigrated to Israel within the last decade have moved into the neighborhood

---

[322] Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, "Immigrants, By Period of Immigration, Country of Birth and Last Country of Residence," *CBS, Statistical Abstract of Israel, 2009*, Chart No 4.4, 2009: 237-238.

[323] Harriet Sherwood, "The Battle of Bet Shemesh," *The Guardian*, October 31, 2011, accessed February 17, 2019, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2011/oct/31/bet-shemesh-haredi-jews-school?newsfeed=true

[324] Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, "Localities and Population by Population Group, District, Sub-District and National Region," *CBS, Statistical Abstract of Israel, 2012*, Chart No. 2.8, 2012: 108-109.

because of Musrara's desirable location near the Old City, on the route of the Jerusalem Light

Rail, and walking distance to the popular "Jerusalem Triangle" downtown.[325]

In addition to transforming Israel demographically, this massive influx in the available

workforce also transformed Israel's economic landscape. During this period, Ethiopian Jews,

Soviet Jews, and Palestinian laborers from the occupied territories all became competitors for the

low-to-middle wage jobs that had previously been dominated by Mizrahi Israelis.[326] As a result,

Mizrahi Israelis became more middle class than they had previously been, although there

remains great disparity between Mizrahim and Ashkenazim.[327] What before this demographic

influx had been primarily a binary intra-Jewish rivalry between Ashkenazim and Mizrahim –

with Palestinian labor consistently beneath both – was now more ethnically varied between

different Jewish groups. The combination of both this demographic and economic change played

directly into Mizrahi Israelis' new found role as Israel's new middle, which, in turn, helped to

sustain the revolution of Mizrahi culture in Israel.

While what Avi Picard identified as "the renaissance of Mizrahi culture" in Israel began

in the mid-1970s and coincided with Mizrahi Israelis' assertion of their political agency on the

path to *HaMahapach*, the mid-1980s was when Mizrahi culture went from on the road to

mainstream in Israel to fully haute-chic.[328] The new popularity and stylishness of Mizrahi culture

in Israel in the 1980s was most evident in the rise of Mizrahi pop music. Before the late 1970s

and early 1980s, the Labor Zionist hegemony in Israel had largely frowned upon the existence of

a distinct Mizrahi sound outside of the beloved Yemenite "Queen of Hebrew Music" Shoshana

---

[325] The State of Israel, Jerusalem Municipality, "Musrara," accessed February 16, 2019, https://www.jerusalem.muni.il/en/Absorption/OlimAbsorbingCommunities/Pages/Musrara.aspx.

[326] Lidia Averbukh, "Israel on the Road to the Orient?" *Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (German Institute for International and Security Affairs) Comments*, translated by Meredith Drake, No. 9 (April 2017): 2.

[327] Ibid.

[328] Avi Picard "Like a Phoenix: The Renaissance of Sephardic/Mizrahi Identity in Israel in the 1970s and 1980s," *Israel Studies* 22, No. 2 (Summer 2017): 2.

Damari.[329] But in the mid-to-late 1980s, the genre of "Mizrahit" music – a distinct mix of

Western dance music and traditional Islamic, Arab sound unique to Mizrahi Israelis – exploded

in popularity both in Israel and around the world.[330] The 1987 dance remix of Yemenite Jew and

"Madonna of the East" Ofra Haza's "Im Nin'alu," broke the top twenty in Israel, America, and

across Europe.[*331] That the lyrics of "Im Nin'alu" come directly from a poem of the same name

by 17th century Yemenite Rabbi Shalom Shabazi indicated how significant a change to Israeli

culture the rise of Mizrahi music represented. Under the Labor Zionist establishment, a both

heavily Mizrahi and heavily Diaspora inspired sound would have been culturally relegated, but

in the post-Begin reality of Israeli identity it was a smash hit.

And yet, Haza's success and Mizrahi culture's meteoric rise in popularity from the 1980s

through to today is indicative of a larger framework of discrepancy between Israel's pop-

unofficial identity and its still largely Ashkenazi governmental-official identity. In addition to the

previously mentioned Yemenite Ofra Haza – enormously famous in the 1980s and 1990s –

Israel's most popular musical artists today, like the new king of Mizrahit pop Omer Adam, or

Persian-Libyan rapper Subliminal, remain largely of Mizrahi background which frequently

consciously figures into these artists' musical stylings and content.[332] Two of Israel's most

[329] Ibid, 5-6; Assaf Carmel and Ha'aretz Service, "Shoshana Damari, 'Queen of Israeli Song,' Dies at 83," *Ha'aretz*, February 14, 2006, accessed January 30, 2019, https://www.haaretz.com/1.4892083.

[330] Picard, "Like a Phoenix," 6.

* In addition to topping dance music charts around the world, "Im Nin'alu" became a popular track to sample during early boom of hip-hop and rap music in America in the 1980s and 1990s. Long Island hip-hop duo Eric B. & Rakim sampled "Im Nin'alu" on the Coldcut Crew remix of their 1987 song "Paid in Full" on certified platinum album of the same name. Hip-hop group Public Enemy, also from Long Island, sampled "Im Nin'alu" in their track "Can't Truss It" on their 1991 album *Apocalypse 91… The Enemy Strikes Back*, now widely considered to be one of the most significant multi-member hip-hop albums ever produced.

[331] "Ofra Haza – Im Nin'alu," *Ö3 Austria Top 40*, accessed February 26, 2019, https://austriancharts.at/showitem.asp?interpret=Ofra+Haza&titel=Im+nin%27+alu&cat=s.

[332] Amy Spiro, "A Hebrew-English Mashup Summer Hit?" *The Jerusalem Post*, July 17, 2017, accessed February 18, 2019, https://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/Culture/A-Hebrew-English-mashup-summer-hit-499913 and Loolwa Khazzom, "Israeli Rapper Takes U.S." *Rolling Stone*, March 2, 2005, accessed February 18, 2019, http://www.rollingstone.com/news/story/7069855/israeli_rapper_takes_us.

internationally famous sports stars – Omri Casspi, the first Israeli basketball player to play in the

NBA, and "the Diamond from Dimona" Yoni Benayoon, a former midfielder for major Premier

League football clubs like West Ham United and Liverpool – are both Moroccan Jews who grew

up in development towns.[333] Pnina Tornai, the globally renowned wedding dress designer and

staple of reality television guilty pleasure *Say Yes to the Dress*, is a Mizrahi Israeli whose father

came from Alexandria, Egypt and whose mother came from Tangiers, Morocco.[334] While

Mizrahi Israelis dominate Israel's pop-unofficial identity – as is appropriately representative

considering Mizrahim constitute approximately 40% of Israel's intra-Jewish demographic, the

majority by a slim margin – Ashkenazim remain the majority of Israel's governmental-official

identity in politics, academia, and journalism.[335] This discrepancy between the two different

faces of Israel is one of the major sources of misinformation about Israel's demographic make-up

in global perception of the country, and a continued source of Mizrahi-Ashkenazi tension within

Israel itself.[336]

But, for the question at the center of this thesis, the most significant transformation in

Israel comes from the redefinition of the Israeli political spectrum stemming from the moral

catastrophe of the Lebanon War and the First Intifada. The First Lebanon War, which began in

Menachem Begin's second term as Prime Minister of Israel in 1982 and did not really end until

the IDF's withdrawal from southern Lebanon in 2000, challenged the IDF's image both in Israel

---

[333] Jerusalem Post Staff, "Who Is Omri Casspi?" *The Jerusalem Post,* February 8, 2019, accessed February 18, 2019, https://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/Sports/Who-is-Omri-Casspi-580090 and Ynet Staff, "Benayoon Hopes to Receive Spanish Citizenship in August," *Ynet News.com*, March 17, 2005, accessed February 18, 2019, https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-3059721,00.html.

[334] Avigayil Kadesh, "Every Bride Wants a Pnina Tornai," *Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs: Israel Experience*, May 8, 2011, accessed March 12, 2019, https://mfa.gov.il/MFA/IsraelExperience/Pages/Every_bride_wants_Pnina_Tornai-May_2011.aspx.

[335] Shabi, *We Look Like the Enemy*, 12.

[336] Ibid, 4; 14.

and around the world.[337] Before Lebanon, the popular opinion in the world and in Israel was that the IDF was the epitome of a moral army whose previous wars had always been fought on legitimate grounds of self-defense.[338] The brutality of the First Lebanon War – especially Israel's role in failing to stop the Lebanese Christian Phalangists from murdering hundreds of Palestinians in the Sabra and Shatila Massacre in 1982 – and the fact that it was a war that Israel had actively opted into beyond the scope of undeniable self-defense in the face of full-scale military invasion recast the IDF as the Goliath in the David and Goliath story, instead of the role of David it had previously played in the international community.[339]

The First Intifada, a popular Palestinian uprising against the Israeli occupation in the West Bank and Gaza which lasted from December 1987 to September 1993, solidified this fracture in Israel's image.[340] Before the First Intifada, Palestinian nationalism conjured images of the five previous Arab-Israeli wars, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine's numerous plane hijackings in the late 1960s and 1970s, or guerilla terrorist attacks like the massacre at the 1972 Munich Olympics that could be dismissed as either a substrata of a larger conflict or the illegitimate violence of various Arab and far-left terror cells. The First Intifada, as a mass movement that broke out across Palestinian largely spontaneously and independent of the Palestine Liberation Organization, redefined the image of Palestinian nationalism and forced Israel to reconcile what it had previously largely tried to ignore or explain away.[341] Images of teenage boys hurling stones at well-equipped IDF soldiers replaced images of PLO terrorists firing Katyusha rockets at non-combatant civilians, and across Israel Israelis were forced to

---

[337] Shapira, *Israel: A History*, 334; 401.
[338] Ibid, 351-353.
[339] Ibid.
[340] Ibid, 376.
[341] Ibid, 377.

seriously confront whether or not their decades long occupation of the Palestinians should, or even could, continue.

Within the context of the Israeli Right, the First Intifada posed a serious ideological challenge to the fundamental tenets of Revisionist Zionism, which traditionally espoused both territorial maximalism and liberalism concurrently.[342] In his popular 2017 book *Catch-67*, Israeli philosopher Micah Goodman argues that the First Intifada forced Revisionist Zionists to confront the fact that they could either be territorial maximalists or they could be liberals, but they could not be both.[343] If Revisionist Zionists remained territorial maximalists, they would be electing to continue an undeniably illiberal practice of ruling over millions of Palestinians without the citizenship and rights afforded to Israelis and Palestinian citizens of Israel inside the Green Line,[*] but they would extend the de facto borders of the Jewish state to include Judea and Samaria.[344] If Revisionist Zionists remained liberals who believed in equal rights and citizenship for all residents of Israel – Jewish or not – they would have to relinquish the idea that a Jewish state would obtain sovereignty over territory that more fully reflected the totality of formerly sovereign Jewish land as dictated by the historical borders of the ancient Israelite and Judean kingdoms. [345] With that area now unequivocally populated by a distinct Palestinian population and rival Palestinian national movement that totally rejects the idea of becoming Israeli citizens in a state of Israel that would encompass the borders that they envision for a separate,

---

[342] Goodman, *Catch-67*, 32.
[343] Ibid.
* The Green Line is the territorial separation line drawn between Israel and the Arab states as a part of the armistice agreements ending the 1948 War of Independence. In international law and opinion, it is commonly cited as the recognized border of Israel proper with territory outside of the Green Line in the West Bank, Gaza, and the Golan Heights being legally demarcated as occupied Palestinian and Syrian territory.
[344] Ibid.
[345] Ibid.

independent Palestinian state, there is no way that Israel can legally extend to these borders without becoming fundamentally illiberal and undemocratic.[346]

The so-called Revisionist princes and princesses – the children of prominent Revisionist Zionists who grew up to be heavily involved in Israeli politics in the 1990s and twenty first century – realized they could not indulge the fantasy of being both liberals and territorial maximalists like their parents had.[347] The princes and princesses split into several different political trajectories: fracturing a formerly unified secular right.[348] For instance, Tzipi Livni – the daughter of Irgun Chief Operations Officer Eitan Livni – prioritized the liberal over the territorially maximalist and left the Israeli Right to form her own center-left party Hatnuah (in Hebrew, "The Movement").[349] But, Yair Shamir – former prime minister Yitzhak Shamir's son – prioritized the territorially maximalist over the liberal and joined the Likud-adjacent Yisrael Beiteinu (in Hebrew, "Israel Our Home") which supports the creation of a Palestinian state in principle, but has yet to seriously try to convert that principle into policy.[350] The political home that had comfortably housed both of their parents in a single political strain could no longer do so going into the twenty-first century, which resulted in a proliferation of new Israeli political parties and reshuffled old party lines.

This fragmentation of the secular Revisionist Israeli Right also extended beyond the Revisionist princes and princesses directly to a number of high-profile Mizrahi Israeli Likud politicians who had joined the party in the 1960s through the 1980s and who similarly struggled

---

[346] Ibid.

[347] Ibid, 31.

[348] Ibid, 32.

[349] The State of Israel, Knesset, "Knesset Members, Tzipi Livni," accessed January 31, 2019, https://www.knesset.gov.il/mk/eng/mk_eng.asp?mk_individual_id_t=213.

[350] Ibid; Jewish Telegraphic Agency, "Meet Yair Shamir, the Man Who Could Replace Avigdor Lieberman," *Ha'aretz,* January 14, 2013, accessed January 31, 2019, https://www.haaretz.com/meet-the-man-who-could-replace-lieberman-1.5224508.

with the redefinition of Israel's political spectrum. For instance, Meir Sheetrit, a prominent

Moroccan born ex-Likud minister and former mayor of Yavne – a development town in central

Israel between Ashdod and Tel Aviv – who was first drawn to the party during Yitzhak Shamir's

reorganization of the Herut Central Committee in the early 1970s, left Likud in 2005 to join the

more moderate and centrist Kadima (In Hebrew, "Forward") party.[351] Sheetrit switched parties

again in 2012 to join Livni's center-left Hatnuah party after Kadima dissolved and fragmented

into several different parties.[352] Conversely, Persian Jew Moshe Katsav – former mayor of

development town Kiryat Malachai who held numerous distinguished government postings

including Minister of Labor and Welfare, Minister of Tourism, and became the first Mizrahi to

be elected President of Israel – remained affiliated with the Likud for the duration of his political

career before being convicted on a guilty plea for two counts of rape and sentenced to prison

time by the Israeli Supreme Court.[*353]

     In the power vacuum left behind by the fragmentation of secular Revisionist Zionism,

Religious Zionism – which did not fracture with the reality of the incongruity between liberalism

---

[351] Cohen and Leon, "The Mahapach and Yitzhak Shamir's Quiet Revolution," 33-32; The State of Israel, Knesset, "Knesset Members, Meir Sheetrit," accessed February 15, 2019, https://knesset.gov.il/mk/eng/mk_eng.asp?mk_individual_id_t=119.

[352] Moran Azulay and Yuval Karni, "7 Kadima Members Join Livni's Party," *Ynet News.com*, March 12, 2012, accessed February 15, 2019, https://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4315151,00.html.

* The allegations against Katsav and his subsequent guilty plea, conviction, and sentencing ignited a controversy amongst parts of the Mizrahi Israeli community that saw the ordeal as an expression of continued anti-Mizrahi bias in Israeli society and in the Israeli justice system. Mizrahim who saw Katsav's scandal as an instance of discrimination argued that, independent of whether or not he was guilty, Katsav's very well-covered trial and public disgrace would not have happened if he had been Ashkenazi. This subtopic of real and perceived ethnic bias in the Israeli justice system – which, for added clarity, functions very similarly to high profile cases involving black Americans in the United States like, for instance, the OJ Simpson or Bill Cosby cases – is one of the foremost ways in which Ashkenazi-Mizrahi tension in Israel continues to manifest. Apart from Katsav, other notable instances that evoke this tension include the conviction of Moroccan-born Shas chairman and co-founder Aryeh Deri on bribery and fraud charges in 1999, and most recently the trial of Elor Azaria, the so-called "Hebron Shooter" and Mizrahi Israeli from Ramle-Lod, in 2016.

[353] Tomer Zarchin, Ofra Edelman, Ha'aretz Service and Reuters, "Former President Moshe Katsav Guilty of Rape and Sexual Assault," *Ha'aretz*, December 30, 2010, accessed February 26, 2019, https://www.haaretz.com/1.5101266; The State of Israel, Knesset, "Knesset Members, Moshe Katsav," accessed February 26, 2019, https://www.knesset.gov.il/mk/eng/mk_eng.asp?mk_individual_id_t=110.

and territorial maximalism in the Palestinian territories – became a more prominent in the Israeli Right.[354] Goodman describes the territorial maximalism of Revisionist Zionism as derived more from Jewish history and international corroboration than from religious messianism, writing, "The Jews received the land from an international covenant at San Remo, not from a covenant with God at Mount Sinai. The authority that determined the borders of the Land of Israel was not divine revelation, but international consensus."[355] But within Religious Zionism, liberalism is not necessarily a central tenant, and the borders of the state of Israel are indeed dictated by divine right.[356] Hence an Israeli Right more influenced by Religious Zionism and a more religious set of reasoning was not as compromised in ideology as secular Revisionist Zionism, and the Israeli Right reorganized around religion accordingly.

A general shift towards Religious Zionism across the Israeli Right also played a large role in the rise of Shomrei Torah Sefaradim (in Hebrew, "Torah-Observant Sephardim"), more commonly known by its acronym, Shas: an ultra-orthodox religious party established in 1983 ethnically specific to Mizrahi Israelis.[357] While Shas is a fascinating political development and an important component of how Mizrahi Israelis factor into the modern Israeli political landscape, it is not a central focus of this thesis and I will not spend enough time on it to comprehensively assess Shas' ideology and role in Israeli politics. For the context of this thesis, Shas is as an amalgamation of a number of seemingly dislocated positions including: an expression of the general turn to religiosity on the Israeli Right, a definitively Mizrahi alternative to the still-Ashkenazi dominated political landscape, a consequence of the overall failure of

---

[354] Goodman, *Catch-67*, 20.
[355] Ibid, 29.
[356] Ibid, 20.
[357] Picard, "Like a Phoenix," 14.

Likud's capitalistic policies to address the economic needs of Mizrahi Israelis, and a movement

to restore Shas' idea of a lost Golden Age Sephardic prestige.[358]

While I will not elaborate on Shas in further detail, I note that Shas itself is one of a

number of new political alternatives for Mizrahi Israelis in the aftermath of the dissolution of a

unified Begin-era Israeli Right. Another one of these Mizrahi alternatives, Kulanu (in Hebrew,

"All of Us") – a secular-centrist political party founded by Mizrahi Israeli and former Likud

Minister Moshe Kahlon in 2014 – takes the opposite approach to Shas in terms of courting

potential Mizrahi voters that would have previously belonged to the Begin-era Likud by instead

focusing nearly entirely on domestic economic policies and social justice.[359] Further

complicating the spectrum of contemporary Israeli politics, neither Shas or Kulanu are

definitively left or right wing, though both grew out of the heritage of Begin's Likud. Between

new political parties like Shas and Kulanu and the dispersion of Begin-era Mizrahi Likud

ministers to several different political homes, traditional right-wing Mizrahi politics, like the

Israeli Right itself, has undergone a dramatic departure from its past organization.

Like the Israeli Right, the Israeli Left has fundamentally transformed itself. The original

Labor Zionist goals of establishing a collectivist, socialist Jewish state have been replaced with a

focus on diplomatic peace; the primary concerns of the modern Israeli Left deal almost entirely

with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and ending the occupation of the Palestinian territories.[360]

But while the Israeli Left's goal have departed nearly entirely from the original tenets of Labor

Zionism, the Israeli Left retains the memories of the Labor Zionist establishment. As Goodman

---

[358] Shabi, *We Look Like the Enemy*, 57; Picard, "Like a Phoenix," 14.
[359] Aron Dónzis, "Popular ex-Likud Minister Slams Old Party, Plans Political Comeback," *The Times of Israel*, April 8, 2014, accessed February 13, 2019, http://www.timesofisrael.com/popular-ex-likud-minister-slams-old-party-plans-political-comeback/.
[360] Goodman, *Catch-67*, 39.

articulates, "Israel's history can be divided, in the left's revised worldview, into two parts: before the Six-Day War, Israel was an ethical democracy whose citizens dreamt of building a model society; since the war it has become an ethnical occupier, corrupt by definition."[361] This self-conceptualization in the Israeli Left, and the obvious tension it has with Mizrahi Israelis' collective memory, plays a major role in upcoming sections.

Likud's War of Succession

In the final months of his premiership in 1983, long-time family friend Batya Eldad described Menachem Begin as "acting like someone who wants to die."[362] The Israeli economy was in ruins with a record high $21 billion dollars of international debt, 191% inflation, and more than five hundred thousand Israelis living below the poverty line.[363] The catastrophe that was the First Lebanon War cannibalized Begin's government from the inside out.[364] And, on top of his political catastrophes, Begin's wife Aliza, with whom he had fled Poland and been married to for 43 years, had passed away in November 1982.[365] On August 28, 1983, Begin resigned before the ministers of the government he had assembled for the 10th Knesset, remarking simply "I cannot go on."[366] He spent the last decade of his life before his death in 1992 in seclusion – abandoning politics entirely, refusing to even endorse his own son Benny's decision to run for a spot on Likud's list – and retired to small apartment on Shlomo Tzemach Street in the Jerusalem Forest.[367] In his abdication, Begin left behind a Likud without a clear future, leading to a veritable succession war for the leadership of the main party of the Israeli Right.

---

[361] Ibid, 39-40.
[362] Naor, *Begin in Power,* 339 in Shilon, *Menachem Begin: A Life*, 420.
[363] Shilon, *Menachem Begin: A Life*, 413.
[364] Gordis, *Menachem Begin: The Battle for Israel's Soul*, 213.
[365] Weitz, "From Peace in the South to War in the North," 160.
[366] Shilon, *Menachem Begin: A Life*, 420.
[367] Gordis, *Menachem Begin: The Battle for Israel's Soul*, 223 and Shilon, *Menachem Begin: A Life*, 427.

The year of Begin's resignation, Mizrahi Israeli Likud MK David Levy proclaimed "Menachem Begin, you have an heir!"[368] Although the immediate post-Begin void was filled by long-time party stalwart and safe-bet Yitzhak Shamir from 1984 to 1992, Shamir was an older man who was aware that he was more of a continuation of the old Israeli Right than a herald of its future.[369] Like Begin, Shamir was born in Eastern Europe in the 1910s and whose parents and siblings were, like Begin's, murdered in the Holocaust.[370] As a leader of the Lehi, Shamir got into politics in the pre-state Jewish underground, and espoused a similar – albeit more hawkish – set of views in line with Begin's form of Revisionist Zionism that he maintained throughout his political career.[371] The progression of what Likud could like look after its pre-state underground old guard departed was still very much undefined, and David Levy saw himself as the natural fit.

As previously mentioned, David Levy had long since been the most prominent and well-liked Mizrahi Israeli politician in the Likud by the time of Begin's resignation.[372] As an immigrant from Morocco who arrived to Israel at age twenty, Levy settled in the northern development town Beth Shean where he quickly became a community leader and organizer.[373] In the mid-1960s, Levy joined the Blue-White Herut faction in the Histadrut after initially being denied a post in the Histadrut by Mapai, and quickly ascended the Herut and Likud hierarchy.[374] Within the Likud, Levy was a moderate voice that countered the party's more extreme

---

[368] Gil Sedan, "Behind the Headlines: Resignation Marks Latest Twist in David Levy's Political Career," *Jewish Telegraphic Agency Daily News Bulletin*, January 7, 1998, accessed April 30, 2018, http://pdfs.jta.org/1998/1998_01_07.pdf?_ga=2.122752136.2069200549.1551230576-716346710.1545945865.

[369] Pfeffer, *Bibi*, 152 and "Knesset Member, Yitzhak Shamir," The State of Israel, Knesset, accessed February 26, 2019, https://www.knesset.gov.il/mk/eng/mk_eng.asp?mk_individual_id_t=175.

[370] David Landau, "When Shamir Revealed How His Parents and Sisters Were Killed in the Holocaust," *The Times of Israel*, June 30, 2012, accessed January 31, 2019, https://www.timesofisrael.com/when-shamir-revealed-how-his-parents-and-sisters-were-killed-in-the-holocaust/.

[371] Gordis, *Menachem Begin: The Battle for Israel's Soul*, 40-41.

[372] Shilon, "David Levy, Likud Stalwart, Should Run for Israeli President."

[373] Ibid.

[374] Ibid.

tendencies. Levy opposed Likud's prioritization of settlements in the West Bank and Gaza,

arguing instead that those funds should go to building up struggling communities inside Israel

proper.[375] He presciently warned his party about a potential disaster stemming from Israel's

initiation of the First Lebanon War, and after the Sabra and Shatila Massacre in 1982 he led the

charge investigating Defense Minister Ariel Sharon and was the sole Likud MK to vote in favor

of withdrawal from Lebanon.[376]

Because of Levy's status as the most visible and authentic Mizrahi Likud politician for

the vast majority of Mizrahi Israeli Likudniks who saw him as the figurehead who most closely

represented their largely blue-collar North African backgrounds and moderate stances, Levy

frequently served as the go-to intermediary between the government and Mizrahi Israelis. This

was especially true during the Ohalim (Tents) Movement in the 1970s and 1980s – a Mizrahi-led

protest for better housing brought about by increasing costs of living and an influx of Soviet

immigration destabilizing formerly established communities – in which Levy engaged in shuttle

diplomacy to help the protestors and the government discuss potential solutions.[377] Throughout

his career, Levy held a long list of significant government posts including Minister of

Immigration and Absorption, Minister of Construction and Housing, Deputy Prime Minister, and

Minister of Foreign Affairs.*[378] As a domestic-focused moderate and apostle of the national-

---

[375] Tessler, "The Political Right in Israel," 29.

[376] Tessler, "The Political Right in Israel," 44 and The State of Israel, Knesset, "Knesset Member, David Levy," accessed January 11, 2019, https://www.knesset.gov.il/mk/eng/mk_eng.asp?mk_individual_id_t=72.

[377] Chetrit, "Mizrahi Politics in Israel," 55.

* As Minister of Housing and Construction, Levy played an essential role in the construction of three hundred thousand new apartments specifically designed to aid the low-to-middle class blue-collar demographic that a majority of Mizrahi Israelis belonged to. Also as Minister of Housing and Construction, Levy helped to execute the Likud policy Project Urban Renewal that invested much needed government funds in service of improving and beautifying more than 100 pre-existing dominantly Mizrahi neighborhoods and towns. Levy's role in both of these projects were major sources of his credibility and popularity with Likud's moderate, domestic-focused Mizrahi voters.

[378] The State of Israel, Knesset, "Knesset Member, David Levy."

liberal Revisionist Zionist paradigm that he himself had used to climb from small-scale development town representative to third highest rank in the Likud, Levy appeared to be the embodiment of what had drawn Mizrahi Israelis to the Likud in the first place.

After Likud's dismal loss to Shimon Peres' new Labor Party in 1992, Shamir – then aged 77 – decided to step down from Likud leadership.[379] Elections for the new head of the Likud would be held in March 1993 in the party's first ever primaries, and, unlike the leadership transition from Begin to Shamir, this election would anoint a new vision to lead Likud into the future.[380] David Levy understood that these primary elections would be his chance to make good on his declaration that he was Menachem Begin's rightful heir to the Likud, and geared up for an electoral showdown for leadership against a relative newcomer to the party whose six short years in Israeli politics proper had already been more than enough time for Levy to develop an immense personal loathing: Benjamin Netanyahu.[381]

As candidates for Likud leadership, Levy and Netanyahu represented near opposite political heritages and political visions. Levy was from Likud's middle-class Mizrahi core; Netanyahu came from Revisionist Zionism's wealthy blue-blooded Ashkenazi elite that saw Menachem Begin as a weak and diasporic leader.[382] Levy joined Herut in the 1960s and had been a party member for decades; Netanyahu joined the party in 1988 and never served in a Begin government.[383] Levy rose through Likud's ranks with just a high-school education; Netanyahu held advanced degrees from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Harvard.[384] Their respective masteries of the English language became a factor in their electoral

---

[379] Ibid.
[380] Pfeffer, *Bibi*, 187.
[381] Ibid.
[382] Ibid, 50.
[383] Ibid, 184.
[384] The State of Israel, Knesset, "Knesset Member, David Levy."

rivalry as the half-American raised Netanyahu spoke flawless, accent-less English which he used to become a media and diplomatic darling, while Levy spoke very limited English although he spoke Hebrew, Arabic, and French.[*][385] Avi Shilon recounted a popular meanspirited joke of the time about Levy's English skills, "When a waiter offered [Levy] a martini, he shouted in response: 'No, Mar Levy!' Mar means Mr. in Hebrew."[386]

Levy's dislike of Netanyahu blossomed almost immediately after Netanyahu's arrival in the Likud. In 1990, Levy alluded to Netanyahu's potential racism and racism within Netanyahu's ilk, stating, "I was for some people in the Likud like a monkey that had just climbed down from the trees."[387] Their rivalry cemented openly in 1991 when Yitzhak Shamir brought Netanyahu to the Madrid Conference – the first major bilateral diplomatic meeting between Israelis and Palestinians – instead of Levy, even though Levy, as the Foreign Minister hierarchically ranked above then Deputy Foreign Minister Netanyahu.[388] Going into the primaries in 1993 there was no shortage of ideological, political, and personal bad blood between the two.

---

* Netanyahu began his political career on American cable news and talk shows in the 1980s where he first cultivated his image as a serious, well-spoken counter-terror and Israeli affairs expert. His acute mastery of recognizing and channeling the political influence of short, memorable soundbites and evocative visual aids has made him arguably the first and the finest late 20th century and 21st century politician to capture the 24-hour media cycle zeitgeist. Netanyahu applied this acquired acumen in his stint as the Israeli Ambassador to the United Nations from 1984 to 1988, during which he solidified his reputation as one of Israel's most strident and convincing diplomats.

This is essential to keep in mind when considering the context of Israel in the early 1990s and this context's implications for Likud's primaries in 1993. In the early 1990s, the First Intifada and the commencement of bilateral talks between Israelis and Palestinians magnified diplomatic and international interest on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict much more strenuously than any other time in the state of Israel's history up to that point. For right-wing Israelis and Likud voters who sought to adopt a more hardline-hawkish position in any upcoming relations between Israelis and Palestinians, the bullish and eloquent English-master Netanyahu seemed like a safer bet to counterbalance Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat: an equally adept English speaker who by the 1990s had already spent decades cultivating his image as a passionate, cool, sunglasses-wearing anti-colonial revolutionary. David Levy, with his moderate positions, domestic focus, and limited English unfairly struggled to compete with Netanyahu's image among diplomatic-focused Likud voters regardless of the fact that Arafat and Levy would have been able to converse in Arabic.

[385] Shilon, "David Levy, Likud Stalwart, Should Run for Israeli President," and Leon T. Hadar, "David Levy: Can He Win the Likud Succession War?" *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs* March 1992, accessed April 30, 2018, https://www.wrmea.org/1992-march/to-tell-the-truth-david-levy-can-he-win-the-likud-s-succession-war.html.
[386] Shilon, "David Levy, Likud Stalwart, Should Run for Israeli President."
[387] Pfeffer, *Bibi*, 184.
[388] Sedan, "Behind the Headlines."

In January 1993, when campaigning for the Likud primaries was already underway, the

Israeli press announced it had received an anonymous tip about the existence of sex tape that

showed Netanyahu cheating on his third wife, Sara, with his campaign public relations

adviser.[389] Although the videotape was never recovered, Netanyahu admitted that he had in fact

cheated on his third wife with his public relations adviser, and quickly asserted that Levy had

orchestrated the whole videotape scandal as a form of political blackmail.[390] In his accusation,

Netanyahu described Levy as "a man in Likud surrounded by a gang of criminals," invoking the

Labor Zionist establishment stereotype that Moroccan Jews were dangerous, violent thugs.[391]

Levy vociferously denied any involvement and decried Netanyahu's accusation as a low-brow

attack to try and sink his campaign for Likud leadership.[392]

In March 1993, just two months after the sex tape scandal, Likud party members went to

the ballot box to select new leadership for the party. On March 24, 1993 the party released the

official results of the voting: Netanyahu won handily with 52% of the vote, David Levy placed

second with 29% of the vote.[393] Levy refused to congratulate Netanyahu, but in spite of

threatening to leave the party, he agreed to stay on as a Likud minister with the stipulation that

he refused to specifically help Netanyahu or the office of the prime minister.[394] Over the next

few years, Netanyahu's and Levy's relations continued to sour. In 1995 Levy left the Likud,

---

[389] Pfeffer, *Bibi*, 188.

[390] Ron Kampeas, "Can Trump Learn a Thing or Two from Netanyahu's Old Video Scandal?" *The Times of Israel* October 14, 2016, accessed January 28, 2019, https://www.jta.org/2016/10/13/politics/can-trump-learn-a-thing-or-two-from-netanyahus-old-video-scandal.

[391] Yarden Zur and Jonathan Lis, "Ex-Foreign Minister David Levy, Voice of 'The Other Israel,' Wins Israel Prize," *Ha'aretz*, March 16, 2018, accessed January 27, 2019, https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-david-levy-voice-of-the-other-israel-wins-israel-prize-1.5911011.

[392] "Netanyahu Tells Police 2 in Likud Tried to Blackmail Him Over Affair," *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, January 9, 1993, accessed January 31, 2019, https://www.jta.org/1993/01/09/archive/netanyahu-tells-police-2-in-likud-tried-to-blackmail-him-over-affair.

[393] Pfeffer, *Bibi*, 190.

[394] Clyde Haberman, "Israel's Likud Passes Torch, Naming Netanyahu Leader," *New York Times*, March 26, 1993, accessed January 31, 2019, https://www.nytimes.com/1993/03/26/world/israel-s-likud-passes-torch-naming-netanyahu-leader.html.

citing Netanyahu's abandonment of the Likud principles that had originally drawn Mizrahim to the party to form his own party, Gesher (In Hebrew, "Bridge"), designed specifically to appeal to the economic needs and moderate positions of Mizrahi Israelis. [395] Levy described his Gesher party as "the true Likud."[396] In a statement about his decision to resign from Likud – his political home for over three decades – Levy stated "I have realized that the movement in which I was raised and in which I had invested all my life, is not ripe to be led by a Moroccan."[397] However, Gesher was not the electoral success Levy had hoped it would be, and Levy's "true Likud" ultimately had to join with the extant Likud to form a coalition for the next elections in 1996.[398] Levy resigned from the Likud coalition again in 1998, but rejoined the party shortly after in exchange for a brief posting as the Foreign Minister in the early 2000s.[399] He remained in the party in a diminished capacity until 2006, when his spot on Likud's list was so low that he failed to earn a seat as a member of the Knesset.[400] Levy is now officially retired, and still lives in Beth Shean.[401] Levy commented on his retirement in a 2015 interview with Israeli news outlet Mako, saying, "[I'm just] a retiree. I don't have plans anymore. I don't have anything to do with politics anymore and am no longer interested in politics. That's the truth. I've done my part, bless God. Changing of the guard and that's it."[402] In 2018, he received the Israel Prize – the highest civilian honor available in the state of Israel – for his storied record of civil service.[403]

Levy's vision for the future of Likud – a moderate, liberal, secular center-right party where a Mizrahi Israeli would naturally inherit the mantle of Israeli identity and Israeli politics

---

[395] Sedan, "Behind the Headlines."
[396] Ibid.
[397] Ibid.
[398] Ibid.
[399] The State of Israel, Knesset, "Knesset Member, David Levy."
[400] Ibid.
[401] Zur and Lis, "Ex-Foreign Minister David Levy, Voice of 'The Other Israel,' Wins Israel Prize."
[402] Ibid.
[403] Ibid.

that Menachem Begin's Revisionist Zionists and Mizrahi Israeli voters had crafted and put in power together – is not the Likud that currently exists. Instead, the current incarnation of Likud – still headed by Benjamin Netanyahu at the time of writing this thesis – reflects a strain of Revisionist Zionism that disdained Begin. This Likud has replaced its focus on intra-Jewish egalitarianism and social justice in favor of ideological-security interests with no real vested correlation to the status of Mizrahi Israelis. As Netanyahu demonstrated in his accusation against Levy in 1993, this Likud tolerates the kind of racial invective Mizrahi Israelis associated with mistreatment from the Labor Zionist establishment. And yet, Mizrahi Israelis continue to vote for this Likud in significant numbers. In the elections for the fourteenth Knesset in 1996 – Netanyahu's first general election as head of the party – Likud garnered 30.2% of the still heavily Mizrahi populated development towns: the highest percentage for a single political party.[404]

The reasoning of this seeming incongruity is in the nature of collective memory itself. Just as with Mizrahi Israeli members of the Labor Party in the lead up to the 1977 *HaMahapach*, the full reality of the entirety of the historical record holds little bearing on the overall narrative of the memory and the translation of the memory into sociopolitical action. The Likud of today is fundamentally departed from the Likud of 1977, but the party's continued success with Mizrahim in spite of the depth of the departure confirms the necessity of understanding collective memory as an essential component of why Mizrahim *continue* to vote for the Israeli Right.

---

[404] Don Peretz and Gideon Doron, "Israel's 1996 Elections: Another Political Earthquake," *Middle East Journal* 60, No. 4 (Fall 1996): 542.

Bibi and Begin: Two Kings of Israel?

In both 1977 and 1981, raucous choruses of "Begin, Melech Yisrael!" (in Hebrew, "Begin, King of Israel") from Mizrahi Israeli supporters accompanied Menachem Begin in his victory speeches and campaign stops.[405] In 1993, when Netanyahu formally accepted Likud party leadership, the crowd greeted him with an identical chant "Bibi, Melech Yisrael!" that has subsequently become a commonplace sound at any Netanyahu appearance.[406] Although both Netanyahu and Begin shared immense charisma, a natural talent for public speaking, inspired passionate devotion in the Likud base, and have both been anointed metaphorical kings of Israel, they are fundamentally different politicians. Netanyahu – who, whether you love him or hate him, is a gifted and savvy politician – has consistently cultivated and enjoyed being cast as Begin's successor in spite of the numerous and obvious differences between the two Likud leaders. Just as Netanyahu's Likud is greatly departed from Begin's Likud, so is Bibi the man greatly departed from Menachem the man. And, just as with understanding the radical changes to the state of Israel and the Likud party, understanding the depth of the differences between Begin and Netanyahu illuminates how collective memory resists the disruption of a more comprehensive reading of the historical record, and affirms Mizrahi Israeli collective memory of their relationship to the Israeli Right as a major factor in contemporary Israeli voting patterns.

Since his election as head of the party in 1993, Netanyahu has been the largely undisputed head of the Likud. Over the course of his fifteen years leading the party – twelve of which he has served as prime minister of Israel – he has invoked Begin's memory for his own political gain. In 2012, Netanyahu dedicated a new monument to the *Altalena* at Nahalal Yitzhak Cemetery in Tel Aviv; in his dedication speech he said, "We want to preserve the *Altalena's*

[405] Claiborne, "Begin Finds New Political Base Among Israel's Sephardic Jews."
[406] Haberman, "Israel's Likud Passes Torch, Naming Netanyahu Leader."

heritage and story, especially the values it represents. At the height of the tragedy, Begin established a simple and clear principle – there will not be a civil war."[407] But even though Netanyahu represents himself as a Begin admirer in this speech, he belongs to the strain of Revisionist Zionism derided Begin. This strain included those like Shmuel Tamir – who said Begin's post-*Altalena* speech made Begin sound like a "Yiddishe mamme"[408] – and like his father Benzion Netanyahu: both of whom regarded the *Altalena* not as a glowing example of a future moral principle, but as an indication that Begin was a weak leader who buckled to David Ben-Gurion and the Labor Zionists.[409] When Begin finalized the Camp David Accords in 1979, Netanyahu – then thirty years old – agreed with his father that Begin's treaty with and concessions to Egypt were indicative of weak leadership and an ideological betrayal of Jabotinsky's Revisionist Zionist principles.[410]

Netanyahu's ideological distance from Begin was further compounded by his physical distance. He did not join Likud until 1988, well after Begin's retirement, and was not well liked by the Begin family.[411] When Netanyahu attended the 1999 *yahrzeit*[*] memorial service for Menachem Begin – something he had never done before, but attended in 1999 in an attempt to salvage a then-struggling career – Begin's son, Benny, refused to allow Netanyahu to stand near him and cut the service short.[412]

---

[407] Herb Keinon, "PM invokes Begin at 'Altalena' Memorials; In Clear Reference to the Settlements, PM Insists on the Supremacy of the Rule of Law, No Civil War Under Any Circumstance," *The Jerusalem Post,* June 10, 2012, accessed July 24, 2018, https://www.jpost.com/Diplomacy-and-Politics/PM-invokes-Begin-at-Altalena-memorial.
[408] Gordis, *Menachem Begin: The Battle for Israel's Soul*, 96.
[409] Pfeffer, *Bibi*, 50.
[410] Ibid, 134-135.
[411] Ibid, 136.
[*] In Jewish tradition, *yahrzeit* is the annual mourning day for the death of a family member or loved one. On this day, Jews light a *yahrzeit* candle and perform the Mourner's Kaddish: a recitation reaffirming a Jew's devotion to God even in spite of grief and loss.
[412] Ibid, 276.

In terms of personal character and political views, Menachem Begin and Benjamin Netanyahu were frequently polar opposites. Begin had an ascetic lifestyle; before he moved into the prime minister's residence on Balfour Street in Jerusalem, he lived in a simple two bedroom apartment in Tel Aviv where he and his wife slept on couches so their three children could sleep on beds.[413] Conversely, Netanyahu owns multiple lavish residences all over Israel.[414] The current corruption and bribery charges Netanyahu faces stem in part from allegations that he and his wife Sara accepted hundreds of thousands of dollars' worth of cigars, champagne, and jewelry in exchange for political favors.[415] In 2013, when Netanyahu came under criticism for spending one hundred and twenty thousand dollars' worth of taxpayer funds to have a double bed installed on his five hour flight to England for Margaret Thatcher's funeral, then 88-year-old Israeli photographer David Rubinger – most famous for his iconic photographs of Israeli troops at the Western Wall in the Six-Day War – rebuffed Netanyahu by posting a photograph he took during his tenure as a state photographer to his Facebook of Menachem Begin sitting in a seat packed with pillows for a twelve hour flight to America.[416] Rubinger sarcastically captioned the photo, "It seems Menachem Begin was dumb. He didn't know what a real prime minister deserves. Twelve hours to America without a double bed."[417]

This discrepancy in lifestyles highlights both the enigma of Netanyahu's and Begin's popularity amongst Mizrahi Israeli voters and affirms the surreal logic of collective memory. Mizrahi Israelis who loved Begin often cited his warmth, accessibility, and Jewish values as the

---

[413] "The Begin Center Museum – a Multimedia Trip Through a Leader's Life," Tour, Menachem Begin Heritage Center, July 12, 2018.

[414] Pfeffer, *Bibi*, 283.

[415] David M. Halbfinger, "The Corruption Cases Against Netanyahu," *The New York Times*, December 2, 2018, accessed January 31, 2019, https://www.nytimes.com/2018/12/02/world/middleeast/netanyahu-cases-guide.html.

[416] Gavriel Fiske, "Will the Real PM Please Rest Up?" *The Times of Israel*, May 13, 2013, accessed April 30, 2018, https://www.timesofisrael.com/will-the-real-pm-please-rest-up/.

[417] Ibid.

main sources of their respect for him. For instance, a Moroccan-born waitress told *Jerusalem Post* reporter Sarah Honig that the key to Begin's success with the Mizrahim was that "Begin is one of us. He has got a warm heart. He is honest and modest and not stuck up. He knows a lot but will never make you feel that he is better educated and knows more than you."[418] Netanyahu, upon scrutiny, clearly lacks these qualities. Where Menachem Begin was married to his wife Aliza for forty-three years, Netanyahu cheated on his first wife while she was pregnant, got divorced, got married and divorced again, and then cheated on his third wife whom he is still married to.[419] Where Begin developed his oratory talent on tours across Eastern Europe where he slept on park benches because he felt uncomfortable staying in strangers' homes without the ability to pay for his board, Netanyahu crafted his on-air media charm by hiring professional videographers to tape him practicing soundbites alone in his decadent American residence.[420] And yet these obvious differences in what Mizrahi Israelis openly identified as important factors in their initial attraction to Likud leadership have seemingly little bearing on continued support for the Likud party.

It is also worth emphasizing that these differences extend beyond cosmetic or personality disparity and into their respective political values. Begin, whose connection to the Jewish Diaspora and closeness with the Jewish past heavily informed his approach to Israeli politics and played an important role in Mizrahi attraction to the Israeli Right, specifically resigned on August 28, 1983 so that he would not have to host West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl.*[421]

[418] Honig, "Menachem Begin – the Republican Monarch."
[419] Pfeffer, *Bibi*, 131; 188.
[420] Gordis, *Menachem Begin: The Battle for Israel's Soul*, 21 and Pfeffer, *Bibi*, 147.
[421] Shilon, *Menachem Begin: A Life*, 419.
* Begin had an antagonistic relationship with every Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany during his lifetime. He vociferously maintained that Chancellor Helmut Schmidt remained a Nazi at heart and routinely proclaimed that Schmidt had never renounced his dedication to Adolf Hitler. Irgunist Elieser Sudit claimed that Begin was the mastermind and financier of an assassination attempt by letter bomb on Chancellor Konrad Adenauer

Kohl, who was born in Bavaria in 1930, had been a Hitler Youth as was mandatory for all German boys his age.[422] Just as Begin's connection to the Diaspora catalyzed his ferocious opposition to West German reparations to Israel in 1952, it remained an important motivator for his politics to the very end of his career. Netanyahu, a consummate practitioner of cynical realpolitik, has made friends out of a number of right-wing authoritarian Eastern European leaders and blatant Holocaust revisionists whose parties trace directly back to Nazi-allied governments. One of these allies, current Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban, gave the following speech filled with thinly veiled classical European anti-Semitism on the 170th anniversary of the Hungarian Revolution:

> They do not fight directly, but by stealth; they are not honorable, but unprincipled; they are not national but international; they do not believe in work, but speculate with money; they have no homeland, but feel that the whole world is theirs. They are not generous, but vengeful, and always attack the heart – especially if it is red, white, and green [the colors of the Hungarian flag].[423]

Netanyahu's open courting of these types of European leaders is a moral betrayal of one of Begin's foundational political principles, but in Netanyahu's approach to politics, pragmatism trumps the Jewish past: making him arguably more typically Labor Zionist in his rationale than Begin-era Revisionist Zionist. Just as David Ben-Gurion and the Labor Zionists argued in favor of accepting reparations from West Germany in 1952 because that money could provide tremendous, desperately needed help for building a stable Israeli infrastructure, Netanyahu similarly rationalizes buddying up to European ethno-nationalists and Holocaust revisionists in exchange for diplomatic support in the European Union and the United Nations.

---

in 1952, though Sudit – who was convicted for his role in the attempt – is the sole source of this accusation which has never been factually substantiated and which was not raised until after Begin's death in 1992.
[422] Ibid.
[423] Erna Paris, "Viktor Orban's War on George Soros and Hungary's Jews," *The Globe and Mail*, June 1, 2018, accessed January 14, 2019, https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/article-viktor-orbans-war-on-george-soros-and-hungarys-jews/.

Theoretically most impactful to continued Mizrahi Israeli support for Likud is the difference in which Begin and Netanyahu regarded and continue to regard the Mizrahim themselves. As demonstrated in the first part of this thesis, Menachem Begin made equality amongst Jews a defining value of his politics throughout his career. His most memorable speech – his 1981 rebuke of Dudu Topaz's "chach-chachkim" statement – hinged on the delivery of its climactic sentiment "Ashkenazim? Iraqi? Jews! Brothers! Fighters!"[424] With his accusation that David Levy was "a man in Likud surrounded by a gang of criminals," Netanyahu openly demonstrated that he did not share Begin's dedication to intra-Jewish egalitarianism in Israel.[425] In his 2000 memoir *Going to the Wars*, British journalist Max Hastings recalled an even more blatant anecdote of Netanyahu's anti-Mizrahi racism, "[Netanyahu] joked about the Golani Brigade, the Israeli infantry force in which so many men were North African or Yemenite Jews. 'They're okay as long as they're led by white officers.' He grinned."[426] Netanyahu denies he ever said this, but the fact that the mere insinuation that he may have said this has not hurt his appeal to Mizrahi voters is itself indicative of the nature of memory.[427]

In spite this mountain of comprehensive evidence of how unlike Begin and Netanyahu are, Netanyahu still enjoys the legacy of Begin's role in Mizrahi Israelis' collective memory of their relationship to the Israeli Right. When asked about how he could support Netanyahu after the revelation of the seriousness of his corruption scandals, Yehuda Ayyash – a fifty-five-year-old Moroccan Jew from Kiryat Malachai – reasoned, "The more they attack us the stronger we get… Gifts, no gifts. There is nobody in politics who is unblemished. It's give and take. There is

---

[424] Shilon, *Menachem Begin: A Life*, 354.
[425] Zur and Lis, "Ex-Foreign Minister David Levy, Voice of 'The Other Israel,' Wins Israel Prize."
[426] Max Hastings, *Going to the Wars*, (London: Pan Macmillan, 2000) in Pfeffer, *Bibi*, 123.
[427] Pfeffer, *Bibi*, 123.

nobody else."[428] What's most striking about Ayyash's statement is how he ascribed the same kind of familial oneness that Mizrahi Israelis attributed to Begin to Netanyahu regardless of their differences in Revisionist Zionist heritage, their character as people, and their political values and approaches.

There are contemporary right-wing Mizrahi Israeli voices that lament the differences between Begin and Netanyahu – like, for instance, Mizrahi Israeli Rami Greenberg of Petah Tikvah who responded to Netanyahu's ongoing corruption scandals by telling *Yedioth Ahronoth* journalist Adir Yanko in 2017, "It's painful to see what is happening around us today, and not just in the Likud… I would like to see a lot of Menachem Begins today, not in terms of power, but in what he exuded. Someone who aims to be a servant of the public, instead of someone looking to see how the public can serve him."[429] However, the reality of Netanyahu's deviations is largely impervious to the narrative-based logic of collective memory. Because Netanyahu does an effective job of self-branding himself as Begin's legacy, and because Mizrahi Israelis have a deep, vested interest in maintaining the collective memory of their relationship to the Israeli Right to which they link their self-conceptualization of pride, dignity, and identity, the discrepancies of the full historical record are nullified in the interests of the narrative.

The Israel of today, the Likud of today, and the leadership of Likud today are all fundamentally different than they were in 1977, and yet Mizrahi Israelis continue to vote Likud in significant numbers. The degree to which the conditions of political and social histories that explain the initial vote for Likud in 1977 have dramatically changed are, I argue, evidence that

---

[428] Isabel Kershner, "In Poorer Periphery, Legal Woes Don't Dent Netanyahu's Appeal," *The New York Times*, March 17, 2018, accessed May 1, 2018, https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/17/world/middleeast/benjamin-netanyahu-israel-likud.html.
[429] Adir Yanko, "Likudniks Recall 40 Years Since Their Dramatic Win," *Ynet News.com*, April 17, 2017, accessed April 9, 2018, https://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4949898,00.html.

political and social histories on their own are insufficient to explain why Mizrahi Israelis *continue* to vote for the Israeli Right today. Instead, I re-emphasize the necessity of an empathetic approach to collective memory as a valuable lens through which to address the question at the center of this thesis.

6. "They Are Exactly the Ones Who Laughed": Israel's 2011 Social Justice Protests

The political goals and values of the Israeli Left have reoriented away from traditional Labor Zionism and towards diplomatic peace. But, just as the Israeli Right's transformation has not altered the collective memory of right-wing Mizrahi Israelis, the Israeli Left's transformation has not deracinated it from creating a positive memory-narrative around the Labor Zionist state. Instead, the Israeli Left imagines the era of the Labor Zionist hegemony as an idyllic, unblemished moral past divorced from the current day which the Israeli Left views as the immoral perversion that began in either 1967 or 1977. I argue that, in terms of collective memory, this produces an inherent tension between the Israeli Left's memory and conceptualization of Israeli identity and Mizrahi Israelis' memory and conceptualization of Israeli identity, which, as I demonstrated in the first part of this thesis, links the pride and dignity of Mizrahi Israeli identity to the success of the Israeli Right. This section uses the context, performance, and reception of the 2011 social justice protests in Israel as a microcosm to explore this tension between competing memories of Israeli identity.

Nostalgia for a Racist Era

In his 2014 text, "'They Will Take the Country Away From Us': Labor Zionism, the Origins and Legacy of the Other in Israeli Mass Media, and Hegemonic Narratives," Seth Frantzman coined the term "nostalgia for a racist era" to describe the process through which the

Israeli Left and non-Israeli voices aligned with the Israeli Left reimagine the era of the Labor

Zionist state as a prelapsarian utopia in contradistinction to the immoral Israeli present.[430]

Frantzman produces several examples of this logic from which I have selected two that are most

indicative. This first is from left-wing American Jew and critic of Israeli policies Peter Beinart,

who wrote in his 2012 book *The Crisis of Zionism*, "The ideal of social justice was embodied in

the early Zionist movement and in the kibbutz."[431] The second is from former *Ha'aretz* journalist

Ari Shavit's 2013 *My Promised Land* in which Shavit writes, "the newborn state of Israel was

one of the most egalitarian democracies in the world."[432] In both examples, the authors produce

ahistorical representations of the Labor Zionist state in service of representing it as a

romanticized past. As demonstrated in the first part of this thesis, the Labor Zionist state was

both individually and structurally racist and Orientalist, and actively sought to discourage non-

Labor Zionist political activities: a far cry from egalitarianism and democracy. Because this

"nostalgia" is – like Mizrahi conceptualization of the Israeli Right – a teleological memory, it

similarly diminishes or omits the elements of the historical record which undermine its narrative.

Frantzman elaborates further "this theory operates on the notion that Israel's trajectory

was egalitarian and positive until after 1967 or until after the election of Menachem Begin in

1977."[433] I point out that 1967 – isolated by Frantzman here as the year of the Six-Day War and

the beginning of Israel's military occupation of the West Bank, Gaza, and the Golan Heights – is

also inherently linked to Menachem Begin and the ascension of the Israeli Right. The unity

government convened to deal with the emergency of impending war in 1967 marked the first

time Herut was properly incorporated into the Israeli government and the first time Menachem

---

[430] Frantzman, "'They Will Take the Country from Us,'" 163.
[431] Peter Beinart, *The Crisis of Zionism* (New York: Times Books, 2012), 91.
[432] Ari Shavit, *My Promised Land: The Triumph and Tragedy of Israel* (New York: Spiegel & Grau, 2013), 151.
[433] Frantzman, "'They Will Take the Country from Us,'" 163.

Begin was formally appointed as Minister Without Portfolio.[434] And, it was Begin who most

passionately lobbied Defense Minister Moshe Dayan to capture the Old City of Jerusalem, the

Golan Heights, and the West Bank after learning of the Israeli Air Force's successful destruction

of the Egyptian airfields on the first day of the war on June 5th, 1967.[435] Whether the logic of the

Israeli Left's nostalgia for a racist era treats 1967 or 1977 as the start date of moral corruption,

both are intrinsically linked to the ascension of the Israeli Right.

Herein lies the tension between the Israeli Left's memory of Israel and conceptualization

of Israeli identity, and Mizrahi Israelis' memory of Israel and conceptualization of Israeli

identity: what is negative, corrupting, and signaling decline to the Israeli Left is what is positive,

triumphant, and signaling ascent to Mizrahi Israelis. In both versions of memory, 1977 is a fixed

narrative point, but with opposite meanings. For Mizrahi Israelis it is the moment when, as

Yoram Tzidkihayu would say, "I got my pride back"; for the Israeli Left it is the moment when

the government became illiberal and undemocratic.[436] The Israeli Left's memory of the Labor

Zionist establishment venerates that era as egalitarian, moral, and democratic, while Mizrahi

Israelis remember this same era as a time of humiliation, subjugation, and lack of agency. These

two opposing recollections of a singular timeline produce a sense of a zero-sum game and, I

argue, constitutes a major example of how collective memory continues to impact Mizrahi

affiliation with the Israeli Right.

Mizrahi Israelis have been aware of this sort of nostalgia for a racist era and binary Israeli

history in the Israeli Left for several decades. In Amos Oz's *In the Land of Israel* (originally

---

[434] Shilon, *Menachem Begin: A Life*, 205.
[435] Ibid.
[436] Franklin, "Likud Party's Success Driven By Sephardim."

published in 1983) a Beth Shemesh man angrily tells Oz, who himself was frequently seen as an

individual manifestation of the Israeli Left, that,

> You – you don't have any pride in your country. Only in yourselves, only in your kibbutzim and that Peace Now group. Running all over the world saying 'It's them! This isn't us. This filthy country is Begin's, but us, we're clean!' Goody-goodies! Pure-hearts! You want the world to think this was once a beautiful, civilized country but now Begin and his niggers have taken over. That the gentiles should come here tomorrow, today, to help you take the country back into your own hands.[437]

In addition to the stark and jarring passion of this man's proclamation, this statement is

significant for two major reasons. First, it clearly articulated awareness of the competition

between the two competing visions of Israel and Israeli identity. Second, the statement

demonstrated that the idea of this competition produces a powerful emotional response in

Mizrahi Israelis. Much more than just the detached presentation of two rival visions, this

competition between understandings of Israel and Israeli identity produces palpable emotional

stakes for Mizrahim as the validity of identity and experience itself is what is in question. I argue

that the emotional component of this binary between two different versions of Israel and Israeli

identity acts as a barrier between Mizrahim and the Israeli Left, in which the idea of switching

political sides can understood as an inherent betrayal of identity.

Rothschild Boulevard 2011

With this context established, I turn now to representative example of how this tension

between the Israeli Left's and Mizrahi Israelis' memories of Israel and conceptualization of

Israeli identity has manifested in recent Israeli history. On July 14, 2011, the so-called "social

justice movement" began in Tel Aviv after Daphne Leef – a twenty-five-year-old Ashkenazi

film-editor – posted a call to action on Facebook after being forced to terminate her apartment

---

[437] Oz, *In the Land of Israel*, 40.

lease due to the skyrocketing cost of housing.[438] Although these protests technically preceded the

Occupy movement of the same year, the Israeli protests assumed a similar form; within days

thousands of tents sprung up in makeshift compounds in Tel Aviv and across Israel.[439] Tel

Aviv's iconic Rothschild Boulevard – famous for its rows of trees and popular cafés – became

the central hub of the entire movement.[440] The content of the demonstrations at this site,

especially their performative aspect, indicated the presence of nostalgia for a racist era at this

major protest largely led by Ashkenazi students and activists affiliated with the Israeli Left.[441]

While it would be reasonable to assume that a protest criticizing the government would

negatively represent symbols of the state, the "protest-carnival site" at Rothschild Boulevard

actually featured a litany of Zionist symbols and Israeli flags.[442] Protestors arranged "dialogue

circles" meant to emulate collectivist spatial arrangements like the kibbutz.[443] They also staged

performances of major moments from Zionist history including a re-reading of the Israeli

Declaration of Independence and a recreation of godfather of modern political Zionism Theodor

Herzl's famous balcony portrait.[444] What is striking about these performative examples is that

they lionized the Labor Zionist and pre-state Israeli past and omitted the presence and

achievements of the Israeli Right and Mizrahi Israelis entirely: forgoing the presence of any post-

1977 past to instead emphasize an implicit argument to make Israel sabra again. By proxy of this

---

[438] Uri Gordon, "Israel's 'Tent Protests': The Chilling Effect of Nationalism," *Social Movement Studies* 11, No. 3-4 (2012): 349.
[439] Ibid, 350.
[440] Oren Livio and Tamar Katriel, "A Fractured Solidarity: Communities and Structure in the Israeli 2011 Social Protest," in *The Political Aesthetics of Global Protest: The Arab Spring and Beyond*, edited by Pnina Werbner, Martin Webb, and Kathryn Spellman-Poots (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), 152.
[441] Uri Gordon, "Democratic Deficit in the Israeli Tent Protests: Chronicle of a Failed Intervention," in *Protest Camps in International Context: Spaces, Infrastructures, and the Media of Resistance*, edited by Gavin Brown, Anna Feigenbaum, Fabian Frenzel, and Patrick McCurdy (Bristol: Policy Press at the University of Bristol, 2017), 222.
[442] Livio and Katriel, "A Fractured Solidarity," 155.
[443] Ibid, 155.
[444] Ibid, 153; 165.

omission, the protestors internalized and projected the logic of nostalgia for a racist era. Israeli scholars Oren Livio and Tamar Katriel implicitly confirmed this position in their assessment of the protests, "this movement largely reconstructed itself as a return to the foundational tenets of Zionism – tenets that had allegedly been deserted by modern day Israeli leaders – by recreating foundational tropes and invoking legendary moments from back to an authentic past."[445]

By the logic of Livio's and Katriel's reasoning, the Israeli reality created collaboratively between the Israeli Right and Mizrahi Israelis after 1977 is inauthentic and a departure from the foundational tenets of Zionism. Israeli political theorist Uri Gordon produced a similar assessment, writing "indeed, the movement is best understood as an all-too-brief interlude in Israel's ongoing move away from democracy," and "efforts to recreate a welfare state were not presented as a matter of social conflict along class lines, but instead through appeals to social unity as an expression of 'true Zionism' – rhetoric that panders to Israelis' nostalgia for the collectivism and republicanism of the early state."[446] In Gordon's explanation, the ascendancy of the Israeli Right, which Mizrahi collective memory of pride is linked to, is negatively represented as a move away from democracy. He represents "true Zionism" as synonymous with Labor Zionism, implying that Israel's departure from a Labor Zionist hegemony following 1977 is a corrosion of what he envisions as the authentic or genuine Zionism. And, in his closing remarks on the overall message of the protests, Gordon redacts the experiences of Mizrahi Israelis under the Labor Zionist hegemony entirely as nostalgia for collectivism is assumed to be universal to the Israeli identity. Just as I argued that Mizrahi Israeli mourning at Menachem Begin's funeral constituted a performative affirmation of their shared conceptualization of Israeli

---

[445] Ibid, 155.
[446] Gordon, "Israel's 'Tent Protests,'" 350; 352.

identity, I argue that the content and assessments of the protest at Rothschild Boulevard were performative rejections of this same memory and conceptualization.

Mizrahi Reactions to the 2011 Social Justice Protests

Housing inequality between Israeli Ashkenazim and Mizrahim has been a fundamental concern for Mizrahi Israelis dating back to the pre-state era. In transit camps, Ashkenazi immigrants spent an average of one to two months in the poor, overcrowded conditions where Mizrahim could spend as long as one or two years.[447] The Labor Zionist state settled Mizrahim in peripheral *ma'abarot* made from the cheapest materials available at the same time as Ashkenazim received well-constructed housing in Israel's more secure center.[448] As *ma'abarot* evolved into development towns, the neocolonial Labor Zionist economic organization produced a system where Ashkenazi managers and owners, who did not live in the development towns where they worked, took the majority of the profits and then invested those profits outside of the development towns: improving their own Ashkenazi communities, but leaving the Mizrahi development towns economically stagnant.[449] And in the 1970s and 1980s, the Israeli government providing Soviet immigrants with better housing upon their arrival to Israel than Mizrahim had gotten decades earlier was a major rallying point for both the Israeli Black Panthers and the Mizrahi activists leading the Ohalim (Tents) Movement.[450]

Needless to say, an Ashkenazi-led protest about housing injustice that also mythologized the Labor Zionist era that Mizrahi Israelis associated as the root of their own housing injustice as an ideal to be emulated caused some frustration amongst Mizrahi Israelis. In a radio interview two weeks after the 2011 social justice protests began, Mizrahi diva Margalit Tsan'ani – known

---

[447] Shenhav, *The Arab Jews*, 32.
[448] Shapira, *Israel: A History*, 200.
[449] Swirski, *Israel: The Oriental Majority*, 32-33.
[450] Chetrit, "Mizrahi Politics in Israel," 54-55.

simply as Margol – touched on this frustration when she criticized the protestors as "tsefbonim" (Israeli slang meaning spoiled Tel Aviv yuppies) who were only complaining because they could no longer afford upscale housing with ease.[451] Margol then went on to contrast the Ashkenazi-led 2011 movement with the Mizrahi-led Ohalim Movement of the 1970s and 1980s, telling the radio hosts, "When we protested, they [implying Ashkenazim] told us to have fewer children and stop drinking arak.'* They are exactly the ones who laughed at [us then]."[452] Margol's response showed both how Mizrahi collective memory continues to impact contemporary Mizrahi politics, and the consequence of the 2011 protests adopting the logic of Frantzman's nostalgia for a racist era. The same Mizrahi memory of mistreatment that the performative content and framing of the protests denied by elevating the Labor Zionist state to a romanticized ideal was exactly what Margol used to ultimately make her negative assessments of the protests. Highlighting this incongruity demonstrates how the modern Israeli Left's clinging to a positive memory of the Labor Zionist state acts as a barrier for Mizrahim to commiserate with their positions and plays a role in Mizrahi Israelis' continued affiliation to the Israeli Right.

And while Margol is just one individual with one individual opinion, the overall statistics regarding participation in the 2011 protests confirms that her negative assessment and lack of desire to participate in the protests was shared by a significant number of Mizrahi Israelis. While Tel Aviv was by far the largest and most populous site of protest, other similar demonstrations extended to other major cities like Jerusalem and Haifa, and even to development towns like

---

[451] Benjamin Acosta, "The Dynamics of Israel's Democratic Tribalism," *Middle East Journal* 68, No. 2 (Spring 2014): 283.

* A delicious licorice-flavored alcoholic spirit made from anise seed that originated and achieved widespread popularity in the Levant and the Eastern Mediterranean. In the context of Ashkenazi-Mizrahi relations in Israel, Ashkenazi's negative association of Mizrahim with arak serves to both negatively stereotype Mizrahim as lazy drunks and to ethnically differentiate them from the Ashkenazi population by intrinsically linking them to a decidedly un-European, Levantine drink.

[452] Ibid, 283.

Kiryat Shemona and former *ma'abarot* that later became cities like Ashkelon.[453] But a closer

inspection into the percentage of protestors when compared to the overall population of these

areas reveals a discrepancy in Ashkenazi and Mizrahi participation in the protests. The largest

protest in Tel Aviv – a city with a population of 430,000 – drew approximately 300,000

protestors: correlating to 70% of the population of the city.[454] But in Ashkelon – a city that began

its modern incarnation as Migdal Gad *ma'abara* and whose population is overwhelmingly

Mizrahi, Ethiopian, and Soviet – the biggest protests were just a few more than five hundred

participants out of a total population of 129,000.[455] This figure correlates to just 0.0003% of the

population.[456] This significantly lower figure provides evidence of a general trend of low Mizrahi

participation in the 2011 social justice protests, and certainly a lower level of participation when

compared with Ashkenazim.[*457]

     The 2011 social justice protests in Israel indicated how Mizrahi Israeli collective memory

of identity produced a sociopolitical impact in recent Israeli history. The Israeli Left's embrace

of what Seth Frantzman termed "nostalgia for a racist era" during the protests and in

contextualization of the protests subsequently produced a conflict with Mizrahi Israelis and

played a role in critical Mizrahi responses and in lower Mizrahi protest turn-out. The central role

---

[453] Jonathan Lis, Eli Ashkenazi, Ilan Lior, Yanir Yagna and Ha'aretz Staff, "More than 300,000 Demonstrate Across Israel to Protest High Cost of Living," *Ha'aretz*, August 6, 2011, accessed January 28, 2019, https://www.haaretz.com/1.5041630.
[454] Ibid.
[455] Ibid.
[456] Ibid.
* I must note that these figures should be regarded with a critical eye for statistical margin of error. Israel is a small and thoroughly drivable country, and Israelis from all myriad of different places may have traveled to Tel Aviv – a well-established city for mass Israeli protest – to take part in the pre-planned largest protest. However, the Tel Aviv tent encampments were definitively much larger than any site erected in any other major locale, so it is objectively valid to argue that the 2011 social justice protests were on whole more popular with the Tel Aviv-type Ashkenazim than they were in other, more Mizrahi parts of the country.
[457] Ibid.

memory itself played in this phenomenon confirms the importance memory plays in contemporary political expressions in Israel.

7. "I Am Proud of Being a White Sabra": Anti-Mizrahi Racism in Today's Israeli Left

In this section, I show how the modern Israeli Left continues to invoke the same representation of Mizrahi Israelis and the Israeli Right as a shared menace to Israeli society that the Labor Zionist establishment employed in the Begin era. In this direct invocation of a key component of Mizrahi Israelis' collective memory of their relationship to the Israeli Right, the modern left-wing Israeli media portrays Mizrahim as unintelligent, dangerous, and a threat to Israeli society regardless of how vastly Israel's context, demographics, and politics have changed. Just as the modern Israeli Left's lionization of the Labor Zionist era acts as a barrier for Mizrahi Israelis in terms of memory of identity, the continued use of the menace invective by the modern left-wing Israeli media reinforces Mizrahi Israelis' sense of shared connection to the Israeli Right and sense of rivalry with the Israeli Left. Since it would be far too tedious to map out the entire evolution of the continuation of the shared menace invective in the left-wing Israeli media, I have isolated three voices for a close reading: Gideon Levy, Chemi Shalev, and Meron Benvenisti.

"Philosopher King" Gideon Levy

I have elected to begin with the controversial *Ha'aretz* writer Gideon Levy because he is arguably one of the most famous and most left-wing journalists in the mainstream Israeli media. Levy, who describes himself as a "good Tel Aviv boy," writes a mix of highly critical and contentious editorials interspersed with investigative journalism focusing on the impact of the

Israeli occupation on Palestinians.[458] Because of the extremely critical positions Levy takes

toward Zionism and Israeli policies, his-self professed love for the Palestinians – although by his

own admission he speaks no Arabic and has no Palestinian friends – and his passionate advocacy

for a one-state solution, Levy has become a darling of the critical-to-anti-Zionist Left.[459] For

instance, Levy claims to have once received a letter from famous left-wing public intellectual

Noam Chomsky in which Chomsky compared him to the biblical Jewish prophets.[460] Robert

Fisk, a British journalist for *The Independent* who describes himself as "a persistent critic of

Israel and the wickedness of its colonial land theft and vile treatment of Palestinians," described

Levy as "a philosopher king" who is "brave, subversive, and sorrowful" and who writes the kind

of journalism "necessary for our moral health" in a 2018 interview he conducted with Levy.[461]

The tag-line for this so-called prophetic philosopher-king's 2017 *Ha'aretz* article "The

Good Guys" was "How did Netanyahu become a right-wing ultranationalist, while all the good

people remained in the enlightened left?"[462] In the article, Levy laments that the well-educated,

Ashkenazi Netanyahu – who he argues has all the characteristics of what Levy considers to be

the classic Labor Zionist archetype – became a right-wing Israeli politician instead of a left-wing

Israeli politician. He questioned, "how can such an intelligent person, who could have been an

internationally respected statesman, draw his fans from the mindless rabble," which he goes on

to openly name as "untamed Mizrahi Likudniks."[463] Levy's use of the menace invective outlined

[458] Johann Hari, "Is Gideon Levy the Most Hated Man in Israel or Just the Most Heroic?" *The Independent*, September 24, 2010, accessed January 22, 2019, https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/is-gideon-levy-the-most-hated-man-in-israel-or-just-the-most-heroic-2087909.html.
[459] Tuvia Tenenbom, *Catch the Jew!* (Jerusalem: Gefen Publishing House, 2014), 120-121.
[460] Hari, "Is Gideon Levy the Most Hated Man in Israel or Just the Most Heroic?"
[461] Robert Fisk, "Here's What I Found Out When I Spent The Day With Israel's Most Controversial Journalist. Gideon Levy," *The Independent*, September, 27, 2018, accessed January 29, 2019, https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/gideon-levy-robert-fisk-haaretz-israel-palestine-gaza-a8557691.html.
[462] Gideon Levy, "The Good Guys," *Ha'aretz*, August 17, 2017, accessed January 29, 2019, https://www.haaretz.com/opinion/.premium-the-good-guys-1.5443540.
[463] Ibid.

in the first part of this thesis is blatant: he represents Mizrahim as a corrupting barbarous "rabble" juxtaposed against the civilized "good people" of the Ashkenazi dominated "enlightened left."

Levy's use of the menace invective extends beyond its application to his writings about contemporary politics to some of the examples specifically addressed in the first part of this thesis. For the seventieth anniversary of Israeli Independence, *Ha'aretz* commissioned Levy to write seventy things he loved about Israel. Levy subsequently complained that this was so hard he could only come up with sixty-seven, which he joked was humorously ironic because 1967 was the official start date of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza.[464] While Levy meant this to be clever and darkly sarcastic, I point out this is clear evidence that Levy engages in "nostalgia for a racist era" by identifying 1967 as the start date of Israeli decline.[465] In his list of sixty-seven, Levy did not name a single Mizrahi Israeli, though he did name Israel's many charming feral cats as number two and number thirty-four as "Shulamit Aloni. I loved her."[466] Aloni, a longtime Labor MK and eventual founder of Meretz (in Hebrew, "Vigor") – the leftmost Zionist party in Israel today – appeared in this thesis earlier as the MK who described Menachem Begin's Mizrahi supporters as "barbarous tribal forces," "a flock with tom-toms," and "a savage tribe."[467]

Most relevant of all, Levy served as an aide for Shimon Peres' election campaign in the 1981 elections for the tenth Knesset which he detailed in a 2011 *Ha'aretz* article "Borne on the

---

[464] Gideon Levy, "Sixty-Seven Things Gideon Levy Loves About Israel," *Ha'aretz*, April 25, 2018, accessed April 30, 2018, https://www.haaretz.com/opinion/.premium.MAGAZINE-gideon-levy-finds-67-things-he-loves-about-israel-1.6027888.
[465] Ibid.
[466] Ibid.
[467] Shipler, "Peres Bids Begin to Discuss Israeli Violence."

Wings of Hatred."[468] In the article, Levy recalled his experiences on the campaign trail including

Peres' hostile reception in Mizrahi communities like Kiryat Shemona and Petah Tikvah as well

as providing his assessment of Begin's famous rebuke of the "chach-chachkim" speech in which

Levy went out of his way to characterize Begin as a dangerous demagogue and emphasize his

Polish accent to otherize him from the Israeli identity.[469] But, most interestingly, Levy described

the elections in 1981 as the last great hurrah of the Israeli Left, the last campaign that was still, as

Levy described, "about our essence," and, by extension, about what Levy thought that Israel and

Israeli identity should be.[470] Recall that during the 1981 Labor Alignment campaign Shimon

Peres called Mizrahi Likudniks "Khomeinists" and that the Labor Alignment party put out an

official political advertisement that stated "Will this be an Israel that is beautiful and beloved? Or

one raped, held by force?"[471] The election season in 1981 was one of the most palpably racist

campaigns in Israel's history, and Levy's unstipulated celebration of this time as the Israeli

Left's last great surge is wholly indicative of Levy's own racism and belief in the tenets of the

menace invective.

I have not found a single article interrogating Levy for his racism, although I did find

plenty lionizing him for being a brave contrarian. In his profile of Levy, Richard Fisk described

Levy as "threatened by his fellow Israelis for telling the truth," and accepted Levy's reasonings

for Israel's decline unquestioned.[*472] Johann Hari described Levy as similarly heroic in his 2010

---

[468] Gideon Levy, "Borne on the Wings of Hatred," *Ha'aretz*, May 9, 2011, accessed April 30, 2018,
https://www.haaretz.com/1.5009968.
[469] Ibid.
[470] Ibid.
[471] Smith, "The Second Israel," 154 and *Mahar,* June 29, 1981 in Brown, "Iron and a King," 7.
* In this interview with Robert Fisk, Levy lauds his *Ha'aretz* publisher Amos Schocken for always defending his
work and providing him with what Levy described as "full freedom" to say whatever he thinks. In April 2018, six
months before the publication of Fisk's interview, Schocken came under his own allegations of anti-Mizrahi racism
after responding to a Mizrahi critic named Ravit Dahan on Twitter by writing "Insolent woman. My family led the
Zionist movement when you were still swinging from trees. The Schocken family has been here for 83 years, and we
got along very well without your ideology, and we will continue to do so."

profile "Is Gideon Levy the Most Hated Man in Israel or Just the Most Heroic?" in which Hari

praises Levy as a journalist "trying to call his people back to the righteous path" while also

failing to address Levy's representation of Mizrahi Israelis a single time.[473] This international

failure to hold the Israeli Left accountable for its history of racism is both indicative of a

shocking lack of moral principles from those who intentionally brand themselves as the moral

perspective on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and a pivotal element of how collective memory

influences Mizrahi Israelis to remain right-wing. So long as the kind of anti-Mizrahi racism that

characterized the Labor Zionists' conceptualization of Mizrahim as a menace goes unchallenged

and even celebrated by the Israeli Left and non-Israeli actors aligned with the Israeli Left,

Mizrahi Israelis' sense of ongoing shared mistreatment with the Israeli Right and alienation from

the Israeli Left remains reinforced.

A Close Reading of Chemi Shalev

After a more general assessment of several pieces from Gideon Levy's body of work, I

turn now to a close reading of a single piece from Levy's *Ha'aretz* colleague Chemi Shalev. On

January 22, 2019, Shalev published an article titled "Why the Israeli Right Hates the State of

Israel and is Bent on Demolishing its Democracy." The title alone is evidence of the modern

Israeli Left's continued use of the shared menace component of Mizrahi Israelis' collective

memory of their relationship to the Israeli Right, but a short but in-depth dissection and

comparison with the menace invective that appeared in the media in the Begin era provides

conclusive evidence of the continuation of this trend today.

---

[472] Fisk, "Here's What I Found Out When I Spent The Day With Israel's Most Controversial Journalist. Gideon Levy."
[473] Hari, "Is Gideon Levy the Most Hated Man in Israel or Just the Most Heroic?"

In the article, Shalev writes,

> For dedicated Netanyahu aficionados and, increasingly, for the entire right-wing, questions of right and wrong, just or unjust, proper or improper and even legal or illegal are no longer relevant. The only true measure of a man's (or woman's) worth is whether they are blindly loyal to Netanyahu. Any indication that they aren't or that they prioritize other values – such as democracy, decency, and the rule of law – above Netanyahu's continued leadership and personal well-being automatically brands them as mortal enemies.[474]

In this passage, Shalev insinuates that the membership of Israeli Right – which Shalev would be fully aware comprises a large proportion of Mizrahi Israelis – has no moral compass, makes judgements entirely based on fanatical devotion to a charismatic leader, is illiberal and indecent, and is a danger to Israeli society. On its own, Shalev's article is already striking, but it is also a near line-by-line modernization of the 1981 op-ed in *The Jerusalem Post* that figured earlier in the thesis:

> A not inconsiderable segment of the population takes a dim view of the country's system of democracy, and would be happy to see it scrapped and replaced with an authoritarian 'strong-man' regime… [but Begin] feels the helm firmly in his hand, and he has served notice that disagreement with his policies will in future be tantamount to disloyalty. And the street mobs who cheer him on would certainly be willing to enforce such intolerance.[475]

Both pieces are nearly identical in reasoning even though they were written nearly forty years apart; the same kind of fearmongering and invective has not changed, and the Israeli Left continues to implement the same kind of mistreatment that originally alienated Mizrahi Israelis.

Shalev continues to inadvertently confirm this himself, as he continues in the article, "In actual fact, Netanyahu is leading the final and possibly fatal push in the right-wing's 40-year rebellion against the rule of law": clearly intentionally linking *HaMahapach* and the ascent of the

---

[474] Chemi Shalev, "Why the Israeli Right Hates the State of Israel and is Bent on Demolishing its Democracy," *Ha'aretz*, January 22, 2019, accessed January 29, 2019, https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium.MAGAZINE-why-israeli-right-hates-the-state-of-israel-and-is-bent-on-demolishing-its-democracy-1.6865530.

[475] *Jerusalem Post*, June 17, 1981 in Peretz and Smooha "Israel's Tenth Knesset Elections," 516.

Israeli Right to the modern day into a singular narrative of what Shalev imagines to be an assault

on Israeli society.[476] Shalev finishes the article,

> The roots of the right-wing war on Israel, however, run far deeper than Netanyahu's
> personal fate or the campaign to legitimize Jewish settlements. They stem from the
> history of Israel, in general, and of the Likud in particular. The nationalist, ethnocentric
> and anti-liberal impulses of the Israeli Right were always there, like smoldering embers,
> awaiting a leader like Netanyahu who would recklessly pour fuel and set them afire.[477]

Evidence of Shalev's use of the menace invective and desire to characterize the Israeli Right, and

Mizrahi Israelis by extension, as a primordial threat to Israel are so conspicuous that they require

minimal explanation. In his description of a right-wing war on Israel, Shalev characterizes the

Israeli Right and its supporters as a solely destructive element, denying the Mizrahi perspective

of the Israeli Right's ascension as redemptive, and signaling an ongoing vilification of Mizrahi

Israelis within the Israeli Left to this day.

"I Am One of the Founders of this Place": Meron Benvenisti

One final case study exemplifies the Israeli Left's continued representation of Mizrahi

Israelis as a menace and a corruption of Israel itself: Meron Benvenisti – former Deputy Mayor

of Jerusalem under famous Jerusalem mayor Teddy Kolek, Israeli academic, and kibbutznik.[478]

Like Gideon Levy, Benvenisti's stances on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict – particularly his

comparisons of Israel's current policies to Apartheid South Africa – have provided him with

popularity amongst critical-to-anti-Zionist activists and journalists.[479] And, like Levy, Benvenisti

has a long record of anti-Mizrahi racism. In a 2012 interview with *Ha'aretz* journalist Ari Shavit,

Benvenisti said,

---

[476] Shalev, "Why the Israeli Right Hates the State of Israel and is Bent on Demolishing its Democracy."
[477] Ibid.
[478] Ari Shavit, "Jerusalem-born Thinker Meron Benvenisti Has a Message for Israelis: Stop Whining," *Ha'aretz*, October 12, 2011, accessed December 27, 2018, https://www.haaretz.com/.premium-zionism-was-not-born-in-sin-but-in-illusion-1.5179945.
[479] Meron Benvenisti, "Bantustan Plan for an Apartheid Israel," *The Guardian*, April 25, 2004, accessed January 27, 2019, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2004/apr/26/comment.

> I do not accept all this Mizrahi whining. Because, what would the Mizrahim have done if we had not been there to take them in? What would they be worth? What would have happened to them if we had not created the Israeliness to which they connected and turned into some sort of cartoon? If it had not been for us, the Mizrahim would have remained a potpourri of migrant cultures. True, we made plenty of mistakes. But we made the heroic decision to take them all in. And by that decision we effectively committed suicide. Our Hebrew-Israeli culture dissolved under the flood of migration. That is why we now have Likud governments and constantly hear Mizrahi whining. But I do not accept either the one or the other. I am proud of being a white sabra. And I will now allow anyone to expel me from the Zionist camp. I am one of the founders of this place. I am from the Zionist Mayflower. I will not allow anyone to treat me as a non-Zionist.[480]

In just this one interview, Benvenisti – who actually titled his 2012 autobiography *The Dream of the White Sabra: An Autobiography of Disillusionment* to no significant backlash – covered all the major bases of Mizrahi Israelis' collective memory of mistreatment by the Israeli Left. He described Mizrahim as useless, contaminating detractors – even integrating Labor Zionism's negative view of the Diaspora – responsible for destroying what Benvenisti imagined as true Zionism. I struggle to describe the idea of Zionism that Benvenisti described, complete with its xenophobia, thinly-veiled logic of white supremacy, and language of primordial blood purity, as anything less than just openly and unforgivably racist.

And, as in the case of Gideon Levy, I did not find one single instance of criticism or rebuke for Benvenisti's racism. In the framing of his interview, Ari Shavit described Benvenisti as a "subversive Zionist" and declared "I love his volcanic temperament and I love his authenticity and his unbearability. I love his sabra quality and his earthiness, and I love the intensity of his tragic romanticism."[481] Shavit, who himself was a major voice in the Israeli Left before his disgrace after revelations of a serial pattern of sexual misconduct, did not challenge Benvenisti's remarks about Mizrahim. Similarly, in a piece for *The Guardian* Ian Black

---

[480] Shavit, "Jerusalem-born Thinker Meron Benvenisti Has a Message for Israelis: Stop Whining."
[481] Ibid.

described Benvenisti as an "Israeli iconoclast" who was "forceful, articulate, and unconventional" but did not ask about Benvenisti about anti-Mizrahi racism.[482]

With unchallenged racism and invocation of Mizrahim as a menace in the Israeli Left, it is just not even remotely enigmatic why Mizrahi Israelis continue to vote for the Israeli Right. In an interview with *The New York Times,* Moroccan Jew Yehuda Ayyash addressed being consistently being represented as the most negative element of Israeli society, responsible for all of its ills including the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, by stating "We're not racists, we're rightists."[483] While Ayyash's statement is only dubiously true – there are undoubtedly Mizrahi Israelis who, as with any group, are racist – it touches on the greater importance of the proliferation of anti-Mizrahi sentiment in the Israeli Left and its retreading of Mizrahi Israelis' collective mistreatment by the Israeli Left. Instead of attempting to understand Mizrahi Israelis' collective memory of their relationship to the Israeli Right and their perspective, the Israeli Left is seemingly content to dismiss Mizrahi Israelis altogether by simplifying them into a racist, dangerous, illiberal horde. In its refusal to acknowledge its own mistakes and consider a different, empathetic viewpoint, the Israeli Left ensures that Mizrahi Israelis will remain right-wing.

8. "The Left is the Same Left": The 2015 Elections for the Twentieth Knesset

This section explores how Mizrahi Israelis' collective memory of their relationship to the Israeli Right impacted the most recent general elections in Israel at the time of the completion of this thesis: the elections for the twentieth Knesset in 2015. The campaign for this election cycle –

---

[482] Ian Black, "Is the Middle East on a Peace Process to Nowhere?" *The Guardian*, April 28, 2010, accessed January 29, 2019, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/apr/28/middle-east-meron-benvenisti-peace-process.
[483] Kershner, "In Poorer Periphery, Legal Woes Don't Dent Netanyahu's Appeal."

which *Times of Israel* journalist Aron Heller described as having "exposed a rift that many here [in Israel] thought had long subsided – the deep-seated schism between Jews of European and Middle Eastern descent," – featured memory in a central role.[484] In this section, I assess how Mizrahi collective memory manifested directly in one single notable instance during the campaigning, and then how it became a major factor in Likud's campaign to entice Mizrahi voters. I will subsequently explain the election results and reactions to the results to confirm how memory impacted this election in particular, and was indicative of the greater framework of recent Israeli politics in general.

Chach-Chachkim 2.0

In the lead up to the elections for the twentieth Knesset, the newly formed center-left Zionist Union party hoped to ride the wave of economic frustration then sweeping through Israel all the way into power.[485] The party – a merger of Labor and Hatnuah led jointly by Revisionist princess Tzipi Livni, whose illustrious career included stints as Minister of Justice and Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Labor Party head Isaac Herzog, son of sixth President of Israel Chaim Herzog – positioned itself as the alternative to the skyrocketing expenses of Likud's capitalist economic doctrine.[486] Just after the government announced new elections following the dissolution of the nineteenth Knesset, an opinion poll put together by Israeli television network Channel 10 in December 2014 placed Zionist Union and Likud virtually neck-and-neck: projecting 22 to 20 seats earned respectively.[487] Zionist Union sustained this momentum into March of 2015, when elections were scheduled to be held at the end of the month on the 17th,

[484] Aron Heller, "How Ethnic Tensions Helped Fuel Netanyahu's Victory," *The Times of Israel*, April 4, 2015, accessed January 2, 2019, https://www.timesofisrael.com/how-ethnic-tensions-helped-fuel-netanyahus-victory/.
[485] Ibid.
[486] Ibid.
[487] Ha'aretz Staff, "New Poll: Labor-Livni Bloc Would Beat Netanyahu," *Ha'aretz,* December 9, 2014, accessed February 4, 2019, https://www.haaretz.com/poll-labor-livni-bloc-would-beat-netanyahu-1.5343413.

and, for a period of time, it appeared that Zionist Union was well positioned to unseat six

consecutive years of a Likud government.[488]

But on Saturday March 5th, just twelve days before the elections, aging Ashkenazi artist

Yair Garbuz took the stage at a Zionist Union rally in the exact spot in Tel Aviv where Dudu

Topaz delivered his "chach-chachkim" comments in 1981, and made a speech that drew Mizrahi

collective memory to the forefront of the last mad-dash of election campaigning. Garbuz said,

> We were told. We wanted to believe, that the hateful person who murdered a prime
> minister had come from a small group of bizarre people… That shouters of 'death to
> Arabs' are just a small group and the corrupt and piggish hedonists are no more than a
> small group. The destroyers of a democracy – a small group. Amulet-kissers, idol
> worshippers, and bowers at the graves of saints – a small group. If these are a small
> group, how are they ruling us? How is it that without us feeling the small group became
> the majority.[489]

While Garbuz began his speech alluding to Yitzhak Rabin's assassin Yigal Amir – a Yemenite

Jew – and the groups of extremist ultranationalist Israelis who openly encouraged violence

against Palestinians like the disciples of racist Rabbi Meir Kahane – an Ashkenazi from New

York City – Garbuz quickly pivoted away from placing the blame for what he framed as the

destruction of liberal Israel on these extremists, and instead implicated Mizrahi Israelis as a

whole. In his speech, Garbuz moved directly from "destroyers of a democracy" to "amulet-

kissers, idol worshippers, and bowers at the graves of saints": all cultural traditions very distinct

to Mizrahim and not commonly found in modern Ashkenazi religious tradition. The clarity and

speed of this transition clearly indicated Garbuz did not differentiate between his condemnation

from the extremists who were actually responsible for the violence he mentioned at the onset of

---

[488] Times of Israel and Associated Press, "Netanyahu Scores Crushing Victory in Israeli Elections," *The Times of Israel*, March 18, 2015, accessed January 27, 2019, https://www.timesofisrael.com/netanyahu-claims-victory-as-vote-count-shows-likud-further-ahead/.

[489] Lahav Harkov, "Speech at Anti-Netanyahu Demo Recalls Racism in 1981," *The Jerusalem Post*, March 8, 2015, accessed December 31, 2019, https://www.jpost.com/Israel-Elections/Speech-at-anti-Netanyahu-demo-recalls-racism-in-1981-Labor-rally-393316.

his remarks, and who came from a variety of ethnic backgrounds, and Mizrahi Israelis in general

as being equally culpable for what he imagined as the general corruption of Israel en masse. In

terms of Mizrahi Israelis' collective memory, Garbuz's comments were a quadruple strike: he

represented Mizrahim as an illiberal menace, was dismissive of Mizrahi cultural traditions with

strong roots in the Diaspora, humiliated Mizrahi pride, and denied Mizrahim full validity in their

Israeli identities by representing them as the ingenuine minority ruling over what Garbuz implied

to be the left-wing, Labor-voting "true" Israelis.

Even though the leadership of the Zionist Union did everything in their power to distance

themselves from Garbuz's speech, the damage was decisive. Likud politicians picked up on the

potential to convert this emergence of conflict with Mizrahi Israeli collective memory into

sociopolitical action immediately. Likud Minister Ofir Akunis deemed Garbuz's speech "the

second chach-chachkim speech," invoking the memory of Dudu Topaz's 1981 speech directly.[490]

Akunis continued to intentionally link memories of 1981 to the context of 2015 by drawing a

linear line of trajectory between the two, "The supporters of the Likud and the right have been

called a rabble and a mob, now we are amulet-kissers who have become the majority."[491]

Controversial Likud MK and current Minister of Culture and Sport Miri Regev – herself a

Moroccan Jew – employed a similar strategy, remarking "Nothing changed. The Left is the same

Left. Then it was the chach-chachkim speech and now it's the Mezuza Kissers and Bowers on

Rabbi's Graves Speech. The only difference is that we saw Dudu Topaz's nonsense in black and

white and today it is in color."[492] Both Akunis and Regev flattened Topaz's and Garbuz's speech

---

[490] Jonathan Lis, "Artist's 'Idol Worshippers' Remarks at Anti-Netanyahu Rally Draw Ire," *Ha'aretz*, March 9, 2015, accessed April 30, 2018, https://www.haaretz.com/.premium-artist-s-remarks-at-ta-rally-spark-ire-on-right-and-left-1.5334352.
[491] Ibid.
[492] Harkov, "Speech at Anti-Netanyahu Demo Recalls Racism in 1981."

into a singular entity of the Left's treatment of Mizrahim. In doing so, they demonstrated how

collective memory can be repurposed as a political tool to make an argument about the past

being synonymous with the present regardless of historical nuance.

In his statement, MK Naftali Bennett – who, while he was a part of the Likud coalition,

was then a member of the right-of-Likud religious Zionist HaBayit HaYehudi (in Hebrew, "The

Jewish Home") party and not a member of the Likud itself – took the conversion of Mizrahi

Israeli collective memory into a sociopolitical argument further: moving beyond just the

invocation of Topaz's "chach-chachkim speech" to an even more widely encompassing appeal to

Mizrahi memory. Bennett said,

> "This 'small group' [Garbuz] described includes people from development towns, people
> from Kiryat Shemona, Shlomi, Netivot, Sderot, who wake up at 6 a.m. to say morning
> prayers and [lay] tefillin.* This 'small group' is people whose culture – our culture – you
> trampled for a generation. [These people] believe the Land of Israel belongs to the people
> of Israel… When they see the Western Wall, they get excited! I get excited! I am proud
> to stand at the head of this small group. We are all Jews, we are all brothers."[493]

In his comments, Bennett expanded upon the breadth of Mizrahi collective memory he was

drawing upon to include development towns and religious culture, but, even more importantly,

Bennett cast himself as a Menachem Begin type figure by capturing a similar type of broad

Jewish ethos. He deliberately used "our culture" to accentuate the encompassing type of Jewish-

Israeli identity that Begin helped to mainstream, which Bennett then places in conflict with the

generations of mistreatment by the Labor Zionist establishment. He then continued to relate

himself to Menachem Begin even more directly, emulating Begin's famous June 28, 1981 speech

by conjuring Begin's "I'm happy and proud that they are at Metzudat Ze'ev!" with his own "I

---

* Observant Jews wrap their arms and head with leather straps and boxes called *tefillin* every morning as a part of
the Jewish weekday morning prayers.
[493] Ibid.

am proud to stand at the head of this small group," and by echoing Begin's "We are all Jews, we are all brothers," verbatim.[494]

In their responses to Garbuz's speech, ministers in the Israeli Right demonstrated their awareness of the potential of utilizing memory for political gain. In capitalizing on their ability to cast Garbuz and the Israeli center-left of 2015 as an extension of such as major moment in Mizrahi Israeli collective memory of their relationship to the Israeli Right as Dudu Topaz's "chach-chachkim" speech, the Israeli Right effectively made memory one of the decisive factors for the election of the twentieth Knesset in 2015. Beyond economic policy or approaches to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, these elections were visibly intrinsically tied to the narrative of Mizrahi Israeli past, present, and future.

Election Results and Responses

Even after Garbuz's speech, Israeli opinion polls had Zionist Union and Likud tied as late as the day of elections.[495] But, when the election results were finalized, Likud beat Zionist Union with ease: earning 30 seats to Zionist Union's 24 seats.[496] According to statistics released by the Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, Zionist Union won twenty-eight out of the thirty-two wealthiest population centers, while Likud won sixty-four out of the seventy-seven poorest.[497] In heavily Mizrahi areas like Sderot, Ashkelon, Tiberias, and Kiryat Shemona, Likud trounced all competing political parties, earning 42.8%, 39.8%, 44.5% and 39.9% of the total vote in each of

---

[494] Shilon, *Menachem Begin: A Life*," 353-354; Harkov, "Speech at Anti-Netanyahu Demo Recalls Racism in 1981."
[495] JPost.com Staff, "Netanyahu Closes Gap: Likud Leads Zionist Union in 1 Exit Poll, Tied in 2 Others." *The Jerusalem Post*, March 17, 2015, accessed February 5, 2019, https://www.jpost.com/Israel-Elections/First-exit-polls-show-tight-race-between-Herzog-and-Netanyahu-394224.
[496] The State of Israel, Knesset, "Elections to the Twentieth Knesset," accessed January 27, 2019, https://knesset.gov.il/description/eng/eng_mimshal_res20.htm.
[497] Or Kashti, "Netanyahu and Likud Won By Taking Poorer Jewish Towns, West Bank Settlements," *Ha'aretz*, March 19, 2015, accessed January 27, 2019, https://www.haaretz.com/.premium-likud-won-by-taking-poorer-jewish-towns-settlements-1.5339404.

those areas respectively.[498] The large margin of their loss in Mizrahi-heavy areas initially

confounded the Zionist Union; the rising costs of goods and housing caused by Likud's

economic policies that Zionist Union had intentionally branded itself as the alternative to often

impacted Mizrahi Israelis more than Zionist Union's stalwart Ashkenazi base.[499] Mizrahi

Israelis' widespread rejection of Zionist Union, as reflected in Likud's high numbers, appeared

in a purely objective sense to be an illogical and self-defeating decision.

The Israeli Left and the Israeli media attempted to attribute the overwhelming Mizrahi

vote for Likud to an ominous eleventh-hour warning from Benjamin Netanyahu in a short video

released the day before the elections that "Arab voters are heading to the polling stations in

droves": distilling the Mizrahi vote into a simple expression of racism and xenophobia.[500] Avi

Issacharoff, Israeli journalist and co-creator of the massively popular Israeli television show

Fauda, adopted this position. He argued,

> Why did [Mizrahim] vote Bibi? Likely it was because of fear of 'them,' of the others, the
> Arabs, made them stream to the polls and vote en masse for Netanyahu, who not only
> speaks fluent English, but also fluent Mizrahi… He did not 'talk weak' like Isaac Herzog
> did. Instead he spoke in 'fluent Mizrahi' – he latched onto the most primordial fear: that
> of the Arabs.[501]

I reject this view as vastly oversimplified and infantilizing: minimizing the need for actual

understanding and self-reflection in the role the Israeli Left itself played in its own loss in favor

of dismissing and vilifying Mizrahi Israelis as the kind of unreasonable, hateful danger they are

commonly cast as in similar invective coming from the Israeli Left. As Seth Frantzman

formulated in response to this line of reasoning from the Israeli Left and the media, by

---

[498] Ibid.

[499] Heller, "How Ethnic Tensions Helped Fuel Netanyahu's Victory."

[500] Mairav Zonszein, "Binyamin Netanyahu: 'Arab voters are heading to the polling stations in droves,'" *The Guardian*, March 17, 2015, accessed February 4, 2019, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/mar/17/binyamin-netanyahu-israel-arab-election.

[501] Avi Issacharoff, "Why Did Bibi Win? Because He Speaks Fluent Mizrahi," *The Times of Israel*, March 25, 2015, accessed January 2, 2019, https://www.timesofisrael.com/why-did-bibi-win-because-he-speaks-fluent-mizrahi/.

positioning Netanyahu's comments as the sole deciding factor in the Mizrahi vote for Likud in 2015, the Israeli Left effectively cast Mizrahi Israelis as a permutation of the poor white American or European whose attraction to right-wing politics derives from racism or xenophobia.[502] In simplifying the Mizrahi vote into a cut and dry expression of hate akin to the kind of ethnonationalism present in the European or American Right, the Israeli Left positioned itself to be able to easily explain away and ignore the role that its own history of racism and continued use of anti-Mizrahi invective played as a factor in the 2015 election results and in reality of the modern Israeli political landscape.[503]

It is also worth arguing that Netanyahu is a far savvier politician and proven long-game player than to assume that his "Arab voters" comments were only intended to motivate a xenophobic anti-Palestinian vote. Netanyahu's classic media scare tactic was just as effective as a warning about a potential vote surge from Palestinian citizens of Israel boosting political parties that would ultimately clinch a victory for an Israeli Left assembled coalition government, drawing a surge from voters that would vote *against* the Left more than for anything else. As the entirety of this thesis has demonstrated thus far, Mizrahi Israelis' antagonism to the Left is multifaceted and extensive even independent of the conflict with the Palestinians. The prospect of a left-wing victory carries more weight for Mizrahim than can be simplified away with a sole attribution to anti-Palestinian sentiment.

Further, Netanyahu's comments were effective as a prescient trap for the inevitable anti-Mizrahi tones in the media backlash to his statement. Just as Begin's 1981 victory portended an increase in anti-Mizrahi invective instead of a decline, days after the election fringe former

---

[502] Seth Frantzman, "How Israel's Poor Minority Was Turned Into 'White Racists' by Israel's 'Left' in Order to Excuse its Own Racism," April 10, 2015, accessed January 4, 2019, https://sethfrantzman.com/2015/04/10/how-israels-poor-minority-was-turned-into-white-racists-by-israels-left-in-order-to-excuse-its-own-racism/.
[503] Ibid.

lecturer at Ariel University Amir Hetsroni, appeared on the widely watched Channel 2 and blamed Zionist Union's loss on Mizrahi and Soviet immigration.[504] Hetsroni argued that Zionist Union would have won,

> If we hadn't opened our legs without selection to all kinds of Jews, questionable Jews and half-Jews from third-rate countries, whose uniting characteristics are to kiss amulets, eat hummus, drink borscht, take government handouts and get an orgasm from arguing with the world.[505]

Knowing Netanyahu to possess a shrewd understanding of the political power of media, narrative, and memory, I argue Netanyahu's ultimate goal was as much about using the deluge of anti-Mizrahi sentiment that invoked Mizrahi collective memory of their mistreatment by the Israeli Left as a cynical confirmation bias for Likud's Mizrahi base as it was about securing a Likud victory.

But for all the heady op-ed hypotheses and political machinations, the most valuable and important voices in articulating why Mizrahi Israelis voted so strongly for Likud in 2015 comes from the Mizrahim themselves. Malkiram Bashari, a Mizrahi who traces his heritage to Yemen, reasoned "Our parents and grandparents have been voting Likud since the upheaval [in 1977] … [Voting for Labor] is too hard. There's just too much baggage there."[506] In the majority Mizrahi Shabazi neighborhood of Rosh Ha'ayin – a former *ma'abara* east of Tel Aviv – Uri Barzilai gave his reasoning for voting Likud as "We were treated like third rate citizens and we still feel damaged."[507] Other Shabazi residents echoed Barzilai's sentiment, stating "Shabazi has always been a Likud stronghold and that is how it will remain."[508] Bashari, Barzilai, and the other

---

[504] Renee Ghert-Zand, "Academic on Hot Seat After Tirade Against Mizrahi Jews," *The Times of Israel*, March 23, 2015, accessed January 2, 2019, https://www.timesofisrael.com/academic-on-hot-seat-after-tirade-against-mizrahi-jews/.
[505] Ibid.
[506] Heller, "How Ethnic Tensions Helped Fuel Netanyahu's Victory."
[507] Ibid.
[508] Ibid.

Shabazi residents did not cite economics or "Arab voters," they cited collective memory. Instead

of voting based on the immediate conditions or practical conditions of the specific election

campaign in 2015, these Mizrahi Israelis candidly reported components of the Mizrahi Israeli

collective memory of their relationship to the Israeli Right covered extensively in the first part of

this thesis – such as residual grief over treatment by the Labor Zionist establishment or regarding

affiliation with the Likud as an integral part of familial or community identity – as their main

motivations to vote for Likud in 2015. In an election season where Garbuz's "amulet kissers"

speech and Likud's memory heavy responses had forced the centrality of memory to the

forefront of voters' minds, I argue collective memory must be regarded as important core factor

in explaining Likud's decisive victory in Mizrahi communities in 2015.

Years later in 2018, Yehuda Ayyash – a fifty-five-year-old Moroccan Jew from Kiryat

Malachai who would have been just thirteen when the Likud first won in 1977 – echoed these

sentiments again, stating that he and all five of his children always had and always would be

Likud voters because "it's genetics."[509] When *New York Times* journalist Isabel Kershner pushed

Ayyash to explain further, Ayyash did not talk about policy, economics, or even the Israeli-

Palestinian conflict; he recalled the memory of his mother, sitting on the floor of their tin shack

in the *ma'abara* with six of her eleven children in her lap to keep them off the cold flooded

ground in the winter.[510] For Ayyash, just as for Bashari and Barzilai, the motivation to vote for

the Israeli Right is not logical and practically based, it is emotional and memory based. The

Mizrahi Israeli vote for Likud and affiliation with the Israeli Right extends beyond deductive

reasoning of the immediate conditions of the current political reality, and is instead heavily

---

[509] Kershner, "In Poorer Periphery, Legal Woes Don't Dent Netanyahu's Appeal."
[510] Ibid.

impacted by Mizrahi perspective on the past and the narrative of Mizrahi Israelis' experience and place in the state of Israel.

In the elections for the twentieth Knesset in 2015 and today, Mizrahi Israelis' collective memory of their relationship to the Israeli Right remains a proven, essential factor in why Mizrahi Israelis continue to vote right-wing. Whether it be in tent-compound social justice protests, in the pages of *Ha'aretz*, or in the content of election campaigning, collective memory is the context and the lens in which all things happen and are viewed. An empathetic understanding of Mizrahi Israeli collective memory is vital to glean even a cursory understanding of how and why Israeli politics functions the way it does, and an indispensable necessity for anyone at all serious about discussing Israeli politics.

Conclusion:

Following the collapse of Netanyahu's ruling Likud coalition after the departures of key ministers Avigdor Lieberman of Yisrael Beiteinu and Naftali Bennett from HaBayit HaYehudi and their respective constituencies in late 2018, Israel will hold early general elections on April 9, 2019 to form the government for the twenty-first Knesset. Since campaigning began in earnest in January 2019, the narrative around this election cycle has largely centered around the impending showdown between Netanyahu's increasingly fundamentalist Likud, and the moderate and civil – albeit blander than matzo – centrist Kahol-Lavan (in Hebrew "Blue-White") alliance headed by former IDF Chief-of-Staff and political novice Benny Gantz and Yesh Atid Chairman Yair Lapid.[511] Facing both a serious political challenge and indictments on several corruption charges, Netanyahu has ramped up his campaign attack tactics to an extreme level of volatile audaciousness.[512] Slandering any perceived opponent – including those he himself appointed – as "weak" or "a leftist" regardless of their actual political convictions, forcing a Religious Zionist merger that would bring the far-right Kahanist Otzma Yehudit (in Hebrew "Jewish Power") into the Knesset for the sake of a few paltry tie-breaking seats, and unreservedly doling out blunt anti-Palestinian rhetoric that has drawn criticism from both Israeli President Reuven Rivlin and Wonder Woman herself, Gal Gadot, alike – Netanyahu is campaigning with all the erratic ferociousness of a man who cannot tell if this April will be his crossing the Rubicon or if he's fiddling while his Rome burns.[513] With this political typhoon as

---

[511] Jonathan Lis and Chaim Levinson, "Political Bombshell as Gantz, Lapid Join Forces to Defeat Netanyahu," *Ha'aretz*, February 21, 2019, accessed March 14, 2019, https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/elections/.premium-political-bombshell-as-gantz-lapid-join-forces-to-replace-netanyahu-1.6957403.

[512] David M. Halbfinger, "The Cases Against Netanyahu and a Decision to Indict," *The New York Times*, February 28, 2019, accessed March 14, 2019, https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/28/world/middleeast/benjamin-netanyahu-indictment.html.

[513] Jacob Magid, "Extremist Otzma Yehudit Announces Unity Pact With Jewish Home," *The Times of Israel*, February 20, 2019, accessed March 14, 2019, https://www.timesofisrael.com/jewish-home-reaches-unity-pact-with-extremist-otzma-yehudit/; Noa Landau, "Arabs Aren't 'Second Class Voters,' President Reuven Rivlin Rebukes

the backdrop, this Israeli election cycle promises to be predictably unpredictable, and attempting to portend results any time before the absolute last hour of Tuesday April 9th would be farcically masochistic. As is also typical of Israeli politics, this consistent unpredictability has not prevented the Israeli press from churning out an endless stream of campaign season think pieces that – just like in the 2015 elections that left the Israeli press stunned – largely fail to place stock in the Mizrahi perspective.

This same dearth in focus on the Mizrahi Israeli voice in Israeli politics, only in my own Jewish American context, was what drew me to focus on why Mizrahi Israelis vote for the Israeli Right as the topic of this thesis in the first place. Young American Jews like myself are presently engaged in the adolescent stage of an appropriately gangly and melodramatic process of re-evaluating both the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and American-Israeli ties. As a consequence, this re-evaluation has led a number of my peers to pursue a range of vociferously critical-to-anti-Zionist assessments on the state of Israel and Israeli politics. Within this lens of criticism amongst young left-leaning American Jews – which is further negatively exacerbated by, in my own view and experience, increasingly hostile and unselfconscious anti-Zionist movements within the greater framework of the global Left – the Israeli Right has been attributed an almost irredeemable, primordial type of evil very similar to the logic of Frantzman's nostalgia for a racist era within the Israeli Left. Amongst these criticisms, I have noted that for this constituency of young American Jews, Likud has ceased to be just a political party, and has instead become synonymous for the very corruption of Israel itself; Likudnik has become a slur to describe those

---

Netanyahu," *Ha'aretz*, March 11, 2019, accessed March 14, 2019, https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/elections/rivlin-says-israel-has-no-second-class-citizens-in-response-to-netanyahu-comments-1.7005331; Aron Heller, "Wonder Woman to the Rescue: Gal Gadot Takes on Netanyahu," *The Washington Post*, March 11, 2018, accessed March 14, 2019, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/wonder-woman-to-the-rescue-gal-gadot-takes-on-netanyahu/2019/03/11/83acbe7a-4408-11e9-94ab-d2dda3c0df52_story.html?utm_term=.72234673d8b1.

responsible for what these subscribers deem Israel's monstrous descent into immoral perversion unworthy of support.

But amongst these passionate denunciations, I noted an accompanying near total absence of any consciousness about the function, context, and development of Israeli politics itself beyond how they can be refracted through a distinctly Jewish American lens. More importantly, I noted a rarity of critical consideration of Mizrahi Israelis' place in Israeli history and role in the development of right-wing Israeli politics beyond relegation to a palatable, uncomplicated footnote about the history of racism in Israel or similarities between Zionism and colonialism. This lack and discrepancy in genuine interest in Mizrahi Israelis – who still constitute the Jewish demographic majority of Israel – and their position as the stalwart base of Israeli Right indicated a vital potential for a historical investigation of what I consider to be a major and consequential shortcoming for ideologically motivated young American Jews.

Initially, I planned for this thesis to take a more traditional social and political historical approach that isolated and explicated how Mizrahi Israelis were first drawn to the Israeli Right and how Mizrahi Israelis played a pivotal role in Likud's first electoral victory. To that end, I researched a number of crucial factors that remain integral to the arguments I produce in this project. For instance, Mizrahi Israelis' experiences in *ma'abarot* and vis-à-vis the hegemonic Labor Zionist state and their commiseration, identification with, and ultimately intrinsically familial relation to Menachem Begin and his brand of the Revisionist Zionist Israeli Right are unquestionably still essential factors in understanding why Mizrahi Israelis voted for the Israeli Right in the past and inform the relationship between the two today. But as I began to consider the full extent of my motivation for this thesis and the full extent of the question that I began with – which are both endemically and urgently tied to Israeli politics in the present day – I came

to realize that this social and political historical approach alone would be insufficient for me to be able to feel that I comprehensively addressed what I set out to address.

The further I juxtaposed the social and political factors that informed the Mizrahi Israeli relationship to the Israeli Right in the 1970s and 1980s when the political partnership between the two solidified in earnest with the reality of Israel in 2019, the less and less Mizrahi Israelis' continued support of the Israeli Right made objective logical sense. Israel today is practically almost unrecognizable to the Israel of 1980, and yet Mizrahi Israelis *continue* to form the consistent core of the Israeli Rights' voter base. To make sense of this seeming incongruity, I readjusted the aim of this thesis through the lens of a study of Mizrahi Israelis' collective memory of their relationship to the Israeli Right: reprioritizing my method to center on a journey to clarify how emotion, perspective, and self-conceptualization of identity impact Israeli politics in the present day and widespread Mizrahi support for the Israeli Right.

With this focus, I shifted my attention away from reconstructing what initially led to widespread Mizrahi support for the Israeli Right, and more towards how the factors that led to this initial support transformed into the realm of memories that continue to exist and influence today. More than just understanding how anti-Mizrahi racism during the Labor Alignment campaigning in 1981 motivated Mizrahi Israelis to give Likud the eleventh-hour surge to victory is understanding how these memories of mistreatment continue to inform why Mizrahi Israelis are so generally averse to voting for the Israeli Left. More than just understanding who Menachem Begin and his ilk of the Revisionist Zionist were is understanding how Mizrahi Israeli memories of their relationship to and role in the Begin's Israeli Right is synonymous to Mizrahi Israeli self-conceptualization of pride and identity. An assessment of why Mizrahi Israelis have voted for and continue to vote for the Israeli Right through the lens of collective

memory clarifies what are otherwise incomplete assessments thorough social and political histories alone, and gives license to clearly answer that Mizrahi Israelis continue to vote for the Israeli Right in no small part because of collective memory and the ways in which collective memory define their understandings of Israel and themselves.

Collective memory's impact Israeli politics today is precisely why I argue a specifically empathetic understanding of Mizrahi Israelis' collective memory of their relationship to the Israeli Right is an imperative intervention in both the existing historiography and more generally for anyone looking to productively discuss Israeli politics. I especially challenge critics of Zionism and anti-Zionists, American Jews my age particularly, to correct this critical lack in empathy and understanding. Without a redress to make the attempt to understand the Jewish demographic majority in Israel, whose motivations for voting for the Israeli Right are far more nuanced that what is typically represented, the conversation around Israeli politics remain dismissive, self-serving, and frankly embarrassing coming from critical-to-anti-Zionists who go out of their way to brand themselves as intersectional anti-racists. It is undeniable that the trajectory of Netanyahu's Likud urgently jeopardizes Israel's ability to successfully remain a liberal Jewish democracy and promotes an increasingly unsustainable and immoral relationship to the Palestinians, but pigeonholing Likud's complex history and disregarding the full complexity of why Likud has sustained such passionate devotion amongst Mizrahi Israelis who largely keep them in power is a cheap short cut for a nation and a conflict that require hard work.

I end this thesis with a further appeal for empathy not through my own words, but parabolically through the story of Judah and Tamar from the book of Genesis. In his middle age, Judah – one of patriarch Jacob's middle children – has three sons, the oldest of whom, Er, is to be married to a woman named Tamar. But Er was wicked, and God killed him. Under the law, it

then fell to Judah's second son, Onan, to marry Tamar, but he too was wicked and God killed him. Judah, now distraught with grief, knows that by law he must offer his third and last son, Shelah, to marry Tamar. But, fearing Shelah may suffer the same fate that his brothers did if he does so, transgresses his responsibility and keeps Tamar in his household with no intention of ever letting her marry Shelah. For Tamar – who was in no way responsible for the wickedness that caused God to kill Er and Onan – Judah's transgression is a fundamentally unjust punishment dooming her to an impoverished life of servitude from which there is no means of escape.

Later, after he has become a widower, Judah hires a prostitute at Enaim on his journey to Timnah, and, unable to pay since he is away from his home, lends the prostitute his chord and staff as collateral. Unbeknownst to Judah, the prostitute was Tamar in disguise, having hidden her face to deceive Judah into hiring her. After Judah is unable to find a prostitute at Enaim to pay when he returns from his travels, Tamar reveals that she was in fact the prostitute he had hired by presenting Judah with his own chord and staff. Judah then proclaims the first great empathetic declaration in the Torah – admitting to his own transgressions and the injustice of his behavior – by stating "She is more righteous than I." Judah's empathetic reconciliation with Tamar starts him on his journey to reconcile with his brother Joseph, whom he had helped condemn to either death or slavery when he collaborated to cast Joseph into a pit to meet an uncertain fate in both of their youths, to close out the central question at the book of Genesis outlined when Cain killed Abel – "Am I my brother's keeper?" – with a resounding yes.

While the story of Judah and Tamar is admittedly almost too unbearably old-school biblical – complete with rods, staffs, and death by divine smiting – it poses an essential philosophical question about the role and value of empathy. In their own minds, both Judah and

Tamar thought they were in the right: Judah believed himself to be protecting his only son, but for Tamar, Judah's same actions were unjust and warranted a confrontation. Only after taking an empathetic approach, and considering through the other's perspective, can Judah ultimately reconcile his transgression and begin on the path to healing, forgiveness, and progress. I appeal to apply this empathetic moral and path to understanding presented in the story of Judah and Tamar to Israeli politics. For a country so fractured in memory and perspective between Israelis and Palestinians, Ashkenazim and Mizrahim, Right and Left, secular and religious – a conscious and deliberate effort to take a leap of faith and make the effort to see through someone else's eyes is a necessary corrective to move forward.

Bibliography

Acosta, Benjamin. "The Dynamics of Israel's Democratic Tribalism." *Middle East Journal* 68, No. 2 (Spring 2014): 268-286.

Alterman, Rachelle. "Opening Up the 'Black Box' in Evaluating Neighborhood Problems: The Implementation Process in Israel's Project Urban Renewal." *Policy Studies Journal* 16, No. 2 (Winter 1987): 347-361.

Arye Gelbaum. *Ha'aretz*, April 22, 1949. In Segev, Tom. *1949: The First Israelis*. New York: The Free Press, A Division of Macmillan, Inc, 1986.

Auerbach, Gedalia. "Urban Politics and Public Policy – Looking Back and Going Forward: 'Project Renewal' in One Israeli City." *Cities: The International Journal of Urban Policy and Planning* 31 (2013): 197-207.

Averbukh, Lidia. "Israel on the Road to the Orient?" *Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (German Institute for International and Security Affairs) Comments*. Translated by Meredith Drake, No. 9 (April 2017): 1-7.

Avishai, Bernard. "The Victory of the New Israel." July 8, 1981. In *A New Israel: A Democracy in Crisis 1973-1988, Essays*, 110-137. New York: Ticknor & Fields, 1990.

Avner, Yehuda. "The Great Emancipator." *The Jerusalem Post,* May 17, 2007. Accessed May 17, 2018. https://www.jpost.com/Opinion/Op-Ed-Contributors/The-great-emancipator.

Azulay, Moran and Yuval Karni. "7 Kadima Members Join Livni's Party." *Ynet News.com*, March 12, 2012. Accessed February 15, 2019. https://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4315151,00.html.

Bader, Yohanan. *The Knesset and I*. Jerusalem: 1979, 122-123 in Weitz, Yechiam. "The Road to 'Upheaval': A Capsule History of the Herut Movement, 1948-1977." *Israel Studies* 10, No. 3 The Right in Israel (Fall, 2005): 54-86.

Bashkin, Orit. *The Impossible Exodus: Iraqi Jews in Israel*. Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2017.

Begin, Menachem. *The Revolt*. Nash Edition. Los Angeles: Nash Publishing, 1972.

Beinart, Peter. *The Crisis of Zionism*. New York: Times Books, 2012.

"Ben Gurion's Meeting With Writers." November 10, 1949. Divrei Sofrim, State Archives. In Segev, Tom. *1949: The First Israelis*. New York: The Free Press, A Division of Macmillan, Inc, 1986.

Ben-David, Calev. "Analyze This: A Typically Classy Send-Off for 'Mr. Television.'" *The Jerusalem Post*, February 7, 2008. Accessed April 30, 2018. https://www.jpost.com/Israel/Analyze-This-A-typically-classy-sign-off-for-Mr-Television-91391.

Ben-Gurion, David. "The Imperatives of the Jewish Revolution (1944)." *The Zionist Idea: A Historical Analysis and Reader*, edited by Arthur Hertzberg, 605-619. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1997.

Benvenisti, Meron. "Bantustan Plan for an Apartheid Israel." *The Guardian*, April 25, 2004. Accessed January 27, 2019. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2004/apr/26/comment.

Bilu, Yoram and André Levy. "The Elusive Sanctification of Menachem Begin." *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 7, No. 2 (Winter 1992): 297-328.

Bitton, Erez. "Zohra El Fassia." In *You Who Cross My Path*, 170-171. Translated by Tzipi Keller. Rochester, New York: BOA Editions, Ltd., 2015.

Black, Ian. "Is the Middle East on a Peace Process to Nowhere?" *The Guardian*, April 28, 2010. Accessed January 29, 2019. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/apr/28/middle-east-meron-benvenisti-peace-process.

Brown, Kenneth. "'Sometimes I Have a Feeling of Foreignness': A Conversation with Erez Bitton." *MERIP Reports*, No. 92, Israel's Uncertain Future (November-December 1980): 25-27.

Brown, Kenneth. "Iron and a King: The Likud and the Oriental Jews." *MERIP Reports*, No. 114 Israel Divided (May 1983): 3-13.

Carmel, Assaf and Ha'aretz Service. "Shoshana Damari, 'Queen of Israeli Song,' Dies at 83." *Ha'aretz*, February 14, 2006. Accessed January 30, 2019. https://www.haaretz.com/1.4892083.

Chetrit, Sami Shalom. "Mizrahi Politics in Israel: Between Integration and Alternative." *Journal of Palestine Studies* 29, No. 4 (Fall 2000): 51-65.

Chetrit, Sami Shalom. *Intra-Jewish Conflict in Israel: White Jews, Black Jews*. London and New York: Routledge, 2010.

Claiborne, William. "Begin Finds New Political Base Among Israel's Sephardic Jews." *The Washington Post*, June 29, 1981. Accessed April 9, 2018. ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

Cohen, Shalom and Kokhavi Shemesh. "The Origin and Development of the Israeli Black Panther Movement." *MERIP Reports*, No. 49 (July 1976): 19-22.

Cohen, Uri and Nissim Leon. "The Mahapach and Yitzhak Shamir's Quiet Revolution: Mizrahim and the Herut Movement." *Israel Studies Review* 29, No. 1 (Summer 2014): 18-40.

Confino, Alon. "Collective Memory and Cultural History: Problems of Method." *The American Historical Review* 102, No. 5 (December 1997): 1386-1403.

"Debate on the Eligibility of Jews for Citizenship (December 23, 1789)." *The Jew in the Modern World: A Documentary History*. Third Edition. Editors Paul Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz, 123-125. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Dockser, Amy. "Israel: Unexpected Election Results." *Harvard International Review* 7, No. 2 (November 1984): 36-37.

Dónzis, Aron. "Popular ex-Likud Minister Slams Old Party, Plans Political Comeback." *Times of Israel*, April 8, 2014. Accessed February 13, 2019. http://www.timesofisrael.com/popular-ex-likud-minister-slams-old-party-plans-political-comeback/.

Dowty, Alan. *The Jewish State: A Century Later.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998.

Eyal, Gil. *The Disenfranchisement of the Orient: Expertise on Arab Affairs in the Israeli State*. Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2006.

"First Tally." *Ha-Dor*, July 28, 1955. In Weitz, Yechiam. "The Road to 'Upheaval': A Capsule History of the Herut Movement, 1948-1977." *Israel Studies* 10, No. 3 The Right in Israel (Fall, 2005): 54-86.

Fisk, Robert. "Here's What I Found Out When I Spent The Day With Israel's Most Controversial Journalist. Gideon Levy." *The Independent*, September, 27, 2018. Accessed January 29, 2019. https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/gideon-levy-robert-fisk-haaretz-israel-palestine-gaza-a8557691.html.

Fiske, Gavriel. "Will the Real PM Please Rest Up?" *The Times of Israel*, May 13, 2013. Accessed April 30, 2018. https://www.timesofisrael.com/will-the-real-pm-please-rest-up/.

Franklin, Stephen. "Likud Party's Success Driven By Sephardim: Voting Block Now a Majority in Israel." *Chicago Tribune*, October 9, 1988. ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

Frantzman, Seth. "'They Will Take the Country from Us': Labor Zionism, the Origins and Legacy of the 'Other' in Israeli Mass Media, and Hegemonic Narratives." *Digest of Middle East Studies* 23, No. 1 (2014): 156-189.

Frantzman, Seth. "How Israel's Poor Minority Was Turned Into 'White Racists' by Israel's 'Left' in Order to Excuse its Own Racism." April 10, 2015. Accessed January 4, 2019. https://sethfrantzman.com/2015/04/10/how-israels-poor-minority-was-turned-into-white-racists-by-israels-left-in-order-to-excuse-its-own-racism/.

Friling, Tuvia. "A Blatant Oversight? The Right-Wing in Israeli Historiography." *Israel Studies 14*, No. 1 (Spring 2009): 123-169.

Fukuyama, Francis. "The End of History?" *The National Interest*, No. 16 (Summer 1989): 1-18.

Ghert-Zand, Renee. "Academic on Hot Seat After Tirade Against Mizrahi Jews." *The Times of Israel*, March 23, 2015. Accessed January 2, 2019. https://www.timesofisrael.com/academic-on-hot-seat-after-tirade-against-mizrahi-jews/.

Gilad, Chaim. *In the Shadow of the Gallows*. Israel: Hadar, 1978, 7-20 in Shilon, Avi. *Menachem Begin: A Life*. Translated by Danielle Zillerberg and Yoram Sharett. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012.

Gilboa, Yehoshua A. "Earthquake." *Ma'ariv,* May 18, 1977. In Weitz, Yechiam. "The Road to 'Upheaval': A Capsule History of the Herut Movement, 1948-1977," *Israel Studies* 10, No. 3 The Right in Israel (Fall 2005): 54-86.

Goldstein, Amir. "Partial Establishment – Menachem Begin, Gahal, and the Black Panthers." *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 17, No. 2 (2018): 236-251.

Goodman, Micah. *Catch-67: The Left, the Right, and the Legacy of the Six-Day War*. Translated by Eylon Levy. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018.

Gordis, Daniel. *Menachem Begin: The Battle For Israel's Soul*. New York: Nextbook-Schocken, 2014.

Gorenberg, Gershom. *The Unmaking of Israel*. Amazon Kindle Edition. New York: HarperCollins, 2011.

Gordon, Uri. "Democratic Deficit in the Israeli Tent Protests: Chronicle of a Failed Intervention." In *Protest Camps in International Context: Spaces, Infrastructures, and the Media of Resistance*. Edited by Gavin Brown, Anna Feigenbaum, Fabian Frenzel, and Patrick McCurdy, 221-242. Bristol: Policy Press at the University of Bristol, 2017.

Gordon, Uri. "Israel's 'Tent Protests': The Chilling Effect of Nationalism." *Social Movement Studies* 11, No. 3-4 (2012): 349-355.

Ha'aretz Staff. "New Poll: Labor-Livni Bloc Would Beat Netanyahu." *Ha'aretz,* December 9, 2014. Accessed February 4, 2019. https://www.haaretz.com/poll-labor-livni-bloc-would-beat-netanyahu-1.5343413.

Ha'aretz, July 25th and 26th 1955. In Shilon, Avi. *Menachem Begin: A Life*. Translated by Danielle Zillerberg and Yoram Sharett. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012.

Haberman, Clyde. "Israel's Likud Passes Torch, Naming Netanyahu Leader." *The New York Times*, March 26, 1993. Accessed January 31, 2019. https://www.nytimes.com/1993/03/26/world/israel-s-likud-passes-torch-naming-netanyahu-leader.html.

Hadar, Leon T. "David Levy: Can He Win the Likud Succession War?" *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*, March 1992. Accessed April 30, 2018. https://www.wrmea.org/1992-march/to-tell-the-truth-david-levy-can-he-win-the-likud-s-succession-war.html.

Halbfinger, David M. "The Cases Against Netanyahu and a Decision to Indict." *The New York Times*, February 28, 2019. Accessed March 14 2019. https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/28/world/middleeast/benjamin-netanyahu-indictment.html

Halbfinger, David M. "The Corruption Cases Against Netanyahu." *The New York Times*, December 2, 2018. Accessed January 31, 2019. https://www.nytimes.com/2018/12/02/world/middleeast/netanyahu-cases-guide.html.

Halkin, Hillel. *Jabotinsky: A Life.* New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2014.

Hari, Johann. "Is Gideon Levy the Most Hated Man in Israel or Just the Most Heroic?" *The Independent*, September 24, 2010. Accessed January 22, 2019. https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/is-gideon-levy-the-most-hated-man-in-israel-or-just-the-most-heroic-2087909.html.

Harding, Luke. "Menachem Begin 'Plotted to Kill German Chancellor.'" *The Guardian*, June 16, 2008. Accessed March 8, 2019. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2006/jun/15/germany.lukeharding.

Harkov, Lahav. "Speech at Anti-Netanyahu Demo Recalls Racism in 1981." *The Jerusalem Post*, March 8, 2015. Accessed December 31, 2018. https://www.jpost.com/Israel-Elections/Speech-at-anti-Netanyahu-demo-recalls-racism-in-1981-Labor-rally-393316.

Hasson, Nir. "Jerusalem Neighborhood to Name Streets in Honor of Mizrahi Black Panthers." *Ha'aretz*, June 24, 2011. Accessed February 17, 2019. https://www.haaretz.com/1.5023472.

Hastings, Max. *Going to the Wars*. London: Pan Macmillan, 2000. In Pfeffer, Anshel. *Bibi: The Turbulent Life and Times of Benjamin Netanyahu*. New York: Basic Books, 2018.

Heller, Aron. "How Ethnic Tensions Helped Fuel Netanyahu's Victory." *The Times of Israel*, April 4, 2015. Accessed January 2, 2019. https://www.timesofisrael.com/how-ethnic-tensions-helped-fuel-netanyahus-victory/.

Heller, Aron. "Wonder Woman to the Rescue: Gal Gadot Takes on Netanyahu." *The Washington Post*, March 11, 2018. Accessed March 14, 2019. https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/wonder-woman-to-the-rescue-gal-gadot-takes-on-netanyahu/2019/03/11/83acbe7a-4408-11e9-94ab-d2dda3c0df52_story.html?utm_term=.72234673d8b1.

Herut Central Committee Meeting, June 12, 1974. Jabotinsky Institute Archives. In Cohen, Uri and Nissim Leon. "The Mahapach and Yitzhak Shamir's Quiet Revolution: Mizrahim and the Herut Movement." *Israel Studies Review* 29, No. 1 (Summer 2014): 18-40.

Honig, Sarah. "Menachem Begin – the Republican Monarch." *The Jerusalem Post*, March 13, 1992. Accessed May 5, 2018. ProQuest.

Israel Central Bureau of Statistics. "Immigrants, By Period of Immigration, Country of Birth and Last Country of Residence." *CBS, Statistical Abstract of Israel, 2009*, Chart No. 4.4, 2009: 237-238.

Israel Central Bureau of Statistics. "Jews by Country of Origin and Age." *CBS, Statistical Abstract of Israel, 2009*, Chart No. 2.24, 2009: 156.

Israel Central Bureau of Statistics. "Localities and Population by Population Group, District, Sub-District and National Region." *CBS, Statistical Abstract of Israel, 2012*, Chart No. 2.8, 2012: 108-109.

"Israeli Elections." *MERIP Reports*, No. 25 (February 1974): 19-22.

"Israeli Elections: MERIP Interviews Fawzi El-Asmar and Nadav Katz." *MERIP Reports*, No. 58 (June 1977): 8-13.

Issacharoff, Avi. "Why Did Bibi Win? Because He Speaks Fluent Mizrahi." *The Times of Israel*, March 25, 2015. Accessed January 2, 2019. https://www.timesofisrael.com/why-did-bibi-win-because-he-speaks-fluent-mizrahi/.

Jabotinsky, Vladimir. "The Idea of Betar." 1934. In Halkin, Hillel. *Jabotinsky: A Life.* New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2014.

Jabotinsky, Vladimir. "The Iron Wall." *Rasviet*, April 11, 1923. Accessed through Jabotinsky Institute on January 13, 2019. http://en.jabotinsky.org/media/9747/the-iron-wall.pdf.

Jerusalem Post, June 17, 1981. In Peretz, Don and Sammy Smooha. "Israel's Tenth Knesset Elections: Ethnic Upsurgence and the Decline of Ideology." *Middle East Journal* 35, No. 4 (Fall 1981): 506-526.

Jerusalem Post Staff. "Who Is Omri Casspi?" *The Jerusalem Post*, February 8, 2019. Accessed February 18, 2019. https://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/Sports/Who-is-Omri-Casspi-580090.

Johnson, Scott D. "The Politics of the Right: The Herut Movement." *Social Science* 40, No. 2 (April 1965): 104-114.

Johnson, Scott D. "Reflections on Israeli Electoral Politics." *International Social Science Review* 57, No. 1 (Winter 1982): 3-12.

JPost.com Staff, "Netanyahu Closes Gap: Likud Leads Zionist Union in 1 Exit Poll, Tied in 2 Others." *The Jerusalem Post*, March 17, 2015. Accessed February 5, 2019. https://www.jpost.com/Israel-Elections/First-exit-polls-show-tight-race-between-Herzog-and-Netanyahu-394224.

Jewish Telegraphic Agency Staff. "Meet Yair Shamir, the Man Who Could Replace Avigdor Lieberman." *Ha'aretz*, January 14, 2013. Accessed January 31, 2019. https://www.haaretz.com/meet-the-man-who-could-replace-lieberman-1.5224508.

Kadesh, Avigayil. "Every Bride Wants a Pnina Tornai." *Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs: Israel Experience*, May 8, 2011. Accessed March 12, 2019. https://mfa.gov.il/MFA/IsraelExperience/Pages/Every_bride_wants_Pnina_Tornai-May_2011.aspx.

Kahanoff, Jacqueline. "Gesher el 'Ole Ha-Mizrahi." *Al Ha-Mishmar*, May 11, 1956. In "Bridge to the Oriental Immigrants." In *Modern Middle Eastern Jewish Thought: Writings on Identity, Politics, and Culture, 1893-1958*. Edited by Moshe Behar and Zvi Ben-Dor Benite, 189-194. Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 2013.

Kahanoff, Jacqueline. "Israel: Ambivalent Levantine." In *Mongrels or Marvels: The Levantine Writings of Jacqueline Kahanoff*. Edited by Deborah A. Starr and Sassoon Somekh, 193-212. Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2017.

Kahn-Nisser, Sara. "Nationalism, Identity, and Rebellion: An Interpretation of the Wadi Salib Events." *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 16, No. 3-4 (2010): 375-396. DOI:10.1080/13537113.2010.526919.

Kampeas, Ron. "Can Trump Learn a Thing or Two from Netanyahu's Old Video Scandal?" *The Times of Israel*, October 14, 2016. Accessed January 28, 2019. https://www.jta.org/2016/10/13/politics/can-trump-learn-a-thing-or-two-from-netanyahus-old-video-scandal.

Kaplan, Eran. "Begin, *Chach'chachim*, and the Birth of Israeli Identity Politics." *Israel Studies* 23, No. 3 (Fall 2018): 68-75.

Kashti, Or. "Netanyahu and Likud Won By Taking Poorer Jewish Towns, West Bank Settlements." *Ha'aretz*, March 19, 2015. Accessed January 27, 2019. https://www.haaretz.com/.premium-likud-won-by-taking-poorer-jewish-towns-settlements-1.5339404.

Keinon, Herb. "PM invokes Begin at 'Altalena' Memorials; In Clear Reference to the Settlements, PM Insists on the Supremacy of the Rule of Law, No Civil War Under Any Circumstance." *The Jerusalem Post,* June 10, 2012. Accessed July 24, 2018. https://www.jpost.com/Diplomacy-and-Politics/PM-invokes-Begin-at-Altalena-memorial.

Kenig, Ofer, Michael Philippov and Gideon Rahat. "Party Membership in Israel: An Overview." *Israel Studies Review* 28, No. 1 (Summer 2013): 8-32.

Kershner, Isabel. "In Poorer Periphery, Legal Woes Don't Dent Netanyahu's Appeal." *The New York Times*, March 17, 2018. Accessed May 1, 2018. https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/17/world/middleeast/benjamin-netanyahu-israel-likud.html.

Khazzom, Loolwa. "Israeli Rapper Takes U.S." *Rolling Stone*, March 2, 2005. Accessed February 18, 2019. http://www.rollingstone.com/news/story/7069855/israeli_rapper_takes_us.

Kirsch, Eli. *You Who Cross My Path*, 10-23. Translated by Tzipi Keller. Rochester, New York: BOA Editions, Ltd., 2015.

Landau, David. "When Shamir Revealed How His Parents and Sisters Were Killed in the Holocaust." *The Times of Israel*, June 30, 2012. Accessed January 31, 2019. https://www.timesofisrael.com/when-shamir-revealed-how-his-parents-and-sisters-were-killed-in-the-holocaust/.

Landau, Noa. "Arabs Aren't 'Second Class Voters,' President Reuven Rivlin Rebukes Netanyahu." *Ha'aretz*, March 11, 2019. Accessed March 14, 2019. https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/elections/rivlin-says-israel-has-no-second-class-citizens-in-response-to-netanyahu-comments-1.7005331.

Lazin, Fred A. "Citizen Participation: Project Urban Renewal in Israel." *Journal of Urban Affairs* 18, No. 3 (1996): 307-321.

Lazin, Fred A. *Politics and Policy Implementation: Project Renewal in Israel*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1993.

Leibovitz, Liel. "Amos Schocken's Shocking Racism." *Tablet*, April 16, 2018. Accessed December 22, 2019. https://www.tabletmag.com/scroll/259983/amos-schockens-schocking-racism?utm_source=tabletmagazinelist&utm_campaign=1130516d99-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2018_04_17&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_c308bf8edb-1130516d99-207792561.

Levy, Gideon. "Borne on the Wings of Hatred." *Ha'aretz*, May 9, 2011. Accessed April 30, 2018. https://www.haaretz.com/1.5009968.

Levy, Gideon. "Sixty-Seven Things Gideon Levy Loves About Israel." *Ha'aretz*, April 25, 2018. Accessed April 30, 2018. https://www.haaretz.com/opinion/.premium.MAGAZINE-gideon-levy-finds-67-things-he-loves-about-israel-1.6027888.

Levy, Gideon. "The Good Guys." *Ha'aretz*, August 17, 2017. Accessed January 29, 2018. https://www.haaretz.com/opinion/.premium-the-good-guys-1.5443540.

Lis, Jonathan, Eli Ashkenazi, Ilan Lior, Yanir Yagna and Ha'aretz Staff. "More than 300,000 Demonstrate Across Israel to Protest High Cost of Living." *Ha'aretz*, August 6, 2011. Accessed January 28, 2019. https://www.haaretz.com/1.5041630.

Lis, Jonathan. "Artist's 'Idol Worshippers' Remarks at Anti-Netanyahu Rally Draw Ire." *Ha'aretz*, March 9, 2015. Accessed April 30, 2018. https://www.haaretz.com/.premium-artist-s-remarks-at-ta-rally-spark-ire-on-right-and-left-1.5334352.

Lis, Jonathan and Chaim Levinson. "Political Bombshell as Gantz, Lapid Join Forces to Defeat Netanyahu." *Ha'aretz*, February 21, 2019. Accessed March 14, 2019. https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/elections/.premium-political-bombshell-as-gantz-lapid-join-forces-to-replace-netanyahu-1.6957403.

Livio, Oren and Tamar Katriel. "A Fractured Solidarity: Communities and Structure in the Israeli 2011 Social Protest." In *The Political Aesthetics of Global Protest: The Arab Spring and Beyond*. Edited by Pnina Werbner, Martin Webb, and Kathryn Spellman-Poots, 147-176. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014.

Magid, Jacob. "Extremist Otzma Yehudit Announces Unity Pact With Jewish Home." *The Times of Israel*, February 20, 2019. Accessed March 14, 2019. https://www.timesofisrael.com/jewish-home-reaches-unity-pact-with-extremist-otzma-yehudit/

Mahar, June 29, 1981. In Brown, Kenneth. "Iron and a King: The Likud and the Oriental Jews." *MERIP Reports*, No. 114 Israel Divided (May 1983): 3-13.

"Man of the Year: Anwar Sadat. Architect of a New Middle East." *Time*, January 2, 1978. Accessed February 26, 2019. http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,915853,00.html.

"Manifesto to the Residents of Wadi Salib." In Kahn-Nisser, Sara. "Nationalism, Identity, and Rebellion: An Interpretation of the Wadi Salib Events." *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 16, No. 3-4 (2010): 375-396. DOI:10.1080/13537113.2010.526919.

Naor, Arye. *Begin in Power: A Personal Testimony*. Israel: Yedioth Ahronoth, 1993, 27. In Shilon, Avi. *Menachem Begin: A Life*. Translated by Danielle Zillerberg and Yoram Sharett. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012.

"Netanyahu Tells Police 2 in Likud Tried to Blackmail Him Over Affair." *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, January 9, 1993. Accessed January 31, 2019. https://www.jta.org/1993/01/09/archive/netanyahu-tells-police-2-in-likud-tried-to-blackmail-him-over-affair.

"Ofra Haza – Im Nin'alu." *Ö3 Austria Top 40*. Accessed February 26, 2019. https://austriancharts.at/showitem.asp?interpret=Ofra+Haza&titel=Im+nin%27+alu&cat=s.

Oz, Amos. *In the Land of Israel*. New York: Harcourt, 1983.

Pallis, Elfi. "The Likud Party: A Primer." *Journal of Palestine Studies* 21, No. 2 (Winter 1992): 41-60.

Paris, Erna. "Viktor Orban's War on George Soros and Hungary's Jews." *The Globe and Mail*, June 1, 2018. Accessed January 14, 2019. https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/article-viktor-orbans-war-on-george-soros-and-hungarys-jews/.

Peretz, Don. "The Earthquake: Israel's Ninth Elections." *Middle East Journal* 31, No. 3 (Summer 1977): 251-266.

Peretz, Don and Gideon Doron. "Israel's 1996 Elections: Another Political Earthquake." *Middle East Journal* 60, No. 4 (Fall 1996): 529-546.

Peretz, Don and Sammy Smooha, "Israel's Tenth Knesset Elections: Ethnic Upsurgence and the Decline of Ideology." *Middle East Journal* 35, No. 4 (Fall 1981): 506-526.

Peretz, Don and Sammy Smooha. "Israel's Eleventh Knesset Election." *Middle East Journal* 39, No. 1 (Winter 1985): 86-103.

Perlmutter, Amos. *The Life and Times of Menachem Begin.* Garden City, New Jersey: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1987.

Pfeffer, Anshel. *Bibi: The Turbulent Life and Times of Benjamin Netanyahu*. New York: Basic Books, 2018.

Picard, Avi. "Building the Country or Rescuing the People: Ben-Gurion's Attitude Towards Mass Jewish Immigration to Israel in the Mid-1950s." *Middle Eastern Studies* 54, No. 3 (May 2018): 382-399.

Picard, Avi. "Like a Phoenix: The Renaissance of Sephardic/Mizrahi Identity in Israel in the 1970s and 1980s." *Israel Studies* 22, No. 2 (Summer 2017): 1-25.

Posner, Steve. "Begin's Ploy." In *Israel Undercover: Secret Warfare and Hidden Diplomacy in the Middle East*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1987.

Ries, Matthew. "Israel." In *Elections in Asia and the Pacific: A Data Handbook*. Volume 1: Middle East, Central Asia, and South Asia. Edited by Dieter Nohlen, Florian Grotz, and Christoff Hartmann, 110-140. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2001.

Roby, Bryan K. *The Mizrahi Era of Rebellion: Israel's Forgotten Civil Rights Struggle, 1948-1966*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2015.

Sabar, Ariel. *My Father's Paradise: A Son's Search for His Jewish Past in Kurdish Iraq*. Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 2008.

Said, Edward. *Orientalism*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1978.

Scammon, Richard A. "International Election Notes." *World Affairs* 144, No. 1 (Summer 1981): 83-87.

Schocken, Gershom. "Revisiting Zionism." *New York Review of Books*, May 28, 1981. Accessed January 19, 2019. https://www.nybooks.com/articles/1981/05/28/revisiting-zionism/.

Sedan, Gil. "Behind the Headlines: Resignation Marks Latest Twist in David Levy's Political Career." *Jewish Telegraphic Agency Daily News Bulletin*, January 7, 1998. Accessed April 30, 2018. http://pdfs.jta.org/1998/1998_01_07.pdf?_ga=2.122752136.2069200549.1551230576-716346710.1545945865.

Segev, Tom. *1949: The First Israelis*. New York: The Free Press, A Division of Macmillan, Inc, 1986.

Shabi, Rachel. *We Look Like the Enemy: The Hidden Story of Jews from Arab Lands*. New York: Walker Publishing Company, 2008.

Shalev, Chemi. "Why the Israeli Right Hates the State of Israel and is Bent on Demolishing its Democracy." *Ha'aretz*, January 22, 2019. Accessed January 29, 2019. https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium.MAGAZINE-why-israeli-right-hates-the-state-of-israel-and-is-bent-on-demolishing-its-democracy-1.6865530.

Shama, Avraham and Mark Iris. *Immigration Without Integration: Third World Jews in Israel*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Schenkman Publishing Company, 1977.

Shamir, Michal and Asher Arian. "Collective Identity and Electoral Competition in Israel." *The American Political Science Review* 93, No. 2 (June 1999): 265-277.

Shamir, Michal and Asher Arian. "The Ethnic Vote in Israel's 1981 Elections." *Electoral Studies*, No. 1 (1982): 315-331.

Shapira, Anita. *Israel: A History*. Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 2012.

Shavit, Ari. "Jerusalem-born Thinker Meron Benvenisti Has a Message for Israelis: Stop Whining." *Ha'aretz*, October 12, 2011. Accessed December 27, 2019. https://www.haaretz.com/.premium-zionism-was-not-born-in-sin-but-in-illusion-1.5179945.

Shavit, Ari. *My Promised Land: The Triumph and Tragedy of Israel*. New York: Spiegel & Grau, 2013.

Shenhav, Yehouda. *The Arab Jews: A Postcolonial Reading of Nationalism, Religion, and Ethnicity*. Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2006.

Sherwood, Harriet. "The Battle of Bet Shemesh." *The Guardian*, October 31, 2011. Accessed February 17, 2019. https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2011/oct/31/bet-shemesh-haredi-jews-school?newsfeed=true.

Shilon, Avi. "David Levy, Likud Stalwart, Should Run for Israeli President." *Ha'aretz*, February 26, 2014. Accessed April 30, 2018. https://www.haaretz.com/opinion/.premium-david-levy-for-israeli-president-1.5326447.

Shilon, Avi. *Menachem Begin: A Life*. Translated by Danielle Zillerberg and Yoram Sharett. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012.

Shipler, David K. "Sephardim are Transforming Israel's Political Map." *The New York Times*, April 8, 1983. Accessed April 9, 2018. https://www.nytimes.com/1983/04/08/world/sephardim-are-transforming-israel-s-political-map.html.

Shipler, David K. "Peres Bids Begin to Discuss Israeli Violence." *The New York Times*, February 13, 1983. Accessed April 30, 2018. https://www.nytimes.com/1983/02/13/world/peres-bids-begin-meet-to-discuss-israeli-violence.html.

Shohat, Ella. *Taboo Memories, Diasporic Voices*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006.

Smith, Daniel L. "The Second Israel: Peace in the Middle East and the Implications of Militant Oriental Jewish Ethnicity." *Dialectical Anthropology* 16, No. 2 (1991): 153-166.

Smooha, Sammy. "Ethnic Democracy: Israel as an Archetype." *Israel Studies* 2, No. 2 (Fall 1997): 198-241.

Smooha, Sammy. "Ethnic Stratification and Allegiance in Israel: Where do Oriental Jews Belong?" *Il Politico* 41, No. 4 (December 1976): 635-651.

Smooha, Sammy. *Israel: Pluralism and* Conflict. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978.

Sofer, Sasson. *Begin: An Anatomy of Leadership*. Oxford and New York: Basil Blackwell, 1988.

Spiro, Amy. "A Hebrew-English Mashup Summer Hit?" *The Jerusalem Post*, July 17, 2017. Accessed February 18, 2019. https://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/Culture/A-Hebrew-English-mashup-summer-hit-499913.

Sprinzak, Ehud. *Brother Against Brother, Violence and Extremism in Israeli Politics from Altalena to the Rabin Assassination*. New York: The Free Press-Simon & Schuster Inc., 1999.

Stillman, Norman A. *The Jews of Arab Lands in Modern Times.* Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2003.

Swirski, Shlomo. *Israel: The Oriental Majority*. Translated by Barbara Swirski. London and New Jersey: Zed Books Ltd, 1989.

"Telecast to the Nation." May 1, 1979. Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs Digital Archives. In Gordis, Daniel. Menachem Begin: The Battle For Israel's Soul. New York: Nextbook-Schocken, 2014.

Tenenbom, Tuvia. *Catch the Jew!* Jerusalem: Gefen Publishing House, 2015.

Tessler, Mark. "The Political Right in Israel: Its Origins, Growth, and Prospects." *Journal of Palestine Studies* 15, No. 2 (Winter 1986): 12-55.

"The Begin Center Museum – a Multimedia Trip Through a Leader's Life." Tour. Menachem Begin Heritage Center. July 12, 2018.

The Simpsons. "The Last Temptation of Homer." Directed by Carlos Baeza. Written by Frank Mula. December 9, 1993. Los Angeles: Fox Broadcasting Network, 1993.

The State of Israel. Jerusalem Municipality. "Musrara." Accessed February 16, 2019. https://www.jerusalem.muni.il/en/Absorption/OlimAbsorbingCommunities/Pages/Musrara.aspx.

The State of Israel. Knesset. "Elections to the Fourth Knesset." Accessed January 27, 2019.
    https://www.knesset.gov.il/description/eng/eng_mimshal_res4.htm.

The State of Israel. Knesset. "Elections to the Third Knesset." Accessed January 27, 2019.
    https://www.knesset.gov.il/description/eng/eng_mimshal_res3.htm.

The State of Israel. Knesset. "Elections to the Twentieth Knesset." Accessed January 27, 2019.
    https://knesset.gov.il/description/eng/eng_mimshal_res20.htm.

The State of Israel. Knesset. "Factional and Government Make-Up of the Tenth Knesset."
    Accessed February 15, 2019. https://www.knesset.gov.il/history/eng/eng_hist8_s.htm.

The State of Israel. Knesset. "Knesset Members, David Levy." Accessed January 11, 2019.
    https://www.knesset.gov.il/mk/eng/mk_eng.asp?mk_individual_id_t=72.

The State of Israel. Knesset. "Knesset Members, Meir Sheetrit." Accessed February 15, 2019.
    https://knesset.gov.il/mk/eng/mk_eng.asp?mk_individual_id_t=119.

The State of Israel. Knesset. "Knesset Members, Moshe Katsav." Accessed February 26, 2019.
    https://www.knesset.gov.il/mk/eng/mk_eng.asp?mk_individual_id_t=10.

The State of Israel. Knesset. "Knesset Members, Tzipi Livni." Accessed January 31, 2019.
    https://www.knesset.gov.il/mk/eng/mk_eng.asp?mk_individual_id_t=213.

The State of Israel. Knesset. "Knesset Members, Yitzhak Shamir." Accessed February 26, 2019.
    https://www.knesset.gov.il/mk/eng/mk_eng.asp?mk_individual_id_t=175.

"The World: Kind…Honest…Dangerous." *Time*, May 30, 1977. Accessed February 26, 2019.
    http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,914950,00.html.

Times of Israel and Associated Press. "Netanyahu Scores Crushing Victory in Israeli Elections."
    The Times of Israel, March 18, 2015. Accessed January 27, 2019.
    https://www.timesofisrael.com/netanyahu-claims-victory-as-vote-count-shows-likud-
    further-ahead/.

Times of Israel Staff. "Israel Said to Seek $250b Compensation for Jews Forced Out of Arab
    Countries." *The Times of Israel*, January 5, 2019. https://www.timesofisrael.com/israel-
    said-set-to-seek-250b-compensation-for-jews-forced-out-of-arab-countries/.

Weitz, Richard. "Begin's Inconclusive Mandate." *Harvard International Review* 4, No. 1
    (September 1981): 8-11.

Weitz, Yechiam. "From Peace in the South to War in the North: Menachem Begin as Prime
    Minister, 1977-1983." *Israel Studies* 19, No. 1 (Spring 2014): 145-165.

Weitz, Yechiam. "The Road to 'Upheaval': A Capsule History of the Herut Movement, 1948-1977." *Israel Studies* 10, No. 3 The Right in Israel (Fall, 2005): 54-86.

Yakobi, Yitzhak. *Davar*, October 10, 1950. In Shapira, Anita. *Israel: A History*. Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 2012.

Yanai, Nathan. "Ben-Gurion's Concept of 'Mamlahiut' and the Forming Reality of the State of Israel." *Jewish Political Studies Review* 1, No. ½ (Spring 1989): 151-177.

Yanai, Nathan. "The Citizen as Pioneer: Ben-Gurion's Concept of Citizenship." *Israel Studies* 1, No. 1 (Spring 1996): 127-143.

Yanko, Adir. "Likudniks Recall 40 Years Since Their Dramatic Win." *Ynet News.com*, April 17, 2017. Accessed April 9, 2018. https://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4949898,00.html.

Yiftachel, Oren. *Ethnocracy: Land and Identity Politics in Israel/Palestine*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006.

Ynet Staff. "Benayoon Hopes to Receive Spanish Citizenship in August." *Ynet News.com*, March 17, 2005. Accessed February 18, 2019. https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-3059721,00.html.

Zarchin, Tomer, Ofra Edelman, Ha'aretz Service and Reuters. "Former President Moshe Katsav Guilty of Rape and Sexual Assault." *Ha'aretz*, December 30, 2010. Accessed February 26, 2019. https://www.haaretz.com/1.5101266.

Zerubavel, Yael. "The Death of Memory and the Memory of Death: Masada and the Holocaust as Historical Metaphors." *Representations*, No. 45 (Winter 1994): 72-100.

Zonszein, Mairav. "Binyamin Netanyahu: 'Arab voters are heading to the polling stations in droves.'" *The Guardian*, March 17, 2015. Accessed February 4, 2019. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/mar/17/binyamin-netanyahu-israel-arab-election.

Zuckerman, Alan S., Michal Shamir, and Hanna Herzog. "The Political Bases of Activism in the Israeli Labor Party and Herut." *Political Science Quarterly* 107, No. 2 (Summer 1992): 303-323.

Zur, Yarden and Jonathan Lis. "Ex-Foreign Minister David Levy, Voice of 'The Other Israel,' Wins Israel Prize." *Ha'aretz*, March 16, 2018. Accessed January 27, 2019. https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-david-levy-voice-of-the-other-israel-wins-israel-prize-1.5911011.