

The Holocaust in Israeli Political Culture: Four Constructions and Their Consequences

Editor's Note: This Article is Followed by Four Comments and a Response by Ian Lustick

Ian S. Lustick¹

Received: 14 March 2016 / Accepted: 23 March 2017 / Published online: 24 April 2017
© Springer Science+Business Media Dordrecht 2017

Abstract The collective memory of the Holocaust among Israeli Jews has featured competition among four related but distinct constructions: Zionist Proof-text; Wasting Asset; Object Lesson for safeguarding human rights; and Template for Jewish life. This paper will analyze this competition and the implications of the apparent victory of the Template. While there is a sequence to the changing prominence of these different versions of the Holocaust, each version has enjoyed periods of relative success since World War II. In recent decades, however, the Holocaust as a Template for Jewish Life has emerged as ascendant. Throughout, competition among the four constructions was driven by parochial and temporary political interests and by the unintended consequences of dissatisfactions associated with any one of them. My analysis will trace this competition and those consequences, using them to explain the extreme and highly particular features of current Israeli Jewish collective memory of the Holocaust. The paper concludes with an assessment of the implications of the hegemonic status of this version of the Holocaust for appreciating Israel's contemporary political predicament.

Keywords Israel · Holocaust · Political culture · Collective memory · Hegemony · Constructivism

✉ Ian S. Lustick
ilustick@sas.upenn.edu

¹ Department of Political Science, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA, USA

Introduction: ‘The Holocaust is Not What it Used to Be’¹

In early March 2014, General Benjamin “Benny” Gantz, chief of staff of the Israel Defense Forces, responded to a massive rally in Jerusalem by ultra-Orthodox Jews protesting government efforts to conscript their young men into the army. In a widely publicized meeting, Gantz told dozens of ultra-Orthodox soldiers that the duty of Jews to serve in the Israeli army springs from the fact that Nazis would not have cared about their level of observance. “In Auschwitz, they did not differentiate between us; we all went to the crematoria regardless of who wore a *kippah* and who did not wear a *kippah*, and they did not distinguish between those with beards and those without beards” (Newman 2015).

In March 2015, Israeli President Reuven Rivlin repeated Gantz’s point—that a defining element of Jewish life in the contemporary world is that all Jews are threatened equally by Nazi-style genocidal hostility. Speaking in Jerusalem on Holocaust Martyrs and Heroes Remembrance Day, Israel’s head of state spoke on behalf of the Jews of Israel to the 6 million Jewish dead memorialized at Yad Vashem, the World Holocaust Memorial Center. “Today, 70 years after the liberation of the death camps, we stand before you and we swear an oath and promise. ‘All of us, each and every one of us, have a number tattooed on their arm’” (Rivlin 2015).

In February 2013, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu addressed the Jewish Agency Board of Governors, offering one of his many warnings that Iran’s nuclear program poses the same threat to Jews in the early 21st century that the Nazis posed in the mid-20th century. The challenge of Iran is the threat that Jews faced during the Holocaust, and has always faced, he said. That threat grows out of

...the millennial desire of the enemies of the Jews, fired by Jew hatred in antiquity and medieval times and in modern times, to eradicate the Jewish people. That has not changed. It may have taken a back seat for a few decades after the Holocaust; it was politically improper, but it has come back with full force, in the nascent Islamist anti-Semitism, the anarchist left and that strange bond between them (Netanyahu 2013).

These three depictions of the fundamental relationship between Jews and gentiles—a relationship that is based on the threat of annihilation epitomized by the Holocaust—are dramatic and extreme. But they are also thoroughly unexceptional and fully representative of how the Holocaust is understood and imagined, both collectively and individually, by the vast majority of Israeli Jews. This powerful, standardized, and pervasive evocation of the Nazi destruction of European Jewry as marking what it means to be Jewish is what I will refer to as the construction of the Holocaust as a “Template for Jewish Life.” I shall argue that this is the construction of the Holocaust that has gained hegemonic status within Israel, rendering it, from a cultural point of view, as the “natural” and “obvious” way to understand and remember the catastrophe. Along with the exhaustion of Zionist ideology and the indirect but suffocating influence of the Israel lobby, this is one of three reinforcing

¹ Comment by a Yad Vashem employee, June of 2014.

elements in the constellation of belief and power that dominates the State of Israel, so constraining its leaders and institutions as to explain both Israel's failure to embrace negotiated routes to resolve the Israel–Palestine problem and the likely demise of the Zionist project as a whole.²

But to assert the importance of the hegemonic institutionalization of the Holocaust as “a template for Jewish life” requires showing that it is indeed a construct, and not the Holocaust itself. In this article, I will analyze the competition in Israel among four related but distinctive constructions of the Holocaust.³ I will consider them in an order corresponding to the sequence of their period of greatest prominence, even though key elements of each can be found as early as the mid-1940s, and each, still, in some fashion, exerts influence. I will suggest that the Holocaust is simply too immense an event to be captured, mapped, ordered, and exploited by any one construction of it. That fact helps to explain what I shall show is the powerful role played by the unintended consequences of attempts to promote particular views of the Holocaust in the dialectical process of this competition. I shall show that the ultimate result of these processes has been the ascendance of the view of the Holocaust as a template for Jewish life—the most extreme and most crippling of these views.

Given the sensitivity of this topic and the danger of misinterpretation, I want to stress that analyzing constructions of the Holocaust is not, in any way, a form of the despicable practice of “Holocaust denial”—the rejection of the historical facticity of the mass murder of 6 million Jews by the Nazis during the time of the Third Reich. However, analyzing alternative Holocaust constructions, as they have shaped collective memory, does represent a break from an earlier approach to the legacy of the Holocaust, which imagines the mechanism of its influence as akin to the direct effects of trauma. For example, in his very widely read 1971 book *The Israelis: Founders and Sons*, Amos Elon describes the Holocaust as “a basic trauma of Israeli society.”⁴ Its effects are “impossible to exaggerate” (Elon 1972, 259). This unbroken gaze toward the Holocaust, he writes,

...accounts for the prevailing sense of loneliness...the obsessive suspicions, the towering urge for self-reliance...the fears and prejudices, passions, pains, and prides, that spin the plot of public life. The lingering memory of the holocaust makes Arab threats of annihilation sound plausible...The trauma of the holocaust leaves an indelible mark on national psychology, the tenor and content of public life, the conduct of foreign affairs, on politics, education, literature, and the arts (260).

² This is a summary statement of the argument of the larger book project of which this article is a part. For discussion of the implications of the template for Jewish life Holocaust construction for Israeli foreign policy, see Lustick in Brenner and Nadell (forthcoming).

³ My choice of these four is a function of sheer empirics and a judgment about parsimony. They do not form a logically closed set of possibilities. One or more of these four could be divided into subtypes by researchers who believe they could thereby gain better analytic leverage over patterns of continuity and change in Israeli political culture.

⁴ For an example of the enthusiasm with which this book was greeted when it was published, see Robert Alter's characterization of the volume as “uniquely valuable...for its searching portrait of the classical Zionist character and the temper of Israel today...” (Alter 1971).

Elon's account of the prominence of the Holocaust in the life and culture of Israeli Jews is fundamentally correct. We may note, from the fact that the term was not yet commonly capitalized when his book appeared, that it came to assume an even more powerful place in the culture and political imagination of the country than it occupied in the early 1970s. Yet Elon's presentation wrongly suggests that the impact of this "basic trauma" was expressed within Israel immediately, profoundly, and uninterrupted, and that the meaning of the disaster remained constant over the first 23 years of Israeli statehood. In fact, it is not the event itself, so much as the collective memory of it that has so powerfully shaped Israeli politics and policy. In other words, to understand Israel's present and the forces that are determining its future, we need to appreciate not so much what happened to Jews in Europe between 1933 and 1945, but what has come to be believed by Jews—especially Israeli Jews—about themselves and the world they inhabit, as a result of the way the events of those awful years have been culturally and psychologically absorbed.

Elon was writing in the immediate aftermath of two wars: Israel's Six Day War of June 1967 and the 1969–1970 War of Attrition. The first of these conflicts was preceded by the agonizing, three-week "waiting period" in May 1967, during which many Israeli Jews imagined themselves to be the imminent victims of a campaign of extermination. As many analysts have noted, this experience (reinforced in 1973 by the heavy isolation and heavy losses of the Yom Kippur War) encouraged many Israelis to appreciate and even identify with the suffering, fear, and helplessness of European Jewry exposed to the overwhelming might of Nazi Germany. Indeed, in the years that were the basis for Elon's analysis, the Holocaust had become something quite different from what it had been for Israelis two decades or even one decade earlier. During the first two decades of the state's existence, writes Elon, "...the Holocaust actually played a marginal role in public life" (Don-Yehiya 1993, 139).

Israelis officially observed the Holocaust Martyrs and Heroes Remembrance Day for the first time in 1959. But for many years after that, Israeli prime ministers and presidents never thought to speak publicly on that occasion. In recent decades, by contrast, no observance of the Holocaust passes without a speech by the prime minister, the president, or both. Indeed, hardly a week goes by without a leading member of the government or an important cultural figure speaking dramatically about the Holocaust or invoking its memory in order to strengthen an argument, reinforce collective solidarity, or comment on a policy. However, it is not only the salience of the Holocaust, but also the very substance of Israeli society's collective memory of the Holocaust that has varied over time. Indeed, its substance has varied in much more complex ways than has the deepening of its salience.

Israeli consciousness of the Holocaust and what that catastrophic event actually means to the Jews of the state have been shaped by four distinctive, recurring, and competitive constructions of it. I shall refer to these constructions in four ways: "Zionist proof-text," "wasting asset," "human rights object lesson," and "template for Jewish life." Elements of each of these interpretive frames have been present since the last years of World War II, and are still present today. I shall argue that the last one—treating the Holocaust as a template for Jewish life in the world—has

largely supplanted the others and that, by the 1980s, it prevailed hegemonically, with immense consequences for Israeli society, culture, and politics.

Precisely because current images of the Holocaust as a template for Jewish life have, as I shall show, been so deeply institutionalized, so effectively naturalized as a matter of common sense, it may come as a shock for many to learn that the Israelis' view of the Holocaust nowadays is dramatically different from what they used to think of it. Contemporary Israel is marked unmistakably with "Holocaustia," by which I mean a universe of discourse based on the centrality in Jewish life of the Holocaust, its effects, and memories of it. Few Israelis ever imagine it as noteworthy—not to say, perhaps, a bad idea—that both Israeli students and foreign dignitaries are required to make repeated visits to Holocaust museums; that large chunks of history curricula and matriculation examinations are dedicated to the topic; that thousands of Israeli students, soldiers, and politicians are pressed to make pilgrimages to extermination camps; and that evocations of the unique suffering of Jews in the Holocaust, the inhuman behavior of the Nazis, and the callous and hostile disregard of gentiles toward the destruction of European Jewry, are standard in the language of Israeli leaders.

Yet in the state's early years, the Holocaust was hardly visible in public life. Until the 1960s, textbooks in Israeli schools contained virtually no information on the topic (Schatzker, p. 468). Although the Knesset did pass the Holocaust and Ghetto Rebellion Memorial Day Law in 1951, the Israeli Parliament did not promulgate legislation to require and regularize its observance—the Holocaust Martyrs and Heroes Remembrance Day Law—until 1959. Not until the late 1990s did leaders of the state use this occasion for public appearances and major speeches on the topic. Yad Vashem, by far the most visited museum in Israel, was not commissioned until 1953—and then, in part, prompted by news of a plan to establish such a center in Paris. Prior to the construction of Yad Vashem, Israel's only memorial site dedicated to the Holocaust was a tiny cellar, or chamber, on Mount Zion, near the (highly disputed) "Tomb of King David" where Ministry of Religion officials had established a small and religiously themed collection of relics (Bar 2005; Don-Yehiya 1993, 140–141).

The point of noting these absences is not to argue that the Holocaust's effect on the new state and its population was minimal—far from it. In the first years of the state, approximately three hundred and fifty thousand survivors comprised fully one-third of the Jewish population of the country. Rather, the point is that in Israel today, the public prominence of the Holocaust and the ways in which it is remembered, deployed in arguments, and used for guidance and inspiration are distinctive. This has been the consequence of very particular processes, policies, and choices. It may now be natural for most Jews, in Israel and in the diaspora, to experience the Holocaust as the single most important focus for thinking about their place in the world and their responsibilities as Jews. But it was not always so. My argument is that the particular content of Jewish Israeli collective memory of the Holocaust, its pervasiveness, and its intensity, has powerful effects on the political imagination of Israelis. This *idée fixe*, this destructive hegemony, is not the mark of the Holocaust, *per se*. It is rather the non-inevitable product of a dialectical struggle among competing projects for its mastery and exploitation. Remarkably, but

reflecting the intractable immensity of the Holocaust itself, this complex process has been driven more by the unintended consequences of the promotion of particular constructions than by the purposes for which they were advanced.

The Holocaust as Zionist Proof-Text

Because of the genocidal scale and industrial form of the crimes committed against Jews during the Holocaust, it was exceedingly difficult for anyone to believe news reports as they trickled out of German-occupied areas in the early 1940s. For Zionist leaders, the challenge of reacting to these reports was especially complex. On the one hand, the Ben-Gurionist and Revisionist streams that had dominated the movement since the 1930s emphasized that, to survive, the Jewish people needed a state. A cruel and fundamental truth was that the Nazis had been able to accomplish the destruction of European Jewry by first stripping their victims of their citizenship, either by destroying the states in which they lived, or by changing the laws of those states (Arendt 1963, 115, 138, 162, 240). No feat of verbal or intellectual agility was required to connect the absence of a state populated by and controlled by Jews with their awful fate, or to convince Jews the world over, including most of those who had staunchly opposed Jewish statehood, that if the disappearance of 6 million Jews made it more difficult to establish a strong Jewish state, it also made it more necessary. In this sense, the Holocaust was seen as a powerful validation of Zionism and, in particular, of statist Zionism. On the other hand, to build the kind of society it imagined, and the state, economy, and army it would need to survive in the Middle East against large and hostile Arab populations, Zionism counted on the desperation of millions of European Jews. After the Holocaust, those Jews were no more. The reservoir of what Zionists traditionally called “good human material” had been almost entirely destroyed. In this respect, news of the scale of the tragedy, as it began to be understood by Zionist leaders, plunged some into deep depression. Even to Zionist leaders Chaim Weizmann and David Ben-Gurion, it began to look as if, perhaps, Zionism had just come too late (Novick 2000, 70).

But Zionist leaders did not abandon their project—perhaps a testament more to their iron will than to their realism. Despite the nightmarish reports they were receiving and their moments of despair about the future, they continued disciplined work toward the objectives they had long pursued. The lodestone of their efforts was a Palestine-centrism that identified success for Jews as the success of the Zionist Yishuv (Jewish community in Palestine), and the failure of Zionism as the one and only completely devastating loss. As we shall see, mainstream Zionism paid a price for this single-mindedness—a price in excruciating questions posed subsequently about whether during the war Zionist leaders had acted in the best interests of the Jewish people they claimed to lead and about how Zionist leaders had addressed, characterized, remembered, and instrumentalized the Holocaust after it occurred. Could they have done a better job of searching for ways to rescue Jews caught in the Nazi maelstrom? Were they wrong to drastically limit Zionist funds allocated to rescue efforts? Could or should they have signaled the Jews of Europe about how best to impede Nazi plans for slaughter? Did they do right by selecting Zionist activists and other “good material” to save, when the opportunity arose to pick some over others? Was it correct to break the

international boycott of Nazi Germany in the 1930s by agreeing to pay Berlin for Jews to leave and transfer some of their wealth to Palestine? After the war, did they act properly by exploiting the plight of the displaced persons in order to gain political advantage for Zionism on the world stage?

These are painful questions posed by historians and by both Zionist and anti-Zionist Jews. Without appreciating how personal was the suffering of so many Israelis directly affected by the catastrophe, and therefore how raw were the emotions associated with public discussion of these matters, it is impossible to understand why contenders for power within the postwar Zionist movement and within the new state of Israel sought so vigorously to control the narrative of the relationship among Zionism, Zionists, and the Holocaust. For ambitious politicians active during World War II, it was crucial to pre-empt potentially devastating criticism of their role during the catastrophe by finding ways to “read” the Holocaust as proof of Zionism’s validity.

Despite their numbers, Holocaust survivors in the Israel of the 1950s did not organize as such or give effective public voice to their memories and losses. Their relative silence about what they had been through and what they had lost was based on two imperatives: social pressure not to burden a new and struggling society with more pain and despair than it could tolerate, and their own inclination to repress memories of agony and, often, of shame.⁵ The general absence of the Holocaust and appeals to its memory in public speech and Israeli political discourse in the 1950s echoed the silence of the survivors. In those years, when Israelis did talk about the Holocaust, the sentiments they expressed were less likely to be sympathy or sadness for the suffering of victims, and more likely to be denigration of their behavior. Raised on ferocious denunciations of diaspora Jewish culture by Chaim Nachman Bialik, Yosef Chaim Brenner, Micha Berdichevsky, Shaul Tchernichovsky, and other Zionist writers, poets, and politicians, it was natural for Zionists to explain the otherwise unexplainable by the correctness of Zionism’s analysis of the pathology of diaspora Jewish life and the failure of Jews to answer the Zionist call quickly enough. The victims, referred to derisively in Hebrew slang as “*sabon*” (“soap”), were said to have submitted without resistance to their oppressors, marching to their deaths “like sheep to the slaughter.”⁶

Thus, the fundamental elements of Zionist doctrine and culture, as they developed in Palestine, made it completely understandable that the first, most natural, and most powerful framing of the Holocaust by Zionist leaders and the rank-and-file in Palestine was as Zionist proof-text. These elements included the rejection of Jewish life in the diaspora as a viable form of existence, diagnosis of

⁵ On both the private inclinations of survivors and social pressure in these early years to remain silent, see Jackie Feldman, *Above the Death Pits, Beneath the Flag: Youth Voyages to Poland and the Performance of Israeli National Identity* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2008) 33; Novick, op. cit. 68–83; and Yechiel Klar, Noa Schori-Eyal, and Yonat Klar, “The ‘Never Again’ State of Israel: The emergence of the Holocaust as a core feature of Israeli identity and its four incongruent voices,” *Journal of Social Issues*, vol. 69, No. 1, 2013, 126.

⁶ On the prominence of this trope and metaphor, see, for example, Gutman (1988a, b) and Friedlander (1990, p. 6). The origins of the metaphor have been traced to arguments in favor of resistance to the Nazis made by ghetto fighters during World War II, who called upon the masses of Jews to refuse to go passively to their deaths, “like sheep to the slaughter” (Patt 2015).

Jewish ills as stemming from a craven and embarrassing unwillingness to fight rather than to negotiate or to flee, and the inevitability of persecution against Jews in any country other than their own.⁷ The Holocaust as Zionist proof-text meant interpreting it to show, conclusively, a number of things that Zionist ideology had long affirmed: life in the diaspora was too dangerous for Jews; Jewish statelessness was a recipe for disaster; neither prayer, acquiescence, nor flight could protect Jews as individuals; and only a Jewish state, wielding its own military and political power, and acting as a vehicle for the psychological and physical rehabilitation of the Jewish people, could offer a future to the Jewish people.

It was inevitable that during Hitler's time in power, Jewish leaders would be bitterly tested, and that in the aftermath of the catastrophe, they would be subjected to rigorous criticism. For my purposes, I need not weigh the moral responsibility or evaluate the policy effectiveness of the Zionist leadership. My aim is to examine the dramatic transformation in what the Holocaust came to represent for Jews after World War II, and to appreciate just how powerful, particular, and, I will argue, crippling is the image of the Holocaust that has taken root among Israeli Jews since the early 1980s. I must therefore look closely at the process by which Zionist leaders constructed the Holocaust—interpreting it within the categories and expectations of Zionist ideology, and thereby shaping its commitment to collective memory. That process begins, unavoidably, with David Ben-Gurion, and with the imperatives and concerns that dominated the thinking of the Zionist leadership during and immediately after World War II.

Ben-Gurion headed the Jewish Agency Executive Committee. He was not only the leader of the strongest wing of the Zionist movement—Labor Zionism or Socialist Zionism—but also the single most important leader in the movement as a whole. Ben-Gurion's role was so central and his personality so dominating in the period between the end of World War II and the end of his last premiership, 18 years later, that we are well advised to begin any analysis of the evolution of Israelis' collective memory of the Holocaust with him. Yet, in some respects, his reaction to the Holocaust was unusual. As noted, in the 1950s, Israeli political and military leaders did not participate in Holocaust memorial ceremonies and paid little attention to it. This was particularly true of Ben-Gurion (Don-Yehiya 1993, 140). Whatever his private anguish, he seems to have had an extraordinary aversion to speaking feelingly about the catastrophe, and he refused repeated entreaties to visit Yad Vashem, Israel's monument and museum to "remembrance and heroism." Indeed, he spoke only once during a Holocaust memorial event—this on the eve of his retirement in 1963.⁸ Ben-Gurion was a tactical Leninist. By this I mean that he

⁷ Although much different in substance, this is the same strategy used by some redemptionist-oriented rabbis and other Jewish fundamentalists, supporters of massive Jewish settlement of the West Bank, who have interpreted the Holocaust as "*hev'laiha Moshiach*" ("birth-pangs of the Messiah") (Kasher 1968, 32; Fisch 1978, 85).

⁸ Yechiam Weitz, "Even Ben-Gurion exploited the Holocaust when it suited him," *Haaretz*, October 31, 2013, <http://www.haaretz.com/opinion/premium-1.555402>. On idiosyncratic elements in Ben-Gurion's approach to the Holocaust, see Stauber (2007, 50–56). Shabtai Teveth's apologetic treatment of this topic in his book *Ben-Gurion and the Holocaust* effectively contradicts many of the characterizations the same author made in his earlier monumental biography (Teveth 1987).

combined an unwavering commitment to a long-term, revolutionary, and virtually unlimited objective with a ruthlessly pragmatic attitude toward the importance of making judgments about what could be accomplished under what conditions and a readiness to make whatever compromises or adaptations were necessary to keep moving toward his ultimate goals. But Ben-Gurion's substantive commitment was not to the end of capitalism and the victory of the proletariat. The premises of his Leninism were a rejection of Jewish life in the diaspora as unsustainable and the absolute need for a Jewish state in the Land of Israel.

To build that state, Ben-Gurion sought opportunities in every situation, no matter how unpromising, and then pushed each to its limit. He had immense confidence in his own shrewdness. His justifications for action always stressed foresight, feasibility, and the need to accept, without exaggerating, the constraints that the great powers could place on Zionist action. In his formulations, reality was never as rosy, or as dark, as his opponents of the moment held it to be. This meant that Ben-Gurion could never characterize himself as satisfied. But it also meant, as his admiring biographer, the late Shabtai Teveth, emphasized, that he could not allow himself to be publicly confused or discouraged. No positive turn of events justified a slackening of effort, and within every setback there was yet something to exploit. By taking the initiative, elements in the new situation, no matter how grim it might be, could be put to use. Even the most tragic event could be reframed and treated, in some way, as a "beneficial disaster" (Teveth 1987, 850–854). When it came to the Holocaust, the question, therefore, was how a disaster that could not be called "beneficial," yet be called upon for assistance in advancing the very Zionist objectives it had rendered both convincingly necessary and more difficult to achieve.

Although there is disagreement about who knew what and when about the horrific progress of the extermination of the Jews, there is no question that by the end of 1942, it was certain "that genocide was being carried out" (ibid., 848). Notwithstanding Ben-Gurion's indomitable will and his highly disciplined approach to politics, he was at least initially unable to fit the scale of the catastrophe within the categories of his political orientation. The most sympathetic interpretation of his prolonged and uncharacteristic silence in reaction to news about the Final Solution is that Ben-Gurion was no more capable than anyone else of thinking of a really effective response, one that would make a substantial difference to the fate of millions of European Jews. When he recovered from a period of paralysis and depression, his responses were often awkward. His apparent lack of feeling and the marginal success of his clandestine efforts to save Jews raised questions that his political opponents exploited in the 1950s.⁹

In his mostly hagiographical treatment of Ben-Gurion from his birth to the establishment of the State of Israel, Shabtai Teveth presents his hero's reaction to the Holocaust in unusually human, if not actually unflattering, terms. According to

⁹ Ben-Gurion's most notorious comment in this regard was made to the Mapai Central Committee in December of 1938. "Were I to know that the rescue of all German Jewish children could be achieved by their transfer to England and only half their number by transfer to Palestine, I would opt for the latter, because our concern is not only the personal interest of these children, but the historic interest of the Jewish people" (Teveth 1987, 855–856).

Teveth, during the two years prior to 1948, Ben-Gurion was “more concerned for the fate of the Yishuv than for that of European Jewry.” Until German Field Marshal Erwin Rommel’s defeat at El Alamein, Ben-Gurion and other Zionists were horrified at the prospect of a German occupation of Palestine, and they were planning a variety of desperate evacuation and defensive operations if that were to occur. His was the doctrinaire Zionist view that the fate of the Yishuv was fundamentally more important than that of European Jews, since besides their individual lives, Jews living in Palestine held the key to the future salvation of the Jewish people as a whole. Ben-Gurion’s response in the two years following the revelation of certain knowledge of the Final Solution “amounted to no more than speeches, wires, discussions, and participation in passing resolutions” (ibid. 1987, 847–848). The ongoing Holocaust, in other words, had no appreciable effect on his political activity. Absenting himself from the “Rescue Committee” set up by the Zionist leadership, Ben-Gurion, according to Teveth, “did not put the rescue effort above Zionist politics, and he did not regard it as a principal task demanding his personal leadership; he never saw fit to explain why, then or later” (ibid., 848).

Teveth poses this behavior as puzzling, since Ben-Gurion appears to have anticipated, if not the genocidal details of the Holocaust, at least the massive and violent threat to Jewish life in Europe actualized by the Nazis. Teveth’s solution to the puzzle is illuminating. Before the end of 1942—, that is, before the real purpose of the “deportations to the East” became known and before the scale of the *Einsatzgruppen*¹⁰ massacres was appreciated, Zionist leaders imagined what was happening as “large-scale pogroms.” With this schema in place, they believed that, as horrible as it was, and despite the possible loss of millions of Jews, there still would remain millions more Jews within Europe—Jews who would need a Jewish state in Palestine, and who would see it as an absolute imperative. From this point of view, the disaster fit into Ben-Gurion’s well-known refrain: “[T]he harsher the affliction, the greater the strength of Zionism” (ibid., 850). This form of his thinking is well captured in his remarks to a meeting of the Zionist Executive and to his Mapai party’s central committee in October 1942:

Disaster is strength if channeled to a productive course; the whole trick of Zionism is that it knows how to channel our disaster not into despondency or degradation, as is the case in the Diaspora, but into a source of creativity and exploitation.

This is our Zionist message: to pour the Jewish disaster into the molds of redemption...A great disaster means strength. An idea...can turn the disaster of millions into the redemption of millions (ibid., 853–854).

According to Teveth, once Ben-Gurion realized the scale of the catastrophe, he fell silent. Believing that he could do nothing to save masses of European Jews from extinction, he turned, eventually, toward a renewed focus on everything required to build that which he had always held as his overarching purpose—a sovereign Jewish state in Palestine. Within the framework of his Zionism, then, the Holocaust appeared as nightmarish proof of the absolute imperative of building a Jewish state

¹⁰ Nazi extermination squads.

in Palestine. Its purpose now would not be to save the Jews of Europe, but to prevent a future catastrophe. Concentrating always on what was feasible and politically efficacious, Ben-Gurion returned his focus to what he believed was crucial to the success of that project—the internal coherence of his Mapai party, its leadership of the Zionism movement, and his leadership of the party (*ibid.*, 861–862). That meant, as his biographer put it, “making the most of the Holocaust” (*ibid.*, 864).

But how was he to do that? Just as neither Ben-Gurion nor the Labor Zionist movement as a whole were able to formulate an overall plan to respond effectively while the Holocaust was being implemented, so, too, were they unable to remain committed to a single strategy for remembering the Holocaust or for integrating it into the movement’s ideological framework. As we shall see, Ben-Gurion and other Zionist leaders displayed a range of somewhat contradictory postures toward the Holocaust from 1947 to 1961. That variation reflected the impossibility of ignoring the Holocaust, but also the difficulty of using it for political purposes without supplying one’s enemies with weapons by doing so in inevitably problematic ways.

The difficulty of publicly discussing the Holocaust in Palestine and Israel in the late 1940s was due, in part, to a mixture of shame at the prevailing image of so many millions of Jews going to their deaths as “sheep to the slaughter,” and guilt that so little was being done by the Jews of the Land of Israel to help the Jews of Europe (Ben-Amos, Bet-El, and Tlamin 1999, 266). Yet the enormity of the event and the power of the emotions it aroused among the Jews of Israel meant that the “*Shoah*,” as it was referred to in Hebrew, could not long be ignored by politics.¹¹ Zionism as a movement and Israel as a project of that movement simply had to integrate an understanding of the Holocaust into their analyses of the past, their responses to present imperatives, and their depiction of future objectives. Those tasks implied a struggle over how the Holocaust was to be remembered. What categories were to be used to honor it? What aspects would be emphasized, and which forgotten? What would children be taught about it? What lessons were to be distilled from it? What latitude was to be allowed for critical engagement with the disturbing questions it raised?

Ben-Gurion’s own sentiments, in this matter expressing with a particularly sharp edge the orientation of much of the Labor Zionist leadership, provided the basis and the boundaries for fashioning collective memories of the Holocaust that could strengthen his Jewish state-centric narrative. The first was genuine disgust for Jewish life in the diaspora and a sense of distance between the defiant healthy nation of Jews gathering in the Land of Israel and the misshapen, impotent, and craven mass of Jews who had remained in Europe to be slaughtered. The other was the elevation of violent Jewish action and the heroism it represented as proof of the vitality of Jewish nationalism and the legitimate claim to authority of those engaged in it.

In his study of Holocaust memorialization in Israel, James E. Young describes Ben-Gurion as regarding the Holocaust “as the ultimate fruit of Jewish life in exile; as such it represents a diaspora that deserved not only to be destroyed, but also

¹¹ For a sensitive discussion of terminology used to refer to what we now standardly refer to as the “Holocaust,” see Achcar (2010, 13–16).

forgotten” (Young 1993, 211). As Orna Kenan has shown in her study of the Yishuv and Zionist intellectual attitudes toward the Holocaust from 1945 to 1961, the Holocaust was identified as typical of the destruction that would always result when Jews lived apart from their land—a trope that powerfully shaped Zionist collective memory of the event (Kenan 2003). This was epitomized in a famous encounter between Ben-Gurion and Rozka Korczak, a Zionist partisan in Europe who reached Palestine in 1945. There are various accounts of the incident, but they all agree that as hundreds listened in rapt attention to her harrowing tale, Ben-Gurion objected to what he called the “refugee comrade’s” use of Yiddish, observing angrily that it was all very moving, and would have been even more so if Rozka had not been speaking in that “foreign and grating language.”¹² Ben-Gurion’s first reaction, in 1943, to news of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising is also illuminating. Referring to encounters between Zionists and Arabs that had resulted in the deaths of Jewish settlers early in the 20th century, Ben-Gurion attributed this act of armed resistance against the Nazis as evidence that the Jews involved had learned from the Zionist example in Palestine. “They have learned the lore of the new death decreed to us by the defenders of Tel-Hai and Sejera—heroic death” (Zertal 2005, 25).

Ben-Gurion’s personal distaste for analysis of the disaster, for lamentation, and for public displays of grief probably delayed the emergence of Holocaust themes in the civil religion of the new state—but not for long. Ben-Gurion came to appreciate that if his own party, Mapai, did not find a way to mold the collective memories and meanings of the Holocaust, its opponents would. The man Ben-Gurion chose for this task was Ben-Zion Dinur, a Russian Zionist of Ben-Gurion’s own generation. A prolific historian, philosopher of history, teacher, and Mapai party stalwart, Dinur had taught at and later headed the Jerusalem Teachers Training College. In 1948, he became a professor of history at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. As a Zionist historian and theorist, he was well known for attributing fundamental importance to molding Jewish national consciousness using interpretations of Jewish history that highlighted its organicity and that emphasized continuities between Jewish life in the Land of Israel prior to the Muslim conquests and modern Jewish efforts to return to the land. Prior to World War II, Dinur had been in the forefront of the ideological, historiographical, and philosophical battles fought between Zionism and its ideological and cultural opponents within the Jewish world—the Orthodox rabbinate, the socialist-Yiddishist Bund movement, territorialists who advocated for Jewish migration to areas other than the Land of Israel, and Jews who sought better futures via a partial or complete assimilation into the Western democracies.

As the sociologist Uri Ram has documented (Ram 1995, 106),¹³ Ben-Gurion turned to Dinur to fashion the formulas, rituals, public postures, and rhetorical strategies that could assimilate the Holocaust into Zionist ideology and narrative in ways consistent with his own outlook, and render it exploitable by the new state for education and for building national morale. Ben-Gurion’s recruitment of Dinur was

¹² Tom Segev, *The Seventh Million* (New York: Hill and Wang 1993, 180), and Tom Segev, “The Makings of History,” *Haaretz*, April 1, 2010.

¹³ For an interpretation that emphasizes Dinur’s effect on Ben-Gurion with respect to Holocaust construction and commemoration, see Stauber (2007, 48–51).

part of his wide-ranging effort to structure political life in Israel along strictly “*etatiste*” lines. This campaign was called “*mamlachtiut*”—“statism.”¹⁴ It celebrated the sovereign State of Israel, with Ben-Gurion as its heroic founder, as the zenith of Jewish nationalist achievement, and as the focal point for true Jewish and Zionist solidarity. The patriotism to be engendered within this framework was to supersede—if not entirely replace—religious, class, ethnic, and even family ties. For Dinur, that meant leading Israeli Jews to understand their participation in the state, their loyalty to it, and their readiness to sacrifice for it as the natural and proper culmination of the flowering of authentic Jewish nationalist feeling. The trick would be to maintain Zionism’s claim to be the natural and organic product of Jewish history while rejecting altogether the form and content of most of that history, symbolized with unbearable clarity, according to Zionist ideology, in the Holocaust.

Dinur was appointed minister of education and culture in 1951, a post he held until 1955. During that period, Dinur also emerged as a founder of Yad Vashem, Israel’s premier Holocaust memorial. He was the author of and the prime mover behind the legislation that created it.¹⁵ Indeed, shortly after leaving his ministerial post, Dinur became president of Yad Vashem, serving in that capacity until 1959. To satisfy Ben-Gurion, Dinur’s approach to the Holocaust had to be based on a comprehensive rejection of the attractiveness and possibility of Jewish life in the diaspora. The vigor of Dinur’s treatment of the Holocaust in this respect, as a proof-text for the ideological and emotional core of Zionism, was given vivid expression in 1955, when he spoke at a Holocaust Martyrs and Heroes Remembrance Day ceremony. “It is our duty,” he said,

to remember the fundamental lesson of the Holocaust...which is that exile is not only a misfortune and adversity, but also is a transgression and a sin. “Exile” and “destruction” are not two separate categories, for exile always includes destruction. We must continually, therefore, repeat to ourselves: a nation must not be dispersed and splintered or its factions will eventually unite in a march of death (Kenan 2003, XX–XXI).

With this sentiment in mind, we can appreciate the difficulty of the problem Dinur confronted: how to integrate the Holocaust into the Zionist narrative of the state, and how to do so without rehabilitating the image of what was lost as worthwhile (Young 1993, 212).

In 1935, Dinur described Jewish history in terms of “a homogeneous unity which engulfs all periods and places.” This “unity” he declared, had to be the “fundamental assumption of our historiography, which should serve also as the point of departure for the discussion of the functions of Jewish history and the determination of its research objectives” (*ibid.*, 98). Now, as minister of education

¹⁴ “*Mamlachtiut*” literally means “rulership.” As a principle advanced by Ben-Gurion, its meaning is closest to “statism” or “*etatisme*,” with an emphasis on the sovereignty of central institutions of political power operating above partisanship and on behalf of the entire people.

¹⁵ For details on the evolution of the idea that became Yad Vashem, and the struggle with uncertainty as to whether Jews who did not physically resist the Nazis could be considered “heroes,” see Stauber (2007, 19–29).

and culture, Dinur had to deal with what would appear to have been a profound contradiction to this assumption. For both victims and survivors, the Holocaust was the most jarring rupture imaginable. For the Jewish people as a whole, it was the greatest discontinuity in their history for at least two thousand years. It was Dinur's job not only to cast the Holocaust as part of an organic and coherent narrative of Jewish national development and redemptive accomplishment, but also to do so in a way that confirmed and reinforced the life-organizing commitments of leaders of the Zionist movement.

The key to his approach was to emphasize, but not overemphasize, episodes of armed Jewish resistance. These were rare and materially inconsequential events with respect to the dreadful unfolding of the Final Solution. But they did occur; they were heroic; and Zionists were often overrepresented in them. For members of the hardline socialist-Zionist movements to the left of Ben-Gurion's Mapai party—activists and leaders of Hakibbutz Hameuchad and Hashomer Hatzair—the armed defiance of their comrades in the ghettos and forests was of overwhelming importance. Indeed, members of those parties had played a disproportionate role in Jewish underground organizations in Europe (Finkel 2015). Partly because Mapai opposed the left-Zionist challenge to its predominance in Israeli political life, and partly because of strong counter pressure from rabbis, religious Zionists, and other centrists to pay homage to all who had suffered and died as Jews, the Ben-Gurion/Dinur approach sought a middle way.¹⁶

This formula effectively integrated the Holocaust into the saga of a heroic vanguard leading an ancient people back to its rightful homeland and restoring its proud standing among the nations. But there was a high cost to the effectiveness of this narrow construction of an event as enormous as the Holocaust. Despite efforts to strike a balance by remembering the suffering of the millions who had perished without a fight, the dominant emphasis in state institutions, official ceremonies, and school curricula was on the contrast between the heroes who resisted and the “sheep who went to the slaughter.” Dinur's approach was to make Yad Vashem an institution that could centralize an official commemoration of the destruction of European Jewry by honoring all victims, while placing special emphasis on Jewish armed struggle against Nazism—whether in ghetto revolts, among underground organizations, with the partisans, or as soldiers enlisted in the allied armies—as a source of inspiration and guidance for the struggle to establish, and then to consolidate, the State of Israel.¹⁷

¹⁶ For revealing treatments of Yad Vashem's early years and its efforts to cope with strong and conflicting perspectives on the role of “heroism” in memorializing Jewish suffering in the Holocaust and the Jewish response to the Holocaust, see Stauber (2007, especially chapters 7–10).

¹⁷ This relatively nuanced use of the Holocaust as a proof-text was more prominent among intellectual and political elites, who faced a public in the early 1950s that was much more likely to disdain the masses of Jewish victims for having gone to their deaths “like lambs to the slaughter,” than to appreciate the virtual absence of alternatives and the complexities of what could, in retrospect, be seen as simply heroic postures of armed resistance. This early and simplistic approach of the Yishuv to the experience of Jewish victims helps to explain the passage of the Nazi and Nazi Collaborators Punishment Law, along with the visceral disgust with which many Israelis reacted to what they imagined as the craven behavior of Holocaust victims. The law allowed survivors to identify and denounce other survivors for their behavior during the war. For a discussion of the bizarre, heart-rending accusations and trials of Israelis, including former “kapos” denounced as collaborators, see Segev, *The Seventh Million* (1993, 258–262); and Zertal

This narrative strategy is vividly documented in Dinur's speech to the Knesset on May 12, 1953, introducing the "Holocaust and Heroism Remembrance Law—Yad Vashem." The name of the law itself raised the armed actions of Jewish partisans, ghetto fighters, and soldiers in allied armies to the same level of significance as the suffering and death of the 6 million and the destruction of Jewish life in Europe.¹⁸ This, according to Dinur, "was not a coincidence." Yad Vashem would not only be a memorial to Jewish victims; it would be a tribute to Jewish heroism (*ibid.*, 131). Indeed, Dinur began his address by noting that the 10th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising had recently been observed, and by declaring that it captured the essence of the Holocaust and what Jews should remember, understand, and learn from it.

In every way, this revolt symbolizes the entire Holocaust, the entire menacing affair, which generation after generation of Israel will remember, and will learn from and will study, in order to understand it, to grasp its meaning, and to learn its lesson (*ibid.*).

Dinur occasionally did evoke the suffering of the millions who had been murdered and the bravery displayed by Jews who had simply sought to survive. Yet he left no doubt that as a guide for living Jews and their descendants to understand the meaning of the Holocaust, it was the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising and the other acts of armed resistance that would permit the Holocaust's integration into the national consciousness. Accordingly, the Holocaust would be characterized as an integral part of the Jewish people's heroic struggle to live—an organic, unified, and inspiring story of courage and redemption.

The Ben-Gurion/Dinur construction of the Holocaust worked as a proof-text in two ways. First, the annihilation of Jewish life in Europe served to validate the fundamental Zionist analysis that the very structure of Jewish life had to be transformed and based on independent statehood, if the Jewish people were to survive. Second, Zionist postures of bold action, defiance, and physical heroism, in contrast to the docility of the masses of Jewish victims, could be valorized by evoking and giving special honor to armed Jewish resistance to the Nazis, especially the resistance offered by Zionist movements. Textbooks concluded their narratives of the ghetto revolts by describing Zionism as a "call for rebellion" and "the heroic position of the ghetto Jews...as compensation for the shameful surrender of the Jews who were transported to the death camps" (Firer 1987, 181). The unintended result of this cultural and ideological framing of the Holocaust was to encourage among young Israelis a deep revulsion toward the behavior of Jewish victims that came to extend to all Jews living in the diaspora, and even toward Jewishness itself. In light of this trend, an official committee on "Israeli-Jewish consciousness" was established in 1956 to reconsider the curricular treatment of the Holocaust. The

Footnote 17 continued

(2005, 60–69). For an extensive discussion of the different perspectives on "heroism" prominent in Israel in the 1950s, see Stauber (2007).

¹⁸ At the beginning of the speech, Dinur asserted that the actual number of Jews killed in the Holocaust was 6.5 million. Ben-Zion Dinur, *DivreiHaKnesset*, May 12, 1953, 1310.

committee's protocol included this statement: "(A)nyone involved in children's education will admit that when we talk to our youngsters about exilic Jewry, we find their hearts shut" (Shapira 2004b, 86).¹⁹

In this context, the government's steps to gain reparation payments from Germany were important, not only because they helped to secure desperately needed resources for the fledgling state, but also because the effort required the State of Israel, and Israelis, to identify at least indirectly with all the victims of the Holocaust, and not just with the armed resisters. This stance implied a distinctive construction of the Holocaust that would enable its use in a campaign for reparations and for political and diplomatic support based on gentile guilt aroused by the Holocaust. It meant treating the Holocaust not as a Zionist proof-text about how Jews should avoid being victimized, but as a wasting asset, linking the welfare of the Jewish state to the suffering of Jewish victims and the gentile guilt which evocations of that suffering could at least temporarily preserve.

The Holocaust as a Wasting Asset

In the immediate postwar period, Zionism made strenuous efforts to attain its long-cherished goal of independent statehood. Vital to this frantic campaign was post-Holocaust gentile sympathy for Jews, a rare and certainly temporary circumstance. This was a resource that leaders such as Ben-Gurion and Weizmann had anticipated as a kind of silver lining to the horrors of the Nazi slaughter. In his speech to the Biltmore Conference in New York in May 1942, Weizmann portrayed the reward the Zionist project would reap from the scale of the suffering wreaked on European Jewry.

Those who will be physically destroyed will be destroyed, but those who will survive will carry the torch proudly, and we shall all be proud of them, and may God speed the day when we can see them and take them by the hand and say, "You have suffered more than anybody else, and to you belongs the place of Honor" (Teveth, 851).

In January of 1944, Ben-Gurion advised the Mapai central committee that after the war, "the world's conscience will awaken," (Porat 1991, 162) triggering shame at not "lifting a finger" to stop the "incessant flow of our blood" (ibid., 159). Since it was temporary, the "guilt" and horror of Europeans and Americans in response to information about the Holocaust was a "wasting asset"—a political resource that should be used to the fullest before it disappeared. This was the political and psychological basis for Zionist leaders to encourage at least public identification with the suffering of the victims, as opposed to identification only with the heroism of those who were engaged in armed resistance. Indeed, as a project for shaping a collective memory of the Holocaust, the wasting asset construction had two faces.

¹⁹ The idea of correcting damage done to Israeli Jews' lack of empathy or identification with diaspora Jews appeared in 1955 as an explicit tenet of the governing coalition's "Basic Principles." In 1959, the Ministry of Education published a booklet entitled *Deepening Jewish Consciousness in Public Schools: Instructions and Curriculum* (Jerusalem: Government Printer, 1959). For details, see Resnik (2003, 305–307).

Elites used it to bolster their position in Israel and Israel's position in the gentile world. For the masses, however, it required a radical perceptual shift from the Holocaust as a confirmation of Zionist theory to the Holocaust as a theater of Jewish suffering—from shame and anger at Jewish weakness to compassion for Jewish victims. It meant construing the relationship between Israeli Jews and Holocaust victims as close enough to warrant the former being treated as beneficiaries of the suffering of the latter.

The Zionist leadership's most dramatic use of the Holocaust in the postwar period was the episode of the "*Exodus*." In the spring and summer of 1947, the Zionist movement was locked in a bitter battle with Great Britain. Zionists demanded the free immigration to Palestine of European Jews, including survivors of the extermination camps. Britain had blockaded Palestine to enforce restrictions on Jewish immigration in accordance with its policy of satisfying minimum Arab demands while leaving the British in control. Ben-Gurion knew that Britain was struggling to recover from the war and desperately needed American goodwill and economic aid. Seeking the free immigration of Jews to Palestine, the departure of the British from Palestine, and the establishment of a Jewish state, he sought to make the blockade as costly as possible for the British.

Toward that end, 4,515 Jews, including 655 children, were smuggled into southern France from displaced persons camps in Germany and loaded onto a rickety freighter under Haganah control. After setting sail, the ship was dubbed the "*Exodus-1947*," and steered toward British-blockaded Palestine. The British played directly into Ben-Gurion's hands. They rammed and forcibly boarded the ship—an event filmed and broadcast in newsreels around the world. Several Jews were killed, and dozens were injured. Instead of interning the passengers on the island of Cyprus, the British forced them into the holds of deportation ships in order to be returned to Marseilles as their port of embarkation. Under disciplined control by the Haganah, the passengers refused to disembark, and suffered for weeks inside filthy holds with little food during a torrid heat wave. Overflowing with hungry, sick, and miserable refugees, the ships sailed to Hamburg, Germany, which was located in the British zone of occupation. They were then off-loaded and transported to a camp in Lubeck, Germany. The heart-rending saga of the ship's tormented passengers being forced to return to camps in Germany dominated international news for weeks.

Ben-Gurion hailed the *Exodus* episode as "one of the greatest displays of the Jewish struggle, of Jewish pride, and of the connection with the Land of Israel" (Segev 1999, 479). He used it to pressure the British, while also portraying Zionism's struggle for Jewish statehood as a drama equal to if not more important than the tragedy of the Holocaust. To Histadrut leaders, he praised the Holocaust survivors aboard the ship as exemplifying the Zionist ethos, exceeding even the courage displayed by the ghetto fighters, "because they (the rebels) had no choice, but these Jews (aboard the *Exodus*) had a choice" (Zerrtal 2005, 46n). Most revealing of the domination of tactical requirements in Ben-Gurion's use of the Holocaust at this time were his actions to prevent the Danish, British, and French governments and even Chaim Weizmann from implementing arrangements that would have spared the *Exodus* refugees the horror of being returned to Germany (ibid., 47).

For Ben-Gurion, Holocaust memory was a Zionist resource to be husbanded with extreme care. It was a temporary “wasting asset” that had to be used to maximum effect. This construction was also the basis for Ben-Gurion’s specific attack in 1947 against his political nemesis, Menachem Begin, commander of the potent underground army and terror organization the Irgun, and leader of the right-wing “Revisionist” Zionists. When the Irgun hanged two British soldiers on July 29, at the height of the *Exodus* drama, Ben-Gurion publicly condemned the Irgun “terrorists,” describing them as “a gang of hooligans...worse than the Nazis,” for “handing [Ernest] Bevin (the British foreign secretary) a gift that the whole of his fleet and his entire anti-Semitic establishment could not have brought him...making the world forget the great tragic struggle of the *Exodus*” (ibid., 46, notes 111 and 113).

As Idith Zertal shows, the honor accorded the refugees on the *Exodus* was short-lived. Key aspects of the whole affair had been orchestrated to coincide with the deliberations of the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP). The transport of the refugees back to a camp in Germany, on September 1, 1947, was timed to correspond to UNSCOP’s recommendation that Palestine be partitioned into a Jewish and an Arab state. The struggle now shifted to political and military preparations for statehood. When a Zionist emissary who had been aboard the *Exodus* returned to Palestine to tell Ben-Gurion of the refugees’ “Jewish heroism,” he was no longer interested. “It’s over,” he said, “finished. This is the past. Now there is a future” (ibid., 50).

This response epitomizes what might be called Ben-Gurion’s impatience with the Holocaust. Despite the tactical advantages he could achieve by utilizing the horror of the event and the pathos of the continued suffering of survivors, these devices were in tension with his fundamental political and psychological posture, which was to reject the value of Jewish life in the diaspora. The doctrine of “*shlilat hagalu*” (“rejection of the exile”) explained both the victimization and passivity of European Jewry as a result of their denial of the national imperative for Jewish territorial sovereignty. In that sense, neither Ben-Gurion nor most of the other leaders of the Labor Zionist movement and the new state felt there was much to learn from the Holocaust. But they did believe that as long as the gentile world remained gripped by the horror of the event and by sentiments of guilt, there was something to gain from it. That was reason enough, even after the *Exodus* affair, to emphasize the needs of the state-to-come over the requirements of the survivors, to honor those killed by Arabs above those killed by the Nazis, and to celebrate new “sabra” values of toughness, taciturnity, confidence, and bold action, rather than exert themselves to acknowledge and share the agony of the victims and the survivors, whose families and social worlds had been ravaged or utterly destroyed.

But sidelining survivors and de-emphasizing the Holocaust as a theme in public discourse did not mean abandoning Holocaust victims and their memory as a national resource. In Israel’s first years, the economic situation was extremely difficult (Brecher 1973, 83).²⁰ Economic distress spurred emigration. Despite their

²⁰ Concerning the severity of Israel’s economic crisis in the early 1950s as an impetus for negotiations with Germany, see Feldman (1984, 67–70).

natural and extreme distaste for dealing with Germans, the Israeli leaders believed that the world would soon lose its image of Jews as deserving victims and of Germans as responsible for paying for Hitler's crimes. This led them to seek revenue and capital investment from Germany. As early as 1945, Zionist leaders were considering the possibility of obtaining substantial financing by demanding compensation for the property of murdered European Jews. Just one month after the end of World War II, Chaim Weizmann sent the four powers occupying Germany a demand for title to what he estimated to be \$8 billion worth of property whose owners had died in the Holocaust (Segev 1993, 197). The allies responded, though only in the amount of \$25 million, to be allocated to many Jewish relief organizations.

Of more significance than the amount of the demand and Weizmann's failure was that it was not directed toward the Germans, but toward the allied powers occupying Germany. In 1948, the dominant view in Israel was the categorical rejection of any contact with Germany or Germans and a strong tendency to view the Germany of Chancellor Konrad Adenauer, who himself had been anti-Nazi, as no more acceptable a point of contact for Jews than the Nazi regime.²¹ "The foreign ministry stamped on every Israeli passport in English a notification that the document was not valid in Germany" (Segev 1993, 191). But with the West accepting the Federal Republic of Germany into diplomatic, economic, and political relationships, it became increasingly awkward, and even impossible, for Israel to maintain the kind of fierce ostracism of Germany that the emotions of most Jews in Israel still demanded.

In late 1949 and continuing into 1950, closed discussions within the Israeli Foreign Ministry focused on the importance of using Germany's need for Israeli goodwill, while that need existed, in order to receive substantial economic resources for Israel's development (Grossman 1954, 10–14). The primary task was to find a diplomatic and public relations formula that would alleviate the moral distress of establishing relations with Germany and accepting German money. No Israeli leader argued that accepting reparations would close the moral account of the Jewish people with Germany. What was argued was the practical importance of getting sizeable German payments while they were available. Journalist Tom Segev describes the attitude of Moshe Shapira, minister of the interior, health, and immigration, as representative— "...everything depended on how much money was at stake (for) it would be pointless to soil oneself with the taint of German contact for a pittance, but if the sum was substantial, it might well be worthwhile" (Segev 1993, 200).

The Israeli Cabinet faced vehement domestic opposition to any contact with Germany, let alone to accepting any assistance from Germany that might be seen as expiation of the sins of Germans against Jews. Even talking of such an agreement meant encouraging Jews to think of the Holocaust as a crime with a beginning and an end, and of the perpetrators as capable of rehabilitation. However, Israel was being offered significant economic opportunities. The United States and its allies

²¹ Jewish extremists tried to kill Adenauer in Paris in the fall of 1951 by sending him a package bomb, but the bomb killed a policeman instead.

forced Israeli leaders to confront this painful question by refusing to act as intermediaries between Israel and Germany. This policy reflected hard judgments of real politik. As the Cold War deepened, the NATO alliance sought to end the supervision of West Germany by American military commissioners, desiring to treat the country not as an enemy unworthy of trust, but as a respected democracy and a legitimate economic, political, and military partner in the struggle of the “free world” against communism. By insisting on direct contact between Jews and Germans if substantial compensation was to be received by Israel in connection with the suffering inflicted on Jews during the Holocaust, they incentivized Israeli postures and policies to recognize Germany as a legitimate actor in international affairs, despite its Nazi past.

Israel was thereby being asked to play an important role in the international community of nations. By establishing relations with the Federal Republic of Germany, the Jewish state would legitimize its emergence as a major ally in the West’s confrontation with the Soviet bloc. To Israel’s founders, this request was itself a source of satisfaction. It offered the new state a role fundamentally consistent with the classic aspirations of Zionism—that their state would allow the Jews to “rejoin history,” and that it be accorded its rightful share of influence, power, and responsibility in the international arena. But for masses of Jews, in Israel and the diaspora, this particular task was extremely distasteful. To overcome the virulent opposition to any direct contact with Germany—let alone to promote contact that might accelerate the end of the Allies’ “denazification program” or rehabilitate Germans in the eyes of the world, Ben-Gurion and his allies launched a determined public affairs strategy.

In 1951, high-level discussions were held within the Mapai party, inside the Israeli Cabinet, and on the floor of the Knesset, over how to gain the support of the great powers for large-scale reparations payments in return for Israeli and Jewish cooperation to help, if only indirectly, with the rehabilitation of the “new Germany” (Sharett 2007, 97–110). Moshe Sharett and David Ben-Gurion favored entertaining direct contact with Germany in order to secure the desperately needed funding. They feared “missing the boat” with regard to potential reparations from Germany. With Germany close to reentering the community of nations, there was little time to spare. The idea that once Germany was rehabilitated internationally, Jewish claims against the Bonn government would be less likely to be honored contributed to the sense that the Holocaust could be an important economic and political asset, but a “wasting” one (Weitz 2007, 12).²²

One element in its public campaign to seek German reparations was a proposal to grant honorary Israeli citizenship to Holocaust survivors. This was part of Ben-Gurion’s effort to ensure that the State of Israel would be recognized as the primary appropriate recipient of compensation awarded in recognition of the suffering of Jews during World War II.

The State of Israel is entitled and indeed must sue the Germans to demand reparations for the insult to the millions who were slaughtered and to receive

²² For more on Ben-Gurion’s approach to the temporarily available opportunity to exploit both German isolation and gentile guilt, see Auerbach (1991, 278).

reparations for the rights and property of those who, solely by virtue of their being Jewish, were slaughtered, burned and gassed, their property confiscated, stolen and wrenched from their hands. Israel has that right because it is the only embodiment of those murdered millions.²³

Secretly, Prime Minister Ben-Gurion and Foreign Minister Sharett took another initiative. They launched negotiations with the Bonn government to agree on some sort of formal statement of collective responsibility and contrition that a German leader might make to signal an opportunity for change in the fundamental attitude of Jews toward Germans. Begun with feelers in early 1950, these negotiations concluded in the summer of 1951, resulting in a speech delivered to the German Parliament by Chancellor Konrad Adenauer. The speech contained one and only one paragraph pertaining to the Holocaust. After that paragraph, quoted here, was read out, the members of the Bundestag stood for three minutes of silence.

The government of the Federal Republic and with it the great majority of the German people are aware of the immeasurable suffering that was brought upon the Jews in Germany and the occupied territories during the time of National Socialism. The overwhelming majority of the German people abominated the crimes committed against the Jews and did not participate in them. During the National Socialist time, there were many among the German people who showed their readiness to help their Jewish fellow citizens at their own peril—for religious reasons, from distress of conscience, out of shame at the disgrace of the German name. But unspeakable crimes have been committed in the name of the German people, calling for moral and material indemnity, both with regard to the individual harm done to the Jews and with regard to the Jewish property for which no legitimate individual claimants still exist (Lustick 2006, 57–58).

Each word of the paragraph had been carefully agreed upon between Israel and Germany. Adenauer was caught between the Allies' desire that he make amends with Israel so that the German integration into the Western alliance could proceed, and German public opinion angry at the threatened execution of scores of former Nazi officials and outraged at the suffering of millions of German refugees expelled from Eastern Europe. As the pallid language of the speech suggests, the German government managed to use the negotiations with Israel and the new state's urgent need for substantial material assistance to reject almost every demand made originally by Israeli representatives. Contrary to these original demands, Adenauer made no references to the guilt of the German people, the existence of groups in Germany still actively antisemitic, the role of the German army in the Holocaust, or the innocence of the people killed by the Nazis. The German chancellor refused to describe the German nation as guilty of the extermination of the Jews. He refused to mention Israel by name and refused to include an explicit reference to the innocence of the victims.

²³ *Divrei HaKnesset*, January 7, 1952, vol. 10 (1951–1952) 897 (cited and translated by Stauber 2007, 48).

An intense and even violent battle erupted in Israel. It included invasion of the Knesset building by an angry mob organized by Menachem Begin and his Herut (Freedom) Party. The government was attacked for treating this “statement of responsibility” as a moral turning point and for its subsequent agreement to accept reparations from Germany. Ben-Gurion’s most famous response to this opposition was to emphasize the material benefits that would be secured and the opportunity for revenge against the German murderers that would otherwise be missed. “The German people, all of whom are responsible for the destruction wrought by their government under Hitler, continue to benefit...Let not the murderers of our people be their inheritors as well!” (Brecher 1973, 88).²⁴

Both the *Exodus* affair and the campaign to achieve reparations payments from Germany illustrate the vigor with which Zionists could exploit Holocaust appeals. Their quick abandonment of the suffering and heroism of Holocaust survivors as a prominent theme in Zionist *hasbara* anticipates the degree to which the evocation of the Holocaust in Israel would be a function of changing circumstances, elite incentives, and the psychological needs of Israeli Jews. But, as I have emphasized, the rhythm of change in Israeli thinking about the Holocaust was also driven by the unintended political and cultural consequences of pushing any particular construction too far and too ruthlessly. This pattern is spectacularly apparent in the details of one of the most painful episodes in all of Israeli political history—the “Kastner Affair.”

Rudolph Kastner was a minor Mapai party functionary in Israel in the mid-1950s. During World War II, he was a leader of the party in Budapest and a key member of the committee in that city seeking to rescue Hungarian Jews from the Nazi onslaught. Hungarian Jewry had been spared for most of the war, but even as defeat stared the Third Reich in the face in 1944, it accelerated its war against this last remaining large Jewish community in Eastern Europe. Kastner played a key role in negotiations with Adolf Eichmann and other Nazi officials responsible for planning and implementing the expropriation and annihilation of Hungarian Jews. Although his frantic efforts to reach an agreement to trade trucks or money for hundreds of thousands of Jewish lives failed, Kastner did use his contacts with individual Nazis to rescue 1,685 Jews of all ages who were then transported by train to Switzerland, and to postpone the murder of hundreds or even thousands of survivors just prior to the liberation of various concentration camps.

But in the early 1950s, large numbers of survivors in Israel whose family members had perished were searching for answers and for someone to blame or punish for the madness that had devastated their lives. The mood was reflected in a series of prosecutions of Jews living in Israel who were said to have collaborated with the Nazis to save their own lives, including those who had served as “kapos” in concentration camps (Yablonka 2003). Malchiel Gruenwald was a Hungarian Jew who had immigrated to Palestine—a crank with right-wing political attachments who had lost scores of relatives in Auschwitz. He regularly issued inflammatory mimeographed leaflets decrying the Labor Party and its rule of the country. One of these appeared in August of 1952, attacking Kastner as a Nazi collaborator and as someone responsible for the murder of hundreds of thousands of Jews. Gruenwald

²⁴ Sharett used this formula earlier (see Sharett 2007, 108).

accused Kastner of facilitating the Final Solution by keeping its details secret from Hungary's Jewish population—all in order to arrange escape for his friends, family members, and those politically connected to the Mapai party.

Although he made a terrible tactical error by doing so, Haim Cohen, Prime Minister Ben-Gurion's attorney general and a future Israel Supreme Court judge, decided that such accusations against a member of the Labor Party and of the government required a forceful response (Zerrtal 2005, 80–82). This judgment arose in part from several matters—from the effectiveness with which right-wing opponents of Mapai had used charges that the party had betrayed Jews and helped Germans by negotiating the Transfer Agreement in the 1930s; from the perception, at least, that the Labor Party had failed to do everything possible to rescue Jews from Europe during the years of slaughter; from the negotiations with Adenauer's Germany after the war; and from the acceptance of reparations. Wishing to deny their political opponents yet another basis for using the Holocaust as a battering ram against it, the Israeli government charged Gruenwald with libel and sought a court verdict that would vindicate Kastner by judging Gruenwald's accusations to be false.

Kastner was reluctant to proceed, but he hoped the trial would remove the suspicions that surrounded his activities during the war and give him the public recognition he craved as a heroic rescuer of Jewish lives. But it was not to be. Shmuel Tamir, a brilliant lawyer with an ambition that burned as brightly as his hatred for the Mapai party establishment, took on Gruenwald's defense. Tamir had been a deputy commander of the Irgun, the armed wing of the Revisionist Zionist Organization. After the establishment of the state, he had helped Ben-Gurion's archenemy, Menachem Begin, found the Herut Party. Blessed with a sympathetic judge, Tamir defended his client by launching a full-scale attack on Kastner, implying that not only Kastner, but also the Labor Zionist leadership had collaborated with the Nazis and shared guilt for the results of the Final Solution.

The trial—a catastrophe for both Kastner and the Mapai government—ended in June 1955. Gruenwald was cleared. As part of his postwar duties, and in response to instructions from Israeli government leaders, Kastner had provided an affidavit in support of Gestapo officer Kurt Becher, accounting for the Allies' decision to treat him as a witness in the Nuremberg trials instead of prosecuting him. Becher had had extensive responsibility under the Final Solution for developing efficient techniques for killing Jews and extracting their property. He was among the Nazis whom Kastner had bribed during the war, and he had been particularly important in preventing the murder of many surviving inmates of concentration camps that the two of them had visited. Perhaps to cover up its efforts to gain access to stolen Jewish money Becher claimed to have been carrying at the end of the war, the government ordered Kastner to deny having provided any such affidavit (Ross 2014). When Tamir dramatically confronted Kastner with a copy of the signed affidavit, his credibility collapsed. In his decision, Judge Benjamin Halevy denounced Kastner for having “sold his soul to the devil” (Segev 1993, 283).²⁵

²⁵ The government appealed the verdict. In January 1958 the Israel Supreme Court reversed the decision. But it was too late for Kastner himself. In March 1957, he was assassinated by members of a far-right ultranationalist group.

The result of the trial seriously damaged Mapai, helped to put an end to Sharett's premiership, and illustrated how difficult it would be for politicians to exploit the Holocaust and the suffering of its victims without triggering unpredictable and costly consequences.

The Holocaust as a Human Rights Object Lesson

Raphael Lemkin, a Polish Jew who escaped from Nazi-occupied Poland in 1940, invented the term "genocide." Inspired by the annihilation of Armenians by the Turks during World War I, he went on to serve on the prosecution team at the Nuremberg trials, where Nazi leaders were convicted and punished—not for killing Jews, Roma, Slavs, homosexuals, or the disabled, but for committing "crimes against humanity." In survivor testimonies, whether in the first postwar years or decades later, a frequently identified imperative is to preserve for humanity what happened to the Jews at the hands of evildoers, to uphold universalist values, and to fight indifference in the face of injustice (Gringauz 1947, 505–507; Cohen 2008, 271; Jockusch 2013; Wiesel 1999; Stauber 2008, 100–102). This construction of the Holocaust as an "object lesson" in universalist values is strongly distinguished from the "Zionist proof-text" construction, which was tightly bound to the particular requirements and outlooks of dominant Zionist leaders and parties in the postwar period. And it is just as strongly distinguished from the "wasting asset" construction, which treats specifically Jewish suffering as a resource, while available, for state or national exploitation.

Apart from the Nuremberg trials, which, of course, preceded the establishment of Israel, the most spectacular opportunity to invoke the "object lesson" construction of the Holocaust was Israel's trial of Adolf Eichmann, the Nazi official most directly responsible for the logistical aspects of the operation of the extermination camps with respect to ensuring a constant supply of Jewish victims. For survivor organizations, the 1961 trial seemed to offer an invaluable educational opportunity for lessons about the scale of man's potential inhumanity; the fundamental importance of civilizational commitments to individual human dignity and the rule of law; the protection from genocidal attacks that every people deserved; and the immorality of playing the role of a bystander when faced with evil actions on a grand scale. In practice, however, Eichmann's abduction, the decision to try him in Israel, the particular strategies and emphases of the prosecution, and his execution all provoked discussion and controversy that illustrate both the attractions and the limits of each of the four Holocaust constructions under consideration here. Indeed, the Eichmann trial became the setting within which key battles over Israel's collective memory of the Holocaust were fought. As we shall see, some of the most important results of these battles were not what Ben-Gurion had intended. While the Eichmann trial gave temporary prominence to the "object lesson" construction of the Holocaust, it also laid the groundwork for profound transformations in Israeli Jewish perceptions and beliefs that subsequently enabled the Holocaust to attain hegemonic status as a template for Jewish life.

The basis for the trial was, of course, the simple desire for justice to be done against a mass murderer. But as Hannah Arendt, Idith Zertal, and others have

emphasized, the timing of Eichmann's abduction and important features of the trial were the result of Ben-Gurion's careful choreography. Foremost among his concerns was to use the trial to assert and teach certain basic Zionist principles. In that sense, the trial was designed to extend the construction of the Holocaust as a "Zionist proof-text" for a new generation that had not directly experienced the drama of Holocaust and rebirth, as Zionism came to figure the fundamental relationship between the Shoah and the rise of the State of Israel. Among these principles were the horror associated with Jewish life in the diaspora, recognition of the Jewish state as the sole legitimate representative of the Jewish people, and the impossibility of Jewish survival without both the willingness and the capability to fight to defend Jewish lives.²⁶ But there were other motives as well. Eichmann's name had come into public prominence during the Kastner trial—a humiliation for Ben-Gurion. Part of his motivation in ordering Eichmann's apprehension when he did was to show that if his right-wing opponents could claim some sort of victory against Kastner for his dealings with Eichmann, Ben-Gurion could do much better by bringing Eichmann himself to justice. The intention was to help to rehabilitate the reputation of Mapai leaders that had been damaged by the Kastner trial (Segev 1993, 328; Weitz 1996, 14–15). Accordingly, Ben-Gurion forbade any involvement whatsoever by Shmuel Tamir in Eichmann's prosecution, or that he be permitted to participate in Eichmann's interrogation, despite that attorney's public plea to be involved somehow in the case. Ben-Gurion never forgave Tamir for his depiction of the Mapai leaders during the Kastner trial, and he was adamant that no further opportunity be given to Tamir or others to raise questions again about the possible complicity of Jewish leaders with the implementation of the Final Solution (Weitz 2009, 31–37).

More generally, Eichmann's dramatic apprehension, ordered by Ben-Gurion and executed by Israel's intelligence agency, the Mossad, along with the Eichmann trial, its elaborate coverage, and Eichmann's execution by a sovereign Jewish state, were meant to showcase Ben-Gurion and the State of Israel as acting forcefully to bring to justice the highest-ranking surviving Nazi leader. In her influential and controversial treatment of the trial, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, Arendt offered the most well-known and influential critique of this strategy (Arendt 1963). She argued that Eichmann should instead have been dealt with in a manner that would have permanently underscored the universal, not parochial, importance of the Holocaust—as an object lesson about the need to protect the human rights of all peoples. Her acerbic treatment of the trial was fundamentally based on her fury that the occasion had been inadequately exploited for this purpose. Hence, she strongly criticized Gideon Hausner, the chief prosecutor in the trial, as Ben-Gurion's instrument for making the trial what he wanted it to be (rather than what Arendt wanted it to be).

Indeed, there is much to be learned by considering Ben-Gurion's choice of Hausner. Judge Benjamin Halevy, who had presided over the Kastner trial and delivered the savage verdict against Kastner (and, by extension, against Mapai), was also assigned to the Eichmann trial. Hausner had fiercely attacked Halevy's verdict.

²⁶ For an excellent analysis along these lines that also surveys work on Ben-Gurion and the Eichmann trial, see Weitz (2008).

Important to Ben-Gurion, as well, was Hausner's view that it was illegitimate to raise questions about the behavior and choices made by Jewish leaders during the Holocaust since they were operating under inconceivably difficult circumstances (Weitz 2009, 33). Another key element in Ben-Gurion's calculations was the desire to protect Israel's relationship with Adenauer's Germany, upon which continued economic aid and an increasingly important arms relationship depended. It was crucial, therefore, that a prosecutor be chosen who was willing to honor the distinction Ben-Gurion was insisting upon—a distinction between Nazi Germany, and the new Germany, despite the presence of high-ranking former Nazis in the Bonn government. Indeed, Ben-Gurion personally edited the text of Hausner's indictment against Eichmann, ensuring that Hausner would refer not to "Germany," but to "Nazi Germany," in his indictment; that Hausner would avoid blaming the German people, *per se*; and that the personal guilt and responsibility of Hitler would be stressed as much as possible.²⁷

The trial lasted for four months, with graphic and emotionally exhausting testimony broadcast live on the radio, holding the entire nation of Israel in its grip. Hausner had a dramatic, extended, passionate, and systematic prosecutorial style. But it is evident that however strictly Ben-Gurion and Hausner tried to adhere to their plan for the trial, it was impossible to orchestrate it in a sufficiently disciplined manner to prevent inconvenient issues from being raised. Even in Hausner's six-hour opening speech, one can detect each of the four Holocaust constructions. In the best tradition of the "lachrymose theory" of Jewish history, he began his speech by stating, "[T]he history of the Jewish people is steeped in suffering and tears" (*ibid.*). In this context, the Holocaust was but the zenith of a relationship between Jews and the world that was fundamentally threatening and agonistic. Ironically, this explicit invocation of the Holocaust as a template for Jewish life was muted—ironic, because the most lasting effect of both his speech and the trial as a whole was to prepare the emotional and psychological basis for virtually all Israeli Jews and, eventually, the vast majority of Jews throughout the world, to identify with the victims. The shift, which I will trace in the final section of this paper, was from identification, in the early 1950s, with ghetto fighters and partisans who had died "beautiful deaths" with weapons in hand, defending Jewish honor or human dignity against all odds, to identification with those who had succumbed, in whatever manner, to the terror, brutalization, and systematic atrocities that were at the core of the Final Solution.

More salient in the opening address was Hausner's treatment of the Holocaust as a Zionist proof-text. Crucial here was Hausner's invocation of the fundamental Zionist premise of the pathology of life in exile. Antisemitism was the automatic

²⁷ Weitz, "The founding father and the war criminal's trial," *op. cit.*, 229–233. At Ben-Gurion's insistence, Hausner took extraordinary precautions to prevent the name of Hans Globke being mentioned more than incidentally in the course of the trial. Globke, a high-ranking Nazi during the Third Reich, continued to serve as a close adviser to Chancellor Konrad Adenauer, Ben-Gurion's chief interlocutor in the budding Israeli–Germany relationship. For a detailed analysis of the relationship with Germany and Ben-Gurion's decisions with regard to Eichmann, see Roni Stauber, "The impact of the Eichmann trial on relations between Israel and the Federal Republic of Germany," in *The Eichmann Trial*, D. Lzar and R. Wittmann, eds. (forthcoming).

result of Jewish life in the diaspora. Only by ending the exilic condition by the mass movement of Jews to a reestablished sovereign territorial state could it be eliminated. "Antisemitism," he declared, "was not invented by Hitler. It had existed for many generations. Its roots are in the disastrous dispersion of the Jews."²⁸ Hausner also gave extended treatment to the heroism of the Zionist youth movements that had risen in hopeless but heroic revolt in Warsaw and elsewhere, and were "longing for action" against the Nazi murderers (*ibid.*). He told of the survivors of those uprisings, who, in July 1944, had issued a declaration that "foretold the emergence of a free, democratic state, in which the long-suffering Jewish people could develop and be creative, as the only historic compensation for their afflicted people" (*ibid.*).²⁹

As we have seen, Israeli leaders had been worried for at least a decade that the world would soon forget what Jews had suffered, and that the obligations that many gentiles felt after the war to help Jews recover from the disaster would diminish. In light of this concern, most of Hausner's address can also be seen as a powerful expression of the "wasting asset" construction—a rehearsal of the implementation of the Nazis' Final Solution, laying out the increasingly horrific techniques used to impoverish, persecute, humiliate, expel, and then annihilate as many Jewish men, women, and children as possible. Hausner's address, and the trial that followed, provided nothing so much as an overwhelming panorama of Jewish agony. From this perspective, the Eichmann trial, among other things, was a bold attempt to vivify and extend the life of the memory of the event so as to continue to be able to treat the Holocaust, for Zionism and for the State of Israel, as a "beneficial disaster."

But as a direct and explicit contribution to expanding the range of public constructions of the Holocaust in Jewish–Israeli discourse, the Eichmann trial was perhaps most significant for the prominence it gave to broad educational and universalist motives, figuring the Holocaust as an object lesson for all who valued civilized life and respect for the dignity of all people. In his opening address, Hausner referred repeatedly to the Nuremberg tribunal, "whose decision is binding upon us according to our law."³⁰ As noted, the judgment of that tribunal was that the Nazi leaders deserved punishment, not for crimes against the Jews or other specific groups of victims, but for their "crimes against humanity." While Hausner emphasized Hitler's obsessive and fanatical antisemitism, he also pointed to Hitler's rejection of the existence of a common basis for all humanity:

According to his doctrines, there is no mutual responsibility between men. In place of the injunction "And though shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," we

²⁸ The Nizkor Project: Remembering the Holocaust, "The trial of Adolf Eichmann," Part 2, <http://www.nizkor.org/hweb/people/e/eichmann-adolf/transcripts/Sessions/Session-006-007-008-02.html>.

²⁹ As Hannah Arendt points out, the prosecution repeatedly asked testifying survivors why they did not resist, thereby revealing the depth and nagging power of the Zionist proof-text's emphasis on distinguishing sheep-like victims from heroic resisters (Arendt 1963, 230; see also Yablonka 2008, 575).

³⁰ The Nizkor Project: Remembering the Holocaust, "The trial of Adolf Eichmann," Part 3, <http://www.nizkor.org/hweb/people/e/eichmann-adolf/transcripts/Sessions/Session-006-007-008-03.html>.

find “Crush him that is unlike thyself!” Instead of the ideal of human brotherhood, we have the principle of race superiority.³¹

This effect of the Eichmann trial became particularly evident in the realm of Israeli education. Even before the trial, concerns had emerged that Israel needed to provide the generation born as Israeli Jews, which was entering adolescence at the time of the Eichmann trial, with a strong sense of personal moral responsibility that could be integrated with their Jewish identity (Carmon 1979, 213–216). That meant a significant broadening of the categories and perspectives employed when teaching about the Holocaust. Studies of curricula and textbooks agree that until the Eichmann trial had registered its effect on Israeli society, teachers in Israeli secondary schools had paid little attention to the Holocaust—and virtually none had treated it as an opportunity to discuss universal values, toleration for others, and dangers of genocidal attacks on any people (Schatzker 1988, 468). As author Ruth Firer notes, many of the chapters in textbooks used in Israel during its first decades concluded their scanty treatment of the Holocaust with a pointed invocation of a key element within the “Zionist proof-text” construction. “In the heroic position of the ghetto Jews, there was a compensation for the *shameful surrender* of the Jews who were transported to the death camps” (Firer 1987, 181). In his study of the treatment of the Holocaust in Israel’s schools, author Chaim Schatzker agrees with Firer that the Eichmann trial was a turning point for Israeli Holocaust education. It produced among Israeli policymakers and educators a new commitment that the Holocaust had to be taught more seriously, more analytically, and less emotionally; that the needs of the students and not the memory of the victims had to serve as the main criterion for content; and that lessons of the Holocaust should be identified to serve not just national objectives, but also “moral and general humanistic goals” (Schatzker 1988, 472).

In the decades following the Eichmann trial, two serious efforts were made to implement curricular reforms reflecting this universalist “object lesson” construction of the Holocaust. Policy expert Arye Carmon first advanced this idea in the mid-1970s. With the new international professional standards for secondary school education in mind, Carmon advocated for a social-scientific analysis of the rise of Nazism and the prewar circumstances of European Jewish communities. He also strongly urged that Holocaust education be designed to communicate the Holocaust’s challenge to universalist values and to encourage a moral consciousness encompassing all of humanity. He tested his curriculum during the late 1970s in pilot programs in Israel, the United States, and Germany, but the Ministry of Education rejected his textbook, *The Holocaust: A Subject for High Schools* (1977). It was deemed “too revolutionary” and, in particular, was regarded as insufficiently committed to presenting the Holocaust as a source of Jewish solidarity and as a crucial element in the Israeli national and Zionist narrative (Keren 2004, 129; see also Firer 1987, 181–185).

However, the curricular prominence of the object lesson did not last long. In 1983, Israeli schools adopted a new textbook, *The Holocaust and Its Meaning*,

³¹ The Nizkor Project: Remembering the Holocaust, “The trial of Adolf Eichmann,” Part 1, <http://www.nizkor.org/hweb/people/e/eichmann-adolf/transcripts/Sessions/Session-006-007-008-01.html>.

written by two Israeli scholars closely associated with Yad Vashem—Israel Gutman and Chaim Schatzker. It became the standard Holocaust textbook in Israeli secondary schools for the next 20 years. Apart from several paragraphs in the last chapter devoted to the Nuremberg trials, which include a critique of Nuremberg for its scant attention to the particular fate of Jews, Gutman and Schatzker excluded the “object lesson” construction from their text. Instead, they systematically organized the book according to the “Zionist proof-text” construction. It featured an extended discussion of the heroism of Jewish ghetto fighters and of the close relationship between the Holocaust and the justice of Israel’s creation and its cause. But, reflecting the impact of the influence of the Jewish consciousness program and the Eichmann trial, the book also emphasized details of the Nazis’ atrocities and the steadfastness of the Jewish victims who had struggled simply to survive.

Nearly a decade later, another attempt was made to implement the “object lesson” construction of the Holocaust in Israeli education. In the center-left government led by Yitzhak Rabin in the early 1990s, Shulamit Aloni, a champion of liberal values and a universalist/secularist interpretation of Jewish culture, served as minister of education. The Ministry of Education commissioned Israeli scholar Yair Auron to design a new approach to Holocaust education, one based on his book *The Banality of Indifference*, about the Armenian genocide. But the reaction against the idea was so strong that the project was quickly abandoned.³² Indeed, Aloni was forced to leave her post—in part because of her identification with the proposed changes in the Holocaust curriculum (“to bring back humanism” [Feldman 2008, 60]), and her related criticism of the Ministry of Education’s program (to be discussed below) of encouraging Jewish ultranationalism by sending thousands of Israeli high school students to visit the death camps in Poland.

A more recent noteworthy effort to evoke the Holocaust as an object lesson in universal values was the widely quoted speech given to the German Parliament by the stalwart Zionist historian Yehuda Bauer. Bauer insisted that the Holocaust be understood in strictly human, social-science terms, in part so that human societies could understand how to prevent such a crime from happening again. By using the cadence and phrasing of the Shema, a prayer of central importance in Judaism, Bauer suggested to the German lawmakers that the Holocaust could be considered a kind of revelation to humanity of three new commandments:

“You, your children, and your children’s children shall never become perpetrators”; “You, your children, and your children’s children shall never, ever allow yourselves to become victims”; and “You, your children, and your children’s children shall never, *never* be passive onlookers to mass murder, genocide, or (may it never be repeated) a Holocaust-like tragedy” (Bauer 2001, 273).

Despite these efforts, there is no question that of the four constructions of the Holocaust I have described, the “object lesson” has had the least success in competition for influence over Israeli political culture. This was signaled in 1995 by major protests that erupted when a progressive multicultural high school in

³² For a discussion of this episode, see Gur-Ze’ev (2000, 379–380).

Jerusalem lit a seventh torch honoring nations, in addition to the Jews, that had been subjected to severe persecution (Feldman 2008, 52). But the competition among Holocaust constructions continues and, as with the “Zionist proof-text” and “wasting asset” constructions, we should not be surprised if the human rights “object lesson” has had unanticipated long-term consequences that outweigh its short-term failures. As I will suggest below, perhaps the most important of these is the application, by Israelis to themselves, of lessons of the Holocaust. These include lessons such as not to remain a bystander when witnessing evil against others; to consider statelessness as a mortal threat to individuals and nations; and to require soldiers to refuse to carry out orders that are “blatantly illegal.”³³ In this way, the Holocaust, which was imagined to offer guidance for how all the nations of the world might protect themselves from descending into the maelstrom of Nazi-style evil, has been used by Jewish Israelis to strongly criticize the state’s policies and actions, sometimes toward Southeast Asian or African refugees, but most commonly toward Palestinian Arabs in general, and toward Arab inhabitants of the occupied Palestinian territories in particular (Klar et al. 2013, 136–137).

The Holocaust as a Template for Jewish Life

A “template for Jewish life” is the construction of the Holocaust whose hegemonic status within Jewish Israeli collective memory was established in the 1980s and consolidated in the 1990s. I do not refer here to a prominent ultra-Orthodox version of this construction—that the Holocaust was a large, tragically familiar, God-authorized punishment of his chosen but wayward people. By this traditional religious account, the Holocaust was the 20th-century version of a long series of gentile attacks on Jews that indicate the fundamental nature of human history prior to a messianic redemption, as well as a reflection of the true nature of the Jews as a “people that dwells alone, and that shall not be counted among the nations.”³⁴ Rather, by this construction, I refer to the Holocaust experienced as a reliable political and moral guide for all Jews, whether secular or religious, as to what it means to be Jewish in an overwhelmingly non-Jewish world. The simple logic of the Holocaust as a template for Jewish life renders facts about the catastrophe as revealing an unbridgeable abyss separating Jews and gentiles—the slaughter of millions of Jews by the Germans and their allies in almost every occupied country; the unique aspects of the Holocaust as an industrialized, ideological, and fanatic effort to extirpate an entire people; the willingness of governments and peoples around the world to acquiesce in the implementation of the Final Solution; and the world’s refusal of refuge to those seeking to escape.

Remembered this way, the Holocaust uncovers the ferocious antisemitism lurking in the hearts and cultures of all non-Jews at all times. The overarching lesson flowing from this construction is that the categorical imperative for any Jew

³³ This requirement, included formally in the doctrine of the Israel Defense Forces, has been invoked repeatedly by Israeli soldiers and military officers as they refused to serve or to carry out orders against Palestinians or in Lebanon.

³⁴ For variants of this characterization used in Zionist contexts, see Fisch (1982, 85), Kasher (1968, 32) and Aviner (1982, 16–17).

is “Don’t be a *frier* (‘sucker’),” by trusting non-Jews, relying upon their goodwill, or taking risks with Jewish interests or objectives to serve supposedly universalist purposes (Gur-Zev 2000, 393). In extraordinarily powerful ways, this Holocaust construction has been deeply and pervasively institutionalized in contemporary Israel (and among Jewish diaspora communities). Its tenets have become unevaluated and virtually unevaluable axioms of Israeli political discourse and of the self-experience of Jewishness on the part of millions of both Israeli and non-Israeli Jews.

Four events contributed decisively to this construct’s success.³⁵ The first was the Eichmann trial. As noted, by the mid-1950s, some Israeli elites had begun to question the intense rejection by Zionist ideology, state propaganda, and sabra culture of Jewish life in Galut (“exile”) and the near disgust with which the experience and behavior of the masses of Jewish Holocaust victims had been treated. But it was only during the Eichmann trial that the Israeli Jewish public was exposed, via live national radio broadcasts, to heart-wrenching survivor and expert accounts of the Holocaust. These drove home the ghastly and terrifyingly inescapable conditions imposed upon European Jews by the Final Solution.

The standard psychological separation in Israel between “them”—the mass of Holocaust victims, viewed as Jews who had allowed themselves to be victimized by the Nazis without resisting—and “us”—a healthy, courageous nation of Jews that inhabited the Yishuv and founded the State of Israel, could not survive the dramatic and personal testimony of survivors. Holocaust scholar Hanna Yablonka’s analysis of the “powerful emotional jolt” delivered by the trial captured the emotional revolution that occurred (Yablonka 2008, 580). Yehiel Dinur, a writer also known as Ka-Tsetnik, was a survivor of Auschwitz. He collapsed on the stand during his testimony during the Eichmann trial, but not before describing the experience of the Holocaust as so remote from anything human and familiar as to be something that had occurred on another planet. Yablonka described his phrase, “Planet Auschwitz,” as “one of the most thoroughly absorbed of all terms in the Israeli discourse”—a formula that enabled individual Israelis to believe that, had they been there, they also would have succumbed, no matter how Zionist or courageous they imagined themselves to be (ibid., 571). This idea, even more than the construction of the “wasting asset,” entailed a shift in the psychological stance of Israeli Jews—to identify directly and personally with the millions of Holocaust victims. As for them, so for Israeli Jews, survival was the imperative, and heroism was anything done for that purpose. The Eichmann trial, more than any other event, “turned the story of the Holocaust in Europe into an Israeli story” (ibid.), meaning that Israeli Jews, whether of European, Middle Eastern, North African, or sabra extraction, identified personally with the victims of the Holocaust—not just with the partisans and ghetto fighters, but with the slaughtered masses.³⁶

³⁵ For a more detailed consideration of the debate over the relative decisiveness of these events in the transformation of Israeli collective memory concerning the Holocaust, see Shapira (1998).

³⁶ For a general assessment of the conclusions of many analysts regarding the Eichmann trial as a psychological turning point for the Israeli Jewish collective memory of the Holocaust, see I Klar, Schori-Eyal, and Klar (2013, 132). For the unexpected and unintended emotional impact of Ben-Gurion’s decision to apprehend and try Eichmann, see Don-Yehiya (1993, 145, 149).

The second of the four events leading to the ascendance of the “template for Jewish life” construct was the three-week “waiting period” prior to the Six Day War in June of 1967. In mid-May of that year, a long process of escalation in the conflict between Israel and the Arab states had accelerated. Aerial dogfights over Syria were followed by threats of annihilation coming from Arab capitals. A new alliance among previously quarreling Arab leaders put their militaries under what seemed to be a united command dedicated to the liberation of Palestine and the destruction of Israel. Following Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser’s order to evacuate the Sinai, the United Nations Emergency Force disappeared as a buffer between the Egyptian and Israeli armies.³⁷ The Egyptian announcement of the closure of the Gulf of Aqaba to Israeli shipping, and signs of dithering in Europe and North America made it seem as if Israel would be standing alone against a credible threat of disastrous defeat and even genocidal slaughter. Israel’s prime minister at the time was Levi Eshkol. His popular image was that of a Yiddish-speaking diaspora-style Jewish politician with expertise in practical matters (as minister of agriculture and finance). Eshkol had none of the brio that Ben-Gurion and his coterie of sabra warriors communicated. Widely suspected of being afraid to lead the country to war, Eshkol gave a halting, uninspiring radio address during the crisis, intensifying the public’s angst and its sense of doom. While the Eichmann trial had stimulated Israeli Jews to identify personally with the fate of Jews murdered by the Nazis, it was only during this anxiety-filled three weeks that masses of Israeli Jews came to identify their collective political predicament with that of the Jews in Europe who had faced the Nazi menace prior to and during World War II.

Over Eshkol’s personal opposition, and as a direct result of moral panic among both the Israeli masses and elites, Moshe Dayan was appointed as defense minister. Dayan, chief of staff during the 1956 Sinai Campaign against Egypt, and closely allied politically and in the popular imagination with Ben-Gurion, was the iconic image of the new, aggressive Israeli–Jewish hero. Many historians now believe that Israel was never in the kind of danger attributed at the time to the Arab threat, and Eshkol’s prudence is now judged to have been wisdom, but Dayan’s appointment made war inevitable. A surprise Israeli attack destroyed the Egyptian Air Force in a single blow, ensuring a victory that exposed the weakness and disunity of the Arabs. But the victory was so quick and seemed so complete that the angst in Israel associated with the waiting period was replaced by euphoria and a triumphalist attitude toward the Jewish state’s ability to impose peace on its terms, including Israeli rule of most or all of the territories acquired in battle from Syria, Jordan, and Egypt (Brecher, 1980, 38–39, 94–94, 328).

However, the 1973 “Yom Kippur War”—the third event leading to the ascendance of the “template for Jewish life” Holocaust construction—permanently rekindled angst as a feature of Israeli political culture. The Eichmann trial was the setting for a shift in the psychological stance of Israeli Jews toward the victims of

³⁷ In 1957 the UN Secretary General Dag Hammarskjöld wanted to station UN troops on both the Israeli and Egyptian sides of the border. This would have given the UN the right to keep its peacekeepers in place even if Egypt ordered them out. Since Ben-Gurion rejected the proposal the UN had no choice but to leave the Sinai when Nasser demanded it.

the Holocaust—from alienation, stigmatization, and disgust, to empathy and identification. The waiting period prior to the Six Day War translated this psychological stance into a Holocaust frame for experiencing Arab threats against the State of Israel, and rendered the international isolation of the Jewish state as equivalent to the Nazi threat to annihilate the Jewish people while the world stood by and watched. But it was not until the 1973 war that the implications of this change in political psychology became clear. In that war, Israeli losses were more than triple those suffered in 1967. Intense fighting lasted for weeks and hostilities lasted for many months, during which the mobilization of the military was nearly total. At one point early in the fighting, Defense Minister Dayan panicked. Believing that Syria was about to successfully invade northern Israel, he recommended unleashing Israel's recently deployed nuclear capability. Given the scale of the losses and rumors of even larger defeats and breakdowns in leadership, large parts of the Israeli public were plunged into despair. Nor was there a dramatic victory, as in 1967, to replace existential doubts with euphoria or a sense of satisfaction. Regardless of the larger losses inflicted by Israel on the Arab armies, the outcome of the war, including the withdrawal from territory in both the Golan Heights and the Sinai, was experienced as a defeat, and as the tragic result of grave intelligence, political, and military errors by previously trusted leaders.³⁸

In 1967, the Israeli Jewish public felt the “template for Jewish life” construction of the Holocaust intensely, but only briefly. By contrast, the prolonged sense of weakness and vulnerability that had gripped the country during and after the 1973 war, coupled with attitudes of disillusionment and distrust, made that construction of the Holocaust altogether more convincing and psychologically potent than the other three I have discussed. From that point on, it was only a matter of time before politicians positioned to exploit that frame would reap the benefits of doing so.

The most revolutionary change in Israel's political history was the rise to power of the right-wing political coalition known as the Likud–National Liberal Movement. The Likud's defeat of the Labor Party in 1977 and its ability to anchor stable right-wing and right-of-center governments transformed Israeli politics. A competitive party system featuring oscillation between center-left and center-right governments, replaced the single-party dominant system (anchored by the Labor Party) that had prevailed in Israel since 1948. The pattern of alternating Likud and Labor governments continued for almost three decades until the reestablishment of a single-party (Likud) dominant system in 2006.

For my purposes, the important aspect of the Likud's emergence and eventual domination of Israeli politics was that its historic leader, Menachem Begin, had been more passionate and consistent in his evocation of the Holocaust than any other major Israeli politician. After the 1948 Arab–Israeli War, Begin transformed his underground Irgun military organization, led by the “fighting family,” into the Herut political party, basing its appeal on calls for maximalist territorial expansion. Expecting to emerge as leader of the opposition to Ben-Gurion's Mapai party, Begin

³⁸ For an eloquent expression of how the aftermath of the 1973 war shocked Jews into experiencing a second Holocaust as a present and threatening reality, see Elie Wiesel, “Ominous Signs and Unspeakable Thoughts,” *New York Times* (December 28, 1974).

was stunned by Herut's poor showing in Israel's 1948 election. After the Likud suffered an even worse showing in 1951, Begin resigned as head of the party. But he shortly returned, basing his comeback on a violent challenge to the reparations agreement with Germany. Herut also benefited from the political fallout of the Kastner trial, so that after the 1955 election, when Begin emerged as head of the largest opposition party, he could see how much his success was linked to the use of the Holocaust as a basis for attacking Labor Party rule, for constructing Israel's conflict with Arabs as equivalent to its struggle with the Nazis, and for portraying relations between Jews and gentiles as intractably hostile.

The Eichmann trial and the wars of 1967 and 1973 gave Begin's political entrepreneurship exactly the ingredients needed to fashion an appeal to Israeli voters broad enough to bring his new Likud alliance to power. The key was to attract support from the great mass of Jewish working-class and lower-middle-class voters who had immigrated to Israel from Islamic countries in the Middle East and North Africa—the Mizrahim (“Easterners”). Mizrahim were available for opposing the dominant Labor Party based on their intense resentment against mistreatment during the absorption of the mass immigration in the 1950s and by the discrimination, condescension, and even racism evinced toward them by many members of the veteran Ashkenazic (European–American) Labor Party and bureaucracy. Few Mizrahim featured prominently in either Herut or the broader Likud, but Begin could mobilize them en masse, in part by drawing directly and dramatically on the common identification of all Israeli Jews, including Mizrahim, with Jewish victims of the Holocaust.³⁹

The basis for this appeal was the change in Israeli sentiments toward the victims and the extension of the category of “we who have survived” to include not only those who had been in the camps, or who had fled Europe, but all Jews whom the Nazis had failed to kill, including Mizrahim. But just as important was Begin's use of the desires of the Mizrahim to avoid being identified with Arabs (despite their appearance, key aspects of their culture, and the prominence of Arabic language in their homes). Begin deftly and relentlessly exploited these desires by using the Holocaust as a template for instructing a united Jewish people about its frightful condition. This was a construction of the Holocaust that Begin keenly experienced as the thing itself. In sharp contrast to the views of Ben-Gurion and most leading Labor politicians, whose ideological commitments and psychological postures predated and survived the Holocaust, Begin's outlook was fundamentally changed by the catastrophe. “The Holocaust,” Begin said in a 1977 interview, “lives within me. And I live within it. And I will live with it until the last day of my life.” He called the Holocaust “the prime mover of all that we have done in our generation” (Rowland 1985, 60).

With powerful, melodramatic rhetoric, Begin's speeches regularly portrayed Jews as forever isolated and exposed to slaughter in an intrinsically antisemitic, gentile world. Drawing directly on the anxieties, fears, and furies associated with the pre-Six Day War waiting period and the losses and disillusionments of the 1973

³⁹ For an analysis of the development of Holocaust consciousness among Mizrahim that describes the third generation as having had “the Shoah burnt in their souls,” see Yablonka (2009, 94).

Arab–Israeli War, Begin missed few opportunities to identify Arab terror or Arab military or political mobilization of any kind as an easily recognized and expected recapitulation of the genocidal campaign of Nazi Germany. His enormous success with this tactic led Yossi Sarid, one of Israel’s shrewdest political observers, to remark that it was Menachem Begin “who released the genie of the Holocaust from the bottle” (Sarid 2013).

For example, during a September 1969 election rally in Safed, to a mostly Mizrahi audience, Begin devoted nearly his entire, highly emotional speech to portraying Jews standing alone and isolated in a hostile and antisemitic world, and to describing the threats posed to Jews and Israel by the Arabs as identical to those faced by Jews during the Holocaust.⁴⁰ Indeed, there were few issues regarding Israel’s foreign and security policies and its place in the world that Begin did not approach by framing them as recapitulating the threats and lessons of the Holocaust—especially the fundamental dramatic positioning of a small group, beleaguered but brave, facing menacing and powerful dominant forces. Arab threats before the 1967 Six Day War “threatened another Holocaust.” After the war, trading occupied territories for peace would lead to another slaughter—that of 1.5 million Jewish children (Rowland 1985, 59).⁴¹ “The PLO (Palestine Liberation Organization) Covenant was...*Mein Kampf* no. 2, and ‘the organization of murderers’ (the PLO) and its leader were the modern-day equivalent of the SS and Adolf Hitler, respectively” (Cromer 2004, 115). The Soviet Union’s support for the PLO was a repeat of its alliance with Nazi Germany. United Nations responsiveness to the Palestinian cause and European and American permission for PLO offices to be opened in their countries proved that the Holocaust’s lessons had not been learned. On the eve of Israel’s invasion of Lebanon to destroy PLO forces there, Begin made this remark to his cabinet: “Believe me, the alternative to this is Treblinka, and we have decided that there will not be another Treblinka” (Morris 1999, p. 512). When Israel bombed the Iraqi nuclear reactor in 1981, Begin equated radioactivity with the poison gas used in the extermination camps, declaring that the raid had protected “Israel and her people” from “another Holocaust” (Shipler 1981). While Israeli soldiers were attacking Beirut in 1982 in search of PLO head Yasir Arafat, Begin sent a letter to President Ronald Reagan characterizing himself as “a Prime Minister empowered to instruct a valiant army facing Berlin where, amongst innocent civilians, Hitler and his henchmen hide in a bunker deep beneath the surface” (Citizen 1982).

Begin led the way for generations of politicians to use the Holocaust as a vocabulary for contemporary political analysis. Particularly effusive in their evocation of the “template for Jewish life” construct as a vehicle for advancing their political program were advocates, both before and after 1967, of the “Greater Land of Israel.” By their lights, only an expansive and militant State of Israel could

⁴⁰ Author notes, Safed, Israel, September 29, 1969 {comment: not sure how to enter this as a source or a citation}. See also Nurith Geertz (1981, 106–114). Begin certainly did not originate the idea of equating Arabs with Nazis. For Ben-Gurion’s repeated use of this trope, including descriptions of Nasser as a new Hitler, see Zertal (2005, p. 97) and Weitz (2013).

⁴¹ For a detailed discussion of Begin’s references to the Holocaust in connection with nearly every security challenge faced by Israel, see Naor (2003, 136–141).

be prepared to do battle against inevitable and recurrent Holocaust threats (Naor 2003). But even left-wing and dovish figures, such as Abba Eban, who was foreign minister during and after the Six Day War, were drawn to this rhetoric. Eban once referred to the boundaries Israel held before the war as “Auschwitz borders”—a phrase repeated endlessly since then by right-wing Israeli politicians. Still, leading politicians on the right have been foremost in their use of the Holocaustia lexicon. In this respect, current Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has been Menachem Begin’s most faithful disciple. For almost two decades, Netanyahu has railed against Iran’s nuclear technology development program as a repeat of Nazi Germany’s mobilization prior to the Holocaust. Indeed, over a period considerably longer than that between Hitler’s rise to power and the end of World War II, Netanyahu has continued to declare this: “It’s 1938 and Iran is Germany!”

To be sure, for decades, Israeli intellectuals have roundly accused politicians such as Begin and Netanyahu of trivializing the catastrophe through crass and transparently self-serving efforts to instrumentalize its memory (Sarid 2013; Avnery 2009; Ophir 1987; Rubinstein 2015).⁴² But if the Holocaust drum is beat at every opportunity by those seeking to mobilize the Israeli–Jewish population, it is only evidence of how completely saturated the society is by Holocaustia thinking and how hegemonic, which is to say “natural,” it is for Israeli Jews to think this way and to expect their leaders to do so as well.

At least 10 major museums and memorials to the Holocaust are now open in Israel. In 2014, the biggest of these, Yad Vashem, welcomed some nine hundred thousand visitors, including de rigueur visits by virtually every foreign leader to arrive in Jerusalem (Yad Vashem 2015). According to Yad Vashem’s director, about six thousand books on the Holocaust are published each year in Israel—more Hebrew books than appear in any other thematic category (Klar et al. 2013, 127). In 2014, this flood of books included a gigantic coffee table volume containing nothing but 6 million repetitions of the word “Jew” (Rudoren 2014). The absorption of what the Holocaust says about what it means to be Jewish was evident to me in June of 2014, when I observed that more than half the books in the Judaica section of the main store of Tel Aviv’s largest bookseller were devoted to various aspects of the destruction of European Jewry and its legacy.

While the Israeli educational system paid limited attention to the Holocaust during the 1950s, and fluctuated in its approaches and emphases during the 1970s and 1980s, once the “template for Jewish life” construct took hold in the 1980s, public schools became powerful vehicles for the transmission of its effects. Visitors to a Holocaust museum in Israel, on almost any school day, are sure to see classes of youngsters or teenagers being led through the exhibits. In 1988, the Education Ministry began sponsoring carefully scripted, subsidized, weeklong trips to the

⁴² This critique reflects an attitude reflected by the increasingly common use of the term “Jewish Woodstock” to refer to student trips to Auschwitz, and of the phrase “Shoah business”—a reference used during an interview even by a senior official at a leading Israeli Holocaust museum to refer to his work and that of his colleagues (see also Finkelstein 2000). For a bitingly sarcastic version of this point of view targeted mainly at the exploitation of the Holocaust by Jews in the United States, see Reich (2008). For an endorsement of the target of this sarcasm—the efforts to manage the Holocaust “brand” by applying professional managerial and advertising techniques, see Heruti-Sover (2014).

death camps in Poland for Israeli students in their penultimate year of high school. The initiator of this program, Oded Cohen, chose the following passage to begin the guidebook provided to participants:

As we stand by the crematoria...opposite the flag of Israel raised on high and over the death pits and ovens of destruction, we stand erect and our lips whisper—the people of Israel lives!...And we swear to the millions of our murdered brethren—if I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its strength! In the ears of our spirit, we hear their souls calling to us—through our death we have commanded you to live! Guard and protect the State of Israel like the apple of your eye! And we answer wholeheartedly—long live the State of Israel forever! (Feldman 2008, 202).

The final ceremony of such trips, before the return to Israel, is conducted in Warsaw, where the participants recite a passage from Haim Gouri, one of Israel's most famous patriotic poets. The melding of Jew-Holocaust and victim-defender of Israel is here succinctly accomplished:

“And sometimes it is I that suffocated in the gas chambers;
And a minute later, I am the partisan in the forests...
And I am the Mussulman,
And I am the IDF paratrooper taking revenge against his enemies...
And I know that this is my people” (Feldman 2008, 204, 228).

By 2008, some two hundred and fifty thousand students had completed their “*masa*” (“pilgrimage”) to the death camps (Feldman 2008, 17, 249).⁴³ In 2012, a kilometer-long-wide “connecting path” was inaugurated between Yad Vashem and Mount Herzl, where the military cemetery and a shrine to national heroes are located. A sign erected at the beginning of the walkway announces that the site was “constructed manually by members of Israel’s youth movements.” Echoing the theme of student trips to the death camps and then back to Israel, visitors are told, “[P]assage along it is a symbolic voyage in time from catastrophe to rebirth. It represents the journey from the Diaspora to the homeland of the Jewish people, from exile and destruction to a life of endeavor and hope in the State of Israel.” Events organized by the Ministry of Education for Holocaust Martyrs and Heroes Remembrance Day include a hike along this path for thousands of students.

⁴³ The word “*masa*” in traditional Zionist parlance is a strenuous journey or voyage, a kind of political and spiritual pilgrimage. It is characteristically used to describe the lives of Israel’s heroic pioneers, who had faced tremendous emotional and physical obstacles after leaving Europe to start new lives and build a new state in the Land of Israel. The journeys to the death camps are designed to recreate, for young Israelis, that same sense of danger, suffering, survival, and transcendent purpose, of having completed their own “*masa*.” Carefully traumatized by the guides, and segregated from positive contacts of any kind with Europeans while on the trip, the students experience an emotional breakdown, only to emerge from what they experience as an antisemitism-saturated diaspora as “witnesses” responsible for carrying on their mission as Jews to deliver the message of the Holocaust and to protect Israel and its inhabitants from contemporary threats of annihilation. For a detailed account of these trips and their psychological effects on participants, see Jackie Feldman’s brilliant ethnography. A trained anthropologist, Feldman worked for the Ministry of Education as a guide on the death camp voyages.

There is strong evidence that these programs, along with the dramatic shift in the nature of Holocaust memory and discourse in Israel that I have described, have had a major effect on young Israeli Jews. As early as 1993, a major survey found that the prominence of the Holocaust in the psychological and cultural consciousness of students in teacher-training colleges had increased markedly since the mid-1980s. Respondents were more likely to see the Holocaust as the source of their personal identity than any other factor—to see it as the most important event in Jewish history, and to identify more strongly with Holocaust victims than with Jews living in the diaspora (Auron 1997). Although there was variation across religious streams (state, state religious, and ultra-Orthodox), the study reported that the Holocaust “has now become the most conspicuous event in Jewish history among all three sectors...evidence,” wrote the author, “of the central position occupied by the Holocaust today in Israel’s national consciousness” (Auron 1997, 113).

A study of Holocaust imagery in the Israeli press conducted at roughly the same time corroborated the survey’s findings for the Israeli population as a whole. During the 1991 Gulf War, Iraqi missile strikes injured 230 Israelis. Two were killed. But fearing poison gas attacks (that never came), millions of Israelis took shelter in sealed rooms wearing gas masks for significant periods of time. In a landmark study of the Hebrew press during this period, author Moshe Zuckerman showed the complete domination of Israel’s public consciousness by Holocaust thinking. According to Zuckerman, the regularity with which reporters and commentators deployed Holocaust metaphors and categories during the war threatened a dangerous dilution of the capacity of the Hebrew language itself to preserve an appreciation of the actual catastrophe (Zuckerman 1993).

While the Gulf War, with its threat of poison gas, might be expected to have prompted more than its share of Holocaust associations, especially as reflected in a generally rightist-leaning popular press, a subsequent study of the liberal *Haaretz* newspaper yielded similar results. From October of 2007 to September of 2008, the study registered an average of 132 Holocaust references per month, compared to 140 monthly uses of all different phrases referring to the “Israeli–Arab conflict” (Klar et al. 2013, p. 127). A 2009 Guttman Center survey asked Jewish Israelis about the “guiding principles of their life.” In response, 98.1% of those surveyed reported “remembering the Holocaust” as one of those guiding principles. This was the most often cited guiding principle, cited more frequently than “feeling part of Israeli society,” “living in Israel,” or “feeling part of the Jewish people” (Arian and Keissar-Sugarman 2009, 70; Klar et al. 2013).⁴⁴ Since the 1980s, according to Idit Gil, the Holocaust has been “an almost daily presence in the (Israeli) public sphere” (Gil 2012, 88).

Menachem Begin survived the Holocaust. His family did not. One of his biographers observed that when it came to the Holocaust, Begin “was entirely sincere, entirely impassioned and entirely haunted” (Perlmutter 1987, 11). The meaning of the hegemony of the Holocaust as a template for Jewish life is that millions of 21st-century Israeli Jews who did not experience or suffer what Begin

⁴⁴ Finding in a study published in 2012 by Asher Arian (Klar et al. 2013, 125). For the complete study, see Arian and Keissar-Sugarman (2009).

did have nevertheless acquired this same Holocaust-haunted framework for defining their personal and collective challenges. Visitors to the office of Meir Dagan, director of the Mossad, Israel's clandestine intelligence and operations agency from 2002 to 2011, found a picture on the wall featuring his grandfather kneeling near a trench just seconds before being shot by an SS officer. In 2003, pilots of the Israeli Air Force, each a descendant of a Holocaust survivor, flew Phantom F-15 fighter bombers in a simulated bombing run over Auschwitz. Text added to the official video of the event posted by the Israeli Air Force reads as follows: "We rose from the ashes of millions of victims, carrying their silent cries, saluting their heroism, and promising to be a shield, to the Jewish people and its land, Israel."⁴⁵ Young Israelis tattoo numbers on their arms and pose for pictures with their grandparents, who received their tattoos in the death camps (Rudoren 2012).⁴⁶ A schoolgirl of Iranian descent cries in pain to her mother, wondering, since she doesn't have an aunt who died in the Holocaust, whether she is really Jewish (Dahan-Kalev 2014). In 2014, the minister of education announced that Holocaust education would begin in the first grade.⁴⁷ Paraphrasing a key portion of the Passover seder, the philosopher Adi Ophir aptly portrayed the centrality of the Holocaust template for translating Jewishness into meaning in contemporary Israel, thereby turning every Jew into both a Holocaust survivor and a witness. "A familiar commandment appears here: In every generation, each individual is bound to regard himself as if he had personally survived Auschwitz, as if he had witnessed the revelation of Evil" (Ophir 2005, p. 547).⁴⁸

Although it took more than a decade for an official Holocaust memorial day to be implemented in Israel, the national calendar is now dotted with such days. For many religious Jews, Tisha B'Av (the ninth day of the Hebrew summer month of Av) is used as the traditional occasion for mourning great national tragedies, now including the Holocaust. Others commemorate the Holocaust on the tenth day of the winter month of Teveth. International Holocaust Remembrance Day is observed on January 27. Holocaust Martyrs and Heroes Remembrance Day is observed in the spring, near the anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, during which Israelis stand silent while a siren sounds throughout the country for two minutes. Although former Prime Minister Moshe Sharett spoke briefly to commemorate the Holocaust in 1953, it was not until the mid-1990s that Israeli prime ministers and presidents made official speeches on Holocaust Martyrs and Heroes Remembrance Day, usually at Yad Vashem. In recent years, that ritual has been amplified by visits of groups of top Israeli leaders to Auschwitz and their participation in the annual "March of the Living," featuring a two-mile hike from the Auschwitz concentration camp to the extermination center at Birkenau. In January of 2014, 54 Knesset

⁴⁵ Israel Air Force Ceremony—F-15 Jets over Auschwitz , uploaded to YouTube April 20, 2009.

⁴⁶ See also Magid (2015).

⁴⁷ In an interview with one Holocaust educator employed by Yad Vashem, this decision was described as designed to prevent the unprofessional presentation of Holocaust material by teachers who lacked the necessary guidance to do so effectively.

⁴⁸ For Israeli critiques of Holocaust memorialization as having counterproductive and trivializing effects on Israel, Jewish life, and the honor due to Holocaust victims, see Segev (1993), Zertal (2005), Burg (2007), Feldman (2008) and Zuckerman (1993).

members—nearly half the members of the Israeli parliament—flew to Poland to attend a ceremony there (Rashty 2014).⁴⁹ A day before Independence Day, Israel also observes *Yom HaZikaron*, its official memorial day for military casualties and victims of terrorism. A key trope in recent years has been not only to identify Israeli soldiers and Israeli students returning from the death camps with Holocaust resistance fighters, survivors, and witnesses, but also to put victims of the Holocaust and all Israeli soldiers and civilians who died as a result of hostile actions into the same category of Jewish martyrdom (Feldman 2008, 52).

The result of this active and unrelenting remembering of an event seen as both the greatest crime in human history and the epitome of what it means to be Jewish, is a culture that marinates Israeli Jews in the images, associations, emotions, and lessons of the Holocaust. Psychologically, hundreds of Holocaust hyperlinks operate within them. Through these links, ordinary words, objects, and experiences—barking dogs, ovens, gas, barbed wire, smokestacks, railroad cars, trucks, carbon monoxide, showers, soap, lampshades, camps, nakedness, fear, baby shoes, hunger, humiliation, etc.—lead immediately to Holocaust thoughts and Holocaust emotions. Politicians, journalists, writers, artists and performers seeking to communicate with or arouse their audiences cannot ignore this reality of the Israeli Jewish collective consciousness, which arises from dense and emotionally powerful networks of associations.⁵⁰ It hardly bears emphasis that, as noted, the Holocaustia template has its most potent impact on perceptions of Arabs and Muslims, and especially Palestinians—those who have challenged the Zionist project since its beginnings. When all enemies are Nazis, and Arabs or Muslims are enemies, Arabs and Muslims are Nazis.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Sandy Rashty, “Israelis’ tough stance at Auschwitz,” *the Jewish Chronicle OnLine*, January 30, 2014, <http://www.thejc.com/news/uk-news/115241/israelis%E2%80%99-tough-stance-auschwitz>.

⁵⁰ Nowhere is this more apparent than in the acclaimed Israeli film by Ari Folman, *Waltz with Bashir* (Folman 2008). The film is a mostly animated treatment of the experiences and traumas of Israeli soldiers during the 1982 Lebanon War and their indirect complicity in the massacre of Palestinians by the Phalange militias under the leadership of Israel’s ally Lebanese President-elect Bashir Gemayel. “*Valtzem Bashir*,” as the title reads in Hebrew, conjures directly the idea of “doing something German” with Bashir Gemayel. Indeed, the entire film, from the ravenous dogs in the first scene to the emaciated naked bodies of Israeli soldiers rising from the sea and the trucks filled with dead Palestinians, is constructed on the knowledge that Israeli viewers will automatically make the connections, linking Israelis to Germans, that cannot be made explicitly.

⁵¹ In the summer of 2016, Israeli Defense Minister Avigdor Lieberman compared the work of Israel’s most famous Palestinian poet, Marwan Darwish, to Hitler’s *Mein Kampf*. Lieberman subsequently compared President Obama’s deal with Iran with Neville Chamberlain’s Munich Agreement. He later retracted the comparison, but not without additional commentary that established the same point less graphically (Glanz 2016; Goldberg 2016). Regarding the systematic conflation of Arabs/Palestinians and Nazis in Israeli popular culture and in the collective imagination, see Burg, *Victory over Hitler* (2007, 129–131), Feldman (2008, 3) and Morris (1999, 514–515). For explicit treatment of the call to apply the traditional biblical injunction to “wipe out the memory of Amalek” not only to the Nazis, but also to Arabs, see Gur-Zev (2000, 374–376).

Conclusion: Too Immense to be Reliably Constructed

This analysis of the struggle among four distinct constructions of the Holocaust in Israeli political culture has been conducted on two levels—an examination of the producers and promoters of these constructions, and an examination of the competition among the constructions themselves. Thus, we have seen how the distinctive perspectives and political interests of key actors, such as Ben-Gurion, Dinur, Sharett, Hausner, Begin, and Netanyahu, have shaped the particulars of individual Holocaust constructions, and we have weighed their changing prominence. We have also seen how the unintended consequences of constructions often outweighed the calculated purposes of their promoters. Traces of all four constructions—“Zionist proof-text,” “wasting asset,” “object lesson,” and a “template for Jewish life”—have been present from the 1940s. But we have also seen that for the last two decades, the “template for Jewish life” construction has not only prevailed over the others but has achieved hegemonic status. This state of affairs encourages all Israeli politicians to publicly interpret the dangers and imperatives of contemporary affairs in ways that reinforce Israeli Jews’ understanding of their world as intractably and existentially threatening—an issue that is beyond the scope of the present article. Also beyond the scope of this article is an in-depth analysis of the distortions and severe limits placed on the ability of Israeli society and Israeli leaders to exploit or even perceive opportunities for moving toward mutually advantageous arrangements with their neighbors. If Arabs and Muslims are automatically seen as Nazis or likely to act as Nazis; if gentiles are automatically categorized as antisemitic or likely to revert suddenly to that type; and if most problems faced by Israel are most convincingly treated as requiring protection against the possibility of another Holocaust, then it is certainly also true that the unintended consequences of this currently ascendant construction will also dominate genuine motives to prevent the “victory of Hitler” by preserving Jewish life in a Jewish polity.

The meaning of the hegemony of the Holocaust as a template for Jewish life is not that all ordinary Jewish Israelis, intellectuals, and leaders see all Arabs or Muslims as Nazis, oppose taking risks to achieve peace through negotiated compromise, and feel comfortable surrounded by the florid Holocaust discourse that currently prevails in Israel. Nor does it mean that the currently ascendant construction of the Holocaust cannot weaken or be supplanted.⁵² Rather, the meaning of this construction’s hegemony is that ambitious opinion leaders and politicians are powerfully constrained to express themselves in ways that do not contradict the Holocaustia discourse, making it extremely unlikely that this construction of the Holocaust will change dramatically as a direct result of efforts to expose its exaggerations, distortions, and dangers. In 2010, a leading Israeli historian of the Holocaust, Hanna Yablonka, a professor of Holocaust studies at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, was removed from her post as adviser to the national committee on history textbooks following her criticism of the Education

⁵² For the view that the hegemonic status of the centrality of the Holocaust in Jewish life is threatened, and that it needs to be defended, see Rosenfeld (2011).

Ministry's Holocaust curriculum for its "superficiality" and "mistaken emphasis" (Kashti 2010).⁵³

Nevertheless, we can anticipate the eventual destabilization of this construct. Consistent with the argument presented here, processes leading to a healthier Israeli Jewish understanding of the Holocaust are most likely to arise from the unintended consequences of dedicated efforts to entrench and defend the currently dominant view. To a large extent, we see that already. Xenophobic trends and chauvinistic Israeli government policies, driven or at least enabled by the Holocaustia passions that extreme right-wing and clericalist political parties and leaders stoke, are producing fierce anti-Israel, anti-Zionist, and also antisemitic backlashes, not only in the Middle East, but also in Europe and Latin America. The burgeoning Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement is only the most prominent evidence of a global trend toward the relegation of Israel to a rogue or pariah state status. While these trends reinforce the very expectations of hysterical gentile antisemitism that the Holocaust template predicts, they also lead to unanticipated reactions among Jews—both in Israel and in the diaspora. If Jewish fundamentalists could condemn Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin to death with caricatures of him in a Nazi uniform, and if settlers evacuated from Gaza don yellow stars to accuse the Israeli government of Nazi policies, increasing numbers of Jews find themselves naturally, if disturbingly, drawn to images of the Warsaw Ghetto's liquidation when witnessing Israeli military assaults on Gaza, or to images of SS troopers forcing Jews to humiliate themselves when hearing of Israeli soldiers debasing Palestinians at checkpoints or in detention centers.⁵⁴

Ultimately, the Holocaust is just too immense an event, too protean, too subversive of all purposive narratives, for it to be contained or disciplined by a single formula, however well-established. In the battle of constructions, the Holocaust as moral "object lesson" may be poised to make a comeback. If the logic of unintended consequences that I have sought to illuminate continues to dominate, that would most likely be in reaction to outrages which themselves would be associated, in no small measure, to the freedom from ethical constraints that is built-in to Holocaustia's ascendance. But that turn of the wheel of memory will be possible only if the demise of the Jewish polity itself does not become the largest unintended casualty of Holocaustia's ascendance.

References

- Achcar, Gilbert. 2010. *The Arabs and the Holocaust: The Arab–Israeli war of narratives* (London: Saqi, 2010). London: Saqi.
- Alter, Robert. 1971. The Israelis: Founders and sons, by Amos Elon. *Commentary Magazine*, September 1, 1971. <https://www.commentarymagazine.com/articles/the-israelis-founders-and-sons-by-amos-elon/>.
- Arendt, Hannah. 1963. *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A report on the banality of evil*. New York: Penguin.

⁵³ For a critical analysis of Yablonka's position in opposition to the Holocaust playing the kind of constitutive role I have described under the "template for Jewish life" construction, see Sagi (2010).

⁵⁴ For an important effort to advance this construction by treating the Holocaust and the Nakba within the same conceptual, moral, and emotional space, see Bashir and Goldberg (2015).

- Arian, Asher, and Ayala Keissar-Sugarman. 2009. A portrait of Israeli Jews: Beliefs, observance, and values of Israeli Jews. Jerusalem: Guttman Center for Surveys of the Israel Democracy Institute, 2012. https://en.idi.org.il/media/5439/guttmanavichaireport2012_engfinal.pdf.
- Auerbach, Yehudit. 1991. Ben-Gurion and reparations from Germany. In *David Ben-Gurion: Politics and leadership in Israel*, ed. Ronald Zweig, 274–292. London: Frank Cass.
- Auron, Yair. 1997. Jewish-Israeli Identity among Israel's future teachers. *Jewish Political Studies Review* 9 (1–2): 105–122.
- Aviner, Shlomo. 1982. Our attachment to the land of Israel. *Artzi* 1: 8–19.
- Avnery, Uri. 2009. Trivializing the Holocaust. *Antiwar.com*, May 11, 2009. <http://original.antiwar.com/avnery/2009/05/10/trivializing-the-holocaust/>.
- Bar, Doron. 2005. Holocaust Commemoration in Israel during the 1950s: The Holocaust Cellar on Mount Zion. *Jewish Social Studies* 12 (1): 16–38.
- Bashir, Bashir, and Amos Goldberg (eds.). 2015. *The Holocaust and the Nakba: Memory, National identity and Jewish–Arab Partnership*. Jerusalem: Hakibbutz Hameuchad Publishing House.
- Bauer, Yehuda. 2001. *Rethinking the Holocaust*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Ben-Amos, Avner, Ilana Bet-El, and Moshe Tlamin. 1999. Holocaust Day and memorial day in Israeli schools: Ceremonies, education and history Israel studies. *Israel Studies* 4 (1): 258–284.
- Brecher, Michael. 1973. Images, process and feedback in foreign policy: Israel's decisions on German reparations. *American Political Science Review* 67 (1): 73–102.
- Brecher, Michael. 1980. *Decisions in Crisis: Israel, 1967 and 1973*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Brenner, Michael, and Pamela S. Nadell, eds. forthcoming. *Reinventing Israel in the twenty-first century*. Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press.
- Burg, Avraham. 2007. *Victory over Hitler*. Tel Aviv: Yedioth Ahronoth Books.
- Carmon, Aryeh. 1979. Teaching the Holocaust as a means of fostering values. *Curriculum Inquiry* 9 (3): 209–228.
- Cohen, Boaz. 2008. Setting the Agenda of Holocaust research: Discord at Yad Vashem in the 1950s. In *Holocaust historiography in CONTEXT*, ed. David Bankier, and Dan Mikhman, 255–292. Jerusalem: Yad Vashem.
- Cromer, Gerald. 2004. *A war of words: Political violence and public debate in Israel*. Milton Park: Frank Cass.
- Dahan-Kalev, Henriette. 2014. *A second order decision: Holocaust and Mizrahim*. Israel: Sde Boker.
- Dinur, Ben-Zion. 1953. Presented at the Divrei HaKnesset, May 12, 1953, vol. 14.
- Divrei HaKnesset. 1952. Proceedings of the Knesset (trans.), vol. 10.
- Don-Yehiya, Eliezer. 1993. Memory and political culture: Israeli society and the Holocaust. In *Studies in Contemporary Jewry* ed. Ezra Mendelsohn, 139–162, vol. 9.
- Elon, Amos. 1972. *The Israelis: Founders and sons*. New York: Bantam Books.
- Feldman, Lily Gardner. 1984. *The special relationship between West Germany and Israel*. Boston: George Allen & Unwin.
- Feldman, Jackie. 2008. *Above the death pits, beneath the flag: Youth voyages to Poland and the performance of Israeli national identity*. New York: Berghahn Books.
- Finkel, Evgeny. 2015. The phoenix effect of state repression: Jewish resistance during the Holocaust. *American Political Science Review* 109 (2): 339–353.
- Finkelstein, Norman. 2000. *The Holocaust industry*. London: Verso.
- Firer, Ruth. 1987. The treatment of the Holocaust in textbooks. In *The Treatment of the Holocaust in textbooks: The Federal Republic of Germany, Israel, The United States of America*, ed. Randolph L. Braham, 153–229. Boulder: Social Science Monographs.
- Fisch, Harold. 1978. *The Zionist revolution: A new perspective*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Fisch, Harold. 1982. *The Zionism of Zion*. Tel Aviv: Zmora-Bitan.
- Folman, Ari. 2008. *Waltz with Bashir*. Bridgit Folman Film Gang.
- Friedlander, Saul. 1990. The Shoah between memory and history. *Jewish Quarterly* 37 (1): 5–11.
- Geertz, Nurith. 1981. The few against the many: Rhetorics and structures in the election speeches of Menachem Begin. *Sifrei Siman Kriah* 16–17: 106–114.
- Gil, Idit. 2012. The Shoah in Israeli collective memory: Changes in meanings and protagonists. *Modern Judaism* 32 (12): 76–101.
- Glanz, James. 2016. Israeli Defense Minister compares beloved Palestinian poet to Hitler. *New York Times*, July 21, 2016.

- Goldberg, J.J. 2016. Avigdor Lieberman is sorry-not-sorry for comparing Iran deal to Hitler deal. *The Forward*, August 9, 2016. <http://forward.com/opinion/347134/avigdor-lieberman-is-sorry-not-sorry-for-comparing-iran-deal-to-hitler-deal/>.
- Gringauz, Samuel. 1947. Jewish Destiny as the DP's see it: The ideology of the surviving remnant. *Commentary Magazine* 4: 501–509.
- Grossman, Kurt R. 1954. *Germany's moral debt: The German–Israel agreement*. Washington, D.C.: Public Affairs Press.
- Gur-Zev, Ilan. 2000. Defeating the enemy within: Exploring the link between Holocaust education and the Arab/Israeli conflict. *Religious Education* 95 (4): 373–401.
- Gutman, Yisrael. 1988a. Jewish resistance—Questions and assessments. In *The historiography of the Holocaust period: Proceedings of the fifth Yad Vashem international historical conference, Jerusalem, March 1983*, ed. Yisrael Gutman, and Gideon Greif, 641–678. Jerusalem: Yad Vashem.
- Gutman, Yisrael, and Greif, Gideon, eds. 1988. *The historiography of the Holocaust period: Proceedings of the Fifth Yad Vashem international historical conference, Jerusalem, March 1983*. Jerusalem: Yad Vashem.
- Heruti-Sover, Tali. 2014. Teaching the Holocaust: A job best done by business? *Haaretz*, April 28, 2014. Israel Air Force Ceremony—F-15 Jets over Auschwitz. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h1FHvsuMzAc>. Accessed 16 July 2015.
- Jockusch, Laura. 2013. Historiography in transit: Survivor historians and the writing of Holocaust history in the late 1940s. *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 58: 75–94.
- Kasher, Menachem. 1968. *The great era*. Jerusalem: Torah Shlema.
- Kashti, Or. 2010. Education ministry bumps professor from post for criticizing 'superficial' teaching of Holocaust. *Haaretz*, July 21, 2010.
- Kenan, Orna. 2003. *Between memory and history: The evolution of Israeli historiography of the Holocaust, 1945–1961*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Keren, Nili. 2004. Teaching the Holocaust: A mission. In *Teaching about the Holocaust essays by college and university lecturers*, ed. S. Totten, B.R. Bartrop, and S.L. Jacobs, 123–138. Westport, CT: Praeger.
- Klar, Yechiel, Noa Schori-Eyal, and Yonat Klar. 2013. The 'never again' state of Israel: The emergence of the Holocaust as a core feature of Israeli identity and its four incongruent voices. *Journal of Social Issues* 69 (1): 125–143.
- Lazar, D., and R. Wittmann, eds. forthcoming. *The Eichmann trial*.
- Lustick, Ian S. 2006. Negotiating truth: The Holocaust, Lehavdil, and Al-Nakba. *Journal of International Affairs* 60 (1): 51–80.
- Lustick, Ian S. 1969. Author notes, September 29, 1969.
- Lustick, Ian S. forthcoming. The changing Holocaust in Israeli political culture: Constructing the Holocaust as a 'Template for Jewish Life' and its implications for Israeli foreign policy. In *Reinventing Israel in the twenty-first century*. Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press.
- Magid, Shaul. 2015. American jews must stop obsessing about the Holocaust. *Tablet Magazine*, January 26, 2015.
- Ministry of Education. 1959. *Deepening Jewish consciousness in public schools: Instructions and curriculum*. Jerusalem: Government Printer.
- Morris, Benny. 1999. *Righteous victims: A history of the Zionist-Arab Conflict, 1881–1998*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
- Naor, Aryeh. 2003. Lessons of the Holocaust versus territories for peace, 1967–2001. *Israel Studies* 8 (1): 130–152.
- Netanyahu, Benjamin. 2013. PM addresses the Jewish Agency Board of Governors. *Newsletter of the Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, February 18, 2013. <http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/PressRoom/2013/Pages/PM-Netanyahu-addresses-Jewish-Agency-Board-Feb-2013.aspx>.
- Newman, Marissa. 2015. IDF Chief cites Holocaust to justify Haredi service. *Times of Israel*, April 15, 2015.
- Novick, Peter. 2000. *The Holocaust in American life*. Boston: Mariner, Houghton Mifflin.
- Ophir, Adi. 1987. On sanctifying the Holocaust: An anti-theological treatise. *Tikkun* 2 (1): 61–66.
- Ophir, Adi. 2005. *The order of evils: Toward an ontology of morals*. New York: Zone Books.
- Patt, Avinoam. 2015. 'It will not be said that our youth marched like sheep to the slaughter'—Writing about resistance in the immediate aftermath of the Holocaust. Montreal.
- Perlmutter, Amos. 1987. *The life and times of Menachem Begin*. Garden City, NJ: Doubleday.

- “PLO Leaders ‘like Hitler and His Henchmen,’ Begin.” *Citizen*. August 5, 1982. <https://news.google.com/newspapers?id=2194&dat=19820805&id=DOVfAAAAIBAJ&sjid=7O4FAAAAIBAJ&pg=3807,1410960&hl=en>.
- Porat, Dina. 1991. Ben-Gurion and the Holocaust. In *David Ben-Gurion: Politics and leadership in Israel*, ed. Ronald Zweig, 145–172. New York: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi.
- Ram, Uri. 1995. Zionist historiography and the invention of modern Jewish nationhood: The case of Ben Zion Dinur. *History and Memory* 7 (1): 91–124.
- Rashty, Sandy. 2014. Israelis’ tough stance at Auschwitz. *Jewish Chronicle OnLine*, January 30, 2014. <http://www.thejc.com/news/uk-news/115241/israelis%E2%80%99-tough-stance-auschwitz>.
- Reich, Tova. 2008. *My Holocaust: A novel*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Resnik, Julia. 2003. ‘Sites of memory’ of the Holocaust: shaping national memory in the education system in Israel. *Nations and Nationalism* 9 (2): 297–317.
- Rivlin, Reuven. 2015. President Rivlin addresses official ceremony marking the commencement of Israel’s Holocaust Memorial Day, April 15, 2015. http://www.president.gov.il/English/ThePresident/Speeches/Pages/news_150415_01.aspx.
- Rosenfeld, Alvin H. 2011. *The end of the Holocaust*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Ross, Gaylen. 2014. Killing Kasztner: The Jew who dealt with Nazis. *GR Films*.
- Rowland, Robert C. 1985. *The rhetoric of Menachem Begin: The myth of redemption through return*. Lanham, MA: University Press of America.
- Rubinstein, Ariel. 2015. A dozen reasons why Israel should do away with Holocaust Memorial Day. *Haaretz*, April 16, 2015. http://arielrubinstein.tau.ac.il/articles/haaretz_041515_eng.pdf.
- Rudoren, Jodi. 2012. Proudly Bearing elders’ scars, their skin says ‘never forget.’ *New York Times*, September 30, 2012.
- Rudoren, Jodi. 2014. Holocaust told in one word, 6 million times. *New York Times*, January 25, 2014.
- Sagi, Avi. 2010. The Holocaust and the foundation of Jewish identity. *Azure Online*, no. 42. <http://azure.org.il/include/print.php?id=552>.
- Sarid, Yossi. 2013. Raised on the Holocaust. *Haaretz*, October 25, 2013.
- Schatzker, Chaim. 1988. The Holocaust in textbooks: A comparative analysis. In *The historiography of the Holocaust period*, ed. Yisrael Gutman, and Gideon Greif, 467–479. London: Vallentine Mitchell.
- Segev, Tom. 1993. *The seventh million*. New York: Hill and Wang.
- Segev, Tom. 1999. *One Palestine complete: Jews and Arabs under the British Mandate*. New York: Henry Holt.
- Segev, Tom. 2010. The makings of history. *Haaretz*, April 10, 2010.
- Shapira, Anita (ed.). 2004a. *Israeli identity in transition*. Westport, CT: Praeger.
- Shapira, Anita, (ed). 2004b. *Whatever became of ‘negating exile’?*. In, ed. Anita Shapira, 69–108. Westport, CT: Praeger.
- Shapira, Anita, ed. 1998. The Holocaust: Private memories, public memory. *Jewish Social Studies* 4 (2): 40–58.
- Sharett, Yaakov (ed.). 2007. *Moshe Sharett and the German reparations controversy*. Tel Aviv: Society to Commemorate Moshe Sharett.
- Shipler, David. 1981. Begin defends raid, pledges to Thwart a new ‘Holocaust’. *New York Times*, June 10, 1981.
- Stauber, Roni. 2007. *The Holocaust in Israeli public debate in the 1950s*. London: Vallentine Mitchell.
- Stauber, Roni. 2008. Philip Friedman and the beginning of Holocaust studies. In *Holocaust historiography in context: Emergence, challenges, polemics and achievements*, ed. David Bankier, and Dan Michman, 83–102. Jerusalem: Yad Vashem.
- Stauber, Roni. forthcoming. The impact of the Eichmann trial on relations between Israel and the Federal Republic of Germany. In *The Eichmann trial*, ed. D. Lazar and R. Wittmann.
- Teveth, Shabtai. 1987. *Ben-Gurion: The burning ground 1886–1948 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin:1987)*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Teveth, Shabtai. 1996. *Ben-Gurion and the Holocaust*. New York: Harcourt Brace & Co.
- The Nizkor Project, Remembering the Holocaust, The trial of Adolf Eichmann. [http://www.nizkor.org/hweb/people/e/eichmann-adolf/transcripts/ \(1991–2012\)](http://www.nizkor.org/hweb/people/e/eichmann-adolf/transcripts/ (1991–2012)).
- Vashem, Yad. 2015. Annual report: Achievements and challenges. <https://view.publitas.com/yad-vashem/yad-vashem-annual-report-2015/page/1>.
- Weitz, Yehiam. 1996. The holocaust on trial: The impact of the Kasztner and Eichmann trials on Israeli society. *Israel Studies* 1 (2): 1–26.

- Weitz, Yechiam. 2007. Introduction. In *Moshe Sharett and the German reparations controversy*, ed. Yaakov Sharett, 11–54. Tel Aviv: Society to Commemorate Moshe Sharett.
- Weitz, Yechiam. 2008. The founding father and the war criminal's trial: Ben Gurion and the Eichmann trial. *Yad Vashem Studies* 36 (1): 211–252.
- Weitz, Yechiam. 2009. In the name of six million accusers: Gideon Hausner as Attorney-general and his place in the Eichmann trial. *Israel Studies* 14 (2): 26–49.
- Weitz, Yechiam. 2013. Even Ben-Gurion exploited the Holocaust when it suited him. *Haaretz*, October 31, 2013. <http://www.haaretz.com/opinion/.premium-1.555402>.
- Wiesel, Elie. 1974. Ominous signs and unspeakable thoughts. *New York Times*, December 28, 1974.
- Wiesel, Elie. 1999. The Perils of indifference. The history place, April 12, 1999. <http://www.historyplace.com/speeches/wiesel.htm>.
- Yablonka, Hannah. 2003. The development of Holocaust consciousness in Israel: The Nuremberg, Kapos, Kastner, and Eichmann trials. *Israel Studies* 8 (3): 1–24.
- Yablonka, Hannah. 2008. As heard by the witnesses, the public, and the judges: Three variations on the testimony in the Eichmann Trial. In *Holocaust historiography in context: Emergency, challenges, polemics and achievements*, ed. David Bankier, and Dan Michman, 567–587. Jerusalem: Yad Vashem.
- Yablonka, Hannah. 2009. Oriental Jewry and the Holocaust: A tri-generational perspective. *Israel Studies* 14 (1): 94–122.
- Young, James E. 1993. *The texture of memory: Holocaust memorials and meaning* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993). New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Zertral, Idith. 2005. *Israel's Holocaust and the politics of nationhood.*, Second New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Zuckerman, Moshe. 1993. *Shoah in a sealed room: The "Holocaust" in the Israeli Press during the Gulf War*. Tel Aviv: Hotzat HaMachber.

Ian S. Lustick is Professor of Political Science at the University of Pennsylvania where he holds the Bess W. Heyman Chair. Before joining the faculty at the University of Pennsylvania in 1991 he taught for 15 years at Dartmouth College. He holds a BA in Politics from Brandeis University and the Masters and Ph.D. degrees from the University of California, Berkeley. His sole-authored books include *Arabs in the Jewish State* (1980); *For the Land and the Lord: Jewish Fundamentalism in Israel* (1988, 1994); *Unsettled States Disputed Lands: Britain and Ireland, France and Algeria, Israel and the West Bank/Gaza* (1993); and *Trapped in the War on Terror* (2006). He has published widely in professional and public affairs journals on a wide variety of topics including Jerusalem, Israeli–Palestinian politics, US foreign policy, international politics, comparative politics, history and politics, and social science methodology. Among the journals where his articles have appeared are *American Political Science Review*, *International Organization*, *Comparative Politics*, *Journal of Israeli History*, *Middle East Journal*, *Middle East Policy*, *Foreign Affairs*, *Foreign Policy*, *Polity*, and *Politics and History*. Professor Lustick has also worked as an analyst on Middle East affairs with the US State Department and is a past president and founder of the Association for Israel Studies.