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The Clash of Civil Religions: A Paradigm for Understanding Israeli Politics

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INTRODUCTION

Almost thirty-five years after Camp David and twenty years after the Oslo Accord, a fundamental question remains unanswered: does the majority of the Israeli public support a left-wing or right-wing ideology? The answer, in a democratic system, should be obvious, since elections are supposed to give a clear picture of the political preferences of the voting public. However, Israeli polls are misleading. After the Yom Kippur disaster in 1977, Menachem Begin won his premiership running as the hawkish leader who never would surrender even one grain of sand from the Land of Israel. Yet after he personally gave up the entire Sinai Peninsula his party won an even greater majority in 1981.[1] Yitzhak Rabin won his premiership in 1992 representing the hawkish section of the Labor party with declarations that he would never negotiate with the PLO;[2] yet it seems that signing the Oslo Accords led him, rather, to the peak of his popularity.[3]

Is there a logical explanation for this development? The same Sharon who won the 2003 elections when he declared that Netzarim, a remote and tiny settlement in the middle of the Gaza Strip, was as much part of Israel as Tel Aviv, would, in the course of a several years, be the one to dismantle that settlement as well as others in Gaza and in north Samaria. The polls, however, did not reflect a decline of public support,[4] and, after abandoning the policy which brought him into his office, Sharon's party again won the elections.[5]

What seems to move the Israeli voting public? Do Israelis vote for the right but deep in their hearts desire left-wing governance? And once a leader who appears to be ideologically right-wing comes to power, how is it that left-wing policies only strengthen him? The dichotomous, left-right paradigm fails us. Other tools are needed: we propose as an alternative the clash of civil religions.

Israeli politics, particularly the unstable and unpredictable trends of public opinion on matters of major importance, defies a traditional Left-Right typology. Sometimes, left-wing voters support their leaders' conservative policies; at other times right-wing voters support their leaders' liberal inclinations. The political map is blurred, and confusion reigns. This paper suggests a novel use of the civil religions paradigm toward the goal of demystifying this type of behavior.

The civil religions paradigm dates back to the French revolution, with Jean Jacques Rousseau one of its first expositors.[6] Robert Bellah and others adopted it in the 1970s as a tool to analyze modern societies.[7] During the following decade, Robert Wuthnow demonstrated how a different, new civil religion was competing with the old one, displacing it and thus reshaping Western political structures.[8] Use of the civil religions paradigm—and more specifically, the notion of the clash of civil religions—as an analytical model will enable us better to understand the Israeli political sphere.

The clash of civil religions paradigm will be introduced in several stages.
First, five core dimensions of religion will be noted. Next, the idea of civil religion is introduced, with a distinction—based on the American case—between the classic civil religion and a new civil religion. Third, the Israeli form of civil religion, namely, Ben Gurion's mamlachtiut, is described in detail. Fourth, the Israeli form of a new civil religion—the "visionary" approach of Shimon Peres—is examined. Fifth, a comparison between the two civil religions is advanced; this comparison focuses not on the content of the civil religions but rather on the realism of mamlachtiut as compared to the denialism of the new civil religion. Finally, some practical conclusions are drawn. Specifically, we note that an awareness of the workings of the new civil religion within Israeli society could enable us to make some sense of the political debate and to explain how, during recent decades, decisions have been made with nary a nod toward a traditional Left-Right dichotomy.

DEFINITIONS OF CIVIL RELIGION

Civil religion is a term that was coined by Jean-Jacques Rousseau. As a thinker of the Enlightenment and of the French Revolution, Rousseau envisioned a religion that was subject to secular legislation, one which held society together with a spiritual foundation consisting not of God but rather of the state institutions and its laws.[9] According to Tocqueville, this vision was successfully fulfilled, not in France but rather in the American colonies.[10]

Nineteenth-century thinkers also tried to understand the social expression of religion.[11] Sociologist Emil Durkheim was probably the first to examine empirically the phenomenon of civil religion. In his early anthropological accounts of an Australian aboriginal tribe that worshipped a godless social system, [12] he noted that religion could exchange the first attribute of supernatural or metaphysical ruling force for an earthly substitute: the public.[13]

During the 1930s, Talcott Parsons made use of Durkheim's notion of a godless form of religion to explain that how American culture was shaped by a secular style of Christianity.[14] During the first half of the twentieth century several civil religions flourished not only in the US, but all over the globe: Soviet Communism, Fascism, and Nazism.[15]

During the late 1960s and early 1970s, Parsons and others revived both Rousseau and the use of the term civil religion.[16] Best-known and one of the first in this new wave was Parson's student, Robert Bellah, who in 1967 published an article entitled, "Civil Religion in America." Bellah demonstrated how the social structure in the US, though democratic in nature, was driven by the cultural settings of a civil religion.[17]

In 1988, Bellah's student, Robert Wuthnow, published his theory concerning a new civil religion in America, claiming that the old, conservative civil religion was contested in the United States by a new, liberal, set of beliefs.[18] I propose that in Israel, as in the American case, two civil religions, an old one as described by Bellah and a new one as identified by Wuthnow, are engaged in a struggle for social hegemony.

THE ISRAELI OLD CIVIL RELIGION: MAMLACHTIUT

Robert Bellah, who maintained that the basic premise of the American civil religion lay in the subordination of the nation to ethical principles, was fully aware of the fact that every nation comes to some form of religious self-understanding.[19] Hence, following Bellah, most contemporary academic discourse refers to the American case as the prototype of civil religion, which permits us to adopt it as a general social pattern for other modern societies.[20] Civil religion is considered to be a belief system that expresses collective self-identity and sanctifies aspects of civil life through public rituals and ceremonies.[21]

Myron Aronoff introduced the paradigm into the Israeli milieu in his paper, published in 1981, "Civil religion in Israel."[22] Aronoff noted that Zionism placed collectivity at the center of its meaning system and that it established a symbolic structure which created a common Israeli frame of reference.[23] Charles Liebman and Eliezer Don-Yehiya further developed this idea and described a civil religion that was shaped by Ben Gurion's notion of mamlachtiut.[24]

The Israeli concept of mamlachtiut could best be understood as a patriotic and responsible form of statism. Thus, during Israel's youth, state and party institutions were at the center of its political system, at the expense of civil society. The Israeli form of statism established power for the state far beyond its institutional dimension. It offered a basic mental framework that stressed values and symbols which recognized the state as an ultimate entity, legitimized its power, and mobilized the population to serve its goals.[25] The term statism, however, is somewhat misleading, because Ben Gurion did not consider that the state should be an end unto itself. He wished to instill in Israeli citizens a respect for legitimate public authority and a sense of public consciousness.[26] Mamlachtiut, then, should not be understood as positing state predominance over other social power centers but rather as a form of responsible citizenship.[27]

Ben Gurion's mamlachtiut conforms with John Coleman's notion that civil religion is a symbolic system that relates the citizen's role and society's place in space, time, and history to the conditions of ultimate existence

and meaning.[28] Ben-Gurion's papers, letters, and memoirs reflect a mamlachtiut that incorporated the five essential dimensions of religion:

1) A divine entity, supernatural and metaphysical, that rules the world

For Ben Gurion, divinity was not an external force, but rather the Jews as a nation. He proclaimed that "Zionism, political and secular, held that Israel must be redeemed by its own efforts and by natural agency, that the Jewish people on its own must create the foundations of a new life […]."[29]

2) A solid doctrine that frames reality and forms fundamental moral codes

Ben Gurion's mamlachtiut was based on negation of the galut (the Diaspora, or exile); hence, the imperative for every Jew to immigrate to Israel.[30] Galut was replaced by Homeland,[31] and the debilitated Diaspora Jew was to be replaced by a rehabilitated, enlightened man.[32] The spiritual foundations for the new Jewish society in Israel are based on biblical sources that glorify the nation's ancient days,[33] but the unity of the people encompasses not only the local residents of the state but also Jews all over the world who at one point or another are bound to wake up, abandon the Diaspora, and to come to Israel. Immigration to Israel (aliyah, ascending) implies a spiritual elevation that a Jew is bound to experience upon returning to his country. Conversely, emigration from Israel (yerida, descending) is understood to imply a degradation.[34]

3) Total devotion, personal sacrifice, and eternal commemoration

Ben Gurion spoke of the ultimate sacrifice that awaited every person in Israel, who "[…] are called to the most painful task in […] history, are summoned to pledge outright allegiance to the Jewish revolution, allegiance in sentiment and will, in thought and deed, in your lives and, if it must be, with your lives."[35]

For Ben Gurion, the pioneers are the bearers of sacrifice, but his use of the Hebrew word for pioneering, halutziut, seems to express something that extends far beyond merely pioneering. He claimed that "halutzim […] are pioneers of labor, science and construction, armed with powerful wills and conscious of a mission," who "yield their very lives for the fulfillment of their dreams."[36] For Ben Gurion, the everlasting greatness of haluziut lay in his understanding that: "[…It] alters the present for the sake […] of generations to come, not to gratify the individual but for the common good, not for personal gain but to profit all society and each member of it."[37]

4) Public rituals and ceremonies

Mamlachtiut dictated its religious ceremonies as well as pilgrimage sites and holy places fit for rituals and educational experiences. Ben Gurion often mentioned "the sainted disciples of Rabbi Akiva [and] the warriors of Masada."[38] Accordingly, Rabbi Akiva and Bar Kokhba[39] became national heroes, and Masada,[40] a national myth. In modern Israel, Lag Ba'Omer turned into a Jewish holiday that was nationally redefined by secular Zionists, as the day that commemorates the Bar Kokhba revolt against the Roman Empire. The non-religious rituals of this newly celebrated holiday include the lighting of bonfires throughout the country; families go on picnics; elementary-school children go to the fields with their teachers with wooden bows and rubber-tipped

arrows just like the days of yore when everyone took part in the great Jewish uprising.

The different rituals around Masada started with youth trips to the summit, where the last words of the ancient rebels would be often read to the light of candles. Youth movements and schools were followed by army units, and, until the 1970s, soldiers would hold their swearing-in ceremonies there, with fire inscriptions "Never again shall Masada fall."[41]

5) Agents and social institutions that propagate religious rituals and define social boundaries

The two major engines of mamlachtiut were the educational system and the army. During the 1950s, educators and academics all over the country conferred and sought techniques to pass on the spirit of Zionist pioneering and to teach the post-1948 generation the mamlachtiut form of republican citizenship.[42] Likewise, the IDF became an important agent of mamlachtiut, and its mission extended far beyond professional duties: "The army is to be a school for growing youth, a nursery of the nation's singleness, its culture and courage […]."[43] Indeed, as in every civil religion, it was, in Ben Gurion's view, the role of state institutions to carry out every national mission.[44]

A NEW COMPETING CIVIL RELIGION IN ISRAEL

During the 1980s, a deep cultural change took place in Israeli society. A new civil religion emerged. As noted above, Robert Wuthnow identified a competing new civil religion in the United States that drew on a liberal set of religious values.[45] It seems that Israel followed suit. Shimon Peres is a proponent of this new civil religion, to which he contributed substantially. Since the primary goal of this paper is to reach a typology based on the differences and similarities among cases, I shall apply a comparative approach. A thorough look at Peres' language indicates that we are indeed observing a competing new civil religion with a distinct outlook.

1) A divine entity, supernatural and metaphysical, that rules the world

Like every civil religion, the new one has displaced God from the basic set of beliefs. "I don't think that God is a great mechanic that sits somewhere and plans and makes man and makes this and makes that," says Shimon Peres.[46] Instead, he believes in the abilities of the Jewish nation to overcome its tragedies, "[…] rising up again, shaking itself free, gathering together its dispersed remnants […] and reaching new heights of distinction and excellence."[47] Though the national idea seems to remain central in the new civil religion presented by Peres, the idea of nationhood seems to have been watered down: "The Jewish people [are] neither a nation nor a religion in the accepted sense of those terms. Its essence is a message rather than a political structure; a faith rather than an ecclesiastical hierarchy."[48]

2) A solid doctrine that frames reality and forms fundamental moral codes

The essence of the new civil religion is the pursuit of peace. Peres acknowledges that the Zionist mission was to restore the Jewish people to their homeland. Thus, issues of defense and security were of top priority and wars had to be fought and won.[49] However, military victories are ephemeral. They may add to the glory of the

nation, but not to its well-being. Accordingly he concludes that "there is just one victory, which is peace."[50] Peace is "neither a pipe dream nor an expendable luxury. It is a vital necessity […]."[51]

We learn, then, three articles of faith, which were part of its belief system: (a) the futility of physical strength; (b) the emergence of a new world; (c) the appearance of a new Middle East

(a) The futility of physical strength: according to the doctrine of the new civil religion, measures of national materialistic advantages, so important for military victories, should be considered as no more than a means to reach the real destiny, which is peace. Hence the point of being strong is not in order to be strong, but in order to make peace.[52]

According to Peres, avoiding physical strength has long been seen as a Jewish moral imperative.[53] Furthermore, the old standards by which a country's physical strength are measured have lost their relevance. Land and natural resources are less important than science, technology and information. Thus, internet trumps geography on the scale of national priority.[54]

(b) The emergence of a new world

Since physical strength is considered irrelevant in the new civil religion, it follows that the whole world has been renewed on a different basis. Once almost everything can be artificially produced, all the old concepts of power belong to an irrelevant past.[55] The conflicts that shape the world in this new era will now center on the content of civilization, but not over territories. Unique properties of a people's geography, language and culture are substituted for advantages dictated by a country's scientific and technological capacities which need no specific homeland.[56] Thus, the concept of a new and different world permits an escape into the future, where global confrontations have already evaporated.[57]

(c) The appearance of a new Middle East[58]

The new civil religion presupposes that Jews and Arabs alike have realized that, with advent of the new world order, making peace was imperative.[59] Following this logic, the Oslo accords are therefore an act of shortening their advent.[60] According to Peres, we are facing a new Middle East, "without wars, without fronts, without enemies, without ballistic missiles, and without nuclear warheads. […] A Middle East that is not a killing field, but a field of creativity and growth."[61]

3) Agents and social institutions that maintain religion and define social boundaries

The bureaucracy of the state provides the indoctrination apparatus for the new civil religion. As part of a state-controlled effort to elevate the activities from partisan politics to a national level, the Yitzhak Rabin Center was established in the form of a state institution that coordinates official memorial ceremonies and maintains educational Rabin-heritage programs.[62]

A COMPARISON BETWEEN THE TWO COMPETING CIVIL RELIGIONS

The critical difference between the two competing secular religions lies in their belief systems. That is, the two civil religions differ from each other in their relative emphases on realism as opposed to denialism.

Religious faith is capable of driving people to folly, and for this reason it is viewed by atheist scholars as a type of mental illness.[63] Perhaps the major danger lies in recourse to denial. Denial can be defined as the refusal to accept an empirically verifiable reality and an irrational manner of action that withholds validation of a historical experience or event.[64] Denial is the refusal, often a collective one, to acknowledge painful realities, thoughts or feelings, in the psychological sphere as well as in the social and the political one.[65] Denialism is multi-determined, but its religious roots are grounded in the ease with which recourse to self-delusion is available in the religious sphere. Indeed religious conviction has been shown to have a profound effect on human observation.[66]

It would seem that Ben Gurion himself could have been a denialist. One can find in his writings prophetic expressions, such as, "from out of the storm Messiah's trumpet-call reaches our ears."[67] He also spoke about the success of the Jewish spirit originating from "messianic hope and the longing for national and universal redemption."[68] Was it not denialism, then, that led Ben Gurion to declare independence? From the vantage point of realism, the proclamation of a state on May 4, 1948 could be seen as such a step. Gush Etzion had surrendered; the hold on the Jerusalem area was tenuous; Tel Aviv was awaiting bombardment; there was no guarantee of American or other international support; and military intelligence could make no assurance of future victories of the small Jewish entity over the large Arab armies.[69]

Ben Gurion's approach appears in retrospect to have been quite realistic. Even at the height of victory he rejected the notion of a guarantee of future success.[70] He was well aware of the Israeli advantage, but warned nevertheless: "[…] We cannot construct our present or our future on the weaknesses of others, on Arab frailty. The Arabs, too, will arm themselves in the course of time. They will not always lack learning and technical skills."[71]

Indeed, Ben Gurion displayed a remarkable realism regarding the most crucial problems confronting Zionism. As early as the 1930s, he publicly spoke of the political rights of the Arabs as well as their demographic advantage.[72] Ben Gurion's letter, written from Lucerne in October 1937, to his children, Geula and Amos, stressed the practical nature of his dream, "a Zionism which is realistic in its view of the present and daring and far-seeing in its vision of the future."[73] This famous letter shows a marked sense of clarity: "There is no room in politics for sentimental considerations. The only thing we must consider is: what is desirable and good for us, what is the path that leads to the goal, what policy will strengthen us and what policy will weaken us?"[74]

Shimon Peres stands in strong contrast to Ben Gurion. Peres is a proponent of the belief system of the new civil religion. At first glance, he appears to have inherited Ben Gurion's realism. Peres, like Ben Gurion, seems reasonable and practical. "[…] Unless you want to be a revolutionary by profession" he says "[…] you have to submit to different circumstances."[75] Additionally, he claims to have been accused of being a pragmatist and an executor, one who led doers who never cared about vision or ideology.[76]

Nonetheless, Peres, unlike Ben Gurion, presents civil religion's doctrine wherein political risks are taken solely on the basis of a reality that is wishfully framed: "Peace in our region" he declares "[…] has built a

permanent place for itself in the realm of reality."[77] With deep awareness of the unrealistic nature of his optimism, Peres argues that it is all a matter of choice: "[…] pessimism has always seemed to me a useless frame of mind."[78] Yet the choice, one should remember, is based on a long tradition, taken from our historic origins: "[…] the great thing about Judaism is that it is very optimistic because it is based on the idea that you can improve every person, you can better every nation, you can bring an end to wars."[79]

This explains why Peres could describe his vision as though it were based on fact: "we are ending a decade-long history dominated by war and embarking on an era in which the guns will stay silent while dreams flourish."[80] In the new world that Peres has created, a crisis is just a passing phenomenon. Dangers represent the seeds of opportunity, and enemies can be potential new partners.[81] This explains why the people of Gaza should not be thought of as the manpower reservoir of regional terrorism; rather, they are admirable people. They "have many endearing qualities […]. They are an intelligent people; their womenfolk, in particular, are feisty and determined."[82]

It is only natural, then, that in Peres' view Yasser Arafat was not a terrorist but rather an urbane leader who refused to submit to the discipline of history.[83] Peres recounted how Arafat quoted the bible in order to remind the world that we are all the sons of Abraham, and when talking about the tomb of Rachel, the Palestinian leader almost made Israel's eternal mother a member of his own family.[84]

Israeli Military Intelligence possessed mounting evidence that Arafat was deeply involved in supporting terrorist groups, actively aiding their leaders who opposed any conciliation with Israel, and secretly organizing his own military forces far beyond the agreed-upon numbers in the first Oslo pact.[85] The fact that Peres ignored Arafat's violations of the Oslo agreements reflected his disregard of information reported by the security professionals. His contempt for intelligence experts who might damage the internal logic of his doctrine is revealed in his comment that specialists on Palestinian affairs are no more than an Israeli invention and that experts have no authority other than to analyze and to refrain from making comments about future probabilities.[86]

We have identified two distinct forms of civil religion playing a role in Israel's recent history: the responsible and realistic civil religion of mamlachtiut and a civil religion founded on a belief system in which visionaries take political
risks based largely on illusions that stem from the manner in which they frame reality.

CONCLUSION

What on first impression appears as erratic public opinion and a series of unstable policies attains coherence when we apply the model of civil religion, and specifically the paradigm that indicates the dynamics of a clash of civil religions.

I have introduced this paradigm in a step-by-step fashion, First, I offered a look at the theoretical foundations of civil religion, and then moved to the Israeli case, where Ben Gurion's mamlachtiut proved to be the ultimate civil religion. His was a civil religion built to cultivate and encourage a sense of responsibility—a civic virtue—and to enable mobilization of the public for the strengthening of the newly formed state. Whereas

scholars of Israel Studies have traditionally taken the view that Israel is driven by one civil religion, I assert that a second and new civil religion has emerged. In Israel, just as in America, the new civil religion is based on liberal beliefs and on a longing for peace. Its doctrine and rituals differ substantially from mamlachtiut. They challenge the core of the older civil religion and threaten to replace it. Thus, during the last decades, we have been observing a social and ideological conflict.

The Oslo agreements and the public support that they attracted provide an excellent test of the validity of this paradigm. Within the context of the negotiations that led to the Oslo accords, issues that were considered taboo and had been totally unthinkable by any former Israeli leader were now placed on the table, namely the future status of Jerusalem and the return of Palestinian refugees.[87] In the Cairo agreement of May 1994, the withdrawal of the IDF from major posts in Judea and Samaria was accompanied by the arming of thousands of Palestinians, most of whom were brought in from Tunis with their families.[88] Thus, over a period of several months, Israel simply retreated from its traditional foreign policy. The leadership of Israel gave up its principle of refraining from negotiations with terrorists; it elevated the PLO to the level of an equal international partner;[89] it conducted a military withdrawal that would put an end to Israeli control over the territories in dispute; and it reversed one of the prominent achievements of the 1982 intervention in Lebanon by bringing Palestinian terrorists directly to Israel from their training camps in Tunis together with their families and officially arming them.

A puzzling moderation, if not apathy, characterized the Israeli public reaction to these steps. Even when the peace talks with Arafat and the Israeli retreat from strategic areas resulted in an increase in terror attacks, the polls continued to indicate that about fifty percent of Israeli citizens did not oppose the process.[90] Only a year before, the “peace makers” considered it necessary to persuade the public into thinking that they were voting for a leader who would never negotiate with terrorists. Despite the ideological U-turn that its prime minister had made, the same public now behaved passively. How did it come to be that the same people who believed that they were electing a leader who would never abandon Israel’s long-held principles acceded to a contradictory foreign policy?

Public dissent over the Oslo treaties was extremely limited in scale. None of the protest rallies exceeded tens of thousands of demonstrators. Even the largest and best-known of them, the Jerusalem rally of October 5, 1995 that achieved infamy because of the posters that portrayed Rabin in SS uniform, counted no more than 100,000 participants.[91] If we assume that, out of a population of approximately four million Jews in the mid-1990s, about half opposed the Israeli retreat, we are left with at least two million Israeli citizens whose opinion was never counted. Yet only five percent of them (at most) demonstrated against the irreversible moves that the government was making. Nearly all remained at home.

While it is a research commonplace that Israeli society is in constant flux,[92] social changes alone cannot explain Israeli tolerance of such inconsistency in national existential matters. Employing the paradigm of clash of civil religions, and following the shift from one civil religion to another, one might explain how a veteran war hero, for example, could with political impunity resort to right-wing ideology as a candidate and left-wing ideology as an incumbent.

The new civil religion attracted growing numbers of believers who voted for the right but cherished a new doctrine that sanctified peace. When Ha'aretz journalist Gideon Samet welcomed the new Israeli policy he spoke for such believers when reporting that "the new Israeli majority […] does not want the mysticism of land or the sanctity of hills and tombs."[93]

The late prime minister articulated its fundamental doctrine. He declared to the Knesset immediately after taking office: "I am prepared to travel to Amman, Damascus, and Beirut today or tomorrow, for there is no greater victory than the victory of peace."[94] Similarly, Abba Eban asserted that "the peace process gives Israel a chance to redeem its own democratic identity."[95] Perhaps the most extreme expression of the late prime minister's adherence to the new civil religion was revealed on the 1995 Tel-Hai Memorial Day, when he explicitly repudiated the teachings of mamlachtiut, proclaiming that: "[…] For seventy-five years we have been carrying on with this story, […] it is good to die for our country. […] And I say to you today: […] it is good to live for our country."[96]

The new civil religion brought about shifts in the Israeli consensus. A student of Israeli politics reading this paper could be forgiven for concluding that the old civil religion that belonged to a group of war-mongers waned, and a new civil religion, one of peace-loving people, prevailed.[97] The situation, however, is far more complicated because, beyond the socio-political analysis afforded by the civil religion paradigm, there is also a crucial difference between the doctrines of mamlachtiut and of the New Middle East. The new civil religion was shaped by a selective denial of reality.

Ari Shavit, a senior columnist at Ha'aretz, a daily liberal newspaper, was an exemplar of this segment of elite opinion. A leading columnist and a member of the editorial board, Shavit for years had been an enthusiastic supporter of the Oslo Accords, but on December 27, 1997 he wrote:

[…] In the early 90's […] we, the enlightened Israelis, were infected with a messianic craze. Almost without noticing it, our peace movement […] began to whirl itself into an ecstatic Kabbalistic dervish trance. All of a sudden, we believed that the great global changes […] were signaling us that the end of the old Middle East was near. The end of history, the end of wars, the end of the conflict. Like the members of any other messianic movement, we decided to hasten the end ….

[…] We had acted like fools. We fooled ourselves with illusions. We were bedazzled into committing a collective act of messianic drunkenness. [98]

The Israeli public turned a blind eye to the risks of arming the PLO and importing thousands of terrorists from Tunis to Israel's very doorstep. The denial of empirical reality paralyzed caution and silenced criticism. The new civil religion crossed the traditional dividing line that separated Left and Right.[99]

The paradigm which we have proposed posits the presence of civil religions in Israel. It not only allows us to comprehend a dimension of Israeli politics which has not been fully appreciated but also to identify the dangers of certain prevailing beliefs which have been driven by denialism. A retreat from rational behavior cannot be explained with the aid of the customary analytical tools. However, the proposed civil religion

paradigm, though it may not be perfect, provides an effective method for testing and understanding certain Israeli political attitudes and repeated manifestations of counter-intuitive behavior.

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Notes

1. In 1977 the Likud Party, led by Menachem Begin, won 45 seats (33.4% of the total votes), making it the biggest party in the Knesset. However, in the 1981 elections Begin's Likud Party won 48 seats (37.1% of the total votes), reaching the historic heights of its electoral power. Cited on September 10, 2013 at: http://www.Knesset.gov.il/description/eng/eng_mimshal_res.htm

2. The Labor Party's platform of the 1992 elections for the Thirteenth Knesset points out clearly that no negotiations will be held with terror organizations, only with local representatives of the Palestinian population and that the Jordan Valley and Northern Dead Sea will remain under Israeli sovereignty. The platform can be found in Hebrew as cited on September 10, 2013 at the Labor Party archive at: http://www.archavoda.org.il/avodaarch/matza/index.asp For an English translation of the 1992 Labor platform, see David Makovsky, Making Peace with the PLO (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995), 193–207. In total contradiction with any of the commitments written in the platform, negotiations with the PLO took part long before the organization allegedly deserted its violent policies, and the city of Jericho, located exactly in the area that the Labor platform declared as intended for future Israeli sovereignty, was handed over to the PLO-controlled Palestinian Authority in 1994. However, it is important to point out that Rabin's commitment to refrain from negotiations with the PLO was an integral part of a hawkish campaign, far beyond Labor's platform. See Giora Goldberg, The Israeli Voter 1992 (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1994), 111–113.

3. Yehudith Auerbach and Charles W. Greenbaum, "Assessing Leader Credibility during a Peace Process: Rabin's Private Polls", Journal of Peace Research 37, no. 31 (2000): 49–50. The authors gave data showing how support of Rabin's peace policy was rising (from 48% to 52%) after the outlines of the Oslo Accord became known. These data are also supported by the Dahaf Research Institute directed by Mina Zemach. See Dan Leon, "Israeli Public Opinion Polls on the Peace Process," Palestine-Israel Journal 2, no. 1 (1995): 34–56. The polls showed that after the agreement was first revealed in September 1993 support reached 53% with 45% opposed; after the actual signing of the agreement, support rose to 61% and opposition dropped to 31%.

4. Various surveys show clearly and consistently that by 2004 unilateral withdrawal from Gaza was supported by 55% to 65% of the Israeli public. Cited on September 10, 2013 at: http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Society_&_Culture/unilateral1.html

5. In 2003 the Likud, led by Sharon, won 38 seats (29.4% of the total votes). In 2006 the Kadima Party won 29 seats (22% of the total votes). Although during the electoral campaign in 2006 Sharon was already in coma, one cannot ignore the dominant role of his shadow as founder of Kadima. Also, Sharon's party was the only one, following the 2006 elections, that could form a government. One ought to bear in mind that there could have been an additional twelve seats for the Likud, that would probably have been Sharon's votes, had he remained within his party. Cited on September 10, 2013 at: http://www.Knesset.gov.il/description/eng/eng_mimshal_res.htm

6. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, The Social Contract or Principles of Political Right. (1762). Translated by G. D. H. Cole. Book 4 chapter 8 (1762). Cited on September 10, 2013 in: www.constitution.org/jjr/socon.htm. For a more modern edition, see Sir Ernest Barker, ed., Social Contract; Essays by Locke, Hume, and Rousseau (London: OUP, 1960).

7. Robert Bellah, "Civil Religion in America," Daedalus—Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences 96 no. 1, (1967): 1–21. See also Robert Bellah, The Broken Covenant: American Civil Religion in Time of Trial (New York: Seabury, 1975).

8. Robert Wuthnow, “Divided We Fall: America’s Two Civil Religions,” Christian Century, 105 (1988): 395–399.

9. Rousseau, The Social Contract.

10. Alexis De Tocqueville, Democracy in America, Vol. I (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., Anchor Books, ([1835] 1954): 311. In Tocqueville’s words: “[…] British America was peopled by men who, after having shaken off the authority of the Pope […] brought with them into the New World […] a democratic and republican religion.”

11. Bernard Spilka, Ralph W. Hood, Bruce Hunsberger, and Richard Gorsuch, The Psychology of Religion: An Empirical Approach (New York, NY: Guilford Press, 2003), 3–23.

12. William A. Lessa, and Evon Z. Vogt, Reader in Comparative Religion: An Anthropological Approach (New York, NY: Harpercollins, 1979), 1–6; 27–35. Durkheim could reach some empirical evidence because, like many other scholars of his time, he was influenced by the Darwinian concept of evolution, according to which primitive tribal culture represented earlier stages of modern society’s cultural developments. It is noteworthy that, unlike others, Durkheim was interested in the cultural functions of religion.

13. Emil Durkheim, The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life (New York, NY: Free Press, [1915] 1963).

14. Talcott Parsons, “The place of Ultimate Values in Sociological Theory,” International Journal of Ethics 45 (1935): 282–316.

15. Mary-Barbara Zeldin, “The Religious Nature of Russian Marxism,” Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion 8 (1969): 100–111.

16. See for example John A. Coleman, “Civil Religion,” Sociological Analysis, 31 (1970): 67–77; Phillip E. Hammond, “The Sociology of American Civil Religion,” Sociological Analysis 37 (1976): 169–182; Michael C. Thomas and Charles C. Flippen, “American Civil Religion: An Empirical Study,” Social Forces, 51 (1972): 218–225; Ronald C. Wimberly, “Testing the Civil Religion Hypothesis,”Sociological Analysis, 37 (1976): 341–352.

17. Robert Bellah argues that the American way of life is in fact an elaborate and well-institutionalized civil religion that exists alongside the churches. He elaborated on this idea in: Robert Bellah, The Broken Covenant: American Civil Religion in Time of Trial (New York, NY: Seabury, 1975).

18. Wuthnow, “Divided We Fall: America’s Two Civil Religions,” 395–399.

19. Bellah, “Civil Religions in America,” 1. He points out this important comparative approach at the very opening of his paper.

20. Marcela Cristi, From Civil to Political Religion: The Intersection of Culture, Religion and Politics (Waterloo, Ontario, Canada: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2001): 1–14.

21. Ibid.

22. Myron J. Aronoff, “Civil Religion in Israel”, RAIN, 44, (1981): 2–6.

23. Ibid.

24. Charles S. Liebman, and Eliezer Don-Yehiya, The Dilemma of Reconciling Traditional Culture and Political Needs: Civil Religion in Israel, Comparative Politics 16, no. 1, (1983): 53–66. The authors thoroughly reviewed some historical developments of civil religion in Israel. They indicated how specifically civil religion was established by Social Zionism, prominently by Mapai. It is worthwhile however to note that Liebman and Don-Yehiya do not use the term mamlachtiut but rather its literal and less accurate translation, "statism."

25. Shmuel N. Eisenstadt, Israeli Society (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1967), 362–363.

26. Peter Medding, The Founding of the Israeli Democracy, 1949–1967 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 135.

27. Nir Kedar, "Ben Gurion's Mamlakhtiut: Etymological and Theoretical Roots", Israel Studies 7, no. 3, (2003): 117–133.

28. John A. Coleman, "Civil Religion", Sociological Analysis 31 (1970): 67–77.

29. In his speech to the General Zionist Council in Jerusalem on April 18, 1940. See David Ben Gurion, Rebirth and Destiny of Israel (New York: Philosophical Library, 1954), 306. Ten years later he would state that "the Jewish people is not merely a political and national unit, and from the time it first stepped upon the stage of history it has personified moral will and historic vision." See Ben Gurion, ibid., 316–317. Ben Gurion viewed Jewish history as unique, with no historic parallel and possessing far-reaching influence over the whole world. See Michael Brecher, The Foreign Policy System of Israel: Setting, Images, Process (London: Oxford University Press, 1972), 262–263. This is the context for his opinion, expressed, for example, in the Government Yearbook of 1952: "Our long acquaintance with history has taught us […] that the salvation of peoples will not be brought about by alien compulsion but from within." See Ben Gurion, Rebirth and Destiny of Israel, 473. For the Hebrew original of Ben Gurion's essays which appeared in the various Government Yearbooks, see David Ben Gurion, Like Stars and Dust (Ramat-Gan: Massada, 1976).

30. Zeev Tzahor, "David Ben Gurion's Attitude toward the Diaspora", Judaism 32 no. 1 (1983): 9–21.

31. The Tikkun, the repair of the negative situation in Diaspora will come, of course, once the Jewish people return to their homeland. In his article of September 1915, entitled "Earning a homeland", he wrote: "[…] we seek [a homeland] where we may cast off the curse of exile, attach ourselves to the soil—that source of quickening, creativeness and health—and renew our native life." See Ben Gurion, Rebirth and Destiny of Israel, 4.

32. The "new Jew" concept can be found in numerous citations. For example, Ben Gurion explained that unlike the Diaspora situation, "[…] The real miracle of Palestine is the Jew who masters the labor of orchard and garden, field and vineyard, quarry and harbor, water and power, factory and craft, highway and byway." See his address of March 2, 1932 before the Elected Assembly. Quoted from Ben Gurion, Rebirth and Destiny of Israel, 49.

33. Negating Diaspora was to a large extent negating Jewish history, because for two thousand years, exile was the natural backdrop of Jewish existence. Ben Gurion's solution, then, was disconnecting the new Jew from current history and attaching the people rather to the ancient sources of the nation. Skipping the millennia, the Zionists were, in Ben Gurion's view, the direct continuation of their biblical forefathers. For Ben Gurion, the destruction of the Temple was the point in time when Jewish history froze and now reawakened to renew itself from that devastating historical moment. He therefore took the position that "Zionism is the greatest venture in Jewish history since the destruction of the Temple." See Ben Gurion, Rebirth and Destiny of Israel, 112. The proposition that there was a direct connection between biblical times and modern times, deliberately skipping over two millenia of Jewish life and effectively attempting to erase them from the Jewish culture that Zionism had claimed to shape, can be found in many of Ben Gurion's writings and specifically in his letter of April 29, 1957 to the Hebrew University's philosopher

Nathan Rotenstreich, denying any relation to the recent Jewish past and viewing himself as a direct offspring of the Hashmonites. See: Israel State Archives, David Ben Gurion—Selected Documents, 1947–1963 (Jerusalem: Israel Government Press, 1997), Document 149, page 547.

34. Ben Gurion spoke a great deal about aliyah. One of the speeches in which he clearly outlined the policies of the newly established state and insisted that top priority be given to investing all the possible national resources to promote aliyah was his opening speech of the Zionist General Council on May 5, 1949. See Israel State Archives, David Ben Gurion—Selected Documents, 1947–1963 (Jerusalem: Israel Government Press, 1997), Document 142, 520–522.

35. In his address to the youth section of Mapai in September 1944. See Ben Gurion, Rebirth and Destiny of Israel, 133.

36. In his article "Earning a Homeland", a title that indeed expresses the idea, from September 1915. See Ben Gurion, ibid., 5.

37. In a paper that he wrote on July 23, 1948. See Ben Gurion, ibid., 270.

38. This is the name of his paper in the Government Yearbook 1951, where he goes into detail how the spirit of the people is to be nurtured. See Ben Gurion, Rebirth and Destiny of Israel, 399–441.

39. Rabbi Akiba was the spiritual mentor of Bar Kokhba, who rebelled against the Romans in 132 CE and established an independent Jewish state over parts of Judea. See James J. Bloom, The Jewish Revolts against Rome, A.D. 66–135 (Jefferson, NC and London: McFarland, 1999), 201–217.

40. Masada, discussed and indeed cherished by Ben Gurion, was a spectacular, mountain-top fortress in the Judean desert, not far from the Dead Sea. According to the Jewish historian, Josephus, The Jewish War, VII: 275–406, (viii:2–ix:2), after the destruction of the Second Temple, some 900 members of the Sicarii faction were besieged by the Romans. When, in 74 CE, the Romans finally breached the wall of the fortress, the Jewish defenders decided to kill themselves rather than face certain capture. They destroyed everything except the foodstuffs to show that they retained the ability to live and thus chose death over slavery. See Nachman Ben-Yehuda, The Masada Myth: Collective Memory and Mythmaking in Israel (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1995).

41. Yael Zerubavel, Recovered Roots: Collective Memory and the Making of Israeli National Tradition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 119–137.

42. Paula Kabalo, "Pioneering Discourse and the Shaping of an Israeli Citizen in the 1950s," Jewish Social Studies: History, Culture, Society 15, no. 2 (2009): 89–110.

43. Quoted from the Government Yearbook 1951, where he seeks methods for preserving the spirit of the people. See Ben Gurion, Rebirth and Destiny of Israel, 427.

44. With reference to settlement, taking one example, he phrased it clearly: "[…] The state cannot just depend on pioneers. It must extend maximum aid to settlement through law and order, financing and planning. It must direct colonization […]." See his paper titled "the call of spirit in Israel", in the Government Yearbook 1951. Ben Gurion, Rebirth and Destiny of Israel, 404.

45. Wuthnow, "Divided We Fall: America's Two Civil Religions," 395–399. He asserted that in the American case, the new civil religion formed an antithesis to the old one. Particularistic connotations were replaced by a focus on humanity in general. Centrism was neglected in order to attend to world problems such as hunger, poverty and war casualties, and above all,there was a new concern for global human rights.

46. In an answer to the questions about his personal religious beliefs. See Shimon Peres and Robert Littell, For the Future of Israel (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 1998), 176.

47. Peres, Shimon (1994). Nobel Lecture, in Irwin Abrams, ed. Nobel Lectures, Peace 1991–1995 (Hougang, Singapore: World Scientific Publishing, 1999), 177–192. This can also be found as cited on September 10, 2013: http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/1994/peres-lecture.html

48. Shimon Peres, Battling for Peace (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1995), 309.

49. In his account of current Israeli history. ibid., 229–230.

50. When asked whether or not Israel could win another war. For the Future of Israel, 134.

51. Battling for Peace, 271.

52. Peres rejects the conventional need for power, claiming that modern missile strategies have changed the world. See For the Future of Israel, 112. Accordingly, when asked if people who seek power are sane and normal, Peres asserts that power is useless unless its goals are defined. ibid., 146–147.

53. Peres bases this insight on the well-known Talmudic assertion that a strong man is one who conquers his own evil inclinations. See Battling for Peace, 260.

54. Peres also produced scientific, empirical evidence for this point of view: the Soviet Union, a thousand times the size of Israel, was short of food and eventually collapsed, whereas tiny Israel succeeds and exports food. See For the Future of Israel, 104–108.

55. In his historical and geopolitical review of world affairs. ibid., 104–108.

56. For an overview of this whole changing world see Peres, Battling for Peace, 308–309.

57. The belief that global confrontations belong only to the past is a conclusion drawn from the observation of how the great rivalry between communism and democracy came to an end with the collapse of the USSR. This alleged end of all wars enables believers of the new civil religion to imagine a world where old splits over wealth or ideology no longer hold, ibid., 275–276. The escape into the future is demonstrated in Peres' assertion that "in this new world the division is between those who still live in the old world and those who have set their sails to the new and more hopeful winds." Ibid., 276.

58. A comprehensive review, though from a different angle, of this component of the new civil religion's doctrine can be found in Yaacov Yadgar, "A Myth of Peace: The Vision of the New Middle East and its Transformations in the Israeli Political and Public Spheres", Journal of Peace Research 43, no. 3 (2006): 297–312.

59. This presupposition is possible, following the logic of the new civil religion. In this view, by the close of the twentieth century the Arab states realized the true danger to them lay not in Zionism, but rather in extremist leaders such as Saddam Hussein in Iraq or the Ayatollahs of Iran. The conclusion is, then, that the Arabs are no longer against Israel, and the winds of peace have finally reached our region. Battling for Peace, 277.

60. Referring to the idea that terror attacks proved that the region was not ripe for the peace process, Peres explicitly uses the term "arrival of the Middle East" and "the time of the arrival". Future of Israel, 79.

61. Peres sees the economy as a major peace-promoting factor. He therefore depicts a Middle East where not only war has ended, but people, goods, and services move freely from place to place. Battling for Peace, 309.

62. The Yitzhak Rabin Center, sponsored by the state, operates in schools, youth movements and army units. It is not considered a political organization but rather a politically neutral state institution. Its goal is to combine socio-educational activity, documentation and commemoration, and to produce educational kits (including programs, reading material, videos, posters, photographic exhibitions, commemoration booths, candles and stickers) focused on themes relating to peace and to conflict resolution. The Yitzhak Rabin center aims to instill values of democracy in all sectors of Israeli society, including Arab ones. It functions throughout the calendar year, but its activity is intensified on the Rabin Memorial Day, when it hosts events throughout the country and assists municipalities, schools, youth movements, and army bases in creating their ceremonies. The Rabin Center has its own internet site, but details can be found, as cited on September 10, 2013, on the official site of the Prime Minister's Office: www.pmo.gov.il/English/PrimeMinistersOffice/DivisionsAndAuthorities/Pages/RabinCenter.aspx

63. See for example Richard Dawkins, The Selfish Gene (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 330.

64. Paul O'Shea, A Cross too Heavy: Eugenio Pacelli, Politics and the Jews of Europe, 1917–1943 (Sydney, Australia: Rosenberg Publishing, 2008), 1–5.

65. Mary Eberstadt, "The Scapegoats among Us", Policy Review 140 (2007): 25–30.

66. Lewis Wolpert, Six Impossible Things Before Breakfast: The Evolutionary Origins of Belief (New York: W. W. Norton & Company Inc, 2006), 23–30.

67. In September 1915. Rebirth and Destiny of Israel, 3.

68. Quoted from his address to the General Staff and commanding officers of the IDF, in 1950. Ibid., 341.

69. For a detailed review concerning the decision-making process that led to the announcement of the state, see Tuvia Friling and Ilan Troen, "Proclaiming Independence: Five Days in May from Ben Gurion's Diary", Israel Studies 3, no. 1 (1998): 170–194. Ben Gurion later referred to the management of the war, and on April 4, 1948, four months after it started he described, at a meeting of the Zionist Executive, how economists or tacticians would see only 650,000 Jews of certain ages, with few possessions and little military skill and equipment, struggling against over one million local Arabs here and thirty million others next door, with states, governments, budgets and armies, with British military and financial backing. Although Ben Gurion was proud of the war's outcome, he clearly admitted that realism demanded that one recognize that the case was hopeless and that it was wise to refrain from politically dangerous moves. Rebirth and Destiny of Israel, 236.

70. Accordingly, even though the state was proclaimed on the basis of the UN resolution, Ben Gurion relied only on the concrete forces of the IDF. His fundamental perception was strictly realistic with no trust in external forces such as those active in the diplomatic arena. Michael Brecher, The Foreign Policy System of Israel; Setting, Images, Process (London: Oxford University Press, 1972), 257–258.

71. Quoted from his paper "Freedom and Independence," August 13, 1948. Rebirth and Destiny of Israel, 276.

72. At the 1931 Basel Congress he said: "We are not blind, withal, to the fact that Palestine is no void. Some million Arabs inhabit both sides of Jordan, and not since yesterday. Their right to live in Palestine, develop it and win national autonomy is as incontrovertible as is ours […]." Ibid., 35.

73. The letter was dated September 7, 1935. Italics are in the original text, David Ben Gurion, Memoirs: David Ben Gurion (New York: World Publishing Company, 1971), 77.

74. The letter was dated October 5, 1937 and referred to his stand in favor of the first partition plan of the Peel Committee. Ibid., 153–154.

75. Reviewing his decades-long political career. Peres and Littell, For the Future of Israel, 202.

76. This refers to the assertion that Peres was a dreamer, as opposed to Binyamin Netanyahu, who was Prime Minister at the time of the interview and considered a pragmatist. Ibid, 103.

77. Battling for Peace, 307.

78. Ibid.

79. In answer to a question in which he was asked to define Judaism. Peres and Littell, For the Future of Israel, 196.

80. Battling for Peace, 307. This, of course, is in complete contradiction with Ben Gurion's realistic attitude that granted at all times security priority over peace. Ben Gurion expressed his approach saying that "Even if we suppose that our peace efforts are effective and almost all of the Arab states—perhaps all of them—sign peace contracts and treaties with us […], even then we have to be cautious of the dangerous illusion that peace can replace security." Address at the conclusion of an IDF officers' course on May 15, 1949. Israel State Archives, David Ben Gurion—Selected Documents, 1947–1963, Document 20, 85.

81. Peres goes into detail portraying a set of conventional opposites that can in fact be regarded, according to his philosophy, otherwise. For the Future of Israel, 74–75.

82. Peres even adds a strange testimony of what he describes as a pleasurable and memorable experience as a guest of Gaza fishermen with whom he sailed to sea. Battling for Peace, 279.

83. When asked about his opinion of Arafat, Peres counts Arafat's personal characteristics. For the Future of Israel, 109.

84. On Arafat's knowledge and attitude toward Jews and Judaism. Ibid., 110.

85 See particularly: [Eran Lerman] Palestinian Authority and PLO Non-Compliance; A record of Bad Faith (Jerusalem: GPO, Nov., 2000); Jonathan Torop, "Arafat and the Uses of Terror", Commentary, May 1997: 30–33; Ronen Bergman, Authority Given (Tel-Aviv: MiskalYediot Ahronoth Books, 2002): 93–98. [Hebrew].

86. Peres explicitly rejects the idea that different people have different mentalities, and therefore, according to his logic, not only are social or regional experts unnecessary, but any expert per se is irrelevant, because none of them really knows what the future will hold. For the Future of Israel, 81.

87. The full Declaration of Principles on interim self-government arrangements from September 13, 1993 can be found in the Knesset site as cited on September 10, 2013: www.knesset.gov.il/process/asp/event_frame.asp?id=38

88. The Cairo agreement of May 4, 1994 can be found in the Knesset site as cited on September 10, 2013: www.knesset.gov.il/process/asp/event_frame.asp?id=37

89. See Daniel Lieberfeld, "Secrecy and 'Two-Level Games' in the Oslo Accord: What the Primary Sources Tell Us" International Negotiation 13 (2008): 133–146. Lieberfeld relies on the testimonies of former Palestinian Prime Minister Abu Ala and Palestinian President Muhammad Abbas and concludes that the PLO was on the verge of financial and hence organizational collapse. Additionally, the PLO had to accept international humiliation when in the 1991 Madrid Conference it was banned by the United States. The Oslo peace process brought the PLO back to the front of the stage of international as well as domestic politics.

90. See Dan Leon, "Israeli Public Opinion Polls on the Peace Process", Palestine-Israel Journal 2, no. 1 (1995) According to the Modi'in Ezrachi Research Institute, the October 1994 poll had 86.5% support for the general peace process, 48% for the Oslo accords. 59.1% rejected stopping the peace process because of the problem of terrorism, 40.5% advocated speeding up the negotiations, 36.7% opposed doing so. At the beginning of 1995, the polls indicated that only 49% were "disappointed" or "very disappointed" with the peace process, and about half the population thought that Israel's security interests could include the establishment of a Palestinian state. The dominant trends indicated a support for the peace process alongside a concern over personal security.

91. See the report of Nadav Shragai in Ha'aretz, October 6, 1995. The count of demonstrators is always subject to interpretation, with police official data usually giving smaller numbers and the organizers of the rally claiming larger ones. The general estimation, however, is not in dispute.

92. Various aspects of this change, using different terminology may be found in Gershon Shafir and Yoav Peled, The New Israel: Peace and Economic Liberalization (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2000). See also: Uri Ram, The Globalization of Israel: McWorld in Tel-Aviv, Jihad in Jerusalem (London and New York: Routledge, 2000). For other aspects, see Yoav Peled and Adi Ophir eds., Israel: From Mobilized to Civil Society (Jerusalem: Van Leer, 2001).

93. Ha'aretz, July 28, 1995.

94. Kurzman, Soldier of Peace, 1998: 438.

95. Eban was quoted in an Australian newspaper in Melbourne, The Age, on May 6, 1994.

96. Al Hamishmar, March 14, 1995. Editorial.

97. Indeed, it is actually quite common among scholars of the Arab-Israeli wars to divide Israeli society into those who prefer peace as opposed to those who prefer war. Political psychologists refer to a dichotomy between those who hold a "peace ethos" and those who retain an "ethos of conflict." See, for example, Danny Bar-Tal, "Societal Beliefs in Times of Intractable Conflict: The Israeli Case," International Journal of Conflict Management 90 (1998): 22–50; Danny Bar-Tal, "Siege Mentality", in Guy Burgess and Heidi Burgess eds., Beyond Intractability (Boulder, CO: Conflict Research Consortium, 2004), 47–72; Danny Bar-Tal and Neta Oren, Ethos as an Expression of Identity: Its Changes in Transition from Conflict to Peace in the Israeli Case (Jerusalem: The Leonard Davis Institute for International Relations, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2000);

Danny Bar-Tal, Keren Sharvit, Eran Halperin, and Anat Zafran, "Ethos of Conflict: The Concept and its Measurement," Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology 18, no. 1 (2012): 40–61.

98. Ari Shavit, "Why We Hate Him [Netanyahu]: The Real Reason", Ha'aretz, December 27, 1997, Friday Supplement. The focus of Shavit's column is an analysis of the hatred toward Netanyahu as an indication of a pathological tendency of a specific social group.

99. For a full account of the policies of denial see Efraim Karsh, The Oslo War: An Anatomy of Self-Delusion (Ramat-Gan: BESA Center for Strategic Studies, 2003). For another analysis that counts cultural and ideological factors that distorted perceptions of reality of the Oslo peace process proponents, see Joel Fishman, "Perception Failure and Self-Deception; Israel's Quest for Peace in the Context of Related Historical Cases," Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs: Jerusalem Viewpoints No. 450, 15 March 2001. http://www.jcpa.org/jl/vp450.htm. See also: Joel Fishman, "Ten Years Since Oslo: The PLO's 'People's War' Strategy and Israel's Inadequate Response," Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, Jerusalem Viewpoints No. 503, 1 September 2003. www.jcpa.org/jl/vp503.htm; and Efraim Karsh and Joel Fishman, La Guerre D'Oslo (Paris: Les Editions de Passy, 2005), 107–254. See also Kenneth Levin, The Oslo Syndrome: Delusions of a People Under Siege (Manchester: Smith & Kraus, 2005). Levin narrates the whole course of the peace process and Israel's faithful adherence to its obligations. He called this the greatest self-inflicted wound of political history, arguing that Israeli leaders hallucinated that there was moderation in a murderous enemy. For yet another analysis in the same spirit see Ofira Seliktar, Doomed to Failure? The Politics and Intelligence of the Oslo Peace Process (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2009). Seliktar questions the ability of Israeli leaders at all levels to assess correctly the motives of the Palestinian negotiators. For an analysis that also takes into account the Arab manipulation of the Israeli self-delusion see Efraim Karsh, "Arafat's Grand Strategy", Middle East Quarterly 2, 11 (2004), 3–11.

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