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Post-Zionism: Left and Right

For the past three decades, Zionist ideology and politics have been the target of a sharp critique by the "post-Zionists."[1] Post-Zionism began as a demand for a revision of historical and sociological academic research in Israel, which, the post-Zionists claimed, has betrayed its scholarly call and formed an unholy alliance with the country's political and social elite. Israeli historians and sociologists, they argue, have not only made Zionist ideology and ethos the premise of their research, but they also serve as court intellectuals, supplying "official versions" and manipulating Israeli collective memory as a means of preserving the hegemony of the Israeli Labor-Zionist establishment.

The roots of the post-Zionist revision are to be found in the works of the "Critical Sociologists" in the 1970s, who emerged against the background of the crises that rocked Israeli society in that decade, particularly the protests by *Mizrahim* (Jews from Muslim countries) against their discrimination by the Labor, mainly Ashkenazi establishment; the shock of the 1973 War, which whittled away at the legitimacy and self-confidence of this establishment; and the political turnabout of 1977, which transferred the reins of power from Labor to a coalition of right-wing and religious parties. The Critical Sociologists argued that by propagating the dominant Zionist ideology, academic sociology in Israel was deliberately avoiding the conflicts within Israeli society, especially that between the Labor establishment — representing the interests of the mainly Ashkenazi middle class, which took advantage of the nation-building project — and groups of "others" like the *Mizrahim* and the Arabs, who were oppressed and excluded by this same process.[2] This critique gained new ground at the end of the 1980s with the opening of archives pertaining to the formative years of the State of Israel, when the Israeli "Whig version" of Zionist–Arab relations came under fierce attack by the "new historians." They argued that, backed by academic research, the official narrative had deliberately blurred Israel's responsibility for the 1948 Palestinian refugee problem, which was the outcome of a premeditated policy of ethnic cleansing, involving mass murder and other atrocities, carried out in the course of the war.[3]

Inspired by the postmodernist school, the post-Zionists gradually expanded their revision to other areas such as culture, education, literature, arts, gender and law, suggesting an overall critique of Zionist ideology and Israeli politics.[4] No less than in its policies towards the Palestinians, the post-Zionists insist, the oppressive nature of Zionism was reproduced by the practices employed by the Labor Ashkenazi ruling elite towards different groups of Jews, before and after 1948. They criticized the idea of the "negation of the diaspora" that lay at the heart of the Zionist ethos, positing the Jewish diasporic life as an ideal type of multicultural existence.[5] The contempt for the "diaspora Jew," they argued, provided the mental background for the Zionist leadership's alleged indifference to the tragedy of European Jewry during the Holocaust,[6] which did not preclude the cynical use of the victims and the survivors to advance the campaign for the Zionist state and to construct a collective memory that would legitimize Israeli aggression and conquest.[7]

After 1948, the post-Zionists furger argue, the Israeli elite discriminated against and excluded different groups of Jews defined by their ethnicity and ideology, most notoriously the *Mizrahim*, who by means of the "melting pot" policy were forced to give up their own culture and adopt the hegemonic one.[8] The emancipation of Israeli society, the post-Zionists conclude, is conditional on its rejection of Zionism, and the annulment of the Jewish character of the State of Israel, turning it into a "state for all its citizens." This concept is based on the multiculturalist recognition of the separate identities of all the "others" in Israeli society, and mainly the Arabs, as a way of struggling against the Zionist-Ashkenazi hegemony.[9]

Whereas "post-Zionism" was initially a left-wing ideology, in the course of the 1990s this term was borrowed to characterize certain sentiments and views among the Israeli right. Among the national-religious right, the principled opposition to the government's peace policies — mainly to the Oslo Accords — coupled with resentment of what they perceived as the continuous erosion of the Jewish and Zionist character of Israeli society, has paradoxically developed in some sectors into a deep estrangement from the Israeli statehood to the point of questioning and even denying one of the foundations of national-religious teachings: the theological justification of Zionism and the sacred nature of its embodiment, the State of Israel. These doubts have strengthened among the national-religious messianic concepts alongside the adoption of stricter religious behavior, which has brought them closer to the Ultra-Orthodox anti-Zionists (*haredim*), an attitude that has been described as "religious-nationalist post-Zionism."[10] At the same time, right-wingers striving to establish an American-style conservative right in Israel began to use arguments of a post-Zionist nature. Their dissociation from the Zionist project moved between ideological rejection of the social radicalism of Zionism and criticism of the collectivist nature of its realization by Labor in Israel.[11]

If initially it seemed that the left and right versions of post-Zionism were opposites, being united only in their criticism of Labor Zionism, gradually it became clear that agreement between them was deeper. Both declared their avowed opposition to mainstream Zionism and emphasized their struggle to undermine its hegemony by exposing the hypocrisy of its underlying ethos. They shared criticism of the basics of Zionist ideology and practice: the "negation of the diaspora"; the Hebrew cultural revolution and the "melting pot" policy; the attitude towards religion and the haredim; the stand of the Zionist leadership during the Holocaust; and the way the Mizrahim had been absorbed. Their shared opposition to Labor Zionism brought right and left post-Zionism closer together in a way that only several years earlier had appeared impossible: the adoption of the new historiography by spokespersons on the right. The latter began to agree with the new historians that the establishment of the State of Israel had indeed been accompanied by the expulsion of Palestinians and other atrocities as a result of the war. Nevertheless, they insisted that these had been morally justifiable necessary evils and that the State of Israel would not otherwise have come about.

Historical revisionism serves, then, as a meeting point for political extremes on the left and the right. In the name of contradictory ideologies and under the veil of rhetorical confrontation, they, in fact, cooperate in fighting the hegemonic Labor-Zionist ethos and in advancing the post-Zionist agenda, whether in its "Jewish" version on the right or in its "civil" version on the left. The critique and its targets reveal an underlying characteristic common to both left and right post-Zionism: recycling and bringing to the center of public debate views that in the past were voiced by marginal opposition groups on the left and on the right. Claims regarding the colonial nature of Zionism and its ties with imperialism, as well as Israel's responsibility for the refugee problem and the failure of efforts to achieve peace, were prevalent among both the anti-Zionist left and radical left-wing Zionist parties. Likewise, criticism of the Zionist leadership's abandonment of European Jewry during the Holocaust, as well as of the material and cultural absorption of the Mizrahim, prevailed among different rightist and religious circles, and had even caused repeated political crises.

In appearing both as critics of the essential foundations of the Zionist ethos and also as spokespersons for its victims, whether Mizrahim or Holocaust victims and survivors who are at the center of the Israeli consensus, the left and right post-Zionists have succeeded in becoming one of the axes of public debate in Israel. The synergy between right and left post-Zionism — both seek to discredit established Zionism as well as attacking each other — grants both of them ideological and propagandistic influence that exceeds the value of their separate messages. It further endowed their criticism with a subversive flavor, making it a provocative cultural event and arousing public interest.

This has enabled post-Zionism to redraw the lines delineating political discourse in Israel by crossing the traditional boundaries that distinguish right and left, and to redefine the difference between them.

In an attempt to explain this success, two different manifestations of post-Zionism will be examined below: the "new historiography" from the end of the 1980s and beginning of the 1990s as an expression of left post-Zionism in its formative stages; and the way in which the post-Zionist arguments were adopted by various circles on the right, especially in the journal *Tkhelet* (*Azure*) at the end of the 1990s, as a manifestation of right post-Zionism in its advanced stage.

The New Historiography and the Academic Historiography

At the end of the 1980s and beginning of the 1990s, the new historians launched their offensive with the aim of criticizing and undermining the authority of academic research of the history of Zionism and the State of Israel. Summing up their success, Ilan Pappé wrote in 1994: "When *Matzpen* raised many of the questions that are discussed today by critical post-Zionist scholars, it was a short-lived harmless criticism. There is no doubt that time and political developments also contributed to the change, but essentially it was the transfer of the discussion to the universities that, for the first time, compelled those who were attacked to respond."[12]

Identifying with the stands taken by *Matzpen*, an Israeli anti-Zionist ultra-left-wing organization active in the 1960s and 1970s, Pappé points to the operative conclusion to be drawn from its failure to convince a broader public of its criticism: the struggle against the Zionist narrative cannot be conducted as a political or ideological dispute. Since academic historiography and sociology, as agents of the Zionist establishment, are the bastions of the hegemonic narrative, the struggle has to be transferred to the universities and conducted as an academic debate. In other words, academic research should be used to legitimize, retrieve and restore to the center of public discourse those same stands that had failed in the ideological and political debate. Thus by integrating into the academic establishment, and by posing as a distinct historiographical school, the new historians succeeded in disguising their ideological and propagandistic intentions as something "academic and not necessarily political."[13]

Maintaining that the academic historiography of Zionism was mere propaganda serving the interests of the Israeli establishment, the new historians adopted the technique and tools usually used by historical revisionism: presenting certain scholarly interpretations as "official versions," denying their academic value and "exposing" them as a tool for manipulating public opinion in the service of the hegemonic forces, while presenting theirs

as a "corrected version," free of the ideological-political distortions of the official versions. Using revisionist *modus operandi*, the new historians began their crusade against academic historiography by charging it with partisan priorities that subjected scholarly standards to political goals and sacrificed "freedom of opinion and research" on the altar of "Zionist nationalism." They argued that this partisan nature had dire professional implications, leading Israeli academic historiography to reject advanced methods of historical analysis that might expose the Zionist narrative.[14]

However, the development of the academic historiography of Zionism in Israel since the 1960s undermines the validity of both contentions underlying the new historians' demand for revision. After all, the basic assumption of historical research is the constant revision of existing knowledge, which is generated by revealing new previously unknown sources and the re-interpretation of already known sources by new generations of historians, who work in changing political, social and intellectual contexts, equipped with new research methods and analytical perspectives. This dynamic is especially evident in the academic historiography of Zionism, which, since the 1960s, has been marked by the demand for methodological updating and the liberation of historical research from the ideological templates of the Zionist project in general, and the political interests of the different parties and leaders in particular. Although this demand generated fierce opposition from the Zionist "old guard," the latter could no longer arrest the development of academic critical historiography. The very fact that academic historians of Zionism became known in public discourse as "myth breakers" testifies to their success in freeing themselves from the yoke of ideological commitment.[15]

Against this background, the new historians' demand for a revision of the ideological Zionist narrative appeared trivial. Likewise, the "discoveries" of the new historiography were to a great extent nothing but a recycling of arguments that had been raised in the past both by the Zionist opposition parties and the anti-Zionist circles in Israel under the mantle of research and with an expansion of the factual basis.[16] Thus, the new historians created an impossible arena of discussion for historians who did not dispute the legitimacy of the demand for revision and criticism — a demand that academic research had actually led for a generation — but rejected the interpretations that were suggested by the new historians and mainly the repoliticization of historical research. The real significance of the new historiography lay, then, in its *extra*-scholarly ramifications: more than historical research, it is a continuation of the ideological debate whose targets lay in the political, not the scholarly, sphere, a projection of the charge that the new historians themselves made against academic research.

The New Historiography: Between Method and Ideology

The use of the concepts "old historiography" and "new historiography" by the new historians is vague, involving changing and contradictory meanings. In the writings of Benny Morris, who coined these terms, they underwent a complete change as the controversy developed.[17] Originally, Morris distinguished between the new historians and the old historians according to a generational and professional criteria.[18] The "old historians" were those who came from the political or military establishments — the army history department, for example — and their works were no more than memoirs and chronicles, in which history was manipulated to serve political goals, and mainly for justifying Israeli policy in the spirit of Ben-Gurion. The "new historians," by contrast, according to Morris's original definition, were a younger generation of trained academic historians, who based their research on professional analyses of archival material opened in the 1980s and whose studies "significantly shake if not completely destroy" the old historiography. From this generational-professional distinction — which Morris agrees to describe as a distinction between the pre-history and history of research — it follows that the old historiography has practically come to an end, and, since the 1980s, Israeli historiography of the War of Independence is all "new."

Shortly after, though, Morris reversed his definitions, arguing that the age of old historiography was not yet over and that Israeli academic historiography was the arena of a struggle for hegemony waged between the new and the old historiography. According to his new version, the spirit of the retired old historians is preserved in the works of some of the leading figures of the new generation of professional historians, whom he calls "the new-old historians." Among the latter, he particularly attacks Itamar Rabinovich and Anita Shapira, who according to his former generational definition were classified with the new historians. Despite their disciplinary training and against all professional standards, Morris charges, the new-old historians prefer establishment propaganda to historical truth, consciously choosing to adhere to the narrative of the old history and continuing to portray Zionism in "an even rosier light." In their essays, "the Arabs are still strong and we are weak, they are immoral and we are moral," and this unfounded partisan premise brings them to "accuse the Arabs, and them alone, for the continuation of the conflict." This preference, Morris continues, possibly stems from their being "conservative with a partisan commitment toward the State and an almost blind faith in the justice of the Zionist way." Morris, though, prefers to explain their opportunism less as ideology and more as stemming from "motives of career and preserving their positions." The conclusions of the work of Itamar Rabinovich, Morris says, are not of an "honest historian" but rather "of one who thinks politically" and prefers the office of ambassador in the United

States to historical truth. These power relations are reproduced in the universities, where the new-old historians prevail and where "people in academe fear to criticize strong people" like Shapira and Rabinovich; therefore, the "sharp criticism" that their studies deserve is silent, and the hegemony of the old historiography is sustained.[19]

Morris accompanied his conceptual reversal with a modification of the nature of the establishments standing behind the "old" and the "new-old" historiography. Initially the old historiography was fostered by Labor Zionism as a means of securing its hegemony. Since the 1980s, however, the right-wing governments have lost interest in the old historiography, according to Morris, and have actually created conditions for the rise of the new historiography. Thus, the amendment of the Israel Archives Law in 1981 and its relatively liberal implementation made it possible to use previously classified materials; this, Morris states, was the starting point of the new historiography.[20] Likewise, the publishing house of the Ministry of Defense, one of the bastions of the old historiography, has shown "openness and intellectual honesty" by publishing a book that "thoroughly undermines central propagandistic values that have characterized its books from the 1950s to the 1980s."[21]

With the authorities' loss of interest in the old historiography, Morris argues, the universities, where the new-old historians hold senior posts, have become the new establishment encouraging the old historiography. Given the essential differences between the two establishments, however, the career considerations of university professors have replaced the political interests of Labor Zionism in defending and preserving the old historiography. Thus, in Morris's new version academic integrity — or lack of it — has replaced political considerations as the underlying factor informing the difference between the two historiographies. Morris's shift from political considerations to academic integrity and intrigues is problematic from a theoretical point of view. The argument that the old historiography was used by Labor Zionism to manipulate public opinion matches various theories of political and cultural sociology. In contrast, positing the new-old historiography as the consequence of academic careerism devoid of wider political and social contexts seems a simplistic and idiosyncratic interpretation, which works against Morris's own explanation of the rise of the new historiography.

While theoretically problematic, Morris's later definitions of old, new and new-old historians, and of the establishments standing behind them, have a propagandistic advantage. Contrary to the generational-professional interpretation that assumed the end of the old historiography, the later presentation of historical research as an arena for protracted conflicts between rival schools arouses public interest, which has focused on the struggle within the professional community more than on its content. Moreover, the focus of the attack on well-known historians like Shapira and Rabinovich, who

combine senior status in the academic establishment with high public profile, added to the controversy a personal, even gossipy, provocative dimension that helped to arouse the interest of the media, thereby turning it into an cultural-political "event."

Pappé attributes to the terms old and new historiography quite different meanings. He describes Israeli historiography as "a combination of positivist methodology and partisan writing," which is backward in comparison not only with the current critical schools but even with nineteenth-century European positivism, which "in the name of scientific accuracy challenged ideological and national commitment." The new historians, accordingly, attempt to free Israeli historiography from its methodological conservatism, ideological bias and Zionist commitment, all of which contradict scholarly standards.[22] Pappé's own definition of the concept of new historiography, however, is not only ambiguous but also contradictory.

In contrast to Morris, whose concept of new historiography is rooted in the narrow context of Israeli historiography, Pappé characterizes the new historiography as an Israeli adaptation of the *nouvelle histoire* — as developed in France and in the English-speaking world — with an emphasis on an interdisciplinary approach, combining history, social sciences and cultural studies. It is difficult to understand, from Pappé's definition, though, what is new in the new historiography; and it certainly does not supply any basis for criticism of Israeli historical research. As Pappé himself admits, since the 1970s, Israeli mainstream historiography — including that of the so-called old historians — has conducted a dialogue with the *Nouvelle Histoire*, as well as with other schools of social history, and adopted the new methods.

As Pappé evolved from new historian to post-Zionist, however, he changed his reasoning. The *Nouvelle Histoire* gave way to postmodernism as the source of inspiration for the new historiography, which, in rather a didactic and simplistic way, has now been presented as an application of postmodern critique to the study of Zionist and Israeli history.[23] If initially for Pappé the new historiography signified methodological innovation and inter-disciplinarity, it later became synonymous with relativism, which acknowledges the legitimacy of every historical narrative. Accordingly, the central traits of the new historians are an awareness of the existence of "earlier positions and hypotheses" influencing their studies and their recognition of the "unavoidable affinity between their actual stand on political questions and their view of the past."

By the claim that every narrative is legitimate and reflects a certain relative truth, the new historiography, Pappé explains, does not strive to replace the Zionist narrative with another, "more correct" narrative; rather, it seeks to undermine the claim of any narrative for the status of scientific truth. The object of Pappé's crude relativism is to emphasize that "the Zionist prism,

especially that of the Labor movement ... is not ... the only prism" and to open Zionist history to a multiplicity of narratives, including those of the "others" and of the "losers." In contrast to the impression created by his relativism, however, Pappé posits the new historiography not just as another possible version of the historical events — which implies that it does not have any advantage over the old historiography — but as the true version. He presents his book as "a scholarly, that is historically accurate, account of the war of 1948," and demands to examine the authenticity and credibility of the different narratives.[24] Thus, he undermines his relativist approach and acknowledges that there are accurate accounts and inaccurate ones.

Pappé's objectives, however, apparently extend beyond the academic sphere to the public and political spheres. By undermining "the hegemonic narrative and discourse," especially its Labor-Zionist version, he strives "to expose its control over our lives — whether in Memorial Day ceremonies or in being sent to the battlefield or in deployment as an occupying force in territories that are not ours."[25] And, indeed, while the ambiguous and self-contradictory meaning that Pappé imparts to the new historiography is methodologically and theoretically problematic, it proves to be very useful in the sphere of public debate, enabling him to use postmodern relativism to challenge the academic research and at the same time to posit the new historiography as the politically correct narrative. Thus Pappé, who began his assault on the old historiography with a critique of its partisan, ideological nature, ends up exactly at the same point.

The different meanings that Morris and Pappé impart to the concepts of the old and new historiography stem from a deep methodological dispute between the two. Morris is a positivist who believes in objective historical truth, which the historian must strive to, and can, reveal. He rejects Pappé's relativism, stating that there is "a correct, 'true' narrative, and a distorted, mendacious narrative." In order to arrive at the correct narrative, "not only should the historian not serve political goals in his writing, he cannot take into account the possible political results or effects of his research."[26] In contrast, Pappé argues from his relativistic approach that objective historiography is an illusion and therefore should not be aspired to. In view of his dispute with Morris, he proposes a distinction between "critical historians," like Morris, who are different from the old historians only in their conclusions but not in their methodology, and "the new historians," who arrive at the new conclusions by using up-to-date methodologies.[27]

The methodological differences between Pappé and Morris are closely connected to their ideological disagreements. Both of them think that the new historiography will encourage the struggle for a better society and for peace,[28] but they differ in their attitude to Zionism, a crucial point in the new historiography controversy. Morris defines himself as a Zionist. He thinks that

Zionism is a legitimate national-liberation movement, to the extent that any national-liberation movement is legitimate, and he objects to the definition of Zionism as a sort of colonialism.[29] Pappé, in contrast, condemns Zionism as a colonialist movement, the result of religious illusion and historical falsification, whose oppressive nature is reflected in Israel in the contradiction between Jewish and Zionist ethnocentrism, on the one hand, and liberal and democratic values, on the other.[30]

In Pappé's opinion, Morris is not a new historian. He attacks Morris's stand on Zionism, criticizing his historical positivism, and points to the connection between Morris's Zionist ideology and conservative methodology. Pappé claims that writings may have contributed to shattering several historical myths, but he does not propose an alternative narrative; he only corrects the existing one, without undermining its hegemony.[31] For his part, Morris also attacks Pappé on ideological-methodological grounds. He emphasized that he was the one who actually coined the term "new Historiograph" and complained that it has been "abducted" and distorted by others who, like Pappé, have given it a completely different meaning than Morris' initial intention. Morris further claims that there is no difference between the indoctrination of the old historians, who preserve the myth of 1948, and the historical relativism of Pappé, because "both of them reject objectivity."[32]

The methodological and ideological controversy between Morris and Pappé shows that contrary to all appearances created by the public debate, the new historians do not form a school in any accepted sense. Indeed, the new historiography is neither a historical theory nor a methodology. Its common denominator, it will be argued below, is not a scholarly or an academic factor but lies in the same domain for which the old historiography is faulted: the effort to construct an alternative Israeli collective memory: in this case, to serve the ideological and political agenda of post-Zionism.

The Praxis of the New Historiography

One of the striking characteristics of the new historians is the gap between their far-reaching criticism — which constitutes the core of the new historiography — expressed from public platforms, particularly the press, on the one hand, and the content of their scholarly publications, which are supposed to serve as a basis of this criticism, on the other. For example, Morris's public statements on the place of the transfer of Palestinians in Zionist thinking and Israeli policy contradicts the conclusions of his own studies on the way the refugee problem was created.

As a "new historian," Morris repeatedly argues that the version of the old historiography on the exodus of the Palestinians in 1948 was deliberate, mendacious propaganda that tried to cover up acts of mass expulsion, mass

murder, and looting and raping. The deception, he argues, started with Ben-Gurion and the official memory agencies, who knew the truth but suppressed it and intentionally spread the falsehood, which permeated all layers of the society. Moreover, Morris claims that the transfer idea lay at the basis of the Zionist agenda, which strove for the territorial concentration of the Jews in Palestine, and that the Zionist leadership, from Herzl to Ben-Gurion, sought to realize it. The conceptual background and the psychological preparation for the mass expulsion of the Palestinians during the 1948 war and for the prevention of their return after the war was thus created. To support Israel's refusal to permit the refugees' return, the Israeli propaganda machine created the myth, placing the responsibility for the Palestinians' exodus on their leadership — a premise that lies at the foundation of the old historiography and is replicated by the new-old historians."

Morris's studies of the history of Israel's War of Independence and its aftermath, in particular his book *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947–1949*[34] — written before the author turned himself into a new historian — actually refutes his new historiography. Many of the facts that Morris uses as a new historian are, indeed, to be found in the book; however, the meanings they assume when fitted into the framework of that research contradict those he later disseminated as a new historian. Morris has made the transition from historical research to the new historiography by omitting two of the book's principal conclusions. First, the refugee problem was basically generated by internal Palestinian causes, foremost among them the weakness of Palestinian society and the psychological and physical crisis in which it was trapped at the beginning of the fighting. Second, the Israeli leadership had no plan whatsoever for the transfer or mass expulsion of Arabs prior to the war, and such a policy was never adopted during it, neither by the government nor by the Israel Defense Forces [IDF].

These two conclusions constitute the framework of Morris's description and analysis of the creation of the refugee problem. This description included documented cases of deliberate expulsions and atrocities, which were the result of local initiatives; but it is clear from the study that, with all their moral severity, these cases were not the result of an overall plan and did not shape the major trends of the process that created the refugee problem. Morris's study is more detailed than previous accounts and, as such, he has shed new light and imparted new insights. Contrary to his claim, though, he does not change the basis of the picture presented by the old historiography; his central conclusions, in fact, strengthen it. In this sense, the principal difference between Morris and his predecessors lies not in the facts but in the intention: the old historians wished to free themselves of the guilt implied in the refugee problem, whereas Morris seeks to blame and condemn those who, in his opinion, bore responsibility for generating the problem.

Morris's new historiography is to a large extent an effort to free himself from the conclusions of his own book. He accomplishes this by blurring the framework that delineates his conclusions, changing the weight and proportions of the various facts, transferring them from the margins to the center and vice versa — all of which allows him freedom of reinterpretation. He replaces the positivist analysis of his book with the moral judgment of the new historiography, and by reiterating selected tendentious facts, he gives them a greater weight than in his original study, while creating the impression that they are but examples confirming a general pattern portrayed in his book. Thus, for example, the expulsion of the Arabs from Lod and Ramle, which from *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem* may be considered to have been an exceptional event, becomes in Morris's new historiography the test case of the 1948 War.[35]

In order to overcome his book's conclusions, Morris is also prepared to deviate from the firm positivism that he normally preaches and to base his new historiography on psychological evaluations. Since he is unable to prove the claim that there was a transfer plan, he hypothesizes: "I estimate that at the end of 1947, with the beginning of the acts of hostility, a half year before the end of the British Mandate in Palestine, the transfer idea hovered at the back of the minds of the leaders of the Zionist *Yishuv* as a continuation of its presence in the 1930s and 1940s."[36] Using the same method and the same terms, Morris tries to connect Ben-Gurion with the idea of transfer, and he again hypothesizes that even though "a transfer policy was not adopted officially in 1948 and there was no central plan to generate an Arab exodus" and even though "Ben-Gurion did not speak [of it] publicly," the transfer idea was "at the back of his mind."[37]

Another fundamental difference between the new historiography and the studies that supposedly inform them is the presentation of the Israeli establishment as a monolithic body. From Morris's studies it emerges that the Israeli establishment, mainly under Labor Zionist leadership, was split over policies towards the Palestinian issue in general and the refugee problem and its implications in particular. The differences of opinion cut across all Israeli establishments — the political decision-makers, the army and the civil service — and were manifest publicly in inter-party as well as intra-party disputes within Mapai and Mapam, the two parties that constituted the basis of the governing coalition.[38] Unlike the picture of a divided establishment as portrayed in his studies, by dint of the logic behind his new historiography Morris turns the Israeli establishment into a monolith. He glosses over the significance of differences in opinion in order to clear the way for a description of a homogeneous policy, derived from a common Zionist belief that promoted transfer prior to the war, generated it in the course of the war and acted to blur it in constructing Israeli collective memory after the war.

If Morris elides the differences between the various schools within Labor Zionism, Pappé denies the difference between the Zionist left and right altogether, portraying them as merely two facets of the same Zionist monolith that is reflected in an agreed, uniform discourse of blood. This monolithic claim, though, which lies at the basis of his new historiography, contrasts with Pappé's own studies. In referring to Israeli policy towards the Arab world in 1948–56, he states:

> Ostensibly a uniformity of opinions prevailed in those years with regards to the subjects of security policy and the Israeli-Arab conflict. Actually, however, the Israeli leadership was divided in its attitude to the nature of the conflict, its expected duration, its solution, its consequences, and its meanings. These differences of opinion characterized the entire Israeli political spectrum.[39]

Pappé argues further that differences of opinion also split the ruling Mapai party. Following previous studies, he points to the dispute between Ben-Gurion and his foreign minister, Moshe Sharett, which led to "the formulation of two opposing political schools among the senior leadership. One, 'Ben-Gurionist,' promoted a policy of deterrence and retribution; the other, 'Sharettist,' favored a policy of restraint and moderation." Other differences between the two schools were Ben-Gurion's support of the "Hashemite option" while Sharett backed the "Palestinian option"; Ben-Gurion demonstrated "utter pessimism towards the possibility of peace" and worked to integrate Israel into the Western world, whereas Sharett "sought to integrate Israel into the region."[40]

Blurring the division that split the Israeli establishment is vital for sustaining the new historiography's claim to the existence of a homogeneous, official version propagated by the old and new-old historiography. If historiography serves as a tool for political manipulation, as the new historians claim, then the split of the governing elite over central questions of policy had to produce more than a single narrative, something that would deprive the new historiography of one of its principal contentions. As it happened, the Israeli leadership was indeed split during the War of Independence, and the inner struggles gave birth to contrasting narratives of the history of the war, created by rival political and ideological factions which prevented the creation of an official version.

Moreover, one of the achievements of the academic historiography of Zionism and the State of Israel since the 1970s lay in undermining the monolithic appearance of the preceding ideological historiography of the various political parties and organizations. Academic historiography broke down the different establishments into subgroups, exposing the splits over central ideological and political issues between contesting factions as well as

within them. This process even led to identifying various "new-old historians" as supporters of certain ideologies, parties, organizations or individual leaders. Thus, for example, Anita Shapira was identified with the heritage of the left-wing, Mapam-oriented Palmah, and Yoav Gelber with the Ben-Gurion line.[41] This has contributed greatly to creating a multifaceted picture, which has made it more difficult to use research as a means of political manipulation. In this sense, the internal contradictions, the ideological, non-critical approach and the monolithic narrative that characterizes the new historiography merely reproduce the partisan narratives for which it criticized the old historiography.

The New Historiography: From Historical Research to Collective Memory

The tension between historical research and collective memory may serve as a suitable paradigm for understanding the new historiography.[42] As is evident from its arguments and *modus operandi*, the principal goals of the new historiography are to be found, not in the area of historical research, but in the construction of an alternative Israeli collective memory focusing on cultivating guilt feelings and self-condemnation. It clearly emerges from Morris's article in which he coined the term "new historiography" that, while speaking about historiography, he means in effect collective memory; that is, the false representation of the past in textbooks, memoirs or the press — the obvious agents of collective memory. Likewise, his criticism of the new-old historians is focused less on their studies — which even in his opinion meet all the standards of historical research — than on the implications of their studies for the collective memory, whose essential assumption can be summarized as: "We are okay, the Arabs are not okay."[43] Morris's focus on collective memory reveals his aspiration to give Israeli society an alternative memory, which, without denying the legitimacy of Zionism, can question its morality.

In Pappé's new historiography, collective memory occupies an even more central place. His relativistic approach elides the difference between historical research and collective memory and turns historiography into a kind of battlefield between opposing narratives striving for hegemony. Pappé claims that Zionism created, "a new collective memory in order to erase other memories," like that of the Arabs or the *Mizrahim*, while using the new collective memory to exclude every rival non-Zionist "other" in Israel and in the Jewish world. By challenging the Zionist collective memory, the new historiography, according to Pappé, is likely to wake Israeli society from the frightful Zionist dream and emancipate it from its nightmare.[44]

Morris and Pappé, then, began the campaign of the new historiography from within historical research and ended up as agents of an alternative

collective memory, while trying to blur or even erase altogether the contradiction between research and memory. This may explain how Morris, whose research focused on uncovering the facts pertaining to the birth of the refugee problem, could have contradicted his own findings during his transition to the new historiography, that is to say in his effort to construct a new Israeli collective memory. However, in this endeavor the new historiography has used the same practices of which it accuses the old historiography, a fact which underlines the nature of the new historiography as a partisan ideology.

In its efforts to construct a post-Zionist collective memory, the new historians ascribe great importance to the Israeli memory of 1948, which, in the spirit of the Zionist ethos of "the new Jew," they claim, was turned by the Israeli political and academic establishments into the formative moment of Israeli identity. Accordingly, in order to construct a morally stainless Israeli collective memory, the Palestinians' past and their suffering were excluded from the victorious Israeli narrative of 1948, as was the alleged indifference of the Zionist leadership to the destruction of European Jewry during the Holocaust. Since the new historians perceive the Palestinian as the ultimate "other" that marks the boundaries of the Israeli identity, it was only natural that they would make the refugee question the nub of their revision.

The Israeli collective memory of 1948, however, does not confirm the post-Zionist criticism; in fact, in order to justify their revision, the new historians invented a phantom, imagined version of an official Israeli collective memory, which was cultivated, so it is claimed, by the political and academic establishments. This fictitious version ranged from the grotesque and righteous to the vulgar and demonic and focused on the contrast between "the good Israelis" and the "bad Arabs." This simplistic and untenable version of the memory of the war — easy to ridicule and criticize — was intended to blur the political and moral complexity of the prevailing Israeli memory of the War of Independence and the refugee problem, a memory that undermines the core of the claims of the new historiography.

Morris's psychological interpretation, that the veterans of 1948 could only remember the war through the nostalgia of "their finest hour," which left no place for the dark side,[45] contrasted with the way this memory was actually constructed. In the course of the war itself — as emerges from Morris's own studies — voices condemning acts of violence against citizens were raised in different quarters of the political and military establishments and acted to stop them. These voices pointed to the harsh consequences of the growing refugee problem and urged the government to take practical measures to put an end to the human suffering and the political damage that would ensue. These voices were particularly loud on the Zionist left, which was not only a senior partner in the Labor government coalition but exerted great influence on both

intellectual circles and the army. In fact, the left played a dominant role in constructing the Israeli collective memory of 1948 both during and in particular after the war.[46]

The complex way in which the Israeli memory of 1948 coped with the human and moral consequences of the war is reflected, for example, in the writings of two of its most important agents: the writer Yizhar Smilansky (alias S. Yizhar) and the poet Nathan Alterman. In his short stories, "Hirbet Hizah" and "Ha-shavu'i" (The Prisoner), stories that were included in the school curriculum and became cornerstones of the Israeli memory of the war, Yizhar clearly portrayed the injuries inflicted on innocent Arabs by Israeli soldiers in the course of the war, pointing to their difficult moral implications.[47] Alterman, in one of his popular political newspaper columns, attacked the harming of the Arab civilian population during the conquest of Lod (Lydda) and the indifference of Israeli public opinion to these acts. Alterman's reproach did not remain unnoticed: Ben-Gurion praised this column in a letter to Alterman and read it at a meeting of the Provisional State Council. He also had it distributed among IDF soldiers along with his own letter to Alterman.[48] Yizhar and Alterman were not only two of the leading literary figures in Israel, they were also the closest to any possible definition of "establishment artists." The two were close to Ben-Gurion and accompanied him through every political twist and turn. Yizhar was a Mapai member of the Knesset, and Alterman — the nation's leading poet, according to Morris — was described as Ben-Gurion's "court poet." In the words of Moshe Dayan, "Alterman with his special Altermanism was the one who educated the people to Ben-Gurionism."[49]

Grappling with the complex moral questions pertaining to the human aspect of the war played a central role in constructing the Israeli collective memory of 1948. The accepted version did, indeed, blame the Arab leaders for the creation of the refugee problem by encouraging the exodus of the Palestinians with the promise of a quick return after an anticipated victory while rejecting the urgings of the local Jewish leadership to remain, as in the cases of Haifa and Tiberias. However, there was also the recognition that a key factor in hastening the refugee flight was the massacre of Palestinians in the village of Deir Yassin. The fact that the massacre was carried out by paramilitary right-wing opposition organizations made it easier for the Israeli hegemonic collective memory to acknowledge a certain Jewish responsibility for the Arab exodus, while exempting the Labor-Zionist leadership from any guilt.

Moreover, the struggle between the ruling Labor Zionism and the right-wing opposition transformed the condemnation of the right for the atrocities in the Deir Yassin affair into a propaganda asset that promised clear political profit. By keeping the affair alive in the Israeli collective memory, the party conflict prevented any attempt to blur the question of Jewish responsibility for the refugee problem and encouraged scholarly and political debate of its

causes. In response to the condemnation of the Deir Yassin affair by the Israeli, mainly Labor, establishment, the right-wing opposition charged the left with responsibility for "Deir Yassins" of its own, a charge that reflected a certain degree of recognition that acts of expulsion were morally wrong. The presence of the Deir Yassin affair in Israeli political discourse has constantly raised the question of Jewish responsibility for the refugee problem, and thus turned it into an integral part of the Israeli collective memory of the War of Independence.[50]

In contrast to what the new historians claim, and unlike what one may have reasonably expected, the Israeli establishment did not adopt a strategy of repressing the memory of the refugee issue; it was not excluded from the hegemonic memory of 1948, and the principal moral questions involved were not avoided but became part of Israel's political discourse. The reasons for this "unnatural" development should be sought in the inter-party struggle of the 1950s and 1960s, which placed the memory of 1948 at the center of two different ideological disputes. One was the struggle between right and left, in which the hegemonic Labor Zionism made political capital from blaming the right-wing opposition for atrocities that occurred during the war. The second was the struggle between "doves" and "hawks" within Labor Zionism — particularly between Mapai and Mapam, but even within Mapai — in which the "doves" turned the status of the Arab citizens in Israel and a solution to the refugee problem into major issues in their struggle for peace. It appears, therefore, that in contrast to the simplistic and superficial description offered by the new historians, the Israeli hegemonic memory of 1948, mainly cultivated by Labor Zionism, was characterized by a dialectical attitude towards the refugee question: the political and moral questions pertaining to it were placed on the memory map; however, the responsibility for it was cast on the "other," whether the Palestinians themselves or Jewish right-wing rivals.

What made it easier to include the refugee issue in the hegemonic memory was the declared Israeli readiness to solve it. This policy, though, did not have an immediate practical implication; it was conditional on an overall solution to the Israeli–Arab conflict and was therefore postponed to an indefinite future. In this context the hegemonic memory of 1948 used a practice that may be defined as "conditional justification": it acknowledged the refugee problem, but without accepting blame or responsibility for its creation; it expressed a principled willingness to solve it, but only in the framework of an overall Israeli–Arab settlement. This practice politicized the refugee question, blurring its moral, human aspects. Conditional justification influenced the strategy that informed the construction of Israeli memory: once the refugee question ceased to be a source of guilt and became solvable as part of an expected Israeli–Arab peace, it could easily be incorporated into the Israeli hegemonic collective memory.

By contrast, the respective memories of the Israeli radical left and right — which had a similar content but contrasting political objectives — were constructed through an opposing practice, that of guilt and accusation. The radical left argued that the refugees were expelled as part of a "grand plan" of ethnic cleansing and that the expulsion attested to the immorality and illegitimacy of Zionism. Contrary to the politicization of the refugee question in the hegemonic memory, the radical left — and the new historians in their wake — turned it into a moral issue, an original sin that was a source of feelings of guilt.[51] The right, too, emphasized Israeli responsibility for the expulsion of the refugees, but claimed that, for national security reasons, it had not been possible to act otherwise. It contended that the whole Zionist project from the very beginning would not have been possible without the dispossession of the Arabs, and that this existential necessity gave it moral justification. Hence, any political effort to solve the refugee problem would have undermined the foundations of Zionism.[52]

The "discoveries" of the new historiography, it appears, are nothing else but a recycling of arguments that have been reiterated in the Israeli political debate over the last 50 years by opposition circles, Zionist and non-Zionist, merely updating the factual base and masquerading as scholarly research. Moreover, in some of their attempts to construct an alternative Israeli collective memory of 1948, the new historians take pains to present a one-dimensional, simplistic and vulgar version of the hegemonic collective memory that is easy to demonize, ridicule, attack and refute. Thus, they obfuscate the real nature of the "accepted version," which has politicized the refugee problem and its solution, thus enabling the incorporation of this problem, with all its human and moral dilemmas, into the hegemonic memory.

Right Post-Zionism

While left post-Zionism created a basis for undermining the moral foundations of Zionism, various circles on the right seemed willing to adopt this criticism, but setting it within a different value system. This meeting of the extremes occurred in the 1990s in the course of the struggle by the right against the Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank and Gaza Strip based on the Oslo Accords. Various rightist circles started to use the new historiography's claim regarding the dispossessing nature of Zionism as a moral and historical basis for opposing any withdrawal, while developing an alternative ideology that may be termed "right post-Zionism."[53] The right post-Zionists claim that those same arguments that are used to justify the dismantling of Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Gaza can be used to negate the legitimacy of the Zionist project as a whole.

In a column entitled "Who's Afraid of the Truth?" published in the most popular Israeli Hebrew daily, *Yediot Aharanot*, in late 1999, Emunah Eilon, a religious-nationalist publicist who represents the hard line among the settlers, came to the defense of the new historians. She argued that "the official Mapai version" of the history of Israel may be nicer and friendlier, but "the version of the new historians is the true version." Referring to the "difficult, even shocking discoveries" that the new historians "lay at the doorstep of the Israeli entity," she writes:

> Even the guardians of the walls of Zionism, who demand to remove the new historians to outside the consensus ... do not try to argue that their discoveries are nothing but wicked and anti-Semitic false facts. The claims of those who object to the new historians ... are not understandable. ... If the country is ours ... we have no choice but to fight for it when necessary and to chase away anyone who needs to be expelled, and we have no choice but to acknowledge the tragedy that we have caused others. ... In any event, there is nothing there to undermine our faith in the justness of our way and our certainty in our right to the Land.[54]

The new historiography integrates well, then, with Eilon's outlook, according to which "the Israeli entity" was established through conquest, dispossession and expulsion and might use these practices again in the future in order to survive. Thus like the new historians, Eilon, too, transforms the debate about the past into a discussion of the morality of future policies and practices.

Acceptance of the new historiography, rejection of the "official Mapai version" and criticism of the "guardians of Zionism" are repeatedly expressed in the right-wing journal *Tkhelet* (*Azure*), which appears in both Hebrew and English editions. *Azure* is published by the Shalem Center, a research institute set up by Ron Lauder, a right-wing American Jewish philanthropist and supporter of Binyamin Netanyahu, which offers an Israeli version of the "New Conservatism" developed by Judeo-conservatives in the US that combines American-like competitive capitalism, Jewish religious tradition and Israeli hawkish foreign policy.

In an editorial named "Making History," Daniel Polisar, the editor of *Azure*, adopts an ambivalent attitude towards the new historians: on the one hand, he warns against their penetration into the academic, cultural and educational establishments of Israel, arguing that "the assault on the legacy of Zionism poses a grave threat to Israel's future," for "no nation can retain its basic vitality if its entire historical narrative comes to be seen in the public mind as a long series of moral failings." On the other hand, he accepts the facts on which the new historians base their moral condemnation of Zionism. He attacks the mainstream historians who question the reliability of the new

historians and their findings, arguing that it is not the facts used by the new historians that need to be questioned but rather their perspective and interpretations. Therefore, he suggests adopting a "Jewish-nationalist" perspective that will judge the "problematic chapters" and the "skeletons" that will continue to emerge from the Zionist closet in the light of moral criteria that give priority to the interests of the nation and the state over injustice and human suffering, of Jews and Arabs alike.

Polisar adopts, then, the factual basis offered by the new historians, but disputes their moral judgment of Zionist history: the policy they condemn as immoral and as reflecting the oppressive nature of Zionism, he justifies as an existential necessity morally justified by its service to Jewish and Israeli interests. Polisar, like Eilon, focuses his attack on "Israel's mainstream cultural leadership," who lack an appropriate historical perspective and whose response to the moral challenge posed by the new historians has been "less than inspiring." This failure, he concludes, might have implications that extend beyond the cultural area, for "the future of the Jewish state" may be dependent on the vindication of the "nation's past."[55]

The support for the new historiography by post-Zionists on both the left and the right may be explained in ideological terms by its contribution to undermining "the morality of partition" (that is, the partition of pre-1948 Mandatory Palestine into Jewish and Arab nation-states), a principle that is historically fundamental to the policy of Labor Zionism and bases the justice of Zionist policy in the conflict with the Arabs on its willingness to compromise and on its use of force only as a last resort in face of Arab rejectionist aggression. Left post-Zionism repudiates the morality of partition, advocating instead a different kind of binational solution that denies the legitimacy of Israel as a Jewish nation-state. Right post-Zionism repudiates it, advocating the principle of "Greater Israel," which rejects the idea of a Palestinian nation-state alongside Israel. Presenting Zionism as tainted by the expulsion and dispossession of Palestinians enables both left and right post-Zionism to claim that the policy of partition has historically failed to solve the Israeli–Arab conflict. Moreover, both claim that Zionism can be realized only by military force and not through political agreement — according to left post-Zionism because of the colonial dispossessing nature of Zionism, which exposes its immorality, and according to right post-Zionism because of Palestinian rejectionism, which justifies the use of force.

Polisar's ambivalence towards the new historiography characterizes *Azure's* attitude towards post-Zionism. On the one hand, *Azure* presents itself as the ultimate critic of post-Zionism and warns against its growing influence. Positing post-Zionism as a reflection of the deep-seated value crisis in Israeli society, *Azure* repeatedly attacks the failure of the mainstream's "hollow Zionism" to deal with it;[56] it emphasizes the Jewish-conservative approach as the only answer to the crisis of Israeli society in general and to the challenge

of post-Zionism in particular. On the other hand, these very arguments raise doubts whether *Azure* indeed offers an antithesis to post-Zionism, as it seeks to portray itself, or whether this is yet another example of a meeting between political extremes, which in the name of competing ideologies and under the guise of rhetorical polarization in effect cooperate and sustain each other.

The critique of "Israel's mainstream cultural leadership"[57] and of its failure to confront left post-Zionism reveals *Azure*'s doubt whether Zionism can constitute a framework for "the Jewish state." Assaf Sagiv, *Azure*'s deputy editor, almost goes as far as proclaiming "the end of Zionism." Attacking the spread of the "Dionysian youth culture," which reflects and reinforces the dissolution of Israeli society, he argues that a Dionysian ecstatic revival has filled the ideological vacuum "left by the demise of the old Zionism" and that it "has been fueled by a mistrust felt by many youth toward anything reminiscent of the grandiose slogans and utopian promises of an earlier day."[58] Sagiv emphasizes that in Israel, which "adopted the modern cult of youth," the youth were the first to enlist in the service of the Zionist revolution, while today they are also the first "to herald its demise."[59] He concludes that the Dionysian outburst originates in the failure of Israeli society "to provide its young with a viable alternative ethos," and that in order to nurture "a countervailing cultural force," Israel needs a "new faith."[60]

Azure's attack on Zionism continued in a critique of one of its most important cultural manifestations: modern Hebrew literature. In his article "Towards a Hebrew Literature," Assaf Inbari differentiates "Hebrew literature" from "literature in Hebrew." He states that "almost none of the literature written in the Hebrew language in the twentieth century retained the Hebrew poetics." For him, Hebrew literature in its various genres, which was intertwined in the fabric of Jewish religious life down through the generations, is "historical, national, deed-based narrative prose." On the other hand, modern Hebrew literature — the child of the Zionist revolution — has broken this continuity and "is not historical but perceives time as immersed in the present; it is not national, but individualistic in content."

The "only significant exception" to this rule, Inbari maintains, is S. Y. Agnon, who was "the only author writing in the Hebrew language in the twentieth century who produced anything that can properly be called 'Hebrew' literature." It is not Agnon, however, Inbari continues, but Y. H. Brenner, whose "poetics can be understood as the precise opposite of those of the Hebrew narrative tradition," who is "the most widely emulated" model of Israeli authors. Current Hebrew literature, Inbari believes, is no more than "a shallow reflection" of prevailing trends in Western culture, and thus "we have consigned ourselves to self-destruction." He concludes by calling upon "those who hold Jewish cultural identity dear" to renew links "with the Hebrew literary heritage," which is the pre-Zionist one.[61] Inbari adds, then, a cultural-

historical dimension to Sagiv's criticism of Zionism: the failure of Zionism to deal with the present crisis of Israeli society is rooted in its core, in particular in its rupture of continuity with the Jewish past.

Yoram Hazony, president of the Shalem Center, proffers an overall explanation for the failure of Zionism and a basis for a "new faith." In his article "'The Jewish State' at 100," he identifies the principal cause of the failure of Zionism in its retreat from the original Herzlian vision, which combined conservatism, idealism, private enterprise and Jewish religion. After Herzl's premature death, Hazony explains, his opponents took over, and Zionism was realized by the Labor movement, which under the influence of Russian Marxism combined materialism, socialism and statism. In contrast to Herzl's idealism, it placed its emphasis on "practical work" — building farms and factories — as a means of creating a "new Jew." The State of Israel, as born in 1948, "reflected Labor's priorities, not Herzl's — and still [it] does." The Labor movement under Ben-Gurion's leadership advanced its materialistic agenda, using "the constant threat of imminent war" to create a sense of collective mission. When finally the military tension eased, Labor Zionism, like Soviet Communism, collapsed, leaving an ideological vacuum. The waning of Zionism began after Ben-Gurion's retirement in 1963, which was perceived by his rivals as an opportunity to replace the Zionist mission with the desire for "normality," manifested by "peace abroad and personal self-fulfillment at home" — the origins of post-Zionism.[62] Hazony's interpretation enables him to appear, on the one hand, as the guardian of "true" idealistic Zionist ideology and, on the other hand, as the most pointed critic of historical Zionism, all of whose practical, "materialistic" manifestations he negates.

After the degeneration of Labor Zionism, Hazony continues, "the only Zionist idea with any kick left in it was the yeshiva nationalism ... and the religious-nationalist leadership," which emerged after 1967, as the dominant power of the Israeli right. "Yeshiva nationalism," however, failed to delineate a new agenda and became "eerily reminiscent of Ben-Gurionism" and its political message and methods. No wonder that under its hegemony the Israeli right has turned into a "new Mapai." Yeshiva nationalism, according to Hazony, did not transcend the Labor paradigm and did not constitute a real alternative to Labor Zionism. Absurdly "the materialistic concerns" that have been at the heart of Labor — Jewish settlement, Jewish immigration, military service, and even farming — remained virtually unchanged."[63] In order to revive the Israeli right, Hazony and the Shalem Center promote Jewish-American neoconservatism as a real alternative that will replace the one offered by yeshiva nationalism. Hazony emphasizes that "the crucial war is not being waged over the territories of Judea and Samaria and the Oslo Accord, but between conservatism and liberalism."[64] Thus, he turns the territorial and

strategic emphases of the national-rightist agenda into values that draw their justification from the neo-conservative *Weltanschauung*.

Hazony's critical analysis of the Zionist project certainly reflects a prevailing sentiment among the right, even if it is not the hegemonic one. In his article, "In Praise of Post-Zionism," in the settlers' journal *Nekudah*, Yair Shapira offers a similar analysis. He rejects the idea that gained a certain popularity in national-religious circles after Yitzhak Rabin's assassination, that they had to come to terms with the mainstream of Labor Zionism in order to fight the spread of post-Zionism together. By contrast, Shapira calls on the disciples of Rabbi Kook — yeshiva nationalism, in Hazony's term — to draw closer to the post-Zionists "in order to save their souls from the affliction of the guardians of the corpse of historical Zionism," that is, Labor Zionism. The affinity of yeshiva nationalism and post-Zionism is based, according to Shapira, on their mutual opposition to Zionist materialism and to the desire to be normal "like all other nations." Against Zionist materialism and normality, Shapira emphasizes, Judaism is characterized by spiritualism, particularism and alienness. The Jewish people developed in the diaspora, where its culture and values were created, and therefore he rejects the Zionist negation of the diaspora. He stresses that the only way for the Jews in Israel to retain their Jewish particularism is, paradoxically, by rejecting the developing normality and nurturing the sense of being strangers even there. In Israel, the Jewish people has "to continue to cling to its trait as a wandering people ... to continue to be in exile in its redemption." In contrast to the classic Zionist stand, which holds that it is not enough to take the Jews out of the diaspora, but that the diaspora mentality has to be taken out of the Jews, Shapira believes that while Jewish continuity indeed necessitates taking the Jews out of the diaspora, diasporic alienness should not be taken away from the Jews.[65] Establishing the diaspora as a positive situation is essential to the post-Zionist argumentation, which presents diaspora Jewry as the ultimate "other," preceding the postmodern condition.[66]

Hazony, like Shapira, shows empathy with post-Zionism as a negation of materialist, Ben-Gurionist Zionism. He even argues that post-Zionism and yeshiva nationalism are closer, each in its own way, to the spirit of the ideas of Herzl than is Labor Zionism:

> Far from being a sign of advancing materialism, as is often claimed among Zionist diehards, the turn towards Post-Zionist values in Israel after Ben-Gurion was precisely the opposite: It presented the search for something higher on the part of many intelligent, very spiritual Jews, for whom trying to persist on the inspiration of Labor Israel's actually rather mediocre physicality meant suffocation. ... Among today's Post-Zionists, there are competing conceptions as to what must be done to satisfy the longings of many Israelis to freedom, creativity,

intellectualism, constitutionalism, internationalism, and a touch of universalism — all things which Labor Zionism, in its tribalism, provincialism and materialism, had never been able to provide.[67]

Hazony continues:

Virtually alone on the Israeli political landscape, Post-Zionists and others on the New Left have made conscientious, if often mistaken, efforts to make Israel a country in which the needs of the individual can find satisfaction — while cultural apolitical figures identified with Jewish nationalism have consistently opposed these efforts, believing that it is the introduction of "American" norms which has caused the destruction of the collective Jewish-national identity. But the nationalists have tragically misunderstood the revolution they were witnessing: Post-Zionism is not a consequence of increasing individual freedom; it is a reaction to decades of intentional suffocation of the individual by state socialism. That is, Post-Zionism is caused not by freedom, but by bondage. It is the abuse of the individual by the Labor Zionist state, which has brought about the disgust for the Jewish national idea.[68]

Hazony accepts, then, the core of the post-Zionists' criticism: Zionism as realized — by left, right and the religious — involved collectivism and oppression of individualism; the collective nature of Zionism, in all its various forms, left no outlet for Israelis of conscience, thus encouraging in reaction the development of post-Zionism. Nevertheless, unlike the post-Zionists, Hazony does not negate Zionism in principle, because of its collectivist and oppressive nature, but presents an alternative model of an individualistic Zionism. In contrast to Labor Zionism — and its yeshiva nationalism version — which in his interpretation was based on the state, he presents what might be called "market Zionism," a capitalistic society built on an individualistic ethos and free market, with minimum state regulation. Like the post-Zionists, Hazony's market Zionism reproaches historical Zionism; unlike them, he tries to enlist the term "Zionism" into the service of an opposing ideology rooted in the Israeli right. In order to impart historical legitimization to his market Zionism, Hazony turns it into Herzl's "true vision." Employing an idiosyncratic interpretation, Hazony distorts Herzl's Zionism, forcing it into the contours of American Jewish neoconservatism.[69] He transforms Herzl from a radical who believed in social justice and public regulation of the economy and society into a conservative who combines free-market capitalism and Jewish religiosity in the spirit of the Judeo-conservatives in the US.[70]

Azure promotes the neoconservative ideology as a model for the Israeli right. In his article "On the political stupidity of the Jews," Irving Kristol, one

of the leading Judeo-conservatives, rejects Israeli Zionist mainstream political thought because its concepts derive from "romantic nationalism" in Central and Eastern Europe and "from the European Left." In contrast he proposes "Western political conservatism" as a basis for Israeli political thought. Reconciling Adam Smith with Edmund Burke, the ideologues of a free-market and a conservative society, Kristol emphasizes that Western conservatism perceives tradition and religion as indispensable for the orderly function of a free-market economy, and he urges Israelis to adopt this ideological combination. Like another ideologue of the free-market economy, Friedrich Hayek — whose thinking the Shalem Center and Azure work to propagate in Israel — Kristol criticizes the "universalist utopianism that characterized the Enlightenment," which strove to construct society in accordance with a universally valid program.[71]

In contrast to Hazony's and Azure's stand, however, revolutionary radicalism, offspring of the "universalist utopianism that characterized the Enlightenment," is the conceptual basis of Herzlian Zionism. As expressed in his writings, in Altneuland in particular, Herzl perceived Zionism as "social engineering" in the spirit of utopian socialism, which by planned and regulated economy aspires to construct "a new society" that will constitute an alternative to capitalism with its failures and evils.[72] Zionism, in Herzl's view, was a rebellion against traditional Jewish society — characterized by the rule of the rabbis and the wealthy, middleman economics, fear of the non-Jew, and messianism — in an effort to modernize, normalize and politicize Jewish existence. In place of the traditional religious ethos, Herzl's Zionism offered the Jews radical, social utopianism, namely a conscious construction of their economics, society and culture, as well as reconciliation with the Gentile world.[73] Azure and Hazony, in contrast, come out against the Zionist radical-utopian ethos and, instead, advance a conservative ethos that combines competitive capitalism with Jewish traditionalism.

On the face of it, Azure's right post-Zionism is focused mainly on criticizing the way that Zionism was realized in Israel; in a deeper sense, however, it is based on a principled rejection of the essential foundations of the prevalent Zionist idea: rebellion against the Jewish past, the politicization of the Jews, the creation of a model welfare state, the separation of Jewish nationalism and religion, the normalization of Jewish relations with the non-Jewish world, and the secularization of Hebrew culture. Right post-Zionism acknowledges only the Zionist principle of Jewish sovereignty, while working to neutralize the effect of its social-radicalism on Israeli society, in order to adapt it to the agenda of the "new conservatism."

Left and right post-Zionism do, though, share a common ground: both reject Zionism as a basis for Israeli collective identity, whether for "civil" reasons on the left or for "Jewish" reasons on the right. Both are of the opinion

that the "old" Zionism — Labor Zionism and national-(religious) Zionism alike — is in the process of dissolution, losing its hegemony as the organizing idea of the Israeli public sphere. Against the background of their agreement on "the end of Zionism," the post-Zionists disagree on a worthy substitute: the left post-Zionists perceive the dissolution of Zionism with its oppressive nature as an emancipatory process and, therefore, reject its replacement with any other organizing project. Right post-Zionists, in contrast, consider the withering of Zionism an unavoidable consequence of its limited Jewish horizon and of its historical subordination to the hegemony of the left; they point to the need for "a new faith," whose basis is to be supplied by neoconservatism grounded on a commitment to Jewish heritage.

Right and left post-Zionism, each in its own way, struggle against the radical-collectivist ethos of Zionism, which serves as a source of legitimization for the regulation of the economy, society and culture in constructing a "new society," a "new human being" and a "new Jew." Right and left post-Zionism are inspired by opposing intellectual traditions and define themselves by means of rival ideologies; at the same time, however, in the tradition of the encounter between political extremes that sustain each other — like that between the right and postmodernism in general — they are potential political partners. Both oppose the project of Enlightenment, which they view as totalitarian and oppressive, although the left adopts the postmodern criticism of the Enlightenment, whereas the right attacks it in arguments taken from conservative thinking. Both make use of the category of "the Jew" in order to dismantle Israeli collective identity as defined by "the Zionist." The left sees the dissolution of Zionist collectivism as the first step in transforming Israel from an "ethno-democracy" and even a Jewish "ethnocracy" into a multicultural, universalist democracy; whereas the right uses "the Jew" to replace Zionism with an alternative "more Jewish" collective identity.

Both ideologies employ arguments from the arsenal of the politics of identity to undermine the hegemony of Labor Zionism and its offspring: left post-Zionism supports the struggles for the recognition of the "others" of Israeli society and attacks what it perceives as the primordial Jewish nature of Zionism; right post-Zionism criticizes the "non-Jewish" nature of Israeli politics and culture, and in adopting Samuel P. Huntington's paradigm of the "clash of civilizations"[4] encourages Jewish primordialism as the basis for its "new faith." Both view the collectivism that characterizes Zionism as a source of oppression and prefer free-market capitalism to the regulating force of the state. Whereas right post-Zionism supports capitalism, which it presents as a kind of "natural law," left post-Zionism opposes state intervention and capitalism alike; however, it supports privatization as an emancipatory step, since it perceives the state's power of coercion to be a greater menace than that of a capitalist free market.

Post-Zionism and the Privatization of Israeli Collective Memory

Left and right post-Zionism repeatedly present themselves as an opposition to the hegemonic Zionist establishment in Israel and as a challenge and alternative to its values. Most commentators have accepted this claim in discussing the factors that account for the rise of post-Zionism — mainly the left version — and its success in redelineating the contours of Israeli discourse. A closer look at the way in which post-Zionism acquired its central public standing, however, shows that this oppositionist stance is fictitious, no more than a means to arousing public interest. In fact, the ascendancy of Post-Zionism is due to cooperating with parties found at the very heart of the establishment. Overcoming the oppositionist appearance of post-Zionism and examining its relationship with the Israeli establishment are, then, preconditions for analyzing the factors that enabled its ascendancy.

The debate over the new historiography and critical sociology began as a dispute within Israeli academe, which has since continued to be the principal arena for discussing various issues pertaining to the post-Zionist agenda. Contrary to the myth cultivated by the post-Zionists, who present themselves as an opposition to the academic establishment, they were, in fact co-opted by it. As part of the acceptance of postmodernist concepts in universities and as part of the normal succession of generations, researchers with post-Zionist views gradually began to occupy a central place in the academic establishment and to define a new orthodoxy.[75] This, paradoxically, may suggest the possibility that Post-Zionism was in effect assisting establishment interests.

An important role in propagating post-Zionist ideas has been played by the Van Leer Institute in Jerusalem, a semi-governmental institution that serves as one of the main channels for the flow of ideas from academe to the public at large and has a dominant role in setting Israel's intellectual agenda.[76] Yehuda Elkana, who was a professor at Tel Aviv University and headed the Van Leer Institute during the emergence of post-Zionism, delineated its ideas back in 1988.[77] During Elkana's term as director, the Van Leer Institute supplied a range of forums for the dissemination of post-Zionist ideas which were presented as the application of the postmodern critique to Israeli reality. The most prominent of these forums was the journal *Theory and Criticism*, published jointly by the Van Leer Institute and the Ha-Kibbutz Ha-Meuhad Publishing House. The latter, one of the leading publishers in Israel, is identified with the Labor-Zionist establishment. Under the auspices of these two agents of the Israeli establishment, *Theory and Criticism* became the leading forum in crystallizing the post-Zionist ideology.

Another agent that played a crucial role in the wide dissemination and rapid acceptance of post-Zionism was the Hebrew daily, *Ha'aretz*, which constitutes the unofficial forum for the business, professional and cultural

establishments in Israel. *Ha'aretz* opened its columns to post-Zionist ideas and gave them thorough and lengthy exposure.[78] As a result of what can be seen as editorial policy, the various sections of the newspaper became a forum for protracted polemics on post-Zionist criticism, thereby positioning it at the center of public debate. The status of *Ha'aretz* in the Israeli media endowed post-Zionist criticism with the establishment's seal of approval, legitimacy and mantle of dignity, which eased its acceptance by significant sectors of the Israeli middle class. Following *Ha'aretz*, other media, from TV through the popular dailies to the local press, soon made the post-Zionist debate the focus of cultural and political discussion.[79]

Right post-Zionism, too, has a close connection with the establishment. The Shalem Center is intimately connected with the former prime minister Binyamin Netanyahu's "ideological-financial infrastructure." Netanyahu himself had close relations with Hazony, and high-ranking officials in his administration had been involved in the various activities of the Shalem Center prior to their governmental appointments. These ties continued after Netanyahu took over, and the Center's ideas on strategic as well as economic issues were embraced by his administration and individual ministers, on both a formal and an informal level.[80] At the same time, the permanent membership of anti-Zionist, ultra-Orthodox parties in the coalition and in the government transformed Right-wing criticism of Zionism — now voiced by ministers, Knesset members and state officials — from an opposition stand into a legitimate establishment position.

There is, then, an intriguing gap between the critical rhetoric employed by the post-Zionists and the current oppositionist image they acquired, on the one hand, and the fact that they have acted from within and through the strongholds and agencies of the Israeli establishment to the point at which post-Zionism may be seen as an offspring of this establishment, on the other. The post-Zionists fostered this oppositionist image by attacking Labor Zionism, which was a central agent of the Zionist ethos and the hub of the Israeli establishment until the mid-1970s. Since then, however, the hegemony of Labor Zionism has declined, to be taken over by a new neoliberal establishment, which challenged the earlier collective values and created far-reaching changes in economic, social, political and cultural power relations in Israel. One of the main goals of this neoliberal policy was the privatization of the public sector of the economy and of social services, which culminated in the gradual dissolution of the universal welfare state, an increase in class differences overlapping ethnic lines, and increased political, social and cultural fragmentation and sectorialization. While attacking the declining Labor Zionism, the spread of post-Zionism came about, in fact, in the context of the rise of neoliberalism, sectorialization and privatization in Israel and served as an agent in promoting them.

Although the privatization project, with its neoliberal ideology and rhetoric, was part of a global trend, in Israel it has encountered special difficulty: the Zionist ethos and the Israeli collective memory, which served as a sort of "secular religion," had a strong collective basis that contrasted the notion of privatization. The basic idea of Zionism was to create a new Jewish national collectivity based on social solidarity, which had clear socialist inclinations in its hegemonic Herzlian and Labor versions. The Zionist collectivist ethos was manifested in the nation-building project and the melting-pot ideology. This ethos became a real force in Israeli life through state regulation of the economy, the dominant role of the public sector, the social services provided by the welfare state, and a high degree of equality in income distribution. Since the 1980s, though, in its efforts to advance the privatization project — and mainly to dissolve the welfare state — the emerging neoliberal elite found the secular religion of social solidarity, encapsulated in the Zionist ethos and Israeli collective memory, as one of its main obstacles. The way to override this obstacle was to undermine the Zionist ethos by creating an alternative, post-Zionist collective memory.

Against the background of the struggle waged by the new elite to advance its neoliberal agenda and in particular the privatization of the services of the welfare state, post-Zionism revealed itself as an effective agent for deconstructing the collective mainstream and the Labor Zionist ethos. Right post-Zionism advanced this agenda very clearly. Its attack on the Zionist mainstream is focused on a denial of an essential element of the Zionist idea: its social radicalism, namely, its striving to establish "a new society" based on non-capitalist economic and social foundations. Right post-Zionism sharply criticizes the socialist tendencies of historical Zionism and presents neoconservatism as an alternative ethos to the collectivism that brought about the decline of Labor Zionism and yeshiva nationalism. As a substitute for Labor Zionism, right post-Zionism offered market Zionism, which combined ethnic and religious particularism along with a privatized economy and society. Left post-Zionism advances the privatization project, employing the whole arsenal of postmodern criticism: it attacks the clear modernist and social-democratic nature of Zionism and presents it as an oppressive force, the emancipation from which can be achieved only by the dissolution of its collectivist structure and by the privatization of Israeli identity.

The new historiography fits into the privatization project of left and right post-Zionism through the privatization of its collective memory. As, contrary to the appearance, the goal of the new historiography is not historical research but the construction of an alternative Israeli collective memory, it strives to delegitimize the Zionist narrative, which serves as a mental block to privatization, and to proffer a privatized memory instead. Methodologically, the privatization of Israeli memory is carried out through attempting, in the

tradition of postmodern relativism, to replace the hegemonic collective memory with a number of conflicting and competing narratives and memories. This trend is a reflection of the process of splintering society into a multiplicity of contesting identity groups and alienated individuals, and reproducing them as such. Moreover, undermining the professionalism and reliability of academic historiography integrates well into the privatization ethos. The relativization that informs the attack of the new historiography transforms historical research from a scholarly discipline into a kind of consumer commodity, modeled to suit the changing taste of the prevailing fashion and its clients.

Ideologically, the privatization of Israeli memory is carried out by challenging the morality of Zionism, whose justice constitutes one of the basic assumptions of Israeli collective memory. Employing a variety of accusations — such as the abandonment of European Jewry during the Holocaust, the expulsion of the Palestinians in 1948, the oppression of Mizrahim etc. — post-Zionism strives to make Zionist history loathsome and abhorrent in order to present Israeli collective memory as preserving, even glorifying, injustice and atrocities towards Jews and Arabs alike. Similarly, positing the Zionist establishments as immoral and oppressive by their very nature is intended to delegitimize the Israeli collective they lead. The only choice left for moral Israelis is to dissociate themselves from the collective that is defined by such a memory and to privatize themselves. Thus the privatized memory serves as an antithesis to any form of Israeli collectivity and social solidarity, obviating the crystallization of an Israeli collective identity and calling for the dismantling of the existing one.

The alternative collective memory constructed by the post-Zionists is a kind of purification rite, absolving the individual Israeli from responsibility for the group guilt through the privatization of memory. The starting point of the alternative memory constructed by the new historiography, like its empathy, is Jews as individuals alienated from the Israeli collective and hostile to the "new Jew," which is the cornerstone of Zionist ideology. In the same way, the heroes of the new historiography are the "victims" of Zionism, be they diaspora Jews, Holocaust survivors, Mizrahim or Palestinians, whose victimization is proof of the immorality of Zionism. Challenging the hegemonic Israeli memory, the new historians strive to construct a new collective memory that is focused on the individual Jew who struggles to preserve his or her individualism, a struggle that fits and sustains the neoliberal privatization revolution.

Contextualizing post-Zionism shows it to be a false critique. It is not an application of critical theories to Israeli reality, as it claims to be, but a neoliberal ideology, masquerading in angry rhetoric that works through the channels of the establishment to advance and reaffirm the privatization of Israeli Society.

NOTES

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65 Yair Shapira, "Be-shevah ha-post-tziyonut" (In Praise of Post-Zionism), *Nekudah*, No. 204 (April 1997), pp. 42–3.

66 Amon Raz-Krakotzkin, "Galut mitokh ribonut"; Daniel Boyarin and Jonathan Boyarin "Ein moledet le-Yisrael."

67 Yoram Hazony, "'The Jewish State' at 100," pp. 27–8.

68 Ibid., pp. 36–7.

69 Ibid., pp. 21–4, 35–7.

70 Joseph Adler, *The Herzl Paradox: Political, Social and Economic Theories of a Realist* (New York, 1962); U. Zilbersheid, "Hazono ha-hevrati-kalkali shel Herzl" ("Herzl's Social and Economic Vision), *Iyunim Bitkumat Israel*, Vol. 10 (2000) pp. 614–40.

71 Irving Kristol, "On the Political Stupidity of the Jews," *Azure*, No. 8 (1999), pp. 49, 51–4, 62–3.

72 See note 68 above; Theodore Herzl, *Altneuland: Old New Land* (Haifa, 1960).

73 Daniel Gutwein, "Utopiyah ve-hagshamah: Antishemiyut ve-shinu'i atzmi 'ke-'ko'ah meni'a' ba-hagut ha-tziyonit ha-mukdemet shel Herzl" (Utopia and Realization: Anti-Semitism and Self-Transformation as a 'Driving Force' in Herzl's Early Zionist Thought), *Ha-Tziyonut*, No. 19 (1995), pp. 7–29.

74 Samuel Huntington, "Hitnagshut ha-tzivilizatziyot?" (The Clash of Civilizations?), *Azure*, No. 9 (2000), pp. 129–57.

75 Neri Livneh, "Aliyatah u-nefilatah shel ha-post-tziyonut" (The Rise and Fall of Post-Zionism), *Ha'aretz*, weekend supplement, 29 September 2001.

76 The status of the Van Leer Institute is defined in a special law, "Law of the Israeli Center for the Advance of Human Culture, 1958."

77 Yehuda Elkana, "Bi-zkhut ha-shikhehah" (In Defense of Forgetting), *Ha'aretz*, 2 February 1988.

78 Alon Kadish, "'Ha-historiyah' ve/o historiyah" ("The History" and/or History), *Davar Rishon*, 8 December 1988. After describing the role that *Ha'aretz* played in propagating the new historiography, he notes that these ideas suit the self-image of *Ha'aretz* as it is fostered by its leading columnists.

79 See, for example, Daniel Gutwein, "Hafratat ha-shoah," pp. 28, 49.

80 Nadav Haetzni, "Makhon Shalem."