ISRAEL

A HISTORY

19 THE DECADE OF HOPE, 1990–2000

The fascinating events of history do not divide equally into decades. Some decades are unexciting, with very few noteworthy occurrences, while in others unexpected events come fast and furious, one on the heels of another. They change reality and establish a new world scene that could not have been predicted a few years earlier. The 1990s was such a decade.

The first reality-shaping event was the collapse of the USSR. In 1989 Russian head of state Mikhail Gorbachev's new policy ending confrontation between East and West changed the paradigm of international relations. This sudden reversal on the threshold of the 1990s marked the end of the post–World War Two era, in which Europe was divided between the two blocs and the Cold War shaped the international system. The USSR's hostility toward Israel and its firm alliance with the radical Arab states, demonstrated by arms supply and constant support in the UN, was over the years a permanent feature of international relations in the Middle East. Egypt had been outside the Soviet sphere of influence since 1972. But Syria, the terror organizations, and Iraq enjoyed almost unqualified support both from the Soviets and from the Communist bloc Eastern European countries loyal to Moscow's political line.

The USSR's meltdown created a new political reality in the Middle East. The patron of the anti-West "confrontation states" renounced confrontation and displayed openness to a new alignment of forces. This meant no more unlimited arms supply and no more political support for countries hostile to the West. One of Gorbachev's first acts, in 1989, was to change Russia's emigration policy. Russian Jews could now leave the country. In the early 1990s some 800,000 immigrants reached Israel. For Israel this mass aliya was a source of great optimism, hope for social and political renewal, and economic growth. But it dealt a harsh blow to the confrontation states and the terror organizations and their hopes of wearing Israel down.

In August 1990 President Saddam Hussein of Iraq invaded and occupied Kuwait, a country that controlled major oil resources and was of immense strategic value to the West. The invasion of this small Persian Gulf country boded ill for the other oil emirates in the Gulf, and even for Saudi Arabia. The industrialized world's dependence on Middle Eastern oil required that it respond to Saddam Hussein's arbitrary act, which threatened not only oil supplies to the industrialized West but also the entire Middle Eastern political order. US president George H. W. Bush exploited the fortuitous political constellation created by the

absence of East-West confrontation to form a war coalition to liberate Kuwait. The Arab states were invited to join. There had been hostility between Egypt and Syria since the signing of the Camp David Accords, which Syria viewed as a betrayal of the Arab front against Israel. Now the Syrians found themselves in the same camp that the Egyptians had once occupied. The disintegration of the USSR placed Syria in a position in which it needed American support. Its participation in the coalition against Saddam Hussein signaled its interest in moving closer to the only remaining superpower, as well as its fears of Iraq becoming too powerful and threatening Syria's eastern border.

By contrast, the Palestinians stood by the PLO-supported Saddam Hussein, whom they saw as the strongman challenging the West and the existing political order. Not only did the PLO openly support Iraq; so did the West Bank and Gaza Palestinians, as well as Palestinians who worked in the Gulf states and had lived there for many years. In fact, as we saw, the Palestinians in Kuwait collaborated with the Iraqi invader, resulting in the deportation of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians from the Gulf states after Kuwait was liberated. King Hussein of Jordan, who found himself between the Iraqi Scylla and the Palestinian Charybdis, expressed tentative support for Saddam Hussein and did not support the Western coalition.

Saddam Hussein announced that should the Americans take action against him, he would retaliate by launching missiles at Israel. In turn Israel readied itself for the possibility that the Iraqi missiles would carry chemical warheads, for the Iraqis had used poison gas in the Iran-Iraq War in the 1980s. Thus "the sealed room" entered the Israeli lexicon. The population was instructed to completely seal a room in the house, equip it with water, a radio, and a telephone, and on hearing the air raid siren shut themselves inside and put on their gas masks. This was a complete change in the rules of behavior from previous wars, when the ground-floor shelter or the basement was the preferred option. The sealed room, or what is now known as the *mamad* (an acronym for "protected home space"), was designed to meet the need to take shelter quickly from missiles. In January 1991 the coalition countries launched their attack on Iraq, and missiles began falling on Israel. Close to forty hit, but they were conventional missiles; the feared chemical warheads did not appear. Fortunately the missiles were not accurate, and quite miraculously there were very few casualties, although there was extensive damage to buildings.

The government of Israel, headed by Yitzhak Shamir, was in a dilemma. The Israeli ethos required that an attack on Israeli citizens must receive an Israeli military response. However, the United States warned Israel not to interfere, since the fragile coalition was likely to fall apart if the Israelis became involved. There was also the question of what form of response Israel could make. With all

the might of the United States deployed against Iraq, an Israeli air strike would likely not make much of an impression, and the risks were very great. To persuade Israel not to retaliate, the Americans supplied it with Patriot surface-to-air missiles to intercept the Iraqi Scuds. It is doubtful that this weapons system provided an effective response to the Scuds, which stopped hitting Israeli cities once coalition forces occupied their launch sites. But this display of American support was highly significant for public morale. Nevertheless some ministers and the army's senior officers found it hard to accept being passive, which seemed like a return to pre-Zionism and prestate Diaspora behavior patterns. The left-leaning literary critic Dan Miron published an article titled "And if There Is an IDF—Let It Appear Immediately" (a paraphrase of one of Bialik's poems of rage) protesting acceptance of the Iraqi attack without Israeli retaliation.[1] But this was Yitzhak Shamir's finest hour. This veteran Lehi fighter and former Mossad operative remained unmoved by calls for Israeli action, and decided that under the circumstances the government should adhere to the principle of restraint.

The Gulf War exposed the Israeli home front's wartime vulnerability. The citizens of Israel had not endured aerial attack since the 1948 war. Now, with the advent of modern weaponry, the home front was exposed. Some Israelis reacted to the missile attacks by leaving greater Tel Aviv for distant Eilat or even Jerusalem, which was thought to be immune from Saddam's missile attacks. Hotels in the areas out of missile range enjoyed full occupancy. But most people were either unable to leave or did not want to, and continued their daily routine as best they could.

The fall of the Berlin Wall on November 9, 1989, ushered in a new era in European history. The Eastern and Central European countries freed themselves from the yoke of their communist regimes and embarked on the road to a free market and an open society. As part of their new orientation, they also formed cordial relations with Israel, especially the countries that swiftly adopted democracy, such as the Czech Republic and Poland. The United States became the world's only superpower. Its impressive victory over Saddam Hussein and liberation of Kuwait boosted its standing in the Arab world. The countries that had not supported it were now at a disadvantage. Having backed the wrong side in the Gulf War, the PLO was more vulnerable than ever. The Israelis never forgave the Palestinians for dancing on their rooftops as Saddam's missiles hurtled above on their way to Tel Aviv. But the general international atmosphere was one of conciliation and goodwill. Amid this unique situation the United States initiated the Madrid Conference. "If there was to be an American moment in the Middle East, this was surely it," said Aaron David Miller, a member of the US State Department negotiating team for peace in the Middle East.[2]

The idea was to hold an international conference under the joint auspices of the United States and Russia, attended by the Arab states, Israel, the UN, and the European Community. The goal was to develop measures to move toward negotiations on Middle East issues. Traditionally Israel was suspicious of such international conferences, which it saw as a means of exerting pressure on it, and demanded instead bilateral negotiations with the Arab states. To overcome this reluctance, it was decided in advance that the Madrid Conference would be solely a ceremonial prelude leading to direct negotiations between Israel and the Arabs. Israel opposed the participation of an official Palestinian delegation, and even more participation by the PLO, which the Israelis had defined as a terrorist organization; Israeli law at the time prohibited holding talks with it. After pressure was exerted on both Jews and Arabs by US secretary of state James Baker, a compromise was reached: there would be no separate Palestinian delegation, but Palestinians from the West Bank would be part of the Jordanian delegation. It was clear to all the parties that the PLO leadership in Tunisia would be pulling the delegation's strings. The result was that unofficially, under the guise created by the Jordanian delegation, Palestinians and Israelis sat around a negotiating table together for the first time.

King Hussein, who wanted reconciliation with the United States after his questionable behavior during the Gulf War, was eager to join the conference. He had maintained contact with Israeli politicians for years, and thus saw no reason to boycott negotiations with Israel. The hard nut to crack was Syria, which under Hafez al-Assad was the most intransigent country, unwilling to recognize Israel, sign agreements with it (the Syrians even evaded signing the 1974 interim agreement), or shake the hand of an Israeli statesman. Kissinger had commented in the past that it was impossible to make war in the Middle East without Egypt, and impossible to make peace without Syria. Thus Syria's appearance at the conference was of particular importance. Its participation in the Gulf War on America's side heralded a real change in its policy. Syria needed both Saudi money, which it received after the war, and American political support.

Mollifying both Syria and Israel required diplomacy and verbal acrobatics. The basis for the Madrid negotiations was UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338. The Syrians interpreted Resolution 242 to mean that Israel's complete withdrawal from territories it had occupied must precede any negotiations. Israeli prime minister and Likud leader Yitzhak Shamir held fast to the "not one inch" policy, and with respect to peace, he demanded "peace in exchange for peace." He therefore vehemently opposed the principle of "territory in exchange for peace" that formed the basis of Resolution 242. These words were omitted from his invitation to the Madrid Conference, but appeared in the one sent to the Arab states. It is therefore hard to say that the solemn gathering in Madrid bore a

message of peace on its wings. Nevertheless the very fact that Israelis, Syrians, and Palestinians attended was certainly revolutionary. Dennis Ross, the White House Middle East peace envoy, wrote: "Prior to the Madrid peace conference, the question was: Could negotiations ever take place? Afterward, it was: Could the negotiations ever produce peace?"[3]

Elections were held in Israel in June 1992. The electorate was tired of the right's government. Corruption scandals overshadowed its last years, as summarized by the left's election slogan, "Corrupt Politicians—Out!" Beyond this, the spirit of the time, as noted, was one of conciliation and consultation. Catholics and Protestants held talks in Northern Ireland; in South Africa the white minority relinquished its control of the government and opened the door to democracy. The effect of the zeitgeist was reinforced by perceptions of the national interest. Because of the Shamir government's stubborn opposition to negotiations with the Arab states and the Palestinians, and its refusal to stop building settlements—or even to report on this building to the Americans as it had promised to do—the Bush administration decided to delay granting guarantees in the sum of $10 billion that Israel needed to secure loans to absorb the mass immigration from the former Soviet Union. Shamir enlisted the help of the Jewish lobby in the US Congress, but in vain. Congress accepted the administration's policy, and Israel could not change the White House stance.

It is impossible to estimate how much the US loan guarantee issue affected Israeli voters, but it probably did have some effect. Worsening relations with the United States, the continuing Intifada, the Gulf War, and the "sealed room" all made Israelis long for a different policy. Yitzhak Rabin, the Labor Party's candidate for prime minister, promised in his campaign that—in contrast with the government's political stagnation—he would reach an agreement on autonomy with the Palestinians within six to nine months. Although unrealistic, this promise marked a change in Israel's political line. It was a commitment to a policy that would strive to reach a political arrangement with the Palestinians. However, Rabin announced when campaigning in the Golan Heights that he was not contemplating withdrawal from that area. This commitment would return to haunt him.

The Labor Party led by Rabin won forty-four seats and the Likud thirty-two. Meretz (a far left-wing Zionist party) won twelve seats, and Shas won six. With the help of the Arab lists, which won a total of five seats, the left had a majority bloc in the Knesset. A coalition was formed comprising Labor, Meretz, and Shas, with the support of the Arab factions. This coalition was shaky from the outset, and as the Rabin government made far-reaching decisions on the peace process, its flimsy majority in the Knesset evaporated. Despite the Rabin government's relatively weak political base, it was one of the most important governments since the establishment of the state. Rabin was returning to the premiership

fifteen years after his first term, at which time he had been a relatively young, politically inexperienced prime minister. Now he was back at the top after a prolonged tenure as minister of defense, a post in which he gained both experience and prestige. To the Israeli public he was "Mr. Security," the man who knew how to protect Israeli interests and could be trusted to make the right decisions on security. Public trust in Rabin's personality, his integrity, his undiplomatic propensity to speak the truth, and even his appealing shyness was a political asset of the first order that served him well in the difficult times ahead. Rabin in his second term was self-confident and committed to making a change. "I shall navigate," he asserted in his victory speech, projecting to the public the feeling that this time he really did intend to lead.

THE PEACE PROCESS

Rabin set as his objectives changing Israel's national agenda and kick-starting the peace process. Although not convinced that peace was within reach, he was prepared to examine the possibilities. In his first meeting with the newly elected American president, Bill Clinton, the two men found a common language and instinctive mutual trust. Rabin told the president of his intentions, and Clinton promised to help him reduce the inherent risks. Two avenues of action were open to Rabin: negotiations with President Assad of Syria or negotiations with the Palestinians. A peace treaty with Syria held solid strategic advantages: if Syria were outside the circle of hostility, the rejectionist front would collapse, the terror organizations in Damascus would have to find a new patron, the possibility of a Syrian-Iraqi alliance would fade, and the road to an agreement, even a peace treaty with Lebanon, would open.

Such a move would considerably strengthen American policy in the region against Iraq and Iran, the West's two enemies, and favor Egypt, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia. But Israel would have to pay a high price: withdrawal from the Golan Heights, evacuation of settlements, and the need to convince the Israeli public that this measure did not pose unreasonable risks to Israel's security. The Golan Heights border had been quiet since 1974, and given the price of peace with Syria, most Israelis preferred continuing the "no peace, no war" situation, even though it meant continued clashes with Hezbollah in Lebanon. On the other hand, reaching an agreement with the Palestinians would address the painful core of the Israeli-Arab conflict—its initial cause—and would likely change the relations between Israel and the Arab world. International criticism of Israel focused on its relations with the Palestinians. Rectifying these relations would bring about a dramatic change in Israel's international standing. An agreement with the Palestinians would require mutual recognitions. Israel would recognize the Palestinians' national rights and the PLO as their representative, and the

Palestinians would recognize the State of Israel as a fact of life. Both sides would commit themselves to peaceful relations. The Palestinians would have to renounce violence and terror and amend the Palestinian Covenant to align with an era of peace. The question was whether such an agreement was achievable and what its price would be.

Rabin stipulated several preconditions to such an agreement. To begin with, it must be implemented gradually, along the lines of the Camp David Accords. The initial agreement would not touch upon the issues of Jerusalem and the settlements. Responsibility for security would remain in Israel's hands. The issue at hand was Palestinian autonomy, and in the meantime the sovereignty issue would remain ambiguous. All the knotty problems would be left for discussion in the framework of the permanent status agreement; negotiations on that agreement would begin three years after the first agreement was signed and be concluded within two years. The breakthrough in the first agreement would come with mutual Israeli and Palestinian recognition and Israel's willingness to recognize Arafat and the PLO as partners in governing Judea and Samaria. This agreement would put an end to the Intifada, reduce the level of hostility between Israel and the Palestinians, and enable Israel to gradually disengage from the Palestinians. Relations between the two nations in such a small country required partition and establishing two separate entities that would eventually become two states. The Israelis feared that without separation a binational state would be established, which would spell the end of the Jewish state. The Palestinians saw a state of their own both as the focal point of national identity and as compensation for loss of the Palestinian entity after the 1948 war.

Rabin deliberated between the Syrian and Palestinian options, assuming that he would be unable to push through two such far-reaching agreements in his present term of office. The Americans were also divided on priorities. President Clinton, Secretary of State Warren Christopher, and Dennis Ross, along with Martin Indyk and other members of the peace negotiations team thought the Syrian option had more plausibility and more chance of success. Aaron David Miller and Daniel Kurtzer, also on the team, preferred the Palestinian option. Rabin thought there was a better chance of rapidly reaching an agreement with the Syrians and therefore prioritized this option. In 1993 he entrusted Warren Christopher with a "pledge" of hypothetical agreement to a complete Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights in exchange for a peace and security "package" from Assad: security arrangements on the Golan Heights, including an Israeli early warning station, demilitarization of the area, redeployment of the Syrian army to the outskirts of Damascus, and a deal on water. He also made several other demands. The agreement between Israel and Syria must be bilateral and not conditional on other agreements between Israel and the Arabs, and the

peace should be real peace, including normalization of relations, exchange of ambassadors, and open borders. Finally the withdrawal had to be implemented in three stages over five years, with normalization commencing after completion of the first stage. Evacuation of the settlements would take place in the final stage.

To a great extent Rabin tailored his demands to the terms of the Camp David Accords between Israel and Egypt. But Assad was not Sadat; he did not have Sadat's willingness to take dramatic steps, demonstrate magnanimity, and make grand gestures, and he vehemently opposed the Camp David Accords. Meanwhile more than ten years had elapsed since they were signed. According to Assad's American interlocutors, he found it difficult to accept that his achievements in an agreement with Israel, coming more than a decade later, would not outdo Sadat's. During the negotiations in Washington he therefore haggled over every point. He refused to take even one small step toward Sadat's brand of open diplomacy in order to convince the Israeli public that his intentions were serious and that withdrawal from the Golan Heights would not endanger Israel's security. He was not satisfied with an Israeli withdrawal to the international border, as had been agreed with Egypt, but demanded "the June 4, 1967, borders." In the early 1950s the Syrians had taken the El-Hamma area, which according to the 1949 armistice agreement was Israeli territory, and also the northeastern corner of the Sea of Galilee, even though the agreement made the entire Sea of Galilee and a ten-meter strip of its eastern shore Israeli territory. Assad demanded an unconditional Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights, claiming that it had been occupied by force of arms. But he would not apply the same logic to the Israeli territory conquered by Syria before June 4, 1967.

Assad assumed that his willingness to accept Israel's existence and renounce war against it was a large enough concession to the Israelis and it was his right to receive the Golan Heights in return. But the Israelis would not concede this strategic asset without guarantees of the Syrians' peaceful intentions. Despite the intransigent negotiating style of Assad and his representatives, the American negotiators were optimistic; they interpreted Assad's responses as hard bargaining positions that were nevertheless accompanied by willingness to ultimately reach a peace agreement. Rabin, however, thought that Assad's negotiating style was leading to an impasse, and in any event did not herald a breakthrough in the near future. Assad and his representatives would not accept direct negotiations with Israel, but instead demanded an American presence and mediation. This left room for an assumption that what the Syrians actually wanted was American support, and they had entered the negotiations for this reason, with no intention of concluding them with a peace agreement.

Rabin and Foreign Minister Peres had divided up the negotiating responsibili-

ties. Peres was in charge of the multilateral negotiations that were a continuation of the Madrid Conference, and Rabin led the Syrian negotiations. The negotiations with the Palestinians in Washington, which lay at the heart of the multilateral negotiations, led nowhere. At the same time, a pair of Israeli academics was holding informal but top-secret talks with PLO representatives in Oslo. These talks were more positive. They were informal and nonbinding, but it was clear that both sides were reporting back to leading figures in their respective political systems and receiving their approval for proposals on the negotiating table. Peres updated Rabin on the progress of these talks and was given his blessing to continue the contacts, held under the auspices of the Norwegian government. Once these negotiations made some progress, Uri Savir, director general of the Israeli Foreign Ministry, was dispatched to conduct the talks. His presence marked a shift from unofficial to official talks.

As at the Camp David talks, in Oslo, too, the guiding principle was gradual development. The negotiators' basic premise was that at this stage a final status agreement was unachievable. Thus the first stage should set a time after which final status negotiations would begin. In the meantime the trust so vital to such an agreement must be established through mutual recognition, developing cooperation on security, and establishing an autonomous Palestinian governance institution, the Palestinian Authority (PA), which would gradually be given control. Following a "declaration of principles," whose effect would be enhanced by the public drama attending this mutual recognition and commitment to peaceful, neighborly relations, an "implementation agreement" would give Arafat the position of head of the PA, and he would be granted governance of Gaza and Jericho as a token of Israel's intention to transfer rule in the West Bank and Gaza Strip to the Palestinians led by the PLO.

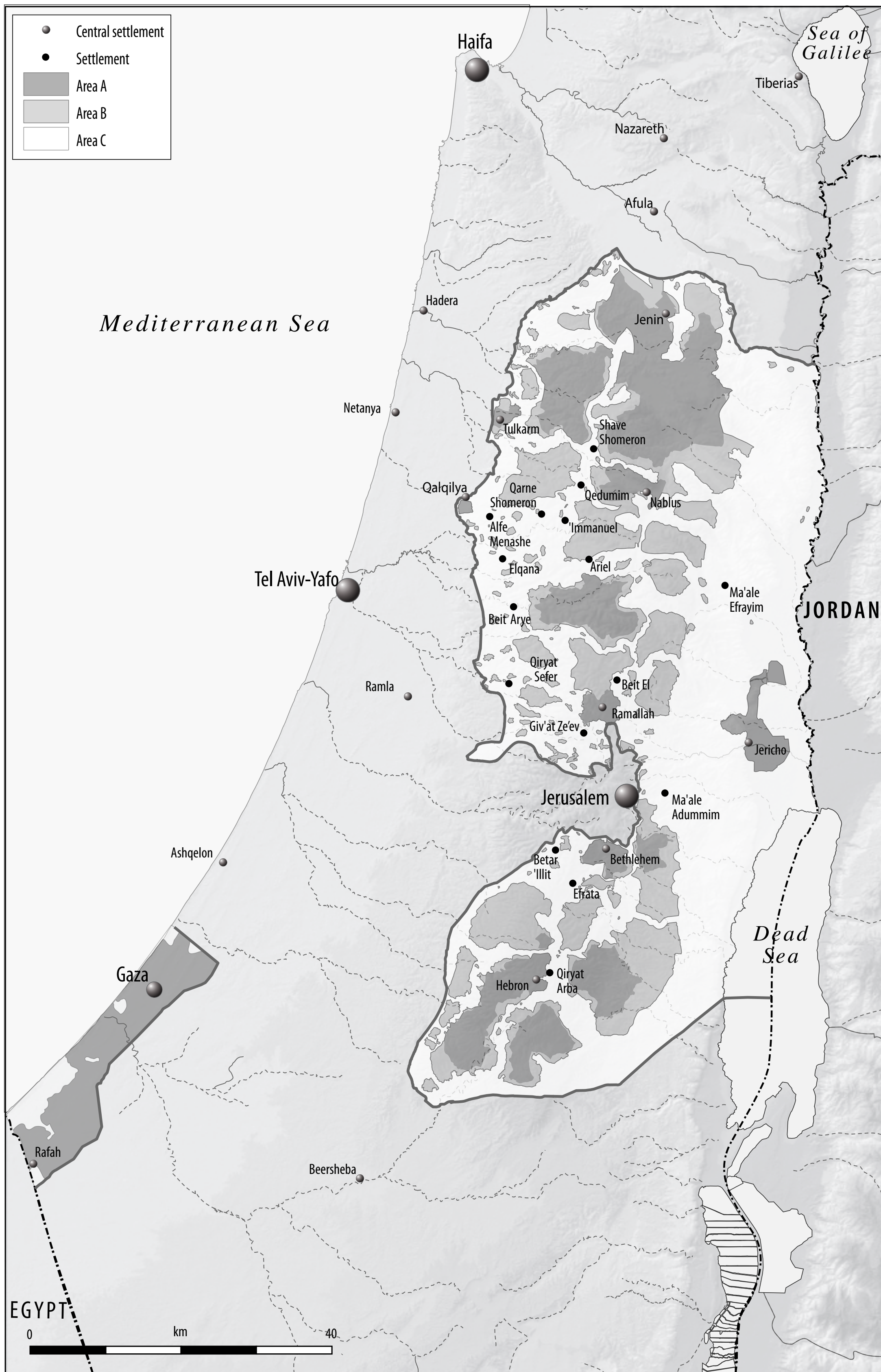
In August 1993 the Israeli and Palestinian delegations in Oslo reached agreement and updated the Americans. For the second time in the history of the peace process between Israel and the Arabs, the parties had reached agreement without American involvement, the first occasion being the negotiations that led to Sadat's visit to Jerusalem. Rabin agreed to talk with the PLO once he realized there was no other authoritative Palestinian partner with whom an agreement could be reached. He would have preferred Jordan or a delegation of West Bank and Gaza Arabs, but Jordan had completely disengaged from the West Bank, and the local notables followed Arafat's orders. Arafat was prepared to reach an agreement since he had no other option. He no longer had USSR support, the Gulf War had cut him off from Saudi Arabian and Gulf state subsidies, and Syria had signaled its intention of reaching a peace agreement with Israel. At that moment it seemed Arafat might miss the boat if he did not reach an agreement with Israel before Syria did. Thus a window of opportunity opened and led to the Oslo Accords.

The excitement that ensued over the news of the Oslo Accords was reminiscent of the drama of Sadat's visit to Jerusalem. Yesterday contact with the PLO had been prohibited; today it was a partner to mutual recognition between Israel and the Palestinians. This new about-turn was an event of tremendous magnitude, and once again was heard the beating of the wings of history. In September 1993, on the White House lawn before an audience of hundreds and world media, Rabin and Arafat signed the Declaration of Principles, which included mutual recognition and opened the way to the establishment of an autonomous Palestinian Authority. A radiant President Clinton, wearing a tie with a trumpet design that called to mind the trumpets that brought down the walls of Jericho, guided the two historical adversaries into a handshake staged to symbolize the transition from hostility to cooperation. Even Rabin's slight hesitation before shaking the terrorist Arafat's hand—conspicuous in all the television broadcasts—was received as an authentic expression of this revolution in relations.

The whole world was euphoric at this scene heralding a new era in the Middle East. But even amid those unforgettable moments, some details cast a pall over the festive spirit. Behind the scenes Arafat had exerted last-minute pressure to amend clauses of the accords in his favor, driving Rabin to distraction. Moreover, Arafat appeared at the ceremony in his khaki uniform, his trademark keffiyeh, and a three-day beard. Although it seemed he was simply maintaining his customary attire and appearance, he was broadcasting a specific image to the Palestinians: even though he was signing an agreement with the Israelis and shaking Rabin's hand, he was not discarding the combat fatigues that had made him the symbol of the armed struggle. It was a portentous omen.

In May 1994 the Agreement on the Gaza Strip and the Jericho Area (Cairo agreement) was signed in Cairo, in the presence of Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak. It gave Arafat the Gaza Strip and Jericho, enabling him to make a triumphal entry into Gaza. But at the last minute, in front of the international media, Arafat tried to avoid signing the border map of the enclaves to be transferred to his rule, and only Mubarak was able to prevail upon him to do so. On September 23, 1995, the third interim agreement was signed, detailing future Israeli withdrawals, security cooperation between the parties, an agreement on the construction of a Palestinian airport and seaport in Gaza, and an agreement on economic cooperation between Israel and the PA. This signing climaxed the series of agreements between Israel and the Palestinians. Despite their mutual suspicion, Rabin and Arafat reached a degree of mutual trust and cooperation on security as well as economic and cultural cooperation.

The Oslo planners prided themselves on the principle of gradual development, which was supposed to give both sides time to adapt to the dramatic changes, examine each other's functioning, and bring along their respective publics. In



MAP 12. THE OSLO ACCORDS MAP, 1993. (SEE PLATE 12.)

retrospect, however, this principle was the accords' undoing. Each side saw different things in the interim stages. The Palestinians were interested in how quickly they could establish the Palestinian state and the particular area it would occupy. The Israelis wanted to see how the Palestinians functioned as state builders. Meanwhile not one of the knottier problems—Jerusalem, refugees, borders—was addressed. None of the agreements mentioned the settlements. Although Rabin opposed settlement in densely populated Palestinian areas, massive settlement construction continued, especially in the neighborhoods around Jerusalem. For his part Arafat made no effort to prevent terrorism. It was a combustible situation. In February 1994 a religious Jewish doctor who had settled in Hebron opened fire on Arab worshippers in the Cave of Machpelah (Cave of the Patriarchs). He killed and wounded scores before he himself was killed. It was an act of provocation aimed at derailing the Oslo Accords, and given the delicate situation surrounding the accords, this act of Jewish terrorism was indeed a serious blow to the peace process. Proposals were made in the Israeli cabinet to evacuate the Hebron settlers. But in the end Rabin did not take this measure, in order to prevent a worsening of the hostility on the right.

The rejectionist organizations headed by Hamas and the Islamic Jihad vehemently opposed the PLO policy of conciliation with Israel. They were determined to undermine the accords through terrorism. April 1994 saw the start of a series of suicide bombings that hit Jews all over the country. This Islamic terrorism undermined the Israelis' belief in the Oslo Accords and in Rabin's peace policy. Israeli public opinion, which had supported Rabin, began to veer to the right. Arafat, unwilling to confront his adversaries in the Palestinian opposition, refused to condemn the terrorist outrages. The Israelis and Americans tried in vain to convince him that terrorism was harming the Palestinians and disrupting their chance of establishing a state of their own. He refused to embark on a struggle that would cause a rupture in Palestinian society over the Oslo Accords. It is also possible that Arafat adopted the methods of guerilla fighters in Vietnam and elsewhere who did not cease fighting and acts of terrorism while conducting peace negotiations.

Rabin's response to the violence was to argue that the terrorist organizations were seeking to stop the political process, and they should not be allowed to win by doing so. He was determined to advance the process. Despite Arafat's suspicious actions, signs also suggested that Israelis and Palestinians were coming closer together. Two years of intensive negotiations had created a certain degree of intimacy and mutual understanding. Efforts to establish a Palestinian police force after the Cairo agreement led to talks between the heads of the Israeli and Palestinian military establishments, which only a short while earlier had been inconceivable. But it is doubtful that the Oslo Accords made the life of the Pales-

tinian person in the street any easier, since Israel's reaction to the acts of terrorism was to close the occupied territories, set up roadblocks, and increase its military presence outside the areas transferred to the PA. These measures made movement difficult for the Palestinians, and the economic growth that peace was supposed to engender did not meet expectations.

On the Israeli side a complicated reality emerged. As the peace process progressed, tension mounted between the Israeli left and right. As far as the settlers were concerned, the very willingness to recognize the Palestinians as a national and political entity and thus to transfer to them (even on a limited scale) areas of the Land of Israel was world-shattering—a betrayal of their fundamental values. For the 150,000 settlers who existed at the time, there could be no forgiving what they termed "the crimes of Oslo." The settlers' struggle against the Rabin government constantly straddled the thin line between civil resistance and protest—legitimate actions in a democratic society—and incitement, overt or disguised, to illegal acts of violence and even murder. The settlers led a broad public campaign that involved demonstrations, both legal and illegal. A permanent, vociferous protest was maintained outside the prime minister's residence, and Rabin frequently needed a police escort to enter. Heavy vehicles blocked the country's roads, particularly during visits by American administration officials. In the newspapers there was an unremitting smear campaign against Rabin and his government.

The nonreligious right was swept along on this wave of hostility and confrontation. Representations of Rabin and Peres as "traitors" began to appear in public places. A poster at a demonstration by the right showed Rabin wearing Arafat's uniform. Certain rabbis declared that anyone handing over areas of the Land of Israel to the government of murderers was a traitor, and as such subject to *din rodef* (lit., "law of the pursuer")—that is, he should be killed.

The backdrop to this inflamed mood was the fragility of the Rabin government. As mentioned, Shas was a member of the coalition and ensured the government's majority in the Knesset. Although the Shas leadership (Rabbi Ovadia Yosef and Minister of the Interior Aryeh Deri) supported the Oslo Accords and did not oppose the transfer of territory to Palestinian rule, the party's rank and file thought differently. Shas voters supported the right-wing bloc, and Shas's being part of a government of the left contravened their beliefs. When the Oslo Accords were brought to a Knesset vote, Shas abstained. This was a signal that pressure from the party's faithful would lead it to resign from the government. After Deri's own resignation, following charges of corruption filed against him, Shas did resign. Now the Rabin government held only fifty-eight seats in the Knesset and was dependent upon the support of the Arab members.

From here on, the settlers accused the government of making decisions fateful

for the Jewish people when the government hung by a thread. They claimed it was enlisting support by offering perquisites to Knesset members and that it did not have a Jewish majority. The right's delegitimization of the Oslo Accords did not deter Rabin. Determined to complete the initiative he had begun, he did not let their protests make him change course. He displayed neither sensitivity to nor empathy for the settlers' heartache at seeing their world shattered. On the contrary, at every confrontation he displayed both his disdain for them and his determination not to be diverted from his course.

Amid all the commotion following the implementation of the Cairo agreement, Arafat's arrival at the Palestinian Authority, acts of terrorism perpetrated by Islamic organizations, and vociferous protests by the Israeli right, in October 1994 a festive ceremony was held on the Jordan-Israel border in the Arava Desert. In the presence of President Clinton, King Hussein, Rabin, and many other dignitaries, a peace treaty was signed between Israel and Jordan. Jordan was a natural candidate for a peace treaty with Israel. Once Jordan relinquished the West Bank, the territories in dispute between it and Israel were very small, and accelerated negotiations ironed out all the two nations' differences. Jordan had waited until the successful implementation of the Cairo agreement before agreeing to take part in peace negotiations. The fact that President Clinton had promised King Hussein to write off his kingdom's debts also helped advance the process. The king had been concerned about the reaction from Damascus if he signed a peace treaty without the Syrians. But as the talks between Israel and Syria dragged on with no agreement being reached, Hussein felt he might miss the right moment for peace.

The treaty with Jordan was the third to be signed between Israel and an Arab entity. It contained precedents that, with goodwill, could serve as a model for additional peace treaties. Israel restored territory it had held beyond the international border to Jordan, which promptly leased it back to Israel. There were also territorial exchanges. Israel also undertook to provide Jordan with an annual quota of water to ease Jordan's water problems. In stark contrast with the Oslo Accords, the treaty with Jordan was universally welcomed in Israel. But it would not have been signed without Oslo.

Only Syria remained outside the peacemaking circle. Attempts had been made to renew negotiations with Syria since the Oslo Accords were signed in 1993. In the spring of 1995, amid the uproar in Israel over the Oslo Accords, "the Stauber Document" was published setting out an Israeli-Syrian peace plan, including an Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights. Although this document was hypothetical, it added fuel to the already highly flammable Israeli atmosphere. This time it was the Golan Heights settlers and their sympathizers from the moderate Israeli center and left who joined ranks against the government. The Golan set-

tlers were mainly nonreligious Labor Party supporters. They did not reject the possibility of a withdrawal from the Golan Heights, but the conditions they placed on such a move would have rendered it totally unacceptable to Assad. The antigovernment campaign, under the slogan "The people are with the Golan," gained momentum; it succeeded in enlisting figures with a celebrated military past and considerable standing among the cultural elites. These were Yitzhak Rabin's Palmach comrades, who now cast doubt on his reasoning. Over and above this personal attack, the Third Way, as this movement was called, further undermined the government's stability, since several Labor members of the Knesset had allied themselves with it.

On November 4, 1995, at the end of a mass rally in support of the prime minister and the peace process, an assassin fired three shots and murdered Yitzhak Rabin. Although the writing had been on the wall since public threats had been made on the prime minister's life, and mystical religious ceremonies had been conducted to enlist divine forces to kill him, it seems that very few people took the notion of a prime minister of Israel being assassinated by a Jew seriously. This was a taboo whose breach was inconceivable. The shock was tremendous. The bullets that killed Rabin injured the very tissue of Israeli democracy, exposing its vulnerability and pointing to the need to heighten awareness of what is legitimate in a political debate, and what is not. Accusing fingers were pointed at the religious-Zionist sector, from whose midst the murderer had come and from which the most serious incitement had emanated. The sobering effect of the murder cooled the fervor of the public debate, reduced the level of violence, verbal and physical alike, and restored a degree of sanity and consensus to public discourse in Israel. Disagreements on the future of the territories, the peace process, and Jewish-Arab relations did not disappear, but the incitement coming from the right became less extreme. Phrases like "Rabin is a murderer," "Rabin is a traitor," or "*din rodef*" were now excluded.

All the world's great leaders, led by President Clinton, attended Rabin's funeral to pay their last respects to the martyr of the peace process and express their support for it and their hope that Rabin's successor, his comrade and adversary Shimon Peres, would follow in his footsteps. And indeed Peres sought to pursue the same path. The Oslo II Accords, the Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, which Rabin signed in September 1995, were successfully implemented, and the IDF withdrew from West Bank cities and areas were transferred to PA control.

The pendulum of diplomatic activity now swung back to Syria. The Wye Plantation talks, held at the end of 1995 with active mediation by the Americans, yielded some progress, though not a breakthrough. Itamar Rabinovich, the Israeli ambassador to Washington and the Rabin government's chief negotiator

with Syria, contends that Assad reacted bad-temperedly to the Israeli proposals and the American mediation and blocked any progress, while US negotiator Martin Indyk claims that great progress was made. But a spate of violence and terrorism that occurred during the talks led to their collapse. Rabinovich believes that the Syrians signaled to the terrorist organizations and Hezbollah that they were free to act against Israel. Indyk, for his part, says the violence was instigated by Iran, which wanted to derail the peace process and gloated over Rabin's death.

Either way, while the Wye Plantation talks were taking place, four severe terrorist outrages occurred in Israel within the space of a few days, and the Syrians refused to publicly express regret over them. At the same time, Hezbollah planted roadside bombs in the security buffer zone in Lebanon, killing IDF soldiers. Peres was forced to retaliate with Operation Grapes of Wrath, which was prematurely terminated after a stray Israeli shell killed approximately one hundred Lebanese and Palestinian civilians. Public opinion in the Arab states and the West raged against Israel, which was forced to withdraw from Lebanon without defeating Hezbollah. Syria enjoyed embarrassing Israel and winning points in the negotiations. But it did not take into account what was bound to happen as a result of these events. The date set for elections in Israel was fast approaching. After Rabin's murder the Israeli public leaned toward the left, and Peres's victory seemed assured. But the recent terror attacks changed the country's mood. In the June 1996 elections Peres lost by a small margin to Benjamin Netanyahu, the new, charismatic leader of the Likud. The momentum of the peace process, which had been maintained since the Madrid Conference, and especially since the 1992 elections, was arrested.

The Arab states greeted the halting of the peace process with sighs of relief. The Egyptians, Jordanians, and Syrians all had reservations about the ideas of "a new Middle East" (an expression coined by Peres), economic cooperation, and joint projects between Israel and its neighbors. To Peres these ideas heralded peace and development in the region, but the Arab regimes looked on them without favor. What to Israeli eyes was the blessing of peace was construed by its future partners as an attempt to establish Israeli hegemony in the Middle East. The pace at which normalization of relations under the auspices of the peace process was proceeding—including economic conferences in Casablanca and Amman, where Israel played a leading role—intimidated the Arab states and made them want to decelerate the process. Assad opposed both the conferences and the vision of a new Middle East, which he viewed as conflicting with the Arab character of the region. "Why is the Middle East being established?" asked Assad. "The Middle East does exist. The strange thing is that the Middle East is being presented as an alternative to Arabism. . . . We as Arabs certainly reject this."[4]

Patrick Seale, Assad's semiofficial biographer, analyzed the deeper reasons behind Assad's reluctance to engage in the peace process. The Israeli version of normalization would expose Syria to Israeli influence and require greater openness to a free market, with exchanges of people and goods that would likely alter the character of the Syrian state as it had been shaped by Assad's radical Baʿath party. Furthermore, Seale maintained, while Israel saw peace as a lever to increase its influence in the Middle East, to Assad it represented a way to block Israel, "to shrink its influence to more modest and less aggressive proportions, which the Arab players in the Middle East could accept and live with."[5]

During his election campaign Netanyahu had promised to abide by the Oslo Accords. Now he had to prove that he did indeed recognize the previous government's international undertakings. Netanyahu was in an inherently contradictory situation. On one hand, he was supported by a right-wing militant bloc whose declared intention was to wreck the agreements. On the other, he wanted to maintain good relations with the Clinton administration, whose objective was to advance the peace process. His attempt to satisfy both sides turned both against him. For his part Arafat thought that from now on his negotiating partner would be the American administration. To ensure its support he did something he had not done previously: he embarked on a vigorous antiterror campaign, arresting Hamas activists and threatening their centers of activity. As a result—and also perhaps as a result of a tacit agreement between Arafat and Hamas—Israel was quiet and the suicide bombings ceased. It appears that Iran and its agents, Hamas and the Islamic Jihad, saw no call to escalate the situation since in any case the peace process was not progressing. Arafat was therefore able to present himself in the American arena as the one who upheld his side of the agreements, while Netanyahu, without renouncing Oslo, refused to advance the peace process. Arafat suddenly appeared to be the reliable partner, and Israel the one whose policy was dubious.

In September 1996 Netanyahu opened the Western Wall Tunnel, a tunnel adjacent to the Wall that dated to the Hasmonean period, to the Israeli public. This act, done without giving prior notice to the PA, released from the bottle all the genies of Arab suspicion about Israel's intentions of taking over the Temple Mount. Bloody clashes erupted between rioters—who included members of the Israeli-trained Palestinian police force—and IDF troops, resulting in dozens of dead and wounded. The Americans swiftly mediated between the two sides and orchestrated a ceasefire. Having extricated Netanyahu from this imbroglio of bloodshed, the Americans demanded that he fulfill the Peres government's undertakings on an Israeli withdrawal from Hebron. He squirmed and tried to obtain easier terms for Israel, but ultimately signed the Hebron Agreement (1997), and IDF forces were redeployed in the City of the Patriarchs. This move

constituted recognition of the international legitimacy of the Oslo Accords by the Israeli right.

The negotiations continued at a snail's pace, but were not terminated. Although talks on the final status agreement did not begin on the date set in 1996, a positive development emerged. After intensive mediation efforts by the American administration, and long and arduous negotiations, in October 1998 an agreement was signed at the Wye Plantation on IDF redeployment in the West Bank that transferred an additional 13 percent of West Bank territory to the PA. American observers conjectured that a tacit understanding existed between Arafat and Netanyahu, such that Netanyahu would transfer relatively small areas to the Palestinians in return for peace and quiet. Yitzhak Molcho, Netanyahu's chief negotiator, likened this policy to swallowing frogs: you can swallow ten little frogs but not one big one.

Netanyahu had severe credibility problems. He made promises to both moderates and radicals in his government that he was unable to keep. The right demanded that he abrogate the Oslo Accords, which he could not do. They viewed the Wye Agreement as breaking a promise. Because of his political bind, he had promised progress in political moves furthering the peace process to his moderate partners, and they were frustrated because none had materialized. The Likud began to crumble from within, and splinter parties that had joined it withdrew, reducing its support in the Knesset. In an effort to prevent the fall of his government, Netanyahu called for a vote of confidence. A loss would mean new elections, a move incumbent Knesset members are usually loath to accept. But on this occasion the right pulled the rug out from under Netanyahu. It voted against him, the government fell, and Netanyahu was forced to hold national elections.

The May 1999 prime ministerial elections were won with a handsome majority by Ehud Barak, the leader of the Yisrael Ahat (One Israel) party, a union of the Labor Party and other small parties. The Israeli electoral system had been changed after 1996, and the electorate now voted directly for prime minister. The hope was that this system, more like the US presidential election system, would create more stable governments. But the actual effect was increased fragmentation. In the Knesset elections the major parties won a reduced number of seats, which benefited small and medium-sized parties. Yisrael Ahat won twenty-six seats, the Likud nineteen, Shas seventeen, and Meretz ten, with the remaining seats divided among numerous small parties that won between two and six each. Along with direct voting for prime minister, the old parliamentary structure was maintained, allowing voters to split their votes, casting one vote for the prime minister and another for the party of their choice. The expectation that direct elections for the premiership would neutralize the need for coalition haggling turned out to be a tragic miscalculation. Direct elections for the premiership

would soon be annulled, and the old system of electing a party list restored. However, the return to the old system no longer resulted in the two-party system that had governed Israeli politics in the 1980s.

At a mass postelection victory rally, Barak's supporters chanted, "Just not Shas." That party was identified with public figures who had been indicted on corruption charges. It had the image of a vested-interest party concerned solely with the welfare of its voters and was politically unreliable. But Barak had no choice. He had to deal with Shas and also persuade leftist Meretz—which had promised its voters not to join a coalition with Shas—to join the coalition on the basis of renewed peace negotiations. The coalition also included the Center party (a new party formed by ex-Likud moderates and notable figures from the political center), the ultra-Orthodox Yahadut Hatorah (Torah Judaism), and Yisrael Baʿaliya (a play on "Israel" and "aliya"), the party of immigrants from the former Soviet Union. It was a loose coalition. In September 1999 Yahadut Hatorah left in protest against nonobservance of the Sabbath, and in June 2000 Meretz departed after a dispute with Shas, although it continued to support the government for the sake of the peace process. When Barak left for the Camp David summit in July 2000 (discussed later), Shas and Yisrael Baʿaliya also left the coalition. Then the Center party began to crumble. Thus despite his impressive election victory, Barak was left with no real political support base.

Barak was not a man of small measures; Netanyahu's "little frogs" method was not for him. He saw himself as a leader continuing Rabin's legacy, ready to make great decisions á la Ben-Gurion, and set himself the objective of putting an end to the Israeli-Arab conflict. In contrast to cautious Rabin, who chose a step-by-step approach with constant attention to the outcome of each measure, Barak sought to reach the final status agreement with one grand gesture. He considered the incremental territorial concessions that transferred small parts of the West Bank to the Palestinians without receiving concessions in return a strategic error, since Israel was losing bargaining chips without any real return. He delayed continuing to implement the already-signed agreements on the assumption that for a few short months, until final agreement was reached, it was not worth creating tension with his coalition partners, which might endanger his government. In any event he intended to resolve all the thorny issues and achieve a final status agreement that would mean "the end of the conflict" with the Palestinians. The tension between Barak's far-reaching objectives and his limited political abilities would lead to his failure.

On the face of it, the time was ripe for taking great measures. It was President Clinton's last year in office, and he wanted to leave the Israeli-Arab peace treaty behind as his great legacy. Voices coming out of Damascus hinted at a dramatic change in President Assad's position. Ailing and unsure how to handle the ques-

tion of turning his position over to his son, Assad now sought to reach an agreement with Israel before he did so. For a moment a window of opportunity opened with Syria. In January 2000 peace talks between Israel and Syria were held in Shepherdstown, West Virginia. The discussion revolved around the June 4, 1967, lines, and at the decisive moment Barak retreated. He refused to approve Rabin's "pledge." It is unclear whether this refusal was a negotiating tactic—since agreeing in advance to such a withdrawal would have significantly reduced his room to maneuver—or whether he wanted to avoid an agreement that would force Israel into total withdrawal from the Golan Heights. Barak was prepared to concede the El-Hamma enclave, but would not give up absolute sovereignty over the Sea of Galilee, one of Israel's most important water sources.

Possibly a public opinion survey in Israel made it clear to Barak that such a concession would not gain the broad support he expected. In any event he did not make this difficult decision. Nevertheless the negotiations continued. A summit in Geneva in March 2000 between Clinton and Assad was supposed to iron out the last difficulties and draw up the outline of the final agreement. But that is not what happened. A chance leak from the Israeli side about the Syrians having agreed to an Israeli early warning station on the Golan Heights after the withdrawal caused a negative reaction among the Syrian intelligentsia, which most likely deterred Assad. The Syrian leader then backed out of previous agreements, as well as all the changes in his position that had fed Israeli and American optimism. He seems to have decided that ensuring his son's succession and simultaneously reaching a peace treaty with Israel was beyond his powers. The negotiations with Syria ended in total failure. Assad died in June 2000, and an Israeli-Syrian peace treaty dropped from the agenda.

The failure of the negotiations with Syria had far-reaching effects. Barak had promised his voters that he would put an end to the constant bloodletting in Lebanon and withdraw the IDF from the security buffer zone along the border, which had remained under Israeli control since the 1985 withdrawal. A withdrawal following an agreement with Syria would have been received as a welcome outcome of the peace process. Now the unilateral Israeli withdrawal on May 24, 2000, without talks with either Syria or Hezbollah, was construed as a victory for Hezbollah, which made sure to snap at the tail of the retreating army, thus reinforcing the image of its triumph.

This so-called victory bore implications regarding Hezbollah's position in Lebanon. Hezbollah contended that as the organization fighting Israel for the liberation of Lebanese soil, it had legitimate reason to continue maintaining its own army there. In addition Syria's continued support for the Islamic terror organizations headquartered in Damascus weakened the Palestinian forces seeking peace with Israel. Hezbollah's boasting about the success of armed struggle

against Israel touched a chord among young people in the West Bank, who over the six years since the Oslo Accords had been under the corrupt rule of the PA and without an independent state. It seems that Arafat was also impressed by the Hezbollah model. Hezbollah's violence had succeeded without either negotiations or concessions. Perhaps this was the way to achieve an enhanced agreement with the Israelis; it therefore made sense at least not to rush into an agreement.

During this period a sort of pendulum swing had also occurred between negotiations with Syria and negotiations with the Palestinians. Each knew that it might be the last negotiating partner on the road to an agreement with Israel, which would weaken its bargaining position. Now that the Syrian option was evidently off the agenda, negotiations with the Palestinians would clearly be more difficult than before. And time was running out; President Clinton's last year in office was nearly over.

During that last year Israeli and American participants in the peace process disagreed on the preferable track for negotiations. Those who supported making progress with the Palestinians viewed the negotiations with Syria as lost time that would later be missed in reaching an agreement with the Palestinians. On the other hand, an agreement with Syria depended on one man's decision and appeared to be within reach. While negotiating with Syria, Barak continued holding a slow dialogue with the Palestinians, who complained that he was taking them for granted. The agreed-on date for the opening of negotiations on the final status came and went, and negotiations continued slowly. By the spring the two sides were still far from any kind of path that would lead to an agreement.

The summer of 2000 saw preparatory talks for a summit at Camp David between Arafat, Barak, and President Clinton. Since the summit was to negotiate an end to the conflict, issues avoided by the sides in the earlier rounds of talks were put on the table for the first time: Jerusalem, borders, and refugees. Until then there had been no real discussions on Jerusalem between the Israelis and the Palestinians. Jews had cherished the city, the Temple Mount, and the Western Wall for two thousand years. Haram al-Sharif (Ar. lit., noble sanctuary, or Dome of the Rock) was Islam's third most sacred site after Mecca and Medina; it was the place from which the Prophet Muhammad had ascended to heaven. The Palestinians had in mind not only a Palestinian state, but a state whose capital was Jerusalem. How could such a profound historical conflict be resolved? There had been good reason to leave discussions on Jerusalem to the final stage of the negotiations. But now the moment of truth had arrived, and the question was whether a compromise could be found between the two sides' contradictory desires.

The issue of the borders was also explosive. The Israelis wanted to control the Jordan Valley in order to protect Israel from invasion from the east. Conceivably

this issue could be resolved by replacing control with suitable security arrangements, but on the question of the Arab refugees of 1948, no Israeli government could compromise. The "right of return" that the Palestinians continued to claim—and had educated generations of children to cling to—conflicted with the very existence of Israel as a Jewish state. A compromise could be reached on bringing Palestinians into the future Palestinian state, and also on allowing a token number of refugees into Israel. All these issues had to be part of an agreement ending the conflict. As background to this developing discussion, intelligence reports intimated that without an agreement, an eruption of violence by the Palestinians could be expected.

Barak's political position was precarious. His government lacked a parliamentary majority and relied on the support of Meretz and the Arab factions, which were outside the coalition. As mentioned earlier, on the eve of Barak's departure for the Camp David summit, Shas and Yisrael Baʿaliya left the coalition in protest against his policies. Achieving an "end of the conflict agreement" could lead to a dramatic change in the Israeli public's mood and a different political constellation. But with time running out before the end of Clinton's term in office and the Barak government's dire situation, it was clear that Barak needed an agreement at Camp David far more than Arafat did. Oddly enough, in this situation the ostensibly weaker side, the Palestinians, held a far better bargaining position.

The long, tortuous Camp David negotiations were later analyzed by both participants and critics. If beforehand the slow progress had led to frustration and tension between the two sides, with neither fulfilling its promises, now the effort to reach a final "end of the conflict" agreement proved to be "mission impossible." It is likely that mistakes were made by both parties. The tactics adopted by Barak, who at first kept his cards close to his chest but rapidly gave in to American pressure and was willing to reveal his redlines, were certainly miscalculated. Barak's assumption that he could make his final proposal at the outset and expect the other side to accept it exposed both his lack of negotiating finesse and his impatience to reach an agreement. On the other side, the more the Americans pressured the Palestinians to put a counterproposal on the table, the more firmly they adhered to the UN resolutions on the June 4, 1967, lines and UN Resolution 194 on the refugees and refused to make a compromise proposal. At the preparatory talks the Palestinians had shown themselves willing to leave blocs of Jewish settlement in place in return for territory. Now the proposal that they receive 92 percent of the West Bank and Gaza Strip angered them. The Israelis also conceded control of the Jordan Valley and were prepared to accept security arrangements and an international force along the Jordan line.

The most difficult issue of all was Jerusalem. Relinquishing Israeli sovereignty over all of Jerusalem ran contrary to everything the Israelis had said since 1967.

Repartition of Jerusalem was an idea that no Israeli leader had previously uttered. But now Barak rose to the challenge. He was prepared to offer the PA the outer Arab neighborhoods in East Jerusalem, the Muslim and Christian Quarters in the Old City, and even to give Arafat custodianship of Haram al-Sharif. The Israelis would retain the Jewish neighborhoods built after 1967, the Jewish and Armenian Quarters in the Old City, the Western Wall, and sovereignty over the subterranean Temple Mount. By any yardstick Barak's proposal was revolutionary. But Arafat would not even consider it. Unlike his American and Israeli interlocutors, Arafat was in no rush. While Barak displayed tremendous courage, in the end he failed since he was unable to convince Arafat that there was no chance of further concessions. And perhaps Arafat feared that making any concession on Jerusalem would enrage Muslims throughout the world and even lead to his being assassinated.

There were several important achievements at Camp David. For the first time the outline of the final status agreement was made clear to both sides. The Israelis learned that the Palestinians would demand almost the entire area of the West Bank plus exchange of territories in return for agreeing to leave the settlement blocs in place. Israel would not control the Jordan Valley but would have security arrangements to secure its eastern border. The Palestinians accepted the Jewish neighborhoods around Jerusalem, the settlement blocs, and Israeli control of the Jewish Quarter and the Western Wall. Barak's proposals on Jerusalem placed the issue of the city on the Israeli public's agenda, and made Israelis aware that there would not be peace with the Palestinians without a creative compromise on Jerusalem. As Martin Indyk wrote, had Camp David been defined as a preparatory summit, it could have been considered a great success, not a resounding failure. However, if that had been the case, Barak would not have made his revolutionary proposals, which he made because he assumed this was the decisive stage of the negotiations. He failed to take into account that his interlocutor saw the summit not as a framework for ending the conflict but as a trap intended to force him to accept an imposed solution. What enabled Arafat to evade this trap was the issue of sovereignty over the Temple Mount, which he presented as an insurmountable obstacle to any compromise whatsoever.

The first Camp David summit had ultimately been a success because Sadat and Begin wanted it to succeed and so were prepared to compromise. The second summit failed because only one of the leaders intended to reach an agreement. Arafat did not see himself as being free to make a difficult decision, either because he did not think his supporters at home were ready for it, because he feared the reaction of the Arab states, or because he thought he would be killed the day after the signing. One thing is certain: he did not prepare the Palestinians for the fact that the final agreement would involve compromises. The incitement in the

Palestinian media and the PA's education system had continued throughout the decade of peace negotiations. Public opinion was not prepared for the possibility of an agreement that would not only give the Palestinians a state but would require them to make several concessions to the Israelis. Barak had carried out the psychological preparation of the Israeli public while he was at Camp David, by means of systematic leaks of all the Israeli concessions. Not so the Palestinians; they took all the Israeli concessions for granted and did not acknowledge that Israel, too, had legitimate claims.

A revisionist article by Robert Malley, a former special assistant to President Clinton for Arab-Israeli affairs, and Lebanese intellectual Hussein Agha corroborated this analysis. The article set out to undermine the version of events disseminated by Clinton, Barak, Dennis Ross, and others, which blamed Arafat for the failure at Camp David. Malley and Agha attempted to explain why the Palestinians did not submit a proposal of their own, and even rejected the Clinton track (discussed later), which offered them terms that went far beyond Barak's Camp David proposals. They wrote: "Most Palestinians were more resigned to the two-state solution than they were willing to embrace it; they were willing to accept Israel's existence, but not its moral legitimacy. The war for the whole of Palestine was over because it had been lost. Oslo, as they saw it, was not about negotiating peace terms, but terms of surrender. Bearing this perspective in mind explains the Palestinians' view that Oslo itself is the historic compromise—an agreement to concede 78 percent of Mandatory Palestine to Israel."[6]

Was the Camp David summit a failure foretold? The opinion prevailing in the Israeli security establishment throughout the period starting with the Oslo Accords was that as long as the matter at hand was interim agreements, Arafat could sign them. But once it was time to negotiate the final status agreement, Arafat had four principles on which he would not budge: a Palestinian state within the June 4, 1967, borders, Jerusalem as its capital, sovereignty over the Temple Mount, and the "right of return." Arafat foresaw the approaching collision and made preparations for a violent clash with Israel. From the outset this concept, which Itamar Rabinovich terms "deterministic," cast doubt on the possibility of an "end of the conflict" agreement. It was the other side of Malley's and Agha's coin. Meanwhile the Israeli radical left accused Barak of flawed negotiating, excessive haste, and being inconsiderate of Arafat—that is, they argued that tactical errors caused the failure.

Some argue that his years at the Palestinian Authority demonstrated to Arafat that what awaited him at the end of the road was a relatively small, poor state burdened with economic and social problems, and that he preferred the romanticism of the struggle rather than the dejecting routine of being president of the Palestinian state. So long as there was no peace, he was a national hero, a media

figure at whose door the world's luminaries came calling. Once there was peace, interest in the Palestine liberation movement would die, his historic role would come to an end, and all that would remain was the quotidian internal friction in the Palestinian camp, the corruption, and the subversion. At the decisive moment he chose yesterday's world with its thrills and risks rather than the world of tomorrow, which necessitated a change of mind-set and image and learning to live in peace. He preferred to return to Gaza from Camp David as a hero who had challenged the Americans and Israelis, assuring himself broad public support. The fact that he had not brought peace was not a black mark against him.

Clinton and Barak did not give up hope after Camp David; they continued their contact in order to reach an agreement, with Barak, who viewed an agreement as his only hope of survival in the upcoming elections, occasionally retreating from the redlines he had set himself to more conciliatory positions. As Aaron David Miller noted, redlines turned pink. But the more Barak conceded, the higher Arafat raised the bar.

On September 28, 2000, opposition leader Ariel Sharon toured the Temple Mount. His visit was coordinated with the Palestinians, and Sharon accepted the restriction they imposed and did not enter the mosques. The tour passed relatively quietly. But the next day about 20,000 Muslim worshippers on the Temple Mount erupted into violent rioting. The Israeli security forces responded with small arms fire, and after that the rioting spiraled out of control. On the eve of the rioting, the Israeli authorities had learned that violent demonstrations would be held on the Mount, and they informed the Americans. US secretary of state Madeleine Albright warned Arafat of consequences and tried to persuade him to prevent the demonstrations. It emerged later that he did not lift a finger. As suggested before, some contend that Arafat had intended to resort to violence from the outset if he did not get what he wanted at Camp David. Others argue that he had always needed the drama of violence to attain Palestinian independence "in blood and fire," in accordance with the PLO's basic concept. In any event Arafat never relinquished the option of violence throughout the entire peace process. He never declared that violence was illegitimate, and whenever he was called upon to take action against it he did so against his inclinations.

Now Sharon's tour of the Temple Mount provided Arafat with an excellent opportunity to bolster his position by using force, and also to prove that his hands were tied with regard to Haram al-Sharif. But violence is a tiger that is difficult to ride. The television images ostensibly showing Israeli soldiers killing a twelve-year-old named Muhammad al-Durrah (it was never determined whether the boy really was killed by IDF soldiers) ignited Palestinian and Arab public opinion against Israel. In Ramallah two Israeli reserve soldiers held in the police station after driving into the city by mistake were lynched. The bloodied hands of the

jubilant murderers were shown on television and sent shock waves through Israeli public opinion. The IDF used harsh measures to quell the riots, in which numerous members of the Palestinian security forces (which Israel had helped train and equip) participated.

October 2000 was full of traumas. The outbreak of the Second Intifada, which entered the Palestinian lexicon as the Al-Aqsa Intifada, further reinforced the myth of Israeli designs on Haram al-Sharif and destroyed both hopes of peace and Israel's trust in the Palestinians. Serious rioting by Israeli Arabs broke out on the Israeli side of the Green Line. The riots raged throughout Galilee and the Triangle, and in Jaffa, raising fears for the safety of the Jewish inhabitants of the Galilee *mitzpim* (small community settlements). The Wadi ʿAra roads were blocked; there was destruction of property, and attacks targeted vehicles, institutions, and settlements. Before the rioting was suppressed, twelve Israeli Arabs, one Palestinian, and one Jew were killed, scores were wounded, and a rift was opened in Jewish-Arab relations within Israel. For a short time it seemed Israel was on the brink of ethnic clashes between Jews and Arabs. Israelis found it hard to believe that these events had not been coordinated with what was happening in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. And on top of all this, three IDF soldiers were abducted by Hezbollah on the northern border, and a reserve officer was taken in Europe. Israel seemed to be in the center of a circle of fire blazing on all its borders. The public lost faith in the government's ability to ensure people's safety and security. Given his government's uncertain status Barak decided to hold new prime ministerial elections without dissolving the Knesset. The date set was February 2001.

Under the shadow of the violence, desperate attempts to reach an agreement between Israel and the Palestinians continued. In the final days of his presidency, Clinton made one last effort to mediate between the sides. "The Clinton Parameters" summarized the core issues between the Israelis and Palestinians and offered a compromise proposal that took into account the sensitivities and needs of both sides. It was a well-balanced proposal that went a long way toward meeting the Palestinian demands—farther even than the Camp David proposals. The Taba summit was convened in January 2001 on the initiative of Egyptian president Mubarak. The government of Israel accepted the parameters in principle, but with some reservations on certain clauses. Arafat did not want—or was unable—to bring himself to accept the parameters. One of the Palestinians remarked to Dennis Ross, "We needed David Ben-Gurion and we got Yasir Arafat."[7] The summit ended in impasse, Clinton completed his term of office, and in the Israeli elections held on February 6, 2001, Ariel Sharon was elected prime minister by a large majority. At this point the peace process was over.

The Intifada raged on. Thousands of Israelis and Palestinians paid with their

lives. The Second Intifada was a blood-soaked affair, with most of its Israeli victims being civilians killed by suicide bombers. The dream of peace and an end to the conflict faded. The feeling was that there was no alternative other than defense of the nation and the state. The Israeli left and center, which had supported the peace process, could not comprehend Arafat's behavior. If the two sides had not reached an agreement, negotiations should have continued, but there was no reason for violence. The right said, "We told you so." The radical left contended, "We didn't do enough." Average Israelis felt betrayed. They were fighting for their lives, and they had no compassion for the other side.

Did the peace process fail? There can be no doubt that it collapsed, leaving both sides profoundly disillusioned. In Israel the Intifada destroyed the left, dealing it a blow from which it has not recovered. After the decade of hope, however, relations between Israel and the Arab states, and Israel and the Palestinians, had changed radically. The peace treaty with Jordan and the creation of some degree of relations with the Gulf emirates and with Maghreb states were steps toward Israel achieving legitimacy and Arab acceptance of its existence as a political entity in the Middle East. The Arab League peace initiative announced in 2002 was perhaps evidence of this change. The Arab League countries proposed a comprehensive peace with Israel, whose terms would be agreed upon in negotiations.

In his summing up of the failure of the peace process, Dennis Ross had cited one reason as the Arabs' perception that their willingness to accept Israel's existence was a major concession that obliged Israel to make numerous concessions without an Arab commitment to make compromises of their own. Recognizing that Israel had legitimate needs and that achieving peace required compromises on both sides was part of the educational process of the peace negotiations. Have both sides internalized this point? The future peace process will reveal whether they have or not.

Israeli-Palestinian relations have also changed dramatically. The mutual recognition deriving from the Oslo Accords led to the sides getting to know each other and talking, creating a certain degree of intimacy between the Israeli and Palestinian political and security elites, among whom the previous sense of foreignness and the demonization have diminished. There is doubt whether this change has reached the popular levels. Even so, the difference between the previous alienation and present relations is impressive. The idea of two states for two nations, which in the 1990s was taboo, is now espoused by the majority of the Israeli public and forms the basis for the major parties' peace platforms, either categorically or implicitly. Today the majority of Israelis realize that it is impossible to rule another people over a long period and they accept that safe-

guarding Israel's character as a Jewish state necessitates disengagement from most areas of Judea and Samaria, as well as the Gaza Strip (the disengagement from which occurred in the mid-2000s). It can be said that the failed negotiations prepared the Israeli public for the need to compromise with the Palestinians and recognize their national needs. Changes in consciousness, particularly in harsh and prolonged conflicts such as the Israeli-Arab conflict, do not come about overnight; they need time, permanence, and maturation. Only the future will show if the seeds that sprouted in the 1990s bear fruit in coming decades.

ISRAEL IN THE 1990S

The change in Israel's economic character between the 1950s and 1990s can be summarized in the following facts: in the last decade of the twentieth century, only 2 percent of the working population was engaged in agriculture, and agricultural produce accounted for only 2 percent of the country's exports. By the end of its first fifty years, Israel had been transformed from a country whose symbol was the Jewish farmer plowing and sowing his fields in accordance with the Zionist ideal into an industrialized country proud of its cutting-edge, high-tech industry. Despite limited water resources, optimal exploitation of those resources and the land enabled Israel to provide food for its constantly growing population and even exports to Europe. But it is doubtful that the founding fathers of Zionism imagined that the return of the Jew to nature and physical labor would last no longer than two generations. In the 1990s Israeli exports were based on industry and services, diamonds, tourism, and, last on the list, agricultural produce.

The economic revolution of the 1990s was marked by a shift from traditional industries such as textiles, machinery, construction, mining, and fertilizers to knowledge-intensive high-tech industries. The traditional industries were labor intensive, did not require a high level of specialization, and in most cases paid relatively low wages. The high-tech industries that flourished in the 1990s required higher education, a background in science or technology, and human capital. Their employees were individualistic, creative, and prepared to work hard for a relatively high salary. They made no long-term commitment to the company, and the company made no commitment to its employees. The Israeli high-tech sector of the 1990s was in internet-related fields, life sciences startups, and medical projects. Their success was the combined result of many years of investment in research and development, institutions of higher education that laid the scientific foundations for knowledge-intensive industries, and the influence of defense industries that invested in R & D projects in which a large number of first-generation high-tech entrepreneurs acquired their skills and ideas.

Free trade agreements with the European Union and North America opened the door to investment in Israeli projects by international companies. Rescinding of the last restrictions on foreign currency trading also promoted free trade.

The privatization trend that began in the 1980s continued, gaining momentum. The Histadrut-owned companies, and the kibbutzim and moshavim as well, were used to operating in a framework of state-subsidized credit. Once subsidized credit was discontinued as a result of the state's shift away from direct guidance of the capital market, the Histadrut-owned companies, moshavim, and kibbutzim were unable to operate in an expensive credit market and faced bankruptcy. Histadrut-owned companies collapsed and were sold to private ownership. The Histadrut became a voluntary trade union that workers were no longer obliged to join. High-tech workers were not organized in the Histadrut; it had lost its sway over elite employees and was limited to workers in vital services such as the Electric Corporation, water provision, and traditional industries. With the arrival of foreign workers in Israel to fill positions in agriculture and care services, the Histadrut lost yet another market segment.

In the early 1990s Chaim Ramon, a senior Labor Party figure, left the party to form an independent list in the Histadrut whose goal was nationalizing medical services—in other words, taking the Kupat Holim health maintenance organization (HMO) out of Histadrut hands. He won a majority of votes in the Histadrut elections. In the reformed health system all citizens would pay a health tax to the state, which would provide them with a basket of medical services that they could obtain at the HMO of their choice. Thus privatization was combined with nationalization, and it had a dramatic effect on worker-Histadrut relations. What had led many workers to membership in the Histadrut was the medical services provided by its HMO. Now the connection between the two was severed. Workers could choose their own medical service provider, and Histadrut membership meant only membership in a trade union. The resulting drastic drop in Histadrut membership revealed the weakness of socialist ideology among workers. After medical services, other institutions were privatized: retirement funds, pension funds, the banks, the post office, communications companies, and the national airline. No longer was there public or state ownership of public assets. Instead Israeli and international tycoons appeared who acquired the assets up for sale, buying themselves a position of influence over the country's economic and political centers of power.

Israel adapted to globalization, which in the 1990s became the name of the game. International companies penetrated Israel, and Israelis invested and operated throughout the world, where open markets welcomed their entrepreneurship. The peace process brought about a significant weakening of the Arab boycott of Israel, and contacts between Israel and other countries in the region

(Morocco, Tunisia, and the Gulf states) led to economic projects and encouraged growth. The positive political climate brought to Israel investors who had avoided investing there during the years of tension. Western European countries that before the peace process had harbored reservations about Israel's policy toward the Palestinians now "discovered" Israel and became more open to contact with it. The Eastern European countries, now open to the West, were also fertile soil for economic and other relations. Israel's balance of payments, which had been one of the economy's weak points, reflecting its dependence on American aid and Jewish donations, went from negative to positive, with the Bank of Israel holding substantial foreign currency reserves. Israel's reliability in the world's credit markets attracted international investors whose investments ranged from $5 to $10 billion a year.

During these years the standard of living rose, but there was also a growing gap between those whose talents were suited to the new reality and those unable to integrate into the new economy. From one of the world's more egalitarian societies in the 1960s, Israel turned into one of the least egalitarian in the 1990s. The two main pockets of poverty were the ultra-Orthodox, whose "society of learners" members did not enter the labor market, and the Arabs, who were subject to social and security restrictions on their integration into the Israeli economy.

A revolution also took place in the social climate. In the past it had been generally accepted that a salaried worker in Histadrut or government employ had a lifetime position. The upheavals in the economy caused by privatization shattered this social convention. Workers' mobility increased, but so did uncertainty regarding their place of work. Companies that had been considered the bedrock of the Israeli economy went bankrupt, changed hands, or streamlined their workforce. The high-tech companies did not ensure permanent employment, and many of them vanished as quickly as they had appeared. A basic element of Israeli society—a stable domicile and place of work, closeness to the extended family, a children's peer group that stayed together from kindergarten to the army; the entire range of familiar connections that made people feel rooted in their place and in society—was suddenly undermined. Although there was greater opportunity and a higher standard of living, something important, which perhaps compensated for the constant sense of danger with which the citizens of Israel live, had been lost.

Two quality-of-life enhancements further eroded the Israeli sense of familiarity and connection. The first: air-conditioning. For eight months of the year, the Israeli climate (especially in light of global warming) demands the use of air-conditioning. Israelis try not to leave this controlled climate. The vast majority of homes are air-conditioned, as are workplaces, cars, and even tractor cabs. The big malls also provide a climate-controlled environment. With the advent of air-

conditioning, the outdoors, the street—the most common place for human encounter in the past—became less popular. Although the outdoor cafés remain, their patrons prefer the protected climate indoors in the summer. As a result, Israelis' exposure to one another has diminished. Each social group shuts itself up in its own neighborhood, and within the neighborhood, in its own home. Thus the rise in the standard of living has led to citizens becoming alienated and distanced from one another.

The second element was the introduction of multichannel television. Instead of the two or three channels that had previously competed for Israelis' attention, there were now innumerable channels to watch. In previous decades television had been "the tribal bonfire" at which everyone enjoyed the same experience, observed the same events, and heard the same commentary on reality. Now television lost this identity-forming role. Instead the multiplicity of languages, cultures, trends, and interests coming out of the small screen gave the divided society affirmation and encouragement. In the past, state-run television had assumed the role of finding a balance between fostering high culture and complying with the wider public's desire for entertainment. Now the multiplicity of voices popularized, vulgarized, and trivialized culture.

Youth culture of the 1990s was nourished by television and influenced by American culture as presented on the small screen. It was a universal culture without roots in the here and now. Scholar Gadi Taub writes, "This culture really did seek with all its heart to believe that it could escape from here, to belong to some supranational MTV republic of viewers of *Seinfeld* and *Murphy Brown*, but at the same time it knew full well that this republic is nonexistent."[8] The demise of Zionist-socialist ideology created an ideological vacuum that the youth found hard to fill. Writer Orly Castel-Bloom opens her *Story* with the words, "I have a story that I have nothing to say about."[9] Life had suddenly become meaningless, an apparent fulfillment of the song "I'm Lying on My Back" written by Ya'akov Rotblit in 1983:

Without to be or not to be
I'm just here
Without anything worth
Dying for
Without hope and without despair
I just watch
The world like a tourist
And it's so beautiful.

The song displays a universal existentialism. In a way it affirms the success of Zionism's program of normalizing the Jews to be like other people. The sense of

security and loss of existential fear conferred by the might of the IDF; the death of idealism and ideology; and the appearance of a generation with no past and no future, interested solely in the present, were all elements of this "normalization." But was that what the Zionist thinkers had envisioned? Indeed the distance traveled by the Zionist enterprise, from the early twentieth-century poem about the son, the new Jew, rebelling against his parents to the late twentieth-century generation's song of total if somehow unsettling acceptance of the serenity of the present, demonstrates how the Zionist revolution not only succeeded but became routine.

The assassination of Yitzhak Rabin opened a gaping hole in this bubble of MTV-style existence. Unable to stop crying, the youngsters gathered by the thousands in the Tel Aviv square where Rabin was assassinated during the seven-day mourning period, lit memorial candles, and sought to be at one not only with the leader who had died but also with an experience of something with meaning, that was not empty of content. They tried to find a connecting thread with a broader public and to set a target in life. The murder and the experience of togetherness that followed were reference points in their lives. Many of them came to view peace as their life's mission. Others volunteered for social activist causes. In the development towns appeared core groups of religious and nonreligious people who had left the cities and kibbutzim and wanted to live in these towns and help their residents move ahead. This was the new volunteerism in turn-of-the-century Israel. The future will show whether it heralded a new wave of idealism, or whether it will remain a marginal event in Israeli life.

The opening of Soviet Russia in 1989 initiated the most comprehensive wave of aliya ever to reach Israel. At almost a million people, in absolute terms it was bigger than the great aliya of the early 1950s. Whereas the fifties' aliya doubled the number of Jews in the country, the new wave made up about 17 percent of the Jewish population. There was a vast difference between the host society of the 1950s, which was poor and lacked the resources for such large-scale absorption, and that of the 1990s, with its expanding, flourishing, solidly based economy, which received very generous loans rooted in American guarantees in the sum of $10 billion for immigrant absorption. However, the immigrants of the 1950s came to a society with a solid value system directed toward building a nation and rapidly developing the state. In contrast, the 1990s immigrants came to a divided society, split between religious and nonreligious, Mizrachim and Ashkenazim, left and right, each camp with a different vision of the future.

Since the aliya from Germany in the 1930s, Israel had not encountered a group of immigrants who were so well educated and represented such impressive human capital as the aliya from Russia. In Israel during those years stories were heard of mathematics departments in leading Russian universities being emp-

tied and hospitals vacated by their doctors. Like the aliya from Germany, the Russian immigrants as a group had a higher level of education than that of the host society (60 percent of the immigrants held academic degrees, compared with 30 percent of Israelis). And like the German aliya, the Russian immigrants lacked knowledge and education about Jewish heritage. Two or three generations of communist rule had erased almost every vestige of Jewish culture and consciousness. The aliya from Russia in the 1970s (about 200,000) had come mainly from the peripheral states, such as the Baltic states, which had been under Soviet rule only since 1939, or from Central Asia. In these regions an active Jewish memory and a Zionist tradition still prevailed. This was not true of the 1990s aliya, which came from the Slavic heartland (Russia, Belarus, Ukraine) and the major cities (Moscow, St. Petersburg, Kiev). In these regions the Jews had been acculturated to Soviet mores for many years, mostly quite successfully. The Jews who came to Israel knew they were Jews, but except for the national-ethnic connection it is doubtful that they had much of a concept of Jewish culture, either religious or secular.

The 1970s Russian immigrants had fought for their right to emigrate from the USSR and came to Israel out of choice (many of their brethren chose to immigrate to the United States). But like the 1930s immigrants from Germany, many of the 1990s Russian immigrants did not come to Israel out of ideology or Zionist fervor. Most wanted to leave Russia because of its political instability and the economic crisis besetting it. They came in the wake of Gorbachev's great changes, perestroika (rebuilding) and glasnost (openness). Their bitter experience of the past had taught them not to rely on the gates remaining open, and they hastened to leave Russia. Many would have preferred the United States, but Washington imposed quotas on immigration from Eastern Europe, fearing a mass wave of immigrants from the collapsing Eastern bloc. For many, therefore, Israel was the default. What catalyzed this aliya was the fact that many candidates for immigration had relatives in Israel, who helped make the distant foreign country seem more welcoming.

Israel of the 1990s was very different from the centralized state of the 1950s whose elites subscribed to a collectivist worldview. It was a country that supported a free market, private enterprise, privatization of services, and a reduced role for the state. At the same time, the 1990s immigrants were an educated group who had no difficulty adapting to the concepts of a modern society and economy. Therefore they were absorbed on a "do it yourself" basis, or as it was officially termed, through "direct absorption." The state did not assign the immigrants to places of residence or employment and allowed them to choose their own HMO. In the 1970s it was customary to keep immigrants in absorption centers for many months, where they were given Hebrew lessons, professional

placement, referral for housing, and health and welfare services. They were also given tours of the country, lectures, and so forth to socialize them and help them adapt to the culture. The process of leaving the hothouse of the absorption center was slow, dependent on when the newcomers obtained housing and employment. Now the new immigrants were given a sum of money equivalent to the value of the services they would have received at an absorption center and had to set their own priorities for spending it. Responsibility for absorption was thus transferred from the state to the individual, the local authority, or to voluntary organizations, in accordance with the policy of privatizing services.

The presence of the Russian immigrants doubled the number of engineers and doctors in Israel. Not all the doctors managed to pass the Ministry of Health professional competency examinations and were compelled to accept a lower status and find work in the paramedical professions or some other field. Emigration usually entails a lowering of status, and the Russian aliya was no exception, at least in its first decade in Israel. But the absorption of this aliya was a great success, and by the end of the decade the unemployment rate among the immigrants was similar to that of the general population.

The Russians brought with them vast technological and scientific knowledge. As discussed, the 1990s saw the emergence of high-tech as one of Israel's leading industries and export sources. Without the aliya from Russia it is impossible to comprehend Israel's conversion to a high-tech power within just a few years, with companies traded on Wall Street and extraordinary economic successes on a global scale. The immigrants demonstrated originality, entrepreneurship, and adaptability to the free, open market. But neither did they shrink from hard physical work, if only to provide for their families with dignity. The aliya from Russia was one of the factors in Israel's economic prosperity in the first half of the 1990s. A wave of immigration is usually attended by an economic boom arising from population growth, the need to invest in order to absorb it, and ultimately the immigrants' contribution to the economy. This wave of aliya came during the peace process, and political optimism fell naturally into place with the optimism that a wave of immigration brings.

The immigrants from Russia did not "divorce" the country of their birth. Connection with the *Rodina* (motherland), Russian culture, and preservation of the Russian language were all important to them. Direct absorption did not require them to be socialized into Israeli culture and society. In contrast with the previous aliyot from Eastern Europe, which the Soviet seclusion policy had cut off from their native countries, the new immigrants were enabled by the collapse of the USSR to maintain contact with friends and family in the old country. Two-way traffic rapidly developed: former USSR citizens came to Israel to examine the possibilities of immigration and absorption, and Israeli citizens visited the old

homeland. Performances by Russian entertainment troupes, theater, and music were in great demand, and they, too, helped preserve the cultural links with Russia.

These immigrants, who came from the Russian Jewish intelligentsia in the big cities, had great interest in nurturing Russian high culture in Israel. Russian-language dailies and high-quality magazines appeared. Readers' demand spawned many publishing houses specializing in Russian-language books. Cultural links and a common language, as well as social interaction among the immigrants, soon created a Russian Jewish community in Israel. These immigrants, who in their native country had not known a community life, for whom virtually any form of association had been forbidden, now established a flourishing community in Israel grounded in Russian culture. This was a phenomenon not seen among immigrant groups in the past. The immigrants from Germany had indeed tried to preserve German language and culture, and to a certain extent succeeded in doing so in towns and neighborhoods where they lived in relatively large numbers. But that culture had no public presence, since German was the language of the Nazi oppressor, and its use was unacceptable. It is doubtful whether the immigrants from the Arab countries—except for the Jewish intelligentsia from Baghdad—participated in their Arab neighbors' secular culture, and in any case the basis of their cultural world was not Arab culture, but Jewish tradition.

The Russian immigrants' desire for a Russian-speaking community that preserved Russian culture did not encounter criticism from the establishment. Unlike the country of the melting pot period, 1990s Israel was a pluralistic society that looked with tolerance on the immigrants' cultural otherness and even granted it legitimacy. There were, however, popular complaints that the Russians spoke only Russian among themselves and excluded Hebrew speakers from their conversation. This habit reflected the collapse of the cultural hegemony of the "first Israel," and its having become resigned to a divided society with no basic consensus about values and culture.

To some degree the Russian immigrants looked down on Israeli culture. They were dissatisfied with the standard of science education in Israel and disapproved of the liberal educational atmosphere in Israeli schools. The familiarity between teachers and students, the low standards of discipline, and the fact that values were not taught troubled them. They therefore established their own education system, either through extra enrichment lessons or by setting up a network of schools and kindergartens in accordance with pedagogical methods they considered acceptable. These schools amazed the veteran Israelis with their high level of achievement. The schools taught in Hebrew but included lessons in Russian language and culture. The immigrants also enriched Israeli culture with various projects; the Gesher (Bridge) Theater, established by Russian immi-

grants, is one of Israel's leading theaters. The Russian aliya also upgraded classical music. Musical ensembles appeared in the peripheral areas, a manifestation of the immigrants' interest in and need of high culture.

The community's cohesiveness and internal communication through the highly developed Russian press were a superb foundation for the development of political organizations. The influence of the Russian aliya on election results was felt as early as 1992. That year the immigrants, who were said to constitute the pivotal bloc between right and left, voted for Rabin because of the absorption difficulties under the Shamir government, which had not received the American guarantees needed for absorption. The Russian immigrants were positioned on the margin between the nationalist-religious and the nonreligious-liberal blocs. Mostly nonreligious, they were sensitive to discrimination against those who were not considered Jewish according to Jewish law. The Law of Return grants immigrants' rights to grandchildren of Jews who are not necessarily Jewish themselves, and also to spouses who are not Jewish. As a consequence, about 25 percent of the immigrants were not considered Jewish according to Jewish law, and faced troubling questions about their status, rights, their own chances of marriage in Israel and those of their offspring, and also their right to a Jewish burial. The rabbis had hardened their position on conversion, demanding observance of the religious laws afterward. That requirement made this option a possibility for very few. Clashes with the ultra-Orthodox over Sabbath observance, the sale of nonkosher meat, and similar issues led to this population becoming a natural ally of the nonreligious bloc.

At the same time, the Russians were suspicious and hostile toward the Arabs, which put into question their support for the nonreligious-liberal camp. During their first decade in Israel, their political position was ambiguous. As noted, in the 1992 elections they supported the Labor Party. In 1996 an immigrants' party appeared for the first time—Yisrael Baʿaliya, led by Natan Sharansky, the refusenik hero of the 1970s. The separation of the vote for prime minister and party enabled the immigrants to vote for a party that would take care of their particular interests while also expressing their new Israeli identity by voting for a national prime minister. In 1999 many cast their vote for Barak, whose illustrious military record impressed them. In that election Yisrael Baʿaliya won six seats, and another immigrants' party, led by Avigdor Lieberman, Yisrael Beitenu (Israel is our home), won two seats. The Russians were also active in the municipal sphere and achieved positions of power and influence in areas where they constituted more than 20 percent of the population. As we saw, Yisrael Baʿaliya was a coalition partner in the Barak government, but left it on the eve of the Camp David summit. The Russians felt no affection for anyone with ties to a socialist past, so from the outset they viewed the Zionist left with suspicion. But they did respond positively

to Rabin and Barak, both of whom had a military image that symbolized Israeli patriotism.

As time went by, however, the Russians displayed a right-leaning tendency, as is apparent in the rise of Avigdor Lieberman. Apart from Lieberman's personality and organizational ability, the Russians' support for him grew out of the mentality of people who had been citizens of a great power. The immigrants viewed Israel's relations with the world in general, and with its Arab neighbors in particular, through a lens similar to the one through which citizens of the USSR had perceived the world. Their old country had reacted forcefully and belligerently to real or imagined threats. The fact that Israel was not a great power, and required a different approach, did not impress the majority of the immigrants. The split in Israeli society over existential questions and cultural issues made it possible for a niche immigrants' party to achieve a significant power position. The Russian immigrants' tendency to protect their social and cultural uniqueness and their use of the press and voluntary organizations to form a community provided them with the tools to create a political framework that could protect their interests. No other aliya seems to have been able to achieve comparable self-awareness and political influence within only ten years.

Some sociologists prophesy that the integration of the Russian aliya into Israeli society is doomed to fail. They maintain that this integration will remain superficial and functional, and that the current cultural and social isolation from veteran Israelis will prevail. An examination of Israeli history suggests a different outcome. The socialization and acculturation processes that take place in the Israeli education system, military service, workplaces, and so forth are indeed weaker as compared with those of the 1950s and 1960s. But even in their current condition, these processes are bound to prevail, and the Russian immigrants' tendency toward isolationism and exclusivity will disappear within one or two generations. This prediction is based on the past experience of Israeli society, and is conditional upon this process not being undermined by unforeseen events.

At the same time as the Russian aliya, tens of thousands of immigrants from Ethiopia reached Israel. There are many and varied conjectures regarding the origins of the Jews in Ethiopia, who were known as "Beta Yisrael" (community of Israel). According to their own legend, they are the progeny of Jews from the Land of Israel who went down to Ethiopia with the Queen of Sheba and her son Menelik, who was sired by King Solomon and became emperor of Ethiopia. Some hold that the first Jews came to Ethiopia after the destruction of the First Temple, when the Jews exiled from Jerusalem journeyed southward and settled in Yebu (Elephantine) in Upper Egypt. These Jews were unfamiliar with Jewish oral law and detached from rabbinic Judaism. They observed part of the Torah commandments and upheld a tradition different from the one accepted in Judaism

since the Second Temple period. Contact was established with them in the early twentieth century, and some reached Palestine.

Doubts regarding the Ethiopians' Judaism initially prevented the State of Israel from taking any action to bring them to the country. In 1973 Chief Rabbi Ovadia Yosef declared that they were indeed Jews, and in 1975 they were recognized as entitled to immigrate under the Law of Return. Various Jewish organizations then embarked on a campaign to convince the government of Israel to bring the Ethiopian Jews to the country. At the same time, because of the unstable political situation in Ethiopia, the Jews began fleeing to southern Sudan, where there were UN refugee camps. News reached Israel of these refugees' grave situation, and Mossad operatives were dispatched to facilitate their immigration. During the 1980s some 17,000 Ethiopian Jews were brought to Israel, including in the airborne Operation Moses, which delivered close to 7,000. In Operation Solomon in 1991, the government of Israel flew nearly 40,000 Ethiopian immigrants to Israel in one week, for fear that Ethiopia's political instability would put them at risk.

The Ethiopian immigrants were absorbed differently than were the Russians. Theirs was a religious culture but very different from the Judaism accepted in Israel. As part of the rabbinic confirmation of their Judaism, they were required to participate in a token ceremony of "return" to Judaism in which the men had to undergo symbolic circumcision. This requirement cast doubt on their Judaism, causing them—particularly the *kaises*, the community's religious leaders—great offense. In a later episode it became known that the Israeli health authorities were not using blood donated by Ethiopian immigrants for fear of contagious diseases. This incensed the immigrants, who developed rancorous feelings that they were being discriminated against.

The Ethiopian immigrants' socialization and adaptation to life in Israel was relatively difficult and protracted. Assuming that immediate exposure to modern life without proper preparation would cause numerous difficulties for the Ethiopians, the immigrant absorption centers adopted the custodianship method used in the 1970s. For the first two years the children were sent to state-religious schools, on the premise that this educational stream was more suitable than the nonreligious one. Later the parents were allowed to choose the stream they wanted. The government invested much effort in absorbing the Ethiopian immigrants; the cost of absorbing an Ethiopian immigrant was estimated as twice that of a Russian immigrant. The epic of the trek to Sudan in the 1970s, in the course of which many hundreds died, and its stories of heroism form the basis of the Ethiopians' identity as Zionists and Israelis and blend well into the notion of suffering and heroism accepted in Zionism. But their identification with Israel was full of problems because of a profound sense of otherness that deepened in

reaction to the host society's reservations. The transition from the small village in the mountains of Ethiopia to the industrialized, achievement-oriented Israeli society was accompanied by crises in family life, in parent-child relations, and between the parents themselves.

The government and voluntary organizations remain aware of the need for tolerance and allocation of special resources for absorbing the emigrants from Ethiopia. There is somewhat less awareness among the wider population that is called upon to send their children to school with Ethiopian children or live next door to them. Here a reluctance to accept the immigrants' foreignness and their difficulties adjusting to the new reality can be detected. What the future holds is impossible to predict, but the relatively small scope of the Ethiopian aliya leaves room for optimism regarding their integration into Israel's diverse human mosaic.

The 1990s were characterized on one hand by increasing multicultural trends, tolerance toward the other, and a strengthening of the liberal elements of society. On the other, there were heightened tensions among the different sectors of society. The debate surrounding the concept of "Israel as a Jewish and democratic state," which appeared in the Basic Laws of 1992, focused on two rifts that divided Israeli society: between religious and nonreligious Jews, and between Jews and Arabs. The concept of a Jewish and democratic state posits that there is no inherent contradiction between the democratic and Jewish elements of the Israeli identity. A state can be the state of the Jewish people—that is, a state with a Jewish majority, which by its very nature will preserve that majority, whose dominant culture has Jewish characteristics, including the language, calendar, Hebrew culture, symbols, and rituals. Together with maintaining this Jewish character, the state will preserve democratic values such as equality, the rule of law, and participation in political life by all sections of the population.

With respect to the concept of the state as Jewish, there were those seeking to emphasize the universal values inherent in a democracy, who wanted to increase trends toward equality and liberalism, individual rights, and defense of minorities and the weak. They were usually, but not exclusively, nonreligious Jews. The extreme radicals among them tended to highlight the democratic element at the expense of the Jewish one in the equation. Thus the post-Zionists wanted the State of Israel to divest itself of its commitment to the Jewish element and become a neutral, civil society blind to ethnic identity, a "state of all its citizens."

In contrast, two groups sought to emphasize the national-religious-particularist character of the Jewish state. The first consisted of the religious and ultra-Orthodox Jews. The second included nonreligious Jews who were similarly unwilling to preserve and enhance the rights of non-Jews. They did not stop at defining the Jewish state as a state with a Jewish majority and a public space with a Jewish cultural character, but demanded that the state's Jewish nature be

strengthened. This would mean separating Jews from those who are not Jewish according to halakhic law and reinforcing the halakhic justice system and the religious courts. Both groups sought to strengthen the Jewish element at the expense of the democratic one.

Accordingly Rabbi Meir Kahane, founder of the outlawed racist Kach (thus) party, contended that there was an inherent contradiction between a Jewish state and a democratic one—that in fact democracy was in conflict with the state's Jewishness. What was more, some ultra-Orthodox Jews, an important group on this side of the issue, considered secular law normatively inferior to the Halakha. Their commitment to democracy was conditional, and they challenged state law from time to time in favor of the "Opinion of the Torah" or the Halakha. The assassination of Yitzhak Rabin and the incitement that preceded it demonstrated that fringe groups in Israeli society have no qualms about taking the law into their own hands when they believe there is a conflict between their own system of norms and the country's law.

As for the second rift over the definition of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state—that between Jews and Arabs—the Jewish population takes Israel being the Jewish state for granted. The vast majority does not doubt the basic justness of Zionism, which sought to build a home for the Jewish people in its ancient homeland. The Law of Return, which grants preferential citizenship rights to Jews and their offspring over other immigrants, seems to the Jews to express the nature of the state as the ingatherer of the Jewish exiles. It is this concept that makes the population of Israel willing to accept the absorption of mass aliyot, despite occasional outbreaks of resentment, as for example when the Mizrachi lower classes felt threatened by the Russian aliya or when the Ethiopian aliya imposed a heavy financial burden on Israeli society. Preserving a Jewish majority in the country is a prerequisite for maintaining this Jewish and democratic character. From the Jews' point of view, this is self-evident. The State of Israel therefore opposes the "right of return" of Arab refugees and also tries to block Arab immigration to Israel from the occupied territories. The fact that the Jews constitute about 80 percent of the citizens of Israel does not allay the feeling of threat regarding this majority's continued existence, given the demands by the Arab refugees and the high rate of population increase among the Israeli Arabs.

For those Arabs this situation appears as a mirror image. To them ensuring a Jewish demographic majority continues the process begun in 1948, which made them a minority in their own land. Over the years the Arabs developed a rhetoric of a "native" minority whose "nativeness" accords it special rights. They have instituted a series of memorial days—Nakba Day, Land Day, Al-Aqsa Intifada Day—that have become the focus of a national myth emphasizing their victimhood at the hands of the Zionist state. Some scholars, such as sociologist Sammy

Smooha, maintain that most Israeli Arabs have a pragmatic attitude toward Israel. They have accepted Israel's existence as the Jewish state, and as citizens seek equal opportunities and cultural autonomy. Others incline toward a less optimistic evaluation. But at least insofar as the Arab population's positions are represented by its leadership, it is not willing to accept the definition of Israel as a Jewish state. According to the Israeli Arab leadership and the intellectual elite, the Arabs of Israel are prepared to accept Israel's existence as a democratic state, but not as a state realizing the Jews' right of self-determination as a nationality—in other words, a Jewish state by definition. They demand that the Law of Return be rescinded, since for them it represents discrimination in favor of the Jews and against the country's Palestinians. They also demand a greater degree of autonomy in education and in managing life in the towns and villages where they constitute a majority.

In the early 1990s Israeli Arabs also made claims for territorial autonomy in Galilee and the Triangle, which they later altered to a demand for nationwide autonomy in education, religion, and culture. Over the years an intelligentsia has emerged among the Arabs of Israel that is fully familiar with state law and ably protects Arab rights. The Supreme Follow-Up Committee for Arab Citizens of Israel, composed of representatives of Arab local authorities, Arab members of the Knesset, and representatives of Arab nonprofit and human rights organizations, constitutes the de facto leadership of this sector, which has an impressive ability to mobilize supporters. The Arabic-language media, television stations, and the internet, in both Israel and the Arab states, boost nationalist trends among the Arab minority. Over recent decades the trend toward Islamization within this minority has strengthened considerably, in parallel with a similar trend throughout the Middle East. The demographic growth of the Arab minority in Israel, which in the year 2000 numbered about 900,000, heightens its self-confidence. Paradoxically this growing self-confidence is evidence that Israeli Arabs are internalizing the Israeli democratic ethos, which enables them to use their numbers to achieve rights and equality.

During Israel's economic development and the increase in the associated liberal trends, the gap in education and income levels between the Arab and Jewish sectors continued to exist. This gap was due to several factors: the constraints imposed on employment of Arabs in security-sensitive industries, Jewish employers' preference for hiring Jews, the low level of education among the Arabs, and the very low participation of Arab women in the labor market. In addition government allocations to the Arab sector for education, development, and industrial projects are far lower than those for the Jewish sector. Discrimination is slowly but surely diminishing, and among Jews there is growing recognition of the need to prevent discrimination in the future. But the prospect of civil equality

in the future does not satisfy the Arab public, and a prominent sector of its elites demands a basic change in the identity of the state as a condition for them to accept it.

The definition opposite to "a Jewish and democratic state" is, as suggested earlier, "a state of all its citizens"—that is, a state that is neutral with respect to nationality and ethnicity, whose citizenship will be solely secular-Israeli. Within the framework of such a citizenship, the entire population would be subject to a single standard in the immigration laws. In fact this would be "a state of all its nationalities," since the Arabs demand recognition as a national group, partnership in decisions pertaining to them, regional autonomy, and equal status for the Arabic language. As an interim stage, the Arabs of Israel seek recognition as a minority with intrinsic minority rights, such as recognition of their organization as a national organization, their leaders' right to represent them on the national stage, and cultural and educational autonomy.

The opposition of the Israeli Arabs—or Israeli Palestinians, in more recent parlance—to recognition of Israel as a Jewish state is reflected in Israeli-Palestinian relations. Many Arabs of Israel vehemently oppose Palestinian recognition of Israel as the Jewish national state in the same way that Palestine will be the Palestinian national state. The Israeli Arabs see themselves as citizens of the state, and as such eligible for all the rights that status gives. But they do not recognize the Jewish state per se as their state, as representing them too. One reflection of this lack of representation is that they do not serve in the IDF; the state exempted them because it doubted their loyalty and also to avoid a situation in which they might find themselves fighting their brothers. But this attitude also appears in their leadership's opposition to young men and women doing any form of so-called national service, such as civil service—even though it would benefit their own people—in hospitals, welfare institutions, and so forth, since such service embodies recognition of the state's authority over them. Their rationale is that "national service" was imposed without their having been consulted. They demand equal rights without the imposition of "national service."

Israeli Arabs' identification with the Palestinian issue has become radicalized, and they are prepared to stretch to the limit their rights under Israeli democracy. Part of their leadership believes it has the license to publicly express its identification with the anti-Israel side, even when Israel finds itself in a state of war with that side—as with Hezbollah, Hamas, or the Palestinian Authority. On the other hand, the Israeli Arabs bitterly oppose suggestions regarding repartition of the country, including transfer of Arab-populated areas on the Israeli side of the Green Line to the PA in return for the West Bank settlements; they accuse the Israelis of racism. The political, economic, and social instability of Palestinian society compared with Israeli democracy (despite all its shortcomings) and the

economic advantages the state affords its citizens make such an exchange option unacceptable to the Arabs of Israel. Nevertheless they continue to refuse to recognize Israel as their state as long as it maintains its Jewish-Zionist character. As a rule the Arab leadership opposes participation by the Arabs of Israel in terrorist acts, but some view violence as a legitimate means of advancing political aims, as manifested in the provocative incitement by these leaders leading to the outbreak of violence in October 2000 described earlier. Even after this traumatic rioting, these leaders would not condemn the use of violence. These events renewed the Jews' deep suspicion of the Arab minority. At the same time, the Arabs of Israel were enraged when the security forces behaved toward them with the same forcefulness used against Palestinians in the occupied territories, instead of with the care due even to violent demonstrations by citizens of the state. The result was to further distance the two communities from each other.

Overall during the 1990s, tensions increased between veteran Israelis and new immigrants, religious and nonreligious Jews, and Arabs and Jews. Mass immigration brought to the surface latent tensions over the nature of Jewish-Israeli identity and in relations between the Jewish majority and the Arab minority. During those years controversy raged between the "new historians," who stressed the injustice done to the Arabs by the establishment of the State of Israel, and historians who saw the new historians' version of the story as both one-sided and a distortion of history. This debate formed a sort of cultural echo around the peace process, posing once again the basic questions of Jewish-Arab relations and raising anew conflicting perceptions of Jewish-Israeli identity.

To mark Israel's celebration of its fiftieth anniversary in 1998, the state television channel aired a documentary series covering those fifty years. The series, *Tekuma* (rebirth or revival), was a continuation of a 1981 series titled *Amud ha'esh* (pillar of fire), which covered the fifty years between the First Zionist Congress and the declaration of the state. *Amud ha'esh* expressed a consensus; it described the Zionist narrative of the history of the establishment of the state. In contrast, *Tekuma* was a critical series that sought to reflect not only mainstream positions but also the views of oppositional movements in Israeli society. Regarding the Israeli-Arab divide it attempted to address not only the Jewish version of the history of the state but also the Arab version. Particularly controversial was the segment on the PLO and the terrorist organizations, which some sections of the public thought tilted too much toward the Arab side. The Jewish-Arab conflict became a popular subject in the arts, theater, cinema, and television. The Israeli cultural scene cultivated the subject of the injustice Israel had inflicted on the Arabs with incessant self-flagellation, in the spirit of the "culture of guilt and remorse," as poet Chaim Gouri termed it.

After the collapse of the Eastern bloc, tours of the death camps and Jewish

commemorative sites in Poland became part of the syllabus for high school students. The journey to Poland was intended to reinforce Israeli youth's awareness of the Holocaust, bring them together with American Jewish youth, who also participated in these tours, and promote a culture of remembrance of the Jewish past. As part of the public debate on post-Zionist identity, the lessons the youngsters should be taught on the tours were debated. Should they be specific to the Jews, along the lines of "the whole world is against us," or universal, in the vein of *If This Is a Man*, by Primo Levi? Should the tours foster latent Jewish existential fears, or reinforce liberal trends against racism and hatred of the other, and for human rights?

The tours did seem to succeed in affirming the young people's Jewish identity, preserving the memory of the Holocaust, and making that memory tangible, due to the participation of Holocaust survivors, who described their personal experiences in the years of horror and turned the foreign scenes of the death camps into something the students could relate to personally. The Holocaust became an integral part of Jewish identity in general and Israeli identity in particular, shared by all Israelis, as well as common ground connecting them with Diaspora Jewry. There was something symbolic in the fact that Chaim Topol played the role of Salah Shabati, the popular hero from the Islamic countries, in the 1950s, and then from the late 1960s onward portrayed Tevye the Milkman, the representative of the Eastern European shtetl Jew who perished in the Holocaust. Israel appropriated the community of remembrance of the Jews who perished as a sort of non-Israeli past that serves as a common emotional foundation for all the Jews of the world.

Side by side with a common Israeli identity, there existed a divided society—or perhaps a society of diverse cultural communities, each of which sought to preserve its uniqueness. The power of the unifying ethos weakened (although it did not disappear), and, when it briefly seemed that the peace process would make it less necessary to strengthen national identity, it was doubtful how solid national solidarity actually was. Increasing materialism resulting from economic growth and the rise in the standard of living alienated those who did not participate in the festival of consumerism. Instead of national solidarity and identity, globalization and multiculturalism became the watchwords. However, the outbreak of the Al-Aqsa Intifada confronted Israeli society once again with the existential facts of life in a region that is in perpetual turmoil.

Would the rude awakening from the hopes of peace and tranquility that characterized the 1990s—as represented in Rotblit's song—bring in its aftermath a new solidarity and greater social and cultural cohesiveness? Would the October 2000 clash between the Arab minority and the Jewish majority lead to a rupture or to renewed understanding of the need to find a way toward coexistence? Those ques-

tions have only been answered in part. As we move into the second decade of the twenty-first century, we can likely expect all of the above—and also its opposite.

NOTES

1. In his poem "On the Slaughter," Bialik writes: "If there is justice—let it appear immediately!" The poem was written in 1903 as an almost instantaneous response to the Kishinev pogroms that erupted at the termination of the Passover festival that year. Chaim Nachman Bialik, *Hashirim* (The Poems), Avner Holtzman (ed.), Israel: Dvir, 2004, p. 248.

2. Aaron David Miller, *The Much Too Promised Land: America's Elusive Search for Arab-Israeli Peace*, New York: Bantam Books, 2008, p. 14.

3. Dennis Ross, *The Missing Peace: The Inside Story of the Fight for Middle East Peace*, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005, p. 45.

4. *Al-Ahram*, 11.10.1995, cited in Itamar Rabinovich, *The Brink of Peace: The Israeli-Syrian Negotiations*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998, p. 195.

5. Patrick Seale, "Assad's Regional Strategy and the Challenge from Netanyahu," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 26, 1 (Fall 1996), pp. 27–42, as cited in Rabinovich, *The Brink of Peace*, p. 244.

6. Itamar Rabinovich, *Waging Peace: Israel and the Arabs, 1948–2003*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004, pp. 167–168.

7. Dennis Ross, *The Missing Peace*, p. 767.

8. Gadi Taub, *Hamered hashafuf: al tarbut tze'ira beYisrael* (A Dispirited Rebellion: Essays on Contemporary Israeli Culture), Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuhad, 1997, p. 17.

9. Orly Castel-Bloom, "*Sippur*," *Mitokh sippurim bilti retzoniim* (A Story, in Involuntary Stories), Tel Aviv: Zmora Bitan, 1993, p. 103, as cited in Taub, *Hamered hashafuf*, p. 154.

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SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

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