

organized educational and ideological activities for youth. Completely detached from the historical reality of the new State of Israel, *Sulam* published anti-British articles "exposing" the British intention to reoccupy Palestine via Jordan, antigovernment articles attacking the decadent party system of the truncated Jewish State, and essays on the indivisibility of Eretz Yisrael and its promised borders. In an age of prestigious democracy it called for the installation of a Jewish dictatorship and for a war of conquest against most of the new state's neighbors. A celebration of Israel's Day of Independence was occasionally ended by the call "next year in Amman."<sup>51</sup>

The total isolation of Chug Sulam from the nation's public life did not prevent the establishment, in the early 1950s, of two new small undergrounds that vowed to topple the regime: Brit Hakana'im (the Covenant of Zealots) and Machteret Malchut Yisrael (the Kingdom of Israel Underground). The first operated between 1949 and 1951, and was mostly interested in fighting the secular character of the new state; the second acted from 1951 to 1953, and was involved in "defending and uplifting" the national honor. Both were captured by the Shin Bet (Israel's secret service) before they caused major damage, but they left an impact nevertheless. While Brit Hakana'im burned nonkosher butcher shops and set ablaze cars driving on the Sabbath, the Kingdom of Israel Underground was involved in larger operations. Reacting to the 1952 Doctors' Trial in Moscow, it blew up the Russian Consulate in Tel Aviv, and repeated the same act in the Czech consulate in response to the Slansky-Klementis show trial in Prague. Following the intense public debate over the German reparations, the underground conducted several symbolic attacks against artists performing German music.<sup>52</sup>

But the arrest of the members of these radical undergrounds and the growing irrelevance of Chug Sulam to the problems faced by the State of Israel of the 1950s slowly brought about the final decline of the old radical right. The army's aggressive retaliation operations against enemy targets in Jordan and Egypt in the first half of the 1950s, the 1956 Sinai Campaign, and Ben-Gurion's and Dayan's hawkish posture became attractive to many people who had rightist tendencies and backgrounds. The illustrious operations of Commando Detachment 101, and later the Israeli paratroopers under the command of major Ariel Sharon, provided the old ultranationalists with new myths of Israeli heroism.<sup>53</sup>

By the early 1960s *Sulam* stopped publishing. Dr. Israel Eldad became a professor of biblical Jewish history at the Technion; his devoted student, Geula Cohen, started to write for *Ma'ariv*, and the radical right became *passé*. Neither its ideologues nor its historical adversaries expected it ever to be resurrected.

## 3

## The Revival of Territorial Maximalism in Israel

The Six-Day War transformed the Israeli political psyche and changed the political thinking of the entire Middle East. The Israel of June 11, 1967, was not the anxiety-ridden nation that went to war six days earlier. Though stunned and disbelieving, the Israelis recognized the greatness of their military victory. The unification of Jerusalem, the destruction of the combined armies of Egypt, Jordan, and Syria, and the capture of the West Bank, Sinai, and the Golan Heights were possibilities only dreamed about before. The occupied territories were three times bigger than Israel proper, which the traditional siege mentality of the Israelis made seem even larger.

It is therefore not surprising that numerous Israelis developed an "imperial" conviction that their state was the strongest force in the Middle East, a world power in the class of England, France, or Italy. Many were quick to see an inner logic and historical necessity that made the war and its results inevitable. This resulted in the revival of a Zionist tradition of "territorial maximalism," which had over the previous two decades become politically obsolete. And it is this orientation that sanctifies the principle that "never again should Eretz Yisrael be divided" that has become, since 1967, a most energetic and influential tenet in modern Zionism.

### The Longest Month

A full grasp of the revival of Israeli territorial maximalism, both as an ideology and political mentality, must be grounded in an understanding of the political situation that produced the Six-Day War. This is especially true



of that period which writer Michael Bar-Zohar had named "the longest month," the four weeks from May 14 to June 11, 1967.<sup>1</sup>

May 14, 1967, Israel's nineteenth Independence Day, was the day the country's leaders learned that Gamal Abd al-Nasser, Egypt's president, had decided to move his troops across the Suez Canal into Sinai. At that time very few Israelis believed that the Egyptians were capable of a challenge of this magnitude. All intelligence reports of the army and the secret services portrayed a troubled Nasser, militarily and politically overextended in the civil war in Yemen. These conclusions were shared by the general Israeli public, leading to the portrayal of Nasser as a "paper tiger."

This illusion was shattered in the space of ten days. Not only did the "helpless" Egyptian president move his troops into Sinai, but in the following week he blatantly violated the understanding reached in 1957 with Israel following Egypt's defeat. Nasser declared the international waterway of the Straits of Tiran closed, and asked the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF) stationed in Sinai and the Gaza strip to leave.

Nasser's message was clear: he no longer feared Israel. Believing that Israel's military superiority was in fact an illusion, Nasser called Israel's bluff, moving to relieve Syria of Israeli pressure. The move was so successful, and Israel's loss of confidence so clear, that for the first time in fifteen years, the Egyptian leader was ready to give a serious consideration to an old commitment of his, to settle the final Arab score with Israel by military means.<sup>2</sup>

Nasser's sudden move stunned the entire community of nations. The Soviet Union, thrilled by its ally's success, made it clear it would veto any anti-Egyptian motion in the U.N. Security Council. United Nations Secretary-General U Thant willingly agreed to withdraw the UNEF troops from Sinai and Gaza, leaving no buffer between the Israeli and Egyptian armies.<sup>3</sup> An American proposal to reduce the tension by sending an international flotilla to test the Egyptians in the Straits of Tiran failed miserably; very few European nations were willing to risk any involvement.<sup>4</sup>

Israel was thus unprepared militarily and isolated politically—emissaries sent to mobilize support around the globe returned home empty-handed. There was a lot of sympathy and understanding, but no nation was willing to help fight Israel's war or risk an unpleasant confrontation with the Soviet Union. There was, however, a moving show of support from Jews all over the world. Non-Zionist Jews, who had never before identified with the Jewish state, rediscovered Israel. Many of them sensed a possible Holocaust and wanted to help. Nevertheless, they could do very little. The ominous shadow of Nasser and his Russian-equipped military loomed large and could not be offset by petitions, demonstrations, and emergency fund raising.

Nasser could not have picked a better time for his move. Everyone in Israel, including the political elite, was caught off guard. The mood was gloomy; an acute economic depression included an exceedingly high rate of unemployment. Many people spoke seriously about the end of the Zionist

dream. Others voted with their feet and left the country. The most common joke of the time had to do with finding a fool to stay behind to turn off the lights at Lod, Israel's only international airport.

Levi Eshkol, Israel's prime minister and minister of defense, had not yet established his authority in the vital area of security. Living in the wrathful shadow of his great predecessor, David Ben-Gurion (who considered Eshkol unfit to rule), he had initiated since 1964 a very aggressive policy of military retaliation against the Arabs, and especially against Syria.<sup>5</sup> To his dismay, however, this hawkish posture did not help him politically in 1967. No one within the nation's ruling circles mistook Eshkol for Ben-Gurion, and very few were content to leave him alone at the helm when Israel's most serious ordeal was about to unfold.

The confusion and insecurity extended beyond the political leadership to the military. Informed Israelis learned that the army's chief of staff, Itzhak Rabin, collapsed from fatigue and hypertension on May 23, the day Nasser closed the Straits of Tiran, and offered his job to his deputy commander, Ezer Weizman.<sup>6</sup> If an experienced chief of staff broke down, dismayed observers could only conclude that the situation must be extremely dangerous.

Perhaps Levi Eshkol was not really frightened by Nasser's move, but in the last week of May he certainly conveyed the image of fear. Instead of acting decisively and leading with confident strength, Eshkol projected confusion and indecision. Unlike the decisive Ben-Gurion, who had reached his most critical decisions with few advisors, Eshkol immersed himself in countless deliberations and had to know what everybody else thought. He seemed to be waiting for a collective decision that would relieve him from the grave responsibility of either going to war or making painful concessions.

During a special radio address to the nation, the prime minister stuttered badly. Unable to read the illegible text that his aides had hastily prepared, Eshkol had to stop several times to consult with them. It was a catastrophe. All the fears and anxieties of his listeners, the vast majority of the nation, were confirmed. Israel was facing its biggest challenge under shaky leadership.

Much of the country wanted to have Eshkol replaced by a more reassuring and authoritative leader. The most humiliating proposal came from Shimon Peres and his small Rafi party. Their idea was to suspend the nation's ordinary democratic procedures and form a national emergency government made up of representatives of all political parties and headed by eighty-one-year-old David Ben-Gurion. The rationale was that Nasser's daring move had damaged Israel's morale and made an immediate military operation extremely risky; Israel had lost the first round and had to amass military and political support before it could regain the initiative. Only Ben-Gurion could break the bad news to the nation and keep it from falling apart.<sup>7</sup>

Not since 1948 had Israelis been so conscious of the enormous vulnerability of their country, a thin strip of land along the Mediterranean surrounded



by sixteen Arab nations. Frightened, isolated, and deserted, they could not but hate the political arrangement of 1949 that left them open to attack from all sides. *Israel was Massada*, a small rock in the midst of a hostile wilderness. All remembered the heroic story of the last defenders of Jerusalem, who committed suicide at Massada, a mountain fort in the Judean desert, in order not fall into the hands of the Romans. The chief military rabbinate, the authority in charge of burials, was rumored at the end of May 1967 to be planning to turn public parks and recreation areas into graveyards.<sup>8</sup>

Israel finally went to war on June 5, 1967. The average Israeli soldier did not go to win big. He went only to survive, to make sure that his small state and his family stayed alive.

These mental and psychological conditions shaped the thinking of the new maximalists: an immense sense of national vulnerability, personal insecurity, memories of the Holocaust, and then, suddenly within a week, the destruction of all the threatening Arab armies and a return of the nation to much of its biblical territory. It was a mental revolution. Most Israelis were shocked and confused by the immensity of their victory. Not only were they and their country saved, but a twenty-year-old political paradigm had been smashed.<sup>9</sup>

Some of them, however, were very certain about one critical element: never again would they let their homeland be weak and vulnerable; never again would Israel become a Massada. For nearly half of Israel's citizens the outcome of the Six-Day War created a new political psychology and new identity: Israel's territorial maximalism.<sup>10</sup>

### The Land of Israel Movement

The ideological movement that was to formulate the creed of the new Israeli territorial maximalism was called *Hatenua Lema'an Eretz Yisrael Hashlema* (the Movement for the Whole of Eretz Yisrael; in short, the Land of Israel Movement, LIM). Its highly publicized founding manifesto of September, 1967, laid the foundations of the new political gospel in very straightforward terms:

Zahal's victory in the Six-Day War located the people and the state within a new and fateful period. The whole of Eretz Israel is now in the hands of the Jewish people, and just as we are not allowed to give up the *State of Israel*, so we are ordered to keep what we received there from its hands: *the Land of Israel*. . . .

Our present borders guarantee security and peace and open up unprecedented vistas of national material and spiritual consolidation. Within these boundaries, equality and freedom, the fundamental tenets of the state of Israel, shall be shared by all citizens without discrimination.<sup>11</sup>

Here was an unequivocal assertion that the conquest of vast Arab territories was irreversible. The war had produced historical justice, returning the entire Eretz Yisrael to the hands of the Jews. Israel was justly entitled to secure borders within which to accomplish its two fundamental goals, absorption of immigrants and settlement.<sup>12</sup>

Had the document been signed solely by representatives of traditional Zionist maximalism, it would hardly have been as significant. The Six-Day War did not invent the Jewish doctrine of the indivisibility of Eretz Yisrael. An old school of territorial maximalists belonging to the Revisionist movement, founded by Vladimir Jabotinsky in the twenties, and its offshoots already existed in Israel, ready to embrace the consequences of the 1967 war with a forty-year-old ideology. These maximalists included Menachem Begin's party Herut (Freedom), old followers of Brit Habirionim and former members of the Lehi underground. Thus it was not surprising to find among the LIM signatories such names as Professor Eri Jabotinsky, Vladimir's son; Dr. Reuven Hecht, a veteran Revisionist; Uri Zvi Greenberg, the poet laureate of the extreme Zionist right since the 1930s; and Dr. Israel Eldad, a former commander of Lehi and a well-known ideologue of *Malchut Yisrael* (the Kingdom of Israel). These people had always been nostalgic about the indivisible Eretz Yisrael and hostile to the 1948 partition of Palestine. Before 1967, though, very few other Israelis took the maximalists seriously. After the 1947 U.N. Partition Resolution, the 1948 war, and the consolidation of the State of Israel in the territories it salvaged from the Arabs in 1949, the issue of the indivisibility of Palestine became academic. It had no electoral appeal and was rarely discussed in any public forum.

What made the Land of Israel Movement manifesto important were the many signers identified with the Labor movement or its fundamental tenets. The most significant and active group were people who had followed David Ben-Gurion when he left Mapai in 1965 to form Rafi. They included the famed poet Nathan Alterman; the essayist and writer Zvi Shiloah, Isser Harel, Israel's legendary first head of Mossad; and Rachel Yanait Ben-Zvi, the widow of Israel's second president, Itzhak Ben-Zvi. They were joined by notables associated with Mapai: Chaim Yehil, former director-general of the ministry of Foreign Affairs; and Uzi Feinerman, the secretary-general of the Moshav movement. These representatives of Israel's political elite were joined by a gallery of illustrious reserve generals: Major General Yaacov Dori, the army's chief of staff during the War of Independence, and Brigadier Generals Dan Tolkovsky, Eliyahu Ben-Hur, Abraham Yaffe, and Meir Zorea. Israel's future Nobel Laureate, writer S. Y. Agnon, was also present, as were many other authors, poets, and critics.

Taken altogether, the seventy-two signatories of the manifesto were probably the most distinguished group of names ever to have joined a public cause in Israel. And what was most striking was that this document united many former opponents: before 1967, the LIM would have been



impossible.<sup>13</sup> Right from its start, therefore, it became a significant political force.

The Land of Israel Movement, it is important to stress, was neither an opposition group nor an extremist protest movement. On the contrary; its members were proud of both the government and the military for the great victory of the Six-Day War. They were alarmed by the growing voices within Israel, and the mounting pressures from outside, to trade the occupied territories for a peaceful solution with the Arabs according to some pre-1967 conceptions, and they believed the government needed their help to strengthen its political resolve. Consequently, the LIM saw itself as an "ideological interest group" in charge of defending and promoting the issue of Eretz Yisrael.<sup>14</sup>

Nathan Alterman, the central figure of the movement, did not want to involve active politicians, for fear that they would use the movement to advance their political careers.<sup>15</sup> He concentrated instead on recruiting writers and poets who could give the new movement a metapolitical quality. The roster Alterman put together overshadowed anything the Israeli intellectual left could come up with.<sup>16</sup>

The lack of active politicians did not, of course, preclude politics. Most of the movement's members were identified with established political parties. The dominant group within the LIM, former Rafi members, were especially pleased with the new situation. One of Rafi's leaders, Major General (res.) Moshe Dayan, was popularly seen as the architect and hero of the Six-Day War. Not only had he pulled Israel to a great victory, but he had brought this splinter party from political isolation to the center of national action. And Moshe Dayan was the man who, upon reaching the Wailing Wall on the war's fourth day, uttered the unforgettable words: "We have returned to all that is holy in our land. We have returned never to be parted again."<sup>17</sup> In another emotional ceremony that followed the war, the burial of the casualties of 1948 on Jerusalem's Mount of Olives, Dayan repeated the theme:

We have not abandoned your dream and we have not forgotten your lesson. We have returned to the mountain, to the cradle of our people, to the inheritance of the Patriarchs, the land of the Judges and the fortress of the Kingdom of the House of David. We have returned to Hebron and Schem [Nablus], to Bethlehem and Anatot to Jericho and the fords of the Jordan at Adam Ha'ir.<sup>18</sup>

This sense of fulfillment and satisfaction was shared by all the components of the new movement. Veteran Revisionists, like Eri Jabotinsky and Samuel Katz, had always been hostile to the 1948 partition of Palestine and repeatedly argued that daring policy could place the entire Eretz Yisrael in the hands of the Jews. For many years, however, they had had no political

forum for their views. Personal conflicts with Menachem Begin had driven them out of Herut, the only party that still subscribed to the old Revisionist creed. The new movement not only fitted their old ideology, but made it possible for them to rejoin Israel's public life without submitting to the dictates of Begin.<sup>19</sup>

The most ecstatic members of the LIM were probably the former leaders of Lehi and the old Zionist extreme right, the poet Uri Zvi Greenberg and Dr. Israel Eldad. Greenberg, Eldad, and other ideological extremists had, from the 1930s through the early 1950s, developed, as will be recalled, a unique set of ideas that most Israelis considered mystical insanity, the vision of the "the Kingdom of Israel." Its main theme was that the returning nation had to conquer the entire Promised Land by force, in a process that necessarily involved blood, glory, and honor.<sup>20</sup> The truncation of Israel in 1948 was to them a national humiliation and disgrace. Until 1967 this group, opposed to the dominant political ethos of Labor Zionism, shunned even by the Revisionists, was considered anathema and pushed to the very fringes of society.<sup>21</sup>

Though the followers of Jabotinsky shared many of the same beliefs, they could not forget that Abraham Stern (Yair) had defied Jabotinsky's last command in 1940 and split the Irgun by creating his own underground movement. And they were never impressed by the mystical vision of "the Kingdom of Israel." After 1948 the Revisionists had been able, under Begin's leadership, to enter legitimate political life, but Eldad and his followers remained outside mainstream right-wing politics. Only after the Six-Day War and the establishment of the LIM were Eldad's views accepted as relevant and legitimate. At first Eldad, convinced that his ultranationalist reputation would damage the new movement, refused to join the LIM. He could not believe that former adversaries were ready to share with him a common ideological home.<sup>22</sup>

Another important component of the Land of Israel Movement came from the Achdut Ha'avoda party, affiliated with Hakibbutz Hameuchad (the United Kibbutz) movement. These people brought to the LIM a unique ideological legacy and a strong political orientation. They were disciples and followers of Itzhak Tabenkin, the legendary kibbutz leader who alone among the founders of Israel's Labor movement never abandoned the ideal of Eretz Yisrael.

The idea of the partition of Palestine, first broached in the late 1930s, was not easily accepted by the Labor leadership. It took David Ben-Gurion many years to convince his colleagues that this was the only chance for independence and international recognition for the Jews of Palestine.<sup>23</sup> The 1947 U.N. Partition Resolution and Israel's success in the war of 1948 seemed to prove Ben-Gurion right.

Nevertheless, Tabenkin, whose personal charisma was always much



stronger than his eclectic political theory, believed that a true Jewish redemption could take place only in the context of communal settlement in the entire Eretz Yisrael. The religious, nationalistic, and chauvinistic aspects of redemption played no role in his convictions; instead he believed in a genuine pioneering spirit and a mystical socialist vision of redemption. This authoritative and unchallenged leader of Hakibbutz Hameuchad never ceased to think that the best way to regenerate the Jewish people in Eretz Yisrael was to turn the entire nation into one big association of kibbutzim. Only such revolutionary socialization could overcome the Diaspora mentality and create a new Jew.<sup>24</sup>

This vision of agricultural, communal, and pioneering socialism, worked out by Tabenkin beginning in the 1920s, was not universalistic. It was very Jewish and particularistic. It was nourished by a deep suspicion of the Arabs, the British, and the rest of the world. And it was based on Tabenkin's unshakable conviction that the great transformation could take place only in the entirety of Eretz Yisrael. Tabenkin, who had no interest in practical politics, never forgave Ben-Gurion for endorsing the partition of Palestine. The U.N. Partition Resolution was an agonizing event for many of Tabenkin's followers; they refused to rejoice with the rest of the nation, since much of the land was left in Arab hands.<sup>25</sup>

We cannot say that Tabenkin's followers—including his sons Moshe and Yosef, and individuals like Menachem Dorman and Benni Marshak—had been waiting impatiently since 1949 for the conquest of the West Bank, but it is clear that Hakibbutz Hameuchad never gave up the idea of greater Israel. In its February 1955 convention, Hakibbutz Hameuchad passed resolutions that made its position clear:

Article 2: Eretz Yisrael in its natural boundaries is the historical homeland of the Jewish people and the space for immigration, settlement, and fulfillment of the Zionist endeavor

Article 20: Socialist Zionism, in its full meaning and framework, cannot be fulfilled in a divided Eretz Yisrael but only in a complete Eretz Yisrael, in the Hebrew socialist state of the Jewish people . . . and the Arabs living in the land.<sup>26</sup>

And while the urgency of reuniting Eretz Yisrael had lost much of its momentum after the 1956 Sinai campaign, Tabenkin and his close followers never gave up on the ideal. Just a year before the 1967 war Tabenkin reiterated his commitment in a seminar held at Ef'al, the ideological center of Hakibbutz Hameuchad. Discussing the present political irrelevance of the issue, he stressed that it was nevertheless extremely important that "the son, the daughter, the student, who go to the army, see this matter as a goal," and continued, "when Jews are told about Zion, they think about the entire Eretz Yisrael." Tabenkin said that if war came (though he hoped it would not), "in every place where the war would make it possible, we would push for the restoration of the integrity of the land."<sup>27</sup> Curiously, Tabenkin did

not sign the first LIM manifesto, though he fully endorsed the movement and its ideas.<sup>28</sup>

It should be noted for the record that the LIM was briefly joined by another literary-ideological circle, the Canaanites, who were never content with Israeli Zionism and democracy. Led by poet Yonathan Ratosh, the Canaanites believed that Israeli Jews should sever their relations with Diaspora Jewry, abandon Zionism, and invest their political energy in the creation of a huge "Canaanite alliance" in the Middle East, made of all the non-Muslim and anti-Arab minorities in the area. They had no objection to pursuing this goal by force and suggested that Israel establish a military dictatorship. Before long, however, they were kicked out of LIM, the excuse being their total nonacceptance of the Zionist ideology and the Israeli regime.<sup>29</sup>

At first the Land of Israel Movement was more of an intellectual club than a fighting mass organization—a typical elite group made up of elderly notables who gave no thought to, and were incapable of, actually leading a radical movement of protest. None of them were young, angry, or powerless. All were successful achievers who had full political and media access, and most accepted the Israeli system of government and the prevailing norms of democracy. They were convinced that *they were* the nation. They truly believed that there was no contradiction between the new Israel that had just been formed by the Six-Day War and the principles of the old Israel. Their reiteration, in their founding manifesto, of the principles of equality, freedom, and the "tenets of the state of Israel" was genuine and sincere. The movement did not aspire to be more than a single-issue ideological group, operating within a fully legitimate regime. If the new territorial maximalism carried within it the seeds of the future radical right, most of its founders were unaware of it.

#### Between Messianism and Fundamentalism: The Roots of Gush Emunim

Zionist religious Jews were especially stunned by the outcome of the Six-Day War. It did not square with the non-messianic, pragmatic stance most of them had maintained for years. It could only be comprehended as a miracle: The God of Israel had once again showed His might. He had come to the rescue of His people in their worst moment of fear and anxiety, and, as in the days of old, had turned an unbearable situation upside down. In one blow He placed the whole of Eretz Yisrael—the object of yearning and prayers for thousands of years—into the hands of His loyal servants.

While most religious Israelis reacted to the outcome of the Six-Day War with as much bewilderment as joy, one group had expected just such an event.



This was the group gathered around Yeshivat Merkaz Harav in Jerusalem. The head of the Yeshiva, Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Hacohen Kook, who had succeeded its founder, his revered father Rabbi Avraham Yitzhak Hacohen Kook (the first Chief Rabbi of the Jewish community in mandatory Palestine), had long been preoccupied with the incorporation of the entire Eretz Yisrael into the State of Israel.<sup>30</sup> His dreams were widely shared by his students before the Six-Day War, and were discussed in many courses and Halakhic deliberations (discussions of orthodox Jewish law and tradition).

Following the teaching of his father that ours is a messianic age in which the Land of Israel is to be reunited and redeemed, Rabbi Zvi Yehuda left no doubt in the minds of his students that in their lifetime they were to see the great event. Thus, unlike the rest of the Zionist religious community, the graduates of Merkaz Harav were mentally and intellectually ready to absorb the consequences of the war—but not before witnessing a unique, seemingly miraculous event. On the eve of Independence Day in May 1967, just one day before the beginning of the crisis that led to the war, graduates of Merkaz Harav met at the yeshiva for an alumni reunion. As was his custom, Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook delivered a festive sermon, in the midst of which his quiet voice suddenly rose and he bewailed the partition of historic Eretz Yisrael and the inability of the Jews to return to the holy cities of Hebron and Nablus. His faithful disciples were told that the situation was intolerable and must not last.<sup>31</sup> When just three weeks later, in June 1967, some of them reached the Wailing Wall as soldiers and found themselves citizens of an enlarged Israel, the graduates of Merkaz Harav were convinced that a genuine spirit of prophecy had come over their rabbi. Just minutes after the conquest of the Wall, a platoon commander sent a jeep to bring Rabbi Kook to the holy site. There he was met by two of his overwhelmed students, paratroopers Hanan Porat and Israel Shtieglitz (Ariel), future activists of the radical right. In front of his students and the entire battalion Rabbi Zvi Yehuda solemnly declared

We hereby inform the people of Israel and the entire world that under heavenly command we have just returned home in the elevations of holiness and our holy city. We shall never move out of here.<sup>32</sup>

Thus, in one stroke a flame had been lit and the conditions made ripe for imparting a new messianic and fundamentalist ideology to a wide religious public, especially to young Zionist Jews. A totally new kind of religious spirit and literature emerged that focused on the messianic and eschatological meaning of the Six-Day War. The war was seen as a miracle embodying all the signs cited by the Prophets and the Halakhic authorities as indicating the coming of the Messiah.<sup>33</sup> The new orientation made it clear that the territories of Eretz Yisrael were physically and spiritually inseparable from the people of Israel.

Zvi Yehuda Kook, the unknown rabbi who spearheaded the new interpretation, was elevated to the status of a charismatic guru. His disciples

became missionaries equipped with an unshakable conviction in the divine authority of their cause. In time they were to transform a passive religious community into an active and excited political constituency.

How does the messianism of the new ideology relate to its fundamentalism? Let us compare the theologies of its two spiritual fathers—Rabbi Avraham Yitzhak Hacohen Kook, the man who established Yeshivat Merkaz Harav—and his son Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook, who became head of the Yeshiva and lived to see the Six-Day War.

The elder Rabbi Kook, by far the more original thinker, believed that the era of redemption of the Jewish people had already begun. It was characterized by the rise of modern Zionism, the Balfour Declaration, and the growing Zionist enterprise in Palestine:

And there is no doubt that this great movement [Zionism] is *Atchalta D'geula* (the beginning of redemption), which is about to come soon, in our own days. And for our people and the cities of our God we have to be strong.<sup>34</sup>

Although not unprecedented, Kook's interpretation of redemption was uncommon and daring. It deviated from the traditional Jewish belief that the messiah could come only through the single metahistorical appearance of an individual redeemer. And there were clearly some elements of heresy in the new interpretation, for it assigned a holy and redemptive status to the Zionists—the modern Jewish nationalists who wanted to establish in the Holy Land a *secular* state.<sup>35</sup> Kook's argument that the secular Zionists were God's unknowing emissaries subjected him to the hostility of the old religious community in Palestine, especially the ultraorthodox, who considered Zionism a heresy.<sup>36</sup>

But the elder Kook hardly advocated political fundamentalism or "operative messianism." Acting and writing in the 1920s and 1930s, he supported the political approach of the secular Zionist movement, one of slow and prudent progress toward national fulfillment. He did not establish a political movement and never called for a policymaking process based on the Torah.<sup>37</sup> The theology taught in Yeshivat Merkaz Harav had no immediate policy consequences and made no political demands.<sup>38</sup>

Israel's victory in the Six-Day War transformed the status of the theology taught at Merkaz Harav as well as the existential reality of its students and graduates. Suddenly it became clear to these young people that they were indeed living in a messianic age and that messianism had a concrete meaning in their everyday life. Ordinary reality assumed a sacred aspect, in which every event possessed theological meaning and was part of the metahistorical process of redemption.<sup>39</sup> Though this view was shared by several authorities such as Rabbi Shlomo Goren, the Chief Rabbi of the army, and Rabbi Zvi Moshe Neriah, the senior rabbi of the Bnei Akiva yeshivot, it was most effectively expounded by Kook's son, Rabbi Zvi Yehuda, heretofore only an



unknown interpreter of his father's writings, who now became an active ideologue and the spiritual leader of a new messianic movement.

Rabbi Kook defined the State of Israel as the Halakhic "Kingdom of Israel in the Making" and the "Kingdom of Israel as the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth." Referring to the Six-Day War and its experience he said: "We are living in the middle of redemption. The Kingdom of Israel is being rebuilt. The entire Israeli army is holy. It symbolizes the rule of the people on its land."<sup>40</sup> Every Jew living in Israel was, according to Rav Zvi Yehuda Kook, holy, all phenomena, even the secular, were imbued with holiness. Not only Kook's students, but all Israelis, were expected to recognize the transformation and behave accordingly. The government was to conduct its affairs according to Maimonides' "Rules of Kings" and to be judged by these rules and Torah prescriptions.<sup>41</sup>

As for Eretz Yisrael, the Land of Israel, the land—every grain of its soil—was declared holy in a fundamentalist sense. In that respect Kook differed from the new territorial maximalists—the occupied territories were inalienable not for political or security reasons, but because God had promised them to Abraham 4,000 years ago, shaping the identity of the nation. Rabbi Zvi Yehuda was so attached to this fundamentalist formula that in spite of his great enthusiasm for the Land of Israel Movement he refused to sign its manifesto. Its preamble proclaimed that "the whole of Eretz Yisrael is now in the hands of the Jewish people"; but this was, in a fundamentalist sense, false. Abraham's Promised Land was bigger than Palestine, it included parts of present-day Jordan, Syria, and Iraq—territories to which the Jewish nation was not allowed, in principle to forsake its claim.<sup>42</sup> While he never called for a new war to conquer these farther territories, Rabbi Zvi Yehuda advocated keeping the areas already occupied. In an early "call" to his students, "Lo Taguru" (Be not afraid), he said, "This land is ours; here are no Arab territories or Arab lands, but only Israeli territories—the eternal land of our forefathers, which belongs in its Biblical boundaries to the government of Israel."<sup>43</sup> Complete national salvation, Kook instructed his students, could only take place in the context of the Greater Israel; withdrawal from the new territories would be against God's intention (clearly demonstrated in the Six-Day War) and would mean forfeiting redemption.

While Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook and his followers were very clear about the requirements of the time and the path to follow, they saw no need in 1967 to establish a political movement of their own. They were, in fact, very pleased with the government, the legitimate carrier of the nation's redemptive calling, and the army. The Land of Israel Movement, which received Kook's full support, would transmit the Eretz Yisrael idea to the nation, and since God was active behind the scenes, there was no reason to worry.

Most of the immediate political activity of the would-be Gush Emunim in the post-1967 years took place within the National Religious Party. It was conducted in the context of the struggle of a new age cohort to assume

leadership positions and influence within this pragmatic party that was an old ally of the ruling Labor coalition. The young generation of the NRP was extremely unhappy with the traditional passive role the party played in the government of Israel on national issues such as security and the conduct of foreign affairs. Its leaders, former Bar Ilan student activists such as Zevulun Hammer and Yehuda Ben-Meir, demanded that the NRP participate actively in all the critical issues facing the nation, and the emerging Eretz Yisrael ideology was a good place to start.<sup>44</sup>

While the young graduates of Merkaz Harav helped form a rabbinical consensus on the sanctity of Eretz Yisrael and thus helped reformulate the political platform of the NRP, their real contribution was to launch the actual Jewish return to the West Bank. Kook's followers pushed the government to resettle Gush Etzion, a pre-1948 Jewish agricultural area that had been captured by the Jordanian Arab Legion during the War of Independence.<sup>45</sup>

In 1968 Rabbi Moshe Levinger, one of Rabbi Zvi Yehuda's most devoted students, led seventy-nine followers in the first Jewish return to Hebron. The operation began in illicitly moving into the Park Hotel in Hebron, to Moshe Dayan's great annoyance. This became the model for Gush Emunim's illicit operations. The unauthorized settlement, was followed by a declaration that the settlers will never leave, and finally by an agreement to be moved to a nearby military compound. It involved tremendous dedication, great political pressure, and intense lobbying. Soon the government decided to establish Kiryat Arba, a new Jewish city next to Hebron.<sup>46</sup>

Thus the young followers of the new theology of Eretz Yisrael found out about national politics. They learned firsthand about diplomatic pressure, political manipulation, politicians' personal ambitions, and internal rivalries. And they found out that one could not remain a pure true believer if one wanted to get things done. Even in the messianic age there was room for shrewd lobbying, cheating, and bluffing. Rabbi Moshe Levinger, leader of the new settlement of Kiryat Arba, became the role model: learned, highly observant, realistic, innovative, and manipulative.<sup>47</sup> Levinger and his colleagues proved astute students of Israeli politics. They quickly realized that the Israeli coalition governments, though united in times of war, were divided in peace—and that it was easy to manipulate ambitious cabinet ministers against each other.<sup>48</sup> To their great disappointment they found that the government, the "Kingdom of Israel in the Making," was *unaware* of its role in the process of redemption, and was not even sure about its short-range goals. In this context, young people, armed with unworldly religious excitement, unshakable conviction in their cause, existential resolve, and some political savvy could work miracles.

By 1973 they were ready for a new, more daring venture, the first Jewish penetration of Samaria, the densely populated northern part of the West Bank. The actors were a small group called Gariin (nucleus) Elon Moreh, led by students from the small yeshiva of Kiryat Arba. Impatient with the slow progress of the Jewish settlement of the West Bank and especially with the



hesitation of the government on settlement in Samaria, the group, under the leadership of Benny Katzover and Menachem Felix, decided one day to lay aside the holy books—"Sogrim et hagmarot." This decision, which has already attained mythical status in the short history of Gush Emunim, meant that although studying Torah at the newly established Kiryat Arba was extremely significant, an even greater calling was the settlement of Samaria.<sup>49</sup> They believed that what was now needed was to challenge the inaction of the Israeli government, break the stalemate on settlement, and make sure the process of redemption continued. Elon Moreh was the biblical name of Nablus, and forming a Gariin—a social nucleus for a future settlement—with this name meant that Nablus, the biggest Palestinian center on the West Bank, was a target for Jewish settlement, with or without official sanction.

While the new Zionist fundamentalism blossomed after the Six-Day War, it is important to recognize that it grew out of social and political processes that had been in the making long before 1967. The disciples of Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook, who studied at Merkaz Harav since the early 1950s, were not isolated individuals who discovered the light through mystical revelation. They came to Merkaz Harav from the community of the so-called "knitted skullcaps," the Bnei Akiva youth movement, Hapoel Hamizrachi, and adherents of the Torah Va'avoda (Torah and Labor), the founders of the religious kibbutz movement.

Bnei Akiva, the religious parallel to several other Israeli pioneering youth movements, provided the quality manpower for many of Israel's kibbutzim. Its graduates were involved in establishing many Zionist enterprises in Palestine and were closely connected to the Labor movement and its pioneering ethos.

Religious Zionists were part of the political, economic, and cultural fabric of the country, with their own variegated semi-private educational system.<sup>50</sup> For many years, however, these people suffered from a major cultural drawback: as observant orthodox Jews who wore knitted skullcaps, they were outsiders. A main feature of modern Zionism had been its secularism and anti-clericalism. Most modern Zionists revolted against the Jewish *shtetls* of Eastern Europe, which represented for them all the maladies of the Diaspora. And the *shtetls* were made up, according to the Zionist caricature, primarily of orthodox Jews who, instead of protecting themselves against a hostile and antisemitic world, lived marginal and unproductive lives and prayed all day long. The Zionist maxim of *Shelilat Hagalut* (the negation of Diaspora) implied for the vast majority of Israeli Zionists the rejection of orthodox Judaism, its practitioners, and its symbols.<sup>51</sup> This prevalent orientation created tremendous identity problems for the religious Zionists who believed there was no contradiction between the traditional Jewish yearning to return to Zion and modern Zionism. They were part of all the exciting developments in Israel, but they were denigrated as secondary partners.

Thus, the youngsters of Bnei Akiva had internalized a profound sense of bitterness and frustration. Truly Zionist and idealistic, they had developed two hidden ambitions: to erase the shame of their parents, who had agreed to play a humiliating auxiliary role in building the Jewish state, and to outdo the secular Zionists. Witnessing the constant decline of Israel's secular pioneering and public spirit and the growth of materialism and self-interested individualism, they found it easy to imagine another kind of Zionism, more Jewish and closer to the true spiritual sources of the nation.

Long after Gush Emunim was founded, it was learned that its leaders came from a secret Gariin, formed in 1952 by teenagers from Yeshivat Kfar Haroe who vowed to work for a spiritual and cultural transformation of the nation. They called themselves *Gahelet* (embers), which also stood for *Gariin Halutzi Lomdei Torah* (a pioneering nucleus of Torah students). The *Gahelet* charter said, "We must kindle the flame of the future generations, to look forward to the day in which every man in Israel will sit under his vine and fig tree in full observance of the Torah of Israel."<sup>52</sup> When the twelve members of this secret group discovered the writings of the elder Rabbi Kook, they joined Merkaz Harav and became devoted students of the younger Rabbi Kook.

Until the 1950s Merkaz Harav was a small and unimportant religious seminary in Jerusalem. The death of Rav Kook, in 1935, had left the yeshiva without a leader. None of his successors was as charismatic and original as the founder, and few students were attracted to the place. But the orientation of Merkaz Harav, based on the unique legacy of the late Rabbi, was nevertheless different from the approaches adopted by other yeshivas. The heads of the yeshiva—Rabbis Harlap, Ra'anani, and Zvi Yehuda Kook—had never been ambivalent about the newly created State of Israel. Its secular nature had not disturbed them, for they had been convinced that in due course the Israelis would repent and return to tradition and Torah. The very attainment of national independence was seen by them as a fulfillment of the prophecies of their revered mentor. They were especially excited about the army of the new state, and unlike many rabbis, they made Yom Hatzmaut (Israel's Independence Day) a high religious holiday full of spiritual meaning.<sup>53</sup> Every Yom Hatzmaut, Merkaz would have an alumni get-together, at which a major sermon by the rabbi would be delivered.

This positive attitude toward the State of Israel had apparently attracted the young members of *Gahelet*. Here was a yeshiva that conceived itself as an integral part of the nation's Zionist regeneration and did not feel apologetic about its religious character. These were rabbis who did not think that reading and rehearsing the Torah and Halakha were antithetical to state matters: security, foreign policy, or economy.

Starting in the mid-fifties, Yeshivat Merkaz Harav slowly became the spiritual center of the new approach to religious Zionism. The new students listened attentively to the idealistic and nationalist sermons of Rabbi Zvi Yehuda and to his very Israeli interpretation of his father's books. In addi-



tion to their scholarly attraction to this person, the students developed a very emotional attachment to him. The childless rabbi gave the young students all his love and attention, and Merkaz Harav became for them a second home and a family.<sup>54</sup>

After they graduated, Kook's students continued to preach the Merkaz Harav gospel in and out of Bnei Akiva circles. Without being aware of their contribution, they had participated in an undeclared cultural competition between Israel's secular educational system and their own. Although there was no outright war between the two systems in the 1950s and 1960s, there was an immense tension. They represented opposing approaches to public and private life, and in the 1950s there were many indications that the religious were being overcome by the grand process of secularization.

Today we know that this never happened. The victors in this power contest were the religious educational system and the subculture of the Hapoel Hamizrahi and the "knitted skullcaps." In contrast to the other sectors of the Zionist educational system, which in the course of being nationalized lost their specific normative characters and underwent an astonishing ideological dilution, the religious Zionists developed an educational system that created norms of life and behavior of the highest order for a quarter of the school population. Thus the religious Zionist public was spared the general decline that beset the country's secular educational system and, indeed, may have even been consolidated by it.

Around that educational system, complete life patterns were created for an entire public, which reinforced its religious life not only at home and in the synagogue but also (for its children) in the neighborhood kindergarten and in the ulpanah (religious academy for girls) and yeshiva.<sup>55</sup> The ideological leadership of this system was partly being taken over in the 1960s by the graduates of Merkaz Harav.

This process of pre-1967 ideological discovery of Eretz Israel, in which a whole Bnei Akiva generation moved slowly in a nationalist direction, was not revolutionary. It was gradual, and consistent, and it had both educational and political aspects. The most significant development in the educational sphere was the emergence of Yeshivot Hesder (arrangement) which combined an advanced religious education with military service in the Israeli army. Hesder (arrangement) refers to agreements between the yeshivas and the Ministry of Defense. The new type of yeshivas brought religious youth into direct contact with national issues they were not aware of before. Young people of military age would now go for one year of yeshiva study, with some military exercise, and later join the army for an intense period of training. While not comprehensive or numerically large before 1967, the new arrangement was part of a larger process that helped close the gap between the secular side of the Israeli life and the religious.<sup>56</sup> Thus, it is possible to conclude that by the mid-1960s, a whole generation of impatient Bnei Akiva graduates and youth, with a Merkaz Harav spiritual elite, stood

ready to change the course of modern Zionism if the right events should take place. And they did within one June week, 1967.

### Rabbi Meir Kahane and the Birth of the Israeli Jewish Defense League

In September 1971, the growing Israeli territorial maximalism movement got an unexpected reinforcement. Rabbi Meir Kahane, the notorious head of the Jewish Defense League (JDL), an American Jewish vigilante organization, moved to Israel. Kahane, an orthodox rabbi, did not conceal his sympathy for the most extreme interpretations of the Land of Israel Movement and the growing Zionist messianism. Already at that early day he was the most radical among the maximalists, a position he never relinquished.<sup>57</sup>

Unlike the other territorial maximalists, Kahane had his roots in America and in the American scene of the 1960s. In 1968, he and a few other young orthodox Jews established the JDL as a self-proclaimed vigilante movement aimed at defending Jewish neighborhoods in New York City. At first the league was mostly concerned with local issues: "crime in the streets," "black anti-Semitism," "do-nothing government," and "changing neighborhoods."<sup>58</sup> Paradoxically, the inactivity of the Jewish establishment helped Kahane, whose penchant for violence was obvious from the start. The leadership of the American Jewish community dissociated itself from the vigilante rabbi without offering a single solution to the problems he addressed. Consequently, Kahane became attractive to lower-middle-class urban Jews, who suffered from anti-Semitism and violence in the streets. And he also found a young Jewish middle-class generation looking for an anti-establishment hero.

The ambitious rabbi from Brooklyn, a talented speaker, knew how to pluck the sensitive chords of Jewish anxiety. He spoke bluntly about American anti-Semitism, manifest and latent, and helped assuage his listeners' guilt about the Holocaust. The Jewish establishment was his prime target; he constantly reminded his audience how little the Jewish leadership had done during World War II to stop the killing of Jews in Europe and of how hesitant they now were in fighting black anti-Semitism. "Never Again" became the slogan of the JDL: never again were Jews to be defenseless.<sup>59</sup>

Kahane's success in activating young Jews for aggressive self-defense against anti-Semitism in America did not escape the attention of several ultranationalist Israelis who believed there was an even more important Jewish cause to fight for, the plight of Russian Jews. According to Robert Friedman, Kahane's biographer, it was Geula Cohen, former Lehi activist, and Herut Knesset member since 1969, who first introduced Kahane to the subject, and who was also instrumental in forging a secret, semi-official support group for Kahane in Israel.<sup>60</sup> Since 1969, the repression of Soviet Jewry and the refusal of the Soviet Union to let Jews emigrate became the



major item on the agenda of the JDL. Russian diplomats were attacked, first in the United States then in Europe, Russian artists were harassed, and demonstrations were held in front and inside of Russian agencies. Kahane had apparently identified a very sensitive issue for which it was possible to mobilize considerable support. The Rabbi's extraordinary ability to dramatize this struggle by the use of symbolic and real violence, and to gain media attention, popularized the JDL and facilitated fund raising and recruitment. In the beginning of the 1970s the JDL had many thousands of activists all over the United States, branches in Europe and South Africa, and admirers in Israel.<sup>61</sup>

For his enthusiastic supporters, Kahane launched a new gospel of Jewish self-transformation and mutual responsibility: "The American Jew, from now on, will become a new person, proud of his origins, capable of defending himself and fully devoted to the cause of his brothers all over the world."<sup>62</sup> Action quickly followed. Though until 1969 most JDL activities included only *symbolic* violence permitted by law, the league soon became involved in illegal acts and actual violence. After attacking an anti-Semitic radio station, JDL members were sent to jail. In 1970 and 1971 they conducted a score of violent assaults and bombing of Russian institutions in the United States, including Aeroflot, Intourist, several Soviet cultural centers, Amtorg, Russian diplomatic missions, and the residences of Soviet officials in New York and Washington. American firms, doing business with the Soviet Union and institutions involved in Soviet-American cultural exchange were also subjected to JDL aggression.<sup>63</sup>

The JDL thus evolved a unique ideology and style, claiming the right to defend fellow Jews wherever there was trouble. The young rabbi from Brooklyn, as associate editor of the Brooklyn *Jewish Press*, the largest selling Anglo-Jewish newspaper in America, could use his weekly column to develop a full-fledged ideology; books based on these essays spread his influence. The key concept of the new philosophy was *Ahavat Yisroel* (Love of Jewry), a mutuality that implied the obligation to help Jews in trouble, with no reservations and conditions.

The pain of a Jew, wherever he may be, is our pain. The joy of a Jew, wherever he may be is our joy. We are committed to going to the aid of a Jew who is in need without distinction, without asking what kind of Jew he is. . . .

We do more, however, than pay lip service to the concept of love of Jewry. We act upon it. There is no limit to the lengths to which we will go when necessary to aid a fellow Jew. We must be prepared to give our efforts; we must be prepared to give our moneys; and, if need be, we must be prepared to give our lives for the Jewish people.<sup>64</sup>

But the new element in the JDL's message was not its readiness to help other Jews, but to do it violently, unconditionally, and with "no limit." Even then Kahane made it clear that no geographic boundaries or legal prohibi-

tions were to stop him from "defending Jews." He also stated bluntly that "Jewish violence to protect Jewish interests is *never* bad."<sup>65</sup> Kahane rarely deigned to play according to rules imposed by authorities he did not recognize, and he seldom restrained himself or criticized his followers for violence.

In ideology, Kahane was greatly influenced by Vladimir Jabotinsky, the founder of Revisionist Zionism. Kahane had participated in Jabotinsky's youth movement, Betar, and was especially taken by the master's favorable attitude toward Jewish self-defense and Jewish dignity; he adopted two of Betar's most famous slogans—*hadar* (glory, self-pride) and *barzel* (iron, iron fist)—as slogans of the Jewish Defense League.<sup>66</sup> What Kahane ignored was Jabotinsky's comprehensive liberal outlook and great respect for legality, which had greatly restrained Betar's militancy. The JDL youngsters were instructed to be demonstrably proud of their Jewish origins and have no guilt about using the "iron fist" against the enemies of Jews. They were told, in addition, to be obedient to their leader (*Mishmaat Yisroel*—Jewish discipline and unity), and to be fully confident that God was behind them and their nation (*Bitachon*—faith in the indestructibility of the Jewish people).<sup>67</sup>

It is hard to identify the sources of Kahane's most notorious ideological contribution to the American JDL, the glorification of Jewish violence. Judging from his early writings, it appears that Kahane's insatiable urge to resort to exhibitionist violence has been his response to the repressions and humiliations of Jews since time immemorial, and especially during the Holocaust. All of Kahane's early writings communicate a profound internalization of the evils committed against Jews, and a deep resentment that this experience had destroyed their readiness to fight back. By legitimizing unmitigated violence against the enemies of the Jews, Kahane seems to believe he is destroying the ghetto mentality of the Jew and reconstructing genuine Jewry, "the Jews of old":

Once upon a time, the Jew was not a member of the ADL [the American liberal Anti-Defamation League, an organization highly critical of the JDL's violence]—neither in form nor in spirit. It was not in the role of Mahatma Gandhi that the Jews fought at Massada; the men of Bar-Kochba and Judah Macabee never went to a Quaker meeting. The Jews of old—when Jews were knowledgeable about their religion, when they turned the page of the Jewish Bible instead of turning the Christian cheek—understood the concept of the Book and the Sword. It was only in the horror of the ghetto with its fears, neuroses, and insecurities that the Jew began to react in fright rather than with self-respect. That is what the ghetto does to a Jew.<sup>68</sup>

Meanwhile, Kahane was developing his own version of *catastrophic Zionism*, an ideology that predicted a new holocaust and called upon the Jews of Diaspora to return to Israel before it was too late. Nineteenth-century Zionism, it should be recalled, had a very strong catastrophic component. Leo Pinsker and Theodor Herzl, its most influential theoreticians,



came to their conclusion that Zionism was inevitable as a result of the threat to the physical security of the Jews in Eastern Europe at the turn of the century. They convinced themselves, and many generations of young Zionists, that anti-Semitism was so severe that it was just a matter of time before the entire nation was eliminated by either physical destruction or spiritual assimilation.<sup>69</sup> The doctrine of *Shelilat Hagalut* (the Negation of the Diaspora) was a direct product of this catastrophic Zionism.

Catastrophic Zionism declined as the Zionist enterprise in Palestine evolved and political Zionism succeeded after 1917; Jabotinsky's warnings of growing European anti-Semitism in the 1930s were the exception. The establishment of the State of Israel, the emergence of the powerful American Jewry, and the respectable presence of Jewish communities all over the democratic West have left the thesis of catastrophic Zionism with little explanatory power.

Kahane could not care less. Since 1968 he talked about the gathering storm, the incipient disaster. Soon the enemies of the Jews would overcome their guilt about the destruction of European Jewry and start to plan the new holocaust. America of the melting pot, the dream of millions of Jewish immigrants, Kahane told his audience, was beginning to undergo in the 1960s both an economic recession and a severe moral and social crisis. Inevitably, the classical scapegoats, the Jews, would be attacked once more.<sup>70</sup>

Kahane's catastrophic Zionsim was the rationale behind his "program for Jewish survival," the subtitle of his book *Never Again* and his call for a comprehensive series of steps to save American Jewry from extinction. While most of the suggestions sought to reform Jewish life in America—by reforming the Jewish educational system, fighting the corrupting influence of assimilation, and defending Jewish rights, by force, if necessary—the ultimate step called for was emigration to Israel. Though Jews in the Diaspora could help themselves by returning to full Judaism and defending their rights and dignity, the Diaspora itself was doomed; there was no chance for a long-range Jewish survival outside the State of Israel.<sup>71</sup>

Furthermore, Kahane saw the America of the 1960s as a troubled land, a modern Sodom or Gomorrah, but Israel, the land of the prophets and conquerors, was all good, the true answer to all the present Jewish miseries. The young state that freed itself *by force* from British colonialism and built a military machine capable of defeating all the Arab anti-Semites was the manifestation of Kahane's early dreams. Only Israel could produce the new Jew, a healthy and complete Hebrew national.<sup>72</sup>

Meir Kahane emigrated to Israel, arriving on 12 September 1971. He and his supporters have always maintained that this was the logical next step in the realization of his Zionist ideology. But less favorable interpretations point out that by 1971 Kahane had come to a dead end: in the spirit of détente the American administration was by then determined to rein in

extreme anti-Soviet activity, and the FBI had made it clear to Kahane that it had sufficient evidence to send him to prison. He had in fact been given a suspended sentence of four years' probation. The critics maintain that Kahane, unable to face the consequent decline of his movement, decided to emigrate to Israel, claiming ideological grounds.<sup>73</sup>

In Israel, Kahane was warmly welcomed by the political right and the media. He said he did not intend to get involved with national politics or run for the Knesset; he would instead devote himself to education. He wanted to found his own *kiryia* (educational center) and a kibbutz. Jerusalem would be the international center for the JDL, and prospective JDL members would come to Israel for a leadership training course. Kahane also stated his wish to replace the "internationalist" orientation of young Israelis with a healthy nationalism.<sup>74</sup>

However, Rabbi Kahane was not destined to pursue a career in education. He craved publicity and needed action in the streets. He also could not be content with the ideological politics pursued by most of the territorial maximalists in the early 1970s. Even the most extreme of them could not quite figure out this strange and impatient person who did not join their movements and would not submit to any period of initiation into the Israeli political style.

The Israeli public learned in 1972 that the JDL had become fully operative in Jerusalem. Surrounded by a handful of young American supporters who had followed him to Israel, and by a smaller group of young Russian *émigrés*, Kahane took to the streets. Besides demonstrating against the Soviet Union, he exploited two new issues: Christian missionary activities in Israel and the sect of American blacks in Dimona. Though in principle Israelis reject any kind of Christian missionary activity and considered it a manifestation of religious hostility, there had rarely been any serious trouble over this issue. However, never shy of publicity, Kahane was determined to apply the strictest rules of the Halakha (which prohibit the presence of Christians in the Holy Land) and evict the missionaries from the country—and to do it noisily. Similarly he and his followers aggressively demonstrated against a small black sect who recently settled in the southern development town of Dimona, and claimed to be genuinely Jewish, though it certainly was not. Small and highly isolated, it went almost unnoticed until Kahane made headlines by drawing attention to it.<sup>75</sup>

But it took Kahane less than a year after his arrival in Israel to focus on his prime target—the Arabs. In August 1972, JDL leaflets were distributed all over Hebron. The astonished Arab residents learned that Meir Kahane was summoning their mayor, Muhamad Ali Ja'abari, to a public show-trial for his part in the 1929 massacre of the ancient Jewish community of Hebron. The military authorities were fully aware that this was a very sensitive issue, given that treatment of the inhabitants of the occupied areas was carefully monitored by international agencies. Despite strict orders to prevent his provocative visit, on 27 August, Kahane, escorted by two of his



followers, appeared in front of the mayor's office in Hebron at exactly the announced time of the public trial. He was stopped and sent back to Jerusalem, but the shock waves created by his visit were deeply felt.<sup>76</sup>

Of course, no public show-trial was ever held in Hebron or any of the numerous Arab towns and villages Kahane visited over the years. There have always been police or military units on hand to stop him from provoking a confrontation with the local residents. But Hebron established Kahane's reputation for expertise in provocation and headline-making in Israel. Recognizing full well the great impact of these tactics on the Arab population of Judea and Samaria, as well as on Israeli Arabs, Kahane proved resourceful and imaginative.

His message was always the same: "The Arabs do not belong here; they must leave." In this spirit, in 1972 Kahane initiated an organized operation to encourage the Arabs to emigrate.<sup>77</sup> Promising full compensation for property, he developed his theme that only massive Arab evacuation would solve Israel's problems: just as two people cannot sit on the same chair, so it is impossible for the two nations, Israeli and Palestinian, to coexist in the Land of Israel.

While specializing in symbolic action, Kahane did not abstain from involvement in acts of violence against Arabs. In 1972, following the terrorist massacre of the Israeli athletes at the Olympic games in Munich, he launched an attempt to sabotage the Libyan Embassy in Brussels. He secured the support of Amichai Paglin, who had been chief of operations of the Irgun underground during the British mandate. The plot was exposed at Ben-Gurion Airport when a container of arms and explosives was discovered.<sup>78</sup>

Prior to the Yom Kippur War of October 1973, no other territorial-maximalist group used tactics like Kahane and his JDL; they did not specialize in direct action or consider systematic extraparliamentary politics proper behavior. Neither the Land of Israel Movement nor the incipient Gush Emunim asked the Arabs to leave. Kahane's radicalism was unique. But though the extreme rabbi was isolated, he attracted considerable attention. This was probably the reason he decided to run for the Knesset and the explanation for his successful fundraising. The result was an "almost" success. Kahane polled 12,811 votes, just a few thousands short of the required number for a Knesset seat.

### Livneh's *Israel and the Crisis of Western Civilization*

While most of the secular territorial maximalists avidly believed their new Eretz Yisrael gospel, they were unable to give it a coherent theoretical framework. Each of the secular schools that joined the Land of Israel Movement—from Hakibbutz Hameuchad's activists to Jabotinsky's Revisionists to smaller groups and individuals—maintained their old convictions with slight modifications.

They all agreed on three fundamental points: Israel's utmost need for secure borders, the nonexistence of a Palestinian nation, and the insignificance of the "demographic problem"—the danger that if the occupied territories were annexed, the Jews would lose their majority in Eretz Yisrael. *Zot Ha'aretz* (This Is the Land), the new ideological magazine of the LIM, continuously rehashed these topics in all possible variations. They were repeatedly published in Israel's most distinguished dailies and discussed in countless symposia and seminars. Three of the leading ideologues of the movement—Samuel Katz, Moshe Shamir, and Zvi Shiloah—published lengthy books about the post-1967 Israeli reality, but none was ideologically new. Arabs were told, one way or another, that they were wrong all along and that they could no longer trust their leaders, who had brought disaster upon them. Israelis were exhorted to recognize how mighty and wonderful their country really was.<sup>79</sup>

The only exception to this combination of intense tactical polemics and unsystematic thinking was a comprehensive and original book by Eliezer Livneh, *Israel and the Crisis of Western Civilization*,<sup>80</sup> published in 1972. Livneh, seventy, was a typical LIM elder statesman with an impressive Zionist record. After emigrating to Palestine in 1920 and joining Tabenkin's kibbutz Ein-Harod, Livneh soon rose from day laborer to labor leader. He held many public offices, including a sensitive political job for the Zionist movement in prewar Nazi Germany. Between 1940 and 1947 Livneh directed the political section of the Hagana, the semi-military organization of the *yishuv's* leadership. A prominent member of Mapai, Israel's ruling socialist party (later to become the Labor party), he served in the Knesset from 1948 to 1955 and was an editor of *Hador*, an influential Mapai newspaper. But in the 1950s Livneh started to drift away from Mapai. This learned and independent person grew critical of Mapai's monopolistic, "Bolshevik," way of running the country. In time he left the party, favoring less and less central planning and a freer market. In the 1960s and early 1970s Livneh was a distinguished columnist for Israel's most influential newspapers and magazines.

Like many of his new colleagues in the Land of Israel Movement, Livneh was profoundly transformed by the experience of the "longest month" in 1967. And very much like them he came to the conclusion that post-1967 Israel could not be secure without a massive *Aliya* ("ascent"—i.e., Jewish immigration). Nevertheless, only Livneh seemed to understand that the state of Israel they all wished for needed a totally different ideological framework. Livneh realized that the LIM was actually advocating a new kind of Zionism and Zionist justification, a set of orientations and aspirations that could not be exhausted by *tactical* arguments about the wicked Arabs, the unfriendly world, and the need for a territorial space for defense.

Therefore he set out to write an ambitious essay, a book that would update Zionist ideology and develop a new logic to legitimize the Israel of the 1970s. Such a book, of necessity, would reexamine classical Zionism in



the light of more recent developments: the establishment of the State of Israel, the Holocaust, the emergence of the powerful American Jewish community, and the misery of Soviet Jewry. Further, it would review the Israeli-Arab complex in the perspective of the Six-Day War.

Livneh understood that a new Zionism had to represent Israel as the only alternative for all Jews, and must present a better argument for the existence of the state than the old and anachronistic Zionist clichés about anti-Semitism. He set out to show that after 1967 Israel had acquired a spiritual quality superior both to the older Israeli condition and to the Jewish Diaspora existence in the affluent West. The result was a new and sweeping theory:

Ninety years have passed since the rise of the present secular return to Zion. . . . Shouldn't we recognize that the foundations of the Jewish existence have totally changed since that time? The Diaspora is not the same Diaspora, Eretz Yisrael of the 1970s is not the Eretz Yisrael expected then, and the Western Gentile environment of Diaspora Jews is completely different from the environment seen by the Zionist thinkers in their time. Western civilization has entered a new age which differs from the previous ones no less than they differed from the Middle Ages.<sup>81</sup>

According to Livneh, the Six-Day War was significant not only for its visible political and military achievements, but also for illuminating the new existential reality of the Jewish people. In a single moment of truth it helped identify three major historical developments: the rise of the "Judeo-Israeli civilization," the decline of the permissive and decadent Western-liberal civilization, and the demise of the viability and creativity of the Jewish Diaspora. This was indeed an ambitious theory.

The Jewish people is not a nation that belongs to one of the great civilizations—the Christian-humanist, the Buddhist, the Hindu, or the Muslim—but is a distinct human phenomenon. Yisrael determines its own modes of interaction with the natural and human environment, and demands of its daughters and sons different mores. Its experience is not limited to the spiritual, emotional or social spheres—belief, beauty, morality, mundane and social contact—but touches upon everything.<sup>82</sup>

The construct of the "Judeo-Israeli civilization" is essential for Livneh's theory, for it helps him to attack the "decadent" Western civilization from a position of strength. Not only should Israelis face Western civilization with pride but Diaspora Jews as well; in the State of Israel they have a cultural sanctuary, an address to return to, a civilization of their own. And when "the Diaspora as an independent and viable phenomenon has come to its end," they can come home.<sup>83</sup>

The Six-Day War, according to Livneh, produced a spiritual breakthrough. In one intense week, it exposed the existential weaknesses of both Israeli and Diaspora Jews, and demonstrated the relevance of four thousand years of Jewish history in the conduct of public affairs.<sup>84</sup> The dominant

Jewish nationalism before 1967 (Livneh's own Zionism) was mistaken because it was atheistic, detached from the genuine spiritual wellsprings of the nation. Most secular Israelis felt superior to religious Jews, but the anxiety of May 1967 brought the two groups together and bridged over all previous differences. And it produced, through its great success, the future model for Jewish living in Israel, a combination of an orthodox Jewish culture with a secular neoreligious respect for the heritage of the nation.<sup>85</sup>

Although Livneh does not call for a total desecularization of Israel and does not use the terminology of redemption, the affinity between his new Zionism and the ideo-theology of Merkaz Harav is clear. *Israel and the Crisis of Western Civilization* is full of references to Rabbi Avraham Itzhak Hachohen Kook and quotations from his *Orot*. Livneh's historical analysis of the modern return to Zion is reminiscent of Kook's historiosophic account. It speaks about Zionism as a teleological process of return to Eretz Yisrael, as much spiritual as concrete. It is a process of a growing religious experience, an increasing awareness of the nation's true heritage. It is a progress toward eliminating the gap that divides religious and secular Jews, forming a new normative consensus that would go beyond political issues and public culture.<sup>86</sup> Livneh is obsessed with the permissive West and its licentious life and discusses such issues as free sex, the purity of the family, and the sanctity of the Sabbath at great length. His chapter on "The Ecology of the Returnees to Zion" is full of neoreligious themes and the conviction that only a genuine respect of the rich tradition of Jewish orthodoxy would solve the nation's problems.<sup>87</sup>

Livneh's affinity with the incipient Gush Emunim shows most clearly on the issue of Eretz Yisrael. One chapter, "The Six-Day War and Its Spiritual Meaning," enthusiastically describes the Israelis who returned to Judea and Samaria, Sinai and the Golan Heights. The immense excitement felt toward the occupied territories serves him as an uncontested proof that the territorial conquests of the Six-Day War were bound to happen and were morally just.

The territories liberated in the Six-Day War are officially called "Occupied." But more than they are occupied by Israel they have Israel under occupation.

Not only had the integration of the nation with its most historic places taken place, but Israel was now once again whole in both a spiritual and physical sense. Israel was now the deep and burning Jordan valley, the snowy tops of Mount Hermon which feed the valleys with their water, the variegated mountains of Judea and Samaria and the spacious deserts of Sinai which provide a sense of security.<sup>88</sup>

The new Israeli empire thrilled Livneh. Security was one reason for holding onto the new territories, but not the primary one. Even more than the emerging Gush Emunim, he represented the new Eretz Yisrael mystique. This school saw in every inch of the new territories, including even parts that God had not promised to Abraham, something holy and inalien-



able. It was as if the process itself, the incredible response to the Egyptian challenge of May 1967, the victory in the war, had sanctified the territories. Thus, only the Israelis had any right to these lands. And no force in the world could make Israel ever give them back.

*Israel and the Crisis of Western Civilization* was never presented as the official creed of the Land of Israel Movement; much of it, especially Livneh's perception of the non-Jewish world, was exclusively his. But it was far from being an isolated treatise by a detached intellectual; rather it was a mature product of one of the most prolific ideologues of the LIM, an authority to everyone within the movement. Though the other luminaries of the movement had not approved the book in advance, it certainly appealed to them. It would have been hard *not* to appreciate what Livneh did for the movement by providing it with a comprehensive post-1967 ideology.

This was, then, the new ideology of the secular territorial maximalists: ultranationalist, expansionist, intellectually megalomaniac, neoreligious, self-confident, and optimistic. Together with the new theology preached from Yeshivat Merkaz Harav and its widening circle, and the polemical literature published in *Zot Ha'aretz* and other periodicals, it indicated the coming of age of a new Israeli Zionism. The new territorial maximalism was much more than a relic from the past. It was a vigorous cultural and social school, one bound to have a lasting effect on the future of Israel's culture and politics.

A careful reading of Livneh's book, as well as other less systematic literature of the new school, is important not only for what it says, but also for what it does not say: *in 1972 the secular maximalist camp had no criticism of the Israeli political process and no conscious quarrel with the democratic values of the nation*. Neither Livneh nor any of his colleagues questioned, for example, the provisions in Israel's Declaration of Independence securing the social and political rights of the Arabs. They sincerely believed that these principles were as applicable to the greater Land of Israel as they were to the pre-1967 Jewish state. Livneh was optimistic about the future relationships of Jews and Arabs in Israel. He clearly felt that "the civic-personal options" regarding their future should be left in the hands of the Arabs of Eretz Yisrael. All the Arabs (Livneh made no distinction between Israeli Arabs and those of the new territories) had the right to full Israeli citizenship, including the electoral process. They were entitled to official positions within the government and the nation's other public domains. Those who wanted to maintain dual citizenship in Israel and one of the neighboring countries were to do so. And Israel was not, of course, to stop the Arabs interested in emigration.<sup>89</sup> Livneh's optimism and liberalism showed very clearly in the conclusion of his chapter on Arab-Jewish relations:

The historical processes of *Shivat Tzion* (the return to Zion) make a favorable policy towards the Arabs necessary and possible. The Zionist thinkers

knew that the Jews were not returning to an unpopulated country. The Arabs are part of the Israeli state and belong to its nature, including its cultural nature. Israel without the Arabs would be missing an important component. Most Israeli Jews feel that in their guts, although many of them are unable to explain it.<sup>90</sup>

### The Politics and Practices of the Territorial Maximalists

At first the new territorial maximalists (the Kahane group excepted) did not intend to organize politically, but they were soon pulled into the very heart of Israeli politics. The occupied territories were not annexed to Israel, and their rate of settlement by Jews was very slow. In addition, the government faced many external pressures to withdraw. The new maximalists also discovered that about half of the Israelis did not agree with what they considered the main lesson of the war: that no single square inch of the occupied territories should be returned to the Arabs. Politically moderate intellectuals proposed imaginative peace plans, at the core of which stood major territorial concessions. Influential ministers, including Prime Minister Levi Eshkol and Foreign Affairs Minister Abba Eban, listened attentively. A Movement for Peace and Security was established to pursue these goals.<sup>91</sup> Under these circumstances, the activists of the LIM and the future members of Gush Emunim had no choice but to join the political fray and start lobbying decision-makers and politicians. Later they would hit the streets.

The Land of Israel Movement's initial strategy presupposed that it was associated with the ruling Labor alignment and that its loyalists within the government made it unnecessary to organize politically. For the most part the assumption was correct, for the most outspoken leaders of the movement were old Labor hands, closely connected with either Defense Minister Moshe Dayan or Deputy Prime Minister Yigal Allon. Both Allon and Dayan had, at first, maximalist and hawkish reputations. Dayan, Israel's No. 1 soldier, was perceived as the architect of the Six-Day War and known for his emotional attachment to the Land of the Bible in its entirety.<sup>92</sup> Allon, an illustrious general from the war of 1948 and one of the most prominent representatives of Hakibbutz Hameuchad in politics, had long been recognized as a maximalist and a great believer in territorial-strategic depth.<sup>93</sup>

Nevertheless, both men proved to be, from the LIM's perspective, unpredictable and unreliable. Dayan, skeptical of the ability of the Arabs to make formal peace and stick to it, was on occasion sympathetic to the new territorial maximalism. But he was also very pragmatic and cautious. He never used the language of the Land of Israel Movement and made it clear that a *de jure* annexation of the territories was out of the question.<sup>94</sup> If there was to be a *de facto* annexation, it would happen only by default, because no Arab



ruler agreed to talk to Israel directly. And Dayan was, in general, dubious of the notion that excited settlers might determine the security policy of Israel. He therefore only approved limited settlement in Judea and the Jordan River Valley.

But Yigal Allon was a greater disappointment. This veteran student of Tabenkin, who in 1948 had demanded that Israel's permanent borders be set on the Jordan river and in the middle of Sinai, adopted a different position after 1967. Allon, like many moderates, worried about the "demographic problem"; the plan he worked out was anathema to the LIM ideologists. The Allon Plan called for Jewish settlement of the Jordan River Valley and a few areas in the Hebron vicinity for security reasons, returning most of the other Arab-populated areas to Jordan in the context of a comprehensive peace.<sup>95</sup>

Thus, while Dayan and Allon could be trusted on some issues, their presence in the cabinet could not provide the iron-clad guarantees the Land of Israel Movement needed. Even the settlement of Gush Etzion and Kiryat Arba, two initiatives that were finally approved by both men, first required several LIM illicit operations.

When Dr. Israel Eldad decided to run for the Knesset in 1969 as the head of the Eretz Yisrael List, it was clear that the non-Labor members of the Land of Israel Movement had decided to become more political. Not all the movement's activists were happy about the step, but several prominent Labor-movement members—Haim Yachil, Nathan Alterman, Eliezer Livneh, and Moshe Shamir—endorsed it enthusiastically. Their support implied a call *not* to vote for the Labor alignment.<sup>96</sup> Eldad was not elected, but other LIM members, running on various tickets, were. Isser Harel and Yigal Horowitz were elected on the State List, Benjamin Halevy with Gahal (the Herut-Liberal Bloc), and Rabbi Neriah and Dr. Avner Shaki through the National Religious Party. By 1969 the LIM had a significant Knesset representation; no longer solely an ideological entity, it was in no one's political pocket.

The growing rift between the LIM and the Labor alignment was revealed in 1970 when Begin's Gahal left the Unity Government. The issue at stake was an American-proposed cease-fire on the Suez Canal, part of the Rogers Plan for an Israeli-Egyptian settlement. When the cabinet of Golda Meir agreed, Begin, an *old* territorial maximalist, saw the beginning of Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories, and he angrily resigned. Alarmed by the American pressure and Israeli acquiescence, he suggested that the LIM, Gahal, and other "Eretz Yisrael patriots" join forces in a nonpartisan Committee to Prevent Withdrawal. Begin was even ready to let Itzhak Tabenkin, an old rival, head the new body.

Tabenkin was not impressed. Not only did this old revolutionary socialist refuse the offer but he decided to leave the Land of Israel Movement

altogether. Unable to forget the pre-1948 rivalries with the "fascists," he mistrusted what he and a few followers understood as a move to turn the LIM into a Revisionist front.<sup>97</sup>

But Tabenkin's secession did not hurt the LIM. On the contrary, it helped its growing right-wing configuration. Most of the LIM leaders, including many former Laborites, were disappointed with the pragmatic and indecisive Labor alignment. Their prime concern was their territorial maximalism; they viewed everything else through this prism. By 1970 most members of the LIM felt the old territorial maximalism of Menachem Begin much more to their liking than their pre-1967 Laborite associations, and that the traditional Revisionists, whom they had fought tooth and nail in the 1930s and 1940s, were now their natural allies. Post-1967 reality was to change some of the most fundamental ideological alignments of Zionist politics.

As disappointed as the territorial maximalists were with the indecisive public position of the Labor alignment on the future of the territories, they could not ignore the fact that creeping annexation had actually been taking place since 1967. The 1967 "three no's" resolution passed at Khartoum by the leaders of the Arab nations after the war (no peace with Israel, no negotiations with Israel, and no recognition of Israel), strengthened the hand of those cabinet ministers who favored a greater Israeli presence in the territories.<sup>98</sup> An early, secret resolution of the government to trade Sinai and the Golan Heights for peace with Egypt and Syria, and to initiate negotiations with Jordan on much of the West Bank, was abandoned.<sup>99</sup>

In 1969 an "oral doctrine" was approved by the central committee of the Labor alignment. It stated that the Jordan River would remain Israel's security border and that Israel would keep the Golan Heights, the Gaza Strip, and the Straits of Tiran. The doctrine was expanded upon in the Galili Document of September 1973, which outlined a comprehensive four-year development plan in the occupied territories. Israel was to start new settlements in the Jordan Valley, the Golan Heights, and Northern Sinai. Industry, agriculture, and water resources were to be developed, and several of the early settlements were to become Jewish cities. The document, presented as a recommendation to the central committee of the Labor party, opened the way for a vast concentration of West Bank lands in the hands of Jews.<sup>100</sup>

The Galili Document did not completely endorse the ideological creed of the LIM, since it implied that Jewish settlement would take place only in limited security areas (for the most part those identified in the original Allon Plan), but it went a long way in the direction of the LIM. It bestowed a sense of stability on the Jewish presence in the territories. No one could ignore the massive Israeli drive into the territories—the huge expansion of Jerusalem, settlements in the Golan Heights and the Jordan Valley, and the permanent military government of Judea, Samaria, and Gaza<sup>101</sup> And the competition between the cabinet's two leading figures, Moshe Dayan and Yigal Allon,



only helped the process; each tried to score political points by backing various settlement projects.

The transformation of the Land of Israel Movement was completed in 1973 when it decided to establish a front organization, Labor for the Whole of Eretz Yisrael, and endorse the newly created Likud (expanded from the former Gahal) for the coming general elections.<sup>102</sup> The old and the new territorial maximalists were now *politically* united, the result of a gradual ideological and political evolution.<sup>103</sup> The 1973 LIM was an ultranationalist movement whose natural location on the Israeli political map was to the right of Menachem Begin. It still maintained a warm relationship with some of its former Labor allies (Israel Galili), and said it was fully committed to the tradition of Labor Zionism. Nevertheless, its political future was now bound with Menachem Begin, the chief public protagonist of Eretz Yisrael. And the new territorial maximalists could legitimately feel that never before had their ideas been so acceptable to so many Israelis.<sup>104</sup>

The 1973 Yom Kippur War caught the territorial maximalists, like the rest of the nation, by surprise. But it did not change their political doctrines or ideological convictions. On the contrary, the leading ideologists of the Land of Israel Movement were certain the new borders had saved the Jewish state from extinction.<sup>105</sup> Since their thesis had now been tested under real fire, and in their view proven to be correct, they were strengthened in their determination never to relinquish any land.

The religious territorial maximalists were equally determined. Rabbi Yehuda Amital, a great admirer of the teachings of Rav Kook, published an important theological essay, "On the Significance of the Yom Kippur War." The war, according to Amital, did not hurt the messianic process of redemption but was, on the contrary, its reaffirmation. It was an attempt of the Gentiles to survive, and perhaps unknowingly, to stop the coming of the Messiah. But the attempt had no chance, for it went against God's own plan. The war's function for the Jews was "the purification . . . of the congregation of Israel."<sup>106</sup> The 1973 war was in Amital's words one step further in the "elevation of Holiness," profound with spiritual meaning.

But the Yom Kippur War created a problem the territorial maximalists were unprepared for. It paralyzed the Israeli government and weakened the morale of the Israeli people. Never before had all the top policymakers of Israel been so discredited. In the end, Israel won the military battle but lost the political war. The overconfident political and military establishment had not believed the Arabs capable of launching a serious attack; as a result, more than 2500 Israelis died in battle and 5000 were wounded. The air force, which had won the war in 1967 in eight hours, this time lost nearly 25 percent of its planes. The IDF was in total disarray—many units were destroyed; others suffered immense losses. A massive American airlift was needed to keep the army going.

A new term, *mechdal* (culpable blunder), was on everyone's lips even before the end of the war.<sup>107</sup> Several distinguished generals blamed each other for failures, and their feuds were vented freely in the press. So damaged was the cabinet's authority that neither Golda Meir, the prime minister, nor Moshe Dayan, her minister of defense, was either able or ready to silence the bitter generals. Less than three months after the war's end, large protest movements of civilians and soldiers called for the resignation of the ministers responsible for the *mechdal*—Dayan and Meir in particular.<sup>108</sup>

The Agranat Report, the first interim report of an investigative committee, was published in April 1974. It dealt exclusively with the military, but it was clear that the Meir cabinet had reached its end. The protest movements, a non-ideological cross section of the population, would not let the politicians make scapegoats of the soldiers. And thus, in April 1974, less than four months after they had won the election, Golda Meir and her top ministers, Dayan (defense), Eban (foreign affairs), and Sapir (finance) stepped down.

The new territorial maximalists watched the evolving crisis with growing unease. Like everybody else, they were appalled by the intelligence failure to anticipate the Arab attack and were disappointed with the government. Many joined the protest movements. But the collapse of the government was immensely disquieting.

The new cabinet of Itzhak Rabin did nothing to reassure the LIM leaders. They were especially troubled by the aggressive diplomacy of Henry Kissinger, the American secretary of state, who pushed Israel into a minor, but strategically significant, territorial compromise with Egypt and Syria.<sup>109</sup> As the government approached the disengagement agreements with Egypt and moved closer to some retreat in the Golan Heights, Kissinger became, in the eyes of the LIM ideologues, a monster, a self-hating Jew, and a very serious threat to the safety and integrity of the State of Israel. The Rabin cabinet quietly rescinded the Galili Document and assumed a defensive posture.

Rabin's concessions to Sadat were attacked in *Zot Ha'aretz*, the LIM journal, and compared to Chamberlain's 1939 concessions to Hitler at Munich.<sup>110</sup> The real blunder of the Meir cabinet, according to the LIM critique, was its failure to settle the occupied territories on a massive scale when it held all the cards. But even then, in mid-1974, it was not too late. The Israeli military had won the war and was still strong enough to dismiss all the threats and pressures. All that was needed was resolve and determination. Instead of making concessions, the government should have started a new settlement drive all over Eretz Yisrael, so that the world could recognize Israel's real strength.<sup>111</sup>

A most significant response to the crisis of the Yom Kippur War was the birth of Gush Emunim in March 1974, amid the gloom of the first territorial concessions in Sinai. The founders, all former students of Merkaz Harav, were determined to oppose further concessions and instead to help extend



Israeli sovereignty over the occupied territories.<sup>112</sup> At first, Gush Emunim was a faction within the National Religious Party, then a partner in the Labor coalition government; the faction included Zevulun Hammer and Yehuda Ben-Meir, two leading figures of the young generation of the NRP.<sup>113</sup> But the new movement soon gave up its party alignment. The members of Gariin Elon Moreh, the religious nucleus established in Kiryat Arba to spearhead the settlement of Samaria, were asked to join; they required that the Gush sever its relations with the NRP.<sup>114</sup> The emphasis on settlement instead of politics echoed the position of Rabbi Moshe Levinger, the unchallenged leader of Kiryat Arba. After leaving the NRP, the members of Gush Emunim refused to identify with any party, even the LIM. Strongly motivated and led by talented young rabbis and activists, they were confident in their mission, and equally confident that they genuinely represented the national interest. The Gush's manifesto, written by the thoughtful Hanan Porat, stated its intention to revive Zionism and promote a national reawakening. It found no contradiction between Zionism—traditionally a secular movement—and orthodox Judaism, since the shared objective was redemption.

The purpose is to bring about a grand movement of reawakening within the people of Israel in order to fulfill the Zionist vision in its entirety, with the recognition that the origins of the visions are rooted in Israel's tradition and in the foundation of Judaism and its goal—the full redemption of the people of Israel and the rest of the world.<sup>115</sup>

It is important to stress that at first Gush Emunim, like the LIM in 1967, did not perceive itself as an extremist movement and did not foresee a serious conflict with the government or the Labor alignment. Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook, the head of Merkaz Harav, who maintained his spiritual authority over the movement without actually participating in its daily decisions, never retracted the full legitimacy he accorded the government of Israel, the Knesset, and the army. These institutions were to remain holy and unchallenged. The members of Gush Emunim acted out of a conviction that the people of Israel and their government *needed* their guidance in their moment of crisis.<sup>116</sup> This was, after all, the historical pattern of pioneering Zionism: an illicit minority action followed by a majority recognition and gratitude. Gush Emunim saw itself as the unselfish instrument of the divine process of redemption. Full of love, it could not possibly think about real conflict with the nation and its government.

While the Labor government of Itzhak Rabin was in power (1974 to 1977), Gush Emunim pursued three types of activity: it joined the Land of Israel Movement in protesting the Interim Agreements with Egypt and Syria, it staged symbolic demonstrations in Judea and Samaria to underscore the Jewish attachment to these parts of Eretz Yisrael, and it carried out settlement operations in the West Bank and Golan Heights. By far the most controversial issue pursued was the demand that Israel settle the densely

Arab populated Samaria. Basing its claim on God's promise to Abraham some 4000 years earlier and on the biblical memories of ancient Jewish cities such as Shechem and Shilo, Gush Emunim challenged the government's tacit acceptance of the Allon Plan. No number of Arabs, the Gush maintained, could possibly invalidate the Jewish right to live anywhere in their promised land.

The main effort to settle in Samaria was carried out by Gariin Elon Moreh, the most influential settlement nucleus in Gush Emunim. Seven times the Gariin members, backed by the entire Gush Emunim, tried to settle in Samaria illicitly, and seven times they were evacuated by the army. Nevertheless, after each effort the Gush was better able to outmaneuver the military in the field, mobilizing greater public support and recruiting more enthusiastic settlers. It was a battle of resolve and patience, of cunning and pressure, a political struggle between a mighty but divided government, and a weak but united Gush. By December 1975 the struggle was over. Prime Minister Itzhak Rabin ordered the settlers out of their temporary settlement but allowed them to stay in Kadum, a military compound nearby. They never left the area, and the principle that Samaria was open to Jewish settlement was, at least partially, established.<sup>117</sup>

There is no doubt that the territorial-maximalist camp was more bitter and radical after the Yom Kippur War than before. The excitement and enthusiasm of the early 1970s were gone, and with them the optimism of the old warriors. *Zot Ha'aretz*, the LIM magazine, was scathing about the weak government and its conduct of public affairs, noting the government's inclination to compromise the territories and pointing out the analogy of Munich, 1939.

Even Gush Emunim, which repeatedly stressed its loyalty to the institutions of the "Israeli sovereignty," developed an important theoretical proposition, the distinction between *legal* and *legitimate* acts. Gush leaders elaborated the distinction: the government's refusal to approve of certain settlements may have been formally legal, but substantially it was illegitimate.<sup>118</sup> Zionism, which according to Gush Emunim was the fundamental constitution of the land, had always called for an unconditional settlement of the entirety of Eretz Yisrael. A government acting against the settlement of its heartland was thus acting "unconstitutionally" and undermining its own legitimacy; it was placing itself in the same category as the British Mandate government, which in 1939 had barred Jewish immigration and settlement in Palestine. Settling Samaria had been declared illegal by the government, but it was as legitimate as the earlier "illegal" Jewish settlement in Palestine. Gush Emunim was determined to settle Samaria, with or without the legal approval of the authorities.

A retrospective examination of the members of the Land of Israel Movement, Gush Emunim, and Kach shows that by the mid-1970s they were different in their epistemology and political convictions from the rest of the



Israeli political community, including most of the Likud activists. They were true believers, committed to the settlement of Eretz Yisrael and the annexation of the territories. They were not interested in considerations of *real politik*, big-power diplomacy, and international law. These orientations, however, did not yet display salient political radicalism or extreme opposition to the prevailing rules of Israeli politics. While some of Gush Emunim's settlement attempts produced small-scale clashes, Gush members were in general very cautious. They felt sorry for the soldiers who had to participate in the evacuations, and not a few among them found themselves confronting friends from their own military units. There was also a standing ruling of Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook, who had always been a great admirer of the army and forbade any intended physical confrontation with it.<sup>119</sup> The early history of the settlers was thus relatively nonviolent. They did not collide with other Israelis and their contacts with Arabs were minor.

The main reason for the relative moderation of the new territorial maximalists seems to have been their conviction that they were part of a larger established parliamentary camp, the territorial maximalism of Herut and the hawkish section of the National Religious Party. Menachem Begin, whose political influence was on the rise, was the great hope of these people, and though they occasionally resorted to extraparliamentary methods, they were restrained by their belief that they would soon have a parliamentary majority in sympathy with them. Some members of Gush Emunim, it is true, were not fully sure of Begin—the “Zionist of words instead of actions”—but most of them were happy with his Eretz Yisrael rhetoric.<sup>120</sup> In the mid-1970s Begin's Herut gave unconditional support to the settlement efforts of Gush Emunim, and Likud Knesset members like Geula Cohen and Ariel Sharon, visited their illicit settlements. In January 1975 Herut held its convention in Kiryat Arba, and endorsed the activities of the Herut Youth who were collecting signatures on a petition against returning the West Bank to “foreign rule” and in favor of settling Judea and Samaria.<sup>121</sup> Avraham Yoffe, an LIM leader and former general, was himself a Likud Knesset member, the only real concern of his movement and Gush Emunim was to elect their political allies to lead the government.

Thus there was no question, in the minds of the territorial maximalists on May 17, 1977, that their long wait for full political legitimization was over. Menachem Begin, the man who had promised to support the idea of the whole of Eretz Yisrael, was surprisingly elected as the next prime minister of Israel. Perhaps no one was happier than Rabbi Meir Kahane, who responded to the event with total jubilation:

For the first time since its establishment, the State of Israel has as its prime minister potential a man who thinks like a Jew, acts like a Jew, faces television with a yarmulka on his head, and actually speaks the “one little word” that we have waited to hear from the lips of Ben-Gurion, Sharett, Eshkol, Golda, Rabin, and Peres. Menachem Begin, the potential prime minister of Israel, faces the nation and the world and thanks G-d, the one little word that

the polysyllabic Eban finds impossible to pronounce. And he reads from Psalms and thanks the Almighty. Miracle? Miracle of Miracles.<sup>122</sup>

Every true believer was thrilled, when shortly after his election Begin visited Elon Moreh for the inauguration of a new synagogue and proudly declared, “We shall have many more Elon Morehs.”<sup>123</sup>