Trauma Construction and Moral Restriction: The Ambiguity of the Holocaust for Israel

Jeffrey C. Alexander and Shai M. Dromi

"Yad Vashem Fires Employee Who Compared Holocaust to Nakba"

Yad Vashem has fired an instructor who compared the trauma of Jewish Holocaust survivors with the trauma experienced by the Palestinian people in Israel's War of Independence. Itamar Shapira, 29, of Jerusalem, was fired before Passover from his job as a docent at the Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority, after a teacher with a group of yeshiva students from Efrat made a complaint. Shapira had worked at Yad Vashem for three and a half years….

Shapira confirmed, in a telephone conversation with Haaretz, that he had spoken to visitors about the 1948 massacre at Deir Yassin. He said he did so because the ruins of the Arab village, today a part of Jerusalem's Givat Shaul neighborhood, can be seen as one leaves Yad Vashem. "Yad Vashem talks about the Holocaust survivors' arrival in Israel and about creating a refuge here for the world's Jews. I said there are people who lived on this land and mentioned that there are other traumas that provide other nations with motivation," Shapira said. "The Holocaust moved us to establish a Jewish state and the Palestinian nation's trauma is moving it to seek self-determination, identity, land and dignity, just as Zionism sought these things," he said.

The institution's position is that the Holocaust cannot be compared to any other event and that every visitor can draw his own political conclusions … "Yad Vashem would have acted unprofessionally had Itamar Shapira continued his educational work for the institute," [Yad Vashem spokeswoman Iris] Rosenberg said. Yad Vashem employs workers and volunteers from the entire political and social spectrum, who know how to separate their personal position from their work, she said.

Shapira said Vad Yashem chooses to examine only some of the events that took place in the War of independence. "It is being hypocritical. I only tried to expose the visitors to the facts, not to political conclusions. If Yad Vashem chooses to ignore the facts, for example the massacre at Deir Yassin, or the Nakba ["The Catastrophe," the Palestinians' term for what happened to them after 1948], it means that it's afraid of something and that its historical approach is flawed," Shapira said.

—*Haaretz*, *April 23, 2009*

"Gaza: Cleric Denounces Possible Holocaust Education"

A Hamas spiritual leader said Monday that teaching Palestinian children about the Nazis' murder of six million Jews would be a "war crime." The leader, Yunis al-Astal, lashed out after hearing that the United Nations Relief and Works Agency was considering the introduction of Holocaust lessons in some of the 221 schools the United Nations [runs] in Gaza. Adding the Holocaust to the curriculum would amount to "marketing a lie and spreading it," Dr. Asatal wrote in a statement. An Israeli government spokesman, Mark Regev, said the comments were "obscene." A United Nations official said no decision had been made on Holocaust education Gaza.

—*The New York Times*, September 1, 2009

These disheartening reports, appearing in two of the world's most sophisticated, liberal, and democratic newspapers, illustrate the idea at the core of this collective research project. References to trauma, and representations about it, are not just individual but social and collective. Who was responsible for a collective trauma, who were its victims, and what was the

trauma's moral lessons for our own time? These are not simply theoretical or empirical issues for professional social scientists. They are fundamental concerns of everyday life, matters for reporting in daily newspapers and web sites, and they powerfully affect contemporary conflicts at the individual, institutional, national, and global levels.[1]

As these reports also demonstrate, however, the manner in which collective traumas are presented in everyday life is naturalistic, to the point of being intellectually naïve. Traumas are spoken about as if they are simply historical facts, as things that happened, clearly understood events, empirical things that can either be recognized or ignored. How we choose to react to the facts of trauma is presented as if it were simply a matter of personal, individual reflection.

According to the cultural-sociological approach, however, neither of these latter suppositions is correct. Collective traumas are not found; they are made. Something awful usually did occur, but how it is represented remains an open question, subject to whirling spirals of signification, fierce power contests, simplifying binaries, subtle stories, fickle audiences, and counter-narrations. Individuals do not respond to traumas but to trauma constructions. How they come to reflect upon them is certainly a matter for individual conscience, but it is also a massively collective thing. Individuals experience the pain and suffering of defeat, and the hopes for future emancipation, in terms of collective stories that engulf and instruct them, sometimes in positive, sometimes in frightening, ways.

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[1]The complaint that caused Itamar Shapira to be fired from Yad Vashem came from a group of students from Efrat, a large settlement in formerly Palestinian, now Israeli occupied territory. While this is revealing of the very divisions inside contemporary Israel which we discuss below, the origins of the complaint are not significant in terms of the point we are making here. What we are emphasizing is not where the complaint came from, but how this central communicative institution in Israel reacted to it.

Earlier work on the Nazi murder of six million Jews[2] explored how the representation of this horrendous event shifted, in the half-century after it transpired, from "war crime" to "Holocaust."" (Alexander 2004). As a heinous event associated with Nazism, the mass murder was initially contextualized inside the culture structures that had framed the World War II, a civilization-versus-barbarism binary, on the one hand, and a progressive narrative of modern amelioration, on the other. For two decades afterward, this binary and narrative frame allowed Western nations to keep the mass murder of the Jews, even as it remained ferociously stigmatized, as an event very much relegated to the past. In the postwar period, people looked to the future and engaged in reconstruction. They saw themselves as building a new, modern, and civilized society, one in which Nazi genocide would never be allowed to happen again. These efforts at civil repair were not illusory. Democracies were reconstructed from dictatorships, and millennia-long anti-Semitic barriers were overcome. Nevertheless, in the course of the 1960s, this grand narrative of postwar progress, which had sequestered racial, religious, and ethnic mass murder in a distant past began, began to be vulnerable and to change.

Collective traumas are complex symbolic-*cum*-emotional constructions that have significant autonomy from, and power over, social structure and interests in the more material sense. At the same time, however, trauma constructions are affected by the kinds of social groups that promote them, by the distribution of resources to broadcast them, and by the institutional structure of the social arenas in which their construction takes place. With the rise of anti-Western, anticolonial movements abroad, and the emergence of antiwar movements and racial and ethnic movements of liberation at home, the postwar protagonists of the progressive narrative were profoundly challenged. Their purity became polluted by association with their

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[2] See also Alexander 2009, where that earlier piece is subjected to intense debate. The present chapter draws from, revises, and substantially extends Alexander's postscript to that volume.

own ethnic, racial, and religious massacres, and their ability to maintain the civilization-barbarism binary destroyed. Rather than being seen as carriers of universalism, they were accused of being primordial and particularistic themselves. It was as these new understandings developed that the shift from "war crime" to "Holocaust" emerged. Rather than being relegated to the past, the dangers of massive racial, ethnic, and religious domination, and even mass murder, moved forward into the present. They became part of modernity. For contemporaries, the Holocaust shifted from a progressive to a tragic narrative. It became a story about hubris and punishment, a trauma drama that evoked sorrow and pity; its victims became objects of universal identification, and its perpetrators were now constructed as representing humanity rather than any particular national group. Its bathetic denouement provided a drama of eternal return to which contemporaries felt compelled to return over and over again. The Holocaust came to be seen as the singular representation of the darkness of the twentieth century, the humbling lesson on which was erected postmodern doubt. Yet, this humbling and tragic lesson also opened up the possibility for judging present and future humankind by a new, more universal moral standard.

This research on Holocaust and trauma construction was conducted in the late 1990s. It was a time of cautious optimism. The American and European intervention in Kosovo seemed to provide singular evidence for the universalizing power of the Holocaust effect. Dictatorships were still being turned into democracies, and there was a bubbling effervescence about the emergence of global civil society. It was a time to focus on the emergence of global narratives about the possibility of justice, among which there was no more surprising and inspiring story than the transvaluation of the Jewish mass murder from a historically situated war crime into tragic trauma drama whose moral lessons had become central to all modernity. In the words of Bernhard Giesen, a principal collaborator in that earlier project, this transvaluation process

provided "a new transnational paradigm of collective identity" (Giesen 2009, 114), according to which the Holocaust became the "global icon of evil." As Alexander put it, "a specific and situated historical event" had become "transformed into a generalized symbol of human suffering," a "universal symbol whose very existence has created historically unprecedented opportunities for ethnic, racial, and religious justice, for mutual recognition, and for global conflicts becoming regulated in a more civil way" (Alexander 2004, 28).

We live now in a darker time, more divided, more violent, more tense. We have become much more cautious about the possibilities for a global civil society, more sensitive to the continuing festering of local wounds and their often explosive and debilitating world-wide effects. This is the time to explore the relationship between cultural trauma and collective identity in a different way, elaborating the theory so that it can explain not only more universalizing but more particularistic and deleterious results. In this chapter, we return to the historical genealogy of the Holocaust, but connect it with the emergence of a radically different carrier group, a drastically divergent social setting, and spirals of signification that depart sharply in their symbolic meanings and moral implications. We connect Holocaust symbolization not to pluralist Western democracies but to a democracy bent on securing the foundations of a single religion, not to a post-war national context but to a nation founded in war, facing challenges to its very existence for decades, right up until today. For this Jewish nation, despite its progressive aspirations, the memory of the Jewish mass murder connoted tragedy from the outset, and the catharsis produced by iterations of the trauma-drama sustained moral strictures of more particularistic and primordial than universal and civil kinds.

Tragic Dramas, Divergent Effects

Tragic narratives compel members of a collectivity to narrate and symbolically re-experience the suffering of a trauma's victims. If these victims are represented narrowly—as simply the story tellers themselves—the tragic trauma-drama is unlikely to generate sympathy for those on the other side. It creates not identification with extended others but with the story tellers' own ancestors, those who share the same primordial identity as the victims' themselves. The tragic trauma drama produces catharsis, but it is not the enlightening pity that Aristotle once described. It is more self-pity, a sentiment that blocks identification and undermines the expansion of moral feeling that such contemporary neo-Aristotelians as Martha Nussbaum have prescribed. Rather than a universalizing love for the other, what emerges from such trauma work is a more restrictive self-love, a feeling that cuts imaginative experience short, encouraging emotional splitting and moral scapegoating.

In this emplotment, the moral implications of the drama of eternal return are inverted. Not being able to get beyond the originating trauma, feeling compelled again and again to return to it, reinforces rather than mitigates the particularistic hatreds that inspired the aggression and murder of that earlier time. Narrowing rather than universalizing in morality and affect, earlier hatreds are reproduced, not overcome. Rather than expanded human sympathy for the other, we have Hitler revenging the defeated German people, Serbia's ethnic cleansing, and India and Pakistan's bloody-minded struggles against Islamic and Hindu "intruders" today.[3] We also have the *Nakba*, the construction of the catastrophe that Israeli's founding is believed to have created for the Palestinian people, a trauma that inspires the violently anti-Jewish and anti-Israeli

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[3]In a series of influential studies, the psychiatrist Vamik Volkan has explored such narrowing and particularistic responses to trauma and the manner in which they fuel violence and revenge, e.g., Volkan 2001. From a historical and cultural sociological perspective, Volkan's work is limited by the individualistic and naturalizing assumptions that so often detract from psychoanalytic perspectives on collective life. These problems also affect, but in a less restrictive manner, the wide-ranging, politically engaged studies by Dan Bar-On and his colleagues, e.g., Shamir, Yitzhaki-Verner and Bar-On 1996 and Bar-On 1997.

struggles by Palestinian people and Arab states against the Zionism and the Israeli state. These polarizing, trauma-inspired struggles have fuelled the tragic-*cum*-primordial narratives that prevent peace between Arabs and Jews in the Middle East today.

An Israeli Patriot's Lament

In the middle of 2007, David Remnick, the editor of the *New Yorker* magazine, published a controversial "Letter from Jerusalem." It was a conversation with Avraham Burg, once Speaker of the Israel Knesset and former chairman both of the World Zionist Organization and the Israeli Jewish Agency. Remnick's conversation with the now embittered Israeli leader points directly to the social processes we wish to illuminate here. "As of this moment," Burg observes, "Israel is a state of trauma in nearly every one of its dimensions." Insisting that this is "not just a theoretical question," he asks, "would our ability to cope with Iran not be much better if we renewed in Israel the ability to trust the world?" It is because Israelis identify the Holocaust with their betrayal by Christian Europe, Burg reasons, that they do not possess the necessary reserve of trust that could propel a process of peace. "We say we do not trust the world, they will abandon us," Burg explains. Seeing "Chamberlain returning from Munich with the black umbrella," Israelis draw the conclusion "we will bomb them alone" (Remnick 2007). It is because of this trauma construction, Burg believes, that so many Israelis feel they must go it alone. He finds this path deeply self-defeating. "Would it not be more right," he asks, "if we didn't deal with the problem on our own but, rather, as part of a world alignment beginning with the Christian churches, going on to the governments and finally the armies?"

In its early "optimistic years," Burg tells Remnick, Israel was different. Paradoxically, "the farther we got from the camps and the gas chambers, the more pessimistic we became and the more untrusting we became toward the world." As Burg sees it, this narrative shift has

produced chauvinism and selfishness. Today, the Holocaust trauma fragments and divides, allowing conservative Israelis to justify oppressing Palestinians. It is because of their Holocaust consciousness, Burg insists, that his contemporaries are not "sensitive enough to what happens to others and in many ways are too indifferent to the suffering of others. We confiscated, we monopolized, world suffering. We did not allow anybody else to call whatever suffering they have 'holocaust' or 'genocide,' be it Armenians, be it Kosovo, be it Darfur." The Holocaust trauma is remembered in a manner that makes a significant swath of Israeli society impervious to criticism: "'Occupation? You call this occupation? This is nothing compared to the absolute evil of the Holocaust!' And if it is nothing compared to the Holocaust then you can continue. And since nothing, thank God, is comparable to the ultimate trauma, it legitimizes many things."

Jewish Dreams of Post-Tragedy

It might have seemed, from a more naturalistic perspective, that the Holocaust would be written directly on the body of Israel and its Jews, whether via first-hand experience or by primordial identification. From a cultural-sociological perspective, however, meaning-work is contingent. For Israel and its Jewish people, the meaning and message of the Holocaust has been up for grabs, crystallized in strikingly divergent ways. "The memory of the Holocaust and its victims," Yechiam Weitz observes, "was accompanied by unending political strife;" these debates "were always … bitter, full of tension and emotional," and occasionally "violent and even deadly" (Weitz 1995, 130).[4]

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[4] It is paradoxical that in her searching and original investigation, Idith Zertal (2005) insists on contrasting what she views as the truly "historical dimension of the events" with their "out-of-context use" in the new nation's collective memory, which she condemns for having "transmuted" the facts (pp. 4-5). The position that informs our own approach is that history is never accessible as such. To make it seem so is to provide resources for the kind of ideology critique in which Zertal is so powerfully engaged.

The millennia-long sufferings of the Jewish people created an historical memory of persecution. These tragic iterations were ritualized in Jewish religious ceremonies, constituting a cultural legacy that seemed to demand not progress but eternal return. While the postenlightenment European emancipation of ghettoized Jews triggered a more progressive narrative, the backlash against Jewish incorporation that exploded in the last decades of the nineteenth century, and accelerated during the early twentieth, pushed European Jewry to look backward again. Zionism emerged in response to this stinging disappointment. It fought against not only anti-Semitism but the fatalism and pessimism that so often had marked the Jewish tradition itself. It promised that, if a homeland were regained, the Jewish people would be landed and citied, and their history rewound. The story of the Jewish people could start over again in a healthy and "normal" way.[5]

Zionist Struggles, Holocaust Memories

This historic dream came to earth in a land peopled mostly by others. Israel's founding did instantiate the progressive narrative of Zionism, but in a decidedly triumphalist and militarized manner. From the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, growing Zionist settlement faced increasingly embittered antagonists, not only indigenous Palestinians but other, better organized Arab Muslim populations.[6] The troubles escalated during the 1920s, reaching their first peak in the 1929 Palestine riots, which killed approximately 250 people and presaged the decades of wrenching conflicts that lay ahead (Gavish 2005).

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[5]For an account of this emancipation, its fateful disappointments, and the rise of Zionism as one among several Jewish responses, see Alexander 2006, chapter 18. The idea of returning to Jerusalem had, of course, long been an essential idiom of diasporic Judaism.
[6]For an account of this situation, see Khalidi 1997.

Could the Zionists have understood their potential opponents in anything other than an antagonistic way? In fact, different sorts of relations were possible, and some were tried. Of course, the options narrowed substantially after the murder of six million. The heinous event gave an extraordinary urgency to the Jewish exodus from Europe, both inside and outside the Jewish community itself. The British folded up their Mandate and the United Nations declared a fragile, and almost universally unpopular, two-state solution. Even then, however, there was more than one path to take. Despite their territorial ambitions, the more left-wing, socialist, and democratic Israeli fighters conducted their struggles in less violent and pugnacious, more civilly regulated ways. Right-wing Zionists, epitomized by the notorious Stern Gang, were more aggressively violent, demonstrating much less concern for non-Jewish life, whether British, Arab, Palestinian, Muslim or Christian.[7]

Amidst the chaotic conditions and competing ambitions of this postwar struggle, Israel declared its independence, the Arab states and Palestinians declared and acted upon their opposition, and the historical options narrowed further still. Zionist forces engaged in pitched battles against local Palestinian fighters and invading Arab armies. Jewish soldiers individually, and the emerging Jewish nation collectively, experienced this birth struggle as a matter of life or death. "We, the Jewish Israelis," the psychiatrist Dan Bar-On recalled, "saw ourselves as surrounded by enemies and having to struggle, physically and mentally, for our lives and survival" (Bar-On 1997, 90). Feelings of compassion for displaced Palestinians—who were equally endangered, and most directly by Israel's own army—were cast aside. Whether or not Israeli individuals and the nation collectively made an explicit analogy with the Holocaust—and we argue here that, by and large, they did not—there seems little doubt the only recently

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[7]For a synthetic account of the significant contrast between the mentalities and fighting strategies of the left and right-wing Jewish forces fighting for the creation of the Jewish state, see Bickerton and Klausner 2002, pp. 100-115.

terminated and extraordinarily searing experience of racially motivated mass murder contributed to the emerging Jewish nation's sense of itself as uniquely a victim.

Trauma and Primordialty

The Israeli state, established on the blood sacrifice of its courageous but also often dangerously aggressive army, honored its soldier-martyrs and inscribed in historical memory the trauma-inspired lesson that only military strength could prevent Jewish defilement and murder from ever happening again.[8] For the new nation's first two decades, the historical record shows, the school textbooks of Israeli children were filled with deeply polluting descriptions of Arabs as savage, sly, cheat, thief, robber, provocateur, and terrorist. As one Israeli historian has suggested, during these early decades the national narrative hewed closely to the "tradition of depicting Jewish history as an uninterrupted record of anti-Semitism and persecution" (Podeh 2000, 75-76). The continuing Arab military campaign against Israel was represented inside this frame. Palestinian violence was analogized with pre-Independence "pogroms" against Jews, and

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[8]For many contemporary friends of Israel—and we certainly count ourselves among them—such a characterization will appear harsh. It seems to us, however, the ineluctable conclusion from two decades of Israel's own deeply revisionist, self-critical historiography. As such writers as Benny Morris (1987) and Ilan Pappe (1992) have documented in painstaking and painful empirical detail, the independence conflict involved not just Palestinian residents' voluntary flight but massive, Israeli-instigated population transfers, pushing hundreds of thousands of Palestinians off their land and wiping out the Palestinian identities of hundreds of once-Arab villages. This is not to say that the historical events triggered by the U.N.'s two-state resolution were inevitable, nor is it to absolve the Palestinian and Arab parties of their own fateful responsibilities. For a collection of archival-based essays by Arab and Jewish scholars exploring this complex and deeply contradictory period, see Rogan and Shlaim 2001. That collection is also notable for Edward Said's "Afterword: The Consequences of 1948" (2001). In this, one of the radical Palestinian critic's last published essays, Said lashes out at the repressive, anti-Semitic, and militaristic conditions that, in his view, have marked so much of Arab and Palestinian political and cultural life during the post-independence period. For an insightful overview of the polarizing, if delayed, effects of Israeli's "history wars" over its collective identity—and an argument for it as psychologically overdetermined—see Brunner 2002.

Palestinian and Arab leaders were depicted as only the most recent in "a long line of 'oppressors' of Jews during the course of their history" (ibid).[9]

Insofar as this trauma-construction conceived Israeli's origin as an iteration of the Jewish Holocaust experience, an aggressive and military response to the "Palestinian problem" became the only conceivable "solution" to the subjective fears of Israelis and the objective dangers that a series of Arab attacks posed to their nation. And, indeed, so long as military power seemed a viable method of wiping the historical slate clean, even the progressive narrative of democratic Zionism was deeply compromised, linking bereavement and triumph in an inward-turning, particularistic way (Ben-Amos and Bet-El 1999, 267).[10] When Holocaust Day was officially declared in 1951, it was not considered a major event, its tragic narration sitting uncomfortably alongside Zionism's future-oriented founding myth. One effort at metonymic resolution placed Holocaust Day one week before the Memorial and Independence Day sequence, in the period that followed upon the Passover celebration of Jewish enslavement and emancipation.[11] The Holocaust holiday, in other words, pointed backward and forward at the same time and, in both directions, remained resolutely particularistic. In its tragic mode, it mourned "the modern attempt to annihilate the Jewish people;" in its progressive mode, it celebrated the Warsaw Ghetto uprising as "the heroic spark" that had reignited Israel's birth (Ben-Amos and Bet-El 1999, 272).

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[9] This specifically Israeli-Jewish frame complemented the more broadly polluting binary of Western orientalism. Though sweeping and polemical, Said was not wrong when he suggested, thirty years ago in *The Palestinian Question*, that "between Zionism and the West there was and still is a community of language and of ideology [that] depends heavily on a remarkable tradition in the West of enmity toward Islam in particular and the Orient in general." Asserting that Arabs were "practically the *only* ethnic group about whom in the West racial slurs are tolerated, even encouraged," Said suggested that "the Arabs and Islam represent viciousness, venality, degenerate vice, lechery, and stupidity in popular and scholarly discourse" (Said 1979, 26, italics in source).

[10] See also Bilu and Witztum 2000, Bar 2005, Ofer 2000.

[11] Zertal 2005, 39, and Handelman and Katz 1990. Handelman and Katz interpret this juxtaposition as having suggested that, for the Israelis, Holocaust Day signified an exit from the suffering of diasporic Jewry, framing the tragedy, in a progressive manner, as adumbrating the emergence of the Jewish state.

In fact, constructing parallels between the Holocaust and Israeli wars was more than a metonymic matter. Strong metaphorical resemblances were established between the holidays marking them as well. On the eve of both holidays, businesses, coffee shops and cinemas close early. Radio stations replace their regular broadcasting schedules with melancholic Israeli songs, and television channels feature documentaries about the Holocaust and the Israeli wars. Schools devote these holy days to commemoration and hold compulsory memorial ceremonies. Although these ceremonies are planned and conducted by representatives of the student body, they closely resemble one another, drawing from the same limited, iconic cultural corpus. Many of the same poems are recited; many of the same songs are sung; similar imagery is projected, and parallel dress codes are required. A state ceremony is broadcasted live through most public TV and radio stations on both days (Handelman and Katz 1990, 192-195). Another feature the holidays share is the sirens that provide temporal and moral demarcation. "On the appointed minute, and for one minute's duration, siren blasts shriek in every village, town and city in the land. Human life stands still, people stop in their tracks, vehicles stop in mid-intersection… All is silent" (ibid, 193). These sirens, which in other contexts and with different modulation serves as an air-raid warning, not only enforces the short period of shared commemoration but also emphasize the incorporation of the victims of the Holocaust into the Jewish-Israeli collectivity.[12] However, while creating an analogy between those who perished in Europe and those who died defending Israel, it also creates a clear hierarchy between them. While the former, the Holocaust victims, are commemorated by one siren blast on the morning of the Holocaust Memorial Day; the latter, the fallen soldiers, are commemorated by two blasts, one on the eve of Memorial Day and the other the following morning.

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[12]As Zertal notes, it has even been proposed that all six million Jewish casualties be granted Israeli citizenships (Zertal 2005, 3).

At the heart of the Independence Day ritual is a binary that contrasts the "passive Diaspora Jewry" of the pre-Holocaust period, "sheep to the slaughter," with the "active Zionism" of post-Holocaust Israel, "which had fought successfully for statehood." For its part, Holocaust Day ceremonies are often accompanied by a similar pairing. Such phrases as "from Holocaust to heroism" and "from Holocaust to revival/establishment"[13] signify a Zionist chronology that leads from Holocaust in the Diaspora to Jewish revival via the establishment of modern Israel. These binaries inspire a progressive narrative according to which "resistance fighters . . . and soldiers in the War of Independence became the protagonists of the ceremony." It was via such a political-*cum*-cultural process that youthful Israel, in Bar-On's words, "crossed the fragile distinction from being morally right as a persecuted people"—or whom "persecution became imbedded in our internal representations throughout the ages of the Diaspora"—to being a dominant and aggressive military power, one which did not "attempt to include the relevant 'other' but rather to ignore or disgorge him" (Shamir, Yitzhaki-Verner and Bar-On 1996, 195).

This construction of a causal relationship between the Holocaust and Israeli war was dramatized in a closely watched and influential television series. *Pillar of Fire* first aired in 1981 on what was then the nation's only television channel, the government-run Channel 1. This series narrates the history of the Jewish people in the first half of the twentieth century from a distinctively Zionist perspective, encapsulating what later came to be criticized as the hegemonic Israeli narrative (Shejter 2007). *Pillars of Fire* led the viewer from the tragedy of the Final Solution to the heroic Warsaw Ghetto uprising; from there to the Jewish Brigades, which volunteered to serve in the British army and assist the Allied forces in their war against Germany; then onward toward the struggle of the Zionist leadership against the British forces

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[13]The phrase "From Holocaust to Revival" (in Hebrew *M'shoah L'tkuma*) is polysemic. The word *Tkuma* can be translated both as "revival" and as "establishment" (specifically regarding the establishment of the state of Israel).

who prevented Jews from immigrating to Palestine; and it concludes with Israel's the declaration of independence and the ensuing war with the Arab nations.

This historical account rests on a self-justifying, narrowly particularistic, and deeply primordial reconstruction of the Holocaust trauma, one that continues to exert great influence up to this day. The Jewish fighters are cast as protagonists. Arrayed against them is the long list of their historical antagonists: the Germans and their accomplices; the British, who stood between Jewish refugees and the soon-to-be Israelis; the Allied Forces, who intervened too late and failed to save European Jews from the Final Solution; Arab-Palestinians and the surrounding nations, who opposed the establishment of the Jewish State; and Europeans, who resented the Jewish survivors and greeted their return to their original residences with several post-war *pogroms*. The binary of Jew and Gentile, a defining characteristic of most Jewish communities since biblical times, is thus reformulated inside the Zionist narrative. Instead of leading, as it did in earlier times, to social seclusion, on the one hand, and moral calls for a more just and universal order, on the other, the new Jewish-Israeli narrative reinforces the militaristic and exclusionary aspects of Zionism. Foreign nations have proven to be untrustworthy. Israel can rely only on the resources of the Jewish people and its own military strength to defend itself.

Shifting Constructions, New Sympathies

Only later, as Israel became more embattled and militarized Zionism stymied and wounded, did this ambiguous and narrow reconstruction of the Jewish nation's founding began to falter. It is revealing that Holocaust Day became more culturally significant as the trauma-drama framing it became more insistently pessimistic. A series of symbolic developments contributed to this darkening before the social arena for the performance of militarized Zionism actually changed. For example, the trial of Adolf Eichmann, a Nazi official publicly tried for war crimes in 1961,

exposed the Israeli public to a multitude of testimonies which brought to light the horrendous war experiences of Holocaust survivors. After more than a decade in which the personal stories were belittled in favor of the collective progressive narrative, these relived testimonies set in motion a new, more privatizing Holocaust memory. Not only a national disaster brought on by the passiveness of Diasporic Jewry, the Holocaust now became a collection of personal tragedies, to be sympathized with and commemorated, and also avenged.[14]

This turn toward tragedy deepened after the Yom Kippur War in 1973, when Israel barely escaped a catastrophic military defeat. With this event, the social arena for the performance of collective trauma was changed. The war experience allowed the particularistic approach to the identities at stake to be challenged in a subtle but powerful way. A newly experienced "feeling of dread," according to a contemporary Israeli observer, meant "diminished importance of the fighter as a Zionist role model" and the corresponding reconstruction of the Holocaust drama in a manner, complementary to the post-Eichmann privatization, that "placed a bolder emphasis on the suffering of the victims and focused greater attention on daily life in the ghettoes and camps." As a consequence, "a different type of bravery was now given prominence—one that was non-military, but involved survival under oppressive conditions" (Ben-Amos and Bet-El 1999, 270).[15] For many Israelis, the published photographs of Israeli prisoners during the 1973 war triggered familiar possibilities of Jewish destruction and defeat. Moshe Dayan, who was Minister of Defense at that time, spoke about his anxieties as evoking nothing short of the

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[14]For an elaborate discussion of the privatization of the Holocaust memory in Israeli society, see Shapira 1998.
[15]Bilu and Witztum note, for example, that the psychiatric diagnosis of post-traumatic-stress disorder could only emerge in the wake of the Yom Kippur War, for it implied a weakening of the indomitable Israeli protagonist's military strength: "The myth of heroism, and with it the layers of disregard and denial that had hidden combat stress reactions from the public eye in the preceding wars, were extensively eroded in the 1973 War. Following the utter surprise and confusion at the onset of the war, the military defeats in the first days of fighting, and the heavy toll of casualties—more than 2,500 soldiers killed and about 7,000 wounded—the war was inscribed in the national consciousness as a massive trauma" (Bilu and Witztum 2000, 20).

"collapse of the 'Third Temple'" (Karsh 2000, ix). Dayan iterates here the Jewish memory of the worst catastrophe of Biblical times: foreign conquest of Jerusalem and expulsion of Israelites from their land. Until the Yom Kippur War, only the Holocaust was comparable to this founding trauma of "Rabbinic Judaism." Dayan's poignant metaphor draws on the power of these two traumas, equating military defeat in 1973 with the worst historical disasters in the Jewish historical imagination.

From this point onward, the enduring conflict between more particularizing and more universalizing constructions of the Jewish trauma-drama became crystallized inside Israeli society. Of course, a sense of victimhood continued to permeate political discourse in Israel's third decade. The Six-Day War of 1967, the 1967–1970 War of Attrition, the Munich Massacre of 1972, the Entebbe Operation of 1976, and the punctuating acts of terrorism undertaken by the Palestine Liberation Organization left deep marks on Israeli society, becoming frequent trauma-recalling and trauma-inducing features of public discourse. Conservative Prime Minister Menachem Begin made prominent use of Holocaust imagery in his political speeches, warning time and again against the "return of Auschwitz" in reference to threats from the Palestinians and Arab nations. Begin was indeed one of the key figures in the politization of the Holocaust in the political discourse of Israel. His vision of an anti-Semitic world against which Israel stands alone was a dominant theme in his speeches and writings.

> No one came to save us—neither from the East nor from the West. For this reason, we have sworn a vow, we, the generation of extermination and rebirth: Never again will we put our nation in danger, never again will we put our women and children and those whom we have a duty to defend—if necessary at the cost of our lives—in range of the enemy's deadly fire (cited in Segev 1993, 398).

But the conflation of Holocaust and Israeli enemies was not confined to the right-wing "Likud" side. Leading Labor politician Abba Eban famously compared the option of a return to the pre-1967 borders of Israel with a return to the borders of Auschwitz.[16] When speaking of the Arab-Israeli conflict, soldiers and politicians frequently expressed concerns about a Holocaust-like disaster looming over their heads.[17] Such narrative inscriptions of Holocaust tragedy inside the long history of Jewish suffering provided further justification for violent resistance against those were perceived as purely external threats.

The new post-1973 context, however, also allowed the tragic construction of the Holocaust trauma to provide a different kind of script, one that could connect Jewish Israelis with Palestinian suffering. An Israeli peace movement emerged that put land for peace on the table, and a new generation of critical historians righteously exposed Israeli complicity in Palestinian expulsion. Leftist intellectuals introduced such new critical concepts as "cognitive militarism."[18] More moderate observers spoke about the decline of "collective commemoration" and the growth of a more individual centered, rights-based political culture (Bilu and Witztum 2000, 25).

Such "devaluation of the myth of heroism" (ibid, 23) intensified after the 1982 Lebanon War, whose military frustrations produced feelings of futility and whose massacres at Sabra and Shatila ignited feelings of humiliation. In their initial response to the massacres, conservative Likud government officials lashed out against accusations of Israeli complicity. They described them as "a blood libel against the Jewish state and its Government," framing them in terms of

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[16]For a detailed account of this change in the Israeli attitude toward the memory of the Holocaust, see Yablonka 2008.

[17]A collection of testimonies and experiences from the Six-Day War provides numerous examples, see A. Shapira 1968.

[18]Examples include Azarya and Kimmerling 1985-86, Kimmerling 1993 and 1999.

historical anti-Semitism against the Jewish people. In response to this defensive and narrowly

primordial construction, hundreds of thousands of Israelis organized a massive protest in Tel

Aviv[19]. This unprecedented expression of criticism and antiwar feeling triggered the creation of a

Commission of Inquiry. Chaired by former Supreme Court Justice Yitzhak Kahan, the

investigation produced sharply critical findings and made significant recommendations for

reform. While it was Lebanese Phalangists who had carried out the massacre against

Palestinians, the Kahan Commission found that the Jewish government had indirect

responsibility and declared Ariel Sharon, then Minister of Defense, directly responsible for not

preventing the massacre (Kahan Commission 1983). The events surrounding the Lebanon

invasion and the self-critical reaction to it not only created more universalizing trauma

constructions inside Israel but also triggered a global reaction that, according to one French

observer, allowed the normative symbolization of Holocaust "to be turned against those to whom

it hitherto protected." For the first time, "large swathes of international public opinion distanced

themselves from the policy of Israel" (Wieviorka 2007, 57). Two decades later, the Israeli

feminist critic Ronit Lentin (2000) asserted that this new spiral of signification had made an

expanded solidarity possible.

Only after Lebanon did the suffering of others, particularly of Palestinian children, not

Jewish suffering, become a principal subject of Israeli literary and poetic discourses. For the first

time, the death of Palestinians was described using *Shoah* images. Palestinian fate was equated

with the fate of the Jews, as Israeli poets and playwrights reflected and compelled Jewish

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[19]While this protest is popularly known in Israel as the "400,000 protest," sources disagree on the exact number of
demonstrators who participated. More conservative estimates put the number at half of that, while others claim that
the square in which it was held, including the adjoining streets, could not have held even a third (Azaryahu 2007).

understanding of the suffering of the Palestinians (Lentin 2000, 145).[20] This new understanding went hand in hand with a weariness of Prime Minster Begin's Holocaust-driven militarism and criticism of the Holocaust's role in Israeli politics. In an open letter to the prime minister, Israeli writer Amos Oz remarked,

> Often I, like many Jews, find at the bottom of my soul a dull sense of pain because I did not kill Hitler with my own hands… Tens of thousands of dead Arabs will not heal that wound… Again and again, Mr. Begin, you reveal to the public eye a strange urge to resuscitate Hitler in order to kill him every day anew in the guise of terrorists (cited in Segev 1993, 400).

Palestinian Counter-Narrative of Trauma

Throughout this period of symbolic reconstruction, the emergent Palestinian national movement played a significant role, creating new "realities on the ground" that provided a new dramatic field of performative possibilities. Its energetic and aggressive ideology, and often murderous tactics, presented undeniable evidence of a previously "invisible" nation and people, making it more difficult, though not of course impossible, to narrate a progressive story of emancipation on the Israeli side. Yet, the PLO's terrorism severely restricted its dramatic appeal. In the late 1970s, the world's best-known Palestinian intellectual, Edward Said, declared that, while "we have gained the support of all the peoples of the Third World," the "remarkable national resurgence" of the "Palestinian *idea*" had not yet succeeded, for "we have been unable to interest the West very much in the justice of our cause" (Said 1979, xi-x, italics in source). While acknowledging how much he resented "the ways in which the whole grisly matter is

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[20]The empathy-creating possibilities of Holocaust memory is ignored by Zertal's reconstruction, whose cultural history has no place for the peace movement.

stripped of all its resonances and its often morally confusing detail, and compressed simply, comfortably, inevitably under the rubric of 'Palestinian terror'," Said declared himself "horrified at the hijacking of planes, the suicidal missions, the assassinations, the bombing of schools and hotels."

Said believed that this performative failure would have to be redressed. To attract a Western audience, the trauma-drama of Palestinian suffering would have to be told in a different way. For there to be "some sense of the larger Palestinian story from which all these things came," Said explained, there must be a new and more compelling focus on "the reality of a collective national trauma [that is] contained for every Palestinian in the question of Palestine" (ibid, xii). A new progressive counter-trauma narrative was projected, describing Palestinian suffering, Western/Israeli domination, and a heroic anticolonial movement for liberation. It provided a new symbolic protagonist with whom a widening circle of Western citizens, and the developing group of self-critical Israelis, could identify, or at least ambivalently support. This possibility deepened among many Israelis in the wake of the first Intifada, the relatively nonviolent Palestinian uprising that began in 1987. It was this expanding structure of solidary feeling that became powerfully institutionalized in the treaties and ceremonies marking the Oslo peace process in 1993.

Right-Wing Backlash

What has been described as the emergence of "post-Zionism" was constrained, though not entirely cut short, by the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in 1995 (Cohen 1995). Rabin's cruelly calculated murder managed to short-circuit processes of civil repair that had, in no small part, been fuelled by the manner which the Holocaust trauma specifically, and Jewish suffering more generally, was being symbolically and morally recast. This murderous

short-circuiting demonstrated the ambiguous and contradictory trauma constructions that emerged in response to Israeli's post-1967 history. While the earlier, more particularistic trauma drama had been challenged, much of its narrowly primordial power had certainly remained. Indeed, even as the Yom Kippur War and the difficulties that unfolded in its aftermath allowed the creation of a more universalizing tragic narrative, they also energized a much more particularistic kind of tragic story, one that was distinctively more anticivil than the Israeli nation's ambiguously progressive founding myth. And even as the emerging Palestinian movement provided opportunities for cross-national solidarity, it had an equal and opposite effect. Alongside and competing with the Palestinian protagonist with whom the left could identify, Palestinian actions offered the growing backlash movement a more sharply defined, polluted antagonist against whom to carry on Israel's long-standing primordial fight.

In 1977, the right-wing Likud party took power on a platform demanding continued occupation and usurpation of the "holy lands," its leaders and supporters fervently opposed to any Palestinian accord. During the course of this backlash movement there also emerged *Gush Emunim* (literally "Block of the Faithful") whose supporters began a decades-long, highly successful campaign to take Jewish possession of occupied Palestinian lands. The religious Zionist ideology initially inspiring *Gush Emunim* was not militarist. Emerging in response to the seemingly "miraculous" 1967 war, it narrated the military acquisition of Judea, Samaria and Sinai, which had taken just six days, as a millennial sign of the Jewish people's imminent salvation. In opposition to the traditional views of Orthodox Judaism, *Gush Emunim* viewed building, settling and developing—whether in prewar Israel or in the Occupied Territories—as a positively sanctioned commandment. The movement's activity's soon generated intense opposition nonetheless. Illegal settlements were forcibly removed time and again, only to be

reinstated by *Gush Emunim*. Public opinion remained largely unsupportive, the expected salvation did not arrive, and Egyptian-Israeli peace accord forced withdrawal from Sinai and the first massive settlement removal in 1982. Its messianic aspirations thwarted, *Gush Emunim* turned from messianic to militaristic narrations of expanded settlement.[21]

In the years that followed, "settler" became as ubiquitous a trope in conservative Israeli society as "survivor." Indeed, the former collective representation drew its symbolic strength from the latter. For the dominant factions of the Israeli right, Jews needed desperately to annex every inch of Palestinian land that surrounded them, for every non-Jewish person was a potential enemy.[22] They had learned this deeply anticivil lesson from their tragic, and primordial, reconstruction of the Holocaust trauma. Because they experienced the Jewish victimhood of those terrible days as never having gone away, they could glean no bridging metaphors from their re-experience of trauma. Instead, they felt compelled to frame every conflict with outsiders in a boundary-making way.[23]

When the Likud Minister of Education delivered her Holocaust Day speech on 2001, she proclaimed complete identification with the protagonists in the original trauma. "We shouldn't

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[21]For an elaborate account of the first years of Gush Emunim and of the religious and political context out of which it had emerged, see Newman 1985. The turn from a messianic religious discourse to a militaristic discourse in the political culture of Gush Emunim is discussed in Taub 2010. If the polarizing effects of the Israeli trauma drama's shifting retellings were deepened by more "fundamentalist," and often more eschatological, versions of Jewish religion, the same can be said for the Palestinian trauma. More radical and rejectionist elements, publicly dedicated to the annihilation of Israel, increasingly experienced the sources of their trauma, and its possible resolution, through Islamicist faith. For this intertwining of the religious extremes, see Friedland and Hecht 1996, 168-70 and 355ff.

[22]Due to the multipartisan structure of the Israeli political map, the definitions of "right-wing" and "left-wing" are rather slippery. Whereas political parties differ according to their socioeconomic policies, ranging from socialism to extreme liberalism, these positions do not necessarily align with their positions regarding the Arab-Israeli conflict. Further complications arise when one takes into account these parties' stances regarding the relations between religion and the state, which range from orthodoxy to extreme secularism, as well as minority parties.

[23]It should be emphasized that not all Jewish residents of the territories conquered by Israel in 1967 are part of this movement. While the original postwar settlers were characterized by a religious and ideological commitment to the settlement project, a significant part of the Jewish migrants to these territories were motivated by economic considerations. The ideology described here represents the more audacious and activist "settlement movement" and does not extend to all Jewish residents of the occupied territories.

suppose," she insisted, "that we differ from our grandfathers and grandparents who went to the gas chambers." Rejecting a progressive narrative that would dramatize the distance between the situation of Jews then and now, she insisted "what separates us from them is not that we are some sort of new Jew." What has changed is not the opposition between Jew and Gentile but its asymmetry. The Jewish side can now be armed. The Minister explained, "The main difference is external: we have a state, a flag and army." During the historical Holocaust, by contrast, the Jews had been "caught in their tragedy, [for] they lacked all three" (cited in Feldman 2002, 1). The trauma-drama points toward an ineluctable solution: Only power and violence that can save contemporary Jews from suffering their ancestors' fate.

Caught up inside this narrowly constructed trauma-drama, the majority of the Israeli right has identified the peace process with Jewish annihilation. In the months before Yitzhak Rabin's assassination, ultra-orthodox and right-wing magazines attacked the general-turned-peacemaker as a "traitor" and "madman," suggesting he was "antireligious" and even "non-Jewish." He and his Foreign Minister, Shimon Peres, were depicted as members of the *Judenrat* and *Kapos*, the infamous Nazi-appointed Jewish leaders who had collaborated in the administration of the death camps. At the antigovernment demonstrations that grew increasingly aggressive in the months and weeks before his murder, Rabin was portrayed in posters wearing an S.S. uniform and cap (Lentin 2000, 148). These disturbing images point to the construction of a trauma drama that is increasingly radical and particularist. Mainstream Zionism casts Israeli Jews as protagonists and Arabs as antagonists. The new conception marks Israeli settlers as victims, and any political or military party that attempts to evict them as Nazis. This trauma rhetoric framed resistance to the first large-scale eviction of Israeli settlers from the Sinai, which mandated by the peace agreement with Egypt in 1982. In the final clash between the settlers and Israeli military forces

who forcibly removed them, the settlers placed yellow stars on their chests, echoing the emblems that European Jews had been forced to wear under Nazi occupation.

Since 1982, the settlement movement has grown considerably not only in size but in influence. In the 2005 Disengagement, Israeli forces withdrew unilaterally from the Gaza Strip and Northern Samaria, and 25 settlements were dismantled. These powerful challenges to the anti-Palestinian land movement triggered more intense invocations of the Holocaust trauma in response. Soldiers sent to forcibly evict settlements were met with sobbing children wearing yellow stars, asking with raised hands, "Have you come to take us to the gas chamber?" Settlers prepared Auschwitz-like uniforms to be worn on eviction day. Prosettlement activists broadly referred to soldiers and Israeli leaders as *Judenrat*, which drew censure from Holocaust survivors and antisettlement political activists alike (Maariv 2004, 2005, Yediot Aharonot 2005). The mainstream Zionist invocation of the Holocaust trauma drama justified anti-Arab and anti-Palestinian violence in the name of creating and defending Israel. The right-wing prosettlement variation on this theme understands such violence differently, as an act of defiance. As the Nazis obliterated Jewish communities in Europe, so should Israeli leaders destroy the Jewish communities in the Occupied Territories.

Left-Wing Inhibition

Faced with such powerfully reactionary trauma constructions, the response of the left would seem clear. Drawing on the relatively autonomous cultural power of Holocaust symbolism, it could challenge the social instantiations on which right-wing deployments of the narrative rest. Building on the earlier peace movement, it could broaden solidarity by identifying the Palestinians as the victims of a Holocaust-like disaster themselves. That such counter-narratives only rarely appear in the highly polarized political conflicts that mark contemporary

Israel, even among fierce opponents of the settlement movement, is not only a politically debilitating but an empirically perplexing fact.

Western critics of Israel's occupation policy, whether Jewish or not, do not share this difficulty. In the 2008 animated pseudo-documentary *Waltz with Bashir*, Israeli journalist Ron Ben-Yshay recounts his arrival at Sabra and Shatilla at the massacre's end. "Do you remember the photo from the Warsaw Ghetto? The one with the kid raising his hands?" he asks his interviewer. The next shot shows a group of Palestinian women and children raising their hands while being led by gun-bearing Phalangists to their certain deaths. The following shot is a close-up of one of this group of victims, a solemn child of approximately the same age as the Jewish child from the Warsaw Ghetto. This potently inverted analogy strongly appeals to critical audiences outside of Israel. *Waltz with Bashir* was nominated for an Academy Award. Such inversion, however, rarely surfaces inside Jewish-Israeli discourse itself.

Post-Zionist scholars have certainly deconstructed the once widely accepted causal relationship between the Holocaust and the establishment of Israel. They have challenged the Zionist founder's claim that the establishment of Israel was the only possible response to the Holocaust and the only feasible solution to the anti-Semitism of the Diaspora and have voiced criticisms of its political and militaristic appropriation (e.g., Zertal 2005). While these radical arguments have not been universally accepted among critical Israelis, they reveal the persisting identification of certain Israeli left-wing circles with the suffering of the Palestinians.

Yet, when speaking out publicly against the occupation, critical Israelis today rarely evoke rhetorical solidarity with Palestinians. When Holocaust imagery is employed, it is directed inward, toward Jewish-Israeli leaders and institutions, identifying them as anti-Palestinian "perpetrators." Philosopher Yeshayahu Leibowitz publicly called Israeli military units "Judeo-

Nazis" (The New York Times 1994). Historian Moshe Zimmerman asserted that his ability to

study extremist settlers was limited because the Jewish children of occupied Hebron resemble

Hitler Youth. The Leibowitz interview became notorious. Zimmerman was sued for libel (Nudel

1995, Zimmermann v. Yedioth Communication 2005). In a similar incident, scandal erupted and

legal proceedings ensued over a letter addressed to a settler in "KZ Kiryat Arba," widely

understood as "Concentration Camp Kiryat Arba," an identification that clearly equated Jewish

settlement with Nazi Holocaust crimes. While acknowledging that "doubtlessly, the defendant

intended to claim that the plaintiff is an evil man," the presiding judge in the case adamantly

maintained that, no matter how evil the settler seemed, the defendant could not have intended to

link him with Nazism: "He did not mean to say that the plaintiff is, God forbid, a Nazi." The

judge's reasoning underscores the difficulty of universalizing the Holocaust trauma in Israel

today. "As a Jew," he explained, "the plaintiff cannot be anything but a victim of the Nazis"

(Haetzni v. Tomarkin 1986).

There are several reasons for this discursive inhibition. One undoubtedly is that Israel's

inability to come to terms with the Palestinian question has produced increasing radicalism,

violence, and anti-Israeli, often anti-Semitic stereotypes among a significant part of the

Palestinian resistance. Another, less noted reason has to do with the centrality of the army in

Israeli society. Most Israeli Jews, both men and women, have compulsory military duty of two to

three years starting at the age of 18. Many voluntarily extend their service to gain benefits and

professional development, and most men remain in reserve duty until the age of 40. To severely

criticize the military by comparing it to the bitterest antagonist in modern Jewish history is to

pollute not only the military *per se* but, indirectly, the whole of Israeli society. Institutional

setting plays a vital role in trauma construction, filtering and tilting the spiral of signification.

Whatever the causes, the result of this constraint on the signification process has been to deprive Israeli critics of a potent political weapon. Because post-Zionists criticize the intertwining of Holocaust and national founding narrative as a forced marriage, they are compelled generally to avoid evoking the trauma drama in a political context. This allows the meaning of the Holocaust to be monopolized by nationalist and conservative forces.

Is there Hope?

Recently, however, there have been moves to appropriate the Holocaust in ways that allow parallels to be made. In 2009, after a mosque was burned down in a Palestinian village, most likely by Jewish settlers, the Chief Rabbi of Israel Yona Metzger paid a visit to the village elders and offered his condolences and support. "We, the people of Israel," Rabbi Metzger told them, "have a trauma from 70 years ago when the greatest destruction we have ever known, the Holocaust, started with the burning of synagogues on Kristallnacht" (Yediot Aharonot 2009). What is striking about this statement is that it came not come from the extreme left, but from the religious center, from one of the highest ranking religious authorities in the country. By polluting the arsonists and the group from which they were supposed to have emerged—the extreme factions of the settlers—as being antidemocratic or even anti-Jewish, Rabbi Metzger is creating a long-overdue bridge between Palestinian and Jewish suffering. Such new metaphoric associations, this recent event suggests, do not only originate in liberal democratic groups but can derive from an identification between religions. Several days after the arson, a delegation of rabbis and religious representatives from the Jewish settlement of Tekoa presented a new Koran to the Palestinian village's elder to replace the one burned. "We want to create new conditions between Jews and Arabs," said a member of the delegation. "Jewish law also forbids damaging a holy place" (Haaretz 2009).

Critical and even moderate Israelis have been increasingly concerned by the Holocaust's role in collective memory and contemporary policies alike. According to the Israeli right, to recognize the rights of Palestinians is to become an enemy of the Jewish people. Solidarity cannot extend beyond the boundaries of one's own group. It must be primordial, not civil. So reconstructed, the trauma drama of the Holocaust is a recipe for conflict without end. If this view should prevail, it would not only be severely destabilizing in geopolitical terms. It would assault the universalizing moral principles that the memory of the Holocaust calls upon us to sustain. Changing this symbolic constriction is a prerequisite if peaceful coexistence is ever to reign. A recent issue of the well established journal *Israel Studies* is entitled "Israelis and the Holocaust: Scars Cry Out for Healing."[24] We agree.

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[24]*Israel Studies* 14, no. 1 (Spring 2009).

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