COLLECTIVE MEMORY AND

Recovered

THE MAKING OF ISRAELI

Roots

NATIONAL TRADITION

YAEL ZERUBAVEL

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS
CHICAGO AND LONDON

Two

THE ZIONIST RECONSTRUCTION OF THE PAST

Although "Zionist" ideologies and immigration to Palestine predated the official establishment of the Zionist movement, the meeting of the first Zionist Congress at Basel in 1897 marked the emergence of Zionism as a major political force in modern Jewish history. Its central role in the revival of Jewish national life in the ancient homeland was ritually expressed in the ceremony in which the first Israeli prime minister, David Ben-Gurion, publicly proclaimed the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948: a picture of Theodor Herzl, the founder of the Zionist movement and the "Prophet of the Jewish State,"[1] was hanging above his head as a symbolic affirmation of his inspiration to Zionist resettlement of Palestine, culminating in the declaration of independence in that historical moment.

The Zionist movement was founded at the end of the nineteenth century in response to the immediate situation of European Jewry. Around that time earlier hopes that the emancipation of the Jews in the modern enlightened European state would solve the problem of Judaism and the Jews eroded. The threat of Jews' assimilation into western European society on the one hand, and the fear of modern antisemitism, dramatized by the 1894 Dreyfus trial in France, on the other hand, became major causes for concern in western Europe.[2]

But Zionism received its greatest impetus from the political and economic plight of the large Jewish communities of eastern Europe during the late nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century. When a series of pogroms broke out in Russia in 1881, it led to a massive Jewish immigration to the United States and stimulated the first organized Jewish efforts to resettle Palestine.[3] The First Zionist Aliya (wave of immigration, literally "going up") followed these pogroms. When bloodshed recurred in 1903 in Kishinev, reports of the death and destruction that it inflicted alarmed the Jews in Russia and elsewhere in Europe. These reports, and the nationalist literature that they inspired,[4] contributed to the public

awareness of the importance of an organized action to relieve the situation of Russian Jews and heightened the sense of urgency that marked the agenda of the newly founded Zionist movement.

The Zionist movement, whose members included residents of eastern and western Europe, secular and religious Jews, hard-core socialists and liberal bourgeois, encompassed a wide range of political, social, and religious views. In spite of this diversity, followers of Zionism shared some fundamental views about the Jewish past and the present: they regarded Jewish life in exile as inherently regressive and repressive, and believed in the need to promote some form of revival of Jewish national life as experienced in Antiquity. Although a harsh polemic on the route to achieve national revival split the Zionist movement for a while between the proponents of "cultural" and "political Zionism," it was the latter that became the dominant orientation of the Zionist Organization.[5] Focusing on the politics of rescue as the most pressing agenda, political Zionism advocated the resettling of Russian Jewry in Palestine as the beginning of rebuilding a secure home for all Jews in their ancient homeland. Thus, the first Zionist Congress proclaimed that "Zionism aims at the creation of a home for the Jewish people in Palestine, to be secured by public law."[6]

It was the particular bent of "practical Zionism," however, that became most influential among those who actually took the step of leaving Europe for Palestine at the beginning of this century. While Theodor Herzl's brand of political Zionism focused on the effort to secure political guarantees for the resettlement of Jews, the followers of practical Zionism insisted on immediate action, advocating the resettlement there even before such guarantees were obtained.[7] This position further accentuated the Zionist belief that Jews were to assume a more active role in changing the course of their own history. For the proponents of practical Zionism, the personal and the collective commitment to resettlement, even without waiting for external recognition or support, was a way of promoting such a desired change. This conviction, articulating the Zionist settlers' belief in their historical mission, also helped them endure the difficulties they encountered in the process of implementing their vision. Indeed, the belief that one could act in defiance of an unfavorable political situation in order to promote the national cause was deeply ingrained in the political consciousness of the emergent Hebrew nation in Palestine and represents a fundamental mode of thought in Israeli political culture.

The Zionist reading of Jewish history was an important facet of its political agenda. In fact, Zionist collective memory provided the ideological framework for understanding and legitimizing its vision of the future. The predominantly secular Zionist movement turned away from traditional Jewish memory in order to construct its own countermemory of the Jewish

past. In its call for change and its critical attitude toward Jewish life, culture, and values in exile, the Zionist interpretation of history had a strong anti-traditionalist thrust. The majority of Orthodox Jews thus objected to Zionism as a challenge to traditional Jewish life and a negation of the belief in messianic redemption.[8] A religious Zionist minority who supported the Zionist advocacy of immediate action to promote the Jewish settlement of Palestine resolved the tension between the two frameworks by explaining the Jews' own initiative as a preparation for "the beginning of the blossoming of our redemption." Attempting to reconcile Zionist views with religious premises, their vision of the future focused on a Jewish nation governed by the laws of the Torah, a significantly different view from that of the secular majority.[9]

While the religious Zionists grappled with the vision of the future, secular Zionists were more concerned with reshaping the past.[10] This preoccupation with the past stemmed from the recognition that the development of a countermemory was in itself an effective tool for revitalizing Jewish national culture, to liberate it from the impact of centuries of life in exile. The Zionist discourse often resorted to oppositionist rhetoric toward traditional Jewish memory. This overt use, however, obscured the many links to tradition that Zionism retained, as we shall see. Even when the Zionist countermemory began to enjoy hegemony among the Jews of Palestine, thus transforming into collective memory, it continued to maintain an oppositionist pose to the larger and more established Jewish society in exile, in order to highlight the new Hebrew society's distinct identity.

The Zionist Periodization of Jewish History

Any commemorative system is based on certain guiding principles that are essentially ideological. For the Zionists the major yardstick to evaluate the past was the bond between the Jewish people and their ancient land. Influenced by European romantic nationalism on the one hand and drawing upon a long, distinctively Jewish tradition of longing to return to the ancient homeland on the other, Zionism assumed that an inherent bond between the Jewish people and their ancient land was a necessary condition for the development of Jewish nationhood. Indeed, the movement's name, Zionism, was based on the Hebrew name of the ancient homeland, Zion, articulating the centrality of this bond between the people and the land.[11] The 1903 "Uganda crisis" marked the failure of an alternative policy of substituting another territory for Palestine for the revival of Jewish national life. The vehement opposition to this idea within the Zionist movement served to affirm the Zionists' commitment to the Land of Israel as the only viable option for rebuilding the Hebrew nation.[12]

The Zionist periodization of Jewish history is thus based on the primacy of the people-land bond: the past is divided into two main periods, Antiquity and Exile. Antiquity begins with the tribal (prenational) history of Abraham and his descendants, leading to their migration to Egypt. Yet it is the Exodus from Egypt that marks the transition from a promise (to Abraham) to actual fulfillment. It also established the commemorative paradigm of national liberation in Jewish tradition, ritually affirmed every year in the celebration of three major holidays—Passover, Shavuot, and Sukkot.[13] The national past begins with the Israelites' conquest of ancient Canaan and extends over centuries of collective experience there. Antiquity ends with a series of revolts that fail—the Great Revolt against the Romans during the first century, followed by the failure of the Bar Kokhba revolt in the second century.

The period of Exile, in turn, covers the many centuries when Jews lived as a religious minority dispersed among other peoples. Exile thus embodies the loss of both physical bond with the ancient homeland and the Jews' collective experience as a unified nation. More problematic was the delineation of its ending, since Jewish life in exile actually continued at the time when the Zionist settlement in Palestine was in process, although it was expected to bring Exile to an end. The actual fulfillment of the Zionist ideology was thus motivated by the double vision of ending the state of exile and of beginning a new national era.

In itself this periodization of the Jewish past into Antiquity and Exile did not mark a revolutionary break with Jewish memory: Jewish tradition, too, differentiated Jewish life in exile from the ancient past in the Land of Israel. It, too, commemorated Zion and *galut* (the homeland and exile) as two distinct situations in the Jewish collective experience. But Jewish tradition also offered alternative periodizations of the past, such as classifying it by different generations of rabbinical scholars or the writings that they produced (namely, the Tana'anic period or the Mishna period).

For traditional Judaism, exile from Zion was a divine punishment, but it was also a condition that highlighted the Jews' spiritual mission as the chosen people. During centuries of life in exile the meaning of the concepts of Zion and *galut* continued to evolve and remained interconnected. No longer embedded only within a political-historical reality, they attained a spiritual, metaphysical meaning that made it easier to endure the state of exile: Zion was not only a physical homeland but also a metaphysical land that the Jews carried with them wherever they went.[14] Although Zionism pursued the traditional binary opposition of Zion and *galut*, it offered a primarily historicist approach to their interpretation. It thus forced Jewish memory to recreate itself by turning from a theological to a historical framework.

In its reconstruction of Jewish history, the Zionist commemorative narrative accentuated the perception of a "great divide" between Antiquity and Exile. The result of this process was twofold: it highlighted the contrast between these two major periods, but it also imposed a sense of uniformity within each period. By grouping eighteen centuries of Exile into one period, the Zionist commemorative narrative overlooked the considerable cultural, economic, social, and political differences in the development of various Jewish communities. Underlying this periodization is the assumption that the exilic condition is more central to Jewish communities' experience than any other dimension of their lives that would distinguish, for example, between the Babylonian Jewry during the fourth century and the Jews of Spain during the twelfth century, or the Jews of eastern Europe in the nineteenth century.

This periodization obviously requires a highly selective representation of many centuries of Jewish experience in a vast range of geographical territories and ignores historical developments that do not fit the principles underlying this mold. For example, it ignores the exile of the ten tribes of Israel from their land, which occurred within the period of Antiquity (722 B.C.), and the long stretches of time during that period when the Israelites lived under Babylonian, Persian, Greek, and Roman rule and their political freedom was severely curtailed. It also suppresses the memory of Jewish revolts against a foreign rule by those who remained in Judaea after the second century,[15] and incidents of Jewish self-defense during the Middle Ages, namely, within the Exile period.[16] The acceptance of the Zionist commemorative framework as given buries important social, economic, and cultural developments that do not relate directly to the political expressions of nationhood, and obscures the continuity within Jewish life between Antiquity and Exile.

Nonetheless, the emphasis on a great divide separating Antiquity from Exile articulates Zionism's ideological message that the political expression of nationhood stands above and beyond any other criterion of classifying Jewish history. Playing Antiquity and Exile against each other was necessary for constructing distinctive commemorative attitudes for each. It was also important for creating an equally dramatic contrast between Exile and the Zionist revival on the other end, marking the beginning of a new national period.

Exile: Suppressed Nationhood, Discredited Past

The Zionist binary model of Jewish history portrays Antiquity as a positive period, contrasted with a highly negative image of Exile. Since the main

criterion for this classification is the bond between the Jewish people and their land, the period of Exile is essentially characterized by a lack. The dispersion to many localities resulting from the loss of direct contact with the land thus undermined the Jews' shared experience of nationhood. During centuries of exile, religion functioned as the adhesive bond for the dispersed Jewish communities. But this exilic way of life was a poor substitute for the earlier national phase, thus conveying a process of spiritual degeneration as well as political regression.

In its highly negative attitude toward the period of Exile and belief in the nation's inner vitality as a historical force, Zionism was influenced by European political and philosophical movements. But the negative view of Exile also continued a trend that began with the Jewish enlightenment, the Haskala, of portraying a highly negative picture of traditional communal life among observant Jews, with an emphasis on talmudic learning and use of the Yiddish language. Much of the Hebrew literature that was used by Hebrew schools in Europe and Palestine during the first decades of the twentieth century was written by Haskala writers and imbued with a critical portrayal that reinforced, in turn, the Zionist youth's negative attitude toward Exile.[17]

Zionism essentially emerged as a reaction against Exile and reflects an acute awareness of the need to find a solution to the problems of the Jewish people and exilic Judaism. In fact, even those who did not regard the return to the Land of Israel as the vital solution to the Jewish problem and who were reconciled to the idea of Jewish life outside the ancient homeland often shared a negative attitude toward Exile.[18]

Zionist collective memory thus constructs Exile as a long, dark period of suffering and persecution. Jewish life in exile constituted a recurrent history of oppression, punctuated by periodic pogroms and expulsions, of fragile existence imbued with fear and humiliation. For the Zionist settlers who left eastern Europe after pogroms, persecution was their final and decisive association with Jewish life in exile, both personally and collectively. They projected those memories back onto the period of Exile as a whole, enhancing the antiexilic attitude that had already marked Zionist memory.[19] The Socialist Zionist leader David Ben-Gurion stated that Exile consists of "'histories' of persecution and legal discrimination, the Inquisition, and pogroms; of self-sacrifice and martyrdom."[20] Another prominent Socialist Zionist, Ya'akov Zerubavel, similarly described Exile as consisting of "the Inquisition and the stake, the expulsion and the tortures, [and] the pogroms." He continued this statement by raising a rhetorical question: "Which other nation has such abundance of martyrs . . . in tragedies which have their source in the passivity of our faith?"[21] This view was later reiterated by a fictional character, Yudke (whose name means "the little Jew"), who protests vehemently against Jewish history in Exile: "You cannot imagine how I'm opposed to it, how I reject it, and how . . . how . . . I don't respect it! Now look! Just think . . . what is there in it? Just give me an answer: What is there in it? Oppression, defamation, persecution, martyrdom. And again oppression, defamation, persecution, martyrdom. And again, and again and again, without end."[22]

The highly negative perception of Exile often turned from *shelilat ha-galut* (the repudiation of the state of living in exile) to *shelilat ha-gola* (the condemnation of the people who live in exile), the product of its demeaning and regressive lifestyle. According to this view, life in exile turned the Jews into oppressed, submissive, weak, and fearful people who passively accept their fate, hoping to be saved either by God or by Gentiles' help. The Zionist image of the exilic Jew often seemed to incorporate antisemitic stereotypes to support this negative portrayal.[23] Exile, Ya'akov Zerubavel wrote, taught the Jew the need "to shrink and to bend one's back."[24] Yitzhak Ben-Zvi, the Socialist Zionist leader who later became Israel's second president, expressed a similar view of the Jewish past: "The spirit of heroism and courage disappeared in the Jewish ghetto in which it had no place." Instead, he argued, the Jews adapted "a sharp mind, agility, submissiveness toward others, and patience, cowardice, and timidity in relation to neighbors and rulers." This Jewish behavior, continued Ben-Zvi, resulted in a tendency to rely on miracles, as Jews lacked either confidence or self-motivation to improve their situation.[25]

The period of Exile thus represents a "hole" between the two national periods, an acute lack of positive characteristics attributed to it. As a Zionist Revisionist youth articulated this idea: "I stand stirred by the heroism and greatness of the Maccabees, Bar Kokhba, and Elazar ben Yair, but all that happened thousands of years ago. We lack someone in the middle."[26] Exile displays the Jews' choice to prove their devotion to the Jewish faith through a martyr's death. Kiddush ha-Shem (i.e., death for the sanctification of God's name), the traditional Jewish concept of martyrdom, represents the Jews' failure to offer armed resistance to their persecutors and actively defend themselves. It was therefore criticized as an expression of passivity or perceived as an inferior form of "passive heroism" relative to the "active heroism" of armed resistance. As a result Exile turned into a dark and bloody period in Jewish history: "Much Jewish blood was poured during the entire period of Exile, all over the world. Not the blood of heroes, but the blood of 'sanctifiers.'"[27] The distinction between sanctifiers (i.e., martyrs) and heroes is thus significant. Heroes, the writer goes on to explain, can be found only when the nation lives in its own homeland. Therefore,

those who die in the battle for their country are recognized as heroes, a status denied to sanctifiers who die for Kiddush ha-Shem in Exile.[28] Death for one's faith may have been the only form of heroism available to the displaced exilic Jew, but this was a mere substitute for the more honorable death for one's country. The same view was articulated by one of my informants, a man who grew up in Palestine during the prestate period:

> The Jews who live in Israel resemble much more the Jews of Masada, because they [the Masada people] had a state and had something to die for. While the Jews of Exile did not have a state and the only thing they could fight for was their lives. While here we have something else. Although according to traditional stories they [the Jews of Exile] fought for Kiddush ha-Shem and fought for the religion and for other things, these were substitutes. But the main reason they fought for substitutes was that they did not have the basic thing, and this is the state.

When the poet Bialik published his famous poem "be-Ir ha-Harega" (In the city of slaughter) in reaction to the Kishinev pogrom of 1903, it was largely perceived as a severe condemnation of the passivity of the Jews.

> Come, now, and I will bring thee to their lairs
> The privies, jakes and pigpens where the heirs
> Of Hasmoneans lay, with trembling knees,
> Concealed and cowering—the sons of the Maccabees!
> The seed of saints, the scions of the lions . . .
> Who crammed by scores in all the sanctuaries of their shame,
> So sanctified My name!
> It was the flight of mice they fled
> The scurrying of roaches was their flight;
> They died like dogs, and they were dead![29]

This highly negative portrayal of Exile was regarded as a crucial countermodel for the construction of a Hebrew national identity and was therefore raised as a central theme in the education of the New Hebrew youth.[30] "Anything that relates to Exile, or anything that has something of Exile's spirit in it, or anything that smells of Exile, should be out of the reach of this youth."[31] Exile was thus portrayed as "pollution" or "disease" that might undermine the development of the New Hebrew Man. During the first decades of the century, Hebrew literature became the central medium for transmitting the "repudiation of Exile." History textbooks, slower to

respond to changing social views than literature was, began to emphasize the themes of pogroms and persecution in Exile from the 1930s on. Exilic Jews were thus portrayed as objects rather than subjects, victims rather than actors.[32]

The "repudiation of Exile" provoked criticism from those concerned about the youth's ignorance and dismissive attitude toward centuries of Jewish life and culture. Such critics warned that this attitude provides a highly biased view of Exile and undermines the youth's sense of historical continuity. "We have developed a contempt toward Exile that brought with it the neglect of the wonderful cultural and social values that developed in it," observed the historian Ben-Tsiyon Dinur in 1934.[33] Similar criticism of the highly negative and reductionist image of the Exile period was repeated by the philosopher Shmu'el Hugo Bergman in the early 1960s.

> The Jewish Israeli youth that has never seen Exile lacks the understanding of its greatness . . . To this youth, Exile seems a history of tears and humiliation, and they do not know the happiness and the light, the festivities and the exaltation that were part of Jewish life in exile. They erroneously believe that all the great classical achievements of our people have been accomplished in the Land of Israel, an error that was transmitted by their teachers.[34]

Yet if Zionist collective memory constructed a major gap between Exile on the one hand and the national periods of Antiquity and the modern National Revival on the other hand, it stopped short of its total rejection. As the historian Shmuel Almog notes, such an extreme position would have undermined the Zionist claim for historical continuity between Antiquity and the present, between the ancient Hebrews and contemporary Jews. Thus, even the most severe Zionist critics of Exile did not advocate a total rupture with it.[35] Indeed, when the small but vocal movement of the Young Hebrews (also known as the "Canaanites") advocated a full rupture between members of the new Hebrew nation and the Jews of Exile,[36] their views provoked a highly critical response. Their claim that the Hebrews of the Land of Israel and the Jews of Exile were two separate collective identities was thus largely rejected.

Having constructed a profound tension between Hebrew and Jewish identities, the secular Zionist collective memory showed a clear preference for presenting the former as a transformation of the latter. Although it wished to accentuate its break with Jewish tradition, it relied on this tradition as its legitimizing framework. As Yosef Gorni points out, the ambivalent attitude toward Exile was further complicated by the strong ideologi-

cal, organizational, and economic ties between the new society in Palestine and the larger and more established Jewish community that remained in exile.[37] When Hebrew youth's critical approach to Exile and its Jews became more salient during the Holocaust, concerned educators urged introducing a more positive image of Jewish life in Europe and playing up examples of heroic behavior during Exile, to counterbalance that cultural trend.[38]

Jewish longing for Zion during centuries of life in exile as well as sporadic Jewish immigration to Palestine during those centuries supported the Zionist claim for the Land of Israel as its national home. The Zionist suppression of positive aspects of exilic life to promote the centrality of the people-land bond was reinforced by its denial of centuries of Palestinian life in that land. This double denial made it easier to reshape the period of Exile as a temporary regression between the two national periods, metaphorically suspending time and space in order to appropriate both into the Zionist commemorative narrative. Ironically, the recovery of the nation's roots in the ancient past implied playing down its roots in Exile as well as the renunciation of the Palestinians' roots in the same land.

In the formative years the repudiation of Exile provided a way of coming to terms with the enormous difficulties inherent in the task of tearing away from the old society and building a new nation. The darker the imagery associated with Exile, the greater was the promise that Zionism offered and the rationalization for the price it demanded. Yet even during the years following the foundation of the state, Israeli collective memory dwelled on the negative aspects of Jewish life in Exile and constructed a negative image of its Jewry. Although Israeli collective memory has been transformed and its negative construction of Exile has weakened, this representation has by no means disappeared, and the issue of the repudiation of Exile still occupies Israeli scholars and intellectuals.[39]

Locating the Nation: Antiquity and the National Revival

The Zionist collective memory constructs Antiquity as a period in which the ancient Hebrew nation flourished, enjoying an autonomous political, social, and cultural life. Antiquity is thus seen as the nation's golden age, the period to which the Zionists wished to return to recover their lost national roots: the national spirit, the Hebrew identity, the Hebrew language, their homeland, and the social, economic, and political structures of an independent nation. In Zionist memory the ancient Hebrews formed a proud nation, rooted in its land; they cultivated its soil and knew its nature;

they were ready to fight for their national freedom and, if necessary, to die for it. This romantic picture was clearly constructed as the counterimage of Exile and as an inspiration for the new modern era.[40]

Within Antiquity various biblical heroes appealed to the Zionist memory and imagination, among them Samson, Gideon, Saul, and David. But the secular national Hebrew culture displayed an even stronger fascination with the period of the Second Temple.[41] Judaea's wars of liberation against various imperial forces during that period—culminating in the Maccabees' revolt against the Syrians and the Jewish revolts against the Romans during the first and second centuries—gradually became the "hottest" events in the Zionist collective memory in Palestine. These revolts represented the ultimate commitment to national freedom, which the Zionists were so eager to revive: they provided examples of the ancient Hebrews' readiness, when oppressed, to stand up against a more powerful enemy and to sacrifice their lives for the nation. Such figures as Judah the Maccabee, Yoḥanan of Gush Ḥalav, Elazar ben Yair, and Bar Kokhba, who rose as leaders of those ancient revolts, provided the Zionist settlers and the Hebrew youth with historical models for their own struggle for national renewal, the importance of which they knew but whose outcome they could not predict.

These ancient heroes became vivid images for Hebrew youth: "Here I see the supreme heroes who served our people and who have become our symbols . . . I see them in my mind's eye: Judah the Maccabee standing in front of his army and making [his soldiers] take an oath of allegiance; Bar Giora, Elazar, the hero of Masada, Bar Kokhba."[42] The memory of the ancient revolts was also important as a proof that Judaea fell not out of indifference or lack of patriotic zeal, but in spite of intense and desperate fights for its autonomy. The Zionists would therefore continue the spirit of total commitment that the period symbolized. As the poet Ya'akov Cahan declared, "In blood and fire Judaea fell; in blood and fire Judaea will rise."[43]

In commemorating these wars of liberation, the tendency was to play up the national-political aspects of these conflicts and diminish their religious significance. This orientation also marked the teaching of history in the new Hebrew schools.[44] Although the subperiodization of Antiquity into the First Temple and Second Temple periods might appear to enhance the religious dimension, their common representation in modern Hebrew as the First or Second "House" eliminates the explicit reference to their sacred dimension and renders them closer in spirit to the English terms, the First or Second Commonwealth.[45]

The Zionist emphasis on the national-political significance of the past was clearly shaped by Zionist settlers' belief in their historical contribution to the modern era of nation building. No longer waiting for a divine

sign or intervention on their behalf, they saw themselves as a group of ideologically committed individuals who left exile on their own initiative to return to the Land of Israel. This nonreligious approach was easily transformed into a more radically antireligious attitude, suggesting that "self-redemption" also expressed an act of defiance against God. "To arms, comrades! Seize sword and lance, spear and javelin—advance! Heaven's rage defy, and in storm reply. Since God denies us, his ark refuses us, we will ascend alone," wrote the Hebrew national poet Ḥayim Naḥman Bialik.[46] Although the explicit reference here is to that ancient generation who died in the desert on the way to the Promised Land, they can also be seen as representing the Jews of exile rebelling against God to free them from their imprisonment there.

Hebrew culture from the prestate period suggests that this shift from the religious to the national was pervasive. This was clearly manifested in the transformation of biblical or traditional allusions to God into a reference to the people of Israel.[47] Thus, the biblical verse praising God, "the guardian of Israel, neither slumbers nor sleeps" (Psalms 121:4) was applied to new Zionist "guards," the representatives of the ideology of Jewish self-defense. Changing the traditional memorial prayer (Yizkor) from "let God remember" to "let the people of Israel remember" is another expression of this orientation.[48] These transformations implied that the people's will would be the most important force for changing the course of history, an idea that was clearly articulated in a saying attributed to Herzl: "If you will, it is not a dream."[49] That this saying became an important slogan in the emergent national Hebrew culture indicates the centrality of the secular activist ethos that it reinforced.

Zionist collective memory not only defied Exile and its spirit; it also blamed it for a deliberate suppression of the national memory of the ancient struggles for liberation. The high commemorative density of these revolts was therefore seen as an important act of revolt against Jewish memory and its constraints. Consider the following quotation from a preface to the popular historical anthology on historical evidence of Jewish heroism, *Sefer ha-Gevura* (The book of heroism), written by Berl Katznelson, the prominent Socialist Zionist leader who was particularly active in the cultural and social spheres:

> With the loss of political freedom, Jewish historiography lost its freedom as well . . . The power of forgetfulness and omission in Jewish history is great . . . That which escaped from external censorship was caught by internal censorship. Did we get any of the Zealots' writings? Those expressions of Hebrew heroism that did not result in victory were doomed to oblivion . . .

> But with the rise of Zionism, a new light was shed on the defeated and neglected Jewish heroism. The forgotten people of Masada were saved from a foreign language; Rabbi Akiba now appears to us not only as the old man who sat in the Yeshiva [a religious academy of learning], but also as the prophet of the revolt; and Bar Koziba has been transformed back into Bar Kokhba in people's minds.[50]

The writer and Zionist activist who later founded the Zionist Revisionist movement, Ze'ev (Vladimir) Jabotinsky, made similar observations regarding the transformation of Jewish memory of the Hasmonean revolt. Jabotinsky accused "the sophistic mind of the ghetto" of distorting history by deliberately wiping out the memory of the Hasmoneans and turning the commemoration of the historical revolt to a celebration of a divine miracle of the flask of oil for the performance of religious worship at the Temple.[51] Indeed, Ḥanukka provides an excellent example of the transformation of traditional Jewish memory in the secular national Hebrew culture and the rising importance of its place in the curriculum of the Hebrew schools as a paradigm of a national struggle for freedom.[52]

The belief in Jewish collective amnesia as far as the national heroic aspects of the past were concerned led to a deliberate Zionist search for suppressed symbols of ancient heroism. Zionist collective memory thus turned to previously belittled leaders and groups involved in the ancient Jewish wars and rehabilitated them as part of Zionism's desired national revival. Thus, the terms *kana'im* (Zealots), *Sikarikim* (Sicarii), and Biryonim, which had been coined as derogatory names of extremist groups were now raised as positive references.[53] The discussion of Masada and the Bar Kokhba revolt in secular national Hebrew culture in chapters 4 and 5 will provide a closer examination of the drastic transformation of their commemoration along these lines.

The reawakening of a dormant "national memory" was thus seen as an expression of triumph over Exile and a means of obliterating its influence. The Zionist choice of an activist approach to the future was thus intimately linked to an activist view of the ancient past. The selective reconstruction of Antiquity was part of the historical mission of reviving the ancient national roots and spirit. Antiquity became both a source of legitimation and an object of admiration. Zionist collective memory emphasized the identification with heroes of the ancient past.

In fact, Zionist memory shaped the image of the young generation of New Hebrews as "grandsons" of the ancient heroes. This association acknowledged the existence of "fathers" (namely, the Jews of Exile) to allow for continuity within the Jewish past, but it enhanced the affinity between the ancient forefathers and the New Hebrews while marginalizing the exilic

Jews. A eulogy for Trumpeldor, the dead hero of Tel Ḥai, thus stated: "He fell dead, the hero of Israel! Like a figure of ancient magic this man was, *the great-grandson of the ancient heroes of Israel*, one of those who joined Bar Kokhba's host, one of those who followed the hero of Gush Ḥalav."[54] At times the need to emphasize symbolic continuity resulted in the projection of modern-day issues on Antiquity. This was the case in Ya'akov Zerubavel's statement that applied contemporary socialist concerns to the ancient Hebrews: "The Biryonim and the soldiers of Bar Kokhba were the last fighters for political freedom and *free labor* in the Land of Israel. Their grandchildren, the Hebrew workers, are the first fighters for free Jewish life, life of labor and creation in the Land of Israel."[55]

The use of the adjective *ivri* (Hebrew) to reinforce the tie with the ancient past and to dissociate from the concept *yehudi* (Jewish) had appeared prior to the emergence of Zionism as a political ideology.[56] But for the Zionists it was particularly appealing as a way of marking the symbolic discontinuity between the period of Exile and the modern National Revival. Zionism wished to present the "Jew" with an opportunity to transform into a "Hebrew" or, as Berdiczewski puts it, to be "the last Jews or the first members of a new nation."[57]

The pervasive use of the term "Hebrew" during the prestate period thus implied both symbolic continuity with the ancient national past and departure from Exile. The mere addition of this adjective was indicative of the national significance attributed to its referent. Thus, the Hebrew culture celebrated the emergence of "Hebrew youth," "Hebrew work," "Hebrew guards," "Hebrew labor union," "Hebrew literature," "Hebrew schools," "Hebrew language," and other such manifestations of its growing distance from traditional Jewish culture.

While the term "Hebrew" was also popular in Zionist circles outside of Palestine, the secular national Hebrew culture greatly enhanced the contrast between the "Hebrew" and the "Jew," along with its repudiation of Exile.[58] The highly negative image of the Jew of Exile was counterbalanced by the no less extreme positive image of the new native Hebrew, later known by the nickname *Tsabar* (Sabra).

> The Sabra became a mythological—and necessarily also archetypal—figure that forms a solid mold by which the Israeli-born would be shaped. The superior Sabra is characterized not only by what he possesses, but also by that which he does not have: he has no fear, weakness, or timidity; he has none of the exilic spirit [*galutiyut*]. He is the product of the Land of Israel, the outcome of generations' hopes, and he stands in contrast to the Jew of Exile. He is Hebrew and not Jew, and he is to put an end to the humiliation of his fathers. Anything that the Jew has lacked he has: strength, health, labor, return to nature, deep-rootedness, and a little of the peasant's slowness and heaviness.[59]

The New Hebrew was thus expected to be closer to his ancient forefathers than to his exilic parents. Accordingly, the uprooted Jew turns into a native who is deeply rooted in the homeland, settles in it, works its soil, and is fully prepared to defend it. Unlike the passive, submissive image of the exilic Jew, the New Hebrew is seen as active, self-reliant, and proud. The desire to compensate for what was seen as the excessive spirituality and verbosity of the exilic Jew resulted in the admiration of activism and physical strength.[60] The New Hebrew was thus portrayed as a man of action, not a man of words. His emergence would help recover the national pride and dignity that was lost during Exile.[61]

Within this context, it should not come as a surprise that the new Hebrew society in Palestine, which referred to itself as the Yishuv (Settlement), cultivated a special admiration for its youth, the new representatives of the Hebrew. For the Zionist settlers the young generation of Hebrews was the key to the future, the concrete evidence of the success of their vision and efforts to rebuild the nation. Youth worship, as the historian George Mosse points out, is characteristic of periods of dramatic political and social change.[62] Revolutionary movements mark their futurist orientation by symbols that revolve around young people or project youthfulness. In its portrayal of the New Hebrews as a radically transformed breed of Jews, Zionism reached closest to a revolutionary stance. However, even though the imagery of the New Hebrew often implied a dramatic contrast to its "Jewish" predecessor, Zionism rejected a total rupture between the two, as the response to the Canaanites showed. Zionism thus sought to induce a "fundamental" rather than a "radical" transformation,[63] using different periods of the past as both a countermodel and a source of legitimation.

More than realistic portrayals, the Zionist constructions of the exilic Jew and the New Hebrew suggest ideal types that provide another link between the Zionist view of the past and its vision of the future. Similarly, the construction of a new native Hebrew culture was more of an aspiration than a description of a reality. The cultural situation in Palestine was, indeed, much more complex. As the cultural critic Itamar Even-Zohar points out, many "exilic" and foreign elements were incorporated into the supposedly native Hebrew culture. The blend of new and old, Jewish and foreign, is particularly evident in such domains as dress, food, dance, and songs,

which were the product of an attempt to construct indigenous cultural expressions.[64]

In spite of its constructed character as an ideal type, the "Hebrew" image was internalized by the Yishuv society and new Jewish immigrants were met with the social expectation that they would transform accordingly. The emergence of a literary archetype of the native youth in the literature of the late 1940s and the 1950s indicates the internalization of this image by Hebrew youth themselves. Ironically, one of the symbolic expressions of the parents' success in transmitting the ideal of a New Man is youth's self-portrayal in the literature as metaphorically "parentless." As the literary critic Gershon Shaked remarks, when Moshe Shamir chose to begin his 1951 novel, *Bemo Yadav* (By his own hands) with the statement that its young hero, Alik, was born of the sea, he was in fact articulating the social and literary expectations of that period.[65] Along with the admiration of the new Hebrew youth and culture, enormous pressures were exerted on new immigrants to relinquish their own languages and traditions and accept the values and norms of the Hebrew culture. Indeed, only during the last two decades has Israeli society begun to face the political and cultural manifestations of the deep psychological scars that these pressures produced.[66]

The Zionist vision of national revival centers around the image of the New Hebrew, but land and language were essential aspects of this revival. Here too, the construction of the past provided the guidelines to the future: national life degenerated in Exile as a result of the rupture from the ancestral land, Zion, and the use of a new hybrid language, Yiddish. The vision of the modern National Revival thus centered upon three main elements: the Hebrew man, the Land of Israel, and the Hebrew language.

National redemption was thus intimately linked to the idea of redeeming the land. The Zionist settlers believed that in the process of settling in and working the land they would find their own personal and collective redemption. As a most popular Hebrew song of the prestate period notes, "We have come to the homeland to build [it] and be rebuilt [in it]." The attachment to the land was further reinforced by the educational emphasis on the study of agriculture, nature, as well as local geography and history (known as a class on *moledet* [homeland]). *Yediat ha-aretz* (knowing the Land) did not simply mean the recital of facts in the classroom, but rather an intimate knowledge of the land that can only be achieved through a direct contact with it. As we shall see later, trekking on foot throughout the land was particularly considered as a major educational experience, essential for the development of the New Hebrews. During the prestate period, Hebrew schools and the highly popular youth movements assigned great significance to such trips.[67]

To erect a Hebrew settlement and work its land required a total commitment, devotion, and readiness for sacrifice.[68] Tel Hai emerged as a central myth of the settlement period because it was believed to demonstrate the significance of these values. Death for the country was itself a modern reenactment of the ancient spirit of heroism, indicating the beginning of a new national era.[69] The importance of working the land was particularly enhanced by the Socialist Zionists and received its most explicit expression in the teachings of A. D. Gordon. Gordon's writing, which focused on the link between the physical and spiritual dimensions of work, highlighted its sacred nature and gave rise to the concept *dat ha-avoda* (the religion of labor).[70] In the same vein, the poet Avraham Shlonsky portrayed the pioneers' work of building settlements and toiling on the land as sacred acts, using terms borrowed from the Jewish ritual domain:

> My land is wrapped in light as in a prayer shawl.
> The houses stand forth like frontlets;
> and the roads paved by hand, stream down like
> phylactery straps.
>
> Here the lovely city says the morning prayer to its Creator.
> And among the creators is your son Abraham,
> a road-building bard of Israel.[71]

Settling was a central pioneering activity that implied rerooting in the land. Founding a new settlement was defined as the ultimate realization (*hagshama*) of the pioneering ideology which Zionist youth movements transmitted to its members. Perhaps the most obvious expression of the prominence of this activity was the emergence of the concept of Yishuv, Settlement, as the collective reference to the new Hebrew society in Palestine. Rebuilding the nation thus became a sacred act, a work of creation; in Shlonsky's bold terms, the Zionist Settler replaced God as the creator.

The Hebrew language likewise emerged as a central component of National Revival. Zionist collective memory cast Hebrew as the language of the ancient Israelites who lived in the Land of Israel, which fell out of active daily use during Exile. Hebrew, accordingly, remained the Jewish sacred tongue of prayers and religious studies while other languages took its place as the languages of everyday life. As the Jews lost their unified territorial base in Zion, so they lost Hebrew as their unified national language. National Revival thus required a return to Hebrew as a means of reconnecting with the hidden national spirit.

For the European Zionists, the most notable example of the exilic substitute for Hebrew was Yiddish, the Jewish language spoken predominantly in eastern Europe. Compared to Hebrew, Yiddish was scorned as a lan-

guage devoid of spiritual depth and artistic qualities. As Aḥad Ha-Am, the proponent of cultural Zionism, emphasized, only the Hebrew language could function as the tongue through which Jews could connect again with their national past and would be able to achieve a full literary and spiritual renaissance.[72]

Like other Zionist reconstructions of the Jewish past, this extremely dichotomized view ignored developments that did not fit its model. After all, Aramaic competed with Hebrew as the language spoken by Jews during the later part of Antiquity. Conversely, Hebrew did not remain constrained to the sacred domain during centuries of Exile but was also a language of poetry and writing, and served as the lingua franca for Jews who came from different countries.[73] Thus, the concept of the "revival of the Hebrew language" is not accurate, nor is the celebration of the "rebirth" of modern Hebrew in conjunction with Eliezer Ben-Yehuda's immigration to Palestine in 1881. That this event became a temporal marker of rebirth is an example of how collective memory reconstructs the past by selecting a symbolic "event" to represent a gradual process of transition. In spite of Ben-Yehuda's remarkable contribution to the development of modern Hebrew, efforts to expand the use of Hebrew as a spoken tongue actually predated his immigration to Palestine. Indeed, the decisive turn in the status of Hebrew in Palestine came later, during the second decade of this century.[74]

Like other aspects of the Zionist collective memory, the association of Hebrew with Antiquity and the negative attitude toward other Jewish languages associated with Exile predated the rise of Zionism. Yet Zionism presented a new insistence upon a full-scale "revival" of the ancient tongue with a more pronounced nationalist bent, and adjusted the perception of the past accordingly. The anecdote told by the archeologist Yigael Yadin of Ben-Gurion's reproach when he saw letters from the Bar Kokhba period that were written in Aramaic is quite revealing: "'Why did they write in Aramaic and not in Hebrew?' was [Ben-Gurion's] immediate angry reaction, as if the scribes had been members of his staff."[75]

The attitude toward the exilic languages and the commitment to turn Hebrew into an everyday language was not uniform, however, even among the Zionists. The emergence of Hebrew as the Yishuv's national language was a complex process that entailed a struggle on both ideological and practical grounds. The 1913 "Languages War" marked the success of the pro-Hebrew teachers and students, supported by the Socialist Zionist settlers of the Second Aliya, in abolishing the use of European languages in Jewish schools and establishing Hebrew as the main language of instruction.[76] For most Jewish immigrants, Hebrew was not a native tongue but a newly acquired spoken language. While its vocabulary was rich in some areas, it was severely limited in others. The use of the language thus required an ongoing effort to find (or construct) appropriate words, idioms, and concepts.

Yet the emergence of Hebrew as the primary and official language of the Yishuv was ultimately seen as a critical link to the ancient past, as constructed in Zionist collective memory. For this reason too, the eastern European settlers wished to adapt the Sephardi Hebrew pronunciation which, they believed, follows the ancient Hebrew accent. Thus, although Palestinian Hebrew actually formed a new system of pronunciation, drawing selectively on both the Sephardi and the Ashkenazi Hebrew,[77] it was seen as an adaptation of the Sephardi accent and therefore as closer to ancient Hebrew. That this was a new synthesis meant, however, that for both the eastern European Zionist settlers and the Middle Eastern Jews the new Palestinian Hebrew provided a further ritualized expression of change. This transformation thus symbolized the cultural transition from exilic to Palestinian Hebrew, from a primarily sacred and literary language to a secular language of everyday use and the official language of the revived Hebrew nation.[78]

Historical Continuity/Symbolic Discontinuities

The Zionist collective memory produces a master commemorative narrative that outlines three periods—Antiquity, Exile, and the modern National Revival. Within this semiotic framework, as it developed in the national Hebrew culture in Palestine, the meaning of each period is largely determined by its relations to the other periods. The following graphic display (figure 1) represents the Zionist vision of symbolic continuities and ruptures within Jewish history.

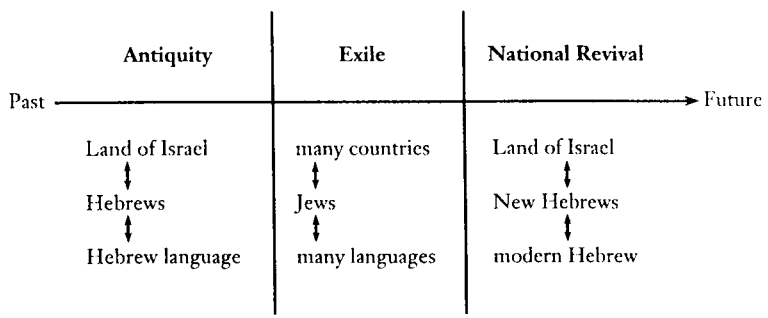

Figure 1

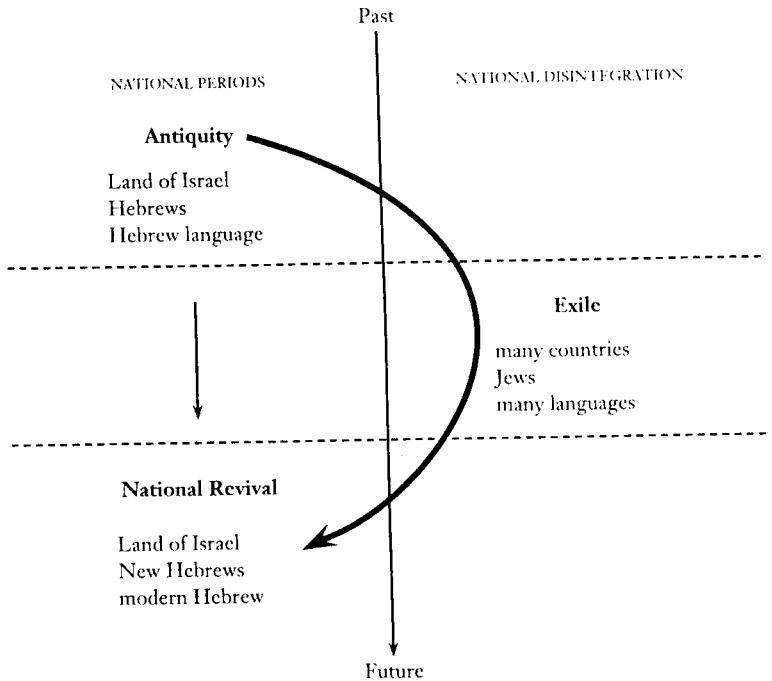

Figure 2

This semiotic system presents a basic conception of linear progression through historical time. But its segmentation into three periods also suggests some notion of historical recurrence that transcends this linearity. This does not imply a fully circular movement through time, but rather a spiral thrust forward to the future with a symbolic incorporation of certain features of the ancient past, as is demonstrated by figure 2.

Figure 2 thus displays how the national periods (Antiquity and the National Revival) became separated by a period of national disintegration. From a nationalist perspective, then, Exile is represented by blank space, a "historical detour" which denies continuity of national life. This gap, however, is not constructed by history, but rather by memory, imposing its ideological classification of the past.

To compensate for this disruption, the Zionist commemorative narrative constructs a *symbolic bridge* between Antiquity and the modern period, emphasizing their affinity and distancing both from Exile. The New Hebrews' renewed bond with land and nature as well as the revival of the Hebrew language help construct this bridge. This is clearly expressed in

the Hebrew literature written for children. Nature is often described as supporting the Zionist efforts to bridge over Exile, thereby constructing the symbolic continuity that history denies. Thus, for example, the writer Ya'akov Ḥurgin informs his young readers that the ancient rebels' story had never left Zion to Exile and was, therefore, transmitted to him by the waves of the Sea of the Galilee."[79] The waves thus provide the symbolic bridge that makes it possible to "weave" the ancient past into the modern National Revival, skipping over the discredited exilic past. The result is an appearance of seamless continuity between Antiquity and the modern National Revival.

The alignment of the national periods on the one hand and Exile on the other plays up the positive images of the first and third periods against the highly negative image of the middle period. Even though Zionist memory acknowledges Exile as a very long period (often marked by the formulaic reference to "two thousand years"), it defines it by its lack, as if it were "empty" in substance. As a result, Hebrew education expanded greatly on Antiquity, with a special emphasis on the two centuries of national revolts against the Romans, and devoted relatively little time to the history of Exile.[80] Among his protests against Jewish history, Yudke, Ḥayim Ḥazaz's fictional hero, complains that Jewish history is boring because it consists of an endless recurrence of persecution and martyrdom.[81] Commemorative time created by the Zionist master commemorative narrative thus differs from historical time considerably, reflecting the different significance it attributes to each of the periods.

Historical Turning Points: Liminality and Transitions

The Zionist reconstruction of symbolic continuities and discontinuities in Jewish history was clearly designed to support the ideology of national revival. The dramatic contrast between the repudiation of Exile and the glorification of Antiquity accentuated the appeal of the future national era and highlighted the notion of a new beginning. The resettlement of Palestine represented a *national rebirth*. The Zionist settlers regarded themselves as engaging in the work of Creation, secularizing religious metaphors and drawing upon biblical images to highlight their own contribution to the formation of a new national era.[82]

While the early pioneering period symbolized the process of national rebirth, it was the 1920 battle of Tel Ḥai that provided the commemorative marker of a new beginning. Tel Ḥai was a sign that the expected historical transition was taking place. But a new beginning presupposes the end of the preceding period: The commemorative sequence strives to portray the

transition as consisting of an end, a great divide, and a new beginning. The reality, however, is more complex and does not offer a clear-cut sequence. Jews lived in Palestine prior to the "first" Zionist immigration, and Jews continued to live in exile even after the beginning of the Zionist immigration and appeared to flourish more than their brethren in Palestine. To legitimize the delineation of a new beginning and reinforce their periodization, the Zionist settlers referred to the pre-Zionist Jewish population in Palestine as the "old Yishuv" (the "old settlement") and regarded it as a symbolic extension of Exile, thereby highlighting its distinction from the new Zionist Yishuv.[83]

The prestate period nonetheless continued to represent a highly ambiguous situation with regard to the end of Exile. Indeed, it was only with the Holocaust that the Zionist commemorative narrative was able to draw a clear boundary indicating the end of Exile. The fate of European Jewry sealed that period of misery and persecution and affirmed that the future belonged to the Zionist national revival in Palestine. It is not surprising, therefore, that the national Hebrew educational discourse emphasized this view of the Holocaust, implying a critique of the Holocaust victims for failing to understand that historical lesson in time and to join the Zionist effort.[84]

Thus, the master commemorative narrative allows for a liminal period in the transition between eras, beginning with the early pioneering period, culminating in the battle of Tel Ḥai. During this intermediate period of betwixt and between, historical forces shaped the emergent nation, but this process was still imbued with ambiguity as life in exile continued. The Holocaust, followed by the foundation of the State of Israel, provided a definitive boundary between the ending of Exile and National Revival. The representation of this symbolic order in the Israeli annual cycle of memorial days further affirms this commemorative sequence.[85] Within this semiotic system, then, the foundation of the state provides a symbolic compensation for the trauma of the Holocaust. This view, which the commemorative order suggests, is sometimes articulated explicitly in Hebrew textbooks that present the foundation of the state as a "happy end" for the Holocaust.[86]

Moreover, since Jewish life outside the State of Israel has continued to challenge this construct, a new term emerged following the foundation of the State of Israel to refer to Jewish communities abroad as "Dispersion" (*tefutsot*). This concept conveys that the State of Israel is the center of world Jewry and the Jews who live outside of Israel are defined in relation to it, namely, dispersed in its periphery. Furthermore, this new term reinforces a cognitive distinction between Exile as a past that preceded the foundation of the state and Jewish life in exile following 1948.[87]

Much like the liminal period marking the transition between Exile and

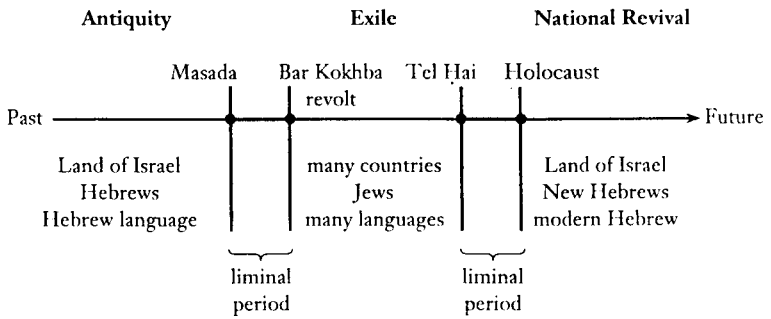

Figure 3

the Zionist National Revival, the Zionist master commemorative narrative constructs a similar liminal period that separates Antiquity from Exile. Although Masada was seen as a key turning point in Jewish history that indicates the conclusion of the Jewish revolt against the Romans in A.D. 73, this end did not actually represent a full transition from Antiquity to Exile. After all, Jews remained in Judaea under Roman rule while others continued to live in various diasporas throughout the Roman Empire. It was the outbreak of the Bar Kokhba revolt sixty years later that provided the Zionist commemorative narrative with an event to mark the conclusion of that transition: the Bar Kokhba revolt symbolized the final outburst of the ancient Jewish activist spirit, and its defeat ended the liminal period that had begun with the Great Revolt of the preceding century. Figure 3 represents the introduction of these turning points as temporal markers, signalling the entry to and exit from those liminal periods of transition. The three historical events that this book explores are thus located in the liminal periods of transition that the Zionist master commemorative narrative constructs. This commemorative location helps us understand why they emerged as major symbolic events in the national Hebrew culture and why they later became subjects of intense controversies over their meaning.

The designation of Masada and the Bar Kokhba revolt as major turning points that mark the transition from Antiquity to Exile and the emergence of Tel Ḥai as a symbolic marker of the onset of the Zionist National Revival were part of the Yishuv's attempt to shape its collective identity in relation to the past as well as the Jewish society outside of Palestine. While the division of the past into Antiquity and Exile continued the periodization constructed by traditional Jewish memory, the reinterpretation of Masada and Bar Kokhba as highly valued events marking the ending of Antiquity was a Zionist innovation. Jewish tradition emphasized the destruction of the Second Temple as the critical turning point ending this

period, while it ignored Masada and was more ambiguous in its commemoration of the Bar Kokhba revolt. The reconstruction of these events as markers of major transitions in the nation's history was nonetheless essential for enhancing the ideological premises of the Zionist ideology.

The notion of a "national birth" is often linked to the themes of a national struggle and the sacrifice of life for its cause. The birth of the new Hebrew nation was no exception. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Zionist settlers focused on these themes with regard to their present reality and elaborated them in commemorating the ancient revolts. Here, the national struggles helped weave the end of Antiquity into the beginning of the modern National Revival to construct a symbolic continuity between the two periods and underscored their great divide in relation to Exile. This idea was so deeply ingrained in the secular national ideology that the first Hebrew organizations for self-defense in Palestine, Bar Giora and Ha-Shomer, chose the verse from Cahan's poem articulating this idea as their own motto: "In blood and fire Judaea fell; in blood and fire Judaea will rise."[88]

The Zionist collective memory emerged out of a deep concern for Jewish survival, both physical and spiritual, in exile. The issues of death and rebirth, sacrifice and survival, rupture and continuity were thus central to the Zionist views of the past and its vision of the future. The three turning points which this study explores likewise focus on national struggles and articulate the new Zionist outlook on those fundamental issues. That they became major heroic national myths of the emergent Hebrew nation in Palestine attests to the power of collective memory to artfully rework historical information in the construction of its commemorative narratives.

The basic premises of the Zionist collective memory described here relate mostly to the prestate period that shaped the foundations of the national Hebrew culture. Although the seeds of these ideas were formed in Europe, the emphasis of this book is on the development of the Zionist collective memory within the framework of the Yishuv and, after the foundation of the state, within Israeli culture. As the society has undergone considerable changes, its collective memory has also been transformed. And yet, even after the establishment of the state, Israeli society has confronted death and survival as part of its experience and these issues have remained central to its collective memory and political discourse. Israelis thus continuously engage in examining the relation between the past and the present and reconstructing symbolic continuities and discontinuities between them as they explore and reshape their identities as both Israelis and Jews.