



THE SYMBOL SYSTEM OF ZIONIST-SOCIALISM: AN ASPECT OF ISRAELI CIVIL RELIGION

Zionist-Socialism¹ was a religious surrogate whose system of symbols and values dominated the *yishuv*.¹ It provided meaning and purpose to individual existence through mobilization of the individual in the collective effort to establish, in the Land of Israel, an ideal society based on social equality, social justice and productive labor. The vision of this society was ostensibly grounded in values that were present in Judaism itself, and many of the symbols which conveyed these values were derived from the Jewish tradition. On the other hand, the radical secularism of the movement led it to absorb the symbols and values of the tradition selectively and reinterpret the tradition in its own spirit. Furthermore, it did not rely exclusively upon traditional Judaism for its symbols. It drew extensively from the internationalist socialist movement, particularly to reinforce values of class consciousness. Finally, some of its unique elements such as its conception of *halutziut* (pioneering), which emerged from the fusion of Zionism and Socialism, led to the creation of unique symbols. While there is an extensive literature on the ideology and political organization of Zionist-Socialism our interest is in its value and symbol system, i.e., in Zionist-Socialism as a civil religion.

I. THE VALUES OF ZIONIST-SOCIALISM

Halutziut (Pioneering)

The *halutz* (pioneer) was portrayed as the bearer of the national mission, paving the way for national redemption. The pioneer was part of an elite, but an elite defined by special obligations and responsibilities, not an elite of privilege. The term *halutz* had two meanings in the Zionist-Socialist vocabulary. In its inclusive meaning, anybody who settled in the Land of Israel and led a productive life, participated in the enterprise of national redemption, and hence was a *halutz*. In its more exclusive sense, the real pioneers, or the pioneering elite, were those who "settled

the land", who engaged in agricultural labor in the framework of the kibbutz, *i.e.*, who led a collective, communal, egalitarian life.

The term *ḥalutz* originated in the Bible.³ *Ḥalutzim*, lead the Israelite camp. They were the first to heed the call to war. But, the biblical pioneer acted "before the Lord," *i.e.*, in God's name. The Zionist-Socialist *ḥalutz* undertook a purely national mission. His authority did not derive from any supernatural source and he relied exclusively on his own strength to realize his goals. The Zionist-Socialist conception of the *ḥalutz* was inspired by the ideals and climate of opinion which permeated the revolutionary movements in Russia. Pioneering came to suggest renewal and change. The pioneer was the harbinger of the Jew of the future. Kibbutz publications frequently quoted the Hebrew writer Joseph Brenner on this point. "These individual Hebrews are few but they are alive. They are a new type among the children of Israel."⁴

Labor

The *Haskala* (Jewish "enlightenment" movement of the 19th century) had emphasized the importance of "productive labor" and the necessity of normalizing "the Jewish economic structure."⁵ Zionist-Socialism went a step further. Labor became an intrinsic value, the basis of national redemption and personal fulfillment. The concept of labor owed much to certain 19th century European ideas expressed in various socialist doctrines.⁶ It was particularly functional for an emerging voluntary society which was highly dependent on the commitment of its members to effectuate its goals.

Labor is not merely the performance of a task. It is a quasi-ritualistic act, "holy work" requiring total and absolute devotion and unconditional commitment. "Labor demands the whole of a person. It exhausts all one's energy and gives but little reward."⁷ The powerful religious dimension in the conception of labor was acknowledged in the very term "religion of labor" which was associated in particular with the message of A.D. (Aharon David) Gordon (1856-1922), one of the eminent spiritual leaders of the labor movement. Gordon's teaching, like his personality and way of life, reflected the religious, almost mystical value he attributed to productive labor, especially that which furthered national aims. In one of his articles he responded to the argument that Jewish employers were justified in hiring Arab rather than Jewish workers because the former were cheaper and more efficient. Gordon asked:

Would a religious Jew be willing to desecrate the Sabbath on the basis of such arguments? He would say: "Religion is a different matter." It is. Religion is not toying with ideals. Religion knows how to impose duties, to assert its rightful place and to be intrinsically important. . . is national life, which so crucially depends on the *yishuv*, valuable enough to require the same effort made by the religious Jew on behalf of religion?⁸

Echoing the biblical verse which demands that the people of Israel choose between worship of God and paganism⁹ Gordon noted that those who live in the Land must choose between productive labor, working with one's hands, which is true and real life, and parasitic life, which is "exilic" even when practiced in the Land of Israel.

The religious dimension in the Zionist-Socialist attitude toward labor had direct political implications. The demand to unite the different labor parties was based on the "unity of believers" in the religion of labor, which requires political unity regardless of whatever differences might exist:

We all direct ourselves to one God. We all want labor and a life of labor and hence, we all must live together.¹⁰

Redeeming the Land

The primacy which Zionist-Socialism gave to agricultural labor stemmed from the bond between man and nature and the redemption of the nation and its homeland, which found its most forceful symbolization in "working the land". This was the antithesis of the "exilic" way of life. The return to nature was appropriate to a people returning to its own land. In an article published in the major organ of Mapai (the dominant political party within the labor movement) the ideal of the land was described as "a sense of duty, persistence, endurance, love for the permanent, the real and the firmly rooted."¹¹ In the writer's opinion one source of anti-semitism was that Diaspora Jews had no land of their own and alienated themselves from the land.

Recurrent metaphors in the Zionist-Socialist literature were the plant which returns to the soil of the homeland, strikes roots and blossoms anew; the son returning to his mother; or lovers who reunite after long separation. Interestingly, many of the metaphors can be found in biblical proverbs and rabbinical homilies, but in the traditional sources the relationship between the Jews and their land derived its sanctity from God, or were actualized because of God. The reverence which Zionist-Socialism manifested toward the land, nature, and physical communion between man and nature is far more evocative of paganism than of Judaism.¹²

Land or soil, the symbol of the concrete and the physical in Zionist-Socialism was grasped as the antithesis of the exaggerated spirituality that characterized traditional Judaism. The enemy, in symbolic terms was the sky—representing religion or men of spirit or the "exile" and all that this entailed.¹³

The cult of the land in Zionist-Socialism symbolized the tendency to transfer the focus of sanctity from the heavens to the earth. In one of the first settlement camps the cry was to remove all the obstacles between the settlers and the land ". . . the land and only the land will be the holy of holies for the Hebrew soul."¹⁴

A particularly rich source of material on the sanctification of Zionist-Socialist values are the Passover *haggadot* (singular: *haggada*) published by various kibbutzim. The *haggada* is the classic text recited at the festive meal that inaugurates the Passover holiday. The custom of reading the *haggada* is deeply ingrained in Jewish culture and Zionist-Socialists transformed and transvalued the traditional *haggada* in conformance with their own ideology. Not atypical of kibbutz *haggadot* of the 1930's and 1940's is the passage in one *haggada* that includes an invocation to the land by its "new sons" who vow to treat it with filial loyalty. "And we shall cross the stormy seas until we reach you and cling to you. In our blood and toil we shall redeem you until you are entirely ours."¹⁵

Asceticism and Equality

Zionist-Socialism in general and the kibbutz movement in particular ascribed great ethical meaning to a modest and ascetic way of life. Yonina Talmon-Gerber argued that the ideology of the kibbutz life, like the Protestant ethic, combined asceticism with a positive and active orientation toward the universe.¹⁶ Unlike Protestantism, she maintained, the kibbutz ideology was completely secular.¹⁷ This is only partially true. No one claimed supernatural sanction for the value of asceticism. On the other hand, asceticism was not revered as an instrumental ideal, but as rooted in a transcendent structure of right and wrong. Talmon herself noted that working for the advancement of the kibbutz became, in part, "a secular worship of God—a sort of holy work—the devotion to work through frugality became a ritualistic and symbolic expression of loyalty to values."¹⁸ In addition "voluntary poverty" established the moral supremacy of the workers' elite and their claim to hegemony in the Zionist movement and the *yishuv*.¹⁹ Associated with the value of asceticism among Zionist-Socialists were the values of equality and mutual cooperation.

Military Heroism

Although some Zionist-Socialist circles held pacifist views and were reluctant to idealize the values of military heroism and prowess²⁰ the concerted Arab efforts against the *yishuv*, those of 1920-1921, 1929 and 1936-1939, in particular, weakened these circles. Increasingly, Zionist-Socialists attributed the role of military defender to the pioneer. He was both a worker and a soldier. The increased tension between the *yishuv* and the British authorities served to further enhance the value of military heroism, and the Second World War and the Holocaust confirmed its importance. But the value of military heroism reached its peak only after the establishment of the State.

Nationalism and Class Consciousness

Characteristic of civil religion is the fact that the collective replaces God. It is the collective which is sanctified, it legitimates, its needs are those which must be fulfilled. In Zionist-Socialism the "sanctified collective" is generally the Jewish nation, but not always. Passover *haggadot* of the kibbutzim, for example, are concerned with a specifically Jewish holiday. Therefore, they stress values and motifs related to Judaism. Nonetheless, socialist and working class motifs appear even in some of the *haggadot*. For example, the exodus from Egypt is presented as a symbol of the struggle for liberation of oppressed classes all over the world.²¹ But class motifs stand out in particular in symbols and rituals drawn from non-Jewish sources.

One party within the labor movement, Hapoel Hatzair, whose leadership included A.D. Gordon, resisted the use of such symbols. It even refused to identify itself as Socialist because of its objections to conceptions of class consciousness and the materialism which it charged was embedded in classical socialism.²² However, the differences between the members of Hapoel Hatzair and Ahdut Haavodah, the largest of the Labor Zionist parties, were gradually overcome. In the 1930 merger of the two which resulted in the establishment of Mapai, the dominant party of the *yishuv* and the State of Israel, the latter's conception of socialism emerged triumphant.²³

Preserving the "unity of the working class" was a sacred value in Zionist-Socialism. The struggle against the Religious Zionists and the Revisionists derived, in large measure, from the support which these groups gave to workers outside the Histadrut, the General Federation of Workers. Indeed, even the opposition to institutionalized religion was based in part upon the sense of the Zionist-Socialist elite that religion competed with class in generating feelings of loyalty and solidarity.

But class consciousness leads to "class struggle" which surely impairs national unity. The ideological solution was "constructivism" which supposedly resolved the conflict between both these sacred values. Constructivism meant substituting for violent revolution the influence to be exerted by exemplary behavior of the Labor Movement, as well as the political control of the "society of workers." Zionist-Socialism did not quite surrender the conception of class conflict, but replaced armed struggle with constructive activity and political struggle. Constructivism prevented an overt confrontation between the labor Zionists and other camps of the *yishuv*. Nevertheless, the Labor Movement was criticized for creating segregated economic, cultural and educational institutions which, it was charged, impaired national unity. The Zionist-Socialist response was that class loyalty and national loyalty, far from being mutually exclusive, are in fact complementary. Both, they claimed, served the interests of the entire *yishuv* and strengthened each other. Such arguments

reflected the conviction that the Jewish working class in the Land of Israel had a special national mission by virtue of which it had to organize itself in a separate framework to promote its unique way of life.

Nevertheless, conflict between national and class orientations troubled the Labor Movement itself. In some circles, as we shall see, the international working class and socialist ideology were endowed with no less a degree of sanctity than that attached to the Jewish people and to Zionism.

*Zionist-Socialism and Traditional Judaism*²⁴

We have already had occasion to observe how Zionist-Socialism utilized symbols of traditional religion, transforming them and transvaluing them to suit its purposes. But, while acknowledging, if only by implication, the resonance of the traditional symbols for the Jewish people, it rejected any political role for traditional religion. A few argued that traditional religion was a basic component in national integration. But a more typical point of view affirmed that whereas religion once served "as a barrier against national disasters," Jewish nationalism will formulate its own value system and shed the forms of traditional Judaism, once it no longer needs its support.²⁵

This attitude was influenced in part by currents that prevailed in both Jewish and non-Jewish working class circles in Russia and Poland. Zionist-Socialist leaders in Eastern Europe represented the war against religion as one of their primary aims. A manifesto to Jewish Youth composed by Nachman Syrkin (1868-1924), first ideologist and leader of Zionist-Socialism, stated that:

Zionist Socialism sees, in the applied Jewish religion, which is not a religion but a tragedy, the major impediment confronting the Jewish nation on the road to culture, science, freedom.²⁶

On the other hand, to the settlers in the Land of Israel, religion was, in fact, less of an obstacle in the realization of their vision. They saw themselves forming a new society and there was no powerful religious establishment with whom they felt they had to contend. The nostalgia and longing for the homes from which they came, intensified by their bitter loneliness²⁷ also served to mitigate their antagonism to the religious tradition. Finally, recognition of the necessity for political cooperation with the Religious Zionists was both an effect of the abatement in antagonism and cause of further restraint in Zionist-Socialist attacks on religion.

None of this, however, led to a disavowal of the militant secularist ideology. Furthermore, the meaning which Zionist-Socialism attributed to two of its most important symbols *exile* and *redemption*, evoked continued antagonism to traditional Judaism.

Exile and Redemption

Exile, in the Zionist lexicon, implied a way of life devoid of any redeeming quality. An exilic Jew was one characterized by exilic Jewish traits: cowardice, dependency, excessive spirituality, non-productive labor, flawed social relationships, egoism, vulgarity and coarseness, weakness, divorce from nature and art, lack of pride, conservatism, etc. There is no question but that this caricature of world Jewry bears the imprint of anti-semitic stereotypes though its roots are to be found in the *haskala* (Jewish Enlightenment Movement) literature as well. The *haskala*, however, sought to repair the Jew whereas the Zionist-Socialists (they were not alone in this point of view, and some were more radical than others) believed that Jews who remained outside the Land of Israel were beyond the hope of redemption.

The anti-exilic attitude, "negation of the Diaspora" as it came to be called, was also expressed in the selective use of traditional Jewish symbols by the Zionist-Socialists. Those symbols associated with the Temple periods when the Jews lived in their own land carried greater legitimacy and were more readily evoked than symbols associated with the 2,000-year period of Jewish exile which followed the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 C.E. Greatest deference, indeed a central place in the Zionist-Socialist educational system, was accorded to the Bible and symbols of biblical origin. It follows that the attitude which Zionist-Socialists exhibited toward rabbinical, as distinct from biblical symbols, and to *halacha* (comprised of rabbinical law and rabbinical interpretation of biblical law) was generally negative.²⁸

"Redemption" which meant attainment of both individual and national freedom, through the individual and collective effort of the Jewish people alone stood in juxtaposition to exilic Judaism.

Ber Borochov (1881-1917), foremost theoretician of Zionist-Socialism, writing about the Passover holiday, praised the "wicked" son of the traditional *haggada* text because he wanted no part of the freedom given by God. The "wicked" son, said Borochov, insisted upon attaining freedom by himself. The same "wicked ones", he argued, who in our generation insist on attaining freedom with their own hands are creating "the foundation for the construction of new Jewish life."²⁹

The traditional story of Hanukkah recounts how, after the Jews recaptured the Temple, they found a container with sufficient oil to relight the sacred candelabrum for only one day. But the oil burned for eight days, time enough to produce new oil. A popular Hanukkah song of the *yishuv* compared the *halutzim* favorably to the Jews of yore because "no miracle occurred to us, we found no container of oil." A kibbutz *haggada* proclaimed in a parody of the traditional text: "Every generation must be its own redeemer that it may be redeemed."³⁰ And redemption includes freedom from the tradition itself. According to another *haggada*, "We, the

generation of free men will celebrate our holiday without the spirit of enslavement to the tradition."³¹

Zionist-Socialism conscientiously excised God from its symbol system. Nation and Land were frequently substituted for God, but sometimes the working class and even all humanity become the source of values and obligations and the focus for feelings of identity and loyalty — the objects of ritual and ceremony. Typical in this regard is the transformation of biblical verses deeply embedded in folk usage. For example, the traditional phrase, "who can retell the glories of God", the opening phrase of one of the most popular of all *Hanukkah* songs was transformed into "Who can retell the glories of Israel." Even the most sacred of all passages "Hear O Israel, The Lord our God, the Lord is One" was transformed in one kibbutz *haggada* to: "Hear O Israel, Israel is our destiny, Israel is one."³²

The type of transformation referred to here seems to exemplify a process which various scholars have identified as linguistic secularization; the use of words, idioms and phrases derived from religious sources, but detached from their original meaning to serve secular purposes.³³ But there is another side to this phenomenon. When adherents of civil religion transform sacred idioms and phrases they are sacralizing the values and concepts which they wish to express with these transformed symbols. In other words, a process of sacralization, as well as secularization, is taking place, depending upon the vantage point one uses to observe the process. This is evident in the frequent usage which Zionist-Socialism made of such traditional religious terms as: *kedusha* (holiness), *mitzva* (commandment), *Torah* (on its many sacred meanings, see below), *brit* (covenant) and *korban* (sacrifice).

It is almost impossible to convey in English, especially to anyone unfamiliar with traditional Hebrew, the elaborate and intricate usage of traditional Jewish terminology in Zionist-Socialism. We have already noted some examples and only a few more must suffice. "Where are the holy ones? . . . All Israel is holy."³⁴ "Let us sanctify and bless the pioneers of the nation."³⁵ [part of a longer statement transforming the traditional Friday evening ceremony called *Kiddush* (sanctification)]. "May the Hebrew Man be glorified and sanctified"³⁶ (part of a transformative text of the traditional prayer for the dead, which was sometimes changed to read: "May the Working Man be glorified and sanctified"). It was traditional among the kibbutzim to contribute part of their earnings to the Jewish National Fund and the ritual presentation of the contribution was referred to as the "sanctification [of the agricultural produce] to the redemption of the land."³⁷

Not only did Zionist-Socialists make extensive use of the concept of *mitzva* (commandment), they even utilized the notion of *taryag mitzvot* (613 commandments incumbent on Jews). Thus: "There is a limit to compromise. The Histadut has 613 commandments which it observes"³⁸

or “the 614th commandment imposed on every boy and girl . . . [etc.]”³⁹

In traditional religious language, *Torah* may refer to the Pentateuch, to the entire Bible, to both the written and oral law, and in broadest terms to the entire rabbinical corpus. In the Zionist-Socialist vocabulary it meant the ideology of Zionist-Socialism. In a parody of the introduction to the most popular of all Mishnaic tracts, *Pirkei Avot* [Teachings of the Fathers], Zalman Shazar, who was to become Israel’s third president wrote:

Syrkin received the Torah from Hess [Moses Hess, 1812-1975, a German socialist, one of the precursors of Zionism and the father of Zionist Socialism] and passed it on to Berl [Berl Katznelson, 1887-1944, the leading Zionist-Socialist ideologue of his period] and Berl created with it the Great Assembly of the men of the second aliya . . .⁴⁰

Zionist-Socialism talked about “a new covenant” with the land and nature to replace the old covenant with the God of Israel. Kibbutz *haggadot* quoted Brenner:

Now we have arisen to throw off the yoke of exile and to make for ourselves a new land and a new sky with a strong hand and faithful arm . . . and to renew our covenant with this land and with the plants that grow.⁴¹

Zionist-Socialism also made frequent use of the religious concept—sacrifice. But, sacrifice was self-imposed rather than demanded by God. Secondly, the sacrifice was to the land, not to God. By virtue of sacrifices the *halutzim* established a “covenant of blood” with the homeland which created an eternal bond.⁴²

The example of Zionist-Socialism demonstrated how traditional symbols may be used to express conceptions or values in opposition to the very tradition from which the symbols spring. Nevertheless, the reliance on symbols from traditional sources reflects a measure of attachment even among those who were ostensibly most antagonistic.

Despite their differences, there were structural analogs between Zionist-Socialism and traditional Judaism beyond a shared set of symbols. For example, the use of the term “*commandment*” in the Zionist-Socialist lexicon reflects its tendency, like traditional Judaism, to impose a system of detailed norms on individual and social behavior.⁴³

II. MYTHS

The myth is a story that both expresses and reinforces beliefs and values about the relevant past, and hence about one’s self and the present: it explains and gives meaning to reality; acts as a guideline to the individual and the group; and may be an agent for social catharsis by enabling societal dilemmas and ambivalences to be expressed in symbolic form. It

serves to legitimate the social order and contributes to social integration and mobilization.

Civil religion may transform or transvalue religious myths and/or create myths of its own. Zionist-Socialism did both. The biblical story of the "exodus" from Egypt is an example of transvaluation of a traditional myth. In the biblical text God does virtually everything for a rather helpless and generally unsympathetic, ungrateful, pathetic people who resisted their own liberation, looked back with longing to their own slavery and were unworthy of entering the Land of Israel. (The religious tradition itself moderated the biblical story, but not in nearly as radical a fashion as the Zionist-Socialists). Various kibbutz *haggadot* represent the Exodus as the story of a people who took their fate into their own hands by throwing off the yoke of their oppressors, and of a leader, Moses, who transformed a horde of slaves into a free and united people.

An example of transformation, as well as transvaluation, is the story of the Maccabean revolt in the second century B.C.E., which is commemorated in the holiday of Hanukkah. The religious tradition emphasizes the miracle of the flask of oil as the central motif of Hanukkah, and generally deemphasizes the heroic deeds of the Maccabees. (The special Hanukkah prayer which does mention the Maccabees praises God for the miracle *He* performed in giving the strong and the many into the hands of the weak and the few.) Zionist mythology, shared by Zionist-Socialism, represented the story as a successful struggle for national freedom and political sovereignty due to the military prowess and courage of the Maccabees. The Zionists ignored the fact that it was religious oppression not national enslavement that stirred the populace.

The creative myths dealt with contemporary and also historical events to which the Jewish tradition had not attached any special significance. A striking example of the latter is Masada.

The Masada Myth

Masada was the last Jewish stronghold to fall to the Romans three years after the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 C.E. The Jewish historian Josephus Flavius in his classic text, *The Jewish Wars*, related that the last survivors chose mass suicide rather than captivity and subsequent enslavement by the Romans. Neither the fall of Masada nor the ostensible suicide (a violation of Jewish law) was endowed with symbolic significance in the Jewish tradition. The scene of the event—Mt. Masada in the Judean desert—only became a quasi-sacred site serving as a focus for ceremonies, pilgrimages and the development of a cult in the later period of the *yishuv*.

It was primarily the *halutzim* who transformed the events of Masada into a sacred story symbolizing the heroism, self-sacrifice, uncompro-

mising struggle, unwillingness to yield, and ardent desire for freedom of the Jewish people. Masada also had symbolic meaning as a place. Its location in the heart of the desert symbolized the isolation of the Jewish people in the world and the isolation of the *ḥalutzim* among the Jews. Masada is located at the summit of a mountain whose ascent is hard and steep; an obvious symbol of the pioneering motif of *aliya* (immigration; literally: "going up") to the Land of Israel despite the hardship and legal prohibitions involved. The ascent also carries the broader meaning of persistent striving towards a goal despite all the obstacles. In addition, Masada was the last refuge, the only alternative. There was no escape from Masada, no possibility of retreat. Therefore, one had to cling tenaciously to it and defend it with body and spirit.

Those who created and nurtured the myth of Masada emphasized that everything must be done to ensure that "Masada will not fall again." This conclusion, formulated as a promise and an oath, was repeatedly affirmed by the *yishuv* and the slogan spread to the Diaspora as well.

The phrase was coined by the Hebrew poet Yitzḥak Lamdan (1899-1954) in his epic poem "Masada", first published in 1927.⁴⁴ The poem reflects the spirit of the *ḥalutzim* of the 1920's:

. . . who had left behind them not only the memory of the brutal senseless murder of defenseless Jews, but also their shattered illusions about the possibility of establishing a free revolutionary society in Eastern Europe. [Masada]. . . in Lamdan's poem symbolizes Erez Israel, the last stronghold of the destroyed Eastern European Jewish communities.⁴⁵

The identification of the hero of the poem, the fugitive from eastern Europe, the *ḥalutz*, the emissary of the people striving to return to their land is clear. "I was sent by my people and will endure any hardship for them."⁴⁶ The God of Masada is "the God of the few who are brave," but they are the "divine inspiration of the people."⁴⁷

The Masada myth also expresses a societal dilemma. The dilemma did not stem from the fact that Masada's defenders all died. Many, perhaps most central political myths are stories of defeat and death. The living generation through identification with the heroes of the myth turn death and defeat into life and victory. Secondly, since death purifies, it is the ultimate form of atonement and legitimates the acts of those who died. Death need not be final defeat for it becomes a source of legitimation to those who identify with the fallen. The living, thereby, become the successors of the dead, and their death legitimates the enterprise of the living.

The striking aspect of the Masada myth is, therefore, not the death of the heroes, but their suicide. The suicide motif, we suggest, is a paradoxical resolution to the dilemma expressed in the myth. It is interesting that whereas the suicide was viewed as a problematic aspect of the myth in the

1960's, it did not trouble Zionist-Socialism. We cannot dismiss the possibility that suicide had particular meaning to the *halutzim*, among whom, oppressed as they were by terrible loneliness and fits of depression, suicide was not uncommon as it had been in traditional Jewish society.⁴⁸ What we would stress is that the Masada myth expresses a dilemma particular to the *yishuv*—the limits of human will. Herzl had inspired the Zionist movement with his aphorism: "If you will it, it will be." A central tenet of Zionism was that Jewish failure in the past stemmed from lack of resoluteness, defiance, pride. Zionism would succeed if its adherents really wanted to succeed. By an act of will, they could cease to be objects of history and become its subjects. This article of faith was an important component of Zionist-Socialism. It was essential to those whose living conditions were most difficult and to whom the possibility of improving those conditions often seemed remote. It is easy to forget, in the wake of the creation of Israel, that settlements *were* abandoned, that the *yishuv* depended upon philanthropy from abroad because its own enterprises were not economically self-sufficient, that the independent efforts of the *yishuv* could be written, from one perspective, as the history of failure. Did this mean that the settlers lacked will? But if they had the will and they still failed, did this not mean that an article of faith of Zionist-Socialism was wrong? With hindsight, the whole dilemma seems absurd. But, in an earlier period, it was too effective and important a slogan in the mobilization of effort to be abandoned. Masada acts out the contradiction between determined will and subsequent failure. The suicide then becomes not an act of despair, but an act of resolution; the final act of will, when will no longer sufficed for victory over the enemy. Taking one's own life at least deprived the enemy of the symbols of his victory. True, one died, but one's death was an act of one's own will.

We have no evidence to demonstrate our hypothesis. However, consistent with our conjecture, Masada lost some of its meaning in the period of Israeli Statehood when the problem of failure no longer posed the kind of dilemma it did for the *yishuv*. Perhaps the reason was that the architects of the civil religion of Statehood were less concerned with the voluntary mobilization of individual effort, perhaps the creation of the State and its early successes blinded them to their own limitations. The Masada myth recaptured its resonance in the 1960's as a prefiguration of the Holocaust, but by that time it had a different meaning and the suicide motif was troubling. Even in the period of the *yishuv*, however, the articulated interpretation of the myth never glorified suicide. Indeed, Lamdan's poem does not even mention it. Nor, we must stress, did the stories of Masada which circulated in that period overtly recognize the dilemma which we suggest the myth plays out. This, however, is to be expected. The myth is a catharsis. One purpose in reciting the myth is to avoid confronting the stark reality of the dilemma.

The Myth of Tel Hai

The central political myth of Zionist-Socialism was the story of the death of Yosef Trumpeldor (1880-1920) and seven comrades and the fall of Tel Hai and Kfar Giladi, two settlements in the Gallilee in March (the 11th of Adar according to the Jewish calendar), 1920.⁴⁹ Trumpeldor's last words, reported to have been "it is good to die for our country" were widely circulated and became an integral part of the myth.

Zionist-Socialism transformed the story of Tel Hai into a symbol of the heroism and valor of the *halutzim* and an expression of the values of labor and agricultural settlement on the one hand, and courage and defense on the other. The myth was related in poems and stories and Tel Hai itself became the object of pilgrimages focused on the date the settlement fell and on the figure of Trumpeldor.

The mythologization began almost immediately after the historical event. Within a year of the fall of Tel Hai a prominent journalist of the period wrote:

Buds of a national myth are already appearing. These modest heroes, who worked towards the rebuilding of the land, are becoming folk legends . . . Such is the power of our effort which opens the door to the creation of myths.⁵⁰

In the myth of Tel Hai, Trumpeldor and his followers represent the pioneers and defenders who gave their lives to defend their land and in so doing, won for their people the sacred right to the land. The heroes of Tel Hai . . . "with their blood, bought . . . the hills of the Gallilee for us." Their stand represented the decisive test of Zionist-Socialism since "the test of every idea is whether those who believe in it are ready to give their lives for it."⁵¹

In the immediate aftermath, the fall of Tel Hai and the death of Trumpeldor and his followers was interpreted differently. The first response of the *yishuv* was guilt that it had not done enough to assist in the defense.⁵² But as the myth evolved, the element of guilt was replaced by the frequently cited words of one of the defenders: "No settlement is to be deserted, nothing built is to be relinquished."⁵³

Thus, the myth of Tel Hai served to legitimize basic values of Zionist-Socialism, helped recruit people to its ranks and rallied them to its goals by identifying with those who fought and died for those goals. The sacrifice of Trumpeldor and his followers established a new basis for the sanctification of the land and the right of the Jewish people to that land. Ben-Gurion declared that "for this generation"—those to whom he referred to as "the comrades of Trumpeldor"—"this land is more holy than for the tens of generations of Jews who believed in its historical and

religious sanctity; for it has been sanctified by our sweat, our work, and our blood."⁵⁴

Ben-Gurion's statement illustrates how the myth of Tel Ḥai also reinforced the Zionist-Socialist negation of the religious tradition. Those who nurtured the myth emphasized that which was unique and new in the personalities and actions of their heroes. They were presented as the archtypes of the "new Jew" as opposed to the "traditional Jew." The story of Tel Ḥai was the expression of the revolutionary change which these heroes and those like them brought about in the values and behavior that characterized traditional Judaism. Trumpeldor was particularly suited for such a role. He was an agricultural laborer, a participant in a communal settlement and a war hero. In the Russo-Japanese War he had lost his arm. Even before his death Trumpeldor had achieved the status of a folk hero, noted for his courage. He was the first Jew to be appointed an officer in the Czarist army. He was the antithesis of the traditional Jew who went to almost any lengths to avoid Russian military service.

Comparison between the defenders of Tel Ḥai and classical Jewish martyrs led the Zionist-Socialists to invidious distinctions:

The early martyrs all sought in return for their deeds . . . a place in the world-to-come—the personal pleasure which every religious Jew feels in giving his life . . . This was not true of the martyrs of Tel Ḥai who did not sacrifice their lives for personal pleasure . . . They were not concerned with whether or not they would earn pleasure in the next world. All that mattered to them was that the Jewish people should survive and the Land of Israel be rebuilt.⁵⁵

Furthermore, unlike Jewish heroes of the past "Trumpeldor is not merely a victim, a passive hero; he is an active hero."⁵⁶ Finally, in what can only be described as the adoption of anti-semitic stereotypes, one writer contrasts Trumpeldor with traditional Jews as follows: "He had not a trace of sickliness, nervousness, impulsiveness, disquietness—qualities which characterize the Diaspora Jew."⁵⁷

The myth of Tel Ḥai also reflected a central dilemma of the *yishuv* in general and of Zionist-Socialism in particular—the belief that one can live in peace with the Arabs and the sense that the Arabs have a competing claim to the Land. (Our evidence, in the material that follows, is highly conjectural, but we believe that it has at least a certain plausibility). It is clear enough, once one thinks in archtypical terms, that blood and death confer legitimacy and that by virtue of Trumpeldor's death his spiritual heirs claim title to the Land. But title is more secure if the enemy, those who spilled my blood, are those disputing my claim. Then there is perfect symmetry. The death of Trumpeldor and his comrades in defense of their right to settle the Land confers title, whereas those who killed Trumpeldor lose their claim to that title. In the ideal legitimating myth, the enemy is particularly evil because his act delegitimizes his title. But

the Tel Hai myth is not the ideal legitimating myth because it does not firmly resolve the question—who killed Trumpeldor and his comrades. Who spilled the blood? This is an expression of the Zionist-Socialist dilemma in identifying the nature of the Arabs and hence in clarifying its own right to the Land. Zionist-Socialism laid claim to the Land of Israel, sensed that another group made a similar claim, but refused to either recognize the other group as an enemy or to legitimate its claims. Zionist-Socialism only recognized the Arab as the enemy long after the Tel Hai myth evolved, at which point the murderers of Trumpeldor were specified as Arabs but the myth itself began to lose its resonance. Until the mid-1930's Zionist-Socialist leaders denied that Jews were engaged in a national conflict with the Arabs.⁵⁸ The conflict, they believed, arose because of the British, or the wealthy Arabs, or mistaken perceptions of the Arabs whose own best interests were actually served by Zionist efforts. But if the Arabs were not the real enemy, who was? Against whom were the *halutzim* defending Tel Hai? Against whom was their claim to the Land of Israel to be asserted? It is precisely at this point that the original myth is vague, as indeed are the historical sources themselves. The myth of Tel Hai describes an archtypical enemy, superior in numbers, who nevertheless must rely on cunning and deception to overcome the courageous defenders who are only betrayed in the end by their own innocence. But the enemy is not identified with precision nor does the enemy juxtapose counterclaims to those of the defenders. In fact, the enemy does not dispute Jewish rights to Tel Hai or Kfar Giladi. The myth, therefore, lacks a certain symmetry and reflects the problematic relationship of the Zionists to the Arabs and to Arab national claims.

III. CEREMONIES AND SYMBOLS

It is easier to popularize a myth associated with a specific place around which ceremonies and rituals can be organized. Masada and Tel Hai are good examples. The statue of a roaring lion was erected at Tel Hai symbolizing the courage of the defenders and parades were held in the square in front of the statue. The eleventh of Adar was marked by pilgrimages to Tel Hai-Kfar Giladi, or for those who could not get there, to settlements closer to home.⁵⁹ Masada was the gathering site for youth movements who, following the quasi-ceremonial ascent to the summit, presented plays reciting the history of its defense.⁶⁰ The kibbutzim of the Emek (the Jezreel Valley) also gained symbolic significance as the location of a great pioneering enterprise.

Masada, Tel Hai and the Emek are natural symbols. But myths also give rise to artificial symbols, such as the statue of the lion erected at Tel Hai. Flags and uniforms are additional examples of artificial symbols.

The artificial symbol represents a value, or an idea, or an emotion, but unlike the natural symbol does not partake of it. The blue and white Zionist flag, unlike the kibbutzim of the Emek, does not constitute a part of the actual process by which Socialism and Zionism are realized.

Ceremony, in contrast to myth, is always artificial. That is, it constitutes behavior which is denotative rather than behavior which engages the participant in the realization of goals or values. According to one of the *halutzim* of the second *aliya*:

In those first years there was no need for special rituals, not on the Sabbath or other holidays. There was a festiveness in the very construction of the first cell of a new Hebrew society. There was something of the ritual in setting out at dawn to the furrows . . . No ordinary agricultural labor was being performed . . . but the holy labor of monks.⁶¹

Ceremonial behavior may also serve as symbolic compensation for a failure or inability to personally realize values with which one is identified. Adherents of the Labor Movement in urban areas made "pilgrimages" to the settlements of the Emek on Passover. According to a sympathetic newspaper report which described this phenomenon, the Emek represented a common focus of longing, a symbol of unfulfilled aspirations, of abandoned desires, of circumstances of life that were dislocated and distorted, to many visitors from the cities.⁶²

Ceremonial behavior possesses great social significance because it rallies the community around common goals and reaffirms ultimate values. In this case it also legitimated the political leadership of those who were members of kibbutzim and actually realized those values which the visitors from the cities merely affirmed symbolically.

IV. FESTIVALS AND RITUALS

The leaders of Labor Zionism recognized the importance of traditional ceremonies and holidays. According to Berl Katznelson:

The Jewish year is full of days whose depth of meaning is nowhere surpassed. Is it the interest of the Jewish labor movement to squander the forces latent in them?⁶³

Zionist-Socialist recourse to traditional holidays and to the customs and rituals associated with them was selective. Some holidays such as Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, even though they held a central position in traditional Judaism were widely ignored. This probably stemmed from the purely religious as distinct from national or agrarian elements in the holiday which imposed difficulties in adapting them to Zionist-Socialist purposes. On the other hand, holidays of secondary importance in traditional Judaism, such as Hanukkah, Tu Bishvat, or Lag Baomer

assumed greater importance. Indeed, Hanukkah was transformed into one of the central holidays of the *yishuv*.

Traditional symbols and ceremonies were transvalued in conformity with the values of Zionist-Socialism and transformed by changes in the ritual. There are a number of elements common to the transformations. The celebration was transferred from synagogue and home to a more public forum. Political leaders played a conspicuous role in the holiday ceremonies. The celebration became an occasion for the announcement of political positions on contemporary issues. In addition, monetary contributions to Labor Movement projects were solicited.

The most striking feature common to all the transformed rituals was the extensive involvement of all the participants in song and dance, which, one cannot help feel, became a functional equivalent to public prayer. Dance was particularly important in *halutz* culture. Descriptions of the pioneering life note the spirited dancing which followed a hard day's work. The literature of Zionist-Socialism elaborated and perhaps even exaggerated the importance of the dance: "without the *hora* the State of Israel would not have arisen."⁶⁴

Dance plays a major role in the rituals and ceremonies of many religions, traditional or civil. It expresses and evokes feeling of unity and solidarity. It can arouse a sense of devotion and elevation. Dance, especially when spirited and prolonged, symbolizes the ability to withstand hardship. The dance enables the participant "to draw strength for life from the faith within us"⁶⁵ according to one girl who explained why it was not cynical to dance while the Jewish people were persecuted in Europe.

The transformation and transvaluation of the holidays occurred over a long period. The early tendency was to refrain from providing a well-defined festive expression to the traditional holidays.⁶⁶ Over the course of time, even the most secular circles came to recognize the need for celebrating them in some manner.

Passover

The nationalist and socialist elements of Passover were recognized from the earliest period of Zionist-Socialism. According to Borochoy, the story of Passover demonstrates that "we are incapable of being slaves."⁶⁷ Katznelson represents Passover as a striking example of a traditional holiday which should be preserved and nurtured by the labor movement: "I know of no other single ancient memory . . . which serves as a better symbol of our present and our future than the memory of the exodus from Egypt."⁶⁸

The *seder* (plural: *sedarim*) is the festive meal traditionally eaten in a family setting that inaugurates the holiday. The *haggada* is the text read

at the *seder*. As we noted the kibbutzim produced new *haggadot* considerably different from the traditional one. At first, they were satirical parodies of the traditional *seder*.⁶⁹ Only later did the kibbutzim introduce their own *sedarim* of a serious nature with *haggadot* that were adapted to the values and way of life of the Labor Movement in the Land of Israel.

The new *haggadot* lacked a uniform format. Those of the ideologically moderate kibbutzim emphasized the nationalist, agricultural and nature aspects of Passover (the holiday of Spring). The more leftist kibbutzim stressed motifs of class and revolution. Texts changed from year to year reflecting the changing social and/or political conditions and/or new ideological perspectives.⁷⁰

Kibbutz *sedarim* were also characterized by new or revived rituals. The most prominent was the reaping of the *omer* (barley offering), an effort to revive a ceremonial from the Temple period of Jewish history. The celebrations began with a ceremony devoted to the harvesting of the first crops. Afterwards, girls from the kibbutz, with bundles of grain on their heads, would present a pageant of song and dance.⁷¹ The central portion of the *seder* was the recitation of the *haggada*. Following the meal, all the participants would dance. Many guests, including leaders of the Labor Movement, participated in the *sedarim* and in "*sedarim for the workers*" that were organized in the cities.⁷²

Shavuot (the Festival of Weeks)

The focus of the traditional holiday was the giving of the *Torah* at Mt. Sinai. Zionist-Socialists sought to "revive" the biblical motif of the offering of the *bikkurim* (first fruits). In the Talmud and the subsequent religious tradition (in other words, in the Jewish tradition of the last two thousand years), Shavuot is "the time of the giving of the *Torah*" and the traditional prayers and rituals give far less emphasis to the agricultural origins of the holiday implied in the verse from the *Torah* "thou shalt observe the feast of weeks, of the first fruits of the wheat harvest."⁷³ In Zionist-Socialism Shavuot was represented as a holiday of nature and agriculture. The new rituals also expressed the nationalist motif in the ceremonial "redemption of the land." The focus of the celebrations was the "bringing of the *bikkurim*." The first fruits of the agricultural produce were dedicated to the Jewish National Fund. They were brought in a festive procession by representatives of the different agricultural sectors of the settlement. The produce was borne in decorated baskets and presented to a representative of the Jewish National Fund. Portions of the *Torah*, once recited when Jews brought the *bikkurim* to the Temple were read. The *bikkurim* were then declared "redeemed," symbolic of the "full redemption of the Jewish people and its homeland." The representative of the Jewish National Fund would then combine the seven traditional fruits of the Land of Israel, hold it in his hand, and say:

They are the symbol of the House of Israel. One by one, the children of Israel will be gathered from the lands of dispersion and will become a single unit and a great people.⁷⁴

The ceremony was accompanied by song and dance and recitation from both traditional and modern Hebrew sources.

These ceremonies were also introduced into schools, where, as a concession to the religious teachers, the children when presenting the *bikkurim* to the Jewish National Fund representative said: "we have brought of the first fruits of our land as an offering for the redemption of Israel" instead of "as a holy offering."⁷⁵

Zionist-Socialists represented their rituals as more authentic than those of traditional Judaism:

Our holidays, which arose out of the land of Israel, were impoverished in the Diaspora . . . It is therefore our duty today, having returned to Zion . . . to renew and revive the celebration of these holidays. Indeed, the holidays of nature which had grown alien to us . . . are now striking roots in our homeland."⁷⁶

Hanukkah

While the Labor Movement, the kibbutzim in particular, initiated the "revival" of Passover and Shavuot, Hanukkah, as we noted, had already been transformed into a national holiday by the Zionist movement. Zionists of all types participated in the Hanukkah ceremonies. These included lighting of candles, special foods, speeches, songs, and parades.⁷⁷ An effort to introduce a socialist motif by describing the wars of the Maccabees as a "popular uprising" of the lower classes against the exploitation of the upper classes failed.⁷⁸

Passover and Shavuot occupied a central place in the Jewish tradition, and those who had a certain attachment to that tradition resisted radical innovations in the ritual associated with them. The ceremonies we have described were confined principally to the kibbutzim or to settlements with high concentrations of the most committed of the Zionist-Socialists. The majority of the *yishuv* shrank from initiating changes, for example, in the traditional format of the Passover *seder* which assumed a certain sanctity even to many otherwise non-observant Jews. Hanukkah held a less prominent place in the religious tradition. Furthermore, the laws pertaining to its observance were not, for the most part, as exacting and strict as the laws pertaining to other holidays. Hence, even those with a positive attitude towards the religious tradition could alter the customs related to Hanukkah or transform it from a traditional religious holiday into a purely national one without violating their sense of propriety.

In the Zionist literature and in the ceremonies conducted in honor of Hanukkah, the religious meaning of the Maccabean revolt and of

Ḥanukkah itself was ignored. The Maccabees were presented as patriots fighting for the freedom of their people from national subjugation rather than religious freedom. The miracle of the flask of oil had no place in the new interpretation of the holiday. Indeed, its central place in the traditional celebration was used to illustrate the passivity of "exilic" Jewry. The new theme of Ḥanukkah was self-redemption; the active struggle for national liberation without recourse to outside powers, be they natural or supernatural.⁷⁹ The *halutzim* were presented as the new Maccabees or as descendants of the Maccabees and those that opposed them were represented as Greeks or Hellenists. (The term Hellenist was often used in the internal struggles of the *yishuv*. It was frequently directed against anti-Zionist circles, the Communists in particular, but sometimes against the Zionist left, most notably during the period in which it leaned toward an identification with the Soviet Union.)

The heroic tales of the Maccabees were, in effect, transformed into a "revived national myth," providing symbols of identification and solidarity, granting meaning to the Zionist enterprise, and spurring the community to action. This myth was disseminated through public ceremonies held in honor of Ḥanukkah. Events such as the "kindling of the candles with great festivity, lectures and speeches held in synagogues, cultural centers, schools, and kindergartens on the freedom fight of the Maccabees" were intended, according to Dinur, the prominent Jewish historian and later Israeli Minister of Education:

to teach the people . . . how its heroes acted, . . . how a people can act if it has faith, if it has confidence, if it is ready for self-sacrifice . . . if it perseveres in its work . . . Ḥanukkah became "the holiday of the Maccabees," the Maccabees became the symbol of the generation, and Hanukkah the holiday of the generation.⁸⁰

The new Ḥanukkah celebrations also included traditional elements, such as kindling of the candles. But instead of symbolizing the miracle of the flask of oil, the candles were seen as a symbol of the light of redemption. In place of the traditional blessings, the kindling of the candles was accompanied by speeches and proclamations or songs of a national-political nature. Among the most striking of the new Ḥanukkah rituals were the pilgrimages to the birth place of the Maccabees, Modiin. A torch was lit there and carried by runners to settlements throughout the land. The participants were told that:

The torch is being lit here and carried by runners who are the great grandchildren of the Maccabees . . . not only in order to kindle the Ḥanukkah candles but also to kindle the hearts of the Jewish youth, and to give them the signal for national unity and action.⁸¹

Sukkot (The Festival of Booths)

The transformation and transvaluation of ceremonials and rituals was particularly striking in the cases of Passover, Shavuot and Ḥanukkah. Other traditional holidays, such as Sukkot or Rosh Ḥaṣhana and Yom Kippur were more often ignored rather than remolded.

Within the kibbutzim attempts were made to celebrate Sukkot as an agricultural holiday, and to infuse national elements into its celebration. In some kibbutzim, a *sukkah* (a hut or a booth) was erected in the center of the settlement. The *sukkah* was interpreted as a "symbol of the wandering of the Jews in the deserts of the world," and members of the kibbutz would gather nearby for a ceremony in which the children brought gifts for the Jewish National Fund from the produce of the kibbutz. From the roof of the *sukkah*, someone would call out: "The tabernacle of David will be rebuilt," a phrase which was then repeated by all present. In addition, those verses of the Bible which deal with the Promised Land and the blessings for its fertility were read.⁸² Sukkot and the holiday which immediately follows it, Shmini Atzeret-Simḥat Torah, were also celebrated in some kibbutzim as the "holiday of water." In the early days of the kibbutz, Sukkot was marked by a festive ceremony of drawing water from a well. In the cities, Sukkot served as an occasion for national ceremonies, such as handing over of the "flag of Jerusalem" to the school that had excelled throughout the year in Zionist activity.⁸³ However, these ceremonies never won general acceptance in the *yishuv* nor even within the kibbutz movement itself.⁸⁴

Tisha B'av (The Ninth Day of Av)

Tisha B'av raised, in an especially keen fashion, the problematical relationship of Zionist-Socialists to the most sacred of all Jewish places: the Western (Wailing) Wall, all that remains of the First and Second Temples. The Western Wall has special associations with Tisha B'av and traditional Jews gather there on this day. The Western Wall was a reminder of the period of Jewish statehood and a symbol of the "heroic" war which the Jewish rebels waged against the Romans—a symbol with which Zionist-Socialists could identify. But, the weeping, fasting and lamentations associated with Tisha B'av were a contrast to Zionist-Socialist values, as was the resignation, passivity, and the awaiting of Divine salvation, which the Wall also symbolized. One of the early leaders and heroic figures of the Labor Movement, Rachel Yanait Ben-Zvi (1886-1978), wife of the second President of the State, related that, when she approached the Wall:

. . . a desire to cry out to the Wall in protest against the weeping arose within me . . . to cry out against the unfortunate verdict of fate: no longer will we live in the land of destruction, we will rebuild the ruins and regenerate our land.⁸⁵

In a play presented to children who had survived the Holocaust, one group of Zionist-Socialist youth leaders portrayed Jews mourning the destruction of the Temple, while a second group portrayed *halutzim* who declared, "the house of Israel will be rebuilt with bricks, not with prayers and mourning."⁸⁶

The Sabbath

The Sabbath also proved problematic for Zionist-Socialism. All agreed that the Sabbath should be the weekly day of rest and the leaders of the Labor Movement recognized its social importance. However, some worked for reasons of collective convenience or economic efficiency. Various attempts were made to endow the Sabbath with a festive character through celebrations of one form or another, or festive dress and meals, particularly in the kibbutzim. Zionist-Socialism succeeded in retaining the sense of the Sabbath as a special day, perhaps because it was so deeply embedded in the tradition, perhaps because it was uniformly accepted as a day of rest, but it did not succeed in imparting its own flavor to the day or in recapturing the dimension of holiness which characterizes the day in the religious tradition.⁸⁷

NEW HOLIDAYS

Until the establishment of the State, no new holidays, in the fullest sense of the word, were created by the *yishuv*. However, several days of remembrance were inaugurated, the most prominent of which was Tel Ḥai Day (celebrated on the eleventh of Adar) marking the revival of heroism and pioneering in Israel. Less successful efforts were made to mark off other days: Balfour Declaration Day on November 2, the death of Herzl on the twentieth of Tamuz, or Histadrut Day during Ḥanukkah. The only holiday that had no roots in the Jewish or Zionist tradition was May Day.

May Day

Ber Borochov believed that May Day proved that man could free himself from his dependence on divine powers and still endow his life with meaning and content. The liberation from religion, he felt, must be complete:

... not only in our daily lives, not only in the realm of pure science, but also in our great longings and ideals ... in abolishing religious belief ... we did not strip man of his higher feelings ... and we did not impoverish the meaning of beauty ... We found within ourselves enough inspiration to create new celebrations, to form new ideals.⁸⁸

Proletarian holidays express the change which has occurred in man's relation to the divine, according to Borochof, for they undermine the distinction "between heavenly and mundane, between sacred and secular" on which the traditional holidays are based.⁸⁹ Borochof implies that Socialism provides an alternative to traditional religion: Socialism is:

a total worldview that provides a solution for the most profound gropings and quests of man's spirit ... and the foremost advantage and strength of Socialism lies in the fact that it puts an end to all religious quests. For, through human, worldly means, it fulfills all those spiritual needs whose fulfillment religious faith sought to find in God.⁹⁰

Borochof notes that the bourgeoisie also substituted religious reliance on the divine with secular celebrations such as Independence days. But unlike Socialism, they have no substitute for the sense of hope or a goal toward which one can struggle, that traditional religion provided. Hence, he claimed, only Socialism can successfully abolish religion, and May Day is the beginning of just such an effort.⁹¹

Unlike the Jewish holidays which Zionist-Socialism had to reconstruct, the format of May Day was "ready made." The central symbols and rituals of the holiday—the red flag, the parades, the slogans and proclamations, the singing of the "International"—all were drawn from May Day celebrations in other countries. However, the Labor Zionists added nationalist symbols. The blue and white Zionist flag was displayed together with the red flag, national slogans were added to class slogans, and both the national and Labor Zionist anthems were sung together with the International.⁹²

May Day was a controversial holiday from the very outset. Hapoel Hatzair opposed its celebration which they termed an "alien graft" that had no place among the holidays of Israel. Following their merger with Ahdut Haavoda in 1930, May Day became the holiday of the entire Labor Movement. But the civil and religious camps were most uncomfortable with May Day celebrations and the Revisionists bitterly denounced them. Whereas the "revived" holidays of Zionist-Socialism led to a national integration of most sectors of the *yishuv*, May Day served to integrate the Zionist-Socialist sub-community alone.

The major feature of the May Day celebration was its mass nature. The huge parade demonstrated the strength of the Labor Movement and encouraged its supporters to take an active part in the achievement of its goals.

The most direct form of political mobilization is through speeches and declarations. However, when the goal is to attract a wider public, visual symbols and ceremonies, or simple and comprehensive slogans are more effective. Speeches did indeed occupy an important place in May Day rallies. However, these rallies also included programs of entertainment—song and dance, readings, dramatizations and gymnastic exercises. The gatherings opened with the hoisting of flags and the singing of appropriate songs, and included ceremonies evoking the memory of the fathers of the Labor Zionist movement and of those who fell in the struggles of the international labor movement.

As a factor in political consolidation and mobilization parades are even more effective than gatherings. The “display of power” is most evident in a parade, which also provides the supporters of a movement with an opportunity for active participation. May Day parades, in which tens of thousands of people participated, were held in most cities and towns throughout Israel to express “the solidarity of the working class.” Paradoxically, various labor parties could not always agree on joint parades because of differences of opinion or the wording of slogans.

The hegemony of the Labor Movement in the *yishuv* was reflected in the virtually total cessation of the economy on May Day. The only newspapers to appear were those published by the religious or Revisionist camps. In the major cities public transportation shut down for part of the day. Schools under Labor Movement auspices were closed and in many other educational institutions the absence of many teachers and students made regular classes impossible.

Nevertheless, May Day never played the role Borochov ascribed to it. It is significant that despite the social and political significance of the holiday it never assumed the kind of existential personal meaning, nor did the Zionist-Socialist elite really seek to infuse it with a kind of meaning that would allow it to substitute for traditional religious holidays. They devoted greater cultural-creative effort to the transformation and transvaluation of the traditional holidays.

CONCLUSIONS

The major symbols of Zionist-Socialism, its myths and ceremonies, were laden with traditional motifs and representations. Those symbols which were borrowed, in toto, from outside the tradition, proved to be ephemeral. The traditional Jewish symbols underwent transformation and transvaluation to suit them to the values of Zionist-Socialism. But the retention of traditional forms, however new the content, serves to legitimate traditional symbols which may result in their continued

vitality. Moreover, in the case of Zionist-Socialism's own subsequent transformation, they can help bridge the movement, at least for some, back towards the tradition.

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NOTES

1. The present paper draws upon a forthcoming book by Charles S. Liebman and Eliezer Don-Yehiya, *The Civil Religion of Israel: Traditional Judaism and Political Culture in the Jewish State*. We are grateful to the Israel Foundation for support.

2. On the *yishuv* as a socio-political system, see Dan Horowitz and Moshe Lissak, *The Origins of the Israeli Polity* (Chicago, 1978) and Benjamin Eliav (ed.), *The Jewish National Home* (Jerusalem, 1976) [in Hebrew]; the section by Eliakim Rubinstein "From Yishuv to State: Institutions and Parties" is of special interest. For a general history in English which includes a description of the five *aliyot* (sing.: *aliya*), the different immigrant periods of the *yishuv*, see Howard Sachar, *A History of Israel* (New York, 1976).

3. *Numbers*, 32:20ff.

4. Avshalom Reich, *Changes and Developments in the Passover Haggadot of the Kibbutz Movement* (Austin, unpublished doctoral dissertation, 1972), p. 215. Reich's appendix includes many illustrations from texts of *haggadot* (to be described below) and we have relied on his study for many of our examples.

5. On the Jewish enlightenment, see Yehezkel Kaufman, *Diaspora and Alienation*, Vol. 2 (Tel Aviv, 1932), [in Hebrew]. The English language literature on the Eastern European *haskala* which is of special relevance to the development of Zionism and Zionist thought is quite sparse, especially when contrasted to the literature of the *haskala* in Central and Western Europe. The classic study is Simon Dubnov, *History of the Jews in Russia and Poland*, Vol. 2 (Philadelphia, trans. Israel Friedlander, 1918). See also, Raphael Mahler, *A History of Modern Jewry 1780-1815* (New York, 1972), pp. 536-601, and Howard Sacher, *The Course of Modern Jewish History* (Cleveland, 1958), pp. 198-220.

6. Avraham Zeitlin, *State and Vision of State* (Tel Aviv, 1956), pp. 77-88 [in Hebrew].

7. Reich, *op. cit.*, p. 216.

8. A(haron) Gordon, *The Nation and the Labor* (Jerusalem, 1952), p. 126 [in Hebrew].

9. *Deuteronomy*, 30:15.

10. Even-Shoshan, *The History of the Labor Movement in the Land of Israel* (Tel Aviv, 1969), p. 424 [in Hebrew].

11. Yaacov Fichman, "The Soil Educates," *Davar*, April 20, 1932, [in Hebrew].

12. Amos Elon, *The Israelis: Founders and Sons* (New York, 1971), pp. 142-143.

13. Gideon Ofrat, *Land, Man, Blood: The Myth of the Halutz and the Ritual of the Land in the Settlement Camps* (Tel Aviv, 1980), p. 79 [in Hebrew].

14. *Ibid.*, p. 26.

15. Reich, *op. cit.*, p. 249.

16. Yonina Talmon-Gerber, *Individual and Society in the Kibbutz* (Jerusalem, 1970), p. 223 [in Hebrew].
17. *Ibid.*, p. 224.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 225.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 226.
20. Uri Milstein, *By Blood and Fire Judea* (Tel Aviv, 1973), pp. 47-48 [in Hebrew].
21. Reich, *op. cit.*, p. 226.
22. Gordon, *op. cit.*, p. 215.
23. There is a formidable literature in Hebrew on the formation of Mapai and its predecessor parties in the *yishuv* period. Fortunately, two of the best books on the topic have been translated into English. They are: Horowitz and Lissak, *op. cit.* and Yonathan Shapiro, *The Formative Years of the Israeli Labour Party* (Beverly Hills, 1976).
24. The topic of the attitude of early Zionist immigrants toward religion is the subject of David Knaani, *The Second Worker Aliya and its Attitude Toward Religion and Tradition* (Tel Aviv, 1976) [in Hebrew]. See also, Muky Tzur, *Doing it the Hard Way* (Tel Aviv, 1976) [in Hebrew].
25. Knaani, *op. cit.*, pp. 65-70.
26. Berl Katznelson and Yehuda Kaufman (eds.), *The Writings of Nachman Syrkin* (Tel Aviv, 1939), p. 75 [in Hebrew]
27. Tzur, *op. cit.*, pp. 96-97.
28. Knaani, *op. cit.*, pp. 89-92.
29. Ber Borochoy, *Writings*, Vol. 3 (Tel Aviv, 1960), p. 334 [in Hebrew].
30. Reich, *op. cit.*, p. 234.
31. *Ibid.*
32. *Ibid.*, po. 304.
33. Baruch Kurzweil, *Our New Literature: Continuity or Revolution?* (Jerusalem, 1965) [in Hebrew]; Raphael Weiss, "From Holy to Profane," *L'shonenu L'am* No. 271 (1977), [in Hebrew].
34. Reich, *op. cit.*, p. 234.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 395.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 199.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 387.
38. Moshe Braslavsky, *The Workers' Movement in the Land of Israel* (Tel Aviv, 1959), p. 263 [in Hebrew].
39. *Education in Israel* (Jerusalem, 1973), p. 22 [in Hebrew].
40. Eliyahu Biletzky, *Solel Boneh* (Tel Aviv, 1975), p. 64 [in Hebrew].
41. Reich, *op. cit.*, p. 197.
42. Ofrat, *op. cit.*, p. 81.
43. Simon Rawidowicz, *Babylonia and Jerusalem*, Vol. 2 (London, 1975), pp. 572 ff. It seems to us, however, that contemporary proponents of Zionist-Socialism tend to exaggerate the parallels and blur the contrasts between Zionist-Socialism and traditional Judaism. See, for example, Tzur, *op. cit.*, pp. 95-104, or Alexander Barzel, "Judaism as a *Weltanschauung* and its Expression in the Labor Movement," *Kivunim* (May, 1980), pp. 87-106 [in Hebrew].
44. Yizhak Lamdan, *Masada, Shirim*, Vol. 1 (Jerusalem, 1973). pp. 27-75, [in Hebrew].

45. *Encyclopedia Judaica*, Vol. 10, p. 1363.

46. Lamdan, *op. cit.*, p. 61.

47. *Ibid.*, p. 64.

48. On the problems of loneliness, depression and suicide among the *ḥalutzim*, see Tzur, *op. cit.*, pp. 27-44.

49. A deliberate effort to demythologize the story is the recent study by Nakdimon Rogel, *Tel Hai* (Tel Aviv, 1979) [in Hebrew]. The book was received with interest and generated a rather limited controversy suggesting how much resonance the myth has lost in recent years.

50. The citations that follow, unless otherwise noted, are from a variety of Hebrew writers (in this case from the pen of Moshe Glickson) found in Gershon Rivlin (ed.), *The Legacy of Tel Hai* (Tel Aviv, 1970), p. 13 [in Hebrew].

51. *Ibid.*, p. 136.

52. *Ibid.*, pp. 132, 140.

53. Quoted in Even Shoshan, Vol. 1, *op. cit.*, p. 341.

54. Rivlin, *op. cit.*, p. 142.

55. *Ibid.*, pp. 136-137.

56. *Ibid.*, p. 177.

57. *Ibid.*

58. Gideon Ofrat, "The Arab in Israeli Drama," *The Jerusalem Quarterly*, (Spring, 1979), pp. 70-92, notes that prior to the period of direct conflict between Jews and Arabs, a romantic conception of Arabs prevailed in much Hebrew writing. The Arab was seen in specific, individual terms and not in general abstract terms. Ofrat, however, finds this true until the establishment of the State rather than the mid-1930's. Ehud Ben-Ezer, "War and Siege in Hebrew Literature After 1967," *The Jerusalem Quarterly* (Fall, 1978), pp. 20-37, also notes that the pre-1948 literature depicts the Arabs between poles of bitter reality and romanticism which refuses to view them as an entity. According to our thesis, this should have changed by the late 1930s.

59. *Davar*, March 20, 1932.

60. *Ibid.*, Dec. 16, 1942; Feb. 21, 1943.

61. Ofrat, *Land, Man, Blood*, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

62. *Davar*, April 27, 1932.

63. Berl Katznelson, *Writings*, Vol. 6 (Tel Aviv, 1947), p. 391 [in Hebrew].

64. *Report on the Education in Immigrant Camps* (Jerusalem, The Knesset, May 9, 1950), pp. 79-80 [in Hebrew].

65. Bracha Ḥabas (ed.) *The Book of Aliyat Hanoar* (Jerusalem, 1941), p. 410 [in Hebrew].

66. Knaani, *op. cit.*, pp. 99-104.

67. Ber Borochoy, *op. cit.*, Vol. 3, p. 330.

68. Katznelson, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

69. Reich, *op. cit.*, pp. 5-6.

70. *Ibid.*, pp. 92-188.

71. M. Amitai, "Ma Nishtana on the Kibbutz," in Yom Tov Levinski (ed.), *The Book of Festivals*, Vol. 2 (Tel Aviv, 1956), pp. 465-466 [in Hebrew]. See also the articles by A. Talmi, pp. 466-468 and Sh. Reichenstein, pp. 468-469.

72. Daniel Persky, "A Passover Seder for Workers in Tel Aviv," *Ibid.*, pp. 469-470.

73. *Exodus*, 34:22.
74. On the Shavuot ceremonies in the kibbutzim, see N. Benari, "The *Bikkurim* Ceremony in the Collective Settlements," Y.T. Levinski (ed.), *op. cit.*, Vol. 3, pp. 209-211.
75. B. Ben-Yehuda, "The Holiday in Memory of the Bringing of the *Bikkurim*," *ibid.*, p. 202.
76. Moshe Gorarli, "The Holiday of the *Bikkurim* in the Tones of the Homeland," *ibid.*, p. 220.
77. Joseph Klausner, "Hanukkah" A Symbol and a Warning," *Ibid.*, Vol. 5, p. 191.
78. Knaani, *op. cit.*, p. 101.
79. Benzion Dinur, "The Holiday of Hasmoneans," Levinski (ed.), *op. cit.*, Vol. 5, p. 197.
80. *Ibid.*
81. "Carrying the Torch from Modiin," *Ibid.*, p. 212.
82. N. Benari and N. Nisimov, "Sukkot in the Collective Settlement," *ibid.*, Vol. 4, pp. 304-305.
83. B. Ben-Yehuda, "The Tradition of the Flag of Jerusalem on Sukkot," *ibid.*, pp. 306-307.
84. N. Benari, *Sabbath and Festival* (Tel Aviv, 1946), p. 33 [in Hebrew].
85. Quoted in Menachem Friedman, *Society and Religion: The Non-Zionist Orthodox in the Land of Israel* (Jerusalem, 1977), p. 299 [in Hebrew].
86. Moshe Sheinfeld, *The Children of Teheran Accuse* (Jerusalem, 1943), p. 15 [in Hebrew]. For a positive, though atypical, attitude toward *Tisha B'av* among the leading Zionist-Socialists, see Katznelson, *op. cit.*, pp. 366, 393.
87. N. Benari, *op. cit.*, p. 50.
88. Borochoy, *op. cit.*, p. 323.
89. *Ibid.*
90. *Ibid.*
91. *Ibid.*, p. 324.
92. Our discussion of May Day celebrations relies on a seminar paper by Ruth Movshowitz submitted to the Department of Political Studies of Bar-Ilan University in 1976.