

# ISRAEL

A HISTORY

## IO THE GREAT ALIYA MASS IMMIGRATION



The phenomenon that had the most profound long-term ramifications for shaping the image of Israel was the immigration that occurred in waves during the state's first two decades. Particularly significant was the wave that arrived during its first three years. For decades this aliya was known as "the mass aliya," but recently the custom has taken hold of calling it "the great aliya," as if the word *mass* implied a somewhat derogatory attitude. The sensitivity toward the character of this aliya revealed by that change in nomenclature hints both at the immigrants' sense of deprivation and humiliation and at an attempt to conciliate and bring them closer, to heal the wounds of the past. This mass immigration was an enterprise of vast proportions undertaken by a new regime intoxicated by the knowledge that it now held the reins of power and believing it could realize all its dreams. At the same time, this enterprise was a painful example of lack of consideration for human need, giving the benefit of the collective priority over the welfare of the individual, and belief in the power of ideology to shape a new human and a new nation.

The wave of immigrants that inundated Israel as early as 1948–1949 was dubbed "a cloudburst." In the Middle East rain is a blessing, but a cloudburst can also bring devastation. During the heroic illegal immigration struggle, the main Zionist slogan had been "free immigration." Now that vision was coming to pass; immigrants were reaching the Jewish state. But it abruptly became clear that despite the intense expectation and the rhetorical anticipations of the arrival of this aliya, no one was actually prepared for the tremendous mass of humanity pouring into the country.

The first to arrive were from the displaced persons camps in Germany, the survivors of European Jewry who, after nine years of war, wandering, suffering, and the loss of family and home, now hoped they had found a permanent haven. In addition the British now opened the gates of the detention camps in Cyprus where illegal immigrants intercepted on their way to Palestine were held, and all the detainees came to Israel. As this group took their first steps in the country, the Bulgarian government granted exit permits to its Jewish citizens. Bulgaria was a member of the Communist bloc, which was already closed off to Western Europe by the Iron Curtain. The Jews of the USSR had been denied the right to leave the country since the 1920s, and every exit permit from an Eastern bloc country was considered an irrevocable opportunity. Now, with no prior warning, an entire

community—its leaders, its young and old—was about to immigrate to Israel. Obviously they could not be told, “Wait a while!” The same urgent need to snatch an opportunity that might never be repeated existed in Poland and Romania. The governments of both these countries were completely unpredictable; one day they allowed people to leave, the next day leaving was prohibited, the day after—allowed again. Memories of the war and what followed, of murder and pogroms perpetrated by local populations, were still fresh in the minds of immigrants and Israelis alike. The Yishuv leaders’ feelings of guilt and helplessness during World War Two regarding the Jewish catastrophe in Europe were now channeled into a broad national consensus. Waiting was out of the question. All Eastern European Jews who wanted to leave and could leave must be brought to Israel.

There were other communities of Jews as well who faced danger at home and sought to immigrate to a country of their own. Throughout the Middle East and North Africa, relations between Muslims and Jews had been strained, especially since the establishment of the Jewish state and the War of Independence. In Egypt, Iraq, and Yemen tensions rose between Jews and their neighbors due to hostility from both the government and the street. The tradition of aliya to the Holy Land had brought the Jews of Yemen to Palestine in a thin trickle since the time of the First Aliya. Now they came in thousands. From small, remote townships in the mountains where they felt especially vulnerable, and from Sana‘a and other cities, they streamed into Aden, the British colony at the tip of the Arabian Peninsula. The British agreed to allow the Yemenite Jews to remain in Aden on condition that the State of Israel evacuate them as quickly as possible. The airlift of Yemenite Jews to Israel was dubbed “Magic Carpet,” and it aroused enthusiasm for the young state’s newfound capabilities.

Just as the Jews of Yemen landed in 1949, tens of thousands more Jews began arriving from Tunisia, Turkey, and Libya. In Libya there was a pogrom against the Jews, and the entire community wanted to emigrate. The immigrant camps, particularly Sha‘ar Ha‘aliya (gate of immigration) outside Haifa, were bursting at the seams. There was no immigrant housing. The housing shortage since the end of the World War was not yet over, and now a quarter of a million new arrivals had to be provided with housing, food, and employment. The housing problem was partially solved by settling about 130,000 immigrants in abandoned Arab villages and towns: Jaffa, Haifa, Tiberias, and Ramla. The housing was not ideal, but it put a roof over people’s heads. The first mass aliya immigrants, from Bulgaria and the DP camps, were considered privileged in that they settled in the center of the country, close to sources of employment and reasonable schools. But that was only the start of the big wave.

In March 1950 the Iraqi government announced that it would allow Jews who wished to emigrate to leave, if they waived their citizenship. This law was to

remain in force for one year only. It was the conclusion of a protracted process that began with Iraq's independence in 1932. Since the turn of the century—and especially under the British Mandate—the country's proud and successful Jewish community had modernized and integrated into the Iraqi economy and culture. But heightened Arab nationalism and the effects of the national conflict in Palestine had increased tension between Jews and Muslims in Iraq. Now the Iraqi Jews, who felt rooted in their homeland, found their economic and civil status undermined. Where they had been citizens with equal rights, they were now dependent on the grace and favor of the government. Whereas until the 1940s the majority of the community had considered itself part of the Iraqi people, this identity was now destabilized in the face of hostility from the government, the media, and the masses. Some educated young Jews joined the Communist Party and looked to regime change in Iraq as the only way out of their frustration. Others turned to Zionism. The Zionist movement in Iraq had been active since 1943, gaining support from eager young people.

The law allowing emigration was intended to bring about the departure of several thousand Jews whom the government saw as an active core of incitement among the Jewish population, as well as of poor Jews who had nothing to lose. The Iraqi government estimated that about 10,000 people would emigrate, while in Israel the estimates ranged from 30,000 to 40,000. Shlomo Hillel (an Israeli born in Iraq who was an emissary of “Hamossad Le'aliya” there) estimated that some 70,000 would immigrate. No one imagined that 120,000 would come. But once registration began it snowballed. As more and more people registered to immigrate, others increasingly feared what might befall them if they remained as a small, persecuted minority. Meanwhile, in order to stop the emigration, the authorities began to limit the amount of money and valuables allowed to leave the country. Finally, in March 1951, they froze Jewish assets in Iraq and prohibited emigrants from taking anything out. Immigration to Israel, which had begun slowly (at the same time as another wave of immigrants from Romania), ultimately became a panicked flight during which an affluent, well-established community became penniless refugees. In 1950–1951 the entire Iraqi Jewish community immigrated to Israel. In contrast with the Orientalist romanticism of Operation Magic Carpet, this time the airlift operation was given the biblical code name “Ezra and Nehemiah,” after the leaders of the Jews who returned from the Babylonian exile during the reign of Cyrus.

The Israeli government had limited control over the process of immigration. Unexpected political situations such as those in Iraq, Poland, and Romania impelled the immigration of hundreds of thousands of people whom the Jewish state could not turn away. In his memoirs Shlomo Hillel describes a conversation in which Levi Eshkol, the Jewish Agency treasurer, told him, “Tell your good Jews



[in Iraq] that we shall be very pleased for them all to come. But they shouldn't hurry. At the moment we have no absorption possibilities. We don't even have tents. If they come, they'll have to live in the street." Ben-Gurion, on the other hand, forcefully rejected claims that Israel had limited absorption capacity: "We must bring the Jews of Iraq and all the other dispersions that are prepared or have to immigrate, as soon as possible—without considerations of property and absorption possibilities."<sup>1</sup> Attempts by the government and the Jewish Agency to introduce qualifications for immigration failed. Prohibitions against the sick, the disabled, and people unable to work were opposed by the immigration emissaries in the various locations. Nor were the authorities in Eastern Europe prepared to accept limitations on immigration on grounds of health. The percentage of immigrants in the mass aliya who needed welfare assistance was particularly high. The daily *Haboker* wrote: "This aliya was brought here without selection. There are many who have been stricken by fate, the aged, elderly, infirm, chronically sick, disabled, and other social cases . . . people who have no will to work, who lack the understanding and the patience to overcome the basic conditions here."<sup>2</sup>

By 1950 the situation in the immigrant camps was intolerable. The director of the Sha'ar Ha'aliya camp described it thus:

The immigrants were locked in, surrounded by barbed wire fences, and guarded by armed police. At different periods the crowding in the wood and stone huts left by the British Army reached brutal levels. Three times a day they stood in long lines for their food ration. The lines wound for kilometers around the medical and customs services. On more than one occasion the immigrants had to wait for hours for their turn in the bathhouses, while the latrines overflowed. There was not always sufficient water in the camp, there were frequent power cuts, and at night the camp was in total darkness. . . .<sup>3</sup>

The immigrant camps were supposed to provide temporary housing until the immigrants were processed and moved to permanent housing. But there was nowhere to move them to. Construction of immigrant housing lagged far behind the number of new arrivals, and was also held up by the shortage of foreign currency. At a meeting of the Jewish Agency Executive, Dr. Giora Josephthal, who was in charge of the Agency's immigrant absorption department, said, "When fifty men and women, old people and children, are in one dormitory, an impossible atmosphere is inevitable. These are conditions of humiliation in which we cannot hold people. . . . In a short while the good human material that comes to the camps sinks into depression, until the people do not have the strength to do anything but cry quietly. . . ."<sup>4</sup>

In addition to making immigrants miserable, the camps imposed a very heavy burden on the Jewish Agency's meager budget. Their inhabitants were not sup-

posed to leave until they moved to their permanent location. They did not work and were fed by the camps' kitchens. Life in the big dormitories without privacy and the possibility of living a family life demoralized people. Thus arose the idea of the ma'abara (pl. ma'abarot), the transit camp. Until permanent housing was built, immigrants would be transferred to temporary housing where each family would have its own unit. The father would be able to go out to work and earn an income, the mother would be able to cook for the family, and the children would go to school. The ma'abarot were to be an intermediate stage between the immigrant camps and permanent housing: a vast improvement in the immigrants' living conditions, the first stage of their productive life in Israel.

However, it was soon evident that conditions in the ma'abarot were not much better than in the camps. The ma'abara housing units were tents, tin shacks, tarpaulin or wooden huts—of any material that could be used for rapid, cheap construction. The buildings were small and temporary, so they had no electricity or water. Washing facilities and toilets were in communal buildings. “My first encounter with the ma'abara was with a group of youngsters. When I asked where the showers were, they were astonished by this odd question, and replied, ‘We haven't showered since we left the Beit Lidd camp.’ In the whole camp there were two faucets for everyone. About a thousand people. The toilets had no roof and were infested with flies. Corrugated iron buildings for showers had been erected, but in the absence of water they too had been turned into toilets.” This was one journalist's description of his encounter with the Migdal-Gad ma'abara.<sup>5</sup> His account was one of the less repellent given by the ma'abarot's detractors.

Up to the end of 1950, sixty-two ma'abarot were built, housing some 100,000 people. At the end of 1951, after three years of mass immigration, the number of ma'abara inhabitants reached 220,000 (out of more than 250,000 people in temporary housing). There was constant turnover: from the aircraft or ship to the camp, and thence to the ma'abara. Some immigrants preferred the camps, where they received their daily food ration plus free health and education services, to the ma'abarot, whose inhabitants had to work for a living. Employment in the ma'abarot consisted of small-scale trading within the ma'abara itself or of workfare, which was subsidized employment in afforestation, road building, or construction of permanent housing for the ma'abara inhabitants. This low-paid, temporary work did not guarantee a future livelihood but was designed to avoid idleness, which the country's leadership considered the leading cause of degeneration and corruption. They believed that every effort must be made to prevent it.

On top of the shock of immigration, unfamiliarity with the mysteries of Israeli bureaucracy, and not understanding the language, the ma'abarot inhabitants had to undergo proletarianization. They were compelled to get used to physical work, which in their countries of origin was considered demeaning. Some with initia-

tive (and sometimes with certain means) left the camps, were helped by relatives or friends, found work, and broke out of the institutionalized absorption process. Harshest of all perhaps was the experience of the Iraqi immigrants in the ma'abarot. The Holocaust survivors and Cyprus detainees had reached the country after years of living in camps, the Yemenite immigrants had traveled far and spent time waiting in camps before immigrating, and the North African immigrants had been in transit camps before reaching Israel. For the Iraqi immigrants, however, only a flight of several hours separated a spacious, pleasant house from the depressing wretchedness of a tarpaulin-walled shack in the ma'abara. Not by chance did several writers emerge from the Iraqi aliya whose experience of Israel was burned into their consciousness through the ma'abara, which they described in their works.

The second half of 1952 saw a sharp drop in immigrant numbers, due, among other things, to the news of absorption difficulties. For the next three years the absorption system was able to catch its breath and plan and execute an evacuation of the ma'abarot. Over the next six years most of the ma'abarot were demolished and their inhabitants moved to permanent housing. As had also happened in the immigrant camps, when the ma'abarot were vacated quite a few people refused to leave, either because their relatives remained there, it was close to their place of work, it was familiar and reasonably comfortable, or because after years of dependency, independence seemed intimidating. Much as when the DP camps in Germany were vacated, some people who lacked education and were socially less competent remained as welfare cases, while those with initiative and energy quickly seized the opportunity to rebuild their life.

The tremendous difficulties created by this aliya gave rise to a conflict between the people in charge of overseeing the process of bringing in immigrants and those responsible for absorption once the immigrants arrived. The second group demanded that the flow of immigrants be based on absorption capacity. They warned that the intolerable conditions in the immigrant camps and ma'abarot were creating a human catastrophe. To them the uncontrolled aliya policy, which reflected a willingness to sacrifice individual people for the sake of "ingathering of the exiles," was irresponsible. On the other side, the people in charge of immigration saw the disintegration of entire communities: people cut off from their homes and familiar environments, who had abandoned their work. These activists could not just stop this process in the middle—in some cases they had initiated it themselves. For them any limits on immigration undermined their "holy work"—not to mention leaving thousands of immigrants in the limbo of transit camps with no possibility of going back home.

## MIZRACHIM AND VETERAN ISRAELIS

In 1950, for the first time since the modern return to Zion began, the majority of immigrants came from Muslim countries. During the Yishuv period 90 percent of immigrants were from Europe. In the first and second years of mass immigration, the Ashkenazim were still in the majority. But from 1950 onward most immigrants were Jews from the Middle Eastern and North African countries. In 1952 some 60 percent of ma'abarot residents came from Muslim countries, people who were later given the blanket name "Mizrachim" (lit., Easterners). Although the Moroccan immigrants were just a small minority in the wave of mass immigration, they received particularly bad press. There are some grounds for the belief that some of the Moroccan immigrants in that first wave had come from the *mellahs*, the ghettos of the major cities, where harsh conditions of poverty and social disintegration prevailed. This group included some criminal elements who were labeled "Morocco knife" (due to their supposed propensity to pull a knife at the slightest provocation), as well as a large number of aged and disabled. Younger people, and those who had the means, chose to remain in their homeland. In the early 1950s French rule in North Africa was still stable and the region's Jewish communities were not threatened.

Given the absorption difficulties, and based on an assessment that in certain countries no rescue aliya would be necessary, in November 1951 the Jewish Agency Executive introduced selective immigration from countries where immigrants could be chosen. Rescue aliyot and immigrants able to fund their own absorption were exempt from restrictions. To a great extent the restrictions were based on the same principle of absorption capacity that had been in force during the Mandatory period. In the early days the state gave immigration priority to young people with military training who could join the IDF-Gahal (an acronym for *Giyus Hutz La'aretz*, overseas recruits). But after the war all restrictions on immigration had ended. Now the new regulations limited the majority of immigrants to families in which the breadwinner was younger than thirty-five. Those without means or a profession were required to work in agriculture for two years. Approval for immigration required a medical certificate that gave the candidate a clean bill of health. These criteria were not strictly adhered to, and as time went by they were relaxed. The age limit was raised to forty, a disabled person in a family was allowed to immigrate if the family had an active breadwinner, and so forth.

The saying that Israelis love immigration but not the immigrants was especially true of mass immigration. The veteran Yishuv had undergone numerous travails and suffered losses during the years of struggle and the War of Independence. Both ordinary people and elites were exhausted and longed for respite. The establishment of the state and mass immigration opened paths to rapid advancement for veteran Israelis in government, the army, education, and so

forth. From the start of the wave of mass immigration, the Israeli public displayed quite limited willingness to volunteer to help with immigrant absorption. The statism concept that so many of the Yishuv elite had challenged now released the objectors and their comrades from responsibility for national missions. In theory they wanted a return to the standard of voluntarism, but in practice they were not willing to volunteer themselves. It is quite possible that the whole matter of ingathering of exiles on such an enormous scale seemed strange and intimidating to them, beyond what they were capable of coping with.

A few here and there did volunteer. Women's organizations were active in the Sha'ar Ha'aliya camp helping the new immigrants. The moshav movement sent hundreds of volunteers to help in the new immigrant moshavim (discussed later). The kibbutz movement took in Youth Aliya children. But these were negligible minorities, as is demonstrated by the failure of a call to Yishuv veterans in the winter of 1951 to host immigrant children in their homes after the ma'abarot were hit by severe flooding. Hundreds, not thousands, of households responded. When the ma'abarot were built, the authorities sought to locate them near established communities that would provide both services and employment for the immigrants. But the stronger and more established the municipal authority, the more easily it managed to keep the ma'abarot at arm's length. Thus there was only one ma'abara in the Tel Aviv area, and Ramat Gan did not permit the construction of ma'abarot in its jurisdiction. So the ma'abarot were built near relatively weak towns that could be forced to accept government authority, but these towns had difficulty providing the immigrants with the services and employment they needed.

Veteran Israelis were oblivious to the new immigrants. Uriel Simon described the alienation between the two worlds thus:

A person rides on a train and sees the landscape of his country, and in it—the ma'abara. The ma'abara with its numerous gleaming tin shacks crowded together around the stinking latrines seems like a wound in the flesh. Disheveled children dressed in tatters stand at the roadside and wave to him with their little hands. For a fleeting second their eyes meet, and he sees the glint of their eyes, but he does not raise his hand in reply. He prefers to remain alien and distant, he fears the contact.<sup>6</sup>

The immigrant camps and the ma'abarot were a world unto themselves, with which only a few veteran Israelis came into contact. They read about what was happening there in the newspapers. The articles described a foreign, frightening country: rubbish and filth, wretchedness, apathy, idleness, and a life of degeneration.

Veterans looked at absorption difficulties as part of the suffering required to attain the Land of Israel. "When we came to this country" became a catchphrase veterans used to justify the hardships faced by the new immigrants. The veterans

had already endured their own hardships and were not willing to return to an emergency regime; in fact the failure of the austerity measures was partly an expression of their rebellion against these new decrees being imposed upon them. The dramatic descriptions in the press of the camps and ma'abarot did not generate sympathy for the immigrants, but rather a sense of alienation and fear, as if the camps posed a danger to the settled country. The image of the immigrants as filthy and suffering from chronic and other diseases only heightened this fear. When a polio epidemic hit the country, some said the immigrants had brought it with them.

The veteran Yishuv was alarmed: was the Zionist enterprise in danger of extinction? Were these waves of immigration, which it had not asked for, about to inundate the country? Even Ben-Gurion, who supported continuing immigration unconditionally, wrote:

“The emerging Jewish people” of which Herzl thought and on which he built his Zionist policy and activity was in fact the Jewish people in Europe. . . . The state was established and did not find the people that had awaited it [that is, the people who were awaiting the state perished]. For hundreds of years the Jewish people were faced with a question or a prayer: could a state be found for the people? No one dared ask the terrifying question—would a people be found for the state when it came into being . . . ? And this question is in fact the question of questions for the State of Israel that has been founded in our time.<sup>7</sup>

Israel was supposed to be a modern state oriented toward Europe and the West, yet now it was stuck in the mire of the immigrant camps.

The negative images of immigrants—for example, “human dust”—did not differentiate between Holocaust survivors and immigrants from the Islamic countries. Would the veteran Yishuv be able to mold this great human mass into its own image? Numerous articles in the press expressed concern over what might happen: “Bringing in tens, if not hundreds, of thousands of people unsuitable for Israel did not strengthen the state, or bring benefit to the Yishuv, did not provide a better hope for the future, and also did not benefit the people themselves, who in very many cases are far more unfortunate and embittered here than they ever were among their neighbors overseas,” wrote Shmuel Ussishkin in *Haboker*. The stigma attached to the immigrants was not restricted to the bourgeois right-wing faction represented by *Haboker*. “A Yishuv with numerous sick, decadent, and unrestrained elements will not withstand the social and security tests that await us. . . . Undermining the health and the psychological and moral balance of the Yishuv—the core of future generations—is recklessness that will swiftly rebound at us in a terrible way,” asserted *Davar*, the Mapai newspaper.<sup>8</sup> A public furor erupted over a series of articles by *Ha'aretz* journalist Aryeh

Gelblum, who spent a month in an immigrant camp disguised as an immigrant. He used negative stereotypes to describe all immigrants, but he reserved the worst ones for the North Africans, particularly those from Morocco. Even reporters who defended the immigrants did not go out of their way to compliment them. But whereas Gelblum assumed that it was impossible to change these ignorant, primitive people, others believed that through education and patient molding of their personalities, these immigrants could be transformed into worthy citizens.

In one of his articles Ben-Gurion writes: “The dispersions that are being terminated [that is, entire communities, such as the Bulgarian and Iraqi Jews, that were liquidated through immigration to Israel] and which are gathering in Israel still do not constitute a people, but a motley crowd, human dust lacking language, education, roots, tradition or national dreams. . . . Turning this human dust into a civilized, independent nation with a vision . . . is no easy task, and its difficulties are no less than those of economic absorption.”<sup>9</sup> These remarks make two assumptions. The first is that it was possible to turn every Jew into a model citizen like the best of the veterans. He repeated this over and over. He was said to have remarked that he awaited the appointment of a Yemenite chief of staff—a statement that was characteristic, for Ben-Gurion aspired to the formation of one nation, unified in one culture, with standards worthy of the modern world. His second assumption involves a recognition that in the initial stages of immigrant absorption the state was concerned solely with immigrants’ physical needs: a roof, food, health services, and minimal education. It did not invest similar efforts in socialization processes.

#### AGRICULTURAL SETTLEMENTS AND DEVELOPMENT TOWNS

The immigration “cloudburst” of the early 1950s interrupted government plans for national population distribution. Concentrating most of the Jewish population in the three big cities—Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, and Haifa—and in the area between Hadera and Gedera seemed to go against the national interest from the standpoint of security, economics, and culture. It also appeared to be a mistake in terms of quality of life. Aryeh Sharon, an architect and director of the planning department in the prime minister’s office, drew up a plan designed to rectify this problem by directing new immigrants to the development areas: the Galilee, the Jerusalem corridor, and the Negev. Sharon explained that Jews had become concentrated in the big cities during the Yishuv period because land was not available for settlement in all parts of the country. Now this could be remedied with two types of settlement. The first, agricultural settlement, was as we have seen the traditional Zionist priority. It was therefore determined that 20 percent of the

population should be farmers. Accordingly five hundred new settlements were established in the first five years of the state, and 13 percent of the new immigrants were settled in them.

The second type was urban settlement. This was an innovation, something the Zionist movement had not yet initiated. Although most of the Jewish population preferred city life, ideologically the city was considered an obstacle to creating the new Jew—a hothouse for propagation of a petite bourgeoisie, whose existence hindered the needs of building a nation. The Sharon Plan was based on a perception prevailing in Britain at the time, a lesson learned from World War Two, of the vulnerability of large concentrations of people during air raids, as well as of the inherent disadvantages of big cities—filth, slums, alienation, and so forth. The new concept involved building small- to medium-sized cities based on meticulous regional planning that would take into account population distribution, security, urban aesthetics, the economy, and society. This was the planning basis for the development towns. In the years between 1948 and 1964, more than thirty of these townships were established.

During the Yishuv period agricultural settlement had been the privilege of those with private capital who could purchase a citrus grove or vineyard, or of groups of pioneers who waited many years until they were allowed to settle on the land, and in the meantime underwent “agricultural training.” Either way, agriculture was a conscious choice people made. No longer. Except for a minority of the graduates of agricultural training who went to kibbutzim, the 13 percent of immigrants who were sent to rural locations had not chosen pioneering settlement. At first an attempt was made to select the candidates for settlement and organize them into groups according to their skills and wishes, but the process rapidly became completely random, as the following testimony demonstrates:

At the immigrants' camp we were approached with a proposal to go to a village. When we asked where the village was, we were told, “In the Tel Aviv area.” We liked the location and agreed to go. We had no idea what a moshav was. We were happy to get away from the immigrants' camp. The truck left the Beit Lidd ma'abara first thing in the morning, and the journey lasted for many hours. After a long ride along dirt roads . . . through wide-open spaces with neither bush nor tree, we reached a small tent encampment in the early evening. The people refused to get off the truck. They said they had been promised a village near Tel Aviv, not at the end of the world. After an argument the family elder got up and said, “I'm getting off. This is my land and this is where I shall be buried.” Once the old man got off, so did his family, and they were followed by the others. When the driver saw that they had all got off, he started the truck and drove off. That's how the settlement of [Moshav] Patish began.<sup>10</sup>



Elements of this testimony recur in dozens of others: the deceit by the authorities; total ignorance of what a moshav was; shock at seeing the wilderness to which the newcomers were brought; and, left with no choice, acceptance of the situation.

The arrival of the mass immigration led Ben-Gurion to call upon the kibbutz movement to open its doors and give the immigrants jobs. However, this suggestion contradicted the kibbutz's guiding principle of "self-labor"—that is, to not employ hired labor. The kibbutzim refused, leading to a clash with Ben-Gurion. In a speech in the Knesset on January 16, 1950, he declared himself "ashamed and embarrassed" by the kibbutz movement's attitude toward immigrant absorption. In a way the establishment of immigrant moshavim was Ben-Gurion's response to the kibbutzim's refusal. Settling thousands of immigrants with neither experience in nor inclination toward agriculture—which in their native countries was considered an inferior occupation—was an extremely daring experiment whose chance of success was unclear.

During the Mandatory period a precondition for settlement on the land was having a consolidated group of young people who were prepared both mentally and physically for the hardships awaiting them. This type of settlement required a prolonged training period for people who were already ideologically committed. The leaders of the kibbutz movement now contended that without a selection process for candidates, there was no chance that settlement would succeed. Experience had taught them that even after extensive training, many people left the kibbutzim, because of the hardship of the life, social tensions, or personal reasons. The notion that one could establish an agricultural settlement based on a random group of people, usually from the same family or region, but sometimes from several different places, who had no prior training, mental preparedness, or any knowledge of agriculture whatsoever, contravened all the historical experience accumulated during the Yishuv period. The kibbutz movement wanted nothing to do with this process, and in rejecting it chose to lose its central place in Israeli society.

It was the veteran moshav movement that came to the aid of the new settlement process. During the Yishuv period this movement was relatively weak and less prestigious than the kibbutz movement. Now its finest hour had arrived. The moshav, in which the smallholding belonged to the family, was more suited to the mind-set of Eastern European immigrants, for whom the kibbutz was reminiscent of the hated kolkhoz (collective farm), and even to immigrants from Muslim countries, for whom collectivism of any kind was anathema. Foremost in the minds of the settlement authorities was having the Jews till the soil and establish a Jewish village; all the rest of the moshav requirements were temporarily put on hold.

The encounter with the wilderness where they were sent stunned the new moshav settlers. During the first years they were monitored by Jewish Agency Settlement Department advisors, who helped them deal with Israeli bureaucracy, represented them before various government bodies, and mediated between them and the agencies responsible for allocating resources to start their farms. In the second stage, instructors who belonged to the moshav movement answered Ben-Gurion's call to come live in the new moshavim and help acclimatize the new farmers, emphasizing social and cultural absorption. The beginnings were very difficult. In the Negev settlements there was a delay in laying the water pipe to the moshavim. Attempts at farming were doomed to failure, and the settlers had to bring in water from great distances for drinking and other household needs. Electricity was also delayed, and not every settlement had a generator. Until the settlements were connected to the grid, it was impossible to use machinery or install milk coolers in the new cowsheds. Plowing was done with mules until a tractor arrived some time later. But the settlers did not know how to maintain agricultural machinery, and until one of them was taught to repair the tractor, it stood idle.

The settlers' lack of experience was exacerbated by the inexperience of the settlement authorities, who did not know which crops were suitable for each location, what was economically viable, and what was obsolete. In addition to vegetables, which the farmers grew beside the houses and later expanded for marketing, the advisors introduced sugar beet and cotton, industrial crops that increased both economic capability and arable land. There were also some attempts at fruit growing, especially grapes and deciduous fruit, but until the settlers had learned what worked and what did not, it was not clear whether farming had a future. In the meantime, and until agriculture yielded a return, the settlers made a living by building their own houses and local infrastructure.

The settlements were far from main roads, and public transport reached each moshav only several times a week. Most settlements had a nurse, but only occasional visits from a doctor; the doctor had no car, and neither did the settlers. The Jewish Agency built public institutions—a school, synagogue, and meeting room—as well as permanent housing, which at first was extremely spartan. The Jewish Agency's management was vital for teaching settlers the new, foreign reality, and it worked to benefit them. But as a result, the settlers saw themselves not as owners of smallholdings but as the Agency's hired workers, exempted from responsibility for the farm and its machinery and livestock. Thus, for example, in some moshavim the settlers neglected the cows they had been given to start a dairy farm, since these cows “belonged” to the Jewish Agency. On the other hand, they nurtured and raised the calves, which were “theirs.” Chickens allocated to develop the poultry industry were eaten. Seed potatoes met the same fate. Cheat-

ing the Agency about the number of workdays completed was accepted practice, nothing to criticize. The settlement authorities had little faith in the settlers, and allocated the land designated for them in stages according to progress in the moshav's agricultural capacity. Often there were confrontations with neighboring kibbutzim, which took over the land in the interim, then refused to turn it back over to the moshavim.

A considerable conceptual gap separated the settlers from their advisors. The advisors had been raised on the principle of collective action—mutual assistance among settlers, common use of machinery, and organized marketing through Tnuva (an agricultural produce cooperative). All these principles were foreign to the new settlers. For them the bottom line was the kinship unit. Moshavim that included people from different backgrounds never became cohesive, and in the end some settlers left. Those who remained tried to bring in new settlers from their own families. Consequently the moshavim developed on the basis of the expanded family unit—the *hamoula* (clan). Instead of a group of pioneers linked by ideology, the kinship unit became the glue of the new moshav. The advisors also tried to introduce a culture of democracy—an elected committee and a transition to self-management. But in many cases internal frictions led to frequent changes in the committee, and it took several years for a culture of self-management to develop. In the moshavim that did become cohesive and had stable populations, a community was shaped within five years, and an authentic local leadership emerged. These moshavim became prosperous as early as the 1960s.

The new moshavim altered accepted practices in the moshav movement in particular, and the Hevrat Ha'ovdim in general. They refused to accept Tnuva's marketing methods, which set the price of agricultural produce when it arrived in the city and delayed payments due to the farmers. Instead the moshavniks sold their own produce and established their own purchasing and marketing organizations, freeing themselves of Tnuva's "guardianship." As they became socialized and learned the economic and social system, they adopted the country's standard political operating procedures, and in the 1960s one could find representatives from the new moshavim among the leadership of the moshav movement, and even of Mapai. In the 1970s the new moshavim prospered and were considered a great success story.

As we have seen, the development towns were established at the same time as the new moshavim. Contrary to the population distribution plan, some were built near the *ma'abarot*. Thus, for example, Or Yehuda was built near Lod on the basis of the *ma'abarot* in the area. The first sign of development towns being located for purposes of population distribution was the establishment of Kiryat Shmona and Shlomi in the Galilee, and Yerucham in the Negev. The first to settle in these towns were people from the *ma'abarot*, who agreed to move to relatively

enhanced housing there. But the vast majority of ma'abarot inhabitants preferred to remain in the center of the country.

The end of French rule in Morocco and concerns about the country's new nationalist regime brought a new influx of North African immigrants in 1954 and 1956. This time the authorities sought to avoid its mistakes in absorbing the first wave. They informed the immigrants about the difficult conditions in advance and even had them sign an agreement to settle where they were sent. This wave of about 70,000 immigrants in 1954 and 1956 was sent to the outlying areas as part of an operation dubbed "From Ship to Village." Some immigrants went to the Lachish district, in the southern part of the country, a well-planned region including both moshavim and townships intended to serve as urban centers, where the housing that awaited them was equipped with household utensils and means of production. Throughout this process the immigrants remained passive; their voices were not heard. A woman described her journey to Ofakim as follows: "We stood by the ship's rail, our eyes streaming with tears as on the horizon we saw Mount Carmel. We reached Haifa and were immediately loaded onto a rickety truck. We drove for the rest of the day. We came to a gloomy place, not knowing what it was or what it was called. We refused to get off the truck. After a few minutes of commotion, arguments, my husband David was arrested by the local police. That was our welcome. . . ."11

This description of the well-oiled bureaucratic process that left the immigrants with no choice of avoiding the path laid out for them recurs in the words of the organizers: "In the years that we absorbed . . . Jews from North Africa, they were like putty in our hands. We took them from the boat and sent them directly to settle. We didn't ask them what they wanted and it worked. The experiment with a hundred thousand people sent to settlement was a success."12

When immigration from Poland was renewed in 1958, following a wave of antisemitism, the population distribution policy was suspended. Because many of the immigrants had relatives in Israel, *landsleit* (people from the same town), and friends, there was a different attitude toward them. Moreover, while immigrants from the Muslim countries could not return to their homelands, the absorption authorities assumed that the Jews of Poland or Hungary (whence immigrants had come after the Soviet suppression of the 1956 revolt) had the choice of not leaving their country, returning to it, or even going somewhere else. Therefore, if the authorities wanted them to stay in Israel and encourage other Eastern European immigrants (there was always the hope of immigration from the USSR), they must be allowed appropriate absorption conditions. Thus the majority of European immigrants were absorbed in the center of the country, while the outlying areas were settled mainly with immigrants from Africa and Asia.

Ever since Mandate times, there had been poor neighborhoods on the out-

skirts of the big cities—Kerem Hateimanim near the Carmel Market in Tel Aviv, Neveh Tsedek and Neveh Shalom on the edge of Jaffa, and the Hatikva neighborhood in south Tel Aviv. The Nordiya neighborhood of shacks and crates remained in the heart of the city for many years. After the War of Independence these poor neighborhoods expanded and even overflowed into new areas. In all the cities the residents of neighborhoods on the margins between Jews and Arabs had fled for their lives during the war. A large portion of them found refuge in abandoned Arab villages and neighborhoods whose residents had also fled. Thus the Salameh neighborhood near Tel Aviv was established on the site of an abandoned Arab village. In the heart of Tel Aviv a poor neighborhood was established where the village of Jamusin had been, whose new residents rejected all the proposals to relocate them. Jerusalem saw the establishment of Musrara and Katamon. All these overcrowded neighborhoods had inferior, unrenovated housing and lacked adequate public services. Their advantage was proximity to the city centers, which gave their residents hope of employment and a reasonable standard of education. Overcrowding in these neighborhoods increased once many residents of the ma‘abarot, development towns, or moshavim decided to leave the places where they had been sent and seek their fortunes in the big city. In a poor neighborhood one could always find somewhere to live, either for free or very cheaply.

In 1959 social protest accompanied by rioting broke out for the first time in Israel’s history. The driving force behind it was young Moroccans from Haifa’s Wadi Salib neighborhood. The riots were a manifestation of the resentment of young people who had grown up in Israel and served in the IDF—some had even fought in the War of Independence—over the lack of possibility for employment and advancement and the failure to recognize them and their needs. The riots revealed that the poor neighborhoods on the city’s outskirts, with their concentrations of young people from the Mizrahi ethnic communities who had left the ma‘abarot and settlements in the outlying areas, were a powder keg that could explode. Moroccan immigrants made up only 30 percent of the residents of Wadi Salib, but they were the majority of the unemployed and welfare cases. The protest died quickly after minor adjustments were made to the wages of workfare workers and child allowances were provided. But it was the first time that the ethnic problem—the connection between ethnicity and poverty, ethnicity and marginal populations—had emerged into the spotlight.

The press reports on the Wadi Salib riots in no way deterred the large wave of immigrants from Morocco that arrived between 1960 and 1964. Nor did these reports induce the absorption authorities to stop this immigration, even though they perceived the Moroccans as very troublesome, posing a threat of disorder. Researcher Yaron Tsur believes that while the Moroccan immigrants blamed “the

Poles”—a derogatory term embracing all Ashkenazim—for their hardships, their attitude toward the Jewish state nevertheless remained positive and patriotic. That is, the power of Jewish nationalism, rendered more potent by the instability and insecurity of Jewish life in Morocco, coupled with an economic crisis there, was stronger than grievances against the Israeli authorities and resentment of their attitude toward the Moroccans. At the same time, the government’s decision to continue the immigration of more than 100,000 Moroccan Jews showed how the sense of national responsibility overcame reservations about the immigrants’ character. The State of Israel could not turn its back on the largest Jewish community remaining in an Arab state, whose well-being hung by a thread and depended on those authorities’ benevolence. Also, the Jewish state’s need to strengthen its Jewish population was more important than any social or ethnic reservations.

The majority of the 1960s immigrants were sent to the development towns, where they became the bulk of the population. These towns were designed to serve as intermediaries between the big cities and the outlying agricultural areas, commercial and cultural centers for the surrounding kibbutzim and moshavim. The problem was that parallel to the development towns, regional councils had been set up that performed these same functions. The towns were supposed to be garden cities, but their aesthetic standard was very low, since the city centers had not been developed and no commercial or cultural services had been created there. Most of these towns remained small, under 20,000—the population level that had been set to assure the residents adequate municipal services. In many, there was no local leadership that felt any responsibility toward the residents. Population turnover was high, and attempts to bring in residents from the veteran Yishuv were unsuccessful. The schools were neglected and lower in quality than the regional council schools to which the kibbutzim—and even the new moshavim—sent their children. The main problem in most development towns was the highly unsound employment infrastructure. Only at the end of the 1950s with the establishment of industry, including the labor-intensive textile industry, were some development towns able to break out of the cycle of chronic unemployment and show signs of recovery.

There were, of course, differences among the towns. Beersheba became the capital of the Negev, and to all intents and purposes a fully developed city. The same was true of Ashdod, whose port gave it a tremendous developmental boost, and Ashqelon, which combined tourism and industry. Arad and Carmiel, the last two development towns to be established, were founded on planning that had been improved by the lessons learned from previous mistakes. But it was not until the late 1960s that the development towns established in the early 1950s achieved stability in population and employment, and acquired some cultural

institutions. Until then they were poor and backward, and this image remained with them for a long time. The immigrants from Eastern Europe, mainly Romania, who were sent to these towns right at the start, managed to leave them for greener pastures. The result was to heighten the sense of insult and deprivation felt by the remaining residents and at the same time reinforce the connection made by the “first Israel” between the Mizrachi (mainly Moroccan) population of these towns and the poverty and neglect rampant there.

Each wave of immigration looks up to those who came before it and tramples those who came after it. In Israel the absorption process was tempered by the national ethos, which wanted and welcomed the immigrants. The state was responsible both for encouraging the immigrants to come and for directing and regulating them once they arrived. It is hard to think of another country that has invested so much in its immigrants. Therefore, the country wore both the coronet of its successes and the crown of thorns of its failures. The attempts to force upon the immigrants the task of settling the outlying areas—a mission the veteran population would not undertake—had some success, but led to a great deal of bitterness and hurt.

The society that took in the immigrants did not intend to humiliate or harm them by using them as human putty. On the contrary, it believed that the faster it could bring these people from their premodern communities into the wonders of modernity, the better it would be both for them and for the State of Israel. Thus the absorption authorities did not hesitate to eradicate ancient customs, disrupt age-old social structures, and destroy accepted traditional orders. The majority of immigrants from the Islamic countries loved and respected religious tradition. The basic social structure in those countries was the patriarchal family. Respect for the elderly, the synagogue, and accepted customs—from dress and food to marriage ceremonies and religious ritual—had all been part of life for generations for most people. The immigration process disrupted the family and undermined the authority of the elders and the heads of families. Religion lost its dominant status, and the immigrants’ entire way of life came under attack.

There were some elements in the immigrants’ culture that Israeli society simply considered unacceptable; for example, the marriage of young girls, polygamy, and women’s inferior status in the family. In these cases the clash between the old and the demands of the new was inevitable. But with respect to all the other aspects of the Mizrachi immigrants’ culture, it is doubtful that accelerated modernization was necessary. Israeli advisors, teachers, and army officers tried to impose norms and behavioral standards on the immigrants that collided with what they had brought from their home countries. The values of deferring gratification and what sociologists call “the achievement syndrome,” typical traits of the modern Westerner, were alien to many immigrants, who had difficulty adapt-

ing to them. The initial encounter led to a tendency among the younger generation to assimilate into the native-Israeli group, a process later known as *hitashkenazut* (becoming Ashkenazi). But as time went by, as the immigrants began to feel more at home in Israel and surer of their identity as Israelis, they recalled past insults and the pain of losing their identity on the way toward Israeliness, and demanded that lost elements of their original culture be recognized as legitimate.

It was not just immigrants from Islamic countries who lost their pre-immigration cultural roots. For Eastern European immigrants the encounter with the culture of the veteran Yishuv, different from what they had grown up with, required changes in their way of thinking, as well as in behavioral and cultural norms. But since most had come from a Jewish society destroyed by the war and the Holocaust, the reshaping of identity that occurred in Israel was less traumatic than for those whose identity was only destabilized when they encountered Israeli reality.

A 1966 conference at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem made one of the first attempts to reflect on “the melting pot” policy and its outcomes. In contrast to their initial hostile reactions to the shock of mass immigration, the Yishuv veterans by now had a more balanced view of the moshavim and development town settlers as “reluctant pioneers,” as well as some understanding of their absorption difficulties and their suffering. The sociologists and anthropologists who participated raised the possibility of a shift away from the melting pot policy, which created a “pressure cooker” that forced rapid changes in traditional cultures, to what they called a “cholent pot” (referring to a traditional Jewish stew, usually simmered slowly overnight). That is, they recommended slowing down the process of modernization and conducting it with consideration of and sensitivity to immigrants’ traditional culture, leadership, and entire social structure.

This was the first discussion of the possibility that an Israeli culture would eventually emerge that would be pluralistic, not exclusively that of the Yishuv. The conference participants were not entirely sure what a pluralistic culture would be like, but raising the question expressed their discomfort with the cultural coercion exerted toward the immigrants and was coupled with a demand that the immigrants’ right to a sort of autonomy be recognized. This debate also raised for the first time the inherent contradiction between two national objectives: population distribution and *mizug galuyot*, integration of different communities. The outlying areas were populated mainly with Mizrachi immigrants, and the center of the country by Ashkenazim. The immigrants preferred to live in homogeneous settlements based on the kinship unit, which provided some consolation in the face of the hardships of absorption. Only 2 percent of veteran Israelis went to live in the outlying areas. “Today the Yishuv has nothing to be proud of. The values it glorified before the establishment of the state are pres-



ently only declarations,” asserted Mordechai Ben-Porat, a former member of the Mossad Le‘aliya and himself an Iraqi immigrant.<sup>13</sup> Ben-Porat was referring to the veterans’ unwillingness to answer the state’s call to go live in the outlying areas, but it seems his words can also be applied to the veterans’ attitude toward the mass immigration enterprise in general.

#### SOCIALIZATION AGENTS: SCHOOL, ARMY, POLITICS

After the period in the early 1950s when the authorities lost control over immigration, the process became organized and regimented, but it still disregarded the need for socialization. As we have seen, the authorities had instead focused on basic needs. The rest was supposed to take place on its own. Yet a socialization process appeared, not complete, not perfect, whose effectiveness increased as the years went by. The main socialization agents were the school, the army, and politics. In the initial enthusiasm that attended the arrival of thousands of immigrants, the “workers’ stream” worked resolutely and with dedication to establish an education system in the immigrant camps. There was immediate protest, for the teachers did not hesitate to tell students to cut off their sidelocks, throw away their hats, and turn their backs on religious tradition. Boys and girls sat together in the same classroom and learned not to respect the traditions of their forebears. The teachers, graduates of the labor movement, considered this a vital step on the path to modernization. But to the religious parties it amounted to forcing religious Jews into apostasy, touching the issue closest to their hearts. It was inconceivable that observant Jews in Israel should not receive a religious education and instead be forced to learn in a nonreligious setting.

Those most affected were the Yemenite Jews, who were very observant. The attempt to educate them in a secular spirit—or provide a religious education under the aegis of a nonreligious body like the Histadrut—was perceived by the religious parties as coercion. The issue had more than spiritual importance, since the religious parties saw the observant immigrants as a source of political power that would enable them to enlarge their faction. Mapai, for its part, sought to extend its own electoral influence through education in the spirit of the labor movement. Both sides claimed the right to educate the children of Israel. The compromise reached in the end was that the immigrant camps housing Yemenite Jews would have religious education provided by a religious stream, while in the other camps the parents could choose the stream in which their children would be educated, in response to various promises of material benefits made by the two political factions.

The problem became more complex with the move to the ma‘abarot, where the same conflict recurred. These disputes combined Kulturkampf with a fight for votes, and ultimately led to a government crisis and the dismantling of the educa-

tion streams and the establishment of state and state-religious education, both under the authority of the Ministry of Education. The disunity among the ruling elite on this question and the interparty struggle for the immigrants' votes supplied an important lesson in Israeli power politics. In an immigrant country the school is generally the most powerful agent of socialization, but in Israel it wound up having only limited influence, either because of the separation of nonreligious and religious or because it lost the educational momentum it had established in the prestate years.

Another socialization agent of the first order was the IDF. It was in the army that young immigrants met the children of veteran Israelis, and even if the Israelis displayed considerable arrogance toward the newcomers, their shared military service nurtured a fraternity between the two groups. Immigrant soldiers returning home from service brought different behaviors, new insights, and a better understanding of the meaning of Israeliness. As a result, clashes occurred between the older generation, which remained loyal to patriarchal tradition, and the younger generation, which rebelled against it.

The third socialization agent was the political system. In the 1960s there were already people from the mass immigration waves within the political parties—including the ruling party—and among the municipal authorities. Some had even been given senior posts. The new immigrants were courted by all the parties, and their electoral power acquired particular potency as part of the socialization process. Just as veteran Israelis knew how to promise the earth in return for voting the “right” way, the newcomers quickly learned that they could reverse the roles and demand their slice of the political pie because they represented a broad public. Integration into politics demonstrated understanding of the mysteries of the Israeli government and the ability to use the democratic system for the benefit of victims of the absorption system.

Was there discrimination against the Mizrachim? Did the European immigrants enjoy better absorption conditions than their fellows from the Islamic countries? The Eastern European immigrants did have several advantages. First, they arrived earlier and were given housing in the abandoned Arab towns and neighborhoods in the center of the country. Second, this aliya comprised mostly young people—a consequence of the selection process imposed by the Holocaust—and almost no elderly people. Families were small, and in many cases the women went out to work. In some cases the family's economic situation was further boosted by reparations payments from Germany, which began arriving in the late 1950s. These immigrants were less educated than those from Eastern Europe who had arrived before the war, but better educated than those from the Islamic countries. They also had subjective advantages; the people who managed



PLATE 1.  
 ZIONIST SETTLEMENT IN  
 THE FIRST AND SECOND  
 ALIYA PERIODS, 1882-1918

PLATE 2.  
THE PEEL COMMISSION  
PARTITION PLAN, 1937



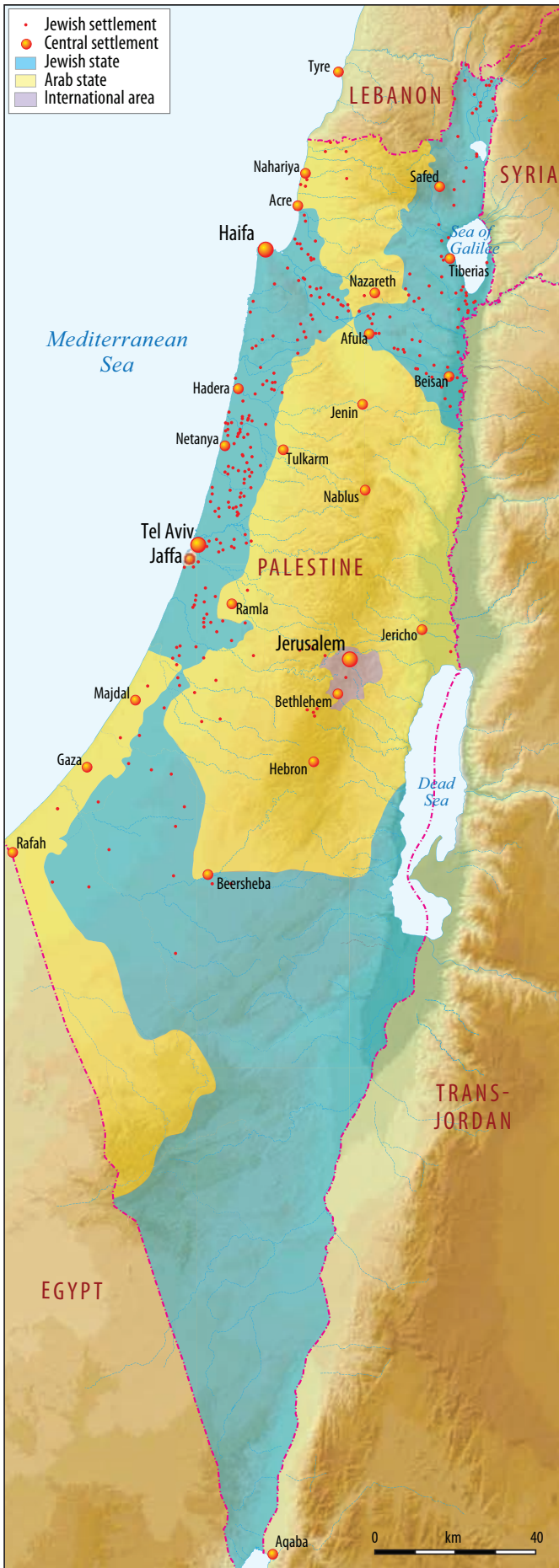


PLATE 3.  
THE UNSCOP PARTITION  
PLAN, 1947



PLATE 4.  
 THE 1949 ARMISTICE  
 AGREEMENT GREEN LINE  
 BORDERS





PLATE 5.  
THE NEW SETTLEMENT MAP,  
1948–1959



PLATE 6. THE NATIONAL WATER CARRIER, 1964





PLATE 7. THE POST-SIX-DAY WAR BORDERS, AND SETTLEMENTS IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES, 1967-1977



PLATE 8. THE ALLON PLAN, JULY 1967

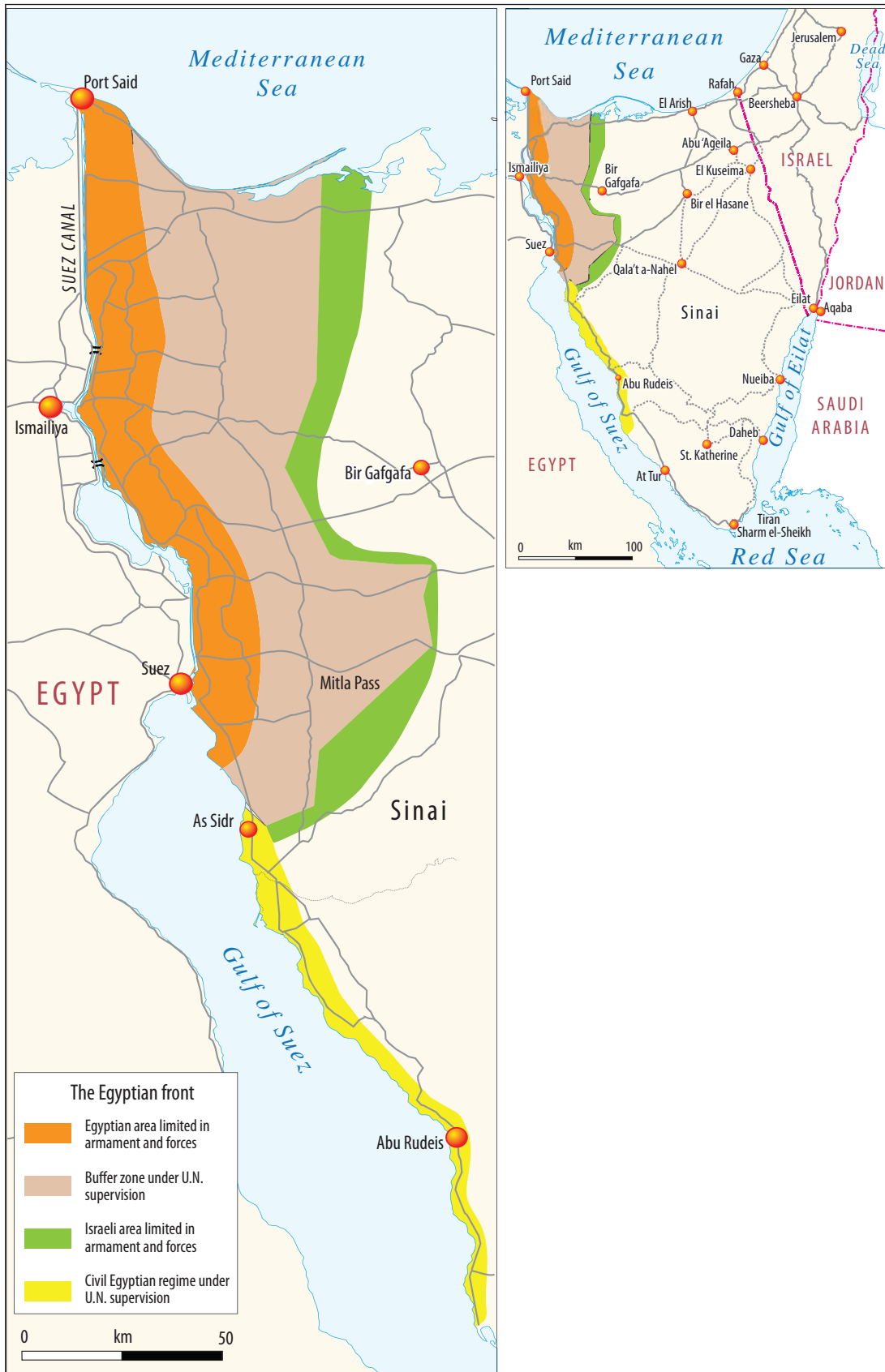


PLATE 9. THE ISRAEL-EGYPT INTERIM AGREEMENT, 1974



PLATE 10. THE POST-CAMP DAVID ACCORDS MAP, 1978





PLATE 11. SETTLEMENTS IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES, 1977–1988



PLATE 12. THE OSLO ACCORDS MAP, 1993

their absorption came mainly from Eastern Europe. Yiddish was the *lingua franca* of European Jews, and it made contact between the immigrants and the representatives of Israeli bureaucracy much easier. Even if there was no intentional discrimination, there was a certain advantage for those whose language was understood. Furthermore, as suggested earlier, many new immigrants had relatives, friends, or *landsleit* with contacts in Israeli social networks. In a society where *protektsia* was common currency, people with contacts enjoyed an advantage. Moreover, as we have seen, after the 1958 *aliya* from Poland it was accepted practice to give Eastern European immigrants better absorption conditions out of concern that otherwise they would not come, or would leave Israel, thus discrediting *aliya*.

Immigrants from Islamic countries came with large families, often including elderly people. Most families had a single breadwinner. The later they came, the more likely they were to be settled far from the center of the country. Their level of education was very low, and most had no profession suited to conditions in Israel. Those who had already been modernized in their countries of origin (like the city dwellers from Iraq) succeeded in finding their way in Israel, and within only a few years managed to achieve economic stability, higher education, and a prominent place in the Israeli *intelligentsia*. But the vast majority were forced to traverse a long, agonizing obstacle course. Moroccan immigrants in particular had great difficulty. The entire Moroccan community did not immigrate to Israel; its elite, which had been part of the educated urban bourgeoisie in Morocco and was successful in business, chose to immigrate to France or Canada. It was thus members of the lower socioeconomic levels of the Moroccan community who arrived in the first two waves of immigration to Israel. They were uneducated and had no professions or skills suited to a modern economy. When members of the Jewish-Moroccan middle class, imbued with French culture, came to Israel in the 1960s, they found themselves the objects of stereotyping that encompassed all Moroccan immigrants. Moroccan Jews had internalized the concept of colonial order, which put Europeans at the top of the scale. They came to Israel with feelings of resentment toward Europeans that were manifested, among other things, in a sense of being insulted and discriminated against. The fact that they lagged behind in comparison to other immigrants heightened their bitterness and rage. They perceived the demand that they accept the values of the society that took them in, that they change and adapt to modernity, as an insult and a refusal to accept them as they were—a rejection that was both social and cultural.

The State of Israel accepted overall responsibility for absorption. Could it have avoided the paternalism and bureaucracy that made the system so hated by immi-

grants? The system's disadvantages seem to have been built in to its mission. It would not have been possible to transfer many different populations, so culturally diverse, in such a short time, to a poor country with no resources and no experience of taking in masses of people without direction from above, in a process that did seem semi-military. Nor could such a process have been accomplished without destroying existing patriarchal, religious, and cultural traditions, without impugning the immigrants' dignity, and without profound misunderstandings of the most basic human relations and social patterns.

In every immigrant country immigrants accept such experiences as self-evident, part of the conditions of immigration. But not in Israel. Immigrants to Israel saw themselves not as aliens seeking a new homeland but as members of the Jewish nation returning to their own homeland. They expected a warm, sympathetic welcome from their brethren, and never anticipated diminished status, damage to tradition and family structure, or insult and patronization. The gap between their probably utopian expectations and the reality they encountered caused great rancor. Nor did their sense of deprivation, discrimination, and affront dissipate with the years; it was handed down from generation to generation as part of Mizrahi culture in Israel. As it turned out, the first generation of immigrants developed a sense of pride as the years passed and a self-image of being settlement pioneers in the outlying areas. It was their children, educated by the state, who internalized the feelings of insult and rage, which they made the basis of their identity. When they reached adulthood, these youngsters undermined the country's existing order.

Israeli society of the mid-1960s was unlike that of 1948. It was far more diverse, both ethnically and culturally. The ruling Ashkenazi socialist veteran elite was no longer unified. The struggles within it, together with changes in the cultural climate resulting from greater contact with the outside world than in the past, led to the rise of individualist trends. The power of the collective as a formative factor was in decline. This society, in which the hold of the old socialist culture was waning, was now disposed to show greater tolerance and acceptance of pluralism. This shift made possible the slow, painful completion of the absorption process. From then on the question no longer focused on "absorption" but on a "gap" between haves and have-nots.

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9. Ben-Gurion, "Yihud veyi'ud," p. 25.

10. Testimony of Habib Sharbaf in Devorah Hacoheh, *Hagarin vehareikhayyim: hityashvut ha'olim banegev ba'asor harishon lamedina (The Grain and the Millstone: The Settlement of Immigrants in the Negev in the First Decade of the State)*, Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1998, p. 96.

11. Testimony of Hannah Maimon in Avi Pikar, "Mi vami haholkhim: ikhlusan shel ayarot hapituah" (Who Is Going: Populating the Development Towns), in Zvi Zameret, Aviva Halamish, and Esther Meir-Glitzstein (eds.), *Ayarot hapituah (The Development Towns)*, Idan 24, Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi, 2010, p. 201.

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