

Intra-Jewish Conflict in Israel

White Jews, black Jews

Sami Shalom Chetrit



Routledge Studies in Middle Eastern Politics

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This is the first book in English to examine the political history of Mizrahi Jews (Jews from the Muslim world) in Israel, focusing in particular on social and political movements such as the Black Panthers and SHAS. The book analyzes the ongoing cultural encounter between Zionism and Israel on one side and Mizrahi Jews on the other. It charts the relations and political struggle between Ashkenazi-Zionists and the Mizrahim in Israel from post-war relocation through to the present day.

The author examines the Mizrahi political struggle and resistance from early immigration in the 1950s to formative events such as the 1959 Wadi-As-Salib rebellion in Haifa; the 1970s Black Panther movement uprising; the 'Ballot Rebellion' of 1977; the evolution and rise of the SHAS political party as a Mizrahi Collective in the 1980s, and up to the new radical Mizrahi movements of the 1990s and present day. It examines a new Mizrahi discourse which has influenced Israeli culture and academia, and the nature of the political system itself in Israel.

This book will be of great interest to those involved in Middle East studies and politics, Jewish and Israeli studies and race and ethnic studies.

Sami Shalom Chetrit (PhD), a Moroccan born Hebrew writer and scholar, is Assistant Professor in the Department of Classical, Middle Eastern and Asian Languages and Cultures at Queens College, CUNY, in New York city. He is the author of numerous books and articles on Israeli society, culture and politics.

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**In memory of
Sa'adia Marciano,
a Black Panther**

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Preface

The title of a talk I recently gave in New York included the phrase, “White Jews, Black Jews.” In the discussion following the lecture, a friendly woman warmly suggested that I not use the terms “white and black” in the Jewish context; she found it off-putting and thought it distracted from the main point. And what is the main point? I asked politely. The main point is the social problems, she replied. Then she explained: “After all, there are no black Jews in Israel, apart from the Ethiopians.” Another participant asserted that today, in 2009, all this talk of ethnic tensions and economic gaps between Ashkenazi Jews and Mizrahi (Middle Eastern) Jews in Israel is antiquated and meaningless, since, he argued, the State of Israel has already achieved full equality among all ethnic groups, and no one cares which ethnicity you belong to anymore. “For example,” he added, “I am half Ashkenazi and half Mizrahi, and neither half really interests me.”

Those two comments, which I have heard on many other occasions in response to my presentation of this book, embody the entire domestic-Jewish ethnic debate in Israel. The first speaker was averse to the parallelism which I draw not only in the title, but also in the book itself, between black–white relations in the United States, and Ashkenazi–Mizrahi relations in Israel. She recognized the existence of tensions among Jews, but would like to believe that they are based on economic status and not ethnic origin. After all, as she said, there are no black people in Israel. She was referring purely to color. Whereas I, of course, am talking about black socioeconomic status, black political consciousness. And indeed, things are not so clearly black and white. There are Mizrahim in Israel with a totally white consciousness, and they despise any Mizrahi claims of oppression and discrimination. Conversely, there are Ashkenazim in Israel with a completely Mizrahi consciousness. And in between are many shades of grey. This is also the situation in the United States, of course.

The second speaker wished to believe, as do most Jews in the West, that all of Israel’s political problems revolve solely around the national question, meaning, conflicts between Jews and Arabs or between Israelis and Palestinians. The reality, as we all know, is quite different, but it is more comfortable to imagine this sort of Jewish unity in face of the Arabs. In this narrative, Jews never star as the baddies. It is difficult for Western supporters of Israel, Jews and Christians alike, to contend with the fact that there is not only constant conflict between Jews and Arabs in

Israel, but also ethnic tensions and vast economic discrepancies within Jewish society, between Europeans and Mizrahim, or, as the title indicates, between white and black people. In other words, Israel, much like the United States, features all the characteristics of a polarized society, with plainly oppressive economic relations, in which most European Jews are in the upper echelons of the social ladder, and most Mizrahi Jews and Arabs are on the lower rungs. As in any place with such polarization, the oppressed groups struggle for their existence and status in society. Much has been written regarding the Palestinian Arabs' resistance to political and social oppression. This book, however, is concerned with the social and cultural struggle of Jews from Arab and Muslim states in Israel—the Mizrahim.

The book seeks to throw open the front door to the critical narrative of Mizrahim in Israel, which has been resolutely and persistently denied by European–Zionist historiography in Israel and in the world, in both public and academic realms. As a result, most of the population in Israel and in the West labors under a forced ignorance of this dimension in the annals of Zionism and Israeliness: the cultural encounter between Zionism and the state of Israel on the one hand, and the Jews of Arabia and Muslim countries on the other, together with all the social and political implications of this encounter. This ignorance breeds fear and aversion, which prevent us all from taking a brave look in the mirror, aimed at recognition, thought, and action for change.

Having studied some six decades of Ashkenazi–Mizrahi relations and the Mizrahi struggle, which has always been the central social struggle, I can say with confidence and a great degree of sorrow that the regime's ability to oppress and control the protest and resistance has never been greater or more confident as it has during the last decade. Today, there is no organization or movement, nor a coalition of movements, with the capacity to threaten the extant economic order—not even the labor unions, which always have one eye on the seat of power. This, despite the fact that the Mizrahi resistance launched a long social and cultural process that changed the face of Israeli democracy, engendering such developments as the political system's transition to a bipolar structure, extremely broad political representation for Mizrahim (even if it was, in part, false), extremely high rates of exercising electoral power in the local municipalities, community politics, social movements, research and rights organizations, alternative education groups, a flourishing of alternative Israeli–Mizrahi culture in literature, film and music (albeit still on the margins), significant legislative battles, and critical academic discourse. However, in seemingly paradoxical fashion, all these changes were accompanied by a consolidation of power by the national right—the economic right—which has spent the past three decades dismantling the welfare state and removing every last vestige of the state's responsibility for the dignified existence of all its citizens, residents and foreign workers. Why, then, has a mass social reform movement not emerged? The reasons are discussed extensively in the book, but here I shall mention only the main conditions for the silencing of any significant social struggle.

First, because the Mizrahi agenda is represented by the margins of Israeli society, it has struggled to gain legitimacy among the Israeli political system, the

media, and the academe, even though in fact it has always been largely a typical social struggle, similar to ones we know from the rest of the world. Consequently, every time the regime and the media crushed the Mizrahi struggle, they were in fact silencing the essential social resistance in Israel, because there was no other. For decades, any talk of tension between Ashkenazim and Mizrahim would immediately inflame the various Israeli establishments, who hurried to denounce the claims as anti-patriotic talk that endangered the “unity of the nation of Israel,” whose existence is (always) in danger. To this delegitimization of the Mizrahi struggle, we may add the distress of the Israeli Arab movement, whose every sign of social protest is perceived by the regime as a hostile act threatening national security and, consequently, is met with a military response; the movement’s leaders are persecuted by the political and legal systems, and to a great extent also by the media.

Second, the “greater Israel” ideology espoused by the Likud and its partners garnered “built-in support” from the Mizrahim, who moved to the Likud in 1977 as an act of rebellion against the Labor Party, which had brought them to Israel and was responsible for the criminal shortcomings in their absorption process. When they switched their allegiance to the Likud, they were not making an ideological transition, as is mistakenly argued, but rather they had found a political ally for their protest. The Mizrahim continue to give prominent support to national and nationalistic agendas, as part of their subconscious attempt to attain the favored Israeli identity, that of the Ashkenazi hegemony. This right-wing nationalistic ideology, which has engendered the bloody conflict with the Palestinians in the past decade, has become a powerful tool of manipulation that silences all sparks of protest or voices of social and economic change. Any reasonable person must know that on the day the Israeli–Palestinian conflict ends, Israel’s social and civic issues will erupt into the center of the national agenda.

Third, the religious Mizrahi–Sephardic party, SHAS, which presented itself to many Mizrahim as an alternative to the Likud and the *Maḥdal* (National Religious Party), and which used many cornerstones of the Mizrahi protest discourse in a purely symbolic way, has in effect become a release valve for the Mizrahi struggle and a sponge for social protest. SHAS has been a partner in almost all the economic-right governments, and has supported the policy of dismantling welfare institutions in Israel while continuing to absorb social foment among the impoverished Mizrahi communities.

It is clear, then, that only a decisive change in these three conditions will have the power to engender a social–cultural change movement, which today has at its disposal a sophisticated discourse, models for change, and, more importantly, diverse coalitions capable of shattering the ethnic isolation that has always afflicted the Mizrahi struggle.

One of the central axes in this book is the development of a critical Mizrahi discourse, which in fact shaped the overall radical social discourse in Israel and greatly influenced the development of the critical sociological and historiographical discourse known as “post-Zionism.” But the essence of this book is to describe and analyze Mizrahi political acts and responses to the oppressive ideologies and

policies—both cultural and economic—in which they found themselves from the moment they set foot on Israeli soil. These acts, aimed at both the regime and the collaborative “Mizrahi leadership” that represents it, have ranged from multiple localized rebellion and protest activities, through organized uprisings, to protest groups, social movements, education and cultural organizations, and political parties. The relationship between the protest movements and their leaders, on the one hand, and the “Mizrahi representatives” in the Zionist–Ashkenazi parties, on the other, are a central issue throughout the discussion in this book. The main point, however, is the political story of the Jews of the Middle East and North Africa in Israel, as it has yet to be told in English.

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Introduction

Cultural conflict or class struggle?

First questions: consciousness, the political collective, and action for change

I present the total sum of Mizrahi political struggle activities in Israel, both radical independent and within the hegemonic mainstream, as “the Mizrahi struggle movement.” In this I follow prevailing academic and public discourse in the U.S., which defines the black struggle for equality during the 1950s and 1960s as “the civil rights movement.” On this basis I try to evaluate the Mizrahi struggle movement’s achievements in relation to the main goal common to all participants: just socioeconomic policies and cultural freedom. Two goals preceding this general goal are shared by all players in the Mizrahi struggle arena: to bring the state to acknowledge its policy of inequality, and to legitimize the very existence of the Mizrahi struggle for equality. Here the main differences in practice and ideology between various groups, organizations, leaders, and politicians are revealed.

This book aims to examine these differences, focusing mainly on the relations between two central attitudes: that held by those who identify with the Ashkenazi Zionist hegemony and collaborate with it (from hereon referred to as identifier-collaborators, or ICs) and that of the radicals, and leading a line of critical thought, practice, protest, and alternative. In this context I present a substantiated argument according to which both attitudes, as well as all varieties in between, existed actively from the very first moment of encounter between the Mizrahim and the Zionist movement and the state, and continue to work side by side to this day.

While exploring the relations and mutual influences among these attitudes, I seek to examine and characterize the various Mizrahi movements and organizations within the Mizrahi struggle movement and their impact on the struggle in general and on Israeli politics and their influence in shaping the Mizrahi discourse and in forging Mizrahi culture and identity.

The book also raises a question regarding the new Mizrahi identity and discourse, which are the outcome of a double encounter in Israel—the first between Mizrahim of different origins, and the second between Mizrahim on the one hand and European Jews and Zionism on the other. The question is how, as if

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paradoxically, out of the main goal of Mizrahi integration in state and society, an alternative identity was born, a new, complex Mizrahi identity—religious according to SHAS (a religious Sephardic movement: *Sepharadim Shomrei Tora*, Sephardic Gradients of Torah), democratic according to others. Again, the black struggle in the United States serves as an example of how segregated organizations, fighting for integration in American culture and society, produced by necessity an independent, secluded identity and a cultural revival. Another relevant question arising from the black struggle concerns the influence of the radical struggle discourse on the general political discourse. In other words, how is it that the radical discourse, forged by radical movements, penetrates mainstream general political discourse, and gains influence years after these radical movements have disappeared?

Mizrahim and the question of collective contention

An important ensuing question that is yet to be addressed in a satisfactory manner in the study of Mizrahi politics is that of collective organization.¹ Why have Mizrahi movements and political movements, groups, and organizations failed to organize Mizrahim into a political collective that would realize their struggle for equality? In other words, did the struggle's leaders try to direct the Mizrahi public into a common political and social consciousness, and into a collective revolutionary organization, and if so, why did they fail? Does the emergence of SHAS in 1999 as the third-largest party in Israel constitute a Mizrahi political collective? Or did the intensive penetration of the new Mizrahi discourse into the political, academic, and cultural agenda create such a conceptual collective as a revolution in the Mizrahi and Israeli collective consciousness?

What drives the creation of such a social movement, and how does it penetrate the individual and collective awareness, and lead to a change or a revolution? This question occupies all thinkers and researchers of social movements and revolutions. Karl Marx, the first theorist of social movements who took it on, initially asked why do members of human groups, apparently bound to rebel, refrain from mutiny?² Why do they put up with oppressive order?

Sidney Tarrow, a scholar of social movements who discusses these questions at length, argues that despite the great contribution of socialist thinkers such as Marx, Lenin, and Gramsci on this issue, these ideologues failed to determine concretely the political conditions under which exploited people without resources can be expected to stand up and act for their own interests, which leads to a question regarding opportunities and political constraints.³

I chose to open with the dilemmas of Marxism regarding the question of consciousness and identity as a condition for mobilizing revolutionary social action because the tension of identity and consciousness is always at the center of the Mizrahims' social and cultural struggle. On the one hand is a need to identify with and integrate into the new Jewish society with its gospel of national sovereignty; on the other hand is a need to respond to and rebel against cultural and social oppression as a social Mizrahi collective that never existed before 1948, and that

had to be created around a common goal, culture, and class solidarity. As we shall see, the Zionist European hegemony successfully manipulated this tension in Mizrahi consciousness to promote its own goals.

The politics of the Mizrahi struggle is unique to the historical, social, and political conditions that created it. Before examining these conditions I should point out that the theoretical framework for discussing the Mizrahi struggle is as complicated as the struggle itself. I therefore borrowed from a few theoretical models of struggle politics in order to include various options for discussion and analysis.

The constituting moment for the Mizrahi struggle against the situation of social and cultural oppression, in which Jews from Arab and Muslim countries found themselves as soon as they were brought to Israel, just after the formation of the state in 1948, is also the starting point for the growth of Zionist Ashkenazim as a ruling class in the sovereign state. In fact, the Ashkenazi Zionist hegemony started building a modern economy only after importing Mizrahi Jews to Israel as a labor force, without control over their own fate.⁴ This process took place contemporaneously with the creation of a Jewish majority and the expansion of the state's territory amid the immense demographic changes of 1948, resulting from the expulsion of the Palestinians and their forced escape.⁵

As we learn from Zionist Ashkenazi historiography and sociology,⁶ both sides, Ashkenazim and Mizrahim, were composed of new immigrants from different cultural worlds and therefore coped with the difficulties of assimilation and absorption in a new state with varying degrees of success. Yohanan Peres divided Mizrahi groups into more developed and less developed cultural subgroups, matching this data with their level of success in Israel.⁷ This historiography does not purport to apply this explanation to the state's treatment of Palestinians left in its territory, who were altogether excluded from these socialization processes. But, as Shlomo Swirski and Ella Shohat note, during the formation of the state and its construction, the oppressive colonial and postcolonial relations between the first world and the Third World were transcribed to the new reality, since the European Zionist movement regarded itself as representing the Western world, on whose economic and diplomatic support it relied. Shohat, in a pioneering essay, connected the Mizrahi with anticolonial discourse and its prominent spokespeople such as Frantz Fanon, Aimé Césaire, and Edward Said:

Within Israel, European Jews constitute a First-World elite dominating not only the Palestinians but also the Middle Eastern Jews [Mizrahim]. The Sephardim, as a Jewish Third-World people, form a semi-colonized nation-within-a-nation. . . . The view of the Sephardim as oppressed Third-World people goes directly against the grain of dominant discourse within Israel and disseminated by the Western media outside of Israel. According to that discourse, European Zionism "saved" Sephardi Jews from the harsh rule of their Arab "captors". It took them out of "primitive conditions" of poverty and superstition and ushered them gently into a modern Western society characterized by tolerance, democracy, and "human values."⁸

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One by one, Shohat refutes the Zionist myths regarding the “rescue” of the Mizrahim from the Arabs and their equal and righteous absorption in Israel. Engaging in dialogue with Said’s *Orientalism*,⁹ she presents this discourse, which, just like colonialist Orientalism, reshapes Mizrahi men and women according to Western needs and pretense of superiority.

It would be mistaken and misleading to describe the Mizrahims’ collective protest activities from the 1950s up to this day as immigrant protest against the immigrants’ state’s absorption authorities. Israel was established during the wave of Mizrahi immigration to its territory, and some of its immigration institutions were established after Mizrahi immigrants were already in Israel. Such an explanation will be useless when we deal with the protest and organization patterns of second-generation, Israeli-born Mizrahim. Our discussion might also be impinged if we choose a minority–majority relationship model as a tool for analyzing Mizrahi protest, because Mizrahim constitute a majority, or at least half, of the Jewish population in Israel ever since the 1950s. Theories of social movements and socialist organizations could be helpful, but these too do not facilitate a full discussion when we bear in mind that the state against which this protest and struggle were directed was ideologically controlled and shaped by a socialist movement, with links to socialist struggles in Eastern Europe and in the world in general. Nor was the Mizrahims’ struggle a struggle for national liberation. On the contrary, they were brought to Israel as appendixes to a reality defined by the European Zionist revolution as “national liberation.”

Before I proceed to describe the complexity of the Mizrahi struggle, I should first define it. I refer to the Mizrahi political struggle as including all collective conflict actions and political organizing against economic and cultural oppression between Mizrahim and the state under Ashkenazi Zionist hegemony. The underlying assumption is that every Mizrahi organization and every Mizrahi political player recognized this reality of oppression to a certain degree.¹⁰

The struggle and protest themselves are varied, requiring a diverse frame of reference. Mizrahi politics of struggle can be divided into three: (1) demonstrations and one-off local collective conflict actions; (2) organized protest and rebellion movements; and (3) political parties, and the work of individuals who took upon themselves leadership roles, or a mission, whether true or imaginary, struggling within the political system and its institutions. Across this range a tension is discernible between the desire to identify with, and integrate within, the European Zionist hegemony and the need to break free of oppression and build an alternative political force. This tension not only exists between various organizations and players, but often also within a single organization, and even within a single leader’s soul.

In order to identify, describe, and understand the various types of struggle, and to comprehend the nature of their internal tensions, I chose a few theoretical models, focusing mainly on two. Tarrow’s “collective contention,” which I use chiefly to diagnose types of action, and of political organization, and Herbert Haines’ radical flank effects,¹¹ which I use as a primary tool to examine the tension between identification-collaboration and radical protest. In order to understand

Haines' model, I examine, later in this introduction, the black struggle for civil rights in the United States as a comparable framework.

Collective contention action

Tarrow studies the processes of the creation and activity of social movements throughout history, and mainly in the twentieth century. As a theoretical basis for his analysis, Tarrow assumes that all social movements, protest organizations, and revolutions are rooted in "collective contention actions."

According to Tarrow, a collective action becomes a confrontation when it is carried out by people devoid of power and of access to the establishment, people who represent unconventional claims, and whose behavior challenges the institutions against which they act. Thus, collective confrontation action is almost the only resource available to social movements facing strong establishment powers. It takes various forms and levels of intensity. The most intense are violent actions such as raids, invasions, barricading, arson, demolition, and harming police officers. Next are nonviolent acts of interference with public order, such as general strikes, mass rallies, passive resistance, and civil disobedience. On the lowest level of radicalism are acts of conventional protest such as protest slogans on street signposts, stickers, T-shirts, blatant and critical publications, provocative media appearances, political music, art, film and theater, and critical conferences. In fact, social movements derive their power exclusively from their ability to challenge stronger powers, and to create internal solidarity and a sense of meaning for the population on whose behalf they act by applying collective confrontation in its various forms.

Hardin¹² notes that such collective actions do not take place outside history, and are not separate from politics. However, the act of collective confrontation differs from relations of market forces, lobbying activities, or representative politics, if only because it places ordinary people in confrontation with the authorities and predominant elites.

According to Tarrow, the process of a social movement's creation from an act of collective confrontation necessarily involves three stages: first, the constitution of collective challenges; second, the formation of social networks, common goals, and cultural frameworks; and third, the creation of solidarity by connecting structures and collective identities, in order to enable the struggle to continue. To these stages I would add a fundamental condition for defining a protest movement as a social movement: It must have a genuine aspiration for social justice, manifest in its goals and its practices. It must call for an overall change of the social and economic structures for the benefit of society as a whole.

Tarrow challenges nineteenth-century scholars and their followers, such as Durkheim,¹³ who viewed social movements as the outcome of social deviation and deorganization, the so-called madding crowd. Adherents to such a concept were wary of radicalism and negativity and feared the violence they recognized within social movements formed after the French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution, and later within the movements that led to Nazism, Fascism, and Stalinism.

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Tarrow flatly rejects such views, which, he argues, are on the rise again with the decline of communism. He suggests a different way of viewing the activity of social movements, an alternative to focusing on radicalism and violence: "Movements, I argue, are better defined as collective challenges by people with common purposes and solidarity in sustained interaction with elites, opponents and authorities."¹⁴

An apparently paradoxical conclusion from Tarrow's study, which is significant for the case of the Mizrahim, is that the success of a social struggle does not depend on the way and on the extent to which a collective confrontation spreads, but on the way and the extent to which it is integrated into thought patterns, and the cultural codes of the state, as well as on the way in which it significantly changes its agenda, character and image.

British scholar and activist Sivanandan¹⁵ rejects this conclusion, suggesting that even such successful cases exist only in appearance, and their benefits are enjoyed only by the middle class among the struggling group (black people in the U.K. in his case study). The benefactors belong to a social strata interested in middle-class issues, such as economic mobility, representation in state organs, integration in political parties, attainment of senior and management-level jobs, and acceptance by the ruling classes. These black activists argued that only representation in the British Labour Party will enable them to serve the black community and save it from poverty. Sivanandan argued against this demand, saying that absorption in the party will serve nobody but the absorbed activists, just as international aid to postcolonial countries serves only the ruling middle class, never reaching the masses who need it. He argued that integration of black educated forces with the ruling middle class reduces the human resources available for the politics of struggle:

And don't tell me that to aid them would be to aid black people lower down the scale. That would be to subscribe to the IMF/World Bank 'trickle-down' theory that aid given to Third World bourgeoisies gradually finds its way down to the people. Black Sections will neither 'blacken' the Labour Party nor benefit the black working class. And the changes they can make from within will be cosmetic. Worse, it will change not the Labor Party but black politics, by drawing away black expertise from where it is needed most—in the ghettos.¹⁶

In this context, the present study asks: Has the Mizrahi struggle been absorbed in the state's political agenda, and if so, on which points, in which form, and was the agenda really transformed? Did this take place following HaPanterim HaSh'horim's struggle, or only after the Likud's Mizrahization in leading up to the 1977 switch of the ruling party, and later in 1981? Alternatively, did it only happen during the alternative collective confrontation led by SHAS, which is the longest and most stable struggle? And is SHAS' stability merely the fruit of earlier struggles? Sivanandan would ask here: How should we measure the struggle's achievements? By the extent of the emergence of a Mizrahi elite that integrates

with the state's economic and political systems? Or by the socioeconomic condition of the poor working class, still predominantly populated by Mizrahim?

The black struggle in the U.S.: comparative background

Observing the political history of African Americans in the United States can acquaint us with two main approaches in the politics of oppressed cultural groups, and the tension between them—segregationist (at times nationalistic) politics on the one hand, and radical yet integrationist politics on the other; a range of attitudes can also be found in between these two poles. The analogy between black–white relations in the United States and Mizrahi–Ashkenazi relations in Israel is far from a full historical analogy. However, one can discern similarities in the political conduct of struggle that shed light on Mizrahim–Ashkenazim interaction in Israeli society.

The conspicuous representatives of these two approaches in the twentieth century are Martin Luther King Jr and Malcolm X (Haj Malik El Shabazz, originally Malcolm Little). These two men also led black politics to high levels of consciousness and radicalization and even managed to somewhat blur the boundaries between their two camps.

There are two basic similarities between the African Americans' struggle for civil rights in the United States and the Mizrahims' struggle against cultural and social oppression in Israel, in the realms of culture and of class. Both are found, in varying doses, in both black attitudes and Mizrahi attitudes of identification-cooperation (integration) versus protest and alternative identity and social order.

Background: nationalists versus integrationists in the black struggle in the U.S.

Two principal attitudes, or two principal camps, are known in black struggle history—the nationalist and the integrationist. The two coexisted as rivals for many years. The nationalist school of thought is older, as old as slavery itself; the integrationist approach is relatively new. The debate between the two is ongoing and also exists as an internal dilemma within each camp, and in the minds of individuals. It was well formulated by W. E. B. Du Bois, who coined the term “double consciousness,” asking: “Here then, is the dilemma, What after all am I? Am I an American or am I a Negro? Can I be both?”¹⁷

The integrationists

At the basis of the integrationist approach lies the assumption that black people should find the solution for racist oppression against them within the geographic and political framework of the United States of America, while integrating with the white majority as equal citizens. They believed the Constitution of the United States and the Bible would lead white people to acknowledge their equal citizenship, and

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to welcome them into American society as equals. They saw themselves as Americans long before most white people did, and laid a founder's claim to the American nation as they had worked its fields, abided by its laws, paid taxes, and fought its wars. The integrationists' main action strategy, which persisted throughout, with varying emphasis, was to present white people with the contradictions between state declarations in official documents (such as the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution) and practice in everyday life—that is, the fact of official as well as unofficial racist discrimination.¹⁸ According to this strategy, white people will eventually become embarrassed by their own hypocrisy, to the point of being compelled to see the error of their ways and grant black people the liberties they were denied.

King is considered by many to be the most important representative of the integrationist approach in the black struggle of the twentieth century. He became the most charismatic spokesperson of the whole civil rights movement. As the leader of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), he joined the veteran Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and led it through its popular non-violent direct actions until his assassination in 1968. We will come back to King later in the discussion.

The nationalists

The nationalists' fundamental assumption was that black people cannot be both African and American. They rejected the American element of their identity, arguing that after 244 years of slavery, oppression, economic exploitation, and racial discrimination, there was no longer a chance for black people to gain recognition as human beings in American society. Black people, they argued, do not belong in America, and should not live among white people, who have enslaved and oppressed them for generations. The conclusion: black people should either leave America and go back to Africa, or establish a nation-state for black people in America. The roots of black nationalism in America go back to the early days of slavery. It was the fresh longing for Africa that encouraged local attempts of rebellion against slave owners, sometimes on the very ships that carried slaves from Africa, as in the rebellion on the *Amistad*.¹⁹

Malcolm X managed to represent these elements, in his life and his leadership, and became the most important leader of black nationalism in the U.S. and in the whole world.

“One shakes the tree, another picks the fruit”: Haines' “radical flank effects” model

Herbert Haines divides the civil rights movement into two main schools, and two ideological and practical concepts: moderate integrationists; and radicals,²⁰ who were often also separatists and militant. It is interesting to observe the dynamic interaction between these schools, particularly relations between radical activists and moderates, between those who shake the tree, and those who get to pick the fruit. An important conclusion emerging from Haines' study is that radicalism is

a relative and changing term. What was defined as radical yesterday may well be regarded as moderate today.

Haines mainly examines and characterizes the effect of radicals' activities on the activities and spokespersons of moderates in the civil rights movement.²¹ He refers to the radicals' influence on the moderates in different realms of the struggle—mobilizing public support, dealing with the media, fund-raising, and negotiating with the white establishment—as “radical flank effects.”²² The effects are “radical” because they involve strong action that includes ideological and physical confrontation with the establishment; “flank” refers to influence employed on the center from the margins, by an act of flanking. He distinguishes between positive and negative effects. A positive effect takes place when a radical group conducts a militant action and as a result the establishment turns to a moderate group identified with the same struggle and tries to negotiate with it, rather than with the radical group. A negative effect takes place when the militant action carried out by the radicals leads the establishment to abolish all channels of negotiation and to turn to oppressing the struggle in a way that damages the moderate groups as well as the radical ones. William Gamson²³ examined thirty black organizations in the United States and found that militant actions by radicals always increased the success rate of less militant activists and organizations. Radicalism, as I noted earlier, is a relative term, and one can note movement along the axis of radicalism, so that a group or a leader perceived as radical at an early stage is later pushed to the moderate center by a new, more-radical group.

Martin Luther King and Malcolm X symbolize more than all others, in their words and actions, the tension between integrationists and separatists. “I have a dream,” Martin Luther King said, and Malcolm X replied, “I don’t see an American dream. I see an American nightmare.”

More than any other black leader, Malcolm X laid the foundations for the central motif in the post-King ideology of struggle: Black Power. J. K. Benson defined this concept as having five components:

- 1 A viewing of the social and political systems of the U.S. as preservers of white supremacy that allow no access to black people.
- 2 A model of social conflict that views the whole society of the United States as a social order maintained by a cohesive force held by privileged groups against subjected and defeated groups.
- 3 Rejection of racial integration.
- 4 Rejection of coalitions with white liberals and similar groups.
- 5 Justification of violence as a way of struggle under certain circumstances, as a principle of self-defense.²⁴

As noted above, despite the fact that Malcolm X was murdered before the emergence of the idiom “Black Power,” and its adoption as the struggle slogan of the Black Panther Party (from hereafter: the Black Panthers), it was Malcolm X who, in his thinking, had established the concept that was embodied in his lifetime by his saying “By any means necessary.” X preached black consciousness and pride

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in African culture. He urged black people to take control of their own communities and organizations and not to shy away from using power for their own self-defense when needed. He pointed out the connection between racism and capitalism. He claimed that the European colonial racist exploitation of Africans is vital for the existence of the capitalist economy in the West and the North.²⁵ Malcolm X saw white-black relations in the U.S. as a colonial situation. He connected the oppression and abuse of many groups: black people in Africa, black people in the whole American continent, Native Americans, and the exploited inhabitants of Southeast Asia. He was ardently opposed to the Korean and Vietnam Wars, which he saw as extensions of white colonialism. He used to explain his objection to conscription by reference to the fact that no Asian ever called him “Nigger”; he claimed that the real enemy to be fought is the white man in America. He convinced many black people to refuse the draft. The most famous refuser was the world boxing champion Cassius Clay, who converted to Islam under Malcolm X’s influence, changing his name to Muhammad Ali.

Malcolm X talked of international solidarity of all peoples and groups fighting for liberation. This was the international principle he developed during his last years, when Islam ceased to be the sole component of his struggle ideology, though he kept using it as the basis for the development of black nationalism. It was no accident that X left his mentor Elijah Muhammad’s Nation of Islam movement in March 1964, after his journey to Africa and his pilgrimage to Mecca, where he met Muslims of all races and colors and realized there was more to Islam than fighting white people. He split from the Nation of Islam as soon as he returned to the U.S., and in June 1964 he formed a new group, the Organization of Afro-American Unity, with no mention of Islam. Eight months later, on February 21, 1965, Malcolm X was shot dead by a young black man.

Malcolm X was perfectly aware of his tragic role as a necessary sacrifice for the creation of radical unrest, so that moderate leaders, whom he criticized so harshly, would be able to negotiate for the benefit of black people. Malcolm X’s awareness of self-sacrifice, is relevant for our case to the positive radical flank effect. For instance he told a journalist on his arrival at the famous march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, in 1965, that Dr King should not have worries, because he came to Selma not to make King’s mission harder but actually to make it easier for him, “because when the white men realize what’s the alternative, they might be willing to listen to Dr King.”²⁶

There is no doubt that Malcolm X’s radicalism had a positive radical effect on King’s activity. But beyond that, Malcolm X seemed to have had an interesting influence on King’s own perceptions. During his last years, after Malcolm X’s death, King’s deep belief in the dream of integration and nonviolent struggle weakened. King’s interpreters have tended to neglect this development in his thought, preserving his memory as an icon of reconciliation between black people and white people. James Cone is an exception in clearly indicating the moment when King’s dream began to fall apart, and his faith in white people began to crack. But King remained loyal to the philosophy of nonviolence, and certainly never turned toward Malcolm X’s black nationalism. King’s speech after his failure to

achieve an open housing policy for black people in Chicago and other cities provides evidence to the beginning of his slight tendency toward black separatism: "It seems that our white brothers and sisters don't want to live next door to us . . . so . . . they're pinning us in central cities . . . we can't get (to the suburbs). Now, since they're just going to keep us in here . . . what we're going to have to do is just control the central city. We got to be the mayors of these big cities."²⁷

To his last day King was a supporter of nonviolent direct action. This strategy, established by Mahatma Gandhi in India, emerged in the black struggle long before King's rise to preeminence. It was used in A. Philip Randolph's time, and later in actions such as the boycott of the Montgomery Bus Company. But it was King who enhanced this strategy, managed to mobilize many white supporters, and turned it into a legitimate and influential mode of struggle nationwide. Haines discovered that support for King's integrationist radicalism among white people was constantly on the rise. On questions of education, for example, support more than doubled, from 30 percent in 1942 to 62 percent in 1963. On the issue of housing it went up from 35 percent to 64 percent, and on public transport it increased from 44 percent to 78 percent.²⁸

King was known mainly from the mass peaceful rallies he organized and led, which ended quite often in mass detentions that were well documented by the media and thus exposed police brutality. The biggest and most important march in the history of the struggle was led by King on August 28, 1963, in Washington, D.C., an estimated 250,000 people (including some 60,000 white people) arrived in the capital from all over the country and marched to the Lincoln Memorial, where they gathered to make their voice heard worldwide. President Kennedy closely followed these events from the White House. Kennedy supported the rally, and the Justice Department, headed by his brother Robert Kennedy, coordinated the technical details of the operation with the black leaders. The purpose of the march was to support Kennedy toward signing of the Voting Rights Act and other reforms. Kennedy was assassinated three months after the march, but his successor, Lyndon Johnson, signed the act. This cooperation between King, white liberals and the White House raised bitter criticism among black nationalists, especially from Malcolm X himself, who said that the march was funded by white liberals and run by President Kennedy.²⁹

King was talented in his ability to speak to white people as a moderate militant, and at the same time to confront them with the just demands of the struggle, in a way that exposed white people's own injustice.³⁰ However, both friends and foes of King claimed that this dialogue influenced his militancy, and that from the early 1960s on he was too cautious and shied away from dangerous situations or direct confrontations with the white racists of the South. Tragically, King's assassination on April 4, 1968, apparently proved the opposite.

Despite all reservations, the growing radicalization of the integrationist camp during the 1960s is attributed, for the most part, to King, and it is evident that his movement relied totally on direct action and "crisis politics."³¹ But King was to discover black America and the deep impact of racism, to his greatest surprise, after many legislative accomplishments, the most important of which was the Voting Rights Act. Five days after President Johnson signed it into law, the most militant

and turbulent demonstrations broke out in the Watts section of Los Angeles. Thirty-four people were killed, four thousand were arrested, and dozens of buildings were set on fire. It took sixteen thousand soldiers to put the district under siege and suppress the demonstrations with live ammunition. King went there to watch the nightmare that Malcolm X foresaw for America. He was not familiar with the black people of the North and West of the U.S.; they mocked the rights he had achieved for their southern brothers, “to vote and to eat in restaurants with white folks.”³² They quoted Malcolm X to him, saying that there was no point in the right to sit in the same restaurant with a white man, if the black man cannot pay the bill. They scorned him when he spoke of nonviolent struggle.

Cone says that King met the future of the South in the North, and only then did he begin to realize how pathetic his talk of appeasement and integration had become for northern black people, whom he also aspired to represent.³³ It seems that only his leadership group at the SCLC kept backing his attitudes; they even advised him to stay away from Los Angeles and from violent activities. The fact that he ignored that advice indicates his first steps in the direction of Malcolm X’s approach.

Another decisive point regarding Malcolm X’s influence on King is the latter’s public and total objection to the Vietnam War. King crossed the line and made his first steps as a leader for all-Americans. His political speeches were well received within the antiwar movement, and the New Left in the U.S. considered him its leader. It was then that the Johnson administration turned its back on the struggle and became hostile to it. Obviously, King’s assassination in 1968 stopped his radicalization process in its tracks.

Many of King’s followers turned to more radical and militant struggle, and others, even if they still resented violence, kept away from criticizing their militant black brothers as they had in the past. Radicalism won the fight over the hearts and minds of the black masses, if only on a symbolic level: black people in the U.S. today refer to themselves only in the terms of the nationalist camp, as “black Americans” or “African Americans”; famous rap musicians such as Public Enemy are inspired by Malcolm X’s texts and use them for their lyrics; and ghetto kids walk around wearing baseball caps with the letter *X* printed on them. But according to Haines’ theory it was the moderate, established politicians who picked the fruit of the positive radical effects. They are the ones who hold high political office as governors, mayors, and representatives in state assemblies and in Congress, all the way up to the highest ranks, such as Colin Powell, who was chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and secretary of state, and Condoleezza Rice, who succeeded him as secretary of state. But more than all these, and above all, is the election of Barack Hussein Obama, a former community activist, as the first African-American president of the United States of America.

The third dimension: the class-culture struggle of the Black Panther Party

The Black Panther Party, founded by Huey Newton and Bobby Seale, was by far the most radical social movement ever to lead a public militant struggle in the U.S..

The Black Panthers saw themselves as Malcolm X's successors as far as their militant determination went, but they rejected Islam and religion in general altogether, as well as black nationalism as an ideology. They adopted elements of Maoist Marxism and considered themselves socialists.

The Panthers had a strict policy against the use of drugs, maintained equality between men and women, and a military-like organizational structure. They wore black uniforms and berets, carried licensed weapons in the streets, marching in military formation. In their document of principles the Black Panthers demanded, in addition to rights in the realm of education, housing, and employment, autonomous power for black communities to determine their own future. They referred to black communities as "black colonies" and to black people as "black colonized subjects."³⁴ Among their demands was a black convention, under UN sponsorship, in which black Americans would vote on the question of their nationality. The Black Panthers led some rebellious activities in 1967–1968 in which they had substantial support from the student organizations waging their own protests against the war in Vietnam.

The movement was under serious pressure toward the end of its days. Its people were under surveillance and were arrested for any minor violation of the law. As a result, activists began to patrol the streets in an attempt to keep the peace, rid black communities of drugs, and suppress all violent actions. The Black Panthers then moved to community-organizing activities such as Liberation Summer Schools and providing breakfast to thousands of children. It did not take long for the pressure to penetrate the leadership and create cracks and splits that led to the end of the movement in 1971. The Black Panthers themselves argue that they were annihilated mainly by the FBI pushing hard drugs into the ghettos. The drugs, according to this argument, created a cycle of abuse within black communities that led to aggression being directed inward, diminishing motivation for political struggle.³⁵ There is no doubt that the federal government, through the FBI, launched a campaign against them in order to eliminate them.

Debate over the radical effect of the Black Panthers on more moderate organizations and on the struggle in general continues. Their main positive radical effect was the power of their Black Power message, sent loud and clear to every black person in every community through dozens of branches and the newspaper *Black Panther*, which was printed in 100,000 copies.³⁶ Later on, "Black Power" as a slogan reached far more through regular media channels. But more than anything, the positive radical effect enabled moderate black leaders to negotiate with the federal government and suggest "a way out of the crisis," thereby achieving a succession of legislative reforms regarding black rights on issues such as housing, education, and labor.

Radical effects—findings and conclusion

The great influence of black radicalism on moderates' success shows that the most decisive element was the radicalization of the uprising. Only radicalization, which turned the situation into a "racial crisis," eventually made the issue into a concern

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for Kennedy's administration—that in spite, and some say because, of these being hard years on the Cold War front, peaking with the October 1962 Cuban missile crisis. The administration perceived the racial crisis as a threat to the U.S. internal security. It therefore supported moderates, led by Martin Luther King Jr, expecting them to calm down the “crisis.” Both Kennedy and Johnson preferred to negotiate with National Urban League and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Following the legislative triumphs up to 1965, there was an apparent decline in this realm, and until 1969 only one new act concerning civil rights was legislated. Haines dismisses this as only an appearance, as little additional legislation was needed after the fundamental acts were passed. In legislation, once a law is in place, all that is needed is to work for its implementation and enforcement. Finally, Haines notes that by the end of the 1960s, when the radicalism of a few groups had crossed a certain boundary (from self-defense to urban guerrilla actions), the effects of their actions became negative, at least insofar as the administration was concerned. In certain cases the administration responded with the use of force against other movements not responsible for the radical violence. However, the negative radical effects were always marginal.

Haines summarizes the government's response to radicalization in five conclusions:

- 1 The administration's response to radicalism was not uniform. Different departments and government agencies responded in various ways. The legal branch of the administration was the first to give in, the government joined later, and Congress was last to get on the wagon.
- 2 Situations when the government responded only favorably to integrationist demands always occurred during a “crisis situation,” following a general uprising in the South and nationwide.
- 3 The administration always led an amending policy according to the integrationist approach, even after the integrationists lost hegemony in the civil rights movement (the Black Panther period).
- 4 All in all, it cannot be said that violent self-defense in the cities created a negative radical effect on moderates in their dealings with the government. Polls show that during the three most violent summers of 1966–1969, support for the civil rights struggle only increased among those who supported it initially.
- 5 The *threat* of violence yielded more from the government than actual violence. This is proven by the fact that the highest legislative achievements were made in 1964–1965, at the height of the nonviolent direct action strategy that drew many violent responses from white people.

Similarities with the Mizrahi struggle in Israel

Haines' critics accuse him of attributing too much importance to the elites. They say that elite involvement is a trap, as its members strive for “industrial quiet” and compromise the struggle.³⁷ According to this argument, there is no real need to get

the elites involved, as the struggle should not rely on governmental funds anyway, and therefore need not shy away from rocking the boat. Another argument against Haines' theory suggests the most disempowered classes stand the best chances of succeeding in a struggle as they have the potential to disrupt the national agenda.³⁸ This school of thought adds the classic argument that elite members' involvement in the struggle facilitates the co-optation of the struggle by the authorities, which enjoy good relationships with them.

There are elements of truth in this critique, but I accept Haines' response to it. He argues that reality is not a theory, and therefore while observing the struggle in action he found that both the moderate leadership of the elite, and rebel movements on the ground have their advantages and disadvantages. Both are present in the struggle arena and both, at the end of the day, work for the same goal. In other words, he views all participants—moderates and radicals—as one movement striving for a common general aim: liberation from policies of racist oppression and legal inequality. Moderates have already established contacts with the ruling elite, they are familiar with its culture and ways of thinking, and they are better equipped to negotiate with it, hence their caution about “rocking the boat.” Radicals, on the other hand, have no contacts with the ruling elite, which rejects any contact with them. Therefore, they have little to lose, and they can and should conduct a militant struggle.

Despite the tragic element inherent to it, I cannot but agree with Haines' bottom line: “Thus, when positive radical flank effects are at work, moderates may be able to maintain good relations with outside supporters by distancing themselves from radicals while at the same time profiting from the crisis the radicals create.”³⁹ This book aims to examine this radical dynamic in the politics of the Mizrahi struggle in Israel. I chose black politics in the U.S. in general and Haines' radical flank effects model in particular because I recognize in them similarities to the political behavior of Mizrahim in Israel in their struggle for equality, integration, and the power to influence the character and quality of living of Israeli society and its culture.

Five main points of similarity stand out:

- 1 A similar cultural starting point (in the case of Israel: the formation of the state); both cultures combine hegemonic Europeans in all levels of control and disempowered third-world people devoid of actual influence.
- 2 Both approaches, the moderate and the radical, have coexisted in these struggles and do so to this very day, in complex relationships of radical tension.
- 3 The size of radical groups is marginal in Israel too, but the disquiet they cause feeds the agenda of the moderates.
- 4 In Israel too, the authorities pay off the moderates by appropriations when a “racial crisis” situation emerges, expecting to be paid back by the restoration of peace.
- 5 Most amending achievements in the form of legislation and government decisions on education and housing were achieved, in Israel too, at the height of periods of radical struggle.

1 The encounter

Ashkenazi Zionism and the Jews of the Muslim world, sociohistorical background

Between ethnicity and Mizrahiness

Defining the identity of an oppressed collective is central to any political struggle. As in national struggles, a cultural or ethnic group's self-definition is a necessary link in the sociopolitical struggle. As shown by Edward Said,¹ so long as a group's identity is shaped and defined from without by the dominant cultural hegemony, not only does the group not determine the components and borders of its identity, it is also manipulated to serve the hegemony's agenda and internalizes its own false identity.

I wish to examine the question of the Mizrahims' identity as it was defined by hegemonic Ashkenazi Zionism, and the process it has gone through to attain a cultural and political self-definition. Traditional research has seen ethnic groups as collectives whose members share a cultural origin. Since the class-ethnic struggles of the 1960s and 1970s, and the collapse of the "melting pot" school in the U.S., ethnic origin as the heritage of the past is no longer used as the sole, or the central, defining characteristic for an ethnic group. This change occurred, according to Hanna Herzog,² when sociologists began to notice that even after losing their distinct historical cultural heritage, ethnic groups continue to exist as separate collectives, mainly distinct from their environment by class affiliation and a cultural division of labor.

This dynamic evolution of identity is evident in the history of Mizrahim, from an external definition of the various Mizrahi and Sephardi communities according to their countries of origin, then as an inferior collective, to self-definition based on cultural and class solidarity. However, as class and social struggle urges solidarity it eventually gives birth to self-definition and self-reshaping of the cultural common ground, already different from *historical heritage*. The cultural Mizrahiness of third- and fourth-generation young Mizrahim is not identical to that of the second generation, and is significantly distant from the first generation's Mizrahiness, which hardly existed, except in religious life. The following discussion shows how the border between public and academic discourse in the shaping and use of the various definitions for Mizrahi identity was diffuse, and allowed for mutual influence between these realms of discourse.

From Sephardim to Mizrahim

The political participation of the Mizrahim in Israel was never defined as a Mizrahi struggle, nor even as Mizrahi politics. This was due chiefly to political reasons. The various political and academic definitions can serve as a point of departure for the discussion I wish to explore in this work. To start with, emigrants from the Arab and Muslim countries, the Mediterranean, and the Balkans were never collectively defined as *Mizrahim* until they began to use this term in the 1980s. Shlomo Swirski³ and Iton Aher⁴ pioneered the use of this definition in particular, and of the new Mizrahi discourse in general. For the Mizrahim, the power of this collective's self-definition lay in its resistance to manipulations that divided them into separate communities, competing to be close to the Ashkenazi political hegemony within all parties and organs of the political system.

Edot haMizrah (literally, "the Eastern ethnic communities") was, and to a great degree still is, the prevalent term in academia,⁵ in mass media, and in politics; it is deeply rooted in public discourse, including among Mizrahim themselves. In the Israeli sociological context this term carries cultural prejudices that present Mizrahim as coming from the *non-European, other, underdeveloped, backward* world, prejudices that are nothing more than copies of Orientalist and Eurocentric assumptions such as "the Oriental's degeneracy." One of the first Orientalists in Israeli academia was Carl Frankenstein, founder of the education system in Mizrahi localities, who based an entire pedagogy of *cultivation and rehabilitation* on a blatantly Orientalist cultural analysis. In his critique of Frankenstein's method, Swirski noted its European origins: "In order to account for the Mizrahims' 'cultural backwardness,' Frankenstein drew a connection between the Orientalist theory of the *Oriental's degeneracy*, and Freud and Jung's deep-psychology. In this way Frankenstein concluded that the decline of the Middle East has damaged the Middle Easterners'—both Arabs' and Jews'—intelligence."⁶ In *Orientalism*, Said offers an apt characterization of the Orientalist's academic and cultural worldview. Composed of four main dogmas, this description is also appropriate for such Israeli Orientalists as Shmuel Noah Eisenstadt, Ernest Simon, and others:

The principal dogmas of Orientalism exist in their purest form today in studies of the Arabs and Islam: One is the absolute and systematic difference between the West, which is rational, developed, humane, superior, and the Middle East, which is aberrant, undeveloped, inferior. Another dogma is that abstractions about the Middle East, particularly those based on text representing a "classical" Middle East civilization, are always preferable to direct evidence drawn from modern Middle Eastern realities. A third dogma is that the Middle East is eternal, uniform, and incapable of defining itself; therefore it is assumed that a highly generalized and systematic vocabulary for describing the Middle East from a Western standpoint is inevitable and even scientifically "objective." A fourth dogma is that the Middle East is at bottom something either to be feared (Yellow Peril, the Mongol hordes, the brown dominions) or to be controlled (by pacification, research and development, outright occupation whenever possible).⁷

European Zionist scholars were no different from their contemporary Orientalists in their view of the Orient, or the Middle East, which was monolithic, making no distinction between Jews and non-Jews. Here is how Frankenstein defined Eastern Jews: “In speaking of *Edot haMizrah*, we refer to the Jews of North Africa, from Morocco to Egypt, to the Jews of Lebanon, Syria, Turkey, Iraq and Kurdistan, to the Jews of Iran and Afghanistan, the Caucasus and Uzbekistan, to the Jews of Yemen and Aden. Many of these regions were once cultural centers, and have declined to their current level of backwardness.” He adds that “in spite of our desire to avoid discrimination in any form, we cannot ignore the fact that the degree of primitivity, as manifest in the lifestyle and thought patterns of newcomers from these culturally backward regions, determines the processes of bridge building, coping, and social adaptation among the various segments of our people.”⁸ This and other similar characterizations laid the foundations for a cultural, economic, and political attitude. Even before they were made part of the European Zionist revolution, the Mizrahims’ image and identity were already set in the eyes of the state’s leadership and the leading social elites, who were already familiar with European Orientalist attitudes toward the Middle East in general. In such early writings as that of Theodor Herzl, one finds an unmistakably Orientalist view of Mizrahim as inferior and exotic. Herzl did not include any Mizrahim in his revolutionary plan, except for the European subjects among them, French Jews in Algeria, and those originating from Spain.⁹

The term *Edot haMizrah* replaced the self-definition *Sephardi*, dating back to the old *yishuv* (the Jewish population in Palestine before the Zionist colonial settlement, and particularly before the formation of Israel). The term *Sephardi* originates from the prayer and Halachic traditions that evolved from the golden age of Judaism in Spain, which is accepted as the religious authority among the Jews of North Africa, the Middle East, the Mediterranean, and the Balkans.¹⁰ Nowadays Mizrahi religious organizations such as SHAS also adhere to the term *Sephardi* and disown the term *Mizrahim*—first, because “Sephardi” defines identity in a purely religious frame, where absolute control of the Sephardi Jewish agenda is possible; and second, because of the threat perceived by these religious circles in the wider term *Mizrahim*, which includes secular people, supporters who are not Mizrahi by ethnicity, as well as non-Jewish cultural elements.¹¹

The new self-coined term, *Mizrahim*, heard since the early 1980s together with the appearance of a new *Mizrahi* political discourse, is mainly a social-political term, based to a lesser degree on ethnic origins. The starting point for those calling themselves Mizrahim is a view of Israeli society in terms of economic and cultural oppression of non-Europeans by Europeans in general, and of Mizrahim by Ashkenazim in particular, based on Shlomo Swirski and Deborah Bernstein’s critical sociological analysis published in 1980.¹² This concept of relations of oppression is based on a view of Mizrahim as victims of the Zionist revolution, analogous to this revolution’s Palestinian victims, as had been suggested by Ella Shohat.¹³ Worth noting at this point is another term, *Arab-Jews*, that takes in all Jews of Arab countries, but not the rest of Eastern and Mediterranean Jewry. This term was quickly expunged from the collective memory of the Arab world’s Jewry

by Ashkenazi Zionist socialization that saw Arabs as inferior enemies, and their culture as unworthy and primitive. From the very beginnings of the Palestine settlement project, Zionism was occupied with constructing the myth of an uninhabited *desert*, most certainly not inhabited by Arabs; Eastern Jews' Arabness might have complicated this task. Here's what Chaim Weizmann, one of political Zionism's leaders after Herzl's death, and Israel's first president, wrote in a letter to Arthur Balfour, some six months after the famous Balfour Declaration: "The present state of affairs would necessarily tend toward the creation of an Arab Palestine, if there were an Arab people in Palestine. It will not in fact produce that result because the fellah is at least four centuries behind the times, and the effendi . . . is dishonest, uneducated, greedy, and as unpatriotic as he is inefficient."¹⁴

Such Jewish identity was undesirable for the European Zionist culture myth, nor would it have helped the Jews of the Arab world in their efforts to survive in a new hostile environment. All that was required of Arab Jews in their socialization process was to erase their Arab identity and distinguish themselves from Arabs and Arabness as much as possible. This was a prerequisite for being accepted as Israelis, equal in national identity to Ashkenazi Israelis.

The most prevalent term applied by the Ashkenazi hegemony for Mizrahims' political participation is *ethnic politics*, accompanied by a host of related terms: *an ethnic party*, *an ethnic candidate*, *the ethnic grinding axe*, *the ethnic slot*, *an ethnic platform*, *ethnic protest*, and even *ethnic whining*, and *the ethnic ghost*. The attribute *ethnic*, one has to note, always refers to the Mizrahi. Even when a newly arrived ethnicity, such as Russian immigrants in the 1990s, joins Israeli politics through a homogeneous party, that party is never defined as *ethnic*. This is all the more so in regards to a party such as MERETZ, which draws its power from the veteran well-off Ashkenazi elites, or a party such as Shinui, an Ashkenazi reaction to the SHAS movement that established itself primarily on incitement, and on arousing Ashkenazi voters' fear of the independent Mizrahi religious organization.

Note the apparent paradox emerging from these definitions. A significant tension exists on the side of those setting the terms, Ashkenazi Zionists, dominant in public media, culture, academic institutions, and government, between on the one hand the ideological and paradigmatic principles they supposedly maintain—*melting pot*, *integration*, *one people*, and *one Israeli identity*—and on the other their social-political and cultural practice, which created an entire terminology that separates, and thereby marginalizes, the Mizrahim: Mizrahi ethnicity, departments dedicated to *Edot haMizrah* in various institutions, *development towns*, *slums*, the *Edot haMizrah Song Festival*, the Center for the Cultivation of *Edot HaMizrah* (Mizrahi ethnicities) Heritage in the Ministry of Education, and special Mizrahi music programs on public and private radio, as well as on television. One should also consider various terms in the realm of welfare, such as *te'uney tipuah* (underprivileged), *marginal youths*, *cultural deprivation*, *neighborhood rehabilitation*, and so on.¹⁵

The state created this separation, in theory and in practice, between veteran Ashkenazi communities and Jewish communities from Arab, Muslim, and Eastern countries. This was done in the realms of housing and settlement, education,

culture, media, and accordingly in the class-economic structure.¹⁶ Definitions were therefore a powerful instrument in the hands of those making them, who created the *fatal* dependence of Mizrahi newcomers, who were separated into *ethnicities*, on the new patronage, the dominant national collective dominated by European Zionism. At the same time, the Ashkenazi Zionist elites disowned responsibility for perpetuating the Mizrahims' inferior starting positions. Definitions rationalized the perpetuation of Mizrahims' economic inferiority over the next two generations. The definitions were self-realizing; indeed, the Mizrahims' absolute dependence on their absorbers was created, along with a gratitude that requires *nationally responsible* behavior, which takes place in the margins of the legitimate center—ethnic representatives among party candidates for parliament, for municipal councils, and for the Histadrut (the national labor union), behavior worthy of loyal partners to the leadership of the large parties, the Mimouna celebrations, Zionist institutes for the study of “Anti-Semitism and Zionism in the Arab and Muslim Countries,” ethnic folklore organizations. In this respect, the terms *Edot haMizrah* and *ethnic politics* became central governing forces of the Mizrahims' political participation; their power was decisive in prevaricating the emergence of an independent legitimate Mizrahi political collective.

Defining and establishing Mizrahim as *Edot haMizrah* served to prevent, until the early 1980s, any attempt to create a collective Mizrahi identity as an alternative to the general Israeli identity. This can easily be accounted for by using the “modernization” Orientalist sociology, represented by Eisenstadt and his disciples.¹⁷ For according to this sociology, and according to the classical liberal tradition that views Middle Easterners as “children,” devoid of the ability to choose and to determine their own destiny, members of *Edot haMizrah* are in the stage of learning and preparation, the stage of transition from undesirable backward Arabness and Middle Easternness into the longed-for stage of European modernity, wherein their dominant Zionist Ashkenazi brethren are already established. As “children,” Mizrahim were deprived of the right to determine their own destiny. This was succinctly put into words by Moshe Smilansky, one of the chief designers of socialization in the Israeli education system: “The root of the problem is that members of that group have come to Israel, and have to acquire a position according to the values of the dominant society, which is already in an advanced stage of Western modernization, in the fields of science, technology, and society.”¹⁸ Western modernization, in the context of 1950s Israel, was a relative matter. Israeli society may have appeared to be Western and modern to Eastern European Jews, and to Middle Eastern Jews from certain areas, but many other Mizrahim who came to young Israel from such modern cities as Baghdad, Alexandria, Cairo, Algiers, Casablanca, Tangier, Tehran, Istanbul, Damascus, and Beirut reported being shocked to discover the technological and economic backwardness of the Jewish nation.¹⁹ When members of *Edot haMizrah* successfully graduate from the “modernization” process they are supposed to step up the cultural ladder to Ashkenazi Israeli identity. The Ashkenazi Zionist hegemony considers such assimilation as a success, the erasure of Arabness from the Jews of the Arab world. Radical Mizrahim refer to the same assimilation

process as “Ashkenaziation,” signifying with a clear tone of protest that the “assimilated” have been disarmed of their cultural assets. In actuality, only a very small group of Mizrahim had “gained” qualifications for Ashkenaziation, mainly a good level of education acquired for the price of high socialization.²⁰

The rest remained fragmented and disenfranchised in the mid-level *Edot haMizrah*, a stage whose temporariness became almost permanent. The “desire to Ashkenaziate” has become an essential component of most Mizrahims’ identity, blocking any possibility for Mizrahim to analyze their condition of political and class inequality, their shattered culture and identity, and thwarting any attempt to shape their collective identity out of these. Instead, the majority followed the order of self-negation, and in the absence of sophisticated education and socialization services that might have made a complete “Ashkenaziation” possible, they embarked on a process of symbolic assimilation by imitating external identity icons marked as “Israeli,” such as home design, light hair tones, and golden Star of David pendants. What an irony! The state was so eager to transform the Mizrahims’ Eastern-Arab identity, and the Mizrahim desired it no less, but the Ashkenazi hegemony could not stand up to its own rhetoric and desires because it failed to overcome its cultural abhorrence for Mizrahim. In particular, the state’s leadership could not imagine establishing a society of equality and forsaking the wonderful opportunity that had fallen into its hands, to establish an ethnically based class society, wherein Mizrahim provide cheap labor for the emerging economy and the military, as well as masses for settling frontier areas empty of Jews.²¹ The majority of Mizrahim were left in-between, their identity half-erased, rejected by the Ashkenazi hegemony. For this reason nearly every attempt to protest or to break free of anomalous existence was militant, and seen at times as an all-out rebellion. However, these rebellions were viewed by the powers that be as social and national deviations; the agents of socialization sought to explain them by using the sociology and anthropology of modernism.

Interesting in this regard is an article by Moshe Shoked *Aggression and Ethnic Relations*, published in 1981 after the establishment of TAMI (*Tnu’at Masoret Israel*, the Tradition of Israel Movement) and before the formation of SHAS, during an election campaign that was the stormiest ever in expressing tensions between Mizrahim and Ashkenazim. The article offers Isrealis a “scientific explanation” for “Moroccans’ violence”:

One prevalent scientific explanation for the “Moroccans’ violence” sees this phenomenon as expressing the escalation of the crisis created with the disintegration of family and community ties. This process that had begun in Morocco, with the migration of Jews from rural areas to coastal cities that developed along with the French penetration, had preceded migration to Israel by decades, and was exacerbated following migration . . . Another prevalent view considered Moroccan violence as the product of insecurity and physical danger that characterized large parts of Morocco for generations.

In another section of the article Shoked defines an aggressive event:

A raising of the voice, accompanied by expressions of anger, evident in facial expression and body movements, which follows personal accusations for inappropriate behavior that disappoints mutual expectations, or comes in response to demands viewed as unjustified by one of the parties.²²

One must bear in mind the social-political background for this analysis—Moroccan Jews being the initiators and the central leaders of every significant Mizrahi political protest (the Wadi A-Salib Rebellion, HaPanterim HaSh'horim, the HaOhalim movement, and TAMI).

As argued earlier, it was radical Mizrahim who promoted the process of Mizrahi self-determination in their radical confrontation activities during the 1980s and 1990s, although they too supported the overall goal of integration in Israeliness while influencing its character. In using the terms “radical Mizrahi struggle,” or “radical Mizrahi politics,” I refer to all acts of protest and rebellion by Mizrahim. I do not mean to say “violent” or “extremist” but to examine the degree of collective confrontation in the struggle against the hegemonic infrastructure, and the unequal and unbalanced class-economic and cultural structures, which maintain by necessity relations of cultural and economic oppression by Ashkenazim of Mizrahim. From here on, I use the term *oppression-relations* to signify the following: a political and cultural system of relations between the governmental-economic Ashkenazi Zionist hegemony and the Mizrahim, wherein the majority of Mizrahim constantly suffer a significant inferiority in economic power—the power of mobility, the power to live and produce their culture—as is manifest in the state's official statistics.

The Mizrahims' few attempts to protest and rebel were, for the most part, entirely suppressed, and the Mizrahim internalized their socioeconomic identity as members of *Edot haMizrah*. Therefore, they were perceived, and perceived themselves, until the Ballot Rebellion of 1977, as supporting actors and, at best, protégés of the political system.

Parallel to radical attempts to protest and rebel, ever since the elections for the prestate Assembly in 1920 and until the formation of SHAS in 1984, Sephardim, Yemenites, and Mizrahim have tried to run independent candidate lists for the Knesset. These parties too were called “ethnic,” and condemned for dividing the people and harming the national “melting pot” process. The academy also considered, and still considers, Mizrahi parties as anomalous, placing them outside the legitimate mainstream political system.²³ Founders of Mizrahi parties and candidate lists, much like the radical politicians, aimed in their actions to enter legitimate Israeli politics. The difference was that such party leaders acted out of a political consciousness to start with, not following a process of attrition and moderation.

Both shaped their agendas, or their lists of demands for change, through the European Zionist national ideals. The banner of protest, when it was at last raised, was in most cases the blue and white flag. Even the most outspoken Mizrahi protest movements, such as the Wadi A-Salib Rebellion and HaPanterim HaSh'horim, fought for the right to be equal Israelis among Israelis,²⁴ as we will see later on. In this context I will examine to what degree these activists were integrationist, and to

what degree they were radical. Does the ambivalence symbolize the constant tension in the Mizrahims' politics? The scales appear to have leaned, most of the time, toward integrationism, since the centers of political power encouraged this tendency by all means and channels, both open and hidden: education, military, media. But the situation changed immediately after HaPanterim HaSh'horim's protest, and even more so after the Ballot Rebellion and the social and cultural breakthrough of the early 1980s, when new definitions were created for the Mizrahims' political participation. The axis began to lean to the radical, which is not satisfied by protest and demands to be integrated but offers a comprehensive critical analysis and poses a comprehensive alternative for the state in the fields of foreign relations, the economy, society, and culture.

When an Orientalist meets a Middle Eastern

One important result of the addition of the Mizrahim to the European Zionist revolution as it established the state of Israel is the geocultural encounter between many different Mizrahi communities, from the Mashreq to the Maghreb, from the Caucasus in the north to Yemen in the south.²⁵ It was this internal Mizrahi encounter, and interaction with Ashkenazi Zionism's hegemony, that gave birth to the Mizrahi struggle's politics in its various approaches, which is the subject of this research.

For the European Zionist revolution's ideologues and leaders, the Mizrahim were a negligible factor, primarily because they accounted for a mere 10 percent of world Jews (according to European Jewish estimates), but also because political Zionism was a European Jewish solution to a European Jewish problem. David Ben-Gurion put it clearly in his essay of self-examination titled "Netzah Yisrael" (Eternal Israel):

"The Jewish people," the way Herzl conceived it and at whom he aimed his Zionist work, was in fact *the Jewish people in Europe*, that did not, and could not want to stay put, the people that bore the Zionist movement on its shoulders . . . This people was displaced and ruined . . . The state was formed but could not find the people who had been waiting for it.²⁶ (emphasis in original)

This was summarized with rare openness by Baruch Duvdevani, who directed the Jewish Agency's department of Aliyah (Hebrew for immigration to Israel, literally: "ascendance") during the mass Mizrahi migration: "Frankly, so long as millions of European Jews were alive no attention was given to the Jews of the East, and to half a million Jews in North Africa, to the Jews of Asia, etc. . . they were the Jewish tribe ever so forgotten, outside consciousness. The springs of the Zionist movement were concerned with Europe."²⁷ Indeed, the political Zionist notion was born in Europe, under conditions that existed in Europe and were alien to the Arab and Muslim world. One principal condition was the Judeo-Christian complex, originating from Christianity's birth out of Judaism. The very existence of Judaism, the mother religion, in the Christian world, cast a continuous shadow

of doubt on the New Testament, which left Christianity with a sense of constant threat, and therefore aggressively defensive. Out of commitment to consolidate and establish itself as the new religion, Christianity did not only break away from Judaism, but wished also to break down Judaism's durability as a religion.²⁸ Pope Innocent III wrote in 1205:

The Christians allow the Jews to live among them, and are doing a *gracias* with them, because the blame is on them for becoming slaves for eternity, because they crucified Jesus. The masters of the countries are permitted to handle their property [of the Jews] as their own property, as long as they don't deprive them from the essentials for their existence.

Jews were therefore considered as slaves, belonging to the Kingdom's treasure. But in the Muslim definition of Jews and Christians as protégés, *Ahl a-D'imi*, there is no mention of property and proprietor, nor is there a burden of sin on the Jews. The term *slavery* is entirely absent from Muslim discussion of protégés.²⁹

As put by Sartre: "That thing which he (the anti-Semite) wants, and to which he aims all his efforts, is indeed the death of the Jew." He was referring, of course, to a spiritual death, but Christian anti-Semitism did not stop at that. Sartre elaborates on the complexity of this complex:

The Jew could have easily assimilated among the modern nations, but he's defined as that which the nations do not desire to assimilate. The source of this is him being the murderer of the Messiah (a false tale created by the Christian propaganda around the world). . . . Have people ever thought about the horrible state of human beings that were sentenced to live among a society that adores the God that they killed? The Jew is therefore and first of all a murderer, son of a murderer.³⁰

Herzl was well aware of the Judeo-Christian complex, and saw it as a potential engine to mobilize Jews into political organization, and even as a source of power.³¹

Islam, unlike Christianity, acknowledged Judaism (and Christianity) and appropriated them as foundations for religious faith and practice;³² in fact, it had no theological disagreement with Judaism. Muhammad granted Judaism, and Jews as protégés, recognition and protection as inscribed in the Qur'an, even though their status in religious hierarchy was inferior to that of the Muslims, and that was the source for a relationship of religious coexistence and for cultural and spiritual cross-fertilization over long periods.³³

The Prophet's direct orders in this regard were explicit: "Surely those who believe, and those who are Jews, and the Christians, and the Sabians, whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day and does good, they shall have their reward from their Lord, and there is no fear for them, nor shall they grieve."³⁴ The actual implementation of the Jews' status as protégés, like any religious rule, depends on the status and character of rulers, who interpreted the rule according to various considerations, not always purely religious. Accordingly, Jews in Muslim

countries experienced some better and some worse periods. Thus, for example, in February 1864, the Moroccan Sultan issued a clear declaration on the subject:

We hereby order to all who shall read this letter of ours, may Allah deliver success to our decree and glorify it and elevate it to the high havens like the sun, and upon our governors and servants and our commissioners that are standing loyal for our orders. That they should behave in grace toward the Jews, that Allah the great has placed them under our patronage in our country, and according to the measure of justice and equality between them and their fellow-man, so that not even a dust of injustice or bad conduct shall strike them, no evil or exploitation should reach them, and they (the addressed above) or their fellow-man should not exploit, not even one of them, neither their souls nor their capital.³⁵

Aggression toward Jews was marginal in Muslim countries, and one must not project upon it the European Jewish terminology of *pogroms*, *persecution*, *anti-Semitism*,³⁶ and most certainly not the term *holocaust*. The appearance of anti-Semitic symbols known from Europe in the Arab world was the result of colonialist European importation—to North Africa by the French, and to Iraq by the Germans and the British.³⁷ Relations began to deteriorate when European Zionism started to penetrate Jewish communities in Muslim and Arab countries on the one hand, and with the rise of Arab nationalism on the other, together with an animosity between these two on the question of Palestine. Jews in Arab countries, added as passive masses to the European Zionist revolution in Palestine, were seen as collaborators with Jewish nationalism and their presence in their Arab homelands became unbearable as Arab nationalism, and Palestinian nationalism in particular, evolved.

The second condition for the development of political Zionism in Europe was the process of European Jewish communities' secularization, and Jewish exposure to the ideas of nationalism and the nation-state in the second half of the nineteenth century. An additional condition mentioned earlier is the colonialist Orientalist atmosphere in which political Zionism was conceived, an atmosphere of claimed European superiority over non-European peoples, discussed at length by Said in *Orientalism*:

Orientalism is never far from what Denys Hay has called the idea of Europe, a collective notion of identifying "us" Europeans as against all "those" non-Europeans, and indeed it can be argued that the major component in European culture is precisely what made that culture hegemonic both in and outside Europe: the idea of European identity as a superior one in comparison with all the non-European peoples and cultures.³⁸

Educated European Jews saw themselves first and foremost as Europeans, and as such they tended to define Jews by European or Christian cultural criteria.

These were the conditions under which political Zionism was born, so that even the vision was that of a European country in the Middle East. Amnon Raz-Karkotzkin described this as “leaving Europe, in order to be, at long last, Europeans.”³⁹ We find no mention in Zionist writings before the end of World War II of a proposal to add all Jews of the East and of the Arab world to the state-building process. Only after the shocking dimensions of the Holocaust were fully revealed, only after the Jews of Eastern Europe were enclosed behind the Communist iron curtain, and after Ben-Gurion had given up on his calls to the Jews of the U.S. to join Israel as inhabitants and citizens,⁴⁰ and after he realized that the demographic situation of 1945 would make it impossible to proclaim a Jewish state with a Jewish minority, only then did he turn for the first time to a notion alien to the original Zionist program: to deliver all the Jews, numbering over a million, from the Arab and Eastern countries to Palestine as quickly as possible.⁴¹ Before discussing the results of this intercultural encounter, let us examine the prestate period of Zionist settlement, during which the basic traits of future cultural and political relations were laid down.⁴²

Before the state: the Zionist colonial settlement period

The encounter between the Jews of the Middle East and the European Zionist movement began in 1882, with the very beginning of the Eastern European Zionists’ colonial settlement project, the BILU movement (a pioneer settler group from Russia). This settlement movement, known in Zionist historiography as “the First Aliyah,” is in fact the first European Aliyah with a political Zionist motivation. For more than a century earlier, religiously motivated Aliyahs took place from countries in the Middle East, protected by the Ottoman Empire, as well as from Eastern Europe. Sephardi organization in Eretz Yisrael dates back to the end of the thirteenth century.⁴³ At the same time as BILU, the first Yemenite Aliyah arrived, “A’ale beTamar.” This organized migration was independent, unlike later migration movements from Yemen that were initiated by the Zionist movement for reasons that foretold the future: importing cheap, loyal labor for the European Zionist project. Yemenites imported in the early 1910s were meant to replace Arabs as farm hands for Ashkenazi Zionists of the first colonies.⁴⁴ Testimony of this is found, for example, in the following article excerpt from the newspaper *HaZvi* in 1909:

This is the simple, natural laborer, who can do any work without shame, without philosophy, as well as without poetry. And he most certainly does not carry Mr Marx in his pocket, or in his mind. I do not mean to suggest the Yemenite element should remain in its current state, that of the savage, the barbarian, which it now is . . . their body will grow strong and robust, and they will acquire skills both in work and in the conditions of work, at which point they will become the better competitors in every aspect of farm work. They will come here and replace, and they are able to replace, the Arabs.⁴⁵

Over the nineteenth century, Sephardi–Mizrahi inhabitants constituted the vast majority of the Jewish population in Palestine, but this majority decreased with the increase of Ashkenazi religious migration, and in 1875 Middle Eastern Jews accounted for only 60 percent of the Jewish population.⁴⁶ The first and second waves of Zionist migration (1882, 1904) mark the beginning of separation between Mizrahim and Ashkenazim in Jewish society, with the formation of *Hayishuv Hehadash* (the new organized Jewish population in Palestine)⁴⁷ by Zionist settlers, who desired thereby to distinguish themselves as the pioneers of a secular, socialist agricultural settlement movement, distinct from religious inhabitants whom they now named *hayishuv hayashan* (the old *yishuv*)—symbolic, in their eyes, of diasporic Judaism from which they wanted to break away.⁴⁸ I will now present the encounter between the Sephardim–Mizrahim and Yemenites on one side and the Zionist movement and Jewish institutions in Palestine on the other. This encounter can be largely divided into two periods: the Ottoman period, until 1917; and the British Mandate period, under the protection of which the Zionists established a Jewish autonomy of sorts in Eretz Yisrael/Palestine, “the state to be.”

There is an essential difference between the Yemenites’ and the Sephardim’s encounter with European Zionist settlers. The Sephardim had been a majority among Jews in Palestine for a long time; they were well organized economically, socially, and religiously, both on a local level and as part of the larger Jewish community throughout the Ottoman Empire. Community leaders, headed by the Hakham Bashi, who was authorized by the sultan, were in fact the leaders of the entire Jewish community. Relations between Sephardim and the Ottomans are described for the most part as good and functional, part of a long tradition. Some quote a famous legend, according to which upon the death of a Turkish sultan, the Turks would lock the gates of Jerusalem, sending the keys to the chief rabbi for a blessing, only opening the gates after the blessing was given.⁴⁹ This legend illustrates the Jewish religious leaders’ stature in the eyes of the Ottomans.

Ashkenazim, both the ultra-Orthodox and the Zionists, who were not Ottoman subjects, lived mostly as foreigners under the protection of various European countries, thus excluding themselves from the Sephardi autonomous responsibility. Since the Sephardim held the official leadership of the old *yishuv*, they encountered the first Zionist settlers from a position of superiority. The encounter was marked from its very beginnings by a competition for primacy; Sephardim regarded Zionist settlement as a threat, which was indeed realized with the fall of the empire and the advance of the British. One should note that Sephardim preceded European Ashkenazim in settling the country and establishing the new urban communities in Jerusalem, Jaffa, and Haifa, including the development of economic and trade institutions by wealthy bankers and merchant families.

Unlike the Sephardim, the Yemenites encountered the Zionists from an inferior position, in numbers, economic power, and organization. For about three decades (1880–1908) Yemenites did not have a *kollel* (a *yeshiva* for married students) of their own, in the way that each Jewish community in Jerusalem did, and they attached themselves to the Sephardi community, which ended up accepting them

with certain reservations.⁵⁰ Their dependence on the Sephardim finally encouraged the Yemenites to break away and to attempt, unsuccessfully, to organize independently. After Zionist leaders determined to use the Yemenites instead of Arab workers as cheap labor, it did not take them long to assume patronage over the Yemenites.⁵¹ The Yemenites had little to lose in accepting the political patronage of the Zionist leadership in Eretz Yisrael headed by HaPoel HaTzair, even though doing so created an internal crisis on religious questions that finally led to a breach.⁵² From a long-term historical perspective, the Yemenites came out of these relations of political, organizational, economic, and cultural dependence as losers, humiliated and bruised.⁵³ The milestones of this relationship have been widely documented in research since the mid-1970s. The first milestone was Yavnieli's mission to Yemen in 1910, representing the Zionist movement in Eretz Yisrael. The proposal to import the Jews of Yemen rose out of a crisis among settlers who failed to adapt to the practicalities of "*Kibush HaAvoda*" (conquering, taking over labor, into Jewish hands), a central ideological Zionist motif, as well as a failure to mobilize laborers from Jewish communities in Russia and Eastern Europe. Resorting to Arab laborers posed a threat to their independence, and undermined the "Hebrew Labor" ideology.⁵⁴ Zionist socialist debate on the need for Yemenite workers raged in gatherings, meetings, and in newspapers, and it was the source of a disagreement between the two parties, HaPoel HaTzair and Poaley Zion, with the HaMizrahi Party in the middle. HaPoel HaTzair pushed for the importation of Yemenites as cheap labor while assigning a higher quality status for its own members: "An Ashkenazi worker would not withstand the menial jobs, and we should put the Yemenites there, whose needs are smaller. I cannot accept the position that we can just call out for Ashkenazi laborers from Russia, simply because our call will not help. . . . The Mizrahi element can be used a lot, as their material requirements are not too large."⁵⁵ Otto Warburg spoke about Mizrahim in general: "The Jews of the Orient, known for their low level, are fit to take the place of the Arab in the colony."⁵⁶

The harsh results of this Zionist episode can be summarized with Berl Katznelson's words of reproach, which reflect the danger of Zionist society's moral corruption:

Let us look down and admit the painful ugly truth: Some among us are not satisfied merely with their horrible material exploitation of the Yemenites, and various attempts are being made to enslave their bodies to batterers, their souls to offenders, to harass their wives and daughters, and evil keeps growing strong. Let us restrain the sinful savage instincts of those enslavers among us!"⁵⁷

The second milestone, an episode, really, which went on from 1908 to 1926, is the exploitation and expulsion of the Yemenites of Kinneret by the Zionist settlers who would not allow them to keep the land as independent farmer settlers. Yehuda Nini's work of research on this history gives ample expression to a sense of supremacy and patronage as an ideological justification for the Yemenites'

expulsion, and for their exclusion from the settlement's history: "Yemen worked in Kinerret, Degania, and Bitania, just like the workers of the Kinerret farm. They were different from the young workers [Ashkenazi Zionists] in one way. Since they were not aware of their role as the makers of 'national history,' they did not write poems, or memoirs that would add up to a national epic. And since they were not aware of it, we do not have now at our disposal any poetic descriptions of their first days reclaiming swamp lands and weeding."⁵⁸ Those who did compose memoirs ignored the Yemenites, or described them negatively and their work as insignificant. These early episodes in the history of the Zionist movement with the Yemenites, and the "baby-snatching" affair in the 1950s, have shaped the outcome of the encounter.⁵⁹

Encouraged by Zionist patronage, the Yemenites did not give up on independent organizing, separate from the Sephardim in the settlement period and after the formation of the state until the 1970s. Thus they were left without real independent political power. This must be taken into consideration as the background for the Sephardims' relations with the Zionists, which were devoid of dependence but were marked by tension and competition.

The British factor: deciding the struggle in favor of European Zionists

To conclude this description of the Sephardi political crisis in the settlement period, I wish to add a central observation on the implications of the encounter with the Zionists, in light of which this discussion should be understood. This observation is related to the British arrival in Eretz Yisrael/Palestine in 1917, and their rule of it under the Mandate from 1920, for about three decades. During this period the European Zionist autonomy was formed, which ended up assuming sovereignty and forming the state of Israel.

The British Mandate in Palestine was pro-Zionist from its very first day; indeed, it helped the formation of the Zionist military forces and the advancement of Jewish settlement and Jewish economic hegemony, and enabled Jewish immigration during most of this period, in spite of some confrontations.⁶⁰ The British Mandate was preceded by a constituting historical event that influenced British support for the Zionist project, the Balfour Declaration of 1917 (presented to Lord Rothschild by Arthur James Balfour), which recognized the Zionist movement as representing the Jewish people, and its national goal as the formation of a sovereign state in areas of Eretz Yisrael/Palestine: "His Majesty's Government views with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people." According to Tom Segev,⁶¹ this pro-Zionist stance was due not only to political reasons but also to a Christian Zionist concept requiring Jewish rule of the Holy Land as a condition for the return of the Christian Messiah. In this respect one must note that many of the Mandate chiefs were Jews, from High Commissioner Herbert Samuel (a Zionist) through legal adviser Norman Bentwich; head of the Commerce and Industry Department, Ralph Harari; and head of the Immigration Department, Albert M. Haimson. The British recognized the European Zionist leadership as the exclusive

representative of the Jewish population in Eretz Yisrael/Palestine, and its institutions as charged with Jewish autonomy. As part of this new alliance the Sephardim and their organizations were marginalized and, as a result, no longer formed a power to be reckoned with.

The new power relations were manifest in Ashkenazi Zionism's domination of decisive realms of life. In the realm of organization, once British patronage was given to Zionist organizations, these were given primacy over all Jewish organizations, thus preventing or interrupting Sephardi or Yemenite attempts to organize. The Zionist leadership also had control of donations from abroad, as well as of budget allotments from the British, and distributed these funds (usually granted in return for political obedience) without any consideration of Sephardi and Yemenite organizations that depended on its charity.

Zionist institutions went so far as to distribute even funds collected by the Jewish National Fund among the communities of the Middle East without any regard for the Sephardim's and Mizrahim's position, or for their needs. The Jews of Iraq, for example, donated some 68,000 dinars during the 1920s, including generous donations by Jewish minister Yehzkel Sasson and his family. Eli Kaduri, a rich and generous Iraqi Jew, donated 10,000 dinars for the creation of the National Library in Jerusalem, and later funded the establishment of the Kaduri Agricultural High School, used for the most part to train and educate the young Ashkenazi Zionist leadership. These sums were supplemented by dozens of thousands of dinars and francs donated by the Jews of Syria, Tripoli, and North Africa.⁶² The money was used, for the most part, to purchase lands on which agricultural settlements composed exclusively of European Zionists were established. Which brings us to the realm of settlement, also fully dominated by the Ashkenazi Zionist leadership. In fact, from the moment its domination was established as autonomous under the British, this leadership prevented the Sephardim, the Mizrahim, and the Yemenites from carrying out any form of settlement that did not agree with Zionist settlement interests. In 1925, for example, five hundred Sephardi families organized to form a new settlement in the vicinity of Jericho and won the British Mandate's approval for leasing the land. The Zionist leadership, led by Menahem Usishkin, intervened with the British to prevent the realization of this initiative, arguing that authority to lease lands in Palestine was given exclusively to the Zionist movement.⁶³ Another decisive factor in the formation of the demographic relations between Sephardim–Mizrahim and Ashkenazim was in the realm of immigration, entirely dominated by the *yishuv*'s Zionist leadership both in coordination with the British Mandate and in illegal immigration operations. Thus, the lion's share of immigrant quotas was given to Jews from Europe. The grand total of Mizrahim permitted to immigrate to Palestine during the Mandate period was about 10 percent of the total of Jewish immigrants. Those 10 percent were, for the most part, Jews imported as laborers, from Yemen, Persia, and Kurdistan.

An exception to this rule was the early immigration of Jews from Thessaloníki, right at the beginning of the Mandate period. The goal these newcomers had in mind was to construct a seaport, relying on their rich experience and economic power, led by the Sarfati family and Maurice Raphael. But the initiative was

blocked by the *yishuv* leadership. Although they were employed to construct the Tel Aviv port, they then became simple longshoremen, while control of trade and commerce was given to Ashkenazim.⁶⁴ In total, the Zionist leadership made possible the immigration of 382,000 Ashkenazim. By the time the state was formed, the Sephardim–Mizrahim and the Yemenites had become a small minority.⁶⁵

Education was another important realm where the Sephardim fell victim to the shift in power. Before the establishment of the *yishuv* institutions, progressive philanthropic Jewish institutions were active in Eretz Yisrael/Palestine; one such institution was Alliance, where the majority of Sephardi–Mizrahi children studied.⁶⁶ With the creation of the *yishuv* institutions, *Alliance Israélite Universelle* (an international Jewish educational organization based in France that operates all over the Arab world) chiefs saw them as responsible for educating Sephardim as well, and gradually stopped their work in Eretz Yisrael/Palestine. Thus Mizrahi children were given help in education by organizations such as Alliance, and Ort in Arab countries, but when they arrived in Eretz Yisrael they were not provided with proper education, nor did they get to attend the Zionist Ashkenazi *yishuv* schools that were fully funded by world Jewish organizations.⁶⁷ The damage to education among the Sephardim and Yemenites was severe and had a lasting influence on their social mobility in the new *yishuv* system.

With the formation of the state under British patronage, European Zionist domination consolidated itself in all these realms. It continued to apply political considerations wherein the Sephardim and Yemenites had no influence, as was later the case for hundreds of thousands of Mizrahi immigrants, who were left almost without a united leadership, and were all subject to economic, demographic, and political manipulation by the European Zionist leadership.

“The immigration of a race the like of which we have not known in this country”: Ashkenazi reactions to the encounter with Mizrahi immigrants in the 1950s

Before turning to the political implications of the encounter during the large Mizrahi migration waves of the 1950s, I wish to outline the cultural and social characteristics of this encounter. My goal is not to offer a historical account of the bringing of Jews from Muslim and other Eastern countries to the young state of Israel, but relying on numerous historical works on this subject, I will note some characteristics of the operation to move Mizrahi and Sephardi Jews into Israel.⁶⁸ First, the ideological initiative for this migration came from the Zionist movement institutions and from the state of Israel, not from the migrating Jewish communities. Second, from the outbreak of the 1948 war, Jews in Arab countries were identified with European Zionists, then at war against the Arabs over a contested land that was, for the most part, Arab. Moreover, the war’s outcome was disastrous for the Palestinians: the *Nakba*, when over 700 thousand Palestinians were expelled or scared out, and lost their houses and properties, most becoming refugees. The war’s outcome had dire implications for the relations between Jews and Muslims in Arab and Muslim countries, especially in the countries

immediately involved in the war—Iraq, Syria, Egypt, and Lebanon. Jews were from that moment on identified as Zionists, based solely on their religion, even if they had never before heard the word *Zionism*. As Jewish and Arab nationalism had defined themselves on the basis of religion, the cultural common ground for Jews and Arabs was undermined. Zionist agents and their local recruits are among those responsible for the creation of this identification. Their aim was to undermine relations of trust between Jews and Muslims in order to urge the Jews to leave.⁶⁹ With this background in mind, it is not difficult to imagine how the Jews of Iraq, for example, showed no enthusiasm about, or identification with, the political Zionist idea, or even about the formation of the state of Israel. The British *Jewish Chronicle* published the following report in 1949:

The Chief Rabbi and Iraqi Jews do not like Zionism, since it has caused difficulties for them. They prefer to stay in Iraq and live under the patronage of Islam and its tolerance. They are attached to their houses and traditions, and to the graves of their prophets in Iraq. They have no desire to leave their country and live in refugee camps in Israel. They believe that people there are not too friendly towards oriental Jews.⁷⁰

The third characteristic is that once the Jews in Arab and Muslim countries were added to the Zionist political framework, they lost all their communities' communal and economic infrastructure, such as the education systems in Iraq and in North Africa and their independent welfare institutions. They became subjects of the Israeli regime, under the Ashkenazi Zionist hegemony, having no control over their destiny as individuals, families, and communities.⁷¹ The most significant cultural result of this process was that it left Jews in Arab countries doubly disconnected. First, physically speaking, there was no option to go back, because of the permanent state of war between Israel and the Arab countries, unlike the Jews of Germany and Austria, for example, who could go back to live in their homelands after World War II. To this can be symbolically added the confiscation of passports from Jews from Arab and Muslim countries upon their arrival in Israel.⁷² Second was the mental and cultural disconnection as required by Ashkenazi Zionist socialization. The mental rupture was no less traumatic than the physical, because it took place not only on the community level but also on the most intimate level of families and individuals who found themselves in a process of self-erasure.⁷³

The most decisive characteristic for understanding the encounter between European Zionism and the Mizrahim is the Ashkenazi reaction to the arrival of the Mizrahim and their unplanned addition to the Jewish national state. Reactions by the political leadership—in academia, in the media, and in public—expressed shock, and unconcealed fear, to see the original program to form a state for the Jews of Europe going astray, especially in terms of culture.

An official expression of the Ashkenazi fears is found, for example, in a Foreign Office memo circulated among diplomatic missions that asked them to increase immigration from Western countries in the face of the Eastern danger: "Maintaining

the *yishuv*'s cultural level [requires] a flow of immigration from Western countries, and not only from the backward countries of the Orient."⁷⁴ The head of the Middle Eastern Jews Department in the Jewish Agency, Yaakov Zrubavel, gave open expression to his frustration: "These may not be the Jews whose arrival we desire, but we cannot tell them, 'Don't come.'"⁷⁵ The following description published by *Ha'aretz* tells much of the hostile atmosphere among Ashkenazi elites upon the arrival of the first Jews from North Africa in 1948. Journalist Arye Gelblum visited immigrant camps to meet the newcomers:

This is a people whose primitivity sets a record, their level of education borders on total ignorance, and yet worse is their lack of ability to absorb anything spiritual. For the most part they are only a tad better than the general level of the Arab, Negro, and Berber neighbors. In any case, this level is even lower than what we have met with the former Arabs of Eretz Yisrael. Unlike the Yemenites, these also lack any roots in Judaism. On the other hand they are entirely given to the play of savage primitive instincts. How many accidents, for example, will pay for the education of Africans to stand in line in the dining room without making havoc. [. . .] In the Africans' living quarters in the camps you will find filth, card playing for money, drunkenness and prostitution. [. . .] These ways of life the Africans carry with them to where they are settled, and there is no wonder that a wave of crime is rising in the country. In some parts of Jerusalem it is no longer safe to walk, and even for a young [Ashkenazi] man to go out alone after sunset. . . . By the way, some of them have assured me more than once: "Once we finish the war with the Arabs, we'll wage a war on the Ashkenazim." . . . And anyone who feels a shred of responsibility, should not be ashamed and not be a coward, but look the problem in the face, considering all its implications. . . . In total there are more than half a million Jews in North Africa, all of them candidates for Aliyah. Have we considered what would happen to the state if this would be its population? For the day will come when the Aliyah of Jews from the Arab countries will join them! What character will the state of Israel have and what shall be its level with such populations?⁷⁶

One should note that this attitude was not universal: there were a few exceptions. Here, for example, is a moving response to Gelblum's article, written by Ephraim Friedman, an Aliyah activist in North Africa:

Is it possible to write in this way about an entire Jewish community without knowing it? Is it possible to publish this in an Israeli newspaper? Is this our Love of Israel, is this our deep relation to the rest? I have not visited the Jewish camps in Europe. But I have many friends who have, and who spent not just one month, but several, as refugee emissaries, and did so illegally. And I have heard from them. And had anyone been as hateful of European Jews as Mr Gelblum is hateful of African Jews, could he not use the very same phrases to describe the Jews in the camps? To describe scalping, and moral decline, of

aversion for work, of prostitution etc! . . . What does Mr Gelblum know about longing for the Messiah? Did he see women and children from desert oases, who had never seen the sea, rushing into the deep waters and putting their lives at risk in order to reach a boat? Did he see the thousands who lived for months, some for years, under inhuman conditions only to reach Aliyah? . . . Let Mr Gelblum embark on a tour of Jarbah, the only place in the East where the Jews fought against the influence of *Alliance Israélite Universelle* and rejected the *Alliance* school for fear of assimilation, and he shall find there Jewish roots, a habitation of thousands of Hebrew speaking Jews. He shall find there, on that lonely island, two Hebrew print-shops, there he shall find learned students well versed in the Torah; and not there only, but also in Casa and Marrakech, in the South of Algeria and in the desert. . . . And how do we call them? *Frenk*, Black, Arab. Why does Mr Gelblum fail to mention this? Or has he, perhaps, not heard it? . . . If you have the courage, Mr Gelblum, please see the problem as it is, and don't evade it. There's racial discrimination, and there's racial hatred, and you have become its mouthpiece.⁷⁷

Sociologist Moshe Lissak explained the sources of racist reactions to the Mizrahi Aliyah: "Negative stereotypes, negative tagging, abounded at that time. . . . The *yishuv* was full of angst. . . . Warnings were heard of Orientalization, of Levantization, and the danger was pointed out of a destruction of cultural, social, and economic achievements following this Aliyah."⁷⁸

This view of Mizrahi Jews as they were brought to Israel was not just confined to public discussion but also took deep roots in the education system, which was charged with the resocialization of Mizrahi Jews, and with turning them into loyal Zionists. One has to remember that until the early 1980s, independent Mizrahi politics was minuscule and marginal next to the massive politics of the "melting pot" and of modernization. Protests and uprisings, which began from the very first moment, were met by a large and popular socialization machine. The bulk of socialization probably took place in the schools, where the Mizrahi narrative was excluded from the curriculum. The reshaping of the Mizrahim as culturally inferior was a central instrument in justifying the ethnic division of labor and their transformation into fuel for the industrial economy. The schools loyally carried out this duty, training hundreds of thousands of Mizrahim as laborers for Israel's economy.⁷⁹

Illustrations of this Orientalist Zionist historiography abound in textbooks such as Dr Shimshon Kirschenbaum's *The History of the Jewish People in Recent Generations*, in which nine pages, out of a total of 400, are dedicated to the Jews of the Middle East.⁸⁰ Those few pages present Mizrahi Jews as helpless hostages in the hands of dark Arab forces, until salvaged by their brave European brethren. Dr Shlomo Horowitz, author of another history textbook, dedicated six out of 638 pages to the Jews of the Middle East, and those pages speak for themselves:

While European Judaism goes through a stormy revolutionary process, and while a new important and powerful Jewish center emerges across the ocean,

some eight hundred thousand members of Jewish communities in the backward Muslim countries of Asia and Africa—formerly strongholds of Jewish culture—are submitted to the double burden of Oriental tyranny and Muslim zealotry, enclosed for the most part in their special quarters, limited to a few professions, especially as artisans and peddlers, frozen in their ways, deep in a spiritual sleep. The masses of populace lived in degenerate poverty, spoke like the commoners, and those who inhabited faraway districts, removed from the highway of modern history (including the inhabitants of Kurdistan, and of the Iranian plateaus, cave dwellers in the Atlas mountains, or oases on the edge of the Sahara) were on an even lower level, their way of life and their cultural level much like those of their half-savage Muslim neighbors. The absolute majority of the Jews were ignorant, and much like their neighbors, steeped in bizarre superstitions. Public life was entirely petrified, not a trace could be found of any social movement whatsoever (even the memory of Shabbetaianism has already been wiped out!), no trace of an ideological struggle or any living aspiration, except for a heavenly longing for the coming of the Messiah.⁸¹

State officials cultivated expressions of racism in public life and in school curricula. In 1951 Zalman Shazar, a member of the Jewish Agency Executive and the future president of Israel, warned of the dangers of a Mizrahi Aliyah:

It will cost us dearly. This is unfathomable . . . An Aliyah has come to us who never knew the taste of a high school, and they are unused to so much education, to so much learning . . . Suppose that, ok, we can bring them to graduate primary schools, but what will the level be then, what will the *yishuv* be like, would we be able to be a light for the gentiles? . . . Will the *yishuv* in Israel survive without more Europeans and Anglo-Saxons, Jews like us? Strange to be talking of Aliyah as though it's coming only from Tunisia . . . Perhaps someone else will arrive once? Aliyah is only for those facing a catastrophe? All Jews of European origin are outside the whole business of Aliyah? I think this is the current function of Zionism: To bring Jews, not necessarily the Jews of the Orient, into the circle of Aliyah.⁸²

Ben-Gurion also contributed to shaping the state's views of Mizrahim as the offspring of an inferior civilization, and as Jews inferior to European Jews. His words dictated all state organs' policies, the same effect they had in every realm during the state's first years: "The ancient spirit has left the Oriental Jewish communities, and their importance among the Jewish people has declined, or has altogether disappeared. In recent centuries European Jews took the lead of the people in both quantity and quality."⁸³ Tom Segev offers the following commentary on Ben-Gurion's statement: "Published in the Government's Annual, Ben Gurion's article gave a virtually official stamp to the view that the house of a Jewish rag-merchant in Plonsk, Poland, for instance, was blessed with the 'ancient spirit', while that of, say, a Sorbonne-trained Jewish physician in Algeria was not."⁸⁴ In 1951, in

a Knesset debate on educating the newcomers, Ben-Gurion said: "A Yemenite Jew is first and foremost a Jew, and we want to turn him, as much as possible and as quickly as possible, from a Yemenite into a Jew." That is, Ben-Gurion understood "Jew" and "Yemenite" as contradictory irreconcilable identities, unlike, say, "Jew" and "American." On another occasion, Knesset member Shoshana Persitz put it more bluntly: "You know that we have no language in common with them. Our cultural level does not match theirs, their way of life belongs in the Middle Ages."⁸⁵ Zalman Aran, who was to be put in charge of Israel's system of education in order to implement a reform policy, was open about his concern: "I am already afraid to talk about *Edot haMizrah*, because soon enough, with increasing Aliyah, we may have to talk of the Ashkenazi Aliyahs."⁸⁶ These quotes, and many like them,⁸⁷ are also indicative of the atmosphere within Ashkenazi academia.⁸⁸ Apart from the pressure of socialization applied to all immigrants, and most particularly to Mizrahi immigrants, the Israeli government's harshest response to Mizrahi migrations was its attempt to stop, or slow down, the flow of immigrants it considered undesirable. It imposed systematic selection filters on the Aliyah, especially coming from North Africa, which, unlike the fast intensive migrations from Iraq (1949) and Yemen (1951), was spread over fifteen years. Haim Malka's research presents the selection apparatus applied to North African Jews, the reasoning behind it, and the history of preference for Eastern European Jews for Aliyah and throughout their absorption in Israel in terms of housing and resources.⁸⁹

Selection was justified mainly on cultural grounds. Nahum Goldman, chair of the Jewish Agency Executive, said that "a Jew from Eastern Europe is worth twice the value of a Jew from Kurdistan," adding that "a hundred thousand Mizrahi Jews should be returned to their countries."⁹⁰ Here's how Moshe Kol, head of the agency's Youth and Pioneer Department, accounted for the decision to have a selection:

In Morocco, Tunisia, and Persia, some half a million Jews live, and from these countries we must pick youths and pioneers aged 13–14. This will be cheaper, and we can educate them, and they would be able to absorb their families more easily within two or three years. Otherwise, we may find ourselves drowning in a Levantine ocean, and the country will become a Levantine country. Our Aliyah policy must be to bring eighty percent youths and pioneers, and twenty percent who depend on them. . . . This must be our policy regarding this Aliyah.⁹¹

Eliahu Dovkin, head of the Pioneer Affairs Department, was more decisive:

There are two newcomer categories, some newcomers are a necessity, and we have no choice about them, like those from Romania, Poland, and Czechoslovakia. But in the case of North Africa, we do have a choice, and we should only bring over the young productive element. As for the rest, who would become a burden on the state, there is no Jewish obligation, and no Zionist obligation for us, or for the state, to bring them to Israel.⁹²

As noted by Malka, a selection policy was practiced after Aliyah as well, especially in housing. Here's what Berginski, head of the Absorption Department, told the Jewish Agency Executive:

I have to present you with a tough problem, and one the public is concerned with: Discrimination against *Edot haMizrah*. . . . We took four hundred apartments that were slated for earlier immigrants from North Africa, who were scheduled to move into housing, and gave them on credit to more recent immigrants. . . . We did not make this public. . . . I want us all to be aware that we have sinned in this way because we had no choice. I do not have to tell the board why we did it. It was done for political reasons and out of a human concern for the Poles.

Ben-Gurion had a similar view: "It's true, there's discrimination, this is necessary discrimination."⁹³

Malka concludes his research:

From 1950 the leadership began to notice the declining percentage of Ashkenazi immigrants, and that the chief source for mass immigration expected to materialize over the next few years was the five hundred thousand Jews of North Africa. Therefore, it did all that was in its power, as presented throughout this research, to prevent the Jews of North Africa from immigrating to Israel, since their immigration would entirely undermine the demographic situation.⁹⁴

There were some sharply critical reactions to the public and official attitude toward Mizrahi Jews. Poet Nathan Alterman published a protest poem in his weekly column, "Newcomer Danino's Race," in which he describes a young disabled man named Danino, who tries to run in order to impress selection agents with his physical fitness:

A story like this can not be omitted
Can not be forgotten
This accusing page.
The page of the shame of a father that started
And jumped, and ran, his children
Silently watching.
This shameful page of a father commanded
To return to Zion, and so he jumped
He ran, and he ran
Silently praying
For help
That we should not notice his bad leg.⁹⁵

The Herut Party, headed by Menachem Begin, embraced the Mizrahi Jews and established a sort of alliance of the oppressed with them. Begin used every

opportunity to condemn the Labor government's policies toward the Mizrahim and turned up on the scene of every Mizrahi protest. Moshe Sne, head of the Israeli Communist Party, also protested against the discrimination against Mizrahi Jews. In a Knesset discussion in July 1959, shortly before the outbreak of the Wadi A-Salib Rebellion, Sne addressed the government:

I warn you! You are creating grave problems that can lead to horrible results. It is indeed a severe social problem, but it is accompanied by clearly ethnic discrimination. According to your statistics seventy percent of those resorting to welfare are immigrants from Asia and Africa; it's not their share in the general population. This means you are creating an ethnic problem among the Jews, in addition to the discrimination of Arabs, which is a separate problem.⁹⁶

Academic backing

Senior members of academia, and discussions in the academic sphere, were deeply involved in the shaping of Ashkenazi–Mizrahi relations during the first two decades of the state's existence, a crucial period for the development of Israeli society. Such sociologists and scholars of education as Shmuel Noah Eisenstadt, Carl Frankenstein, Ernest Simon, Moshe Smilansky, Reuven Feuerstein, Nathan Rottenstreich, Rivka Bar-Yosef, and others developed academic explanations for the “Mizrahims' cultural inferiority.”⁹⁷ These academics and their work helped provide for the government a way to absorb and culturally socialize Mizrahim. One man, Eisenstadt, a sociologist of the “modernization and development” school, had more influence in shaping the state's official sociology than anyone else.⁹⁸ This official sociology adopted his theory for the assimilation of Mizrahim in Israel: “Absorption through Modernization.”⁹⁹ As testified by Eisenstadt himself, the modernization theory on which he based this system is “a process in which important bonds of earlier social, economic, and psychological commitment expire and crumble, and people acquire new patterns of behavior and socialization.”¹⁰⁰ In a later publication Eisenstadt went on to warn of the damage caused to the status of Western culture:

The potential spread of a formless culture of the masses, and the possibility of a revival of what is known as Levantinization and Provincialism, can weaken the trend for cultural and social horizons and commitments, and finally sweep away their foundations and institutional nuclei. This can be related to, and reveal itself in reduced connections with other centers of culture in the West.¹⁰¹

In the absorption process, Mizrahim were required to break away from all “symptoms of traditional society” and start acquiring the new society's “modern orientation”: the erasure of a backward identity and culture (desocialization) together with the acquisition of a new, “modern” identity and culture by way of imitation and assimilation (resocialization). This theory served until the early

1980s as the central academic basis to account for the economic gap between Mizrahim and Ashkenazim. It claims that personal and cultural patterns, as well as patterns of social organization carried by the Mizrahim from their countries of origin, prevented them from successfully integrating in “modern Western” Israel, and that the gaps are a temporary necessity and would greatly decline over time.¹⁰² Reality disproved this concept as early as the early 1970s, when it became clear that the second generation of Mizrahim, although born and raised in “modern” Israel, is economically inferior to the Ashkenazi second generation.

Over the past twenty years this theory has lost all touch with reality, as not only did the income gap between Ashkenazim and Mizrahim not diminish, but it increased by at least 11 percent.¹⁰³ Moreover, the second generation of Jews from Eastern Europe (not a modern Western society) did manage to establish itself in both social and economic status, no matter what migration wave it arrived with.

Only at the end of the 1970s did Swirski and Bernstein’s critical theory take a stand against this theory by focusing on economic and political power relations between Ashkenazim and Mizrahim, that is, relations of the rulers and the ruled from the moment of encounter, with all the accompanying complexity of economic dependence and cultural coercion.¹⁰⁴ Swirski also talks of a solid economic class structure that necessarily resulted in the economic relations of oppression under which Mizrahim live.¹⁰⁵ As in similar societies, sociological minority–majority relations resulted from perpetuation mechanisms, for economic inequality, formed by necessity, in ethnic terms.¹⁰⁶ That is to say, the unification of Mizrahi immigrants’ separate categories—from a diverse multiplicity of communities to a single ethnic category, Mizrahim, or *Edot haMizrah*—has a class origin, deriving in the beginning from the very actions of Ashkenazi Zionist hegemony.

This is the root of all political acts of struggle by Mizrahim against a regime they perceived and identified as Ashkenazi. They themselves soon became a political minority, weakened and disorganized, given to manipulations by the Ashkenazi Zionist political hegemony. Swirski and Bernstein took a stand against Eisenstadt and his disciples for their constituting argument. They rejected the assumption that Mizrahim had come from a “traditional” to a “modern” society:

Describing Israeli society where the large waves of Mizrahi migration arrived after the War of Independence as a “modern industrial society” is, at best, inaccurate. A modern economy is not something the Mizrahim found already constructed upon their arrival, but a process in which they took part. . . . The Mizrahim played an integral role in transforming the Israeli economy into a “modern” economy.”¹⁰⁷

According to this critique, the false assumptions of the “modernization” theory later justified the disenfranchisement of the Mizrahim from the rewards of the economy’s development, to which they had contributed so much:

As a relatively cheap labor force, mobile and accessible to manipulations, the Mizrahim played a central role in several stages of economic development

after the state was formed. First, they played a decisive role in expanding the mixed farming economy, in rehabilitating and expanding the citrus crops, and in the development of industrial crops, such as cotton, on a large scale. Second, and more or less simultaneously, they carried the brunt of the big construction effort of the 1950s. Third, once agricultural development had reached saturation, and farming became more mechanized, and since investment in construction diminished, the Mizrahim played a decisive role in the fast industrial development of the late 1950s and the 1960s, especially in labor-intensive industries such as textile, diamonds, metal, chemicals, and minerals.¹⁰⁸

Swirski's concept of economic "backwarding" is deeply rooted in the unequal distribution of the rewards of this development.

The development of those industries—both absolute novelties and unprecedented expansion—was characterized by an unequal distribution of rewards among various participants. As a result of development a few categories of participation were formed. First, the mechanism we used to refer to as the government-entrepreneurial complex. Second, a wide layer of factory owners, bankers, and ownership groups, to whom, or through whom government funding was channeled. Third, yet a wider layer of engineers, technicians, and professional workers. Finally, there was a wide layer of unprofessional and semi-professional workers. The first three categories comprised for the most part of Ashkenazim, both veteran and recent immigrants. The last category had the largest percentage of Mizrahim. The main significance of the unequal distribution of rewards and achievements was not in the distribution of salaries, or profits, but in the very consolidation of distinct socioeconomic categories in a process of planned development, which continues along these general outlines.¹⁰⁹

The third factor in the Mizrahim's "backwarding" system, according to Swirski, was the "caretaking" factor, which placed Mizrahim in a system of extended social dependence that was passed on to the second generation, and that had a decisive part in buffering despair and individual frustration, and in preventing the outbreak of protest and revolt.

The unequal development in the specific field of the economy was accompanied by the creation of a large "welfare" mechanism, whose aim was to place Mizrahim in the work circle, and to maintain them in the work circle under more or less reasonable conditions, so as to assuage the effect of adaptation difficulties, poor conditions and location, or of long periods of effective unemployment.¹¹⁰

Swirski also criticizes the pluralist approach, whose main representative in Israel is Sammy Smooha. According to this theory, the solution is the merging of ethnic

and race groups.¹¹¹ Swirski's analysis maintains the theory of dependence that makes one central claim: "Many societies nowadays are mutually linked in a world capitalist system—partaking in this system determines not only the type of relations between societies, but also the nature of the social structure within each one of them. . . . Due to the unequal character of this system, participation in it leads not to similarity, but to dissimilarity among its components."¹¹² The dependence theory focuses its analysis on historical processes of forming social structures, on the assumption that a society's essence changes from one generation to the next in accordance with developments in the world capitalist system. Swirski argued that one could anticipate the creation of a politically significant Mizrahi identity and entity, as a result of the division of labor on a cultural basis in Israel, thereby predicting the appearance of SHAS. By analyzing Israel's economic development and the formation of "an ethnic division of labor," Swirski arrives at three conclusions. First, ecological differentiation takes root over time and is not only a product of government policy but is also determined by individual and group preferences.¹¹³ Second, the probability that the Mizrahim group will change its status without a radical change in the social system is very low. Third, the relations among ethnicities are structured by dependence. The Ashkenazim dominate senior positions, capital, and the governing institutions and have the ability to determine the course in which society will develop. The Mizrahim, for the most part, have no capital, provide a cheap labor force, and are barely represented in political positions of power. Their development depends on society's general development plans.¹¹⁴

A few years after Swirski's analysis was published and had become central to the discourse of economic-political oppression, a radical scholar of culture, Ella Shohat, pointed out the concomitant cultural oppression, in an examination of Mizrahim's relations with Ashkenazi Zionism from the Mizrahi's point of view as a victim. Her work significantly aided understanding of the cultural encounter between the European Zionist movement and the Jews of the Arab and the Muslim world. Shohat's essay on the Mizrahim as the victims of Zionism was crucial in shaping the critical Mizrahi discourse. Following Edward Said, she relocated the Jewish-cultural discussion, totally dominated in 1988 by the Ashkenazi Zionist hegemony, to the theater of universal discourse, where she exposes its Orientalist nakedness:

The Zionist denial of the Arab-Moslem and Palestinian East, then, has as its corollary the denial of the Jewish "Mizrahim" (the "Eastern Ones") who, like the Palestinians, by more subtle and less obviously brutal mechanisms, have also been stripped of the right of self-representation. Within Israel and on the stage of world opinion, the hegemonic voice of Israel has almost invariably been that of European Jews, the Ashkenazim, while the Sephardi voice has been largely muffled or silenced.

Filtered out by a Euro-centric grid, Zionist discourse presents culture as the monopoly of the West, denuding the people of Asia and Africa, including Jewish peoples, of all cultural expressions. The rich culture of Jews from Arab

and Moslem countries is scarcely studied in Israeli schools and academic institutions.¹¹⁵

Shohat's additional work on the reflection of Israeli society's relation to the other and the different in Israeli cinema established new criteria for examining the cultural relations between the European Zionist establishment and Mizrahim and Arabs in Israel.¹¹⁶ Connecting Arabs and Mizrahim on one side against Ashkenazi Zionist Orientalism on the other offered a fresh point of view on these relations and withdrew discussion from the national local trap.

In the context of this cultural discussion, it is important to mention Ammiel Alcalay's work on culture relations between Jews and Arabs in the Mediterranean and the Middle East through the second millennium CE. His book *After Jews and Arabs: Remaking Levantine Culture*,¹¹⁷ based on cultural and literary analysis, offers a deep and wide perspective for understanding the Mizrahims' cultural-identity crisis following the encounter with European Zionist socialization. A different Arab-Jewishness and Sephardi-Mizrahiness emerge from this extended perspective, a Jewish-Arab interaction in the regions of the Mediterranean-Middle East (the Levant), as opposed to a Mizrahiness devoid of history and culture as presented in the work of Ashkenazi sociologists of the "modernization" school,¹¹⁸ whose encounter with Arabs began with the birth of European Zionism. This new reflection puts all the basic assumptions of the "modernization" theory to the test.

2 The first decade

From shock to protest

The seeds of protest: a policy of socioeconomic inequality

A close examination of the socioeconomic situation during the state's first years reveals the roots of economic oppression relations between Ashkenazim and Mizrahim. Justification for this system was provided by "modernization" theory in academia, and by the official immigrant absorption approach that supported a class-ethnic structure and justified it with cultural excuses. Those approaches also gave birth to myths in the form of such simplistic slogans as "We have all been through transit camp," or "The times were hard for everyone," or "Everyone was equal, but the Mizrahim got stuck because they lacked education and were lazy," or worse: "Those who wanted to, did make it." These myths did not appear by themselves; they were developed by public opinion makers and by social policy. Take, for example, the following excerpt from the protocols of a 1954 interministerial committee for the investigation of conditions in transit camps: "It must be emphasized that immigrants with exceptional initiative, or who were well off, bypassed the transit camp in the process of their absorption, or found ways to leave it quickly and settle among the established *yishuv*. Those remaining were for the most part less apt at paving their own path through the new cultural frame."¹ The worst and most official myth was that of "absorption through modernization" by modern democratic Israel. According to the modernization theory, the Mizrahim had come from a "backward" society to a "modern Western" society, and were therefore objectively inferior, but over time, as they were to become modernized, they would be able to join the higher echelons of the economy and of society, which would become entirely heterogeneous.² Today, even Israeli traditional functionalist sociology speaks of a conscious policy of inequality during the first years, and of the various elites' denial of this policy's existence. Thus, for example, Moshe Lissak:

This reality contained, in fact, much inequality, whose expressions were, first and foremost, a visible quantity gap in control of resources between recent and veteran immigrants. Second, a quality gap in the diversity of resources that were unequally distributed (income, property, profession, education, cultural assets, political power, etc.). All this was overshadowed by a grim perspective about the duration of time required for changing the situation.

Only rarely was the grim prediction about the chance to diminish inequality within the foreseeable future attributed to a policy of conscious discrimination by the absorbing Ashkenazi establishment.³

The pessimism Lissak refers to was responsible for, among other things, the “desert generation” myth, which viewed the immigrants as a lost generation, not worthy of much investment and absorption efforts.

However, Swirski and Bernstein had already described in 1980 the relations of economic inequality in detail,⁴ ranging from the selection policy applied to potential immigrants from North Africa (productivity considerations), through the settlement policy, the Mizrahims’ inferior role in the division of labor, and their meager part in the fruits of the new developing economy. The state never acknowledged its own policy of social and economic inequality, but priorities were clear. In 1950, for example, in a meeting of the Jewish Agency Executive, which was charged with absorbing all new immigrants, Yitzhak Raphael of the Hapoel HaMizrahi (Ashkenazi religious) Party laid out the rationale:

Immigrants from Poland are unlike immigrants from other countries. Immigrants from other countries [Mizrahim] who are making demands today, for a long time did not want to do Aliyah, and had postponed their Aliyah. For this reason we don’t have such an obligation toward them, while the Jews of Poland could not do Aliyah because they had no such possibility. . . . If we release the Jews of Poland from the camps [immigrant camps, or *Mahanot ha’Olim*] and give them preference in the housing waiting list, they’d get along in Israel more easily than the majority of *Edot HaMizrah* camp inhabitants. . . . The Jews of Poland come from good living conditions. For them, camp life is much more difficult than it is for a Jew from Yemen, for whom the camp itself is rescue.⁵

Berginski, head of the Absorption Department, had a practical proposal:

There is a chance we will have one more camp at our disposal. Atlit camp is currently inhabited by Yemenites. We take them out, and push them wherever we push them, and then have a camp for 3–4 thousand people. . . . We tried our best to retain a reserve of 200–300 apartments at 200 Pounds. We’ll take those houses from the ones we have already assigned to the North Africans and the Yemenites, and give them to Poles. For this we’d require 300 x 200 Pounds.

This was the Executive’s resolution: “A public committee for the absorption of immigrants from Poland will be established. Mr Greenbeum will take part in the committee with the Executive’s approval and will report to it from time to time on the work’s progress. To the outside Mr Greenbeum will do this work as one of the leaders of Polish Jews.”⁶

In a special Executive meeting with Ben-Gurion, Berginski reported on immigration statistics up to 1956:

Over the last twenty-seven months 85,000 have emigrated from North Africa, and 85 percent of them (72,500) were directed to development areas beyond the Gdera-Nahariya strip, to such municipalities as Beer-Sheba, Dimona, Eilat, Ofaqim, Azata, Qiryat Gat, Qiryat Shmona, Betzet, and Hatzor. Things are different with the Polish Aliyah. Over the last two months more than 2,000 people have emigrated from Poland. Some of them were placed in vacant locations within the strip such as Givat Olga, Acre, and Nahariya, because there were vacant apartments left for us to use, and we will also send Poles to Zichron Yaakov and Benyamina, because we won't be able to place the Poles in shacks, for them we need reasonable housing.⁷

These examples are representative of the official inequality policy for absorbing Aliyah determined and carried out by the young state's Ashkenazi Zionist leaders, such as Yitzhak Greenbeum, who acted not as an Israeli leader, but as a leader of Polish Jews. Presenting these examples at the outset of our discussion is important in order to avoid the slippery slope of vagueness suggested by the myths of "equality" and "social justice" inscribed in the state's Declaration of Independence, as well as in many laws.

Data about the period speak for themselves: more than 80 percent of transit camp inhabitants in 1952 were Mizrahi.⁸ Precedence in leaving transit camps was given to those willing to move to moshavim—farming communities whose situation was inferior to that of older Ashkenazi moshavot, moshavim, and kibbutzim (farming collectives). The decision to enforce settlement in frontier areas was also applied to the Aliyah from North Africa, under the slogan "From the boat to the village."⁹ Some 270-immigrant moshavim were established during the first decade, most of them in frontier areas, and most of their inhabitants Mizrahi.¹⁰ In most cases, the goals of establishing immigrant moshavim were not in keeping with the general immediate goal of absorbing Aliyah. Creating a Jewish territorial continuity in the Negev desert, and blocking infiltrators from crossing the borders, for example, were considered supreme goals, without consideration for the quality of the soil, or for training the immigrants for farming. Hanina Porat's research reveals:

two motivations behind the geographical distribution of moshavim in the Negev. One, continued defense and thickening of [Jewish settlements] along the water line, and the other, blocking the largely unguarded border between Egypt and Israel along the Gaza strip. Moshe Dayan, General Commander of the Southern Command, urged the Settlement Department to set up two moshavim near Beerot Yitzhak, to stop the flow of infiltrators who penetrate the state territory at night for the purpose of stealing and killing; he even toured the area with the Department's experts and proposed sites for settlement.¹¹

Inequality toward moshavim for Mizrahi was also manifest in the landownership status. While land for kibbutzim and older moshavim was leased for a long term

(forty-nine years) to the inhabitants, land on which most immigrant moshavim inhabitants were settled was under a regular three-year rental contract, with the option of evacuation with sixty days' notice. This proved crucial more than fifty years later, when leases for kibbutzim and older moshavim expired, and the government had to determine the ownership status. It decided to pass a significant part of those lands to the private ownership of the inhabitants.¹² In immigrant moshavim the inhabitants did not have a similar bargaining position. Thus the seeds of inequality sowed at the outset now yield a significant edge to the economic gap between Mizrahim and Ashkenazim of the third generation, more than fifty years later.

Mizrahim suffered from a clear preference for Ashkenazim with regard to government housing as well. In 1955, for example, the average area of a public housing apartment constructed for Mizrahim immigrants (4.9 people per household on average)¹³ was 430 square feet (40 sq. m), whereas the area of an average Savings Apartment (public housing for veteran immigrants, mostly Ashkenazi, 3.2 people per household on average) was 689 square feet (64 sq. m).¹⁴ As if this were not enough, a public housing apartment was rented out to new immigrants (in development towns and in new immigrant neighborhoods) under regular three-year contracts and has not become their property to this day,¹⁵ whereas Savings Apartments were given to veteran immigrants (for the most part in the center of the country, and in older established cities) together with special loans and government grants for housing expansion, immediately becoming their private property.¹⁶ Today, heirs to a public housing apartment in the periphery, whose value is often low, are far behind heirs to a Savings Apartment in the central areas, which has become a valuable asset.

Seeds of inequality were not only sowed in settlement, housing, salary, and economic development. Two additional realms, crucial for the social-economic oppression relations, are education and culture. The preceding chapter elaborated on alienation and cultural snubbing; here I would like to elaborate in some detail on the shaping of the Israeli education system, since a universal high-quality education system is the key to social mobility in any human society, but in its absence, as in the case of Israel, we witness a rigid ethnic-class society in which socioeconomic inferiority passes down generations of large segments of the population.

In the first years of Mizrahi Aliyah, 1948–1950, children in immigrant camps and transit camps were left outside the state's system of education; in fact, they hardly studied at all. Official responsibility for their education was not on the Education Department, but on the Culture Department, which was also charged with adult education and the teaching of Hebrew.¹⁷ Later, as their stay in transit camps lingered on, and even when development towns were formed separately from the Ashkenazi *yishuv*,¹⁸ the Mizrahims' education became separate and of lower quality, similar to that provided for the state's Arab citizens who were still under military rule.¹⁹ In March 1950 Minister of Education Zalman Aran described the situation as follows: "To this day half of the children in camps enjoy no regular education. There are no appropriate structures in the camps, no helping municipality, and out of hope that stay would be temporary we have not put things in

order as in the rest of the state, and we have not included camp children in the work of the Education Department.”²⁰ Mizrahim that were settled in the periphery of the large cities were not fortunate either. Indeed, after some time their children were taken into established schools, but were assigned to separate classes and studied a separate curriculum. Anthropologist Arnold Lewis documented the situation of one such school in a veteran locality:

In 1950, the school was still serving the Ashkenazi veterans and was considered a distinguished school in the framework of the Labor Party. The arrival of the immigrants from the Middle Eastern countries had changed the situation. The school was divided into two sections. The first section was constructed of a small number of students per class, children of veterans and immigrants from Eastern Europe that placed on a track leading to an academic-oriented high school. The second section of school, where a stress was put on learning to read and write and other basic skills, was populated mainly by students from North Africa and the Middle East. These students were prepared to the work market . . . this kind of school was apparent still in 1966.²¹

This inequality in education was made a permanent official legitimate structure over the years, and became the central feature of socioeconomic oppression. Education is a realm in which the state’s direct oppression of Mizrahim is clearly identifiable, because poor education necessarily blocks their ability to acquire a higher education, and to establish a good life for themselves and for their children. During the first decades, as a result of a political impotence that will be discussed later, the Mizrahim accepted this policy, although there was protest about housing and basic living conditions.

The supposedly socialist and cooperative movements of the Ashkenazi Zionist hegemony participated in the oppression system. For example, kibbutzim hired cheap laborers from neighboring immigrant camps and development towns, in violation of the principle of “self-work.” They also refused to accept those same laborers’ children into their schools, for a litany of rigid ideological justifications that can be summarized as concern that Mizrahi workers’ children might spoil the kibbutz communal education: “Establishing common schools is just unthinkable. We have to bring up our children to follow our path and continue our work . . . We have to train them for a life of justice, equality, and self-realization as pioneers.”²²

Separation was also visibly absolute in the Mizrahims’ moshavim, populated on a homogeneous ethnic basis, and in some cases the inhabitants of one village in Morocco were settled in one moshav. According to government figures, ethnic separation in education was near total: 86 percent of Mizrahi immigrant children studied separately from the veteran Ashkenazim.²³

As noted earlier, this policy of inequality was provided with an academic ideological rationale from early on, under the paradigm of “absorption through modernization.” Moshe Smilansky, one of the influential ideologues of the system of inequality (to him it was “real equality”), offered the following justification for having separate curricula for Ashkenazim and Mizrahim:

If we see that ninety percent of School A [Primary, Ashkenazi] graduates in Tel-Aviv go on to attend other educational institutions, and that for them the final years of primary school serve only as a *first stage* in a long path of enjoying high school and higher education; and if ninety percent of School B [Primary, Mizrahi] graduates in the same Tel-Aviv go out to work, and for them the same classes serve as the *supreme stage* of education, and as a transition toward adapting to the hardship of life—indeed it seems evident that any attempt to offer a homogeneous curriculum to both these types of children in the name of equality means not providing their immediate needs, and in the long term—a blatant discrimination.²⁴ (My italics)

Presently a new pedagogy was developed for Mizrahim, paradigmatically titled “Cultivation and Rehabilitation,” carrying an entire cultural ideology about the Mizrahi person’s, and Mizrahi culture’s “primitiveness,” “degeneration,” and “petrification,” as put by Professor Carl Frankenstein, considered then and now the prophet and executor of the *teuney tipuah* (under-privileged) pedagogy in Israel:

As a result of the petrification, or of a kind of collective amnesia, which leaves man as if in a vacuum of super-personal content and values and causes him to reduce, together with his cultural emptiness and the area of his reality, within his own narrowest borders and those of his immediate environment. In this reduction, parallel to the cultural petrification, the entire world of super-individual content and values might degenerate into conventions and rigid collective patterns, which then weakens the faculties of abstraction and critical thought, as well as the power of empathy. This cultural petrification, and the mental rigidity that accompanies it, form therefore as factors that bring man in the backward culture closer to that of a primitive man in the transition stage. Both approach, from opposite directions and in supposedly two paths, to the same psychic figure: in the path of disorientation and inflation of the self, and in the path of petrification and rigidity.²⁵

Regarding this summary of the cultural foundations for the state’s pedagogy in its early years, Swirski has observed: “One might conclude that had not Zionism come and rescued Muslim countries’ Jews from petrification, they would probably find themselves before long marching in virgin forest paths, wielding bows and arrows, leaving their bodies and souls in the hands of a blind trans-individual destiny.”²⁶ Frankenstein constructed his entire pedagogical thinking on this concept of cultural superiority/inferiority, and already in 1947 he said, projecting his solid views of Arabs, that “the Jews of the Orient are backward, they are no longer capable of understanding the contents and values of Western Civilization except through imitation and passive reception . . . and they are not yet able to productively join the direction in which the majority of the Jewish population tries to make its life.”²⁷ One must note that Frankenstein remained a dominant influence in the education system through the early 1980s, and his books are still required reading in all state schools of education and teacher training. This includes his

later books, bearing such titles as *Liberating the Mind of Its Chains: Rehabilitating the Intelligence of Adolescent "Teuney Tipuah"* (1972), and *They Think Again: Elements of Rehabilitating Pedagogy* (1981). According to this concept, based on classical liberalism,²⁸ both Mizrahi and Arab pupils and parents are not yet worthy of being considered fully developed human beings, they are mentally and emotionally sick and disabled, and their broken-down cognitive systems require therapy and rehabilitation before they can achieve any intellectual engagement. Therefore, until such a time, all decisions about their destiny are placed in the hands of their adult custodians—the Ashkenazi rulers.

This ethnocentric line of thought nourished the builders of the education system and soon became the state of Israel's official policy. Thus, since that time (and to this day, as shown in the following chapters) education structures and infra-structure in Mizrahi neighborhoods and localities (and even more so in Arab localities) were of inferior quality, and the state's expectations of these communities were lower than its expectations of the veteran, mostly Ashkenazi population. Mizrahi children did not get to study the full official curriculum set by the state. They were diagnosed as *teuney tipuah*, and the Ministry of Education provided them with special curricula, special teaching methods, special study courses, and low-proficiency groupings; teachers meant to teach in these schools were given special training. All these were handled by a special department in the ministry, the Center for Education Institutions for *Teuney Tipuah*. Deputy Minister Aharon Yadlin was full of praise: "As soon as the term *teuney tipuah* was defined, not only were intensive study patterns created, but also especially adapted patterns of teaching, instruction, and supervision. The directive was made on the assumption that a teacher in the *teuney tipuah* [read: Mizrahi] school requires special methodical and didactic means." These included special textbooks for the special pupils, "for if there is an element that might damage the child's confidence, it is the hopeless struggle against a book whose language he does not understand and whose terminology he cannot penetrate. Over time we began working on the composition of special text books in History, Geography, and Talmudic Literature."²⁹

The state, in its unequal policy, did not allow Mizrahim a liberal arts and science education, and until 1961 established very few high schools for the Mizrahi pupils. This policy was quickly internalized in every stratum of the education system, with the state setting very low expectations for the Mizrahi population, very low expectations for principals and teachers of Mizrahi pupils, and for parents of their children. Yet worse, it created low self-esteem and low expectations of students for themselves. This expectation chain-reaction worked like a self-fulfilling prophecy, or the Pygmalion effect,³⁰ as it was called by Paulo Freire.³¹ It is evident in a special memo distributed by the Ministry of Education among teachers meant to teach in Mizrahi localities, concluding their training period. It is clearly based on Frankenstein's cultural concepts:

First grade teacher! You have just received pupils into first grade. Some of them have attended kindergarten, and others come directly from their parents' home without any preparation. You know that for the most part they are the

children of immigrants who come from a backward cultural environment . . . Let us see what causes the difficulties. Causes for difficulties in studies: 1. Lack of maturity for learning to read. 2. Insufficient motivation for learning to read. 3. Inability to withstand failures. 4. Absence of basic educational habits. 5. Lack of basic vocabulary we use to convey knowledge and expanding it, and which is in our text books.

The lack of maturity: 1. Incomplete physiological development in the realms of motor function, hearing and seeing. 2. Inability (or difficulty) to comprehend the picture in portrait lay-out in one glance and transfer it into landscape lay-out (correct copying from the blackboard to the page). 3. Lack of coordination between the eye and the page . . . 4. Inability to visually distinguish among various figures and sizes. 5. The difficulty to transition from perception of the three dimensional (an entire product) to the two-dimensional . . . 6. Inability to acoustically distinguish the sound of similar or different words. 7. Mental age lower than chronological age. 8. Inability to notice or to follow simple instructions. 9. Inability to express himself and his thoughts with simplicity and clarity. 10. Lack of experience with objects and activities (house pets, toys, tools) of which he will hear, learn, and read at school.³²

After more than a decade one might have expected the official trend of inequality in education to change, that the state would open liberal arts and science high schools in Mizrahi localities, and decrease vocational and technical education in these localities, but the trend only grew stronger. In 1965 the government resolved to double the number of pupils in vocational education, which does not lead to the standard matriculation diploma. Indeed, following agreements with vocational education chains Ort and Amal, the number of Mizrahi pupils in vocational education was doubled by 1970 from 25,000 to 50,000—40 percent of all high school students at the time.³³ The result of the unequal Israeli system of education at the end of the first decade might have been anticipated. In 1958 the system's achievements among the Mizrahi population (about 50 percent of the general population) were as follows: eighth-grade graduates (out of that year's total)—41 percent; ninth-grade graduates—22 percent; 12th grade graduates—8.8 percent; academic high school graduates with a matriculation diploma—2.5 percent; percentage in vocational high school—42; percentage in farming school—48; percentage in academic high school—7.8; Hebrew University graduates (out of Jewish graduates)—5.2 percent; Technion graduates (out of Jewish graduates)—4.5 percent.³⁴

Inequality in education was not an aim in and of itself, but an instrument in shaping the class-ethnic structure of the modern Israeli economy. The man who set up this system of education was Zalman Aran, intermittently minister of education from the mid-1950s through the mid-1960s. Aran set the level-grouping system, and differential education whose motivation was political-economic. His partner in training the Mizrahim as the future workers in Israeli industry was Pinhas Sapir, the minister of commerce and industry who led Israel from an agricultural to an industrial economy. Swirski wrote of this partnership:

Sapir and Aran were also partners in the social definition of the new path. Sapir based his new development policy on the assumption that the Jews of Arab origin in general, and in particular the Jews of North Africa who constituted at the end of the 1950s the bulk of Aliyah reserves, are not candidates for economic entrepreneurship, and that their main contribution can be as manufacturing workers in labor-intensive industrial factories. With prolonged unemployment in development towns as the backdrop, Sapir could present his policy as “generating employment,” and therefore as a major step forward and a real improvement in living conditions for the inhabitants. Aran, for his part, adopted the terminology prevalent among many education people, according to which different “quality groups,” to borrow the terms that took root in the IDF, have emerged in Israel, to which equal norms of academic achievement cannot be applied. He was therefore willing to forsake the traditional aspiration for a universal equal education and turn toward separation among students and providing a different education to each different course.³⁵

For many years it was claimed that everything was done innocently, and that lessons have been drawn from “mistakes in absorption,” but that was not the case. A brief examination of the absorption of Ethiopian Jews, for example, four decades later, after their Judaism was recognized by Rabbi Ovadiah Yoseph, supports our argument about the racist cultural assumptions at the foundations of Israeli society. The state applied the same racist cultural prejudices in absorbing Ethiopian Jews. Generally, they were treated as the offspring of a backward society, who cannot manage an independent family and community life. Therefore, for example, they were housed in hotels and in absorption centers, where every step they made in the new life was closely supervised. To immigrants from Russia, on the other hand, who were considered modern, a “direct absorption” method was applied—that is to say, they were housed directly in apartments in the community, and given a budget to run their lives independently. Since immigrants from Ethiopia were considered incapable of functioning independently in a modern state (immigrants from the countryside were treated the same as immigrants who came from cities, without distinction), the state sweepingly assumed custody of their children. They were taken from their families and sent to vocational boarding schools of the National Religious system, controlled by MAFDAL (*Miflaga Datit Leumit*), the National Religious Party. The following trinity summarizes the 1980s and 1990s version of the “cultivation and rehabilitation” approach: “boarding schools,” because families were defined as dysfunctional and no longer capable of raising their children; “vocational,” because non-European children are incapable of abstract and academic learning and must therefore acquire a trade; and “religious” because this was the way the state chose to pass them through an undeclared conversion to Judaism, and without arousing resistance.³⁶

Inequality in education was added to inequality in land distribution, and in the distribution of capital and salary, and became the adhesive that perpetuates them in the following generations. As shown in Chapter 1, the foundation of socioeconomic inequality is the Ashkenazi Zionist elite’s Eurocentric Orientalist

cultural assumptions about Middle Eastern civilization in general, and about Mizrahi Jews in particular. Concern for the state's cultural European superiority appears to have blinded state leadership in its early stages and prevented officials from treating Middle Eastern civilization with tolerance and respect. This was true in regard to both Arabs and Jews, as Ben-Gurion himself succinctly told the senior commanders of the IDF in 1950: "A rabble and human dust, without language, without education, without roots, or any connection to national tradition and vision. Without knowledge of the alphabet, without a symptom of Jewish or human education."³⁷ This lack of respect enhanced a cultural animosity toward Mizrahim that had already existed among many members of the Ashkenazi public and increased the tension between these groups. Two articles by sociologist Y. Shoval reveal clear hatred and social alienation by Ashkenazim toward Mizrahim, but not the other way around.³⁸ Yohanan Peres' research of 1968 also shows an ongoing alienation of the Ashkenazi population, evident mainly in reservations about living in proximity to Mizrahim, or having marital ties with them.³⁹ This trend decreased over time, but the alienation of Ashkenazim from Mizrahim stands out in later research through the end of the 1970s.⁴⁰

Arrogance, paternalism, and cultural alienation, which prevailed in all population strata—from the leadership and the cultural elites through the teachers, welfare workers, and the general population—played a decisive role in igniting protest and rebellion among Mizrahim starting from the first decade. However, the concretization of oppression and inequality relations was especially manifest in the difficulties of finding a livelihood, a near impossibility for the majority of Mizrahi immigrants, who soon became fully dependent on the government to provide their most basic needs, such as shelter, water, and food.

The government, for its part, encouraged the system of dependence and did not take long to develop an entire formal system of total dependence relations in the form of social bureaus whose function was to "treat" Mizrahi families, and Mizrahi individuals who were fast-tracked into being "welfare cases," requiring government charity for minimal subsistence. Deborah Bernstein presents an important rare monologue that offers insight into dependence. The speaker is Mrs Dvora Elinor who was the supervisor of social services in the district of Jerusalem at the time of the transit camps:

The very fact that people were directed here, there, and they were told "Do this". This meant the very ability to determine their own destiny was taken away from them. They took it with great shame. We also drove them into such passivity. . . . An entire generation, about a hundred thousand people, actually we broke them, their values, their ability to make their own decisions. That is the worst damage we've caused by our paternalism and by this entire operation of discrimination, and more transit camps and more transit camps—it broke them down, and it goes from one generation to the next. . . . We felt that if we don't give them all our values, in *every* aspect, they would be lost. We felt so arrogant and superior, as if we knew everything, and they nothing.⁴¹ (Emphasis in original)

Within a few years those Jews coming from Arab and Muslim countries—the offspring of an ancient and glorious civilization, from the oldest Jewish communities, bearers of a religious vision of the return to Zion who responded to secular European Zionism’s appeal and trustingly followed its agents—became impoverished refugees in tent encampments and shacks, and later the dwellers of far-flung settlements and Mizrahi neighborhoods. The more fortunate among them became low paid laborers, and many more became welfare clients, extremely poor, without any independence in the supply of their daily subsistence. Finally, the entire collective became a threatening problem in the government’s eyes, the “ethnic problem.”

The European Zionist movement and the state, for their part, saw the Jews of the Arab and Muslim world as survivors of primitive backwardness, who were fortunate, and would be transformed from “human dust,” as Ben-Gurion had put it, into modern, productive human beings, “into a civilized creative nation, independent and visionary.”⁴² The sociologists and ideologues who gave words to the hegemonic ideology and immersed it in Israeli social thinking ignored the socioeconomic relations of inequality that emerged from their penmanship, and when they spoke of the problem of *Edot HaMizrah* they referred to the “cultural threat,” as demonstrated in the long and impressive debate held by the senior Ashkenazi intellectuals of the time in the pages of *Megamot* during the years 1951–1952 regarding the question of the Mizrahims’ primitivity.⁴³

As in other cases, it took a critic from the outside to present the leadership with the state’s ugly face. In September 1958, less than a year before the outbreak of the Wadi A-Salib Rebellion, a UN expert named Klein presented the prime minister with a report on the functioning of his government’s social policy and the state’s welfare system. “There is no general policy,” Klein wrote. “The state’s responsibility toward the poor is not defined; the poor person is considered an inferior person, and not a person in an inferior situation.”⁴⁴ The government shelved the report, and the debate on the Mizrahims’ primitivity continued against the backdrop of the Mizrahims’ silence. But the silence did not last long. In July 1959 a rebellion broke out in the Wadi A-Salib neighborhood in Haifa, spread to other parts of the country, and started the process of Mizrahi collective consciousness, although another decade was to go by before this consciousness matured into a general protest that would end up forcing the state to acknowledge its policy of inequality.

Political reactions—background to the first years

During the three years after the establishment of the state, 664,038 immigrants arrived: 330,400 Mizrahi immigrants, 329,051 Ashkenazi immigrants (mostly from Eastern Europe), and 4,587 Jews from the U.S. By May 1959, over the state’s first decade, the number of immigrants rose to 997,116—of them 481,603 were Mizrahim (including immigrants from Bulgaria, Greece, Yugoslavia, and India) and 494,615 were Ashkenazi, including 11,327 from the U.S.⁴⁵

The Mizrahi immigrants’ presence in the veteran *yishuv* centers was minuscule, and the majority was sent to settle the Negev, the upper Galilee, and the Corridor

to Jerusalem. Thirty percent of Iraqi immigrants and 60 percent of Moroccan immigrants, for example, were settled in new localities that did not exist before 1948. The percentage of Ashkenazi immigrants who settled in such localities ranged from 10 to 30. One may note for comparison, that 83 percent of immigrants from Poland were settled within the Nahariya-Gdera strip, and of them half were absorbed in Tel Aviv.

Small wonder, therefore, that Mizrahim were referred to in the media as, among other terms, “The Second Israel.”⁴⁶ They had little visibility and were of little concern. Geographically isolated in development towns and in moshavim, and mentally isolated, they had not yet comprehended their position in the larger context. It is therefore no coincidence that the large organized outbreaks of rebellion began in Mizrahi neighborhoods in the periphery of older cities, such as Wadi A-Salib in Haifa, and Mousrara in Jerusalem (the HaPanterim HaSh’horim protest) some ten years later. (Similar phenomena have been observed among black people in the U.S., the large rebellious outbreaks tended to emerge in black ghettos in large cities both in the North and in the South.) This is because Mizrahim in the large cities—Jerusalem, Haifa, and Tel Aviv—have always lived in the shadow of better-off, state-preferred Ashkenazim. Ashkenazim were always represented in higher positions: the school principal, the teacher, the commander, the social worker, the doctor, the judge. Living in the shadow of this daily frustrating comparison is a condition for the development of a political consciousness from which the only way out is protest and the search for an alternative political order.

But before we discuss the first acts of protest that peaked in the Wadi A-Salib Rebellion, our main interest in this chapter, let us survey Mizrahims’ political situation in the Israeli political system during the first decade. We will also refer to older Sephardi and Yemenite political organizations that dwindled and disappeared in the space between the Ashkenazi Zionist regime, to whom they had lost primacy as the Zionist movement consolidated itself in the *yishuv*,⁴⁷ and the masses of Mizrahi immigrants who had only begun to arrive in Israel and formed a majority group.

The decline of the old Sephardi politics

In a letter to a Knesset member for the Sephardi list, Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion warned Eliyahu Eliachar that his political and media activity among the Mizrahim may undermine the hegemony of MAPAI: “Should you succeed to arouse Sephardim and members of *Edot HaMizrah* to organize and become aware of their minimal civil rights in a democracy, the Left’s hegemony, and MAPAI’s (*Mifletet Poale Eretz Yisrael*—the party for the Laborers of the Land of Israel)⁴⁸ supremacy in managing the state would be undermined.”⁴⁹ Both leaders, who agreed on nothing, were gifted with foresight. History proved Ben-Gurion’s apprehensions right, and Eliachar, for his part, was right to campaign for breaking the Mizrahims’ dependence on MAPAI. Ben-Gurion’s words represent his attitude, and the state’s leadership’s attitude regarding the Mizrahims’ political participation. In fact, his letter reproaches a senior Mizrahi leader, asking him to

become a political collaborator, to cooperate with him and with MAPAI's leadership by helping to perpetuate the Mizrahim's lack of political consciousness even regarding their "minimal civil rights," such as the right to organize politically.

But in spite of Eliachar's celebrated militancy, evident in his pointed articles and his speeches in parliament, the work of the Sephardi Community Committee (Va'ad Ha'Edah HaSpharadit) did not much go beyond the production and distribution of periodicals and other publications in order to spread awareness. The Yemenite Union (Hitahadut HaTemanim), for its part, was far from being a radical organization and kept to the traditional community role.

In 1920 rule of Eretz Yisrael/Palestine passed to the hands of the British, and the Sephardi community's power in the *yishuv* disappeared at once. The British recognized the organized *yishuv* institutions as leaders and representatives of the entire Jewish population. The Sephardi Community Committee had no choice but to join the formation of Knesset Israel, and at least try to retain its power in the Sephardi community. The transition required its leaders to transform from community leaders into political leaders in a diverse and highly competitive political system, which also competed with them over providing community and welfare services.⁵⁰ This introduces two important issues for our discussion. First, the Sephardi community became the first general Mizrahi collective of which we are aware. It wins this distinction because the community's organization was not based on any specific origin; it included Jews from many communities such as Iraq, Morocco, Persia, Egypt, Syria, Bukhara, Turkey, Georgia, and others. The committee's leadership imposed a sort of "nationalism" by preventing community and financial organizing by specific ethnicity. However, this "nationalism" was not maintained very long.⁵¹ With the emergence of the new committees in Tel Aviv and Haifa that were more Mizrahi (or *Edot Mizrah* as they were then called) than Sephardi (the old Jerusalemite aristocratic leadership was foreign to them), a break from the veteran leadership began, and it increased as the new *yishuv* grew, creating more social and economic possibilities, and as the basis for community services became more individual and less according to ethnicity.⁵² Second, the new Sephardi political leadership was very successful in consolidating nearly all the Sephardi votes in the first election for the Assembly, in 1920, which can be described as the first power struggle between Mizrahim and Ashkenazim. Histadrut HaSepharadim won 17.3 percent of the representatives, while the Sephardi population accounted for 19 percent of the population.⁵³ This achievement however was not to be repeated, and it diminished the more Ashkenazi Zionists grew in power and managed to divide Sephardi and Yemenite forces. This trend grew even stronger after the state was formed.⁵⁴

Ben-Gurion's attitude toward Mizrahim in general, and in particular toward their participation in politics, accorded precisely with the patronizing "absorption through modernization" approach. Patronage became MAPAI's practical policy, based mainly on incorporating Mizrahim within special departments for *Edot HaMizrah* and for Yemenites, not only in the party and its many organs, but also in the Histadrut, and in all state institutions.⁵⁵ One can figuratively say that Ben-Gurion wanted to swallow the Mizrahim and subdue them politically, but

culturally he wanted to vomit them up to erase their Arab culture. One thing was clear to him and to MAPAI leadership: control of state affairs as it is manifest in the composition of government must be in Ashkenazi hands. Opinion among the party bureau officials about the composition of the first government was unanimous regarding its Ashkenaziness, although some spoke of the need to assign to a Sephardi minister an unimportant position, such as the ministry of the police, which became over time the Mizrahi government slot, next to the ministry of the post. Some warned against appointing even one Sephardi government minister. MAPAI bureau member Garbovski, for example, was apprehensive: "By allowing a Sephardi minister in the government we would consolidate this ethnic gang for decades. We have no need of this."⁵⁶

First days: shock and helplessness

The following story, recounted by a new immigrant from Gabès, about the first night on the way to a moshav in the Negev, illustrates the genuine shock and helplessness prevalent in Mizrahi immigrants' lives during the first years:

We came from abroad, they put us in an immigrant center in Bait Lid. People came and said, "Who wants to go to Moshav?" They told us, "Come to Moshav." What is Moshav? We thought it's a city called Moshav . . . "Yalla, hurry up!" We said "To Moshav," and they were happy, the Agency. "To Moshav? Great, great!" Quickly they brought a large truck, and put in the trunk blankets and beds, and the children and us we all climbed in. "To Moshav? Yalla, go." And we went and went and went, arrived in Tel-Aviv and the driver stopped, in the heart of Tel-Aviv. We were happy. We were sitting, and they brought us cookies and candy. "Why? [Because] you are going to Moshav." . . . Then we went. The truck went, sand all around us, no road, soon we would enter Gaza, I don't know where the road is. And now darkness, darkness. Then the Border Police came, stopped us, "Where are you going, Gaza?" No, we are going to Moshav. "Not this way, yalla, go back, go back the same way." So he drove back. And we go and go and go, the truck barely travels, till we reached Moshav. It was pitch dark. . . .

We went in. Dark. We saw nothing until morning.

Raising this rag of the tent, I thought, lo my god! Only heaps of sand as far as the sky, not even a green branch, nothing, nothing, nothing. Not a bird, no green, no car, no road, no houses, nothing. What is this? Where from? What is this? There were eight tents, perhaps ten, I don't remember exactly, so there's one little shack, I told them: What's this? They told me: *Tzarchania* [convenience store]. I said what is *tzarchania*, what is *tzarchania*? . . . I had nothing to do, I sat by this shack and sat to sob. Sob sob.⁵⁷

The sense of shock expressed in this monologue was experienced by the majority of Mizrahi newcomers and resulted from the unbridgeable gap between expectations inspired by Aliyah agents before coming to Israel and the harsh landing

and meeting with their “inheritance.” The symbolism of night and morning, as delivered by Esther Shelley-Newman in the stories she collected, is the metaphor in reverse: night was still full of hope and expectations, as darkness covered the grim reality, which was revealed by morning and light.

The majority of sociologists in the 1950s and 1960s could not cope with, or understand, this feeling of shock as experienced by the immigrants, nor the helplessness that accompanied it. They referred to it as “acceptance,” or “idleness.”⁵⁸ That is how Mizrahi newcomers were transformed from victims of a social reality, in which they were placed without any control of the process, into self-victimizers responsible for their condition because of their indifferent behavior and lack of initiative.⁵⁹ Sobbing, a central motif in this story and in many others retained in the memory of those years in every Mizrahi family, was actually an important act, a recognition of the harsh reality and the predominant helplessness. This legitimate human sobbing was scorned and looked down on by the Ashkenazi veteran “absorbers” and “care-takers,” and over time it was also stigmatized as “whining.”⁶⁰ One has to bear in mind that shock and helplessness are no literary matter, in spite of being represented in the fiction of such writers as Sami Michael⁶¹ and Shimon Ballas.⁶² Scores of thousands of families found themselves in veritable existential danger as the state disowned responsibility for them, instead working to construct popular unifying myths, such as Ben-Gurion’s policy of encouraging birth. In 1956, for example, a father of ten in Lod received a card from Ben-Gurion congratulating him for his family’s fertility, with a check for a hundred liras attached. Together with this card the mail brought this man an evacuation order, because of his being late in paying government rent. This head of family told *Kol Ha’am*: “I arrived with 1,400 kg of belongings, I have sold it all over the two years that I have been in the country. Ask the grocer what we eat (ten children and a grandchild)? Twelve loaves of bread every day.”⁶³

Only in the late 1970s did a critical class sociological approach emerge, which began to examine the early years’ reality through liberated eyes. Deborah Bernstein wrote about the shock:

The encounter with objective conditions and the attitude they met in the country in general, and in transit camps in particular, caused all immigrants a *severe shock*. The immensity of the shock is evident in every talk and interview, regardless of the country of origin, or status prior to immigration. The better off, or rich immigrants, like traders from North Africa, or professionals, lawyers, accountants, engineers, from Baghdad, suffered a deterioration in the quality of their life in every aspect. The situation was similar among poorer immigrants, both villagers and city folk, although it was not as extreme. The sense of shock led to various symptoms: indifference, depression, violence, and in some cases suicide. Interestingly there is no reference to the immigrants’ mental reaction in official documents.⁶⁴ [My italics]

Among those settled in moshavim, about 50 percent of immigrants during the state’s first two years, shock resulted not only from the migration itself and the

great disappointment, or from the crisis of transition to farm work that was entirely foreign to them. The shock resulted chiefly from the pain, the helplessness in the shaping of their agenda of which they had no participation; they had no part in decisions that determined their future and the future of the next generation. No one asked or told them where they were assigned to be settled, or what was the quality of the soil. Hanina Porat examined the context:

An additional difficulty derived from the fact that in the Jewish National Fund, and in the centers of the settlement movements, it was thought that kibbutzim should be given the majority of land in the plains, where modern tilling and irrigation technology can be used; while the margin and mountain lands, which required manual care, should be assigned to simple laborers, immigrants from Iraq, Morocco, and Yemen. Upon entering farming life the new immigrants went through a tough personal revolution: Only a tiny minority (3.5 percent) of North African Jews had any experience in agriculture. The rate of experience was slightly higher among immigrants from Eastern Europe.⁶⁵

In addition to shock and helplessness, a temporary state for the most part that lasted a few days, after becoming disillusioned about change, Mizrahim began reacting more actively to their social and cultural oppression.

Early protest reactions

The background for the outbreak of the Wadi A-Salib rebellion was the reality of cultural and economic oppression shaped by an official policy of inequality toward the Mizrahim and in favor of Ashkenazim, which had become a permanent condition. It is important to note that in this reality, Arab Palestinian citizens of Israel were living under military rule and severe restrictions were imposed on their civil rights. Any act of protest among the Arabs was considered an enemy action and was dealt a harsh military response. Mizrahi acts of protest were not met with an essentially different treatment, but over time the regime's violent reactions became more problematic, because, being Jewish, the Mizrahim were defined as equal and desirable citizens on a declarative level. As the economic gaps between Mizrahim and Ashkenazim grew wider and more exposed, so grew the frustration, tensions, and unrest. Local protest gradually consolidated toward an organized struggle.

Protest in the first years was bitter, including expressions of hatred toward the state and anyone representing it. Thus, in the immigrant camps and in the poor neighborhoods in the center, as well as in the periphery, frustrated immigrants vented their anger on state clerks and immigration office managers, and did their utmost to warn their relatives abroad, who were preparing for Aliyah, that they should avoid coming to Israel. The press did not usually report the protests, especially when no one was arrested, or injured, but the few reports tell of local demonstrations and protests in the first year of immigration. For example, three events stand out between April and July 1949. At the end of April about three hundred immigrants in Ramla went to Tel Aviv to demonstrate on Alenbi Street.

Chanting "Bread and work," they tried to storm the old Knesset building, but police forces arrived on the scene, blocked them, and drove them away. They turned to the government quarter, where minor clerks talked to them and appeased them with promises.⁶⁶ Some two weeks later, dozens of Mizrahi demonstrators burst into the Jewish Agency offices in Haifa and held a demonstration inside the Absorption Department chanting "Housing and work." A large police force showed up and some of the protesters were injured; others were arrested.⁶⁷ About two months later, toward the end of July, Mizrahi demonstrators from Jaffa stormed the old Knesset building, breaking windows and unhinging doors. Only an effort on the side of the police prevented their entry into the Knesset Chamber.⁶⁸ Not one of these actions was repeated, or evolved to the stage of political organization. However, it is important to recognize these instances as initiated and organized collective confrontations against central government institutions, as opposed to sporadic protest, or individual protest about individual problems.

Another common phenomenon in those days, publication of which was banned by the military censorship, was that of Mizrahi youths who refused to join the army as a response to socioeconomic discrimination. Individual rebellious acts were common among those drafted, and in some cases collective rebellious acts including hunger strikes, disobedience to orders, and verbal and physical attacks on Ashkenazi commanders. This phenomenon is well known from the history of the black struggle in the U.S., when black people refused to "go to war for white America." On the Black Panthers list of demands was an explicit demand to "exempt all black youths from the draft." HaPanterim HaSh'horim, as we shall see later on, took a similar stance and encouraged reserve soldiers to give their reserve soldier cards back to the army. Gideon Giladi, who relies on alternative sources of documentation, was the first researcher to record evidence of this phenomenon among acts of protest and struggle.⁶⁹

Unlike contemporary sociologists that considered those local protests as group and individual "deviance," state officials did not take the unrest lightly, and were especially concerned with the collective confrontations. Pinhas Lavon gave the following warning to his comrades in the MAPAI secretariat:

During this year the critical mass for a counter-revolution may come together in the country. I propose that we, and our comrades in government handle this by applying the severe letter of the law. . . . The comrades who handle immigration affairs say they are amazed by the relative calm in the camps. I think they are deluded. It may be quiet at the top, but down below the natural forces of destruction are coming together. And one clear morning, a hundred thousand people of that kind that will be concentrated in the camps without any way out, and they can converge for a whole month, they will rise, and this can be such an explosion as to take down the government with it, and the Knesset, . . . Altogether.⁷⁰

This pattern of protest persisted in the following years in transit camps, moshavim, development towns, and immigrant Mizrahi neighborhoods in the big cities. At

times, a sense of collective threat was in the air, as expressed by Lavon and other state leaders on various occasions, and evident in the regime's harsh reaction to any unrest or demonstration. Government reactions are the main source for learning of the protest and unrest in centers of Mizrahi population, since the media ignored this unrest almost entirely, except for extreme cases involving arson, or casualties, that were covered as criminal stories, as in the case of a guard who fatally shot a Yemenite immigrant during unrest in the immigrant camp of Ein Shemmer.⁷¹ One has to mention in this context that immigrant camps were closed areas, surrounded by a fence, and guarded by the military. When the Mizrahim began attempting to leave the camps independently and find different ways of living, the Jewish Agency came up with a creative, if not an original, proposal: a law of confinement for transit camp inhabitants, a sort of quarantine ghetto.⁷² It seemed to the powers that be that a too liberal atmosphere put the stability of the regime at risk. Other common actions against unrest in the transit camps included stopping the water line, preventing medical care,⁷³ and issuing orders of arrest and orders of seizure for failure to pay municipal taxes.⁷⁴ In one case, in August 1953, the Mekorot water company stopped the water supply to the Kobeba transit camp, after cases of dysentery and polio were diagnosed among camp children. The doctors, for their part, refused to treat patients, claiming the latter had not paid the Histadrut membership fees.

The most extreme and significant act the regime took to reduce unrest was, as elaborated on above, the attempt to reduce Aliyah from North Africa as much as possible by applying a strict process of selection, as resolved by the Jewish Agency Assembly in March 1952.⁷⁵ Support for the selection policy was prevalent and unequivocal in government circles and among their media cronies. Shabtai Tevet of *Ha'aretz*, for example, accused the Mizrahim of potentially conspiring with Arab countries against the Ashkenazim. This was his logic:

Ninety percent of the unemployed are recent immigrants, and ninety percent of these are *Edot HaMizrah* . . . Immigrants from Middle Eastern countries bear a grudge against those who came from Europe . . . This contains the first hint of their hatred for the Ashkenazim, whom they blame for their situation. This is the first clandestine agreement between immigrants from Muslim and Arab countries regarding the Jews of European origin.⁷⁶

Ben-Gurion himself warned of the possibility of Mizrahim connecting with the Arabs. A direct response to the Mizrahi unrest appeared, for example, in an editorial in the daily paper *Haboker*:

Experience shows that allowing lawlessness to rule in this realm [of North African immigrants] places at risk not only the inhabitants' health, but at times the life of citizens and their children. Security measures against this lawlessness are pedagogically important too. Israel's moral and social atmosphere today is not as it should be. The rise in crime and the trend of violating both law and morality create a dangerous climate for the upbringing of our youth.⁷⁷

Although protest was not yet organized in a local or national movement, but was only an accumulation of local protests of similar motives and characteristics, it spread through every form of settlement and every part of the country. Thus, for example on May 5, 1956, in the downtrodden faraway development town of Qiryat Shmonah, a group of workers who had not been paid for two months, organized a demonstration against the labor office, and against the rule of MAPAI in the distribution of labor. Hundreds of workers participated, setting fire to the labor office and hurling stones at policemen who came to disperse them. Twenty-seven protesters were arrested, and the police commander testified in court that he had carefully prepared in advance a list of people to be arrested, composed only of the leaders and central activists.⁷⁸

In moshavim in the Negev too, during the early years, conflicts arose between Mizrahi settlers and government representatives, including instructors in agriculture, who controlled every aspect of their life, from care for the babies through to the choice of crops. Seeing themselves as charged not only with agricultural matters, but also as teachers of values and culture, the instructors interfered in the most intimate details of Mizrahim's lives, removing children to boarding schools and correctional schools and shattering the family authority structures.⁷⁹ When conflicts increased, local demonstrations were organized, as in the case of moshav Patish in 1950:

[The instructors] were often viewed as foreigners imposing a bureaucratic farming policy on the settler. At one point, when the inhabitants of *moshav* Patish thought their demands for better employment and better agricultural instruction were not being met, they blocked the road leading to neighboring *kibbutzim* and the police had to be called in. That demonstration was the expression of the daily difficulties faced by new immigrants in those days.⁸⁰

The two following cases testify to the existence of protest even in faraway frontier settlements. In June 1957 residents of moshav Mivtahim, on the southern border, held a strike in protest of their poverty and of being enslaved by the Jewish Agency:

They tell us to weed three kilometers. We start working at six in the morning and work until two but cannot complete these kilometers, so they only credit us with three hours of work. We have no vegetable garden, and no chicken-coop, nothing, we only work for the Agency, only work in the government Works Program. What kind of a *moshav* is this? There's no meat in the kitchens, no milk, the children can't have an entire egg every day. When it was decided to strike, the police showed up. They chased us one by one, broken into the house each one entered, viciously beat them up and put them in the paddy wagon. This was when the tumult broke out. The policemen beat up whoever they could lay their hands on.⁸¹

In Shlomi in the north, residents demonstrated against poverty and high rates of unemployment. Immediately, in spite of the geographical remoteness, police forces

arrived on the scene and began beating up the demonstrators, of whom they arrested sixteen. When one of the protesters approached a policeman and asked him, “Mister Sergeant, aren’t you ashamed to beat up an old man of sixty?” The policeman’s response was to beat him up too.⁸²

One decisive factor in the growing agitation and protest by Mizrahim in the first decade was the state’s openly unequal policy in absorption. In December 1956 Yigal Eilam, a member of the immigration and absorption Coordination Committee (HaMossad LeTeum) warned Ben-Gurion of the unrest caused by this policy:

Immigrants arrive from Poland and Hungary, their absorption requires apartments and not transit camps, they go into permanent apartments while next to them people inhabit canvas shacks. It creates unrest among immigrants from North Africa. These wait for years for their turn to arrive, while those go in directly . . . There are twenty-four thousand people in temporary housing, and these are people that have lived like this for years.⁸³

As if this were not enough, a year before the Wadi A-Salib rebellion Ben-Gurion decided to raise 20 million liras by issuing special compulsory government bonds. The official purpose of these bonds was to fund the absorption of immigrants from Eastern Europe (the Gomoulka Aliyah). To mitigate Mizrahi reactions, on the same day the bond was announced Ben-Gurion appointed Rabbi Toledano as minister of religious affairs.⁸⁴ MAPAM (The United Workers Party, represents the left section of the Kibbutzim movement), MAPAI’s partner that tried to compete with it over the Mizrahi immigrants’ vote, responded to the ongoing unrest and to the heated atmosphere by creating a special party section for *Edot HaMizrah*, parallel to the Arab Affairs section. Mordechai Bentov was chosen to head the section, which held public gatherings throughout the country at which party leaders spoke “against the discrimination, and in favor of merging the diasporas.”⁸⁵ In a public gathering in Afula, six months before the outbreak of the Wadi A-Salib rebellion, Bentov warned against developing hate for the Ashkenazim, or a growing vote for Herut.⁸⁶

The appointment of Rabbi Toledano, a well-known supporter of MAPAI, as minister of religious affairs, just like Bentov in MAPAM (Mifleget HaPoalim HaMeuhedet—the United Labor party, representing the Kibbutz movement), and Bechor Chetrit before them, was only a prologue to the extended use the regime was yet to make of co-opting Mizrahi leaders and activists.⁸⁷

1959: the Wadi A-Salib rebellion—the beginning of organized struggle

In research, as well as in Israeli media and politics, what I refer to here as the Wadi A-Salib rebellion is known as the Wadi A-Salib events. This was also the case when a commission was appointed to examine the rebellion, the Commission for the Investigation of the Events in Wadi A-Salib. Common reference is also made to “riots” and “rampage.”⁸⁸ These charged terms were chosen by the authorities and

the media in a campaign to stigmatize and delegitimize the rebellion and its leadership. An exception in this regard was *HaOlam HaZeh*, a weekly magazine, which dedicated a special issue to the rebellion. The magazine cover was titled "What Ignited the Moroccan Rebellion," on top of a large photograph that became an icon of the rebellion. It depicted demonstrators rallying with black banners and signs, led by a youth carrying a blood-soaked Israeli flag.⁸⁹ The fact that use of such terms as "riots" and "rampage" had become prevalent is no justification for continuing to use them. The word "rebellion" I advance here signifies action against an oppressive regime while challenging its authority and violating its system of laws, usually by use of force. The rebels' goal is always the same: to liberate themselves from relations of oppression. The closest term I have found in literature in reference to Wadi A-Salib is "uprising," used by Gideon Giladi,⁹⁰ followed by Shlomo Swirski, who described it as a "revolt."⁹¹

We have followed, in this chapter, the history of socioeconomic and cultural oppression relations that led to increasing tensions, unrest, and the spread of protest through all concentrations of the Mizrahi population, until peaking as an organized uprising in the Wadi A-Salib neighborhood in Haifa, and from there spreading throughout the country. The first question we will pose is why did it all come together in Wadi A-Salib? Why did a rebellion not break out in Beersheba, or in Qiryat Shmonah, where protests and demonstrations occurred both before and after Wadi A-Salib? The answer lies in the neighborhood's character and living conditions, the origin of its population, as well as the degree of socioeconomic oppression, the presence of Ashkenazim, and, of course, the local political situation. In Wadi A-Salib we find all the "ideal" conditions for rebellion to ripen.

Wadi A-Salib is an Arab neighborhood at the foot of Hadar HaCarmel in Haifa. The neighborhood's Palestinian residents were expelled during the conquest of Haifa's Arab neighborhoods in the 1948 war. After the war Jews were settled in its houses, originating mostly from North Africa, especially Morocco. The houses and their contents were nationalized and became the property of public housing. At the time of the rebellion, residents lived in conditions of extreme density, unemployment, and unbearable poverty. Their number was about fifteen thousand,⁹² more than in most development towns at the time.⁹³ Two important background elements nourished the cultural identity construction of the residents, much like in other Arab neighborhoods (such as Mousrara in Jerusalem), where Mizrahim were housed. One such element was the Arab neighborhood itself, its history, and the history of its absent Palestinian residents. In this respect, the Mizrahim were ambivalent; on the one hand, by being housed in Arab houses they were told that they had "inherited" the defeated Arab enemies, and in the direct religious context, present for these religious Jews, it was a return to the biblical conquest of Canaan, the realization of God's promise: "And I will bring you in unto the land, concerning the which I did swear to give it to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; and I will give it to you for an heritage: I am the LORD."⁹⁴ On the other hand, they discovered shortly that their cultural position as the Jewish replacement for the Arabs, and even lower than that, was a negative position. As put succinctly by Arye Gelblum's article about the North African immigrants: "In any case, this

level is even lower than that we have met with the former Arabs of Eretz Yisrael. . . . What character will the state of Israel have and what shall be its level with such populations? Masses of such poor primitive ignorants will absorb us, instead of us absorbing them.”⁹⁵

This leads to the second element that cast a shadow on Wadi A-Salib’s residents—well-to-do Ashkenazi Haifa in the form of the Hadar HaCarmel neighborhood at whose feet they lived. Hadar, whose residents were veteran Ashkenazim, was enviably well maintained and brimming with shops, cafés, and entertainment venues. Hadar’s presence, hovering over the crowded houses of Wadi A-Salib and its neglected streets, gave the facts of oppression a sharp visual, unequivocal expression.

The political atmosphere in the city of Haifa was charged on the eve of elections for the Fourth Knesset in 1959. A year earlier, the future leader of the rebellion, David Ben-Harouche, had headed an organization named Likud Oley Tzfon Africa (the Union of Jews from North Africa), and was preparing to take part in the elections. MAPAI’s main political work in transit camps, development towns, and immigrant Mizrahi neighborhoods was “trading in votes,” a practice carried out through local brokers, and setting up party cells to counter any independent political organization.⁹⁶ Haifa was known as a “Red City,” that is, absolutely controlled by MAPAI and MAPAM, which considered themselves socialist parties. MAPAI’s two strongmen in the city were Mayor Abba Hushi and in the north Yoseph Almogi, a member of the Knesset, who now headed the national election campaign. Both applied force and a robust party apparatus to ensure MAPAI’s continued control. Ben-Harouche’s choice to reject MAPAI, embark on the path of independence, and participate in the elections at the head of his organization against all odds was a rare exception. Herzog notes that little was new in the organization’s goals, but the tone in which its leadership, as well as its rank-and-file activists, spoke and the fact of their being recent immigrants and not veteran Sephardim were unprecedented.⁹⁷ Indeed, most of the goals had already been espoused by Mizrahi functionaries in MAPAI, MAPAM, and MAFDAL. They focused on “eliminating ethnic discrimination, resolving problems of livelihood, and of the unemployed, and resolving the housing crisis.”⁹⁸

But one stated goal stood out as unprecedented in its radical implications: “*To defend immigrants from North Africa*” (Emphasis in original).⁹⁹ Using the infinitive “to defend,” and not “to guard,” “to advance,” “to strengthen,” and so on, marks a highly aware use of language. We are familiar with use of the term “self-defense” among radical black activists in the U.S.; similarly, its immediate implication at the end of ten years of Mizrahi immigration is a no-confidence motion against the regime. The activists do not stop at saying the regime has neglected its responsibility for its citizens and their well-being, but argue that it is their chief aggressor. This point is crucial for the rest of our discussion because it shows a rebellious intention a year before the actual outbreak of the rebellion. Another novelty in the work of the Union of Jews from North Africa is a direct attack against Mizrahi functionaries in the various parties, headed by MAPAI, considered collaborators against their brethren.¹⁰⁰ This line of thought grew out of

awareness and reflection, not out of the events of the rebellion. Moreover, it fed the rebellion and guided it.

Chronicle of a struggle: the events of the rebellion

The first shot was fired on July 8, 1959.¹⁰¹ As night fell, neighborhood residents, most of them unwillingly unemployed, sat in their local café. Among them sat Yaakov Elkarif, who had drunk too much cheap alcohol until he got drunk and began wreaking havoc in the café. Policemen arrived on the scene and tried to arrest Elkarif. For some reason, an officer decided to open fire and hit Elkarif. At the sound of shots, hundreds of residents rushed to the place, among them women and children, and a wail rose up: "The policeman killed one of us." Out of fear, self-defense, and rage against the behavior of the police, residents began hurling stones at them and cursing them. The policemen locked themselves into their car, and radioed for reinforcement. Elkarif was taken to a hospital. Later the Haifa police chief, Superintendent Nahmias, arrived. He heard residents' grievances about their hardship and thus managed to rescue the policemen. The pause in the conflict was brief, and misleading. The Union of Jews from North Africa activists headed by David Ben-Harouche worked through the night, preparing demonstrations for the next day. They mobilized protesters, wrote down slogans, and printed them on banners. Nothing was left to chance.

The following morning, at 7 o'clock, July 9, 1959, activists with the Union of Jews from North Africa covered the neighborhood with fliers calling for a commerce strike and inviting all residents to gather in the neighborhood center for a demonstration. Response was unanimous, and soon all residents were gathered. At 8 o'clock hundreds of demonstrators began a rally, carrying black flags and banners, led by a youth who carried a blood-soaked flag of Israel. They marched toward the police headquarters in the Hadar neighborhood. Their immediate demand was to see Elkarif in Rothschild Hospital to verify the police claim that he was still alive. This was granted, and Ben-Harouche left for the hospital accompanied by a delegation. They entered the hospital at 10 o'clock. The police called for the crowd to disperse.

But on the way back to the Wadi, through Hadar neighborhood, the inevitable happened. Accumulated tensions and anger brimmed over. From about eleven o'clock and into the night acts of rebellion occurred as demonstrators destroyed all that came in their way: breaking shop windows and setting fire to parked cars, the MAPAI Club building, and headquarters of the Workers' Council,¹⁰² as well as a car belonging to the manager of the Leumi ("national") Bank branch in Hadar. The action spread to the heart of Hadar and to its side streets. No violence was directed at people, only at property. The police arrived shortly, reinforced by border police forces, and began to put down the actions in a way demonstrators described as extremely brutal, indiscriminately beating up women and children. Scores of protesters were injured, and scores were arrested (sixty, according to the commission's report). Damage to property was estimated at thousands of liras. Fifteen policemen were injured in the clashes, and some

police cars were damaged. Those arrested later told of harsh beatings by their investigators.

But the harshness of the police did not paralyze the rebellion, either in Wadi A-Salib or in other locations to which it spread.¹⁰³ Already on the day of the mass demonstration the news traveled to Mizrahim in nearby Acre and Tel-Hanan, and spontaneous confrontational demonstrations broke out there too, in solidarity with the Wadi A-Salib rebels. In spite of a total media silence, and in spite of Ben-Harouche's arrest, news also traveled to Mizrahi localities and poor neighborhoods throughout the country. Thus, a week later, on July 19, a workers' demonstration broke out against their comrades' arrests among general assistance laborers who demanded an easing in work. Demonstrators clashed with policemen and threw stones at those who blocked their path. Eleven policemen and two protesters were injured. In Beersheba Mizrahim became very tense though the situation there was yet to catch fire. In Mousrara neighborhood in Jerusalem Mizrahim organized a solidarity demonstration with their brothers in Wadi A-Salib (July 23, 1959), but it was thwarted by police alertness and a high level of police presence on the streets, of which residents were apprehensive. Twelve years were to pass until the emergence of the HaPanterim HaSh'horim protest from this neighborhood.¹⁰⁴

On July 24, in Wadi A-Salib, a stormy demonstration was organized outside a Hadar movie theater, where a MAPAI election gathering was about to take place under the patronage of Mizrahi functionaries. The demonstration scared party organizers, and they canceled the gathering. The next day, surprisingly, Ben-Gurion arrived in Wadi A-Salib accompanied by Lt. Gen. Moshe Dayan, hero of the 1956 Sinai campaign who had just shed his uniform and entered politics. For Ben-Gurion, who had personally ordered the tough response to the rebellion, visiting the neighborhood was a national affair, not a local question. That is to say, Ben-Gurion wanted to deliver a clear reminder of statehood, authority, and regime power.¹⁰⁵

About a week later, on Saturday night, July 31, rebellion broke out again, and again it was aimed directly against a planned election campaign gathering at the Hadar cinema, protected by the police and by Ben-Gurion's private militia, (intermittently referred to as the "Workers Regiments," under Almogi's command). Violent clashes ensued. Scores of protesters and policemen were injured. Sixty protesters were arrested. Ben-Harouche was arrested in a police raid on leadership homes in the Wadi, after resisting arrest and shooting his pistol in the air. Apart from Ben-Harouche and his leadership partners—Haim Mamman, Naphtali Sabag, and Yoseph Shem-Tov, who were indicted with serious charges—all others arrested were released on bail. Ben-Harouche and his comrades were portrayed in the newspapers and radio reports as lawless criminals, not as the leaders of a rebellion, or a protest.

As in any previous attempt to hold a gathering in the Wadi, and in Mizrahi neighborhoods in general, Ben-Gurion's private militia which were called to protect the meeting employed brutal force against protesters, using clubs and brass knuckles. During the night after this demonstration, the police prepared in advance and issued a warrant against a solidarity demonstration in Mousrara.

In August and September MAPAI held two more meetings under the protection of Almogi's "Workers Regiments." One, again on a Saturday night (August 7), with the participation of Moshe Dayan, passed in peace, and on the next day photographs were published that showed Dayan talking with Wadi A-Salib residents, although the meeting was closed and they had not been permitted to attend. The second meeting (September 14) also took place only after Ben-Gurion's militia dealt protesters merciless blows and pushed them away from the theater. The media kept silent about the use of these storm troopers, and public criticism of this tactic was nearly nonexistent, except for one article in *Ha'aretz* (September 16, 1959) in which the paper warned of the disaster brought over Wadi A-Salib by the militia's attacks. Already on July 13, Knesset member Arye Ben-Eliezer of Herut addressed Almogi directly from the speaker's stand and required an explanation:

We will contribute to the deterioration in relations if we use the same means as Knesset member Almogi, who gave such a bad example during these events . . . The Minister of the Police, the law, and the courts are in charge of maintaining order, not Knesset member Almogi of Haifa . . . I demand an investigation into the nature of those "Workers Regiments" in whose name Knesset member Almogi speaks. I want to know how many soldiers they have. . . . Who commands them, what weapons they have, sticks, rocks, brass knuckle, or live ammunition? Who instructs them, who calls the orders, who summons them?¹⁰⁶

The rebellion continued to spread, and violent protest demonstrations broke out in the North and the South. In Migdal Ha'emek (August 2) protesters stormed the Histadrut building and burnt it down. Police in Haifa announced a supreme alert again, toward another MAPAI meeting. Finally tensions erupted in Beersheba too, and the tumultuous demonstrations became a clash with police forces; again many were injured and scores were arrested. A dozen of those arrested were tried in an expedited process and sent to serve prison time. Interestingly, the media chose to remain silent on events in Beersheba and nothing about them was published for six weeks, until early September, when *Yedioth Aharonoth* (September 4) published some details, highlighting the criminal record of those who were arrested and presenting the entire action as a criminal act.

Throughout this period, as the protest spread through the country and demonstrations continued in Wadi A-Salib, the rebellions leader David Ben-Harouche and his comrades were still under arrest, and out of touch with events. This indicates the struggle was deeply and essentially rooted, not a local act by hooligans as presented to the public.¹⁰⁷ Ben-Gurion and his comrades in state leadership were well aware of this, and they did all they could to suppress the spread of the rebellion. The state, led by MAPAI, had earned a few more years of quiet.

The method used to suppress the Wadi A-Salib rebellion was simple, and it became the state's chief instrument for containing Mizrahi protest.¹⁰⁸ The state's consistent rule was to recognize demands, but not those who made them, and such

was the case in Wadi A-Salib. On the one hand, a Commission of Inquiry was appointed to investigate the events; on the other hand, an iron fist was employed against the leaders, including arrests, prevention of services, smearing their names in the papers (stigmatization), and delegitimizing their political organization. In addition to the blatant process of delegitimization, rebellion leaders and activists had to withstand repeated attempts at co-optation by MAPAI and its institutions. For the most part, they succeeded. Both before and after the rebellion, Ben-Harouche turned down MAPAI's offers to work within it. He ended up leaving Wadi A-Salib and moving to the suburbs of Haifa, as did the majority of Wadi residents who were evicted, in order to disperse the center of rebellion and protest.

The minister of the police himself made an important contribution to the denunciation of the rebellion and the restoration of quiet. Bechor Chetrit, who considered himself and was considered by MAPAI as the representative of the Mizrahim, not only sternly commanded the suppression of the rebellion but also condemned it sharply. He referred to the rebellion as "poisonous ethnic incitement," or spoke for the entire public: "All parts of the people have rejected this handful of hooligans, and unequivocal condemnation is heard everywhere."¹⁰⁹

The rebellion leaders in court—the first Mizrahi political trial

Court trials of protest and rebellion leaders have always been the extension of political theater, and to a great degree they reflect both sides' positions outside the court. Ben-Harouche was aware of this and used the seat of the accused to spread this message.

Everyone arrested was indicted, but the heavy charges were laid on Ben-Harouche and his comrades in the leadership—Mamman, Sabag, and Shem-Tov. Two facts regarding this case fail to pass any test of a fair trial. First, parallel to the trial, a sort of public trial was taking place, in the form of the Commission for the Investigation of the Wadi A-Salib Events, chaired by Supreme Court Judge Etzioni. The commission was appointed at the height of the events (July 19) and was incapable of seeing the whole picture. The issues it was asked to investigate were in essence about security, but it went beyond to ask such questions as: How did the police function? What motivated the "rioters"? Was there "an organizing hand behind" these events?

We will return to the commission later; suffice it to say here that it finished its investigation and the composition of its report on August 10, 1959, before the trial itself had ended. All of the commission's work was covered in the media, and that the exposure may have influenced the court, which concluded its sessions only on September 28—providing the judges with enough time to read the commission's report and its conclusions carefully before giving their verdict. The second fact that undermines any claim that this was a fair trial was that Judge Starkman made her opinions on culture and values heard from the very first court session: "Any man who would come to me and announce he is Moroccan would get twice the sentence . . . You are dividing the people."¹¹⁰ In saying this, Starkman wished to

prevaricate any attempt by the accused to discuss the sociopolitical motives for the protest. She therefore immediately turned to Ben-Harouche with the standard question: "Mr Ben-Harouche, do you plead guilty?" Ben-Harouche, a man with a heightened political consciousness, replied: "To you, Mrs., I won't answer,"¹¹¹ and he asked the court to disqualify her from sitting on this case. The court did not disqualify Starkman, but appointed two additional judges to please Ben-Harouche. And so Ben-Harouche used the platform and spoke of the harsh social conditions that led to the protest. The court heard him out patiently but found him guilty. He was sentenced to two years' incarceration. The others were sentenced to seven and six months. Ben-Harouche appealed to the Supreme Court, and in November his sentence was reduced to ten months. His comrades came out of the appeal with suspended sentences.

The highlight of Ben-Harouche's time in prison was his run in the Knesset elections at the top of his list, the Union of Jews from North Africa, from inside his prison cell, after his request to be released on bail was rejected. Thus, Ben-Harouche became the first Mizrahi political prisoner. Not only was he arrested, indicted, tried, and convicted for what were clearly acts of Mizrahi political protest (unlike other famous Mizrahi prisoners in days to come, whose charge sheets had nothing to do with protest), he also made use of the court arena and his incarceration as a platform to voice his political message. Formally, of course, he was charged with violating public order and with illegally keeping and using a weapon.

The regime in denial

Denial was the general response of all government bodies toward the rebellion in Wadi A-Salib, and was actively supported by the press. They denied both the rebellion itself, and the socioeconomic oppression to which it was a reaction. Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion was the first to identify the seriousness of this threat, as he saw it, and in spite of being entirely immersed in battling for his political future against increasing competition for the party leadership (especially from Pinhas Lavon), he found time to ensure that the response was authoritative and clear, as we have seen above. Just as he had in suppressing other instances of resistance to the emerging Israeli state, he left no room for doubt or mistakes, and bending the law, not openly of course, he sent a letter to the chair of the Commission for the Investigation of the Wadi A-Salib Events and Supreme Court Judge Etzioni, while the commission hearings were taking place. Regarding the character of the rebellion leader, David Ben-Harouche, he wrote: "An Ashkenazi goon, a thief, a pimp, or murderer would not win the sympathy of the Ashkenazi community (if such a community exists), nor would he even dream of that, but among a primitive community [Read: the Moroccans] this is possible."¹¹² Needless to say, this was sentencing Ben-Harouche by using extreme and entirely groundless libel. Ben-Gurion, we must remember, was concerned not only with the suppression of the rebellion but also with consolidating his stature and authority over the Mizrahim, by symbolically visiting Wadi A-Salib directly after the large demonstration accompanied by an Ashkenazi general, and not by a Mizrahi

minister. Later he increased the number of MAPAI meetings in Haifa, and in Mizrahi localities in general.

As part of this denial, Ben-Gurion's government hardly referred to the Wadi A-Salib Rebellion, so as not to legitimize the demonstrations. Additionally, the government resolved to appoint a commission of inquiry, one of whose senior members was none other than Shmuel Noah Eisenstadt, the chief sociologist of the "absorption through modernization" policy, itself the central cause for the hard economic conditions of Wadi A-Salib residents.

The Knesset also stuck its head in the sand. Reading Henriette Dahan-Kalev's examination of reactions in the parliament, one gets the impression that Knesset members lived on a different social planet, or were Ben-Gurion's satellites and acted within the general denial of the rebellion. An interesting point raised by Dahan-Kalev is that the Knesset acted with the same degree of denial, and only apparently in the opposite direction by debating explicit questions about the existence or inexistence of a policy of inequality:

This debate turned out to be mere lip service, and acted as a shock buffer. Discussions were eventually concluded with a whisper, and the Knesset authorized commission members to investigate only the chain of events, whereas nothing was decided about a deeper investigation. Thus, taking an opposite path to that of the government, referring to the question of discrimination, the Knesset buried the opportunity to endow the Wadi A-Salib events with an ethnic, economic, and social meaning.¹¹³

The words of Sephardi minister Bechor Chetrit, quoted above, and those of Yemenite member of the Knesset Israel Yeshaiahu, who accounted for the immigrants' harsh economic situation in terms of cultural differences demonstrate this kind of lip-service and shock-buffering Dahan-Kalev writes about:

Indeed we are one people by historical consciousness and by the Jewish religion, but after two thousand years of diaspora we are . . . a people . . . fragmented by obvious differences . . . in language, eating habits, ways of life, terms, ways of thought . . . This fact is not due to anyone's will, or anyone's ill will, but a disease we contracted in diaspora, perhaps the worst of its curses.¹¹⁴

Yitzhak Raphael, leader of MAFDAL, pronounced in self-convincing denial: "We would like to hope that this outbreak, which we condemn unanimously, is not a symptom of a serious disease. Let us hope it is but a passing mishap, a one-off event."¹¹⁵ Knesset member Rubin, of MAPAM, proved to be an exception by reproaching his comrades and putting things squarely on the table: "How is it that many of us were surprised by this reaction [the rebellion]? . . . The question is primarily social . . . The majority of government employment-initiatives workers are from Edot HaMizrah; . . . people of Edot HaMizrah are on the lowest salary level."¹¹⁶ The Knesset, as mentioned above, did not accept this analysis and rushed to pass the burning coal on to the Commission of Inquiry.

Only the Communist Party and Herut, of the opposition, openly supported the Wadi A-Salib rebellion. Menachem Begin came to visit the Wadi and delivered speeches in support of the rebels on a makeshift podium, but the media ignored these speeches entirely. Only from personal testimonies¹¹⁷ do we learn of Herut's and Begin's support of activity in the neighborhood. This worried the Labor Party (MAPAI) and they intensified their attempts at co-optation within the neighborhood itself, through the work of such young party activists as Moshe Shahal, who tried several times (almost succeeding) to "buy" David Ben-Harouche before the rebellion. Ben-Harouche described these attempts as follows: "Shahal told us, 'Why don't you use the Knesset elections to improve your economic conditions? And if you are not interested in money, we'll give you a club and find you a job.'"¹¹⁸

The Commission for the Investigation of the Wadi A-Salib Events

The commission, whose senior members were a judge, who secretly received a cultural opinion from the prime minister about both the rebellion leader and an entire ethnic community, and a sociologist, who had to justify the absorption policy he had himself laid out, left little room for suspense and imagination. Beyond the security issues it was asked to investigate, the commission focused on a question it was not authorized to deal with: "Is there, or is there not, social and economic discrimination against the Mizrahim in Israel?" Its answer was a categorical "no." It recommended, naturally, a series of steps in the realm of welfare that the government should take in order to reduce the economic gaps between newcomers and veterans. As for the official questions of the investigation, the commission determined, just like the court did afterward, that the "events" were caused by incitement and that the police acted appropriately to the demonstrators' violence. With these explicit conclusions, the state of Israel could feel relieved: there was no intentional discrimination against "Edot HaMizrah"; the "riots" did not represent Moroccan newcomers, nor even the Wadi A-Salib neighborhood. The commission was impressed by "a spectacular show of Jewish solidarity, and wonderful dedication and sacrifice, as well as a national and religious vitality that have always characterized the Jews of North Africa." It recommended that a special authority be established to speed up the "merging of the exiles."¹¹⁹

In the margin of the public storm following the rebellion, Eliyahu Eliachar decided to expose Israel's dirty laundry to the eyes of the world. In July 1959, immediately after the outbreak of the rebellion in Wadi A-Salib and its spread to other places, regardless of the events, the Fourth World Jewish Congress convened in Stockholm. Organizers from around the Jewish world had announced they would also discuss the problem of the absorption of Mizrahim in Israel, but did not allow Mizrahi participants to take part in these discussions. Eliachar protested against this in an open letter published by *Ha'aretz* (July 27, 1959) where he argued that the congress was "neither Jewish nor World." Although he was

not invited, he led a delegation of the Sephardi community to Stockholm, where he organized press conferences and other informative actions aimed at world public opinion. He presented Israel as a state with a policy of economical and cultural oppression of its Mizrahi citizens. The Ashkenazi Israeli delegation, led by Moshe Sharet, the future minister of foreign affairs and prime minister of Israel, refused to include Mizrahi representatives in the Israeli delegation, and Sharet was enraged by Eliachar's private publicity campaign. In an angry telegram to the Jewish Agency offices in Jerusalem Sharet wrote only three words: "To kill Eliachar." Later he explained that he had intended to say, "Silence Eliachar."¹²⁰

The press as an extension of the government

In a period when the media was uncritically patriotic, and comprised government-run radio stations that served as a government mouthpiece, two newspapers that served as nationalist party newsletters (*Davar*, *Al Hamishmar*), and two private newspapers under strict government censorship (*Yedioth Aharonoth*, *Ha'aretz*), any public debate was limited to those two private newspapers.¹²¹ The exceptions were two critical independent weekly newspapers *Haolam Hazeh* and *Kol Ha'am* (the Communist Party newspaper). Reading the Hebrew daily press from this period shows that Wadi A-Salib was far from being the main news story.¹²² Reports on the rebellion were not only incomprehensive and irregular, but were also published as part of the police chronicles, which placed the political protest in a criminal context. Still, the media did not avoid the subject entirely, and reports can be divided into two categories: The first type is engaged in denying the newcomers' socioeconomic situation and the state's responsibility for it, including the heralding of Mizrahi "success stories" featuring clearly "content" Mizrahim. The second is blatantly engaged in stigmatization and delegitimization of Ben-Harouche, his movement, participants in the rebellion and their messages. It can certainly be said that without the active collaboration of the press, Ben-Gurion and his government would have found it much harder to suppress the spread of the rebellion, to foster alienation between the Mizrahim and the rebels, and more than anything else to deny government responsibility for the harsh economic oppression that resulted in the outbreak of the rebellion.

The media reports focused not only on Wadi A-Salib residents, described as "hooligans," "criminals," and "antistate agitators," but also on inhabitants of other areas to which the rebellion had spread, such as Beersheba. These reports persistently maintained the same terminology, such as "criminal elements." *Ha'aretz* went out of its way (August 1, 1959) to prove that in kibbutzim, for example, there is no discrimination against Mizrahim, neglecting to mention that there were hardly any Mizrahi kibbutz members.

An exception to the rule was *Haolam Hazeh* magazine, edited by Uri Avneri, which featured cover stories by Shalom Cohen that were radical for the period and maintain a radical freshness to this day. Cohen, who was also a Knesset member for *Haolam Hazeh*, retired in the early 1970s and joined *HaPanterim HaSh'horim*

for an election run that failed. *Kol Ha'am* also gave serious attention to the socioeconomic conditions that sparked the rebellion. It respectfully referred to the rebels' demonstrations and arguments as legitimate, in stories by Hannah Stern, an activist journalist and a supporter of the struggle.

Elections, the fall, the silence

Hanna Herzog argues that in order to rid himself of the negative stigma attached to him and to his movement, and in order to gain legitimacy, Ben-Harouche, while in prison, turned to a normative political path and deserted violent protest.¹²³ This assumption is reasonable, but two things need to be mentioned in this context: first, Ben-Harouche had personally considered the possibility of joining MAPAI in 1958, but was disappointed by the party's humiliating approach. Second, by establishing the Union of Jews from North Africa in 1958 Ben-Harouche had already directed himself and his activities toward parliamentary politics, toward the election of the Fourth Knesset in the following year, and not to protest activities. Even the decision to organize protests, wherein most of the violent episodes arose from clashes with the security forces and with Ben-Gurion's "Workers Regiments" summoned to disperse the demonstrators, was based on the idea of creating a national solidarity leverage, since elections were national. Of course, Ben-Harouche did not anticipate the severity of the regime's and the media's attacks, which depicted him and his comrades as dangerous evil men, lazy and ignorant, unworthy of leadership roles. With this as a backdrop—working from inside a prison cell, without an organization, a media campaign, or even postage money, and in the face of the powers arrayed against him—we have to acknowledge his electoral achievement (0.8 percent of the vote) that came very near to passing the minimal vote threshold to win a seat in the Knesset of one percent.¹²⁴

The weakest point in this election campaign, and in the rebellion in general, was the movement's ethnic borders. Ben-Harouche, working within an almost homogeneous North African neighborhood, diagnosed the Mizrahi problem as a Moroccan problem, or at most a North African problem; hence, his messages were addressed narrowly to newcomers from North Africa. Against the state's intense propaganda for national "unity," and under the pressure of Ben-Gurion's and MAPAI's *mamlachtiyut* (republicanism), Ben-Harouche and the Union of Jews from North Africa were swept to the margins of national consensus, not only Mizrahi protest, but North African, and more specifically, Moroccan.

Yet one may paradoxically argue that the only "resource" at the disposal of the Union of Jews from North Africa was being persecuted by two types of forces—rejection (delegitimization) on the one hand, and co-optation attempts on the other. This, more than anything else, as pointed out by Herzog, motivated them to persist and not to give up the run for parliament. One should note that at the end of his independent activities, Ben-Harouche resisted MAPAI's co-optation attempts and instead joined the Herut Party as a local activist. For him this was the natural continuation of protest against MAPAI.

Summary and discussion: politics and the Mizrahi struggle during the first decade

From the first stage of the political encounter between Mizrahim and Ashkenazim, with the establishment of the British Mandate that recognized the Ashkenazi Zionist institutions as representing the Jews in Palestine in 1920, and in negotiations with the Yemenites and the Sephardim toward the election of the first Assembly,¹²⁵ we can discern the emergence of two approaches adopted by Mizrahi political participants. One involved those who identified with European Zionism, its values and its state, with whom they collaborated while accepting its basic cultural assumptions in the hope of integrating with it (people on this category will be referred to as identifier-collaborators, or ICs); the other, a critical approach, of protest and alternative approach, involved those whose ideological goal is social and cultural integration based on equality (from hereon referred to as radicals). On this axis, in the tension between these two extremes, Mizrahim have acted since that time, and more clearly and extensively since 1948, in the new political system under the sovereign European Zionist regime.

For the conclusive discussion we will adopt the distinction made by Haines between “radicals” at one end of the spectrum and “moderates” at the other.¹²⁶ In between, various shades of these attitudes are at work, in a dynamic of movement and mutual influence. Political activity on this axis, as we have seen with black people in the U.S., is characterized by an interplay of radical effects between the extremes.

I would like to examine two examples from the 1950s by using Haines’ model: the Sephardi Community Committee, which worked with the system from the *yishuv* period to the time of the sovereign state; and the Wadi A-Salib Rebellion, which was led by the Union of Jews from North Africa. But first I will discuss Tarrow’s question,¹²⁷ what is a social movement? And how do we distinguish a social movement from a social protest action, a cultural organization, a community organization, a party cell, or the organization of a party, or an elections list?

Between social movement and a social protest action

In accordance with Tarrow’s criteria I define a social movement in the Mizrahi struggle¹²⁸ as follows: an extraparliamentary movement¹²⁹ whose members share a challenge to put an end to socioeconomic oppression in general and that of the Mizrahim in particular who work for a shared near-term goal, to put the relations of inequality on the agenda of the state, society in general, and the Mizrahi population in particular. To this end, it: (1) works to create and maintain social and cultural solidarity among its activists and among Mizrahim in general, as well as among supporters and partners who are not Mizrahim; and (2) maintains a prolonged interaction with the regime through acts of collective confrontation (rebellion, protests, demonstrations, and clashes).¹³⁰ But first and foremost it must maintain the fundamental condition: honest aspiration for equality and social

justice, manifest in its goals and its practice, and its calls for a comprehensive change of socioeconomic structures for the benefit of society in general, not just of a limited sector.

A Mizrahi organization that fits this definition fully is hard to find during the first decade. During this period we see three main types of Mizrahi political activity. First is in the party realm, national and local (the Knesset and the Histadrut, municipal authorities, and workers' councils), either under Ashkenazi domination or as independent attempts, few of which succeeded.¹³¹ The second and most common type of Mizrahi political activity was one-off acts of protest and collective confrontation with the authorities, which resulted at times in a chain reaction and the beginnings of organizing, but never became an organized social movement as defined above, which is the third and most rare type in Mizrahi politics and in Israeli politics in general.¹³²

The majority of Mizrahi political actions during the first decade were of the second type, as surveyed in this chapter, including a long line of unique local actions of confrontation with the authorities aimed at social and economic justice for the Mizrahi immigrants. Even when the confrontations were severe, as in the storming of the old Knesset building in Tel Aviv or the blocking of access to kibbutzim in the Negev, they did not have a sequel, and they did not reach the organizational stage. There were two types of reason for this, external and internal. Externally, the state, society, and the media, all under Ashkenazi hegemony, despised the protesters, condemned them, repressed them by force and used stigmatization and delegitimization to prevent any chance of solidarity with the Mizrahi public. The internal causes were mainly the economic and organizational weakness of the Mizrahim during the first years, when they were still caught in relations of entire dependency on their Ashkenazi absorbers. Therefore, the only stable, regular Mizrahi organizations during the first decade were the veteran established Sephardi and Yemenite organizations whose decline and disappearance is discussed above. Another reason for the single occurrence of these protest actions is the immigrants' perpetual desire to acquire an Israeli identity, identified as secular-Ashkenazi Zionist, and to be accepted as equals in the new society. This is the source of the internal conflict in the heart of every Mizrahi immigrant wishing to survive: on the one hand, the urge to cry out and protest in order to be liberated from the conditions of social and cultural oppression; and on the other hand, knowing that every act of protest and confrontation would mark him/her as "ethnic" and distance him/her from the desired goal.

The Sephardi Community Committee was not a social movement before the formation of the state, nor after. In its old form it was a community committee charged with managing autonomous aspects of life, such as religion, education and culture, and welfare, without having to compete for power and representation, and without a confrontation with the authorities. Following interaction with the Ashkenazi Zionist political system, the committee transformed from a community organization into a political party-like organization that participated in elections and maintained a representation relationship with its community. After the formation of the state, the committee continued in the party path in order to retain its

representational power and formed a candidate list (the Sephardi Union) that gained representation in the Knesset, as well as in government, with the police portfolio given to Bechor Chetrit, who was to epitomize the unmistakable IC Mizrahi of the first decade. In other words, the committee transformed into a coalition party, and was thereby prevented from protesting and confronting the government.

But as we have seen, other forces were at work in the committee, led by Eliyahu Eliachar, the prominent radical Sephardi of the first decade, who opposed collaboration with the government and preferred to work from inside the opposition in order to be free to resist the government and confront it. With this tension as a backdrop the Sephardi Union divided. Eliachar retired from the union and withdrew from the government coalition to establish, with younger activists, TELEM (Mizrahim United Movement), the first movement to use the word Mizrahim in its name. TELEM made clear it did not intend to follow the subservient path, and under Eliachar's leadership it became the government's constant critic. Still, Eliachar and TELEM did not answer all the requirements for a Mizrahi social movement, in part because its leader sat in parliament during the first years, but chiefly because it did not engage in collective confrontation actions as we have defined them (demonstrations, rebellion, strikes, violent clashes, and so on) with the authorities. Eliachar himself identified with protests in his articles and public appearances, and supported protest movements such as the Wadi A-Salib rebellion and HaPanterim HaSh'horim, so he can be described as a Mizrahi radical.

The Union of Jews from North Africa, on the radical end of the axis, is the organization closest to the definition of a social movement, until it turned to elections as a party in a final attempt to survive. It existed as a movement for an entire year, but only for one month as a party, before the elections. After the elections the organization died out both as a movement and as a party and disappeared from the political map.

The movement, for the most part, was extraparlimentary, and proclaimed a common challenge as its goal: "To eliminate ethnic discrimination." The aim was to shake the state so as to make this call heard and to destabilize the state's agenda. The movement maintained a social and cultural solidarity, but mainly on the local level of Wadi A-Salib, where response to the movement's leadership was widespread, and to a lesser degree throughout the country among Mizrahi immigrants in general and in particular among immigrants from North Africa. I have already commented on this aspect that Ben-Harouche's consciousness and that of his comrades was still North African and not Mizrahi, because a general Mizrahi identity and consciousness had not yet evolved, and because the reality of inequality as he had experienced it was in Wadi A-Salib, an almost homogeneously North African neighborhood. In any case, the solidarity is beyond doubt, because it was clearly manifest in the spread of the rebellion to other Mizrahi localities, in spite of the absence of a regular chain of communication, as well as in a significant vote that almost surpassed the minimal vote threshold.

The main novel contribution of the Union of Jews from North Africa to the Mizrahi political landscape was its rather prolonged collective confrontation with the MAPAI-dominated state. For the first time we witness organized clashes of

unprecedented intensity—with the police, the security forces, and Ben-Gurion's private brigades—as well as significant physical damage to symbols of the Ashkenazi Zionist hegemony, including commercial establishments in a well-off neighborhood, a bank, a party branch office, MAPAI gatherings, the workers' councils, and the absorption office.

Radical effects during the first decade

Next, we will consider the question of radical effects among the various Mizrahi political forces.

Eliyahu Eliachar, the forerunner of radicalism

The more radical Eliachar became, the more Bechor Chetrit's stature increased with Ben-Gurion and the state leadership, because he became key to restraining and absorbing any Mizrahi protest, as proved in the Wadi A-Salib rebellion. This is a radical effect, but according to our model, a positive radical effect results in the advance of the challenge and the general goals of the struggle, that is, the elimination of the economic oppression situation, as in the example of Malcolm X and Martin Luther King. Chetrit's promotion to the top, based on Eliachar's radicalism, brought him closer to Ben-Gurion, but it did not advance the goals of the struggle; on the contrary, Chetrit supported the government's absorption policy and condemned the Mizrahim when they spoke against it. In the Knesset he led speakers against the Wadi A-Salib rebels, and as minister of police during the protest and unrest he enforced an iron-fist policy against any form of protest. The effect's dynamics can also be examined from the opposite perspective: the more Eliachar's power as a radical declined, the more Chetrit's power to negotiate suffered; Chetrit had meanwhile joined MAPAI, until he finally lost his position as a protest restrainer even inside MAPAI.

Looking at Eliachar himself, we can trace a consistent line of radicalization among the Sephardi community toward state institutions and the Zionist movement. From the first moment of encounter, when he established the Youth of the Middle East against the old leadership of the Sephardi Histadrut, Eliachar led a line of resistance and change whose highlights were: convening the first Sephardi Congress in Vienna in 1925; regularly publishing *Hed HaMizrah*, a militant and radical publication for its time; publishing criticism and protest in the daily newspapers; retiring from the government coalition and from the Sephardi Histadrut; forming TELEM; supporting the Wadi A-Salib Rebellion; and directly confronting the Zionist Jewish world leadership. Further on in his career, he published *We Have to Prevent Jewish Racism in the State of the Jews*, a radical booklet containing a bitter indictment of the state of Israel, the Ashkenazi elites, and the few educated Mizrahim.¹³³ Even at a very advanced age, Eliachar continued to support Mizrahi protest and social organizations such as HaPanterim HaSh'horim that were discreetly subsidized by the Sephardi Community Committee in Jerusalem.¹³⁴

The Yemenites

Of the Yemenites one can also say that their insistence on running independently in the elections and refusing to be annexed to MAPAI was a radical effect, though it led to their elimination, and that the Yemenites' efforts speeded up the rise of Yisrael Yeshayahu inside MAPAI, as he became a prominent IC, and an ally of Ben-Gurion, who helped the prime minister in the government's efforts to absorb protest among the Yemenites. In 1953 Yeshayahu was appointed by Ben-Gurion to sit on a commission that was to examine grievances by Yemenite immigrants in moshavim about discrimination in their absorption. The commission reported "good" findings, that there was no discrimination and no difference in the treatment of immigrants from different origins, although it could not help but note the harsh social and economic situation of Yemenite immigrants. The success of Ashkenazi immigrants in the moshavim was attributed to "their initiative, their professional level and adaptability, qualities that objectively give them easier possibilities to sort out their problems both inwards and outwards."¹³⁵ In 1967 Prime Minister Levi Eshkol appointed Yeshayahu minister of the post office, explaining his decision explicitly as an Ashkenazi gesture: "The government considers it its duty to include non-Ashkenazi forces in its work. Moreover, should a non-Ashkenazi candidate come along at some point, who is willing to carry the burden, we would gladly take him into the government."¹³⁶

Other ICs in government parties

As seen in the cases of Chetrit and Yeshayahu, the stature of other ICs within MAPAI, MAPAM, and MAFDAL increased with the growth in protest, especially following the Wadi A-Salib rebellion. One such politician, young Moshe Shahal, played a key role in neutralizing rebellion activists and was promoted within the party and the Histadrut, and later became a Knesset member and a senior government minister. Another such politician was Mordechai Bentov, for whom the Edot HaMizrah section was formed in MAPAM. Its mission was to try to absorb into MAPAM any beginning of a social left among the Mizrahim, and in many cases even threatened MAPAI's standing on this. Many other Mizrahi activists, such as Shaul Ben-Simhon and Yisrael Keisar (whom we will meet again in our discussion), worked in a similar way within the parties, and within MAPAI and its organs in particular, but also on the level of local clerks managing welfare and labor offices.

As the radical elements pushed all the Mizrahi ICs nearer the top, they had one general indirect yet important result: the perpetual and growing presence of these ethnic representatives around the Ashkenazi leadership of the state and its institutions forcing them to stay in touch with Mizrahi immigrants and to absorb their grievances, yet without their really being able to change anything. They had thus marked themselves as impotent and false representatives in the Mizrahims' eyes, thereby furthering Mizrahi disillusionment with the possibility of change through ICs, and indirectly bringing about the growth of the radical and independent approach. As the identification-collaboration possibility was exposed

as false, the radical independent element grew, especially in the 1970s with the emergence of HaPanterim HaSh'horim and HaOhalim (which explicitly criticized the ICs), as well as the appearance of other groups such as Oded and TZALASH—a trend that peaked with the protest vote of 1977, and later, clearly, in the formation of TAMI and SHAS.

The Union of Jews from North Africa—the Wadi A-Salib rebellion

Ben-Harouche and his comrades undoubtedly caused the most significant radical effect on Mizrahi politics and the whole political system at the end of the first decade. We have already noted the rise in the “price” of ICs that occurred parallel to the movement’s actions, as Herzog notes in her conclusions: “They accomplished an increase in ethnic [Mizrahi] representation in various existing [Ashkenazi] parties and some of the activists found positions in various parties and work places. Their appearance had become the icon of ethnic protest, and politicians concluded that ethnicity is an effective resource for political manipulation.”¹³⁷ In spite of an obstinate official denial by Ben-Gurion, members of his government, and coalition members, the rebellion’s significant radical effect over them was evident in that they were forced to appoint a commission, hold discussions, and make records in the state’s official chronicles. Thus, the rebellion had sown the seeds of Mizrahi protest, and even if deep underground they would take time to sprout and break out forcefully. But the main influence of the rebellion and the movement was a radicalization of the Mizrahim. Even though it was only marginally visible, the possibility for protest against, and resistance to, the oppression was born. The rebellion’s spread throughout the country raised Mizrahi awareness and marked the breakthrough of the radical independent path.

Also noted on the axis of radicalism is the work of communist Jews of Iraqi origin (and a few of Egyptian origin, such as Felix Matalon), mainly in the Arab–Jewish Communist Party, that negates the nation-state altogether and wishes to form one egalitarian state for both peoples.¹³⁸ Because of their small numbers, and their assimilation in Arab politics, they had very little influence along the axis.

At this stage of Mizrahi politics, one cannot yet speak of a clear “Mizrahiness” as a solid collective identity, in spite of an “equal” treatment of Mizrahim on the oppression level. During the first decade, and to a great degree during the second decade, we can see clear categories of North Africans (and even a clear division among them, into Moroccans, Algerians, Tunisians, Tripolitans), Iraqis, Yemenites—Sephardim according to Eliachar, and Edot Mizrah according to Bechor Chetrit. Indeed, though class and cultural oppression had begun to bind them into a collective, at the end of the first decade these were only beginnings.

Following the Wadi A-Salib rebellion, already in the 1959 elections, we witness many Mizrahi organizations throughout Israel. Some of them were absorbed by the parties, and a few participated in the elections, as, for example, Independent North Africans, the National Union, the National Sephardi Party, the Yemenite Faction, and others. Not one of these had passed the minimal vote threshold. The 1960s were ushered in by several radical Mizrahi events that were a direct result of radical

effects from the rebellion, although all political events were overshadowed by the Lavon affair. We will survey these in the following chapter, which elaborates on the relative calm of Mizrahi politics in the 1960s and the maturation of conditions for radical protest, and mainly on the renewed outbreak of rebellion and protest in the work of the 1970s movements lead by HaPanterim HaSh'horim.

In conclusion, let us examine an event that serves as a metaphor for the transition from the 1950s to the 1960s. In March 1960 popular Mizrahi singer Felfel el-Masri (his real name was Albert Mougrabi), a Cairo-born new immigrant, recorded a satirical song recounting his harsh experience of Aliyah and absorption. When he wanted to have the song broadcast on the national radio, the radio manager referred him to well-known lyric writers who “command Hebrew,” because he found el-Masri’s “lyrics infantile, and the Hebrew faulty.” Here is a stanza from this song:

When I arrived from Cairo
 They promised me a set-up
 Luxury housing
 surrounded by gardens
 with a fridge and no neighbors.¹³⁹

3 “Either the pie is for everyone, or there won’t be no pie!” HaPanterim HaSh’horim (the Black Panthers Movement)

The generating collective confrontation

From the cultural melting pot to the social pressure cooker

The renewal of the Mizrahi uprising in March 1971 led by HaPanterim HaSh’horim is a direct continuation of the radical effect of the Wadi A-Salib Rebellion on both Mizrahim and the entire political system. According to Tarrow, HaPanterim HaSh’horim’s protest is to be regarded as the generative event of collective confrontation that succeeded in putting the Mizrahi struggle movement in motion.¹ The chronology of the Mizrahi struggle politics can therefore be largely divided in two: before HaPanterim HaSh’horim and after it. To a large extent, this division is also valid for the general Israeli sociocultural agenda.

In this respect, the renewal of the rebellion by HaPanterim HaSh’horim travels through the second generation’s experience of stewing slowly in the socioeconomic and political pressure cooker of 1960s Israel. Over those years the relations of socioeconomic inequality were made permanent, and from the middle of that decade, after the second wave of immigration from Morocco, the Mizrahim are no longer portrayed in official Israeli memory as newcomers suffering from “difficulties in adapting and integration,” but as *Edot HaMizrah*, with a long line of associated descriptors such as: in the social sphere—“the ethnic problem,” “the second Israel,” “welfare cases,” “poor neighborhoods,” “development towns,” “marginal youths,” “*teuney tipuah*” (under-achieving); in culture—“backward,” “Levantine,” “primitive”; and in politics—“the ethnic ghost,” “ethnic voting,” “an ethnic party,” “an ethnic representative,” “the ethnic slot.”

The state, for its part, appears to have accepted the cultural-class structure and its policies created in the 1950s. Instead of making an effort to think universally toward structural and systematic amendments and changes for balance and equality, the state adapted its organs to the cultural-class reality, through a large and sophisticated apparatus of social workers and welfare clerks who turned the Mizrahim from free humans into “clients”²; an education system adapted to the cultural “needs” of Mizrahi students, which is in fact a separate, inferior system both in the quality of instruction and in the quality of study materials, in accordance with the state’s low level of expectations³; housing conditions adapted to fit the “socioeconomic” conditions and the Mizrahims’ “way of life”⁴; appropriate employment for their new status in the new industrial economy as

manual laborers, especially after the immense economic growth delivered by the 1967 war.

The conflict known as the Six-Day War, which consolidated the status of Israeli *Bithonism* (the ideology of security), led to a series of security decisions that resulted in an artificial economic boom, manifest especially in the fast development of the security industries, service contracts for the army, and army purchases from Israeli industries.⁵ The increased budgets mainly boosted the revenues of middle- and upper-class Ashkenazim: senior officers, entrepreneurs, bankers, investors, infrastructure and construction contractors, factory owners, managers, and various brokers of the liberal professions. The Mizrahim, in accordance with the “cultural labor division” analysis,⁶ did not partake of the finances being channeled into the economy and had to make do with low wages as skilled and semi-skilled laborers. The Israeli economy had come out of recession, but the quality of life for the majority of Mizrahim had not improved.

Following this war and its economic outcome, the Mizrahim related to inequality for the first time from the position of partners, partners in a military national struggle symbolically “signed in blood” as part of the Zionist myth of being partners and sharing a common destiny. The war of 1967 therefore, including its myths and its enormous implications for Israel’s economy, society, and politics, had a central role in speeding the process of disappointment among Mizrahim, and marked the beginning of a growing class and culture consciousness, until finally leading to a crisis in confidence,⁷ manifest in a growing population of second-generation Mizrahim who had been gradually pushed to the political margins, until the outbreak of the renewed rebellion in HaPanterim’s protest.

One can discern a continuous line of radical effects in the Mizrahi struggle, moving from the early 1950s, through the Wadi A-Salib Rebellion, to HaPanterim HaSh'horim, and on to the Ballot Rebellion in 1977,⁸ and to the establishment of TAMI, and even more so SHAS, parallel to the rise of the new Mizrahi discourse. The radical influence of this struggle on society, culture, and politics in Israel is evident: the issue of relations between Ashkenazim and Sephardim occupies an expanding space in academia and in the media, an era of “legitimization” of Mizrahi culture begins, welfare budgets are augmented after HaPanterim HaSh'horim’s protest, and new welfare legislation is passed. All researchers concur: these changes in Israeli society cannot be explained without reference to HaPanterim HaSh'horim.⁹

Haim Hanegbi, one of the founders of the Marxist Matzpen group, which supported the Panterim’s struggle, recalls:

One time I was sitting with Charlie Bitton in the Knesset cafeteria [at the time that Bitton was a member of the Knesset] when suddenly the former minister of labor, Israel Katz, came in. They hugged, and Charlie introduced us, and then I asked Dr Katz: “It’s very interesting to hear from you what HaPanterim HaSh'horim have accomplished, if in your view they have accomplished anything at all?” He repeated the exact words I’d just heard from Charlie: “The establishment was awoken to recognize the severity of the social problem, they began researching, began making statistical studies and to

create budgets, to help here, to fix there. And this business that had been under the table, rose to be on the table.”¹⁰

Economic inequality and cultural oppression made permanent

Already in the early 1960s solid data was available to indicate the severity of the Mizrahims' socioeconomic situation, which resulted not only from a policy of inequality by the government and its organs in the 1950s, but later also from the new economic policy of a supposedly socialist government in the early 1960s: comprehensive liberalization, cutbacks in expenses, and significant attempts at balancing the budget.¹¹ The results did not take long to show: reduced economic growth, a deep recession, increased unemployment, reduction of wages, increased dependence on welfare, and, of course, harsh poverty and increasingly obvious social dichotomy—well-to-do or livelihood-earning Ashkenazim on the one hand, and poor and dependent Mizrahim on the other. The state went on expanding the system of welfare support and other kinds of support. In February 1967, for example, the government resolved for the first time to pay unemployment benefits to laid-off workers. About 80 percent of welfare recipients during the 1960s were Mizrahim.¹² Not only did the government make no attempt at gap-reducing reforms in the socioeconomic structure, it deepened the gaps by adding a “free competition” element to the market, in a dichotomous situation that held little prospect for the majority of Mizrahi immigrants, still living in a state of economic dependence, to enter the circle of free initiative and competition. Meanwhile, Ashkenazim who were economically well positioned were also given government grants and benefits to encourage “free initiative,” as in the establishment of textile factories in the Negev.

Two additional economic factors fueled the expansion of the socioeconomic gap during the 1960s. First was an increase in the transfer of funds by the United Jewish Appeal,¹³ directed toward investments and development that exclusively benefited entrepreneurs, bankers, construction contractors, members of the liberal professions, academics, and senior executives but never touching the lives of the hundreds of thousands of Mizrahim in development towns and Mizrahi neighborhoods. The second factor was German reparation money paid both to Holocaust survivors and to the Israeli government, which pushed up the revenue of some 20 percent of Ashkenazi families enabling them to acquire much better housing and a better quality of life.¹⁴

I will survey in brief the socioeconomic landscape according to data on education, revenue, housing, and land.

Education

Three government decisions made in the 1960s were central to the education system and decisive in perpetuating the relations of social oppression, all of which indicate the same policy mentioned above: adapting systems to reality by rationalization rather than reform. The first decision, of September 1962, officially established two

tracks of high school study—an academic track leading to a *bagrut* (matriculation) certificate, and a vocational track leading to a partial *bagrut* or to none whatsoever. The decision referred exclusively to the Mizrahi and Arab population, to whom the state began partly offering partial high school education only in the early 1960s. All high schools for the Ashkenazi population were academic from the start, so the decision did not affect them. The decision was motivated by the Mizrahims' growing demand that their children too be provided a high school education. As these Mizrahi demands increased, the state developed its "Cultivation and Rehabilitation" approach to new levels of sophistication, including tracking mechanisms such as classification and grouping.¹⁵ Even the Compulsory Education law required the state to provide Mizrahi children with only eight years of school education. In January 1965 this was extended by one more year, to nine, which remains the legal requirement to this day. This decision gives schools, and local and national education authorities, legal permission to drop Mizrahi students from the normative education system at the age of 15. Officially, of course, it applies to Ashkenazi children too, but it rarely affects them, as most of them attend academic tracks in strong schools that hardly produce any drop-outs.

The second decision contributing to the perpetuation of gaps in education created level grouping in basic subjects in primary school. In creating the grouping system in primary schools, as with the high school tracks, the Israeli state clearly disowned responsibility to the commitment to equality in education declared in its declaration of independence. Swirski sees the grouping system as a political arrangement for separation:

In actuality, grouping is a politically based arrangement whose goal is to separate between students as a response to political problems. In general, one can say that separating pupils into groupings, which practically means advancing only some students and not all of them, is one of the means used by a state apparatus to evade the promise to provide an equal high quality education to all of them.¹⁶

This shirking of responsibility eventually led to the third decision, in July 1968, to establish junior high schools, which was in fact a mechanism for classifying and separating primary school students into high school courses that determine their future: some to continue to higher education and some to acquire a craft and join the nonprofessional labor market. Classifying and tracking mechanisms such as junior high school are not an Israeli invention, but were conceived in the U.S. with the beginning of integration and mixed-race education.¹⁷ Israel chose this path for political reasons, because adopting a more egalitarian worldview would require work on a revolutionary transformation of education, which is the central mobility factor in the social class system.¹⁸ Such a change would eventually take primacy away from the Ashkenazi Zionist hegemony.

The education system now had unequal tracks that even formally overlapped the students' ethnic origins, although the state developed an entire system of rationalizations based on cultural theories of backwardness and progress, as well

as on tests and examinations that turned separation into an apparently individual-student issue, and therefore legal and legitimate. This was the case with the survey examination at the end of primary school, whose only function was to sort pupils into prospective high school courses, and with the Hadassah Tests, created by the Hadassah Institute, which were devised to help counselors to “predict” a student’s tendencies in order to assign him/her to the various tracks.¹⁹

Such an unequal education system inevitably produces unequal accomplishments. During the years 1963–1964 only 27 percent of Mizrahi adolescents (ages 14–17) attended the education system; all the rest, 73 percent, were on the streets. By 1970 the attendance rate rose to 45 percent; that is, about a year before the HaPanterim HaSh'horim’s protest, 55 percent of Mizrahi adolescents had no educational structure. In July 1965 the Ministry of Education tested literacy among all age groups in development towns, with results revealing that more than half the students could not read and write Hebrew.²⁰ Following this finding, the ministry launched a literacy campaign aimed at these pupils—seventeen years after the beginning of Mizrahi absorption in Israel. At this time, only 1 percent of university and higher education students were Mizrahim.²¹ Among teachers in the education system only 10 percent were Mizrahim, and nearly all of them had acquired their education and training abroad, before their emigration to Israel.²²

Revenue and housing density

During the period the 1950s–1960s an average salaried Mizrahi employee’s family earned about 30 percent less than the average salaried Ashkenazi family,²³ and more than 60 percent of the poorest 20 percent of the population were Mizrahim. In terms of housing density, in 1960 about 50 percent of all Mizrahim lived three or more to a room, as compared to 12 percent of Ashkenazim. In 1970 the rate was down to 17 percent of Mizrahim, and 2 percent of Ashkenazim, but the gap drastically increased from a proportion of 1 out of 4.1, to 1 out of 8.5.

On the issue of land distribution, already mentioned in Chapter 2, we can add the illustrative example of the Hula land reclamation project in the 1950s. The labor was carried out by Mizrahim from Qiryat Shmonah, Hatzor HaGlilit, and neighboring moshavim as part of the government employment program, but the resulting fertile lands were distributed among kibbutzim in the region, Manarah, Misgav-Am, Malkiyah, and others.²⁴ Towns such as Hatzor HaGlilit and Qiryat Shmonah, and Mizrahi moshavim such as Margaliot and Zarit, went on providing the kibbutzim with a cheap labor force, first for agriculture and later for industry.

The Wadi A-Salib Rebellion’s implications in the 1960s

Already in the 1959 elections, following the Wadi A-Salib Rebellion, Mizrahi candidate lists and political organizations emerged, as well as extensive courting of Mizrahi voters and candidates by existing parties. Ben-Gurion went the furthest, about two months before the elections, when he announced in a MAPAI meeting with immigrants from North Africa, “Moses was a North African, and our

patriarch Abraham came from Iraq.”²⁵ MAPAI’s power increased in the elections, apparently unexpectedly. The rise can be attributed to the military victory of 1956, the harsh oppression of the rebellion throughout the country, effective representation of the Mizrahi independent path as negative and unrewarding, and Almogi’s intense groundwork and his ICs, as well as a growing number of well-rewarded party apparatchiks, especially in the Histadrut. Thus, for example, five Mizrahim were added to the Histadrut’s Central Committee (compared to thirteen Ashkenazim), twenty-eight members of the Histadrut Executive Committee (compared to forty-six Ashkenazim), four managers of Histadrut factories and thirty-one deputy managers (compared to ninety-six Ashkenazi managers and sixty-nine Ashkenazi deputies), thirty-seven senior executives in the Histadrut apparatus (compared to 197 Ashkenazim), and two chairs of workers’ councils (compared to eleven Ashkenazim). Only among chairs of workers’ unions, elected by the workers, did the number of Mizrahim come near that of Ashkenazim—thirty compared to forty in 1970. Among state employees hardly any Mizrahim were appointed, except for minor clerical functions. Others were elected officials, mostly representing MAPAI. The only drastic increase recorded was among police officers: 175 Mizrahi officers were appointed between 1959 and 1969, and a similar rate was recorded among lower-level police employees.²⁶

In this way MAPAI managed to appropriate and absorb any spark of leadership, while Ben-Gurion himself went on publicly attacking any Mizrahi organizing, and heavily laying his considerable weight to eliminate any organizing potential, as illustrated in the following quote about Mizrahi organizing: “This is corruption and careerism of the lowest and most dangerous kind. Those whose Jewish being does not defeat their pride in their foreign country of birth are not worthy to be called Jewish and Israeli.”²⁷

But the fire that started in Wadi A-Salib continued to smolder on the margins but expanded inward during the decade. Apart from the increasing IC activity in the parties, the work of independent organizations continued both as movements and in attempts to form political parties.

More than anything, the 1960s were characterized by a relative silencing of the Mizrahi struggle, at least on the surface, in spite of the deep recession and deepening unemployment. This was a result of an unequivocal message from Ben-Gurion and the government, and of the extensive co-optation of 1950s activists that absorbed protest among large portions of the Mizrahi population. During this time MAPAI also advanced the groundwork of IC Mizrahim and consolidated the “local boss” mechanism already familiar to us from the 1950s transit camps,²⁸ to mediate between the central government and Mizrahi communities, as described by Shlomo Hasson: “On the one hand he functioned as a local advocate, representing neighborhood residents’ interests and needs before the establishment and seeing to the provision of services and resources to his clients. On the other hand he functioned as the head of the political mechanisms—MAPAI the Labor Party, the Histadrut and the City—and advanced their goals in the community.”²⁹ In regard to our subject, the “local boss” functioned as a protest buffer for the Ashkenazi ruling and economic elites. Thus the state transferred the

collective confrontation line into the Mizrahi communities themselves, which became the theaters for internal, sometimes ruthless power struggles.³⁰

Evidence for the silencing of the struggle in the early 1960s is the three-year period of almost total calm to the outside, from the elections in November 1959 through August 1962, with the appearance of the Mizrahi Flier Underground in Jerusalem.³¹ This relative calm endured until the first HaPanterim HaSh'horim demonstration in March 1971. During this period there were few demonstrations and protest events to mention, and a very few independent attempts at organization. Still, radical Mizrahi expressions in the media increased, led by *BaMa'arakha*, a periodical published by the Sephardi Community Committee headed by Eliyahu Eliachar. With the launch of Israeli television in 1968, *BaMa'arakha* was quick to warn the state television managers against using it as yet just another “instrument for perpetuating the social and ethnic divide like the radio.”³² Young journalist Judy Lotz responded to the challenge and produced, early in 1971, a series of short documentaries on the harsh situation in development towns. Presenting the Mizrahims' situation in a visual medium entirely transformed the gaze of Israeli society on the Mizrahims' life of poverty. Now those referred to as “the Second Israel” entered every Ashkenazi living room. And the other way around—television opened the Mizrahims' eyes to closely see the life of well-to-do Ashkenazim in cities and kibbutzim, as well as their way of life in the wider Israeli context. Of course this transformed view was still limited, being seen through the state television's filters, but nevertheless, Israeli television had unintentionally contributed to the incitement of poor Mizrahim by conveying Eurocentric cultural alienation toward Mizrahim, and sharpened awareness of the depth of their economic oppression. This was so most poignantly when Mizrahim watched the enthusiastic and loving welcome afforded by state leaders to new (Ashkenazi) immigrants arriving at the airport from Russia.

Judy Lotz's reports on development towns were almost prophetic, preceding only by a month the first story in *Al HaMishmar* about a group of youths in Mousrara, Jerusalem, who wished to become Israel's “Black Panthers”: “Deserted youths said a few days ago: We want to organize against the Ashkenazi government and the establishment. We will be the state of Israel's ‘Black Panthers.’ When black Jews were hanged in Baghdad the Ashkenazim were silent, but now, when the hanging of white Jews in Russia is planned, they hold hunger strikes and everyone protests.”³³ The writing was clearly inscribed on the wall. Some six weeks later, HaPanterim HaSh'horim began its journey by holding its first demonstration.

Two factors urge the ripening of protest: the Lavon affair and the 1967 war

While the media barely addressed the tough questions of absorption and increasing poverty, two central events in the 1960s drew so much attention as to cast a shadow on the life of Mizrahim, and contributed to the maturation of Mizrahi collective consciousness: the Lavon affair at the beginning of the second decade, and the 1967 war during which Israel conquered extensive Arab territories—the

Sinai, Gaza, the West Bank, and the Golan Heights. The battles lasted only six days, but public and media attention and discussion of the war went on for at least six years, until the next war. Military occupation, the settlements, and their harsh implications are a feature of Israel to this day. The Israeli military victory against the largest and strongest Arab countries aroused a major national euphoria, for which the media served as the central platform for celebration.

The so-called Lavon affair did not, apparently, have to do with the Mizrahim, as argued by Bechor Chetrit, although its tragic heroes were twelve Mizrahi Jews from Egypt, mobilized by the Mossad to arouse a dispute between Egypt and Western powers. But those executed Mizrahi Jews were immediately forgotten and were not the real protagonists of the affair. Those who featured prominently in the Israeli media were Ben-Gurion and Pinhas Lavon, who publicly battled over leadership of MAPAI. Commissions of inquiry, reports, and mutual allegations created the first major breach within MAPAI, which was eventually to result in Ben-Gurion's ousting from the leadership, his retirement from MAPAI, and the formation of RAFI (Israel's Workers List). Ben-Gurion's public brawl with his leadership partners and his eventual demise registered in the Mizrahi consciousness process as "the fall of the big brother"—perceived by Mizrahim, in the wider context of salvation, not only as national leader but as a virtual king. Ben-Gurion was, in the Mizrahims' eyes, a big brother figure who took responsibility for their lives, and ruled them high-handedly. HaPanterim HaSh'horim's renewal of the uprising, expansive in size and radical in force, apparently had to wait for "David, the King of Israel," as many had called him, to leave the scene.

But Ben-Gurion, on his way to the political and geographical desert, put himself to a leadership test by asking for public support as a single leader, drawing on his credit as founder of the state but not as the head of MAPAI. Winning only the ten Knesset seats in 1965 was a bitter disappointment for Ben-Gurion, and marked the end of his political career. This failure is solid evidence of the Mizrahims' vote of no confidence in Ben-Gurion at the first democratic opportunity he provided them with.

Yonathan Shapira argues that Ben-Gurion's demise and the Lavon Affair signify the decline in MAPAI's historical domination through its apparatus.³⁴ Apart from Israeli Palestinians, those who suffered under the domination of MAPAI's apparatus were the Mizrahim. One should also note that in the same elections Menachem Begin led GAHAL (*Gus Herut Liberalim*—the right-wing coalition between the Revisionists and the Liberals) to an unprecedented twenty-six Knesset seats. The decline in Ben-Gurion's power simultaneous with Begin's rise undoubtedly indicates the gradual budding of the Mizrahi Ballot Rebellion against MAPAI that would blossom in 1977. One of the most significant events in tightening Herut's bond with the Mizrahim was the election of David Levi as a Knesset member representing Herut. Levi came directly from Beit She'an, where he had experienced local struggles, as well as disappointment with MAPAI, and became Herut's Mizrahi magnate, and later the Likud's for almost three decades.

Later on we shall see that Ben-Gurion's death in 1973, about a month before the elections, was perhaps the ultimate symbol of the mental liberation of

second-generation Mizrahim from the big brother figure. The outcome of the Yom Kippur War in October 1973, painful and gory, presented MAPAI—the omnipotent mother figure—as helpless and old lady at the end of its days. This was the signal to vote for GAHAL that rose in 1973 to thirty-four Knesset seats, and in 1977 to forty-eight, ending the era known as the “MAPAI state.” But the Mizrahim, as we shall observe, still had a long road of disappointments ahead of them in the struggle for justice and equality.

The second important factor affecting the renewed Mizrahi uprising was the Six-Day War. It was supposed, according to Zionist logic, to increase national unity between Ashkenazim and Mizrahim, by sealing a “blood bond” between them. Indeed, conducted by both government and private media, a mystical air of wonder (the Six-Day Miracle) swept up everyone into a large cloud of national unity. Victory songs by nationalist songwriter Naomi Shemmer and army bands were played in every home, in addition to victory albums produced and published by the large newspapers and distributed to every employee as a holiday gift. Supposedly, the war also “proved” Zionist Eurocentric theories on the superiority of Western over Arab civilization. The implicit message to the Mizrahim was visual and clear, you had better decide what civilization you wish to live in: ours—of technology, science, and strategic sophistication, whose army now rules over vast territories and more than a million Palestinians, and that arouses the admiration and support of the entire Western world; or the civilization, from which you came—of a multitude of Arab POWs led in lines by a few soldiers, of thousands of shoes left behind in the Sinai Desert, of the defeated Arab leaders presented as stupid.

So, the Mizrahim had to relinquish their civilization and identity, forget their poverty, give up their struggle for social justice and embark on a new path of integration and assimilation in the powerful Israeliness of Dayan and Rabin, while accepting the inferiority of their cultural origins as an empirical fact. Moreover, as described above, within three years, as the cloud of euphoria dissipated, the Mizrahim found themselves in the exact same socioeconomic position—spectators of the economic boom around them, participated in mainly by Ashkenazim, and observers of the mass immigration from Russia being welcomed with sympathy and many benefits. But even HaPanterim HaSh'horim's protest that would break out in the wake of this disappointment would not be strong enough to dissipate the Mizrahim's new sense of national belonging following the victory of 1967. It was this sense of national unity that eventually connected the Mizrahim to the Ashkenazi-Zionist collective, the “national camp.”

Apparently the Mizrahim were also artificially pushed up the social scale by the introduction of a new status, lower even than that of Israeli Arabs. Palestinian subjects of the Israeli occupation regime had now become the source of cheap labor for Mizrahi farmers, who could apply to them the same methods of exploitation and economic oppression against which they had struggled. But even this message—trample on someone and feel on top—did not stop the maturation of the Mizrahi consciousness as it approached its major turning point—the HaPanterim HaSh'horim's uprising.

The war's most significant obvious contribution was the temporary pause in security tensions that followed it. This pause, slightly disturbed by the War of Attrition, enabled the young Panterim and thousands of their supporters to break free of enslavement to the national myth according to which security needs always come first. As Charlie Bitton says: "When did HaPanterim HaSh'horim form? HaPanterim HaSh'horim formed right after the War of Attrition with Egypt. That is to say, the security barometer only went down a notch, and instantly there was an outbreak."³⁵ HaPanterim HaSh'horim group, most of whose members did not serve in the military, was totally free of Dayan's single-banner myth. Sa'adia Marciano says:

We demanded to raise the social banner, especially when the security situation is difficult. There was a man named Moshe Dayan, his memory be blessed, who said at the time that it's forbidden to raise both banners (security and social) at the same time, and that was a strong edict in those days. But we embarked on a struggle and said both banners must always be raised, because a weak society, socially and culturally degenerate, suffering from harsh poverty, will never be security strong either.³⁶

Another important point in a state of relative military calm is the diversion of the media and public opinion to domestic issues, or at least a real difficulty for the media to ignore pressing social questions.

Public opinion makers

To provide a full background to the outbreak of radical struggle in the early 1970s one must take into account the role of public personalities and intellectuals, in addition to the media's role in silencing the struggle and those struggling and in stigmatizing them. A close examination of a series of publications and words from Ashkenazi public opinion makers, some twenty years after the arrival of the Mizrahim in the country, reveals one leading motif: the Mizrahim are to blame for their inferior socioeconomic condition. Neither government policy nor the central ideology have caused the dependence and inequality, but they themselves, because of their large families and their cultural backwardness. Let us examine a short representative sample of this motif's recurrence.

From the early 1960s the call was repeatedly heard to reduce the birth rate among Mizrahim, because that was seen as the main cause for their economic dependence. This was the verdict of Eliezer Bergman, who also wanted to punish Mizrahi families for producing too many children by withdrawing their national security allowance: "Birth encouragement should aim not only for quantity but to quality too. Common sense requires that families who are able to give their children of their culture and of their money should be the ones bearing many children. Therefore support should be withdrawn from families reproducing beyond their ability, we have to refrain from supporting the father's primitive pleasures."³⁷ Bergman did not refer to the phenomenon of ultra-orthodox

Ashkenazi families having numerous children by talking of the ultra-Orthodox father's "primitive pleasures." Two years later, in December 1964, the issue was raised in the Knesset in a debate on the "merging of ethnicities." Knesset member Uziel, of the Liberal Party, went so far as to mention the anxiety he and others experienced about the high natural growth rate of the Mizrahim, felt, according to Uziel "by both the people and the leadership."³⁸ The effort to lower the Mizrahim's birth rate by Ashkenazi leaders can now be seen as no less than Ashkenazi altruism. Later, at the height of HaPanterim HaSh'horim's demonstrations, journalist Nathan Donevich proposed from the pages of his paper, *Ha'aretz*, to provide Mizrahim with contraceptives, as well as instruction on how to use them.³⁹

Another aspect on which Ashkenazi public opinion makers concentrated was the danger and potential damage the Mizrahim posed to the state, even before the rise of HaPanterim HaSh'horim. The obvious example is the Ashkenazi book of race theory, *The Ashkenazi Revolution*, by Kalman Katznelson,⁴⁰ a member of the neofascist movement Brith HaBiryoni, who presented the Mizrahim as an inferior cultural race that endangers the supremacy of the Ashkenazi race, and the construction of the Ashkenazi Zionist state. Katznelson called for the establishment of an apartheid regime, imposing strict restrictions on the Mizrahim and withdrawing their political rights. He also objected to mixed marriage and wanted to forbid the use of the Arabic language, as well as the Hebrew language, which is reminiscent of Arabic. In their stead, he asked to establish Yiddish as the national language, because of its high-quality German cultural roots. He expressed a hope that the Mizrahim would choose to leave Israel and proposed that they be encouraged to do so. The book was, in fact, a belated but profound response to the Wadi A-Salib Rebellion. In spite of its glaring extremism, it matched the state's response in the degree of anxiety and hysteria, as shown in the preceding chapter. Katznelson compared the rebellion to the Algerian revolt against the French:

Such an "Algerian situation" was also created, according to Ben-Harouche and his friends, in the state of Israel, and it is the role of the Sephardo-Mizrahim to intensify it by a series of Wadi A-Salib acts, whose outcome would be like that of Algerian Arabs' rebellion. Ben-Harouche is too primitive to spread this discipline among Sephardi clergy book-keepers. He founded his ideas in action, and was followed by learned men and ideologues who formulated them in words. The version currently prevalent among Sephardi clergy is the "Algerian version," maintaining that the vast Sephardo-Mizrahi majority will sweep out the Ashkenazi minority, just as was done to the European minority in Algiers [*sic*]. The current situation, is perceived by Sephardi clergy as an early stage during which the Sephardo-Mizrahi camp must prepare, acquire knowledge and education, occupy positions and weaken the positions of the Ashkenazi enemy. This approach holds much truth, but makes two serious mistakes. The situation in Israel is different from Algiers in that the French in Algiers had a place to go to, whereas the Ashkenazim of Israel have nowhere to emigrate to. Second, and this is the main point, French

zealousness is nothing compared to Ashkenazi zealousness. The Ashkenazim will never surrender and would prefer to see the whole world go up in flames so long as it doesn't give the country over to the Sephardi clergy.⁴¹

A short while later Ben-Gurion issued an order forbidding the distribution of the book, but not before it was nearly sold out. *BaMa'arakha* condemned the book, claiming it expressed the feelings of many Ashkenazim. All Mizrahi politicians and intellectuals criticized the book and condemned it.

Two months later *Salah Shabati*, a film by Efrayim Kishon, premiered. Although the story includes sardonic criticism of the national leadership and the kibbutzim's ideological hypocrisy, it is based on every possible Mizrahi stereotype and quickly became the model for a whole genre of Ashkenazim–Mizrahi films ("Burekas" films), in which the Mizrahi always come out of darkness into the light thanks to their Ashkenazi brethren. In most cases, as in *Salah Shabati*, the story ends with the Mizrahi savage marrying a civilized Ashkenazi woman, or the Mizrahi woman marrying an Ashkenazi man.⁴² There is more, apropos cinema. In December 1965 *Ha'arets* wrote of the Mizrahi youths' cinematic preferences: "The cinematic taste of the youths of *the second Israel* (i.e., Mizrahi) . . . is old westerns, Hercules films . . . and recently spy films and thrillers . . . These films are not a good lesson in citizenship and democracy."⁴³

Anxiety about damage to the superiority of European culture also aroused respectable authors to take a public stand. Haim Hazaz, who made his livelihood writing stereotypical stories on the life of the Yemenites, explicitly wrote in *Ma'ariv* of the need to denigrate Mizrahi culture: "The danger of levantinization. We have to try to deliver European culture to Edot HaMizrah, we can not turn into an Mizrahi people . . . We have gone through two thousand years to become a European Jewish section, it is impossible now to turn back the wheel and accept the culture of Yemen, Morocco, and Iraq."⁴⁴ Kol Israel added to the air of the Mizrahi threat by publishing statistics according to which most charges of criminal and violent behavior are brought against immigrants from North Africa. Again, the dry statistics are accurate, but reference to it is static—as if it emerged of its own accord and stands as an independent fact, as though there were no socioeconomic background to this development.

At that time Shmuel Noah Eisenstadt, the Mizrahi absorption sociologist, warned about a new Mizrahi rebellion: "The danger of a Wadi A-Salib explosion still hangs over our heads," he said, "because the Mizrahi are not happy with the advancement the state provides them, but insistently demand full equality in society and in the economy."⁴⁵ According to Eisenstadt, the demand for justice and equality is a deviation, or a disturbance in the Mizrahim's absorption process. About a year later, in July 1967, Eisenstadt published *Israeli Society: Background, Developments, and Problems*, which became the central social science textbook in Israeli academia. The book continues to present Eisenstadt's main theory of "backwardness and modernization," without any debate until the end of the 1970s, when *Notebooks for Research and Criticism* began to be published.

The first two decades for the Ashkenazi–Mizrahi encounter in a socioeconomic system of oppression and dependence relations is given an interesting summary by Jacob Talmon:

In the face of these difficulties, the people of Israel were fortunate in two vital issues. The Jews of the East have never tried to organize seriously, and certainly not effectively, into a distinct political party. Every attempt of this kind is gravely threatened by demagogues and rabble rousers. In actuality, incidents and riots over twenty years can be counted on one hand. And this is in spite of housing problems and unemployment.⁴⁶

With this Ashkenazi public opinion as a backdrop, one can understand the Ashkenazi surprise and shock by the force of HaPanterim HaSh'horim's uprising, which swept along many Mizrahim over an entire decade.

The uprising of the Black Panthers (HaPanterim HaSh'horim)

In the spring of 1971, in *Shdemot*, a periodical published by the kibbutz movement, appeared a sharp and eloquent article by a young Yemenite intellectual, Yehuda Nini,⁴⁷ "Reflections on the Third Destruction." Nini delivered a harsh reproach against Zionism and the state, blaming them for hypocrisy, fraud, and the Mizrahims' vain sacrifice in the wars. It was Nini who quoted Talmon's words, mentioned above, that expressed satisfaction with the Mizrahims' lack of political response, in spite of their inferior socioeconomic conditions. Yehuda Nini, who wrote during the Panterim's very first days, sensed the oncoming storm and gave answers to Talmon and the Ashkenazi elites. This is how he concluded his presentation:

But, Mr Professor [Talmon], if anyone merits a commendation it is the residents of Mousrara, and of HaTiqva neighborhood, of Nahliel, and Sha'arayim, and many more places. They are to be commended for their patience, and tolerance, and the responsibility they have shown even when one could imagine that something contained and dormant would burst out in rage. I have said, we are still seeking our place, we still have hope that national responsibility will overcome the provincial narrow-mindedness, this Ashkenazi functionaries' "You scratch my back and I'll scratch yours." But should this hope too be lost, I trust that those responsible among us will try to take, forcefully and with little care in the choice of means, what we consider that we legally deserve. A moment will come, or an hour, when too severe an outbreak will take place, too brave and too impertinent, and whoever will consider this let him know that these are the visible stages: asking to be partners; demanding to be partners; and after being rejected—refusing to be partners, as in "We shall have no part."⁴⁸

At the time Nini was writing, the Mizrahi struggle was just prior to the stage of “demanding to be partners”—like the stage entered by the radical struggle of the civil rights movement in the U.S. after Martin Luther King’s assassination: radicalization, a turn to stronger means following a stark disappointment, and, mainly, the formation of the Black Panther movement.

One should note that the period preceding the uprising in Israel is the height of civil protest in the U.S. and in Europe, which included not only the black struggle in the United States but also the student rebellion and the rise of feminism. These movements bypassed Israel, which was immersed in militaristic euphoria following the conquests of 1967. The nationalist–patriotic reality in Israel was the absolute opposite of the air of civil rebellion in the U.S. and in Europe, with strong resistance to the Vietnam War at its center. When youngsters in California and Paris sang peace and protest songs, Israeli youngsters were marching in victory parades wearing uniform and singing songs of praise for the military and the occupation until HaPanterim arrived.

The immediate background

To the general background of economic, social, political, and cultural conditions over the entire decade should be added the immediate conditions for the outbreak of protest in the Mousrara neighborhood in Jerusalem, led by ten young men. Mousrara had been, from 1948 until 1967, a frontier neighborhood, bordering on East Jerusalem, which was under Jordanian rule. The old Arab neighborhood was populated by 650 families of Mizrahi immigrants, mostly from North Africa, and a few from Iraq, who suffered severe security tension through living next to a hostile border. But the security tension was marginal compared to the internal socioeconomic tension. Only after the occupation of East Jerusalem in 1967 put an end to its frontier status did this domestic tension rise to the surface, as explained by Chief Superintendent Tourjeman, deputy commander of the Jerusalem district during the protest: “It was obvious that as the security tension would subside, questions would focus on internal affairs. It’s a natural legitimate situation. Calm at the borders would bring social issues to the headlines, and the public would be more occupied by internal issues.” He also summarized the essence of the protest: “And in such a situation it was obvious that social and political factors would use the social hardship to attack the establishment. For it is obvious that in a different security situation these factors could not draw public interest.”⁴⁹

Following are some basic data, an introduction to Mousrara’s socioeconomic profile, summarily representing the general Mizrahi socioeconomic profile presented above.⁵⁰ I will focus on housing, livelihood, and education.

Housing

About two-thirds of the residents were accommodated in Arab houses, divided into small splintered apartments by various patches and improvisations; the rest were accommodated in projects for recent transit camp evacuees, which were

supposed to resolve a housing problem but created another in its stead. Housing density was on average 2.15 persons per room, compared to 1.4 in Jewish Jerusalem. About half the apartments in the Arab houses lacked at least one vital room: kitchen, toilet, or shower. About a quarter of the apartments had only one room, and very few had three rooms, not even in the new projects. After the war, the entire neighborhood became highly desirable real estate, on which the Mizrahi residents had no ownership or bargaining position; most of them rented from public housing corporations for about a quarter of their income.

Livelihood

A third of family heads in the neighborhood were unemployed. Of those employed, 75 percent had unskilled low-wage jobs, twice the national rate. In 1970 an average Mousrara family's income was 810 liras a month, compared to a national average of 1,040 liras. But the real gap was wider, because the average Mousrara family was larger—4.8 persons on average, compared to 3.6 among the Jewish population in Jerusalem. According to the national average, 330 liras were needed to support one person, but in Mousrara a child had to be raised on about 150 liras. As a result of this harsh economic situation, 180 Mousrara families surrendered and had to live on meager welfare support—160 liras a month per family, barely enough to support one child.

Education

Education in the neighborhood was the chief signifier for second- and third-generation victims of the socioeconomic oppression relations. Only 56 percent of adolescents (ages 14–17) attended any education structure. Astoundingly, 16 percent of those still attended very low-quality primary schools. More than 20 percent of children of primary school age were removed from the neighborhood to various institutions run by the Ministry of Education, the city, and the welfare services. Not one resident was a student in an institution of higher education.

The media, the police, and all researchers have emphasized the marginal and “criminal”⁵¹ element among the Mousrara youths that were to become HaPanterim HaSh'horim. I wish to limit this emphasis and present its other aspect—these youths being the second-generation victims of a socioeconomic oppression. More importantly, it was not the “criminality” of Charlie Bitton, Sa'adia Marciano, Reuben Abarjel, Kokhavi Shemesh, Dani Sa'il, and others that was at the center of attention, but their advanced Mizrahi social awareness and their ability to spark a Mizrahi uprising, after which Israel was never again to become the way it had been, not even in the eyes of the dominant Ashkenazi Zionist hegemony.

Immediate factors contributing to the outbreak of protest

This harsh reality of inequality has to be viewed in the context of three ostentatious, alienating, and provocative factors. First was veteran Ashkenazi Jerusalem,

a short walking distance from Mousrara. HaPanterim HaSh'horim's rhetoric abounds with comparisons with such neighborhoods as Rehavia, and Bait HaKerem. The second factor is massive government investments in the environs of Mousrara but not in the neighborhood itself, as part of the speedy process of forming new Jewish neighborhoods in the East of the city after the 1967 conquests. One of the battles waged by Edi Malka, an independent protest activist who worked parallel to the Panterim, was against being evacuated with his brother after the war, from a structure in the Yemin Moshe neighborhood that they had used as an art studio and craft workshop, to another structure used by their family as a sales kiosk. In protesting against the evacuation, the Malka brothers argued that Yemin Moshe was evacuating all its Mizrahi residents, having defined them as trespassers and having arrested them, and handing the neighborhood over to rich Ashkenazim and American Jews who remodeled the houses and transformed the place into a world-class luxury area. The third provocative ostentatious factor, which highlighted more than anything else the policy of inequality in absorbing immigrants still followed by the government, even twenty years later, was the absorption policy applied to the new mass migration from Russia in the early 1970s. Mousrara youths could see on TV the loving enthusiastic welcome afforded the Ashkenazi newcomers. Additionally, a New Immigrants Benefits Law was passed to assist the Ashkenazi immigrants, providing them with large and cheap loans and mortgages, an exemption from customs when buying electronic products and cars, as well as a long line of benefits and privileges that paved their way to quick absorption among the well-to-do classes in Israeli society. The inevitable comparison between the absorption of Russians in the 1970s and that of their parents was a basic element in HaPanterim HaSh'horim's arguments, and following them to the arguments of Mizrahim in Israel, who demanded a retroactive matching of their absorption conditions to those of the Russian immigrants, a demand that has not been accepted to this day.

Finally, the factor that drove Mousrara youths to organizing was contact with and instruction from Mizrahi social workers working for the City of Jerusalem (but aware and independent in their positions), particularly Avner Ammiel and Shabtai Amedi, who urged the youths to stand up for their community rights, among them the opening of a youth club in the neighborhood. In fact, the first demonstration was meant to present local demands to pull the neighborhood out of oppressive conditions, but the young activists' developed awareness was already engaging in general Israeli and even universal issues. The government realized that, and therefore it attributed great importance to the new organization even during its infancy.

The government's attitude and the police's heightened initial reaction certainly played a part in provoking the protest. Haim Hanegbi commended the government for encouraging HaPanterim HaSh'horim's protest: "The moment you arrest all the activists, even before the demonstration, and the demonstration is held under the banner 'Release the Detainees,' who had not existed the day before the police created them, it turned from a local issue to a national issue. Who knows, it might have ended as a local, or neighborhood story."⁵²

The outbreak of protest could not linger any longer because social awareness was at work for a long time, and it is the nature of awareness to bloom and evolve into action. The central ideological factor in the maturation of the Mousrara youths' class consciousness was the encounter with the youths of Matzpen, such as Haim Hanegbi, Shimshon Vigodar, and Meir Vigodar, who later participated in all the movement's actions and were responsible for the participation of hundreds of Matzpen youths in the many demonstrations.

Matzpen (Compass), a veteran organization of the Left, was founded in 1962 by a group of Communist Party members who had left the party because of their criticism of Soviet Communist policy in the Middle East. Among the founders were Moshe Machoever, Akiva Or, Jabra Nicola, Oded Pilavski, and Hanegbi. The organization went through a crisis and a split following the 1967 war: Uri Avneri and some of the HaOlam HaZeh group considered the war unavoidable, whereas others, such as Shalom Cohen, objected to the occupation from the very first moment. Later some young activists quit Matzpen, including Shimshon Vigodar, Yigal Noah, Rafi Brook, and Hanegbi, because they could not convince the organization to work in the Mizrahi neighborhoods in Jerusalem. These youths came to the poor neighborhoods, including Mousrara, where mutual exchange with HaPanterim HaSh'horim group lifted Matzpen members out of their political isolation.

Frequent encounters at the Ta'amon coffeeshop and elsewhere, listening to rock music and protest songs by British and American bands, reading revolutionary texts, and smoking together created a sort of belated local bubble of the rebellious 1960s in Europe and in the U.S. These encounters not only enriched the Mousrara youths but also created an affinity between the groups. Matzpen members supported the Panterim activities all along. Haim Hanegbi names the reason for this successful connection: "Our collaboration succeeded because we came to them clean! With no patronizing."⁵³ Matzpen members, children of good families, as Shimshon Vigodar put it,⁵⁴ contributed their connections and their brief experience in Matzpen to organizing demonstrations, writing fliers, and mobilizing support, resources, and participants such as members of leftist student cells on the Jerusalem campus of the Hebrew University.

But all that had gone before, and all that came after, belongs exclusively to HaPanterim HaSh'horim, who changed the Israeli agenda, as observed by Ehud Sprinzak as early as 1973: "It is important to note that neither the City of Jerusalem's social workers nor the groups of the extreme Left initiated and established the Panterim organization. The organization was formed on its own, out of a personal choice of its members, and it retained the movement and carefully maintained its independence from the start."⁵⁵

Chronology of an uprising

In *Democracy and Disorder*, Tarrow argues that the protest cycle begins with an organized act of collective confrontation from within an institutional framework, and only from there does a cycle of mobilization and challenge evolve. This

cycle is used by the leaders of the social movement to radicalize the struggle, driving the system to reactions and counterreactions until the cycle dies down, as a result of both violent oppression and the institutionalization of the protest movement. According to Tarrow, protest only develops when rage and frustration, as well as political opportunity, are well noticed. This protest succeeds in moving to the stage of a confrontation cycle only when the breaches created by the confrontation are deep enough and the government's behavior creates an opportunity for mass protest.⁵⁶

As we shall see with HaPanterim HaSh'horim, the first act of confrontation was born out of regular organization assisted by the city's social workers, but the harsh social background and the government's reaction to the organizing were what led to a radicalization that started an enduring cycle of protest actions. The first act of confrontation in Wadi A-Salib was also organized by a formal parliamentary-oriented movement—the Union of Jews from North Africa.

Not every act of confrontation is a protest, according to Tarrow. In the light of Tarrow's perception, I will present the protest cycle chronology according to the events of collective confrontation generated by HaPanterim HaSh'horim. In surveying the protest events, we will also discern a repertoire of collective action, as categorized by Charles Tilly. Tilly maintains that protest movements, whatever they may be, share a common repository of collective actions, each appropriate for a certain goal, just as each individual has an action appropriate to him/her. Tilly argues further, as we will see in the case of the Panterim and general Mizrahi protest movements, that in every period the movement will use actions available to it, not necessarily those pointed to by "theory" as the most effective. This arsenal of protest actions ranges from moderate actions such as signing petitions, going on strike, and dispatching a delegation with a list of demands, through to more aggressive actions such as holding public demonstrations and rallies, as well as more radical actions such as occupying sites, but only rarely, argues Tilly, will protesters opt for extreme violence.⁵⁷

After presenting the protest chronology, I will discuss the movement's organization and the forming of its ideology, public opinion after the protest, and HaPanterim HaSh'horim's influence on Israeli society and the state. Finally, I will present the radical effects axis with the movement's entry into the Mizrahi and the general political systems.

The first period—January 1971 through December 1973⁵⁸

I wish to mark the beginning of HaPanterim HaSh'horim's protest as the moment it publicly announced its decision to rebel and its intention to be Israel's Black Panthers, in a brief report in *Al HaMishmar*,⁵⁹ a rather marginal publication in the context of Israeli media. The report is not important in itself, but its sharply radical content—especially the use of two words, "Black Panthers"—linked Israeli reality to a world of connotations with the oppression of black people in the U.S. and with their struggle. The choice of these words for the movement's name was

a provocation, a protest, and a challenge to the Israeli government. Many in the state's leadership, then headed by Golda Meir, elaborated on the damage caused to Israel as a result of the borrowing of a name from black people in the U.S. Prime Minister Meir, in her meeting with a delegation of HaPanterim HaSh'horim in April 1971, reproached them for borrowing their name from the American Black Panthers, whom she claimed were anti-Semitic—a false accusation. The story in *Al HaMishmar* led many other newspaper reporters to pose questions to city and police spokespeople, thus alerting them to the group's existence. Perhaps, had the group chosen a name such as “Black Jewish Lions,” as Menachem Begin proposed to Sa'adia Marciano,⁶⁰ no one would have been so excited by their first appearance in the media. Kokhavi Shemesh says in retrospect:

The first proposal was Sa'adia Marciano's, to call it HaPanterim HaSh'horim (the Black Panthers), and the idea was to scare Golda. They told us she can't sleep at night because of this name, so we said, “There, we've made it, this was what we wanted to achieve.” The fear it put in Golda was immense, the name itself, with which we transformed, in fact, the whole discourse that had existed between protest groups and the establishment at the time.⁶¹

Only a month after the signing of ceasefire accords with Egypt, and the end of the War of Attrition, HaPanterim embarked on the path of protest. Its breakthrough into Israeli consciousness was indeed, as noted by all researchers, after its first demonstration, on March 3, 1971.⁶² Under the influence of community workers and leftist students it had met, HaPanterim HaSh'horim group decided to hold a demonstration outside city hall in Jerusalem, and filed a request for a permit with the police. The Jerusalem police passed on the request to national police headquarters, accompanied by a negative recommendation. Police headquarters chose to involve the minister of police, Shlomo Hillel, who decided to consult Prime Minister Meir. Meir convened an urgent meeting with the mayor of Jerusalem, Tedi Kolek, as well as the minister of police, and the police commissioner. Their decision was unequivocal: “Reject the permit request and carry out preventative arrests of the young leaders, together with two Matzpen leaders that supported the demonstration.” Two nights prior to the demonstration, as it was published in fliers, all the young members of the group, seventeen altogether, were taken into preventative custody without any charges together with two leaders of Matzpen. Among the official reasons: “The Panterim are habitual criminals who will not be able to maintain the permit conditions.”⁶³ HaPanterim HaSh'horim immediately published a flier condemning the rejection of the application for a permit: “What right does the minister of police have to deny members of his community the ability to demonstrate for rights they have been deprived of for twenty-three years. . . . Ministers will ride a Karmel [car], and we will not have running water at home. . . . [Signed:] Mousrara-Harlem.” Interestingly, during their detention, the police tried to use the “carrot and stick” approach—the neighborhood rabbi was called to the station and the police

commander asked him to convince the detainees to cancel the demonstration, and be released in return. The rabbi listened to the detainees, learned of the goals of their struggle, and ended up encouraging them and giving them blessings for success. Sa'adia Marciano recalls: "Everything was legal. They started it. First they came and tried to convince us in so many ways not to hold the demonstration, but nothing they tried did the job. Before dawn they arrested us. Went from house to house, like in Russia, and took us away."⁶⁴ Charlie Bitton adds: "We only asked for a permit to demonstrate and they came and arrested us, collected us one by one, out of bed, and took us to jail."⁶⁵

The police issued a press release announcing the arrest of HaPanterim HaSh'horim together with Matzpen members, intending to link the Panterim with an anti-Zionist left-wing organization that had a very negative public image. This political stigma, with the criminal stigma, persisted throughout the Panterim's struggle as a tactic to isolate them. Moreover, it was intended to scare them, and dissuade them from holding demonstrations and protests in the future. But these drastic measures not only missed their target they also had an opposite effect: they encouraged and urged further organizing. The arrested youths realized they had touched on a very big issue, as explained by Haim Hanegbi: "People began to interpret the fear: high up, in what was known as the 'high windows,' of the authorities and in government, they know the dimensions of poverty and discrimination much more than we do, who come from below. Or they would not be so scared. They were acting hysterically."⁶⁶

At the designated time of the planned demonstration it became clear that HaPanterim HaSh'horim had passed the first leadership test with the government and with the community. While they were in jail, the remaining activists and their families carried out the demonstration as scheduled, in spite of police interdiction. Reuben Abarjel, who was not one of those arrested, and who participated in organizing the demonstration, as well as delivering the keynote address, recalls: "The first demonstration, in spite of the arrests, was when all the guys were in jail, although very few of us were left outside [jail], our parents showed up, our cousins showed up, our families showed up."⁶⁷ The flier calling residents to demonstrate was distributed, and some three hundred demonstrators gathered outside city hall, including numerous students and a handful of intellectuals. The participation of Ashkenazi students and leftist Ashkenazi intellectuals from the very first demonstration was the Black Panthers' chief starting advantage over the delegitimized Wadi A-Salib Rebellion. This is the text of the first flier:

We, a group of screwed-up youths, address all those who have had enough:
 Enough with no work.
 Enough sleeping ten in a room.
 Enough looking at the projects constructed for the *olim*.
 Enough taking jail and brutality every other day.
 Enough with government broken promises.
 We've had enough disenfranchisement.

We've had enough discrimination.

How long will they give to us and we will keep silent.

Alone we won't do anything—Together we will make it.

Demonstrating for our right to be like all other citizens in this state.

The demonstration will be held on Wednesday, at 3:30 pm, in Jaffa Street outside City Hall.

Messages in this flier are not essentially different from earlier expressions of protest since the Wadi A-Salib Rebellion, and yet it contains indications of the approaching confrontation with the government and with the police. The demonstrators were dispersed by the police without any special incidents, except for Mayor Kolek's famous dismissive call: "Get off the lawn, punks." The next day all newspapers reported on the demonstration as well as on the preventive detentions. HaPanterim HaSh'horim learned from this coverage, and from the police's scared reaction, that its claims and its level of organization had a great and powerful potential. After the detainees were released and until the first major significant demonstration in May, the Panterim concentrated on organizing, mobilizing members, and giving interviews to the media. As part of that effort, they asked to meet Prime Minister Golda Meir. After a prolonged refusal, and after a symbolic hunger strike by the Wailing Wall, Meir finally agreed to meet them, a little more than a month after she gave the order to arrest them and stop them from organizing.

The meeting with Golda

On April 13, 1971, Prime Minister Meir consented to HaPanterim HaSh'horim's request and met a delegation of five in her office in Jerusalem. Throughout the meeting Meir referred to them as individual cases and was consistently disrespectful to their position as leaders of a protest movement, yet she offered them cigarettes from her personal pack. She asked about their family situation, their socioeconomic situation, their education, place of work, criminal record, and the like. More than anything else she interrogated them about the movement's name, which she claimed belonged to an anti-Semitic group of American black people. When Sa'adia Marciano told the prime minister that in spite of having been born in Israel he has a heavy Moroccan accent, she replied, referring to her heavy American accent: "So what? Is my accent any better?" Marciano responded: "Give me your [American] accent, and I'll manage."⁶⁸ Meir promised to look into their claims and asked them to be patient and to stop the demonstrations. But on their way back from the meeting they heard her on radio, describing the meeting in a phrase that was to become a byword in the Mizrahi struggle: "They aren't nice." Below is an excerpt from the historical conversation. Present at the meeting were Minister Yigal Alon, Minister M. Hazani, and Panterim representatives Yaakov Elbaz, Rafi Marciano, Sa'adia Marciano, David Levi, and Reuben Abarjel. After Meir interrogated Abarjel purely about his personal situation, she turned to the question that was uppermost on her mind:

G. MEIR: Where did you get the name [HaPanterim HaSh'horim, the Black Panthers]?

R. ABARJEL: By ourselves. We sat and thought, and some members have together concluded . . . that people like us, or our Sephardim have tried all sorts of names by themselves, or Iraqis from various parties have tried this and no one listened to them. They said here's another one who wants to get to the Knesset at the expense of the miserable and the disenfranchised. We have no chance to get to the Knesset. We suffered, and we saw everything that we have gone through, since we came to live on the border twenty-two years ago. Since coming to the country we live under the same conditions to this day. My family has ten members, and seven of my brothers are in correctional institutions. It did not happen to us in Morocco, and would not have occurred that my sister should become a street girl.

G. MEIR: How did you reach this name?

R. ABARJEL: There is an organization called "Qattamon for Qattamon" and some other organizations were formed until this day [with other names], and they have all disappeared, or fell into comma. This name is striking and arousing.

G. MEIR: Where did you get this name?

R. ABARJEL: It's a striking name.

G. MEIR: You did not hear of this name somewhere else?

R. ABARJEL: We know they support the PLO and they are against Jews.

G. MEIR: So why did you take this name?

S. MARCIANO: Because it gives us the edge, to make the noise around us, and so there'll be a response to our actions.

R. ABARJEL: About the name, we may have forty percent of the ideology of the Black Panthers in the U.S., who were also disenfranchised, and screwed-up, the fact is they are violent—we are not.

G. MEIR: They are also anti-Semites.

R. ABARJEL: We are dedicated to the state, and patriots, and we love it. The very fact that we are aware of a problem that limits our children and us, and want a child who has to go to the army, could be healthy and worthy to serve in the army, and has to be nurtured accordingly—proves it. I, due to the fact I had nothing to eat, and I'd roam the streets, and go to the car market, to steal a tomato . . .

(G. MEIR: Your father did not work?)

R. ABARJEL: In 1952 he became disabled. We came from Morocco in 1948, and were delayed in Algiers because of the war here. When that ended we arrived in Pardes Katz. My father was a plumber in Morocco. Here he did not work at first. We were in Pardes Hannah, and sat there for several months. Our parents grew bitter and sought a place to work, and we found a neighborhood in Jerusalem named Mousrara, where no people lived. We squatted, a few families, in that neighborhood. Fifty meters from there was Shivtey Israel Street. We renovated the buildings and lived there. My father entered houses on the border, and took what the Arab refugees left behind. One day part of a roof that collapsed fell on his body, and broke his ribs, and he hasn't worked since that time.⁶⁹

Sa'adia Marciano, the movement's dominant leader, recalls the rest of this conversation:

All her questions were on personal matters, so she could publish the protocol afterwards and tell the public, "See what they came to me for". Finally we burst out and told her "Enough asking us where do you work and where does your father work, we came about problems of hardship, and poverty, and discrimination, and you are the prime minister, and this happens here in this country!" From here she gave the order—just break their bones. And then the General Security Service, and the Mossad, and the police rule started, they had spent millions on all these banana republic, and totalitarian regime methods, they did everything against us.⁷⁰

The meeting with Prime Minister Golda Meir shows us two main points. First, Abarjel's and Marciano's high degree of awareness regarding the struggle's universal context, as well as their firmness with the prime minister. Second, the prime minister's profound alienation from the reality of inequality and of the immigrants' hardship and her consistent denial of the state's responsibility for the Mizrahims' situation. Only Meir's alienation from the Palestinian issue and her denial of the existence of the Palestinian people were greater than her alienation from the oppression of the Mizrahim under her rule, as she explained in an interview to the French newspaper *Le Monde*: "They brought with them the discrimination, which was applied to them in the countries of their origin."⁷¹

HaPanterim HaSh'horim did not expect much of this meeting, but they gained sweeping attention by all the media and as a result began preparing for a really large demonstration. Eventually the group drove Golda Meir to appoint a commission to examine the state of poverty, and thereby indirectly admit the existence of a policy of inequality toward the Mizrahim. Another accomplishment, relevant to the present discussion was HaPanterim HaSh'horim's direct confrontation with the prime minister, which took the collective confrontation several steps forward.

"The night of the Panterim"

On May 18, 1971, about a month after the meeting with Golda Meir, HaPanterim HaSh'horim launched a lengthy and tumultuous mass demonstration. At its peak, according to various estimates, five thousand to seven thousand protesters participated in what became known as "The night of the Panterim." More than anything else, this demonstration impressed on public opinion HaPanterim HaSh'horim's uncompromising radical image. The demonstration also revealed the government's determination to break down the Panterim through police action, by using uncompromising brutality (water jets, clubs, horse-mounted policemen, and mass arrests). HaPanterim had been given a permit which limited the

demonstration to the Davidka Square area, which police on foot and on horseback surrounded. At about 4.30 p.m., after a few speeches, demonstration leaders decided to rally the protesters down Jaffa Street, toward Zion Square, thus blocking the city center's thoroughfares. The police, who attempted at first to stop the flow of thousands of protesters, decided to let them gather in Zion Square. There they were addressed by the police chief, using a bullhorn, who told the audience that the demonstration was illegal and that they must disperse. After the protesters failed to obey the third call, the chief ordered his forces to disperse the protesters by force, just as they were about to deliver speeches and hand out fliers. The police used clubs, and then water hoses, and the clash began as the protesters were reinforced by HaPanterim HaSh'horim groups from Tel Aviv and other cities, and many students from Matzpen and SI-YAH (*Smol Yisraeli Hadash*—New Israeli Left) leftist groups. Additionally, and as was to become a standard in Panterim demonstrations, large numbers of passersby spontaneously joined the demonstration in solidarity after recognizing friends, relatives, and neighbors among the demonstrators. What followed resembled street fights that Israel had never known in a Jewish civilian context. HaPanterim HaSh'horim were not deterred by the police brutality and organized for a defensive attack. Recurring waves of protesters hurled rocks and bottles at the angry policemen. During about seven hours of clashes the social struggle banners of the demonstration seemed to have evaporated. Only one call echoed through the streets: "Police state!" The police eventually managed to suppress the thousands of protesters by persistently employing force. They also arrested about a hundred protesters, including most of the leaders of the Panterim—a few managed to evade the police. Scores of protesters and officers alike were injured and needed treatment. Among the police, a senior officer, the commander of the Scout Force, was injured.

In response to the violence of the police and the numerous arrests, three HaPanterim HaSh'horim activists threw Molotov cocktails that very night, according to the police. One was thrown into the yard of the police headquarters in the Russian Compound, landing on a gasoline repository but failing to set it on fire. Another was thrown next to Attara café on Ben-Yehuda Street, and a third landed next to the old Egged bus terminal on Jaffa Street. Use of Molotov cocktails signified a serious escalation in HaPanterim HaSh'horim's means of violent confrontation, resulting in increased readiness among state leaders to eliminate the movement.

On the same night, and in the following days, the media was captivated; all newspapers published headlines and photographic stories. For the first time, Mizrahi protest made the front page, and via Israeli television news the images reached homes throughout Israel. The wide coverage, as well as the interest of foreign media networks, encouraged the Panterim leaders to keep up their determined struggle.

Two fliers, of importance to our discussion, were distributed during the events: the first on the day of the demonstration and the second immediately after it. The first flier is a list of elaborate comprehensive demands for the immediate correction of the inequality and injustice against which the protest was aimed:

- 1 Immediate elimination of poverty housing.
- 2 Families with 6 children or more to be given apartments of 100 sq.m. according to their social conditions or economic situation.
- 3 Young couples to be given housing in a way that would enable them to build their future appropriately and not under the pressure of a heavy mortgage, under the same conditions given to new immigrants [e.g., from Russia].
- 4 The cessation of the construction of concentrations, in the form of "A Black Ghetto" as in Qattamonim and Shmuel Hanavi.
- 5 No person or persons to be taken out of an apartment he or they inhabit or squat unless an alternative apartment is provided.
- 6 Social Security money will only be given to needy families and to the poor, and an increase of twenty percent from the current sum to be guaranteed.
- 7 The public housing institutions of the Ministry of Housing, such as Prazot and Amidar, must be canceled in order to cut short the *via dolorosa* of the deprived citizen.
- 8 Nursery schools for children up to the age of four to integrate children of both strata [i.e., ethnicities] – attendance compulsory and free of charge.
- 9 Provision of free kindergartens for children up to the age of six.
- 10 Free primary school, high school, and university for low income families.⁷²
- 11 The welfare office must support pupils from families with many children.
- 12 Build new schools and kindergartens, provide new equipment and labs to all schools, especially to schools that have so far been neglected.
- 13 Build new clubs with sophisticated equipment without a difference from the clubs in wealthy neighborhoods.
- 14 Youth clubs will be supervised by the neighborhood committee, and instructors will be trained, in order to understand the youth and its problems.⁷³

The flier, evidently, focuses on the micro issues of the life of dependence and economic inequality. It does not contain the general ideological statements that appeared later. The most radical terms in the flier's introduction are "ethnic discrimination," and "slums." The words "Mizrahim" (or "*Edot HaMizrah*") and "Ashkenazim" are not mentioned. This conciliatory language does not indicate an intention of violence for its own sake, as the police were later to accuse the demonstrators.

But the second flier, distributed the next day, shows no such linguistic restraint:

We address the public to give us full support to stop our persecution by the police! Since yesterday in the demonstration, when the police presented the entire public with its ugly face, when its troopers, armed from head to toe, attacked the demonstrators *after we got a legal permit to demonstrate*, without distinguishing demonstrators from passers by, children, and women, when it hurt innocent people with its water jets, and damaged people and property—since yesterday we have been under police persecution: Women, children, and members of the organization are brutally beaten up. Leaders of the organization

are arbitrarily arrested. The police takes its revenge for yesterday's shame from us. (Emphasis in original)

This is followed by a series of demands, focusing on the results of the clashes with the police; the language is much stronger and is accompanied by many exclamation marks:

Immediate release of the detainees! Stop the police campaign of arbitrary arrests! Allow the entrance of doctors and lawyers to care for the victims! We demand the formation of a government Commission of Inquiry to investigate the policemen's stepping out of their line of duty, and their being put to trial for their crimes! We demand of the police to stop the racist policy! We call upon the Sephardi policemen to stop collaborating with the Ashkenazi oppressors! We place protest vigils outside the police in the Russian Compound until all the prisoners are free!⁷⁴

The innovation in this flier is, as mentioned above, the use of strong radical language, and in particular the unmistakable phrases: "the racist policy" and "the Ashkenazi oppressors."

A no less important drama took place through the night inside the police station. The heads of police and of the security services realized that the might of their "stick," the force they had employed, instead of scaring and deterring had had the opposite effect: it gave a boost to HaPanterim HaSh'horim's determination and provided it with additional supporters, extensive public attention, and a presence on the Israeli government's agenda. Kokhavi Shemesh recalls: "The establishment realized there's a group here that's not going to be aligned, that cannot be disciplined as they desire. We came and said 'we want the whole pie. Don't want a piece of the pie, we want to partake in the distribution.'"⁷⁵ On the night of the arrests, a "carrot" was also used. Shaul Ben-Simhon, a veteran IC of Moroccan origin, chair of the Moroccan Expatriates Alliance Organization (MEAO) and a member of the Histadrut's coordinating committee, was urgently called to the police station. Golda Meir had assigned Ben-Simhon the task of co-opting the Panterim. The idea was to offer them a merger with the MEAO, on the condition that they disband their organization and immediately cancel all planned actions. In addition to the merger, they were promised many benefits, jobs, resolution of individual problems, and, of course, release on bail directly after signing the merger agreement. At last, some Panterim leaders signed the draft merger agreement. Ben-Simhon convened a press conference to present his accomplishments, during which Edi Malka chastised him for eliminating HaPanterim HaSh'horim. However, after being released from jail, the Panterim disowned the agreement as though it had never been and went on organizing for the continued struggle. Kokhavi Shemesh summarizes this point:

Our first rebellion was against the Mizrahi (organizations). We saw them as enemies. We saw them as an instrument used by the establishment to

oppress all Mizrahim, to divide and rule. There was Brit Yotzey Morocco, Irgun Yotzey Morocco, Irgun Tzfon Africa, and that's just to mention the Moroccans. There's also Irgun Yotzey Iraq, and Irgun Yotzey Bavel, and Irgun Paras and Irgun the devil and Irgun Hillel and Irgun Shamai . . . All these organizations had the function to oppress the Mizrahim, bring them in line. It scared the establishment that we stood up and said, All these organizations should be thrown on the scrap heap.⁷⁶

The next day, May 19, 1971, at the Labor Party bureau meeting, with Shaul Ben-Simhon seated next to her, Golda Meir condemned the demonstration and accused HaPanterim HaSh'horim of damaging the people's unity: "The state of Israel's strength is in our unity, and there can be no worse or more horrible disaster than division, then I fear we approach the danger point." Charlie Bitton comments on this danger: "How did Golda tell us boys we should have remained nice? The moment we stopped being nice boys we became a danger in the eyes of the Ashkenazi establishment."⁷⁷

The massive tumultuous demonstration set the protest cycle in motion, and many small actions kept taking place almost daily, until the next massive demonstration in August. The following description is an exemplary sample.

A petition to free HaPanterim HaSh'horim

On May 20, 1971, students supporting the struggle collected signatures on the Jerusalem campus of the Hebrew University for a petition that read: "Free all detainees immediately without exception! Form an independent Commission of Inquiry to investigate the police crimes! Punishment to the givers of orders and to those responsible for police brutality! End the campaign of violence against HaPanterim HaSh'horim and their supporters!" On that day Reuben Abarjel wrote a very sharp flier, which he signed with his initials, calling for an escalation of the struggle:

We shall not rely on empty words and fiddlesticks, various promises have been made but not kept. It is time to launch an open struggle against the police rule and the submissiveness of the powers that be, headed by Golda who can not see the social gap. We demand a Commission of Inquiry to investigate the police attacks and the brutal behavior against our organization. We will react in the same way that the police will treat us.

***Dvar HaPanterim HaSh'horim*, issue no. 1**

In June 1971 the first issue of the movement's magazine was published. This is the first documented use of the unequivocal radical terms "resistance" and "uprising" in the Mizrahi–Ashkenazi context, by HaPanterim HaSh'horim in describing their activity:

Our organization was formed on a backdrop of accumulated bitterness since the first European settlers arrived in the country. Our organization is the first manifestation of the Jews of the Middle East's resistance. A resistance whose history is as long as our acquaintance with the Jews of Ashkenaz. The current uprising, which is growing and spreading by the day, gathering force and momentum, is a result of a process that has peaked in two areas: A. The extent of the gap in all realms of life. B. Our growing numbers to 65 percent of the Jewish population. The uprising results from the tension between these two facts.⁷⁸

HaPanterim HaSh'horim also published in their magazine some of the many letters of support sent to them and to newspaper editors, such as the following letter, sent by high school students in Tiberias three days after the mass demonstration in May, evidence that the message quickly traveled a long distance: "To HaPanterim HaSh'horim, We, a group of eleventh grade students in (humanities) in HaGalil high school in Tiberias, hereby express our solidarity with your struggle to eliminate ethnic discrimination and poverty. However, in our opinion your struggle would gain more popularity if your actions were not violent, but be legal actions." Indeed, the next Panterim action involved no violation of law and order.

The quiet demonstration

On July 5, 1971, HaPanterim HaSh'horim from all around the country held a quiet demonstration on Davidka Square in Jerusalem, with a permit, in co-operation with the police, and with the participation of other organizations of the Left, without either clashes or use of force by either side. About thirty central Panterim activists opened the demonstration, and were later joined by hundreds of supporters from Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, as well as the Haifa, Beersheba, and Beit She'an branches, among others. About three thousand protesters altogether finally gathered on the square; of them, five hundred were members of the organization and their supporters. Kokhavi Shemesh recalls:

We arrived, about thirty Panthers, carrying thirty black flags. We gathered on Davidka Square with our flags, and suddenly all the groups began to appear. You should have seen Davidka Square. I stood on top, where the old mortar was [a war memorial the square is named after], looking around and having fun—black, red, white and blue, flags, banners that read, "women's rights", "free abortion", everything. It was one of the Panthers' large demonstrations.

The protesters held banners against discrimination, for the abolition of poverty, and called on Golda Meir to resign. Their speeches were against the creation of two peoples, the dominating and the dominated. From Davidka Square, in co-operation with the police, they marched in relative peace down Jaffa Street to Zion Square, then on to City Hall, where the police awaited them with pens prepared in advance. A delegation went in for a short talk with Mayor Kolek,

which concluded with the scheduling of another meeting. From there the rally went on to the minister of police's office in Agron House, and later dispersed without any clashes or arrests. For HaPanterim HaSh'horim leaders this demonstration's importance lay in proving their leadership and control, contradicting the claims they encountered whenever they applied for a permit to demonstrate. But the quiet demonstration did not indicate a deradicalization. Not only would events yet to come testify to that, but so also did the flier distributed near the time of the demonstration, which continued to use very strong language:

Against the poverty imposed on the residents of Israel under the patronage and protection of the police. Against a government that runs a state of black people and white people. Against an Iraqi minister of police, appointed due to a need for ethnic representation, and fulfilling his function as an oppressor with dedication and enthusiasm. . . . Minister Hillel!!! The fact that you defend the exploitation of the people of Israel by the ruling gang makes you the most violent man in the Middle East.⁷⁹

The trip that never happened

On July 12, 1971, HaPanterim HaSh'horim announced their decision to send a delegation on a publicity campaign to the U.S. The trip was organized with the help of a private donation (which remains anonymous) and with help of a supporter of the movement, Dr Naomi Kiss. But the decision led to many arguments around choosing the delegates, about the source of the money, and about the goals of the trip. Eventually four delegates were chosen: Reuben Abarjel, Sa'adia Marciano, Charlie Bitton, and for the first time in the leadership front, a Black Pantheress, Shulamit Tzuberi, at the demand of Shlomo Segev (legal adviser and movement supporter) and Dr Kiss that a woman be included in the delegation. Tzuberi, the daughter of a large family from Rosh Ha'Ayin, had participated in HaPanterim HaSh'horim actions in Jerusalem and was even arrested by the police. However, under strong pressure by state security, and after internal debates, the plan was not carried out. The trip that never happened created tension, and even some rows that deteriorated into brawls. One result was the distancing of Edi Malka from the movement.

Formation of Panterim Kahol-Lavan (White-Blue Panthers)

In July 1971 Edi Malka, an activist who held independent views and was never taken into the leadership, announced his retirement from the movement and the formation of a separate organization, Panterim Kahol-Lavan (White-Blue Panthers). HaPanterim HaSh'horim's leaders, however, have a different version of events. They say they ousted Malka "because he was exposed as a traitor that even uses several names—Edi (Sa'adia) Malka (Mor)."⁸⁰ Edi Malka became an ardent opponent of the movement and alleged it was connected to hostile countries and organizations, including the funding source for the overseas delegation.

Two days later, the Panthers brought out a flier in response to Malka's claims:

Since he had already been ousted from the organization, the authorities had no choice but to use him to bad-mouth the organization. On the very same night that Edi (Sa'adia) Malka (Mor) was unanimously ousted by all members of the organization, he was summoned to meet the minister of police. During the meeting that lasted four hours it was decided that he would make a press release, with the help of journalists hostile to the organization, accusing us of accepting support from the Soviet Union, conspiring with the PLO, and receiving funds from leftist organizations to finance the trip to the U.S.⁸¹

Indeed, in an interview published by *Yedioth Aharonoth* (July 14, 1971) Malka advanced serious allegations against HaPanterim HaSh'horim, arguing that its ties with the Left endangered the state, saying he knew it was in possession of guns, and that the delegation to the U.S. would damage Israel's interests. Organizationally and ideologically, HaPanterim HaSh'horim's leadership considered Malka's allegations to be treasonous and harmful to the organization. The media's support of Malka's allegations damaged the movement and created the first rift, to be followed by many more. It should be noted that similar allegations were made against other activists during periods of tension and suspicion but were never proven.

At this time of confrontation and internal rows that seriously damaged the movement's power, the leadership headed by Sa'adia Marciano decided to organize a mass demonstration calling for unity of the movement.

"Golda take off"—mass demonstration on Zion Square

On August 28, 1971, following a relaxation of public interest and increased internal debates, the Panthers went out again toward Zion Square for a large radical demonstration, preparing for a possible violent confrontation with the police. A flier distributed a day before announced their intention to hold "an unprecedented demonstration on the streets of Jerusalem," and "In response to our just demands, the government of Israel has taken some organization members to show trials reminiscent of the Moscow Trials. We won't let the government turn our country into one that prevents its own citizens from expressing their opinion of the government." And in very large type: "We warn the government that we will use *any means necessary* against the show trials" (My italics). At the bottom of the flier they use, for the first time, the signature, "Black Panthers in Israel, Central Command—Jerusalem," adding, "Prepare for Surprises."

This flier shows, for the first time, intentional provocation of the government and an attempt to elevate tensions before encountering the police the next day. The phrase "*any means necessary*" in particular caught my eye, being a direct quote from Malcolm X's phrase that had become a Black Panther slogan in the U.S. This could have been interpreted as incidental were it not for the signature, identical to that of the black organization, "The Black Panthers Central Command," indicating

the organization had adopted a military orientation, and the apparent expletive “in Israel,” implying participation in a larger organization, of which this is only the Israeli branch. This radicalization, with this broader dimension, was undoubtedly the result of a growing exposure to the ideas of the Left, and a growing acquaintance with the Black Panthers’ struggle in the U.S. Haim Hanegbi concurs: “They discovered they were no orphans, when they heard of the American Black Panthers. They said, ‘A good name, this is a powerful name.’ After a while they found out that connections were forming around the world.”⁸²

The demonstrators rallied down the usual path from Davidka Square to Zion Square, carrying black coffins marked “Democracy” and “Justice.” Their rhetoric was very radical, for example: “A state that half its residents are kings, and half are exploited slaves—we shall set it on fire.” The flier distributed that day indicates a deepened, consolidated social awareness, relying on basic Marxist terminology:

To the screwed-up citizen—You are screwed-up, not because you were born screwed-up, but because you are being screwed-up. Suppose you are a menial black laborer, native of Iraq, Yemen, or Morocco, and a father of many children. One can guess, more or less, your history. Upon arrival in Israel—you were dumped in a transit camp. You were paid exploitation wages, and worse: the fruits of your labor were eaten by them—site managers, factory owners, the bosses. To this day they take pride in building the country, paving roads . . . Today they hold the highest positions in the state that you constructed, and you—the real laborer, the real builder—are left screwed-up. After all, you did not emigrate from Moscow, or Leningrad. So why should you get a normal apartment?⁸³

This demonstration, with a permit, did generate a harsh violent clash with the police, as promised in the flier. Once again, the police used force to disperse the protesters the moment they burned a large cardboard effigy of Prime Minister Golda Meir, naked and winged, inscribed: “Golda Take Off.” During this demonstration, the last mass demonstration, the police used excessive force, including, for the first time, tear gas. Another escalation was the detention of the movement leaders in jail for more than a week. Directly after the demonstration they were charged with “disrupting public order,” and given mostly suspended sentences, in order to restrain them; any future infringement of the law relating to demonstrating or disrupting order would lead to their incarceration. The deterrence worked—more than two months went by before the next significant action, which occurred on the day the World Zionist Congress opened in Jerusalem, and protest events diminished in frequency and size from that time. Below are some highlights.

January 18, 1972—demonstration against the Zionist movement

HaPanterim HaSh'horim took advantage of the World Zionist Congress in Jerusalem to demonstrate and spread the message of the struggle. This was the

first time the Panthers explicitly took a stand against the Zionist movement, as being responsible for the Mizrahims' state of socioeconomic oppression. This oppression began, they argued, with the connections the Zionist movement had made with their parents in the diaspora, before the actual Aliyah: "Abroad they promised us everything, just let us come to Israel. They promised us a good education but in fact have turned us into criminals. They transformed us into uncultured youth, depressed and without education. They promised salaries that would allow us a respectable livelihood, and in fact have made us poor. They promised us apartments and dumped us in transit camps." Again, there was a warning to the police, and guidelines for protesters: "If you are attacked by the police, use all means at your disposal!"⁸⁴ HaPanterim HaSh'horim were not the only group preparing for the demonstration. The police were preparing as if for a state of war, carrying out preventive arrests of the organization's leaders and mobilizing five hundred officers from around the country. Mounted police, a water jet vehicle, and 1,600 meters of pens and roadblocks were placed under the direct command of the minister of police. This time the police met every attempt of the demonstrators to approach the Binyaney HaUmah area with dispersal and detentions. Again protesters clashed with police, including many student members of SIAH and Matzpen, throwing rocks and chanting, "Police state!" Scores of young people were injured and detained. They disrupted the World Zionist Congress by anonymous phone calls announcing that a bomb had been placed in the auditorium. Protests continued during the following days of the congress, but messages were mostly aimed at the release of the detainees.

The protest against the world Zionist movement aroused HaPanterim HaSh'horim and its supporters for a long series of actions with few participants but plenty of media attention and popular support, until the outbreak of the Yom Kippur War, in October 1973. On February 1, 1972, students and Panterim supporters, as well as supporters of the Mizrahi struggle, gathered on the Hebrew University campus to form a HaPanterim HaSh'horim cell in the university. They resolved to work on campus against the exploitation of service workers and for the admission of Mizrahi students, as well as to work off campus to raise awareness in Mizrahi neighborhoods, and to participate in HaPanterim HaSh'horim actions. An information sheet distributed by the Panterim student cell on February 20, 1971, presented up-to-date data on the economic situation of Mizrahim and Arabs, emphasizing that oppression is oppression, no matter where. Later on, additional fliers were distributed with further updates. The students held cell meetings and occasionally hosted the Panthers' leaders. In the first meeting, at the Weiz auditorium on campus, Sa'adia Marciano remarked: "At last, we too are in the university." "The auditorium was filled up with students and professors," recalls Haim Hanegbi. "For the first time in Israel, they all sat and heard out the members of a Mizrahi protest movement, who explained in simple wise words the oppressive situation. Everyone looked down, out of shame and approval."⁸⁵

“Operation Milk” and other actions

On March 14, 1972, in a Robin Hood–style action, HaPanterim HaSh'horim activists led by Charlie Bitton removed milk bottles from doorsteps in Rehavia neighborhood and distributed them to residents of the Asbestos neighborhood in Qiryat Yovel. A flier attached to the bottles read: “Operation Milk for the children of poor neighborhoods. These children do not find every morning, next to the door, the milk they need. On the other hand, some dogs and cats in the rich neighborhoods have milk every day, and in plenty.” This quiet operation, requiring few participants, explains Kokhavi Shemesh, was easier to organize at a time when protest tensions had wound down, and activists carried criminal registration and suspended sentences because of their previous protest actions. In this situation it was difficult to arouse the public to mass demonstrations, so this and other actions, such as the distribution of cooking oil, stolen from warehouses, were easy to carry out and won public support and extensive media coverage. The same can be said about “Operation Rabbit,” in which the Panthers let rabbits loose in the home of the minister of agriculture, Dr Israel Katz, “to mark him as a rabbit [coward], for he was known as our supporter, but once he was made a minister he forgot about us,” says Kokhavi Shemesh.⁸⁶

The “Panthers’ Budget”

On March 27, 1972, the state budget proposed to the Knesset was known as the “Panthers’ budget,” because of a significant increase in funds for education and housing, as compared to the preceding annual state budget. The budget increase was considered one of HaPanterim HaSh'horim’s immediate successes.⁸⁷

The Panthers in an international conference

On April 17, 1972, the *London Daily Express* reported on the participation of HaPanterim HaSh'horim representatives from Israel in a conference of revolutionary movements from around the world, held in Florence, Italy. The news made newspaper headlines in Israel, and the opportunity was used to further stigmatize HaPanterim HaSh'horim. *Ma'ariv*’s headline, for example, read: “HaPanterim HaSh'horim from Israel participated in an international terrorist conference in Florence. The ‘Terrorist Alliance’ aspires to coordinate acts of violence on a world scale.”⁸⁸ *Ma'ariv* had thus transformed HaPanterim HaSh'horim from social activists to violence-mongering terrorists. About two weeks later, the Panthers joined a May Day demonstration held by SIAH and Matzpen, against the occupation and the annexation of the territories, and against poverty. The police dispersed the demonstration and detained more than sixty protesters.

HaPanterim HaSh'horim against Meir Kahane

HaPanterim HaSh'horim should be recorded as having had the most accurate perception of Meir Kahane’s behavior toward the Mizrahim. They had realized

early on that the racist, fiery rabbi from Brooklyn desired to promote himself among Mizrahim in Israel, riding the waves of protest and awareness aroused by the Panterim in the development towns and Mizrahi neighborhoods. In the early 1970s Kahane walked around the same protest theaters the Panthers used, such as Zion Square, accompanied by a band of hot-headed American goons, trying to push the Panterim from these areas. Sa'adia Marciano makes a not so imaginary suggestion that Kahane may have been funded by the security services, to divert Mizrahi attention away from protest against the government to a new target to blame for their hardship: the Arabs. A full physical confrontation did not take long to happen, as recalled by Sa'adia Marciano and Kokhavi Shemesh,⁸⁹ after an incident during which HaPanterim HaSh'horim activists were beaten up by Kahane's Jewish Defense League activists. "We realized we had to teach them a lesson to deter them and stop them from disturbing us," says Marciano.⁹⁰ On June 11, 1972, a large group of Panterim activists organized for a physical action against Kahane, in his offices in Rehavia neighborhood in Jerusalem. The clash was planned, and according to testimonies the Panthers gave Kahane's goons a good beating. Shemesh: "You should have seen those little Moroccans go after Kahane's gigantic Americans and beat them up good."⁹¹ The brawl led to the arrest of HaPanterim HaSh'horim activists alone. Four of the Panthers leaders, including Sa'adia Marciano, were charged with possession of Molotov cocktails with intention to use them against Kahane's offices. The police relied on all sorts of informers and extended the detention of Marciano and his comrades by fifteen days. HaPanterim HaSh'horim's hostility toward Kahane's movement, the Jewish Defense League, is well known. The league was popular with the media, and with the Israeli establishment, and later became the Kakh movement, with a new agenda—deporting Arabs from Israel. It relied on the votes of impoverished Mizrahim. Kahane knew how to divert all their claims and protest from the establishment to a new target: the Arabs.⁹² Kahane was profoundly scared by the Panthers' direct attack against him, and having realized he could not drive them out of the Mizrahi theater under the threat of his American strongmen, he initiated a reconciliation meeting with HaPanterim HaSh'horim leaders, where he asked that clashes between the movements cease. The Panthers had few alternatives. Sa'adia Marciano, the dominant leader, stayed in detention for many days together with other activists. The detentions, followed again by suspended sentences of incarceration, paralyzed the Panterim for a long time, except for hunger strikes and small demonstrations for the release of the detainees. Shalom Cohen, a Knesset member for the DI (Enough, Israeli Democrats) Party, joined the hunger strike by the Wailing Wall against the detentions, signifying his move closer to the Panthers, which was to lead eventually to running a common candidate list for the Knesset. If someone directed Kahane's opposition to the Mizrahi struggle, they achieved a great success, at least in terms of the immediate reduction of HaPanterim HaSh'horim protests.

After the detainees were released the movement remained in hiatus for many months. On December 27, 1972, in an attempt to revive the movement, HaPanterim HaSh'horim convened a national convention, trying to reunite the ranks from all over the country. The convention was attended by HaPanterim

HaSh'horim from Bat-Yam, Beit She'an, Beersheba, Tel Aviv, Ramat-Gan, and other localities. However, the convention adjourned without devising any operative plan, and this first convention also turned out to be the last, signifying the end of HaPanterim HaSh'horim as a social protest movement. In 1973 former Panterim, in separate factions, campaigned for the Knesset elections. To sum up this chronology, during the Panterim period of uprising, which lasted from March 1971 through the end of 1972, there were more collective confrontation actions than during the entire 1950s and 1960s put together. Moreover, the partial survey presented above indicates increasing radicalization of the content of confrontation, and the means used, until an eventual complete isolation and fragmentation resulted. As we have seen, the main actions were tumultuous radical demonstrations. Calan did not serve HaPanterim HaSh'horim's path. During periods without much public attention, internal conflicts arose, and only a noisy radical demonstration temporarily reunited them.

I will now examine various aspects of the organization and its path: the movement's structure, organizational and decision-making procedures, thought, practice, and reactions by the government and the media.

The movement structure, organization, and decision-making procedures

Although a formal organizational structure was devised, and although democratic decision-making procedures were created, HaPanterim HaSh'horim movement was characterized all along by three organizational elements. First was the Mousrara neighborhood founding core leadership, headed by Sa'adia Marciano, with Charlie Bitton, Kokhavi Shemesh, and Reuben Abarjel, until the latter's retirement. Next to them, other young loyal members were active, such as Coco Deri, Dani Sa'il, and Rafi Marciano. This group was, and always remained, the center of leadership and decision making.⁹³

Other important personalities worked behind the scenes with this group, including community workers Shabtai Amedi and Avner Ammiel and supporters such as Dr Naomi Kiss and the lawyer Shlomo Segev; in addition, there were partners in the struggle and in daily confrontations—Matzpen members Haim Hanegbi, Meir and Shimshon Vigodar, who played decisive roles offering advice and carrying out decisions.

The second organizing factor was the local Jerusalemite boundaries—that is, the Panthers' difficulty in reaching beyond Jerusalem, and breaking away from the narrow neighborhood and municipal political context in order to impact the national political sphere and connect with centers of solidarity and support around the country. Significant consistent external connections were maintained with the Tel Aviv branch, headed by Muni Yaqim, and to a certain degree with the Beersheba branch, headed by Victor Alush. Both these branches' activities were in fact independent and local, while showing ideological solidarity with the struggle. Beyond that, HaPanterim HaSh'horim traveled to every corner of Israel where people had asked to meet them, or had contacted them for help with a local

struggle, including Nahariya, Beit She'an, Ashdod, Bat-Yam, Or-Yehuda, Kfar-Sabba, and Haifa.

The cause for both these organizational elements derive from two factors characteristic of the group even before it organized politically. First was the leadership core's initial solid unity and Sa'adia Marciano's unchallenged primacy, until the split. Second, the Panterim were highly suspicious of "outsiders" who joined them; and in this sense, an outsider was anyone coming from outside Mousrara. As more people joined, competition for leadership increased and camps and rivalries consequently emerged; therefore, the return to the small group structure, led by Sa'adia Marciano, always made them feel safe, but also prevented the movement from expanding and developing a national organization.⁹⁴

The third organizational element that characterized the organization was the absence of a strategic agenda, and of a diverse arsenal for realizing it. Lacking resources and access to opinion-making centers, the main and only tool they had at their disposal was demonstrations. Demonstrations were used to convey the struggle's messages, to mobilize members, and to raise funds. This tool's disadvantage, as noted by Deborah Bernstein, is that movements usually employ it as a last resort, after all other means have failed, whereas for HaPanterim HaSh'horim, demonstrations, especially radical demonstrations, were the central tool from the start. It is the nature of a "radical" tool to quickly wear out and be exhausted.⁹⁵ Therefore, the movement employing the radical militant tool will not survive long as a movement and will no longer be around when the radical effect of its work begins to bear fruit. That is the way it was with HaPanterim HaSh'horim: only when the echoes of the tumultuous demonstrations died down did the fruit of the struggle begin to mature, and it was collected by those on the moderate end of the struggle axis, where friction is minimal, and survival is measured in many long years.

However, HaPanterim HaSh'horim maintained the active structure of an organized social movement: the formation of democratic action bodies, while distributing authorities by field criteria. Committees were democratically elected for each field. The Coordinating Committee, which met once a month, coordinated the branches (Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, Ashdod, Dimonah, Beersheba, Bat-Yam, Ramat-Gan, Qiryat Shmonah, Beit She'an, Givat Olga, and even faraway Eilat), headed by Sa'adia Marciano. Next, there were a Finance Committee; a Press Committee, which was very active and published the movement newspaper, *The Black Panther*, as well as regularly issuing and distributing press releases; and a Wording Committee, charged with writing the organization's fliers and banners for demonstrations, which was also very active and included university and school students among its members. One of these members' brilliant ideas was to produce a special Passover Haggadah, which began with the message:

This is the bread of affliction that our fathers ate in the lands of Egypt
and Morocco,
Not knowing we won't have even this in Jerusalem,
In Morocco whoever is hungry let him come and eat, and in Jerusalem all that
is forgotten.

In Morocco they promised we go out to freedom,
But it turns out they pushed us to slavery.⁹⁶

The Haggadah was sold for pennies around Jerusalem and brought the Panthers revenue of about three hundred liras.

The most important committee was the Operations Committee, charged with planning all actions and demonstration logistics, as well as neighborhood clean up operations and the distribution of clothing and food in Mizrahi neighborhoods. There was also a Member Recruitment Committee, responsible for registering new members based on the principle that everyone is accepted, regardless of “sex, race, and ethnicity,” depending only on the prospective member’s will to identify with the movement and to contribute to the struggle. During the first two weeks thousands of new members enrolled in the organization, and it was decided to issue member cards, with a photo, to boost solidarity. Each committee nominated a chair, which rotated on a monthly basis in order to keep the ranks fresh. According to testimonies by Dr Naomi Kiss, Shlomo Segev, and the social workers who served as advisers to the committees, their work was democratic and responsible, and Sa’adia Marciano, the unchallenged leader of HaPanterim HaSh’horim, never took a stand against committee decisions but accepted majority rule and knew how to direct proceedings with charisma.⁹⁷ As mentioned above, the committees were made up mostly of Jerusalemite activists and never broke out beyond the limits of the Mousrara neighborhood in any significant way.

Ideology and action practice

I wish to examine three ideological components in HaPanterim HaSh’horim’s positions: the wide ideological framework within which the movement worked, its local ideological principles (in Israel), and the goals it set for its struggle. This examination shows that some local ideological motifs were inherited from the Wadi A-Salib Rebellion and the 1960s, and some were HaPanterim HaSh’horim innovations, such as severe criticism of central Zionist myths. It also reveals some ways of action unique to the movement.

The wide ideological framework

Before discussing HaPanterim HaSh’horim’s ideology, let us quickly review the principles of Tarrow’s discussion of ideological interpretative framework, which unite the movement’s target audience. Tarrow suggests—and this is as evident with respect to HaPanterim HaSh’horim as it is to many other movements after them—that activists and supporters of a protest movement will not endure long unless they manage to create an identity between the ideological values they fight for and legitimate ideological values shared by the wider society and deriving from its political culture. Thus, for example, every rights struggle in the U.S., including that of most black people, draws the “civil rights” value directly from American political culture, and from the U.S. Constitution. In Israel

too, we observe HaPanterim HaSh'horim and HaOhalim, which followed them, as well as other movements directly addressing the *Declaration of Independence* and other central Zionist myths, such as the “merging of the exiles” based on equality. SHAS, as will be shown in Chapter 4, went further by symbolically appropriating the Zionist discourse, and frequently declaring, “We are the real Zionists.”

Tarrow adds that ideology shapers also make occasional use of universal values, but the latter are not always accepted by a particular local society and can at times create alienation out of misunderstanding. This is what happened to the HaPanterim HaSh'horim movement in Israel when it used the name and slogans of the Black Panthers in the U.S., who were perceived by contemporary opinion makers in Israel as dangerous extremists and Jew haters. Sometimes a symbol wanders into an ideology elsewhere, in a different generation, or a different movement, acquiring an entirely new meaning and context. Tarrow uses the symbol of “rights” as an example. When this symbol was used by the black civil rights movement in the southern U.S., its meaning was collaboration with white people and a nonviolent struggle to attain those desired rights. But when the struggle moved to the North and West of the U.S., where black people had already had formal rights *de jure* for many years, but not in practice, the same symbol of “rights” became the motif of “Black Power,” which in stark contrast to the struggle in the South meant noncollaboration with white people and a radicalization of confrontation by any means necessary, including violence.⁹⁸

HaPanterim HaSh'horim's wide ideological framework consisted of two major components: Marxism and black people's struggle in the U.S. The first and main component is the basic revolutionary neo-Marxist discourse, absorbed in the movement's rhetoric in such terms as “oppressors and oppressed,” “exploiters and exploited,” “black laborer,” “screwed-up,” and of course, “equality,” “justice,” and “revolution.” Hanna Herzog notes that HaPanterim HaSh'horim's class identity as social revolutionaries was stronger than their Mizrahi ethnic identity, which served them more as a means than as a goal.⁹⁹ I tend to support this view, clearly evident in the Panthers' open, universalist approach toward their partners in the struggle. The Ashkenazi or their American partners and supporters in this struggle had neither ethnic origin nor economic class in common with the Panthers. Charlie Bitton emphasizes the drive to organize: “We saw that racism is on an ethnic basis, not a class basis. It's not true to say it's class. With all my desire to integrate in the Communist Party I did not agree it was a class struggle; it's an ethnic struggle.”¹⁰⁰

These Marxist influences reached the Panterim through student members of leftist organizations Matzpen and SIAH, as well as through American activists such as Dr Naomi Kiss, who was intimately familiar with the 1960s struggle and discourse in the U.S., where she lived before coming to Israel in the early 1970s. Charlie Bitton remarked on this in an interview in 1971: “We are people who never read books about Lenin, Stalin, Che Guevara and others . . . Most of the people had not known what politics is, or even what is a political atmosphere.”¹⁰¹ Today he adds in retrospect: “We were seventeen-year-old kids,

revolting against being oppressed, and we did not even know who was oppressing and how they oppressed. Only through the struggle did we begin to understand what was happening to us, who was stepping on us, and why.”¹⁰²

The second broader ideological component was the discourse of black struggle in the U.S., from which not only the most radical and significant name was borrowed—the Black Panthers—as well as the panther icon and the fist icon printed on fliers, banners, and shirts, but also some central terms mentioned above, such as “any means necessary,” “they screw the black people,” “black people and white people,” “white power,” “masters and slaves,” “police state,” “brothers,” and “equal rights.” This adoption was not just symbolic, as movement members had an advanced social consciousness and a deep understanding of the language. Thus, Charlie Bitton rejected in 1971 the claim that Panthers chose to take the name of an anti-Semitic black movement: “The Panthers in the U.S. are not against the Jews as Jews, but as exploiting employers. They are the masters, and that’s why the fight is against them.”¹⁰³

Of all the influences on the HaPanterim HaSh'horim in Israel from the Black Panthers in the U.S., one should particularly note the intense radicalization of discourse and the level of determination in collective confrontation. In spite of many other influences, the Israeli movement did not adopt some essential principles of the Black Panthers in the U.S., such as their military-like organizational structure—including the wearing of uniforms and caps and the carrying of guns with permits (perhaps because of alienation toward military service in the IDF), the severe prohibition on alcohol consumption and drug use, tough organizational discipline and full equality between men and women, attained after Panthers’ protest. In Israel, the movement hardly took women into the decision-making process, although women were active, especially mothers who practically supported their sons’ actions and encouraged them to participate in the struggle. Among these mothers, the leader Sa’adia Marciano’s mother stood out, and was nicknamed the “Panthers’ Mother.” She was not afraid to confront the police and the authorities herself. It is told that during all their detentions she would arrive at the jailhouse in the Russian Compound with baskets full of food and would make her way to the detention cells, pushing aside any jailer who tried to block her path. She was interviewed on television and declared her support of her sons, Sa’adia and Rafi. According to one account, even Golda Meir telephoned her at home to offer help with placing Sa’adia in a job. She clearly told Meir that her son, the leader of the Panthers, was “not for sale,” and hung up the phone.¹⁰⁴ In addition to the mothers, the central activists’ spouses of those who were married also participated in actions, though always behind the line of male leaders. This, of course, must be compared with the general male-chauvinist attitude toward women’s participation in Israeli politics, when the number of women Knesset members, for example, was not more than five, and Golda Meir was never considered a feminist, and never talked on behalf of women.

Local ideological principles

Besides adopting and intensifying the basic struggle discourse from the Wadi A-Salib Rebellion, and from the movements that had come after it—who gave the Panterim such common terms as “disenfranchisement,” “ethnic discrimination,” “the elimination of poverty,” “an equal division of the pie,” and more—the movement also coined entirely new terms and raised the tone to a level not previously known in Israeli society. In a word, it radicalized the discourse.

The first outstanding local Israeli principle was the challenge: “Either the pie is for everyone, or there will be no pie,” as Sa’adia Marciano declared. This wording, for the first time, directly attacked the myth of “security first of all,” manipulatively used by MAPAI to silence all protest, along with Dayan’s myth of the single banner mentioned earlier. In this context a banner slogan used by the Panthers is worth mentioning: “Security also means us” indicates a high awareness on the part of the Panthers of the security manipulation. The Panthers argued, using clear direct language, that a state maintaining economic-cultural oppression relations has no right to exist. As Kokhavi Shemesh said at the time: “I make a distinction between the government and the state, but you can not threaten me with what would happen if we destroy the state, because we don’t feel we are partners. We belong, but we are not partners.”¹⁰⁵

The second local ideological principle is the shattering of central Zionist myths and the presenting of them as false, especially the “gathering of the exiles” and the “merging of the exiles,” as we saw in the flier for the demonstration against the World Zionist Congress. The innovation here is in aiming at the sources and attacking the ideological roots of the oppressive reality—that is to say, not only attacking policy executors in the present but the entire Zionist movement that worked to bring the Mizrahim to Israel by many promises and declarations that proved false once in Israel: “Abroad they promised us everything, just let us come to Israel. They promised us a good education and in fact have made us into criminals.”¹⁰⁶ By no mere coincidence did HaPanterim HaSh’horim erase the word *Zionism* from their political jargon, although they never declared themselves anti-Zionists, a term reserved for those at the most dejected margins of Israeli politics. Yet, as Deborah Bernstein argues,¹⁰⁷ they never broke free of the most basic loyalty to the idea of the state of the Jews; they just wanted it to be different, more just and egalitarian. This basic loyalty was also the basis for disagreements and factions in the movement.

Another important principle is the linking of the terms “ethnic” and “class,” as explained by Kokhavi Shemesh: “Indeed we felt the ethnicity, but we always said we saw the class line as overlapping with the ethnic line. My world is built on the socialist notion of class, but here in this case (in Israel) I can not attribute it; it’s sort of an ethnic mutation of Israeli society. In socialism there should be no difference between a black and a white if he is bourgeois. What is the difference? It goes even against nature.”¹⁰⁸ The Panthers made frequent comparison between the state’s absorption of immigrants from Russia in the early 1970s and the second-generation of Mizrahim, still impoverished. To this they added an additional

dimension to a comparison that had already existed in the collective consciousness between the absorption of the Mizrahim and of Ashkenazim in the early years of the state. HaPanterim HaSh'horim at once undermined the theoretical arguments of "modernization and development" sociology, based on a cultural as opposed to a class analysis. In that, the Panterim were ahead of Marxist sociologists who were to appear, by no coincidence, only after the Panterim's protest became the focus of their research.¹⁰⁹

The other discursive precedent set by HaPanterim HaSh'horim was to emphasize the connection between the oppression of Mizrahim and that of Palestinians. Here influences of course bear the marks of the radical Left organizations, Matzpen and SIAH, that worked in collaboration with HaPanterim, even though in public the Panthers tried to disown the Left and frequently denied the collaboration. For their part, the media and the police highlighted this collaboration in order to damage the Panthers' image among the Mizrahi public. Supplemental evidence for the ties can be seen in the fact that the majority of the Panthers' core leadership continued their political path, after the group broke up, in alliances with organizations of the political Left alone, such as Democratism Israelim, SHELI (*Shalom Le'Yisrael*—Peace for Israel), RAKAH (*Reshima Komonistit Hadasha*—New Communist Party), and Moked (meaning: focus—an Israeli leftist movement). None of the Panterim leadership went on to connect with right-wing parties. (In this context we may reiterate HaPanterim HaSh'horim had preceded everyone else in the struggle against Meir Kahane's racism.) Kokhavi Shemesh made this clear thirty years later in retrospect:

All of us in the Panthers have said it, that the security issue goes hand in hand with the social issue. On this we rejected our Mizrahi friends' advice, who told us, Don't deal with the foreign policy, why do you talk about foreign policy? So I always said, Hold it, what's up? Is this an Ashkenazi privilege? What, I'm black so I'm not allowed?

The Panthers were ahead of Israeli society by a whole generation, and ahead of the Left as well. We had connections with the PLO as early as 1972. We met with PLO leaders and recognized them as legitimate leaders of the Palestinian people. We had talks, and we understood their need for independence and to eliminate the occupation, and we agreed that the problems of the Mizrahim and of the Arabs are intertwined. There will be no equality and no chance for the Mizrahim as long as there's an occupation and a national struggle, and on the other hand, the national struggle will not be over so long as the Mizrahim are at the bottom of the ladder, and are practically an anti-Arab lever.¹¹⁰

This connection with Palestinians, which was of greater concern to the authorities, according to many, than any other aspect of the protest, was one of the central causes for the elimination of HaPanterim HaSh'horim, because during the said period Israel was busy annexing occupied territories and establishing settlements by near absolute consensus. Anyone who deviated from this consensus was

condemned and marked as an enemy of the people. The Panterim, in this respect, were working in a direction opposite to the majority of Mizrahim, who began to ally with the Likud Party, both in protest against MAPAI and as a step toward building an Israeli identity based solely on the Jewish element, as offered to them by Menachem Begin, who had built ties with the Mizrahim while still in the underground, and more so after the formation of the state. Begin's allure became attractive for Mizrahim once they began to comprehend the degree of MAPAI's cultural alienation toward them, and when Begin demanded the cancellation of the entire MAPAI's "pioneer apparatus" as a condition for equal citizenship *de facto*. Haim Hanegbi says about this special relationship:

As a child I saw Begin half an hour before he arrived on Zion Square for his first public appearance, as a man who has lived underground and was a wanted terrorist. Before coming to Zion Square, he went to Mahane Yehuda, and in Mahane Yehuda, he made an impromptu appearance on a balcony, and all the residents of Mahane Yehuda came, all the Kurds who began ululating in joy. And he addressed them: "Dear brothers and sisters, you provided the fighters for the underground. I come to thank you in my name, and in the name of the entire people of Israel." Only after that did he go to Zion Square. That is to say, it's not by chance that he had a good reputation with the Mizrahim. What MAPAI could have imagined such a thing?¹¹¹

Goals of the struggle

In addition to setting overarching general goals, such as the elimination of economic gaps, attainment of equality in education, and resolution of the housing problem, HaPanterim HaSh'horim's innovation was in presenting detailed plans for the achievement of these goals. They mastered the statistical data, and presented them alongside a list of required resolutions, some elaborately detailed, including sums of money and percentages, from their very first flier through to their objection to the 1972 state budget. Indeed, the Panthers' list of demands as presented above marked the path the government would follow in planning a budget directly shaped by this struggle. One can say that, to a great extent, HaPanterim HaSh'horim "poured" money into education, housing, and welfare more than any Mizrahi movement or party before or after.

Of course, the central goal, total elimination of socioeconomic gaps, was not accomplished by HaPanterim HaSh'horim's struggle, as we will observe in discussing the 1980s, although in two realms the gaps were significantly reduced—improvements in housing, and a reduction in school dropouts. But their biggest accomplishment was in removing the masks. Once Dr Katz's report was published, followed by many research papers based on its findings, no one could go on pretending the problem was a matter of individual subjective feelings, or a matter of priorities in Mizrahi families, as Prime Minister Meir did with her token advice: "Let them stop with the family celebrations, learn how to manage a budget rationally, work hard for their rights, start reducing family size."¹¹² From here on

it was clear to everyone that the state played a crucial function in the economic condition of the Mizrahim. Denial became the sole inheritance of reactionary Ashkenazim who clung to the cultural explanation.

According to Tarrow's index of social movements' success or failure in accomplishing their goals, we can argue here that the Panthers failed to realize the "protest cycle," though they had succeeded in sustaining the confrontation over a long period. They failed to transform this momentum into an established social movement, to mobilize the masses to continue the political struggle. HaPanterim HaSh'horim would certainly have liked to see its movement evolve into a mass social movement of "poverty and Edot HaMizrah class," as put by Abarjel, but it was not aware of the tragic role assigned to it by history, as we have learned from Haines' model, to be the groundbreakers, those whose backs were to serve as the bridge for the Mizrahi social struggle in Israel—that is to say, to create a series of radical effects that would evolve into accomplishments for the general Mizrahi struggle, reaped by other, more moderate movements. Today Kokhavi Shemesh has a historical perspective on this role:

My frustration is with those who crossed over my back when I was laying on the fence, and have reached today a position of power to do things. We didn't have this; our power was limited. You cannot do anything when you have nothing to eat. Today there are people in good positions who can afford to take action, but they don't. They don't understand that the role of the revolution that we began is in their hands.¹¹³

Except for the phenomenal precedent set by Nelson Mandela, who courageously lead the black people's revolt in racist South Africa sacrificing his liberty by being imprisoned for longer than a generation, only to re-emerge as a winner to establish democratic South Africa, no one in the history of modern ethnic social struggle has yet come back alive (politically, and sometimes physically) from such a primary mission. Therefore, in the internal chronicling of the Mizrahi struggle, the Panthers had a decisive role in laying down the foundations for a collective Mizrahi social awareness, paving the road for new movements to follow.¹¹⁴

However, a general overview of the evolution of the radical Mizrahi discourse shows that HaPanterim HaSh'horim failed, perhaps never tried, to propose a comprehensive ideological alternative to Ashkenazi Zionism. Their enduring ambivalence toward the state's Zionist identity, and their difficulty withstanding Israeli sanctified militarism while aspiring to political legitimacy, were like two millstones around their neck, mentally preventing them from developing their political thought into an ideological alternative to Zionism. Eventually, when facing the ballot, since they had failed to develop an alternative to Zionism, they were left with the radical struggle as their only option. Mizrahi voters, who were required to have absolute loyalty to Jewish nationality as part of acquiring Israeli identity, opted for "unblemished Zionism," eventually found in the miracle cure of the Likud, which worked incessantly to oust MAPAI from government.

Means of action

In relation to Tilly's analysis of "protest repertoire" presented above,¹¹⁵ HaPanterim HaSh'horim appear to have started their struggle, much like the Wadi A-Salib Rebellion, with a high level of confrontation (public demonstration, clashes, break-ins, and challenging radical messages), but one should bear in mind that government and police reaction, even before the first demonstration began, constituted proaction. They carried out arrests with no charge and suppressed any organizing. It appears that, paradoxically, in HaPanterim HaSh'horim's case the government started the confrontation cycle by deploying extreme police brutality.

I have already mentioned the movement's extensive use of the demonstration, a common physical means of collective confrontation used by every radical social movement. HaPanterim HaSh'horim maintained a determined collective confrontation, manifest in daring clashes with a violent police force, including the rare case of the throwing of Molotov cocktails into a police facility that was attributed to its members. But there is no innovation in that. Before these events, in Wadi A-Salib and in other development towns and Mizrahi neighborhoods, police cars were set on fire, as well as various offices of the "establishment." The innovation of the Panterim was its success in focusing the confrontation on the prime minister, thereby raising the political level of the struggle. Some, such as Eliyahu Eliachar and David Sitton, had confronted Ben-Gurion as well as with Mizrahi ICs through articles and publications, but the confrontation remained distant from the Mizrahi public and had little effect on it. HaPanterim HaSh'horim created an immediate public social confrontation. Its success in meeting the prime minister, and then in turning her own dismissive remarks against her, contributed to it: "Golda, at the Suez Canal we are all nice," (referring to Mizrahi contribution to the war effort). "Golda told us No," or "Golda teach us Yiddish."

We have already observed that after Ben-Gurion's "reign," confronting the prime minister became possible and more legitimate. Applying the same tactic of targeting the political top, HaPanterim HaSh'horim also aimed attacks at the minister of police, Shlomo Hillel, an IC of Iraqi origin in the Labor Party. In confronting his leading role in the oppression of the struggle, they presented him as a betrayer because of his Mizrahi origins. Another minister on whom criticism was levelled was Minister of Treasury Pinhas Sapir, considered by many to be in control of far more than just the state budget.

HaPanterim HaSh'horim found themselves in a constant head-on clash with a police force that was employed against them. Charlie Bitton thinks the police overestimated the Panthers' power:

The police knew what went on in every home in the neighborhood. They went from house to house and investigated every person. They wanted to know everything. And this was merely a social movement, not even political [i.e., partisan]. We had no pretensions to replace the government. All we demanded was [action on] social policies, to mend injustices in the realms of housing, education, social problems.¹¹⁶

Under such police pressure, including being tailed and arrested for no reason, Panterim leaders might have fallen into a “cops and thieves” trap, which would have depoliticized the confrontation, as desired by Golda Meir and the political leadership. But they avoided the trap by turning the very clash into a slogan of protest: “Police state!” Thus, the police became the subject of a new message, according to which the state deploys police power to silence its citizens and prevent critical political organizing.

Another means crucial to the Panthers’ success, also an innovation in the Mizrahi struggle, was the principle of forming a political alliance with almost anyone who identified with the struggle and was willing to act and to participate in collective confrontation. In many fliers, the Panthers explicitly called on everyone to join, so long as they were willing to clash with the police. Thus, for the first time in Mizrahi demonstrations, youths from Mousrara demonstrated, clashed, and were arrested, together with youths from HaTiqva neighborhood, workers from Ashdod, youths from Rehavia and Haifa, leftist students, and leftist Ashkenazi intellectuals. These alliances, although they occurred within the political margins, broke the “ethnic” isolation into which the state had usually succeeded in pressing such movements, by presenting them as extremist, marginal, and of no interest to a wider public. At the party stage, the alliances became for some of the movement leaders a final attempt at rescue from plummeting into oblivion.

HaPanterim HaSh'horim were therefore the forerunners of the Mizrahi struggle’s liberation from naïve isolated protest, which had characterized it during the 1950s and 1960s, to its entry into the radical stage; they liberated the Mizrahi struggle discourse from the awe of Ashkenazi Zionism and initiated the proposing of alternatives. HaPanterim laid the foundations for the radical socioeconomic discourse in Israel in general, and particularly for the radical Mizrahi discourse, as will be shown later.

The authorities’ reactions

The principle of recognizing the issues of protest, but not the protesters and the path of protest, remained the leading motif in the government’s relationship to HaPanterim HaSh'horim. But the authorities failed to repeat their immediate success in putting down the Wadi A-Salib Rebellion. HaPanterim, thanks to the conditions mentioned above, managed to last much longer and to gain much more exposure for the struggle’s message, up to the point where the government could no longer deny the existence of a radical Mizrahi social movement.

The authorities’ response after hearing of the Panthers for the first time in *Al-Hamishmar* in January 1971, before the actual organizing, was to deny the political element of the Mousrara youths and refer to them as “criminals.” In this regard, police and government evaluations of the group’s nature were mistaken.¹¹⁷ These were fed by two contradictory motivations. First was the old pattern of dismissing the possibility of mass Mizrahi protest organized by a handful of unknown youths who were no more than “habitual criminals” in the government’s view, and who lacked resources and an education. Second was the impression left by the Wadi

A-Salib Rebellion among decision makers. Just as Ben-Gurion was unwilling to accept this new social politics and was surprised that thousands should respond to David Ben-Harouche's call (no more than a "pimp" in his eyes), so too Golda Meir was unwilling even to permit the first demonstration by these "not nice" Mousrara youths bearing the terrible name, irrelevant for Israel in her view—the Black Panthers. Therefore, the first response was preventive detentions, a blatant assault on these young citizens' freedom to organize and their freedom of speech. Parallel to wielding the stick, the police tried the carrot, by arranging a visit by the neighborhood rabbi with the detainees, in the hope he would appease what appeared to the government as a street youth's whim, under negative political influences. Even on the "Night of the Panthers," the mass demonstration in May 1971, the government held tenaciously to the old methods. Thus, next to brutally dispersing the demonstrations and carrying out mass arrests, Shaul Ben-Simhon was called to the jail to try to end the episode with an internal ethnic co-optation. Such co-optation—into a government-patronized sectorial heritage organization, the Moroccan Expatriates Alliance Organization—had it succeeded, would have pushed the Mizrahi struggle back to the days of ethnic separation, an obstacle HaPanterim HaSh'horim overcame on their path to creating a general class-Mizrahi discourse.

The more the government adhered to denying the movement's existence, and refusing to recognize the sociopolitical crisis, the more HaPanterim HaSh'horim movement grew strong, and the more its radicalization (as well as its environment's radicalization) increased. A survey conducted by Yohanan Peres in 1972 in three large Mizrahi neighborhoods, after all the major demonstrations, shows that only a quarter of those interviewed considered HaPanterim HaSh'horim's political claims unjustified. By comparison, 63 percent considered the means of the struggle unjustified.¹¹⁸ This testifies to the government's success within the movement's target audience in stigmatizing and delegitimizing the movement leaders, but it failed to block the struggle's message. In the process of socialization and acquiring the desired "Israeli" identity, the preferred character of the Mizrahi leader played a major role. IC leaders such as David Levi and Aharon Abu-Hatzeira, both of whom were active in the consensual middle, were perceived as positive characters, because they managed to enter the political hall "of the Ashkenazim" and become like them. The Mousrara boys were a long distance from that image. In confronting HaPanterim HaSh'horim's leadership core, the government had for the first time entirely failed to co-opt Mizrahi protest leaders. Their resilience, in the face of repeated co-optation attempts, was the central foundation that made a continued radicalization of the struggle possible, even though some in the margins of the movement were co-opted, including youths recruited to present an alternative model to the Panthers' protest.

Bernstein notes four components in the elimination of HaPanterim HaSh'horim as a political movement:

- 1 Delegitimization, both by highlighting the members' "criminal" records and by associating them, in the public's eye, with the anti-Zionist Left and presenting them as a threat to state security.

- 2 Individualization of the struggle—transforming the social claims of the struggle into individual claims by the leaders, thereby dwarfing the movement's political element.
- 3 Co-optation attempts, which only worked on minor activists.
- 4 Frequent arrests, trials, suspended incarceration sentences, and fines.¹¹⁹

In this regard, I refer to my introduction to this discussion to reiterate: this method eventually managed to isolate and eliminate, even physically, HaPanterim HaSh'horim as a movement, but it failed to eliminate the ideological struggle because it gave the movement a central public platform and unprecedented media coverage, which at the bottom line, were this poor movement's only resource, as it succeeded with great sacrifice to establish the facts of the socioeconomic inequality between Ashkenazim and Mizrahim as the central issue in internal Israeli politics.

The report of the prime minister's *Commission on Children and Adolescents in Distress*

One of the government's important responses to HaPanterim HaSh'horim's uprising was the formation of the prime minister's *Commission on Children and Adolescents in Distress* early in 1972. When the report was presented in October 1972 HaPanterim HaSh'horim gained some credit for the tough struggle they had conducted for about two years. The report born out of this protest was presented to the government by the commission's chair, Agriculture Minister Dr Israel Katz. It confirmed the factual claims of the struggle but rephrased them. It pointed to economic hardship among "Jews from Asia and Africa," as well as the absence of an overall social policy. The findings showed that about a quarter of children and adolescents in the state were in economic, social, and educational hardship, and about a hundred thousand families were living in substandard conditions. According to the report, hardship existed in families where the parents worked, but where their low earnings did not provide an adequate livelihood. The significant point in this report for our analysis is the nearly complete overlap between poverty, economic hardship, and Mizrahi origins.¹²⁰

Much of the report is dedicated to the education system, whose faults were clearly highlighted by the commission:

According to team members the Ministry of Education and Culture must take the initiative and the central responsibility for administering and developing education institutions for the pre-school age group and those in compulsory education, and to prevent the need and the possibility of other government ministries caring for marginal groups outside the pre-school and primary education system. The team calls upon the Ministry of Education and Culture to increase its leadership in launching curricula and specialized study areas and diligently seeing to their realization on the ground.¹²¹

However, the approach of functionalist sociology and rehabilitative education still dominates the report, so its recommendations, clear as they are, were still a long way from an egalitarian revolution in education. For example, the commission's education team attributed the Mizrahims' condition to a lack of resources, including, of course, cultural and educational resources.

A cultural resource: Social groups whose culture of origin is different from the prevalent culture in society, and whose orientation—derived from the culture of origin—actually hinders cultural integration and intertwining with the larger society. The desire to integrate on the one hand, and the causes of cultural hindrance on the other, exacerbate the hardship. . . . An educational resource: Groups whose children experience an accumulated failure in the existing educational system; these children's education and skills are below the national standard, and therefore their chance of attaining mobility in a hierarchic education system are slim.¹²²

Where the report makes practical recommendations, apart from the regular call to provide funding, and sometimes to expand structures, it reverts to the Orientalist discourse of academic justifications for the policy of inequality in education since the 1950s as we have seen above:

In fact, there are two possible ways to cope with the “cumulative gap” in education. One: changing the education system as far as reducing requirements to the lowest common denominator, thereby moderating the selective aspect of education institutions. This solution is easy to implement and aims to produce, in the short term, a relaxation of social political criticism. But it appears that in a society going through modernization processes and aspiring for economic independence, under conditions of perpetual immigration absorption, such a solution can result in a lack of skilled and professional manpower and might reduce society's operational quality.

When the moment of truth arrives—the choice between equality and elitism in education—the report implicitly admits it is better to keep on investing mainly in well-to-do Ashkenazi students. Moreover, it also disowns its initial call to the Ministry of Education to take the lead and not to leave the job for others, instead recommending that the Ministry of Education do the exact opposite, that is, opt for informal education as the solution—as it explains: “The multi-resource nature of informal education endows it with the power to function as an alternative to formal education and provide the impoverished adolescents with resources necessary for integration and standard functionality in society.”¹²³

As a result of the report's recommendations, the implementation of the reform in education was expanded (the formation of junior high schools) in most Mizrahi localities, additional resources were provided, and informal education programs were developed, such as assistance with homework in community settings. As we will see below, this reform effort indeed diminished drop-out rates in high schools, but failed to reduce the gap in achievement levels between Ashkenazi pupils and Mizrahi pupils of the third and fourth generations, for a simple reason: the cultural

approach that saw Mizrahi pupils as less able and their parents as not at all interested in their children's education remained the basic assumption for Israel's official pedagogy. And, naturally, this approach did not lead to increased expectations from Mizrahi pupils themselves, and therefore the education system's unequal structure remained the same. The majority of Mizrahi pupils still attended nonacademic structures and classes that did not lead to a *bagrut* certificate and academic studies.

The media and HaPanterim HaSh'horim

Between January 1971 and December 1973 hundreds of stories, reports, and articles were published by Israeli media about HaPanterim HaSh'horim's protests and their implications. One should also consider radio and television broadcasts that regularly reported the main public events. The matter of content is distinct, of course, from quantity, but in this instance quantity is a quality in and of itself. The decisive accomplishment was intensive reference to the protests, and as a result, to issues of ethnic relations and the Mizrahims' socioeconomic situation. Once the War of Attrition was over, coverage of the Panterim protest provided the news media with refreshing "lively material," but most coverage was clearly biased in the government's favor, except for a few reports in *Al HaMishmar* that showed some understanding and sympathy for the struggle. The other papers, as well as radio and television reporting, highlighted the movement leaders' "criminal" and marginal background, as well as their ties to Matzpen and SIAH, with a negative slant, of course. Reports focused on "violence" and "violations of the law" as the movement's major characteristic, yet could not ignore the underlying issues. Thus, beside reports on the movement and its actions, much data and reports on the Mizrahims' socioeconomic situation were brought to the public's attention. In this respect the media had slightly altered their slant in their coverage of the Mizrahi struggle from the time of the Wadi A-Salib Rebellion, when hardly any opportunity was given for the leaders to speak out or for their goals to be mentioned, and the media functioned as a state propaganda organ, denying or embellishing reality. Hanna Herzog observes that during the 1973 election campaign the Panterim became the first ever Mizrahi movement to gain extensive media attention, although it was stigmatizing. Up to that time, Mizrahi parties were entirely absent from media coverage and were never brought to public attention.¹²⁴

As in the U.S. media's relations with Malcolm X, and later with the Black Panthers, one of the radical effects of the protest in Israel was to provoke the media to look for moderate "positive" Mizrahi personalities who could be presented in personal profiles and asked to explain the crisis. This led them to such personalities as Shaul Ben-Simhon, Avner Shaqi, and David Levi, who were suddenly given broad coverage and permitted to express reservations about HaPanterim HaSh'horim's radical path and present their own as moderate and more appropriate for the same struggle. In general, they used this exposure to acknowledge, for the first time, the condition of economic inequality, but refrained from attributing it to the state's official policy. However, they did use the opportune crisis to signal to

the leadership: "We told you, now you better listen to us." The following words by David Levi reflect the bidirectional flexibility of the ICs' position; he attacks government policy like a member of the opposition while at the same time distinguishes himself from HaPanterim HaSh'horim and speaks in a more statesman-like fashion:

For me they are no Panthers, just miserable people. They are the victims of a socioeconomic policy that has not proven itself a success. They are the result of a problem that has always been ignored, even when it exploded as in Wadi A-Salib at the time. . . . We are all obliged to do our best to uproot this unacceptable phenomenon [HaPanterim HaSh'horim], which serves the enemies of Israel. But to the same degree of revolt we too have to examine ourselves and consider our part in creating the conditions that have led to this . . . I wish to note that I definitely sympathize with their struggle, but not with the way in which it is conducted.¹²⁵

One way or another, the extensive press coverage that Mizrahi IC politicians gained because of the Panthers' protest did indirectly, in moderated form, carry HaPanterim HaSh'horim's issues to the Mizrahi public and into the general Israeli political consciousness.

The end of the road: the political party period—spring 1973 through May 1977

After a long hiatus, HaPanterim HaSh'horim leaders sought a way to revive the movement that, in Tarrow's terms, had reached the end of its "prolonged confrontation period" and faced two alternatives—disappear or try to become established. HaPanterim HaSh'horim opted for the second option, but retaining their radical character was important to them. Therefore, they turned down proposals to fit into various ethnic slots in the big parties, and responded positively to Shalom Cohen's proposal. Cohen, a Mizrahi radical and a veteran leftist, had written about Mizrahi oppression as early as 1953 in *HaOlam HaZeh*, had accompanied the Wadi A-Salib Rebellion, and was eventually elected to the Knesset as part of HaOlam HaZeh's list with Uri Avneri. After prolonged disagreements he quit Avneri's party and formed a one-man party, DI—Israeli Democrats. Knesset member Cohen left without his former voters (mainly among the Ashkenazi foreign-policy Left), and saw the HaPanterim HaSh'horim movement as a political opportunity to continue parliamentary work on issues he cared about. Cohen's proposal aroused serious debate on the very idea of moving into the parliamentary theater and deserting mass social struggle. Finally, on February 21, 1973, a faction of the Panterim merged with Cohen's Israeli Democrats, with the October elections to come. The new party was named DI: HaPanterim HaSh'horim—Israeli Democrats. The unification caused a serious confrontation with Reuben Abarjel and his men, who strongly objected to taking the parliamentary path, arguing they were not ripe for elections. This debate kept

rising to the surface as the elections approached. On August 29, 1973, a severe confrontation broke out between Sa'adia Marciano's camp and Abarjel's. Abarjel explained his position thus: "I would not allow myself to head a list if I had not guaranteed in advance the maximum voter potential among Edot HaMizrah and the impoverished. We have not yet convinced this population that our ideology is appropriate for their needs."¹²⁶ Later on, Abarjel proposed to compensate those "yearning for elections," by participating in municipal elections only; but for himself, he quit the movement and with his men joined the Oded and Tehila movements led by Erez Bitton and others. HaPanterim HaSh'horim with Shalom Cohen and without Abarjel were already at the height of the Histadrut election campaign, their first electoral test.

Histadrut elections—a momentary success

In the general Histadrut (unions) elections, held on September 15, 1973, DI: HaPanterim HaSh'horim—Israeli Democrats won three seats in the Executive. Encouraged by this impressive success on their first electoral attempt, they were full of hope for the Knesset elections. Many activists who had retired now resumed participation following this success, and the movement came back to life and entered an intense election campaign, forming branches around the country, shooting a propaganda film, and recruiting members and activists. The general feeling was that HaPanterim HaSh'horim could re-create the accomplishment in the Knesset elections, scheduled for the end of October. But the hopeful atmosphere was abruptly terminated by the Yom Kippur War, which blocked the Pantherim's renewed momentum and their final opportunity to take off, and the elections were postponed to December.

On October 5, 1973, Egypt and Syria launched a military attack that took Israel completely by surprise, on the Jewish Day of Atonement. Israel overcame the attack only after mobilizing all its reserve forces, and paid with thousands of dead and thousands of wounded. The war shook the country and plunged Israeli society into deep mourning, as well as caused a loss of confidence in the government, which was widely accused of a serious failure. In this war, the second generation of Mizrahim was almost fully integrated in the military, and the last group the public wanted to hear from as the December elections approached was HaPanterim HaSh'horim. Most protests now were against Golda Meir's government and Minister of Defense Moshe Dayan's failure to foresee the surprise attack and prepare for it.

In the shadow of war, having been postponed, Knesset elections were held on December 31, 1973. HaPanterim HaSh'horim participated as HaPanterim HaSh'horim—Israeli Democrats, headed by Knesset member Shalom Cohen and by Sa'adia Marciano. Edi Malka campaigned against them with his list White-Blue Panthers, which tried to shift HaPanterim HaSh'horim supporters from the social agenda to national unity.

In their agenda the Panthers headed by Cohen and Marciano wrote: "Two social classes live in this country: The comfortable and the screwed-up. Not this nor that

ethnicity is discriminated against. An entire class is discriminated against, the screwed-up majority class, most of it Edot HaMizrah.” Hanna Herzog argues that on the way to the ballot, like every Mizrahi party, the Panthers moderated their message to appear more legitimate.¹²⁷ After failing in the elections, HaPanterim HaSh'horim nearly ceased to exist. The election results indicate that if it were not for Edi Malka's participation, HaPanterim HaSh'horim was likely to have passed the minimal vote threshold (of 1 percent): HaPanterim HaSh'horim—Israeli Democrats, headed by Cohen, Marciano, Bitton, and Shemesh, won 0.9 percent; Edi Malka won 0.4 percent.

HaPanterim HaSh'horim leaders blamed Edi Malka for serving the establishment in the task of eliminating the movement, by splitting the voters and misleading them. Charlie Bitton recalls:

After our success in the Histadrut, Golda Meir decided that there was no way the Panthers would enter the Knesset. She ordered Bar-Lev, who was Labor's General Secretary, to block us at any price. And so, suddenly we see Malka with equipment, posters, and fliers [for his] White-Blue Panthers. He was there to counter us—White-Blue against the Black. He was the one who actually blocked us and eliminated us, as the results clearly indicate. Of course, after that Malka disappeared; there was no need for him.¹²⁸

In spite of the war, Meir's MAPAI Party won the elections. She formed another government and appointed Moshe Dayan as minister of defense again. However, as the fog of war began to dissipate, and the severity of Meir's government's security failure became clearer, public protest did not take long to emerge. Moti Ashkenazi, commander of a stronghold on the Suez Canal, was released from reserve service and began a hunger strike outside the prime minister's office. His one-man strike launched a mass protest movement. Demonstrations and strikes against the failure were announced daily. Mutual allegations between the military and the politicians shook the government's stature and authority in general, and Golda Meir's as prime minister in particular. Under public pressure an official Commission of Inquiry was formed, headed by Judge Agranat. Defying public expectations, the Agranat Commission's report blamed the head of military intelligence and the chief of staff, but exonerated Prime Minister Meir and Minister of Defense Dayan of any responsibility. The pressure of protests and demonstrations kept mounting, in spite of the report, until it took down Meir—and with her, according to the law, her entire government, Dayan included. Yitzhak Rabin, Israel's ambassador to the U.S., who was in no way associated with the military failure, was elected to head the Labor Party and formed a new government in June 1974.

These severe blows to public authority and legitimacy of the Labor Party headed by Meir and her MAPAI generation of ministers were crucial in liberating second-generation Mizrahim from mental dependence on MAPAI, thus opening their path for the next rebellion, at the ballot box, in 1977. I argue further that without the wave of social protest that rocked the government—that is, HaPanterim

HaSh'horim protest—the military failure alone would not have liberated the Mizrahim for a protest vote. The Mizrahim contributed eighteen additional Knesset seats to the Likud in 1973, and fourteen more in 1977, marking the first time in the country's history that the Labor Party (formerly MAPAI) did not form the government. Ashkenazi voters, for their part, hardly changed their voting pattern, except for three seats given to Ratz—the Movement for Civil Rights headed by Shulamit Aloni, herself a former MAPAI member. One way or another, HaPanterim HaSh'horim ceased to exist as a movement or a party. From here on they were active as individuals, or in very small groups, organizing symbolic one-off actions, and in various alliances aimed at individual survival.

Cultural influence of HaPanterim HaSh'horim's protest

Strong radical effects of HaPanterim HaSh'horim's activities are evident outside the purely political realm, in the world of Mizrahi culture that had existed, until the mid-1970s, only in a diminishing collective memory, and for the most part veritably underground. One can imagine this social protest, set in motion by HaPanterim HaSh'horim's actions, as a mass workshop for rehabilitating the oppressed identity, where participants open up their hearts, cry out freely, and undo the knots of humiliation, helplessness, and isolation that characterized the life of submission and cultural humiliation in the encounter with European Zionism.

From the mid-1970s we witness radical moves in two directions in the cultural sphere, even though retrospectively from today's vantage point their limitations are evident. One move was from below, in the Mizrahi intellectual world—Mizrahim begin singing, playing, writing, performing, presenting, discussing, and documenting. The other move was from the top—Ashkenazi cultural hegemony, entirely identified with MAPAI and MAPAM, begins reluctantly to open, little by little and with great caution, the doors that had been locked for the pioneers of the reviving Mizrahi culture to enter. This behavior is chiefly motivated by anxiety about the forceful protest lest it break out again. Another motivation was a feeling of guilt HaPanterim HaSh'horim managed to instill in the Ashkenazim.¹²⁹ But the main factor was the need to control the revival and reshaping of Mizrahi culture,¹³⁰ while keeping it in the margins of Ashkenazi hegemonic culture and retaining control of the state's cultural resources. With the rise of Likud, a new political motivation was added—a genuine fear on the part of Likud's leadership of the very voters who had voted it into government.

Only with the relative recuperation of a very thin layer of educated Mizrahim of the first and second generation, in the mid-1970s, do we witness the emergence of Mizrahi literary authors, such as Sami Michael, Erez Bitton, Gabriel Ben-Simhon, Jacqueline Kahanoff, Lev Hakak, Yitzhak Bar-Moshe, Yitzhak Gormezano Goren, and Shimon Ballas (who had published a book as early as the mid-1960s). The innovation and uniqueness of these writers' appearance in the Israeli literary sphere is not only their Mizrahi origins but also the content of their writing, which deals with the life of Mizrahim and the crisis of transition to Israel. Up to that time, it was Ashkenazi literature, together with cinema and theater, that “dealt with”

Mizrahi life in Israel using stereotypes and reflecting enslavement by the European Zionist paradigm.¹³¹ The advent of these writers broke through the dam of cultural silence of the Mizrahim, who had been for two and a half decades under the press of modernization's cultural oppression. Here is a small sample of the work of two authors:

*Zohara al-Fasiya's Song*¹³² (Erez Bitton)

Singer at Muhammad the Fifth's court in Rabat, Morocco
 They say when she sang
 Soldiers fought with knives
 To clear a path through the crowd
 To reach the hem of her skirt
 To kiss the tips of her toes
 To leave her a piece of silver as a sign of thanks
 Zohara Al-Fasiya
 How now you can find her in Ashkelon
 Antiquities 3
 By the welfare office the smell
 Of leftover sardine cans on a wobbly three-legged table
 The stunning royal carpets stained on the Jewish Agency cot
 Spending hours in a bathrobe
 In front of the mirror
 With cheap make-up
 When she says
 Muhammad Cinque
 Apple of our eyes
 You don't really get it at first

 Zohara Al-Fasiya's voice is hoarse
 Her heart is clear
 Her eyes are full of love
 Zohara Al-Fasiya

The following is an excerpt from the novel *Shavim ve-Shavim Yoter (Equal and More Equal)* by Sami Michael:

Reuben: There we were another people, and here we are another ethnicity. There we were ruled by *goyim*—here we're being ruled by Jews that looks like *goyim* . . . so what for? For this I had to leave a good job, destroy my house—come here naked and barefoot to stand outside the green shack . . . like a beggar by the window—with the railings and live like that?! In a fabric-shack, with rags for walls?¹³³

The breach in the dam released a flow of writers that increased after the 1977 “electoral coup,” as the old Ashkenazi Zionist hegemony of the old MAPAI

generation grew weaker. And by comparison the accompanying phenomenon was the publication in Arabic and in English of such Iraqi writers as Nissim Rejwan, Samir Naqqash, and Yitzhak Bar-Moshe, whose works broke out of the Israeli borders and reached, for the first time, the Arab world.

The leading field, in terms of quantity, in the emergence of the Mizrahi cultural renaissance may have been academic research, especially in the fields of history, linguistics, Halachah, literature, music, and customs, subjects that were not considered by the Zionist research funding institutions as posing a threat to Ashkenazi cultural hegemony, particularly since they did not criticize the oppression relations in the Ashkenazi–Mizrahi reality in Israel. Such scholars as Abraham Shtal, Yaakov Abraham, A. Almeliach, Shalom Bar-Asher, Michel Abitbul, A. Shwaqi, Yehuda Nini, Shalom Ratzhabi, Ratzon Halevi, Yoseph Chetrit, Pinhasi, Ben-Shoshan, Yoseph Halevi, Ephraim Hazan, Edwin Sarousi, Avi Eilam-Amzaleg, Moshe Maoz, Nitza Droyan, and others, most of whom had acquired advanced education and had integrated in universities, some self-educated, began researching, documenting, and shaping Mizrahi historiography. The discursive framework was still attached to European Zionist historiography, but a significant change in the mostly Eurocentric Orientalist perspective is evident in the works of such anthropologists and folklorists as Shoked, Deshen, Ben-Zvi, Bar-Yoseph, Hirschberg, and Gates. The young Mizrahi scholars' perspective and motivation was characterized by very involved intimate and moral observations. Some of the works even show the first critical tones. But only in the 1980s, when silence was broken in social sciences critical research, did the process of liberation toward a more independent narrative begin.

Two additional factors nourished the growth of cultural research. One worked from above—the decision to establish the Center for the Cultivation of *Edot HaMizrah* (Mizrahi ethnicities) Heritage in the Ministry of Education's Curricula Department, in itself an act of multicultural demagoguery—controlled and moderated by the government—but some unintended positive results did come out of it. In spite of being a limited cultural “Mizrahi reservation,” the institution urged the work of many scholars who later also influenced the curriculum, especially in the religious wing, most of whose students were Mizrahim. There, in subjects such as literature and Judaism, the curriculum is much more balanced than the national “secular” curriculum, although everything is naturally subservient to Ashkenazi Zionist discourse. The second factor came from the outside—Iraqi scholars working or publishing in London, such as Ballas, Rejwan, and Cojman, and North African scholars in Paris, such as Haim Zaafrani, gave a universal academic legitimacy to the study of Mizrahi Jews' culture, thereby contributing to the liberation of Mizrahim from the manipulation of the internal Israeli discourse about their supposed cultural inferiority.¹³⁴

As important as these developments were, the largest spiritual contribution to the development of the radical Mizrahi discourse was in critical sociological research, which broke out as an academic confrontation action following HaPanterim HaSh'horim's struggle. The researchers, having been in close touch with the events and the leaders of the struggle, gave theoretical legitimacy to what

the authorities considered as riots and lawlessness by punks. Some of them were also exposed, while studying in the U.S. and in Europe, to the revolutionary atmosphere of black people and of the New Left, and were therefore not surprised by developments in Israel, which they could place in their view of Western society in a process of social rebellion and cultural and ethnic emancipation. Nearly all the radical scholars were Ashkenazi at first, probably because they were more numerous, as well as more liberated from being in fear of the establishment, and their criticism was not perceived as a rebellion, but as an internal Ashkenazi debate.¹³⁵

The most important focus for the development of critical sociology was the Sociology Department in Haifa University in the late 1970s and the early 1980s, in its periodical *Mahbarot leMehkar uleVikoret*. Critical work about Ashkenazi Zionism and Israel's policy toward Mizrahim by Ashkenazi scholars led by Shlomo Swirski, who to this day combines research in sociology and education with Mizrahi social activism in the community and in education, was to prove the most crucial contribution for the beginning of the new Mizrahi discourse, through such platforms as *Iton Aher* and *Bimat Kivun Hadash*, and for the emergence of the critical Mizrahi movements of the 1980s and 1990s. Swirski was also a central participant in the formation of the single most important of these movements, HILA (The Public Committee for Education in the Development Towns, Neighborhoods, and Villages). I will return to these movements in the next chapter, in discussing the new Mizrahi discourse and the radical movements of the last two decades.

Finally, music. As scholar Edwin Sarousi has put it, music is the avant-garde of all social revolutions.¹³⁶ Music is the first to join them, and at times it precedes them. Music may be the most tangible aspect of every culture in any situation, including deep crisis. During the 1950s and 1960s, which were particularly hard times, music was played within Mizrahi communities almost in secret, at family and community celebrations. North African musicians such as Yeshuah Azulay and his Andalusian ensemble, Braham Swiri, Sami al-Moughrabi, Zohara al-Fasiya, Moiso, Raymond Abouksis and Iraqi musicians such as Ezra Aharon and Zozo Moussa, who were integrated in the Israeli Broadcasting Authority's Arabic orchestra (performing exclusively in a local Arab context, never Arab-Jewish), kept singing and playing within Mizrahi communities, at family events, and in such clubs as Café Noah in HaTiqva neighborhood, but they were totally isolated from the Ashkenazi Israeli musical discourse.¹³⁷ An exception was popular Moroccan singer Joe Ammar, who opted from the very beginning to integrate his music within the Israeli mainstream. Only the audiocassette revolution, the very invention of cassette players and recorders, enabled them to overtake the state's radio stations (which shut them out), distribute their music directly to the masses, and thus reach a wider awareness among the Mizrahi audience. The cassette revolution also encouraged renewed reproduction of classical Arabic music, such as that of Farid al-Atrash, Muhammad Abd al-Wahab, Umm Kulthum, Abd al-Halim Hafez, Fayrooz, Ismahan, the Jewish Layla Mourad, and many others, who signified for Mizrahim of the first generation their Arab culture and identity. Until

that time, such music was only available from Arab radio stations and from Egyptian and Jordanian television. The occupation of the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip and their opening for the passage of workers and goods sped up trade in Arab music that came directly from Arab countries.

The pedagogical and cultural establishment tried hard to keep second-generation Mizrahim away from this musical world, using stern socialization in the schools and the media and avoiding the playing of any Mizrahi sounds except in negative or ridiculous contexts. A speedy and extreme process of secularization, experienced by most Mizrahi children of the second generation in secular state schools, also alienated and distanced them from their parents' life of religion and tradition, of which music is an inseparable part.

However, thanks to continued musical activity in modest community and family contexts, the second generation of Mizrahim managed to take Mizrahi sounds to Israeli center stage. The first to do so were Yemenite musicians and singers who had been the most successful in preserving singing within the family and the community. Embraced by the Zionist establishment as a harmless Jewish folkloric "natural reserve," they made quick use of the technological revolution for recording, reproducing, and mass distribution, in spite of continued disregard by radio and television. "Cassette-music" groundbreakers, including Daklon and Ben Moush (Tzliley ha-Oud), Hofni haGadol, and Ahuva Ozeri, began their career by trilling songs by Ashkenazi songwriters such as Alterman and Zeira. The breakthrough for this music, introduced simultaneously in Mizrahi neighborhoods and development towns, came in 1977 with the appearance of a young unknown singer, Zohar Argov (Orqabi), who took the popular music back to classical Mizrahi *mawals*. Zohar Argov frequently performed and recorded Moroccan and Yemenite popular songs that had become classics in these ethnic groups, creating the model along whose lines dozens of singers emerged in the 1980s.¹³⁸

Edwin Sarousi notes that musically there is little connection between Mizrahi and Arab music and that the bulk of the music known as "cassette music" is mostly based on Turkish and Greek tunes performed on electric guitars and organs.¹³⁹ But the very use of popular Western conduits eventually managed to open the Mizrahi neighborhoods toward Ashkenazi-controlled broadcast stations. These outlets began allotting programs, if closed and limited, for Mizrahi music, such as *Al haDvash veAl haKefak*, *Ruah Mizrahit*, and *Festival haZemer beSignon Edot haMizrah*, titles of which those institutions would be ashamed today.

And yet, unlike some music by black people in the U.S. that was not only an alternative but whose lyrics also contained direct radical protest, popular Mizrahi music in Israel hardly touched on a protest content. Zohar Argov was no exception in this, except for the protest he expressed outside his music, in interviews, where he often spoke of the cultural oppression of the Mizrahim and of radio stations' rejection of his songs.¹⁴⁰

Parallel to this popular axis of Mizrahi music, the practice of Mizrahi and Arab music using Middle Eastern motifs and classical Middle Eastern instruments evolved slowly, as well as a genre combining Eastern and Western styles. Shlomo Bar and his band, HaBreira HaTiv'it, were the groundbreaking force that led a

revolution in Israeli music beginning in the 1980s, which in the 1990s penetrated nearly every corner of Israeli culture, as the latter became more commercialized. Bar pioneered the combination of West and East in his music, and following him numerous musical groups, Mizrahi and Ashkenazi, Jewish and Arab, emerged—for example Boustán Abraham, East–West Ensemble and Yair Dalal. Uniquely, Shlomo Bar was a politically aware militant artist, engaged in Mizrahi politics both through lyrics he composed and in his performances, in numerous interviews, and in talks with students about the oppression of Mizrahi culture. At the height of his political activism Bar enthusiastically joined Mizrahi supporters of TAMI in the 1981 elections, and even appeared in the party's TV ads.

We have seen that the second generation of Mizrahim in music, literature, and research, much like their colleagues in the social struggle, especially HaPanterim HaSh'horim, did not rebel against their parents' generation as was the case in the student-led social revolutions in Europe and in the U.S. Rather, as in the black civil rights movement, they carried a charged collective memory of the traumatic encounter with European Zionism and the state of Israel, using it as a basis for their protest and their cultural growth. They became a mouthpiece for their parents' silenced generation. Indeed, they felt anger at their parents' silence, but they recognized that generation's helplessness as a result of the traumatic migration crisis.

And yet, again as in black people's struggle in the U.S., on the political level we can discern a revolt against the politics of the ICs, especially against the “local boss” institution that had paralyzed any Mizrahi activity for more than two decades.¹⁴¹ The “local boss” exit did not eliminate the IC approach in the second generation's Mizrahi politics, but certainly pushed the new IC generation (mainly young mayors, Likud members of the Knesset, heads of localities, and chairs of workers unions) toward a more independent style—at times critical, and at times more socially radical and not in rhetoric only.

The universal Mizrahi neighborhood model: the Ohalim movement in the footsteps of HaPanterim HaSh'horim—1973 through 1981

The beginnings of the Ohalim (The Tents) movement can be traced back to the height of HaPanterim HaSh'horim's activity, before participation in the 1973 elections.¹⁴² It was definitely a clear immediate product of the radical effects of HaPanterim HaSh'horim on youths in Mizrahi neighborhoods, especially Qattamonim and Qiryat Yovel in the south of Jerusalem. The youths that organized in the fall of 1973 as a community–social theater workshop in Qattamon Nine neighborhood were in fact adolescents who participated in HaPanterim HaSh'horim demonstrations and were exposed to the radical Left discourse and to the influence of young Marxists from Latin America who carried out volunteer work in their neighborhoods. This exposure was simultaneous with an individual encounter with HaPanterim HaSh'horim's actions in the city; some even had the “honor” of being arrested more than once by the police during Panthers'

demonstrations, according to the recollections of Eli Hamo and Moshe Salah,¹⁴³ who were among the troupe's founding actors. In 1973 they performed *Joseph Goes Down to Qattamon*, directed by instructor-director Arye Yitzhak. The core group of HaOhalim came from this troupe. After the Yom Kippur War the troupe kept working under the leadership of Moshe Salah, Shlomo Vazanah, and Nafi Salah, producing the plays *Mechanical Youth* and *Partly Cloudy*, followed by *Good Jews*. These works directly and critically addressed the difficulties and dilemmas of living in a Mizrahi neighborhood in a situation of inequality and cultural oppression.

Ohel Yoseph, the first Ohalim organization, was formed already in the Qattamonim during the 1973 war, and it was followed by Ohel Shmuel haNavi, in the Shmuel haNavi neighborhood, and Ohel Stern in Qiryat Yovel and other neighborhoods. This was the beginning of the Ohalim movement, as it became known three years later. In 1976 HaOhalim's theater period ended with the play *The Drop Out*, directed by Shlomo Vazanah. When Yamin Swissa joined the movement in 1977, the group went through politicization and radicalization, and from there it entered the stage of protest and confrontation.

To all appearances, the Ohalim movement (an umbrella organization comprising local neighborhood movements in Jerusalem) took the Mizrahi struggle back to the neighborhood and to the narrow community context, after HaPanterim HaSh'horim had brought it out to the collective Mizrahi context and the larger social context. But a close examination of HaOhalim's goals and principles, especially those of Ohel Yoseph in Qattamonim, Ohel Shmuel in Shmuel haNavi, and Shahak in the Ir-Ganim neighborhood, immediately reveals the central motifs of the Mizrahi social struggle, and mainly the universal discourse and rhetoric class struggle. This shows that every local organizing effort after HaPanterim HaSh'horim connected in ideology with what may be named the Mizrahi struggle movement. Since the Panthers, every instance of residents organizing in a Mizrahi community is considered a Mizrahi (or ethnic) protest movement, or a social movement (a term that began to be used more frequently in the 1990s), both by the initiators and by the media. HaOhalim's local movement model can therefore be given the apparently oxymoronic name "universal Mizrahi neighborhood" movement. This universal-neighborhood model, and its class-ethnic discourse, can be discerned throughout the oppressed realms of Western democratic societies, such as black urban ghettos in the U.S., and migrant and laborer quarters in the United Kingdom, France, Italy, and Germany and in Latin America.

The Ohalim movement, which entered the theater of Mizrahi political struggle immediately after HaPanterim HaSh'horim's twilight, inherited from the Panthers a revolutionary ideology and, also thanks to them, gained immediate public attention for Mizrahi protest. Yet, HaOhalim focused its immediate goals on the neighborhoods themselves, each neighborhood and its Ohel ("tent"). The main aspiration was to establish community, education, and welfare services the Ohel would provide in accordance with that Ohel's worldview, and in accordance with neighborhood needs as seen by the Ohel. Organizing under the Ohalim umbrella organization and holding radical protest actions together gave them a political

power that was separately translated into municipal resources in each neighborhood. In this regard, HaOhalim did not manage to reach out beyond Jerusalem, as it never tried to. It did, however, receive support from numerous Mizrahim and leaders such as Nissim Gaon, president of the World Sephardi Federation, who provided a budget of \$200,000 (U.S.).¹⁴⁴ That said, in spite of the local focus of its actions, HaOhalim was a Mizrahi social movement, another link in the chain of the Mizrahi struggle's radical effects.

Accomplishments of the Ohalim movement

The following are four of the chief accomplishments of the HaOhalim movement: (1) eliminating the old leadership 'local boss' model; (2) creating a model for autonomous administration of community life; (3) setting in motion the process of disillusionment with the Mizrahim's so-called victory through the Likud; (4) with all of the above, retaining a radical level of discourse and struggle, manifest in the general Mizrahi and universal ideological principles, and by actions of radical confrontation, while at the same time, moderating the radical discourse and level of confrontation as set by HaPanterim HaSh'horim.

The essential difference between HaOhalim and HaPanterim HaSh'horim is summed up by HaOhalim's eventual institutionalization. All the Ohels and the neighborhood organizations became institutionalized, including the one led by Yamin Swissa, and each became its "Neighborhood Administration"—a sort of professionalized, independent model of the old Neighborhood Committee. Protest disappeared, and some of the activists became professional workers in various fields of community life, education, and culture in the neighborhood. Yamin Swissa even tried, more than once, to compete for a place on the Avoda list of candidates for the Knesset, though he failed, until at the end of his public career he worked as a deputy president of a government corporation. And yet, Swissa should not be likened to a first-generation IC, or even to the young Likud and Avoda activists of the second generation. To retain his radical image, Swissa continued to address the Mizrahi struggle in public until the early 1990s. His last provocative action was symbolic—at the height of the new immigration wave from the U.S.S.R. in 1991, as the government and the Ashkenazi elites celebrated the arrival of hundreds of thousands of Russians, Swissa wrote an open letter to the Soviet president, Gorbachev, asking him to stop the Jews' departure, arguing that their absorption would be at the expense of investments required for repairing conditions of economic inequality suffered by the Mizrahim. Swissa was not alone in this—around the same time, Kokhavi Shemesh formed the Movement to Stop Immigration from the Soviet Union. Shemesh even intended to participate in the 1992 elections based on this platform, but finally gave up. Time was to reveal that the government did indeed invest hundreds of billions of shekels in absorbing more than a million Russian immigrants, increasing the budgetary deficit by 6 percent during the first years, at the same time that the labor market in development towns and villages was collapsing, and the education system in Mizrahi and Arab localities was hitting rock bottom.

4 The old crown and the new discourse

The era of radical awareness—
1981 to the present day

The “Ballot Rebellion”: electorizing the struggle arena—the 1977 upheaval

The Mizrahi protest vote of 1977, against three decades-long rule by MAPAI (which ran a list for these elections together with some satellite parties, under the title Ma’arach), gave the Likud thirty-two Knesset (parliament) seats of Mizrahi votes, fourteen more than in the previous election cycle.¹ The 1981 elections results intensified the Mizrahi Ballot Rebellion, Mizrahi votes were responsible for thirty-six parliament seats for Likud and three for TAMI. One can say that a third of Knesset seats were decided in 1981 by one of the greatest ethnic protest votes in the history of ethnic struggles. One must note, in considering this, that until 1973 half of the Mizrahim consistently voted for MAPAI. From 1973, Likud came consistently to win half of Mizrahi votes.² Even after this shift, Mizrahi Knesset members numbered twenty-seven in all, not even a quarter of the the Knesset membership. Ironically, in the Tenth Knesset (elected in 1981), only nine of Likud’s forty-eight Knesset members were Mizrahim, compared to eleven Mizrahim out of forty-seven Ma’arach Knesset members.³ In both parties, “integration” of Mizrahi ICs still dominated; they were placed on the candidate list to attract Mizrahi votes. Shevah Weiss, one of Ma’arach’s leaders at the time, wrote after the 1977 upheaval: “The pseudo-technical and artificial integration of characters from the ethnic communities in Ma’arach, coming out of the continuous patronizing attitude and their noninclusion in the actual party leadership—caused the Ma’arach real damage.”⁴ The Mizrahi block vote for Likud was not to find representation until a system of primaries was implemented and party members determined the list of candidates.

The 1977 upheaval shocked the dominant elites of the “Leftist Camp,” but in spite of harsh reactions, such as Yitzhak Ben-Aharon’s quick pronouncement on television, “I do not accept the Israeli voters’ decision,” most perceived it as a temporary penalty for the military blunder of 1973, and for the exposure of criminal corruption at the top of the Labor Party, including the resignation of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin after the press revealed his wife had a bank account in the U.S., in violation of Israeli law. The meteoric rise of DASH (Democracy, Change) was explained in the same way. Headed by former chief of staff Yigal Yadin, and

running a Mizrahim-free list of candidates, DASH won fifteen Knesset seats with its message of democracy and change against a backdrop of “moral disintegration.” Only the 1981 election results, when DASH disappeared, proved that a substantial shift had removed Ma’arach from power, namely, the block of Mizrahi protest voters. At the same time, an Ashkenazi voter block was clearly galvanized—some thirty-six seats (of the Ashkenazi vote) went to Ma’arach⁵—two to Shinui, and one to Ratz. During the 1980s, Knesset elections appear to have become a political battlefield between Ashkenazim and Mizrahim. Mizrahi voters now saw Likud as their independent political home, and Likud viewed them as “the people” who gave power to the “national” party. But Mizrahim in the Likud were unsuccessful in taking over the party and dictating its agenda. Their main failure was not being able to turn around the party’s liberal capitalist economic ideology and policies.

The increase in Mizrahi representation in the Knesset from both major parties did not necessarily lead to a radicalization of the struggle or to an expansion of its front line, since most of these Knesset members served the official ideology of the Zionist parties and accepted, at least in appearance, the Orientalist cultural conceptions regarding Mizrahims’ backwardness, and the state’s inequitable economic structures. Most acted out of complete identification and faith, perpetuating the tradition of identification and collaboration. A few voiced an occasional internal critique.

One must differentiate the great protest vote, which also included 57 percent of educated Mizrahim,⁶ from Mizrahi politicians who became Knesset members and government ministers not by direct vote, but as part of the “integration.” Voters’ disappointment with the outcome of this “ballot rebellion” and its electees was quick to follow, manifest in neighborhood social protests, such as the Ohalim movement, in the mobilization of educated Mizrahim toward a new dialogue, in the vote for TAMI in the elections that followed, and later in the ever-increasing vote for SHAS. Ashkenazi electoral reaction has remained steady ever since and has even intensified the stronger SHAS has grown—for example, with Shinui obtaining six seats in the 1999 elections and fifteen seats in 2003.⁷

As I have briefly mentioned, what allowed Mizrahi liberation from mental dependence on MAPAI, perceived as the state itself, was the collapse of the central myths of European Zionism. The 1973 war, widely seen as a military and political failure, destroyed the myth of “the few clever European Jews” facing hundreds of millions of “backward” Arabs. Revelations of corruption at the top of MAPAI shattered the myth of “socialism and partnership.” Above all, HaPanterim HaSh’horim’s uprising seeped into the consciousness of Mizrahim and refuted the central myths of the Aliyah—the “coming together of exiles” with the promise of integration, equality and justice—and forced the government to indirectly admit their falsehood, through a series of budgetary changes. HaPanterim HaSh’horim also exposed the illusion of “modernization,” which failed even by its own standards, in an escalating manner. HaPanterim, though labeled as extreme leftists and marked as unworthy of participating in government, “delivered” the Mizrahi masses into the arms of the politically and economically right-wing Likud. There,

over the years, Mizrahim were relabeled as right-wing warmongers, Arab-haters, and obstacles to peace⁸—a ludicrous claim, since it was MAPAI that had successfully carried out the negation of Arab Jews' Arabness. Likud simply plucked the ripe fruit.

The Mizrahi collective, having inhabited the margins of Ashkenazi-dominated Israel under MAPAI, could not be picky in choosing its allies. Just as Mizrahim were the Likud's only electoral prospect against MAPAI, Likud had little to lose in opening its resource-poor gates to young Mizrahim, who quickly became chapter leaders and members of the party's bureau, and later leaders of municipal and local lists of candidates who began to win elections. Thus was born the "alliance of the oppressed" between the Mizrahim and the Likud.⁹

However, it was MAPAI itself that provided Menachem Begin and his Herut (now Likud) Party with national legitimacy, by inviting Herut to join a national unity government on the eve of the 1967 war. For Mizrahim, the electoral and symbolic link with Likud was a perfect way out of the margins and into the center, since it appeared to contain both components of the Mizrahi identity complex: identification and integration on the one hand, protest and alternative politics on the other. Joining Likud, with its banner of "the entire Land of Israel," demanded an ideological identification, and Mizrahim welcomed the opportunity to belong, and to prove their nationality and their new Jewish identity. Moreover, in the "new" state, headed by Likud, Mizrahim became in their own eyes and in the eyes of Likud's leader more Jewish and more Zionist than MAPAI's leadership.

These sentiments were artfully molded in Begin's paternal, inclusive manner, like a father rescuing his children from evil. Yet Begin's close relationship with Mizrahim was no novelty; it dated from prestate days and increased with the waves of immigration. Begin's patronage expressed itself in characteristic fashion in his famous speech at Malkhei Israel Square on the eve of the 1981 elections, two days after comedian Dudu Topaz slandered Mizrahim at a Ma'arach convention ("The riff-raff in Metzudat Zeev are hardly booth-sentinels"). Prime Minister Menachem Begin replied: "Our sons of Edot HaMizrah were heroes! There are martyrs among them! They went to prison, concentration camps—Jews! Warrior brothers! And now this actor hired by Ma'arach should stand here and cuss? . . . And you say in front of the Ma'arach's unruly mob 'riff-raff'? . . . 'Booth-sentinels'? . . . no one has hurt the Mizrahi Communities as did Labor." Begin offered Mizrahim symbolic state recognition of their part in Jewish nationalism: a common history of persecution, shared sacrifice for the founding of the state, warriors' camaraderie, and, above all, the pointing of an accusing finger at MAPAI for the historic injury to the Mizrahim.

Identification with the Right, and being the central mass of right-wing supporters, further deepened the Mizrahi-Jewish conflict of identity. Over three decades, the cultural socialization of the state had required the Mizrahim to strip away all Mizrahi and Arab cultural values and identity, perceived as the antithesis of European Zionist culture and identity; now, in return for the pact with Likud and for the dramatic rise in their national status, Mizrahim were required, and to take it upon themselves, to serve as front-line soldiers of Jewish nationalism. On

the practical, everyday level this translates as “Arab-hating,” a projection of the self-hatred planted in the Mizrahim by Ashkenazi Zionism. Yet, all the ideologues and leaders of this nationalism (Ben-Gurion, Rabbi Cook, Tabenkin, Begin, Eldad, Badar, M. Shamir, Rabbi Amital, Rabbi Waldman, Rabbi Drokman, Y. Shamir, and others) and of hatred and racism against the Arabs (Rabbi Kahane, Rabbi Levinger, General Ze’evi, Rabbi Porat, Ephi Eitam, Yosef Lapid, and others) were Ashkenazim. Palestinian–Israeli scholar Azmi Bishara explains:

The Palestinian has learned to recognize the Mizrahi as the extremist Israeli, and the Palestinian understands that the Mizrahi is in a predicament, since he constantly strives to distinguish himself from the Arab and his Arabness, as does the Druze. The Ashkenazi does not have to emphasize his Jewishness, for it is obvious to him that he is not Arab. He doesn’t have that problem. The Ashkenazi has a clear stance on the relationship with the Palestinians—you are there, we are here, there’s no mixing. Yet, the Mizrahi resembles the Arab in looks, customs, dialect, and other aspects that force him to differentiate himself from the Arab, in order to win equality on the basis of national identity. If the criterion for equality is nationalism, then they must prove their nationalism.¹⁰

The Mizrahi leader who symbolized this ambivalent identity more than anyone was also the greatest magnet for Mizrahi, particularly North African immigrant votes for Likud—David Levi.

David Levi—sitting on the fence

David Levi, a Moroccan-born construction worker, symbolized in his personality and career the tension between, on the one hand, the need to belong to the national identity already defined and shaped by Ashkenazi Zionism both on the Right and on the Left (he was an admirer of Levi Eshkol) and, on the other hand, the urge to bring about change. Levi was perceived by the Israeli public as an “authentic” Mizrahi leader, who began his path as a worker from the development town of Beit She’an and quickly rose to the top of Herut and Likud, and on to the highest positions ever held by a Mizrahi leader. The powerful “Levi camp” in Likud was known for its Mizrahi solidarity and for its struggles for Levi, and further accentuated the particularly Mizrahi dimension of Levi’s identity. Levi himself fought to increase Mizrahi representation in the institutions of the party of which half the voters were Mizrahim since the early 1970s. In retrospect, Levi saw this as a central element of his politics:

I strove first and foremost to unify members from development towns, so that their power could be realized in party institutions. I opposed separating the towns and determining a set number of representatives for each to send to the conference. I saw it as an insult and as perpetuating the system that I opposed and set out against. Thus I united the development towns, that became a

powerful body. It was no easy task. . . . The fruit of this labor, and it was of course not only my own, was very visible in the composition of Herut. Until 1967 development towns were not represented except for isolated individuals in the party center. In 1967 their representatives already formed twenty percent of the party. Following the conference in which I ran for head of the permanent committee (whose role it was to design the composition of the party center), representation of neighborhoods and development towns went up to forty percent. The representation continued to increase in the party center and indeed it reflects the party's population of voters, and I believe that, in this, Herut surpasses any other movement in the country.¹¹

In this sense David Levi is different from Labor Party ICs, who failed to increase Mizrahi representation in the party, and perhaps did not seek to do so at all, accepting instead their status as fortunate, "incorporated" Mizrahim, without examining the possibilities for relations between the movement and the Mizrahim. Levi changed both the structural-democratic aspect of Likud and its agenda—Likud (Herut) had never dealt with social questions before Levi joined it, bringing its focus instead to questions of security and foreign policy.

That said, Levi also tried to distance himself from the label of Mizrahi leader, and always aspired to all-Israeli national recognition, both of his leadership and of the identity of his Mizrahi supporters. This was true since his time as a young Knesset member. Knesset records of his first term reveal little parliamentary activity on his part.¹² During his first year he addressed the Knesset twice and filed two official questions. One was about Israeli chess champion Frieda Rabinowitz's assault by "bullies" in the Mizrahi neighborhood of Neve-Sharet in Tel Aviv.¹³ The other was addressed to the minister of housing, asking why he broke his promise to build a synagogue for "fifty Ashkenazi families residing in Shikun Sela in Rishon-Letzion."¹⁴

Levi's first speech was dedicated to the execution of Jews in Iraq who were accused of spying for Israel.¹⁵ Only in his second speech, almost a year later, did he refer to the "poverty problem" and to development towns. In this speech we can identify the motives that would mark Levi's later career:

I come today to demand making the development towns our chief concern . . . It is the accepted term itself, "development towns," that determines how they are treated. Something that is not a city, not a village, and certainly not a kibbutz. This isn't determined by the number of residents. Savyon, for example, is no larger than Beit She'an. It has development, but it is no town. Label a place a "town" and you've already determined its inferiority. Those called development cities or towns are of three kinds: pampered towns, development, and discriminated towns. Is it possible to treat Beersheba like Beit She'an, Ashdod like Hatzor? These are of different kinds. . . . As one of the representatives of the development towns in Israel, I am proud of my origin. However, the Knesset's sympathy for these towns is not enough. They need budgets. They too contribute to national security; they too stand in the

line of fire, their boys will also be soldiers; they too need education; they too hold our future. I am certain that this recognition will unite the Knesset.¹⁶

However, Knesset records do not reflect all of Levi's work during this period, when he was also the Deputy Mayor of Beit She'an, and a member of the Histadrut's acting committee. It was there that he spent most of his time and effort, and he became known for his fierce criticism of MAPAI in the acting committee. Nevertheless, this was at the expense of his activity on the main stage, the Knesset—during his entire first term David Levi addressed the Knesset only twelve times.

An interesting matter for our discussion is Levi's silence throughout all Knesset discussions regarding HaPanterim HaSh'horim. Even when members of his party sought to form a Commission of Inquiry to investigate the "poverty problem," Levi's voice was not heard. This silence can be explained by his fear of being cast in a radical "ethnic" image. The price of this silence was also his anonymity during his first term—only once did his name make the headlines of the large dailies, and this was as a result of a confrontation with the police. On June 21, 1971, Levi came to the aid of a family from Beit She'an who protested in front of the Knesset and were forcefully arrested by the police. In the struggle with the policemen, who ignored his Knesset member identification card, Levi's head was hit by the police Jeep door. This brought Levi a brief exposure, after which he sunk back into unglamorous fieldwork.¹⁷

David Levi truly believed from an early stage that he had acquired his national status in Likud, and when Begin resigned, he saw himself as Begin's natural heir. Losing the 1983 party elections to Shamir, the uncharismatic senior who did not even have a camp of followers in Likud, made Levi realize the path was longer than he had thought. Only in 1992 did he become disillusioned with his national status in Likud, and this recognition was manifest in the famous "Monkeys Speech" he delivered at the party center, accusing his Ashkenazi comrades of unseating him because of his origins.

The labeling of David Levi as a Mizrahi leader was accompanied even years earlier with an explicit rejection of his skills and capacity to function as a national leader. From his first term as a government minister, Levi encountered nothing but distrust. The media never complimented him, and the most blatant symptom of his rejection was a wave of racist jokes originating within and without the party. These jokes sent David Levi repeatedly back to his Mizrahi roots. Even if ostensibly he chose to ignore them and continued to project the image of a statesman, even at the price of condemning the actions of Mizrahi protest movements and disowning them, Levi understood that the jokes were a serious matter, and not funny at all. "Perhaps these jokes result from the fact that Israeli society has not yet become accustomed to having a member of the Mizrahi ethnic groups, who is by nature 'a bit retarded,' supposedly, achieve national recognition, express his opinions openly and be ready to fight for them without wavering."¹⁸

The following story about his first days in Israel, told from the perspective of a government minister, summarizes our discussion of Levi's status as an IC who is at all times "on the fence":

I remember that when we came to Beit She'an, Romanian Jews also came to the town. We lived shack by shack, ate together, laughed together. Yet, the fact is that a few months later they left. They always knew the right person at the Jewish Agency's office, always made contacts and slowly disappeared from the town. Then, of course, the question arose—why them and not us? If there is a problem, why isn't it everybody's problem? Why do all the families that leave bear the names Rubinstein, and Eizenberg, and Milkowsky, and all those that remain are Abutbul, and Bukovza? This created a sense of frustration and an increasing belief that someone plans this injustice towards a specific community. That there is someone who wants to “screw the Black people,” to create purposeful discrimination.

This was followed by a nationalist justification:

I have never accepted this thesis. Since I understood what's happening, I came to the conclusion that there is no intentional malevolence and no planned discrimination, but only criminal negligence. A negligence whose victims are not only the “Black people,” but the entire Israeli society . . . When you do the balance today and see who are the ones in the prisons, who are the criminals, then somewhere your heart bleeds. Yet, to see the problem from an ethnocentric perspective is like pouring oil on the fire . . . One of the things that gives me comfort today is that now everybody knows that if one layer of society is suffering, it cannot be ignored, just as the body cannot ignore a pain in one of its organs.¹⁹

TAMI—tall stance and stuttering tongue

Vested interest encounters social oppression

Like David Levi, TAMI (*Tnu'at Masoret Israel*—the Tradition of Israel Movement), headed by Aharon Abu-Hatzeira, despite taking a radical step by founding an independent Mizrahi party, chose to retain ambiguity in its message: on the one hand, an outcry about economic inequality and the cultural oppression of Mizrahim, and, on the other, perpetual avoidance of Mizrahi identity, or the “ethnic” label—a struggle for equality and social justice on one hand, and a claim for Israeliness on the other. I argue that as Mizrahim began to form a clear and growing block of protest voters, this choice of an ideologically stuttering strategy was TAMI's downfall, leading to its quick disappearance.

It should be noted that TAMI's founding was the result of interest-based politics. Aharon Abu-Hatzeira's trial threatened his status as a prominent minister for MAFDAL, and Aharon Uzan lost his status in the Labor Party. Both were veteran ICs, and as such their motivation for founding a Mizrahi movement was self-interest, not social radicalism, an interest that found fertile social soil—the ongoing socioeconomic inequality even after a term of Likud government.

Abu-Hatzeira was TAMI's uncontested leader. Uzan, who headed the Sephardi Federation in Israel, joined Abu-Hatzeira at the order of the party's patron, the president of the World Sephardi Federation, businessman Nissim Gaon. Gaon was the one who aspired to increase the political power of the Mizrahim in Israel so that they could work toward social change: "Those responsible for the future of Israel are showing appalling indifference to, if not a lack of awareness of the social, cultural and traditional problems of over a million and a half Israeli citizens. More than half of the population is a victim of discrimination as a result of disregard."²⁰ Gaon tried, even before the TAMI initiative, to found a Mizrahi political organization, and once even managed to convene all Mizrahi Knesset members (aside from Charlie Bitton) and called upon them to start a political social lobby in the Knesset. But that was a one-of-a-kind meeting.²¹ He initiated TAMI's founding even before Abu-Hatzeira's verdict was given in his bribery trial (the first trial). On May 25, 1981, Abu-Hatzeira was acquitted of bribery charges, giving the signal for the founding of TAMI.

Aharon Abu-Hatzeira,²² of the same generation as David Levi, was born in Tafilalet, a town in southeast Morocco, the seat of the Abu-Hatzeira rabbinic dynasty—leaders of the Jewish communities in that district and in all of Morocco. Abu-Hatzeira received his education in Morocco and in MAFDAL's educational institutions in Israel. He enlisted in the IDF as part of a Bnei-Akiva group, studied at Bar-Ilan University, and became a teacher. He joined the political activity of MAFDAL in Ramla and made his way up to becoming mayor of Ramla in 1972 as MAFDAL's representative, at the age of thirty-four. About a year later Abu-Hatzeira joined MAFDAL's list of candidates for the Knesset and was the main factor in attracting Mizrahi votes to the party, thanks to his family's dynastic status among Moroccan immigrants in Israel. In 1977 he was appointed minister of religious affairs and became one of the strongest men in the party, then at the peak of its power.

However, within two years of becoming a minister, a bribery investigation was launched against him, on allegations regarding his time as mayor of Ramla. On December 1, 1980, Abu-Hatzeira was indicted on charges of bribery. Within less than a year he was also indicted on separate charges of theft and fraud, while the first trial was still under way. The charges caused an uproar among Moroccans and Mizrahim in general in development towns and poor neighborhoods. Even those who did not support Abu-Hatzeira politically identified with the sense of his being persecuted. Kokhavi Shemesh, a leader of HaPanterim HaSh'horim, told a newspaper: "Black punk.' That is what Gottlieb and Mr B. called Abu-Hatzeira, and that is in fact how all the Ashkenazim in the MAFDAL think. It upset me even though I have nothing to do with Abu-Hatzeira. All Sephardim felt in the Abu-Hatzeira trial as if they themselves were framed."²³ There were critics among the Panterim leaders, such as Sa'adia Marciano, who explicitly pointed at Abu-Hatzeira's motives: "It's all a desire for seats [in the Knesset]. For thirty years Abu-Hatzeira has lived with Burg [MAFDAL chairman Dr Yosef Burg] and never said a word about the prisons in Israel being full of Sephardim. Now that Burg screwed him over seats in the Knesset he suddenly remembered he's Sephardi."²⁴

The most significant sharp reaction in the Moroccan communities was that of Rabbi Yisrael Abu-Hatzeira (Baba Sali), Aharon Abu-Hatzeira's uncle, who published a pamphlet calling upon the Mizrahim to demonstrate against those he called the "men of evil."

About a week after the second indictment, Abu-Hatzeira was cleared of the first set of charges, and he continued to serve in office. In the Knesset elections of 1981 TAMI won three seats and tipped the balance for forming Begin's second government. Abu-Hatzeira was appointed minister of immigrant absorption, and Aharon Uzan was named minister of labor and welfare. In April 1982, still serving as a government minister, Abu-Hatzeira was convicted of larceny, fraud, and breach of trust. He was sentenced to three months community service and forced to resign. The verdict unleashed another uproar. Abu-Hatzeira did not recover from the blow, but in 1984 he was the only one on TAMI's list to make it to Knesset. He was later absorbed by Likud and disappeared from the Israeli political landscape. It was this uproar and the atmosphere of confrontation to which SHAS connected in the same election campaign.

TAMI and the pact with the intellectuals

Though the immediate motivation for founding TAMI was Abu-Hatzeira's and Uzan's personal interest, it encountered a social reality of ongoing inequality and increasing cultural class tension. TAMI became, from the moment of its founding, a magnet for additional Mizrahi forces with varying degrees of social motivation and Mizrahi awareness. These tried to influence TAMI's character as a Mizrahi party that appeals to the Mizrahi population and puts the central Mizrahi class and culture issues on the agenda, at least during election campaigns. After the elections it became clear that TAMI was a one-man movement. The beautiful ideas regarding cultural and social change became empty slogans. Every office allotted to TAMI was manned by Abu-Hatzeira's network of cronies. The young intellectual supporters could only protest.²⁵ Another interesting group that joined TAMI was a group of Mizrahi neighborhood rabbis who were frustrated with MAFDAL's patronizing. These rabbis, not only Moroccans but also Bukharan, Iraqi, and Indian rabbis, began showing up at the party's headquarters in Jerusalem.²⁶ Their disappointment with the elections' outcome led them to the new organizations—SHAS' list of candidates for the Jerusalem City Council in 1983, and later the SHAS movement in general. It turned out, therefore, that TAMI had wrested the poor neighborhoods' and development towns' rabbis of MAFDAL, then SHAS came along to reap the fruits.

TAMI's election slogan in 1981, "With a Tall Stance," struck many young Mizrahim of the second generation as refreshing and bold. TAMI openly appealed to the downtrodden Mizrahims' pride, aware of the motives for the 1977 protest vote: "The security of Israel and arming the IDF come first, before more comfortable housing or a cleaner neighborhood. However, there is something else, which we will never again swallow—our pride. With a Tall Stance, and with mutual respect we shall debate any issue, but the self-erasure and apology for our

ethnicity will be no more.”²⁷ Eli Dayan, mayor of Ashkelon, leader of Oded, and TAMI’s third leader, apologized in an interview on Israeli television during this same campaign: “This is not an ethnic party; this is a party of authentic leaders, a party against the system, for national-social ideas, that appeal to the entire people. . . . We are not ethnic; we are for the love of Israel.”²⁸ With these apologetic words Dayan pitted, perhaps unintentionally, Mizrahiness (“ethnic”) against “love of Israel.” In his words we discern the impossible combination “national–social,” coined by David Levi. This combination holds the Mizrahi ambivalence that we identified only to a small extent in HaPanterim HaSh’horim and more so in other Mizrahi movements, but it became an ideology via David Levi in Likud. The combination “national–social” seems to be an oxymoron: a “Mizrahi struggle against oppression (‘the system’)” along with “incorporation into Israeli nationalism” (the system’s ideology). Thus said Aharon Abu-Hatzeira: “No more ethnic neglect, no more ‘quotas’ on an ethnic basis, no more two peoples in one land. I, Aharon Abu-Hatzeira, hereby pledge, along with my comrades, that when the day comes, when these borders will be no longer, I, Aharon Abu-Hatzeira, will be the first to take down this banner I have raised today.”²⁹

In fact, in electoral fieldwork Abu-Hatzeira and his comrades openly appealed to Mizrahi voters in three circles: most broadly to all Mizrahim; next to North African supporters of party leaders (Abu-Hatzeira, Uzan, Dayan); and within this circle to a smaller group of Moroccans, traditionally loyal to the Abu-Hatzeira rabbinic dynasty. The 1981 election results clearly show it was this smallest circle—Moroccans loyal to the Abu-Hatzeira dynasty—that gave TAMI at least two of its three Knesset seats. These voters were concentrated in two cities, Ashdod and Ramla.³⁰ These loyal communities’ near automatic vote for TAMI, thirty years after arriving in Israel, is a more complex phenomenon than may be realized on first examination.

Indeed, the Abu-Hatzeira police investigation and his humiliating trial, with broad media coverage, were perceived by the family’s followers as a grave injury to the dynasty’s honor. Yet, this alone cannot account for TAMI’s success.³¹ The main factors that benefited TAMI were the radicalization of the Mizrahi protest vote and HaOhalim’s protest shortly before the elections, which were the tensest elections Israel ever witnessed in terms of Ashkenazi–Mizrahi relations. Although Likud was completing a full term in power, the Mizrahim in the Likud continued directing their protest at the Labor Party, still perceived as powerful and threatening. In the 1981 campaign, Mizrahi Likud activists led operations to sabotage Labor election gatherings. Twice, in Petah Tikva on June 16, and in Gan Saccher in Jerusalem on June 3, they even clashed with police forces. In Jerusalem the calls that silenced Shimon Peres made Mordechai Gur lose his temper and yell at the Mizrahim: “We will screw you like we screwed the Arabs.”³² In this turbulent atmosphere, alongside Likud, TAMI made itself available as an option for a Mizrahi protest vote. It worked.

Beyond these conditions, Hanna Herzog notes the organizational and political factors that allowed TAMI to run a quick and successful election campaign.³³ The party’s three leaders—Abu-Hatzeira, Uzan, and Dayan—brought with them

political expertise, support networks, voters from the parties they quit, and experienced organizing teams. Finally, but perhaps decisively, money was a factor. Many of the Mizrahi movements before TAMI had come close to making it into the Knesset but failed because of a lack of funds. The wealthy Mizrahim rejected the message of Mizrahi struggle. It was businessman Nissim Gaon, who also served as head of the World Sephardi Federation, who broke this refusal by funding TAMI's campaign with a sum hitherto unprecedented, more than \$1 million. Gaon's support for a clearly Mizrahi political struggle caused him harsh confrontations with the Ashkenazi public. He was accused of coaxing ethnic unrest and aggravating the ethnic divide—a false demagogic claim, familiar since the Ben-Gurion era. Gaon did not keep silent, and in a series of full-page newspaper ads answered the attacks, revealing a radical Mizrahi stance, as in the following:

The wickedness with which the Israeli media is attacking my involvement in TAMI raises questions regarding their real intentions. The impression is that the media in Israel is part and parcel of the political establishment. They view this new political initiative as a threat. The parties themselves, on a thirty-three-year power high, fear that a new initiative to change the social order in Israel will undermine their authority. They want to keep ruling and using the Jews of Asia and Africa as their pawns. In fact, they want to engulf them in their supposedly western culture, to uproot them from their tradition and culture. Have I encouraged an ethnic party? The divide is the doing of the parties themselves; they were the ones who sowed division and separation between Moroccans, Iraqis and Yemenites as if they were pawns on a chess board, instead of seeing them, simply, as Israeli citizens.³⁴

This precedent set by TAMI and Nissim Gaon was the foundation on which SHAS later built a system of fund-raising from wealthy Mizrahim in Israel and abroad.³⁵

In the broad circle of TAMI supporters were young Mizrahim who were strangers to the leaders' support circles in their previous parties. These were intellectuals and artists such as Vicky Shiran, Asher Idan, Ofer Brunstein, Erez Bitton, and Shlomo Bar and students, many from the Oded movement, such as Eli Dayan and Raphael Ben-Shoshan. This encounter is important to our discussion since we identify its predictable failure with the awakening of the intellectual Mizrahim, followed by the separation, which boosted the growth of the new Mizrahi discourse in the 1980s and 1990s.

After TAMI's failure in the 1984 elections, its leaders struggled for personal survival by attempting to re-enter parties on the Left and Right. Abu-Hatzeira turned to Likud, Eli Dayan joined Labor, Fuad Ben-Eliezer joined Ezer Weizman's new party (YAHAD), and later Labor. Aharon Uzan retired from political life. TAMI's electoral collapse in 1984 was primarily an ideological failure, not a result of Aharon Abu-Hatzeira's conviction. The evidence: SHAS nearly doubled its power just after its leader, Arye Deri, was convicted. TAMI, unlike SHAS, did not provide an alternative political home to the Ashkenazi Zionist camp, both religious and nonreligious, which it left and confronted, but without attacking the

manipulative “national unity” myth of Ashkenazi politics.³⁶ The act of founding the party was in itself insufficient because it came about chiefly out of the self-interest of two ICs from Ashkenazi-ruled parties. It did not identify the ripeness of the Mizrahi protest awareness, which gradually progressed to the alternative action phase. Mainly because of its veteran IC leaders, TAMI failed to exit the center and present an alternative, as did SHAS, which quickly drew the lesson from TAMI’s short experience.

In March 1984, TAMI stood in the center of a political tempest when it caused the collapse of the government, bringing about early elections. SHAS accused TAMI of causing early elections in order to sabotage the formation of the new party. This political ruse did not save TAMI, and it won only one Knesset seat.

TAMI’s collapse also marked a significant ideological development for the formulation of the new radical Mizrahi discourse. The party’s young intellectual supporters took a more militant stance, in which we can identify socialist class-struggle ideological elements rather than ethnic ones, as well as a parting from the religious image; they were knowingly and publicly recognized as Mizrahim, and women, in particular Viki Shiran, who served as the party’s spokesperson and frequently appeared in the media, became prominent speakers against the policies of inequality.

Mizrahi voters who rejected TAMI in the second round can be divided into two types. Most continued to prefer Likud as a legitimate Mizrahi political home, and a minority found a Mizrahi alternative in the new Mizrahi religious party, SHAS, which, for its part, thought little of TAMI and its secular message. The spiritual leader of SHAS, Rabbi Yosef, made a clear ruling during the 1984 elections: “It is prohibited to vote for them [TAMI candidates], since they do not follow the Rabbis.”³⁷

The young, the educated, and the intellectuals, disappointed by the political experience with TAMI, embarked on a new journey, a struggle for Mizrahi awareness of class and culture. Thus did the process of forming the new Mizrahi discourse begin. Paradoxically, parting from rather than confronting TAMI was decisive for the radicalization of Mizrahi politics. TAMI served as an enabling event in this shift.

Ideological radicalization: two sides of the same coin—SHAS and the new Mizrahi discourse

The social and cultural conditions

An understanding of the Mizrahi Ballot Rebellion, which passed the point of no return in 1981, would be incomplete without noting the socioeconomic and cultural conditions in the late 1970s and early 1980s that indicated a continued Mizrahi inferiority. HaPanterim HaSh’horim’s uprising and the Ballot Rebellion of 1977, which had their origin and goal in resistance to economic oppression, also awakened resistance to cultural oppression, including demands for a cultural balance in the curriculum and national media. The relative liberation from the

terror of MAPAI allowed the Mizrahim to commence a journey of cultural confrontation, which became the center of the Mizrahi struggle in the 1980s and 1990s.

Persistence of Mizrahi economic oppression

Notwithstanding slight improvements in areas such as housing density and high school graduation rates, social gaps in the early 1980s display a clear ethnic class division between Ashkenazim and Mizrahim, and even a worsening of the difference in income levels in the first generation born in Israel. According to a study by Yaakov Nahon,³⁸ two factors that are not related to policy changes positively affected the state of these gaps. First, the birth rate among Mizrahi women, once more than double the rate for Ashkenazi women, fell to just 10 percent more. This change, one must note, resulted from the process of secularization of Mizrahim in Israel as part of their cultural oppression through modernization, as well as from increased consciousness of fighting poverty among the second generation. In seemingly paradoxical fashion, we encounter the opposite pattern in the 1990s—increased fertility in the community of SHAS supporters as a result of the movement toward cultural liberation and a return to tradition and religion. The second factor is interethnic marriages, which were about 20 percent of marriages by the end of the 1970s. However, interethnic marriages are no solution to the gaps, as they take place between the lower-class segment of the Ashkenazi population and the higher-class segment of the Mizrahi population. Therefore, even if such a pattern of interethnic marriages will reach the maximum possible, the economic gaps will remain and even worsen, since the Ashkenazi upper-middle and upper classes and the Mizrahi lower-middle and lower classes do not tend to intermarry. Yohanan Peres points to an interesting finding, according to which the majority of intermarriages in the first generation were between Ashkenazi men and Mizrahi women, and “involve maintaining a gap and unidirectional feelings of rejection” by the Ashkenazim toward the Mizrahim.³⁹ Peres notes the fascinating conclusion of the historian Risley from his study of intermarriage in India, South America, and South Africa: “Whenever one people subdues another, whether by sudden conquest or by a process of gradual suppression, the conquerors take wives and mistresses from among the conquered, but wed their daughters among themselves.”⁴⁰

I would like to point to the other aspect of this phenomenon: in the second generation, marriages of educated Mizrahim with Ashkenazim were a sort of shortcut to improving their status by acquiring the new “European Zionist” identity. At least this was the illusion. We have seen that most Mizrahim, who did not receive an education because they suffered oppression in the unequal educational system, made do with improving their status through attempts at symbolic integration: adopting national Jewish symbols in a most ostensible fashion and rejecting the characteristics of Arab identity and culture. This behavior included the adoption of external symbols, such as wearing golden Star of David pendants to distinguish themselves from Arabs and raising the Israeli flag from balconies on Independence Day, but was expressed mostly through massive

support for Likud and even voting for Meir Kahane's racist, anti-Mizrahi party, which helped land him in the Knesset in 1984.⁴¹

In the beginning of the fourth decade after the Mizrahim arrived in Israel, they and the second-generation Mizrahim (born in Israel) still suffer the consequences of prolonged economic oppression, as evident in the data on the three main areas of inequality: education, occupation, and quality of life (income and housing density).

General data

In 1982 the Jewish population in Israel included 1,552,100 Mizrahi and 1,273,400 Ashkenazi immigrants, and 494,600 Israeli-born citizens, most of whom were Mizrahi. Of the economically better off, 88 percent were Ashkenazim. Of the bottom 10 percent, more than three-fifths were Mizrahim and nearly one-fifth were Israeli-Arabs. The average Mizrahi family included 4.2 children (though a drastic drop in birth rates occurred among those born in Israel). In the highest birth rate category, seven children or more per family, 30.2 percent were Mizrahim, as compared to 1.4 percent Ashkenazim (the remainder being Arab families). The average Ashkenazi family included 2.7 children (including ultra-Orthodox Ashkenazi families).⁴²

Education

The gap in elementary and high school graduation rates diminished, but in the category of higher education, the gap increased among those born in Israel. The percentage of Mizrahim born in Israel who attended academic high school (EIYUNI) leading to university education did not increase, as compared to a slight increase among Ashkenazim born in Israel. At the end of the 1970s, only 23.8 percent of students in academic tracks were Mizrahim born in Israel, while Mizrahim accounted for 55 percent of the Israeli population. In 1984 only 7.6 percent of bachelor's degree recipients, 2 percent of master's degree recipients, and 0.5 percent of Ph.D. recipients were Mizrahim born in Israel. Among tenured faculty in the universities, a mere 1.2 percent were Mizrahim.

At the same time, Ashkenazim born in Israel accounted for 34.8 percent of bachelor's degree recipients, 68.1 percent of master's degree recipients, and 59.9 percent of Ph.D. recipients (the remainder being foreign-born, with a great Ashkenazi majority). The data indicate a decline for Mizrahim born in Israel as compared to Mizrahim of the previous generation, those born outside Israel who studied in Israeli universities, for whom the percentages were: bachelor's degree recipients, 11.1; master's degree recipients, 5.8; and Ph.D. recipients, 6.7. For the state, this was a failure both on the level of declared ideology (modernization, justice, and equality) and on the level of social structures and infrastructure—a failure that had become a trap for Mizrahim and, of course, for Arabs. One of Labor's ideologues, Lyuba Eliav, put it clearly: "Israel cannot blame the Middle Eastern countries with the nondevelopment of the Mizrahi communities, since the second generation was born and raised in Israel. This is the greatest

failure of our society. We have managed to pass the educational gap through the generations.”⁴³

The captains of education, supported by modernization sociologists, continued to attribute the problems to cultural factors issuing from the country of origin. But in 1984 two new studies exposed the official policy of the Ministry of Education to direct Mizrahi students to special education tracks in elementary schools and to vocational education in high school.⁴⁴ The very structure of the unequal education system (in 1984, for example, there was not a single academic school in all of the Mizrahi neighborhoods and development towns) displays an overarching policy to train trade manpower in Israel.⁴⁵ In 1980 406,977 Mizrahi children were defined as *teuney tipuah* (under-privileged), a definition reserved for Mizrahim alone, as one of the qualifiers was “father’s ethnicity: Asia-Africa,” alongside three other criteria: father’s schooling, ten years or less; number of children in the family, four or more; and income, lower than average. Already in 1978 Leah Adar suggested canceling this classification of Mizrahi students, to allow teachers to treat them without predetermined negative labeling.⁴⁶

Occupation

The gaps in education led to the gaps in occupation. According to Yaakov Nahon, these gaps remained and even deepened slightly among the generation born in Israel. In academic professions, Nahon found overrepresentation of Ashkenazim, especially among Israeli-born, and underrepresentation of foreign-born and Israeli-born Mizrahim alike.⁴⁷ In the category of skilled and unskilled laborers, the situation was reversed: overrepresentation of Mizrahim, especially Israeli-born, and underrepresentation of Ashkenazim. Nahon concluded that “in every case the gap in representation between East and West increased over time and remains greater in the generation born in Israel than among those born abroad.”⁴⁸ Nahon found that the income gap, as a result of occupation, which also had decreased among foreign-born, had deepened among Israeli-born.

Housing density

The gaps in housing density between Israeli-born Ashkenazim and Mizrahim became smaller as a result of lower birth rates and not because of increased housing. In the worst category of housing density, four or more persons per room, there were 37,000 Mizrahi families as opposed to 2,242 Ashkenazi families. As for housing ownership, most first-generation Mizrahim living in the poor neighborhoods and development towns still resided in small public housing units, a fact that prevented them from enjoying estate actualization and passing inheritance to the next generation. Hence the generation born in Israel started off with nothing by way of housing, without the assistance of accumulated family property.⁴⁹

Nahon’s main conclusion is that in the beginning of the 1980s the economic gaps in Israeli society divided the population into two ethnic groups among Israeli-born as well, despite the state’s determined socialization processes:

Moreover, the gaps often widened. The gaps are greater among the Israeli-born than among the foreign-born (in occupation, for example) because of the greater achievements of the Israeli-born of Western descent; these as a group have become more of an elite than those of the same ethnicity born abroad, while the Mizrahi Israeli-born remained at about the same place as Mizrahim born abroad. The competition between the two groups over social positions did not take place under equal conditions: large families, economic conditions, inferior ecology and negative images grouped together to slow down the progress of Mizrahim born in Israel.⁵⁰

From cultural oppression to cultural confrontation

Cultural oppression continued so long as the Mizrahim were completely dependent on the ruling parties, and therefore impotent and defeated culturally. From the moment the Mizrahim began resisting economic oppression, a radical effect was created on the educated and a resistance to cultural oppression began to form as well. Historian Michel Abitbul comments that “the renewal of the study of ethnic heritage and history is one of the side effects of the ethnic awakening in recent years.”⁵¹ However, a crucial change occurred in the epicenter of research. The Ministry of Education, along with the universities, decided for obvious political reasons to appropriate the field of research on the culture and history of Mizrahi Jews from the few Mizrahi organizations, by taking responsibility for funding.⁵² The Ashkenazi Zionist hegemony’s control of academic research, mainly for the purpose of curricular development, remained the same: “The political system that funds the research is in fact its producer and consumer, and it determines which fields will be researched and which neglected. . . . The ministry, not the researcher, determines what is relevant, what is useful or not.”⁵³ Thus, the Ministry of Education, through the Center for the Cultivation of *Edot HaMizrah* (Mizrahi ethnicities) Heritage in the curricula department, began to perform a folkloristic “Zionization” of Mizrahi history and culture, rather than a real culture balancing of the curriculum; this can be called “demagogical multiculturalism.”⁵⁴ In the schools, all Israeli children continued to study the Ashkenazi Zionist narrative according to the official program, and the development of new curricula on Mizrahi Jews was not obligatory for schools and teachers. The passing on of ignorance of the Ashkenazim regarding Mizrahi Jewry from generation to generation through the education system, and more gravely also the stereotypical cultural distortions, increased cultural alienation, tension, and confrontation. Black writer James Baldwin wrote about a similar situation in the U.S.:

It is not really a “Negro revolution” that is upsetting the country. What is upsetting the country is a sense of its own identity. If, for example, one managed to change the curriculum in all the schools so that Negroes learned more about themselves and their real contributions to this culture, you would be liberating not only Negroes, you’d be liberating white people who know nothing about their own history. And the reason is that if you are compelled

to lie about one aspect of anybody's history, you must lie about it all. If you have to lie about my real role here, if you have to pretend that I hoed all that cotton just because I loved you, then you have done something to yourself. You are mad.⁵⁵

The ignorance of second-generation Mizrahim regarding their culture as a result of the erasure of Mizrahi culture and history from the curricula,⁵⁶ as well as to alienation and rejection by the Ashkenazi hegemony, brought an entire generation of Mizrahim to cultural emptiness, the only way out of which, aside from an attempt at cultural self-erasure, is withdrawal from life's normative framework, life outside the law, despair and addiction, an increasing turn to religion, or entering a new process—the beginning of a search for the erased identity and culture, which since the 1980s has generated an increasing wave of Mizrahi poets, authors, researchers, musicians, artists, theater and cinema creators, magazines, organizations, and research foundations. This cultural current has managed to acquire supporters and identifiers among many young Ashkenazim as well, who see it as another phase in the Israeli cultural formation in the Middle East. Further down we will see these two paths—return to religion and the new Mizrahi discourse—becoming two aspects of the same coin: rejection of the hegemonic Ashkenazi Zionist discourse and formation of an alternative superstructure.

One of the central accelerators of the process of cultural confrontation was the flooding and rising to the surface of ethnic anxieties among Ashkenazi Zionist opinion makers, who began to feel, since Likud took power in 1981, that they were losing cultural hegemony to the Mizrahim. These unfounded anxieties were manifest both in reactionary Ashkenazi political organizations, and in statements by members of the Ashkenazi elites, who contributed to the sharpening and hardening of the two sides' cultural positions. An example was the extensive discussion that ensued after the publication of the following essay by a mainstream Ashkenazi journalist and author, Amnon Dankner, who in 1983 raised the possibility of a culture war between Ashkenazim and Mizrahim:

This will not be a civil war [in Hebrew: a war of brothers], not because there will be no war, but because it will not take place between brothers, for if I am a side in this war, which is forced upon me, I refuse to call the other side my "brothers." These are not my brothers and not my sisters, leave me alone, I have no sister. . . . They lay down the sticky blanket of the love of Israel and ask me to consider the cultural lack, the sentiments of authentic neglect . . . My blood boils when I hear these self-righteous calls . . . They put me in a single cage with an enraged baboon and tell me, "OK, now you are together, start having a dialogue, there is no other choice. . ." The baboon is against me and the keeper is against me, and the prophets of the love of Israel stand aside, wink wisely at me and say, "Speak nicely to him, toss him a banana, after all you are brothers." Now I want to tell you that I am sick of feeling sorry and sympathetic. I know all these stories about the neglect and the gap and the

frustration and the DDT and the shacks. Wadi A-Salib and the Mousrara and poverty and humiliation. I know this history no less than those who are filled with the love of Israel, and I recognize the wrongs done, but if it means that I have to offer my neck to the slaughterers, to turn my cheek to the spitters and hitters—then no. That’s it. . . . It must be said that the nation is divided into two distinct political groups that, to our demise, are also identified by countries of origin. It must be said that a large, loud and violent part of Likud supporters sees in its political activity also an expression of ethnic hatred. . . . All this talk about—OK, OK, don’t get mad, we recognize that you too brought an enormous heritage. It’s true that we had Heine and Freud and Einstein and all this wondrous synthesis between Judaism and Western culture, but you also had nice things: hospitality, respect for parents, a great patriarchal tradition. If I hear this nonsense again I’m going to scream! Kissing father’s hand and the wonderful hospitality and the authentic longing for Zion and the naïve messianism are perhaps nice things for those who like these kinds of things, but for me they are not of the symbols that I would like to see in the society that I and my spiritual fathers have dreamed of founding here: a model society of humanism, an advanced society interlaced with the more beautiful visions of humanist liberalism. The supporters of the love of Israel are whispering . . . “Don’t call them ‘Khomeinists,’ don’t call them ‘primitive,’ it just makes them angrier.”⁵⁷

Dankner learned one thing immediately after his article was published: the Mizrahim know not only how to kiss hands and peel bananas but also how to read his article and to respond in writing. Responses flooded the papers. *Haolam Haze* editor Uri Avneri considered the article especially important

because it does not express the personal sentiment of a single person. This sentiment has been spreading around the country for some time now, and it includes a growing circle of Ashkenazim . . . The ethnic problem in Israel is no less dangerous to our future than the problem of peace with the Palestinian people . . . All of this large public [the Mizrahim] suffers a deep sense of humiliation. The humiliation of its tradition and culture, of its past, daily social humiliation. It has lost its cultural assets, which were seen by the ruling Ashkenazi society as primitive and contemptible. . . . No objective conditions caused the cultural neglect of the Mizrahi ethnic groups in Israel, but an atmosphere of malice and alienation. If so many persons of the Mizrahi ethnic groups hold key positions in the cultural and social life of France today, it means that we must seek the reasons for the situation in Israel in circumstances distant from stereotypes; no genetics are at work here, but politics; not biology, but sociology.⁵⁸

Brigadier general (ret) Benjamin Ben-Eliezer (or Fuad, as he’s known by his Arab name), who joined TAMI and led the party to the 1984 elections, added his opinion to the understanding of the matter:

Dankner doesn't only identify the Mizrahim with the political right, with the crowds in the city squares, but when he speaks of freedom of speech and 'who shuts whose mouth,' he ignores the fact that in a modern society you can scream with thousands of people in the city square and no one knows you exist, but you can shut yourself in a room with your own column in the paper and reach tens of thousands of readers. Those whose path to the media was blocked made their way to the squares.

On the matter of peace, Ben-Eliezer clarified Dankner's misunderstanding: "It's worth reminding him that we live in the Middle East, and if he can't live in peace with the sister he doesn't have, he will never be able to live with the cousins he does have."⁵⁹

More than displaying merely racist opinions, Dankner managed, in one article (and others that followed), to express real anxieties of the hegemonic Ashkenazi Zionists' losing primacy and "the dream that I and my spiritual fathers have dreamed of founding here." We have already seen these anxieties rise in the shock of the first encounter between Ashkenazi Zionism and the Mizrahim in the early 1950s (Chapter 1), along with the sense of security and the belief that mechanisms for preserving the Ashkenazi hegemony would efficiently handle this tension.

Protest in the 1970s and above all the 1977 Ballot Rebellion, confirmed in 1981, proved that the Ashkenazi hegemony's mechanisms were beginning to crack. The more they cracked, the more the real anxieties so eloquently expressed by Dankner in the name of an entire generation rose to the surface. Dankner gave this sentiment yet more blatant expression in his book *Berman, Why Did You Do This to Me?* in the cynical words he put in the mouth of his kibbutz protagonist:

We must build a bridge to the development towns, to bring the population closer, so that these strong, black men, these animals, these monkeys, can come and flood our lawns, and suck us dry, have intercourse with our wives and daughters and erase our faces, and have their Mimouna and Saharne celebrations by the [kibbutz] dining room. And have belly dancing in the clubhouse. Sure, we shouldn't segregate, alienate or patronize, give them everything for free, give them the regional factories, the fields and the plantations and the cattle, tear down the fences and open the gates, what does it matter who will ruin us, they or the Arabs? Invite Shimi Tavori to perform instead of Sarale Sharon, open a synagogue, and let their filthy children piss in our pools.⁶⁰

Dankner's writing and that of others were not unique expressions.⁶¹ They emerged from the fertile ground of a press that systematically labeled the Mizrahim with negative stereotypes, as seen in the findings of researcher Eli Avraham about the coverage of Mizrahim in the media in the 1980s and 1990s. Analyzing hundreds of articles from the Israeli press, Avraham listed the recurring motifs in the depiction of Mizrahim by the media: "1) violence, crime, and civil unrest; 2) filth and neglect; 3) lack of control over fate and a blurry future; 4) generalizations, no

individuality ('herd') and ethnic political identification; 5) doubt about their ability to be like 'us'; 6) the 'primitive' syndrome."⁶²

Against the backdrop of the continued collapse of the Ashkenazi Zionist myths, and the atmosphere of escalating cultural confrontation, radical Mizrahi political, cultural, and educational organizations were formed and placed themselves at the front line of the confrontation. SHAS too was born, the first Mizrahi movement that sought to present a complete and ultimate ideological alternative to Ashkenazi Zionism. These developments were soon met by Ashkenazi Zionist political reactions at the end of the 1970s and during the 1980s and 1990s. Two predominant examples are MERETZ, and even more so Shinui (an Ashkenazi reactionary movement that claim to represent the interest of the middle class), headed by Yosef Lapid. These two movements always spoke for "sane secularism," directing their words at Likud and SHAS, whose voters were prominently Mizrahi.

The beginning of the break from Ashkenazi Zionist hegemony

The commencement of Mizrahims' journey of mental separation from the shackles of the Ashkenazi Zionist hegemony was directed inward at first as with other revolutionary processes, forming a Mizrahi solidarity that for the first time crossed the divisions into separate "Mizrahi ethnic groups." This separation was founded by the political system on the Left and the Right alike, with the divide-and-conquer method mentioned earlier, although early signs of cross-ethnic Mizrahi unification had begun appearing in the 1920s and 1930s in Palestine, in the Sephardi communities and Talmud Torah institutions and later, more clearly, in the Sephardi-Mizrahi Porat Yosef Yeshiva.⁶³

The prominent motif in this separation was later developed and presented by hegemonic sociology as the "Moroccan problem." In an attempt to cope with the troubling fact that most of the Mizrahi rebellion and protest organizations were initiated and led by Moroccan and North African Jews, Ashkenazi sociologists and anthropologists produced publications explaining this fact by cultural factors of underdevelopment, in particular behavioral and socioeconomic characteristics prominent among Moroccans but not among other ethnicities, such as the Iraqis, who according to this argument were better adapted to modernization. One explanation, for example, was the difference in dates of arrival. All Iraqis arrived in 1949, soon after the founding of Israel, and were housed in the big cities, whereas Moroccans arrived later and were housed in the development towns. But this explanation fails a reality check. All of the Mizrahi uprisings under Moroccan leadership took place in the big cities where the first Moroccans settled, not in development towns. Moreover, Iraqi Jews from the same neighborhoods participated in those protests. Another explanation about Iraqi Jews mentions the respect Ashkenazis had for their relatively high levels of education. This myth is also proven wrong by the later placement of Iraqis in the inferior education system in Mizrahi neighborhoods and development towns. Louise Cohen, an Iraqi intellectual, who had been a teacher in Iraq, and became an activist in Israel against

the oppression of Mizrahim, predominantly in education, recalled in her writing that respect as she encountered it upon arrival in Israel:

Morning classes. Until ten o'clock the students do carpentry. Hard at work, a small table, a shelf. English and Math are pushed to one in the afternoon. A method for perpetuating the gap through low grades. No liberal arts and science. In a vocational school, a student who fails a subject is prohibited from being tested for matriculation diploma. . . . Writer Shmuel Moré, world renowned, Iraqi, whose books were translated into forty-seven languages. His sister Sphirones, who has two sons. When they finished elementary school, the principal said they were not capable of studying liberal arts and science. One [will be] a carpenter, the other a glass worker. The mother fought for her sons' education. Today, one is an esteemed physician, not in Israel. The other, Professor Yosef Bar-Cohen, is a world-renowned physicist, who developed the drill for investigating space rocks, and studied at the University of California in Los Angeles. NASA gave him a Special Engineering Achievement award. He received a medal of honor for his exceptional engineering accomplishment from the U.S. Space Agency. The mother showed records of the children to the principal: "These are the children of whom you said, one carpenter, one glass worker." The principal turned purple with rage.⁶⁴

Accounting for the prominence of Moroccans in rebellion and protest is more complex. First, the Moroccan community was and remains the largest Mizrahi community (larger than all other Mizrahi communities combined), obviously the most prominent and the most threatening in the eyes of Ashkenazim—as opposed to, say, Yemenites or Tunisians, small communities embraced by the elites. Moroccans were rebellious, and compared to the rest of the Mizrahim they did indeed have difficulty surrendering to the socialization decree of Ashkenazi Zionism, and therefore the Mizrahi struggle as a whole was more than once labeled the "Moroccan problem," or the "Moroccan rebellion." Eitan Cohen explains the rebellious character of the Moroccans through historical and cultural reasons, according to which the individual is always in confrontation with the authority. These centuries-long traditions resulted in the development of informal social structures and institutions: "Since the seventeenth century and up until the 1970s, Moroccan Jews came upon realities that continued to strengthen the status of the personal element in social life as well, and at the same time, unavoidably, also to resist the validity of rational authority and the acceptance of the 'Ashkenazi' Israeli establishment's rule."⁶⁵ This partial explanation does not on its own provide a full answer to such a complex question.

Other objective reasons for the Moroccans' high involvement in and leadership of the Mizrahi struggle (and most prominently the confrontational aspects), from the first days of the state through to the present day, lie in several historical factors that call for more research. Following initial lines of thought I identify two such historical factors, related to the beginning of the encounter with Ashkenazi Zionism. Unlike Iraqi Jews, who were incorporated in the neocolonial Iraqi middle class who

mastered official Arabic, and of whom some had an early connection with Ashkenazi Zionist leadership, and later with Israel's intelligence and secret service institutions,⁶⁶ and unlike Tunisian Jews, who also made an early pact with European colonialism and with the European Zionist movement, Moroccan Jews did not connect with European colonialism or with the Ashkenazi Zionist movement in a deep and extensive fashion. Their level of dependence and loyalty was much lower than that of the smaller communities, since "preparation" for immigration to Israel was minimal and touched a limited segment of society.⁶⁷ It goes without saying that the smaller Mizrahi communities chosen for an early pact with the Ashkenazi Zionist movement felt chosen and primary among the Mizrahim. A second cause for Moroccan prominence in the leadership of rebellion and protest is the Ashkenazi Zionist movement's harsh response to its encounter with Moroccan Jews: rejection, alienation, loathing, and, worst of all, an attempt to stop their immigration through racist selection.⁶⁸ The trauma of Moroccan Jews from the selection experience became the first experience in their collective political memory in Israel, first in a series of traumas of economic cultural oppression under the bulldozer of Zionist modernization. The intensity of the selection experience is manifest in the stories of thousands of Moroccan Jews, but in the recollections of those who carried out the selection it sounds even harsher, as in the story of Yehuda Berginski, head of the Department of Immigration at the time:

On the dusty earth lay an old woman wrapped in wide clothes, weeping silently, uttering few words in her withheld wail. Occasionally she brought her arms close to her body and rolled in the dust in her sorrow. I innocently thought she was sick, but it was explained to me that she lives with the family of her married daughter. The husband is old and the number of family members exceeds the number allowed by immigration regulations, and she is not included in the [selection] list. I thought, what are we doing? what will become of this lonely old woman, who will have to search for roof and bread? this is real murder! And what will the family think of the classification team, of Israel and the Jewish people that brought about the mother's abandonment? And what will they think of us, the Ashkenazim, who come to insert orders and make regulations?⁶⁹

In his book *Emat HaHalom* (The Dream's Terror), author Nehorai Meir Chetrit brings forth many testimonies by Moroccan Jews who had, with great messianic enthusiasm, liquidated all of their possessions and sought to emigrate to Israel, after which the selection disqualified one of the elders or the sick in the family, and the whole family remained in Morocco, devoid of assets. Especially moving are the words of the rabbi of the little town of Gourama, in southeast Morocco, to his congregation: "When the selection was explained to the Rabbi Baba Ana, the honorable Rabbi was enraged and said: 'For this humiliation of humans alone, Israel must be boycotted. Either there should be an Israel for all Jews, or everyone should remain in exile until the coming of the Messiah, and anyway, anyone who wants the real Israel can create it in his home, his town and his community,' thus

said the honorable Rabbi Mas'oud Levi."⁷⁰ Rabbi Levi died and was buried in his town in Morocco. The Jews of Morocco took the memory of selection with them on the journey of incorporation and protest in Israel.

In spite of the rebellious prominence of the Moroccans, the Mizrahi struggle had managed to overcome the "Moroccan problem" manipulation already in the HaPanterim HaSh'horim's uprising, which shaped both the movement and the goals of the struggle as pan-Mizrahi. Yet it was only in the early 1980s that the barriers between the ethnic groups in the Mizrahi struggle fell away and the emphasis on ethnicity and even the expression "ethnic" itself disappeared from the discourse. In its final and fully fashioned stage, thanks to the Panterim's breakthrough, the turn to a pan-Mizrahi struggle discourse became possible along three main lines: first, the thoroughly critical sociology of *Mahbarot leMehkar Ulevikoret* group led by Shlomo Swirski and others; second, the beginning of the development of a new pan-Mizrahi discourse among educated Mizrahim of the second generation, to whom I will henceforth refer to as the "new Mizrahim;"⁷¹ and third, the founding of SHAS as a pan-Mizrahi movement that bases itself on the Sephardi Jewish element.

1. Critical sociology

We have already examined the role of critical sociology in the radicalization of the Mizrahi struggle. The beginning of this new sociology was in the gathering of Marxist critical students and young professors at Haifa University in the early 1970s, alongside the uprising of HaPanterim HaSh'horim. An exceptional combination of South American Marxist students, Mizrahi students from the Oded group, together with Arab and Jewish students from the Left, gave birth to a revolutionary and critical political group on campus, which at its peak won the elections for student government in a coalition list of candidates titled YESH.⁷² The radical politicization of the campus startled the Ashkenazi Zionist circles on the Left and Right. In an unprecedented joint effort of Likud groups and the Labor Party, YESH was destroyed with the assistance of the university administration and the media.

But the critical spirit did not leave the Haifa campus, and at the end of the 1970s it gave birth to the new sociological revolution through the independent, practically underground journal *Mahbarot leMehkar uvekoret* (*Notebooks for Research and Criticism*). This critical approach emerged as the institutional-idealistic approach, which presupposed a stable national consensus and viewed organization along ethnic lines as an impediment to modernization and the process of shaping Israeli society through European Zionist values had already declined.⁷³ The central contribution of the critical-conflictual approach to the radicalization of the Mizrahi struggle discourse was viewing the economic-political gaps between Ashkenazim and Mizrahim as a reality effected by conflicts of interests and power struggles. In other words, it provided legitimization and theoretical backing to the accelerating Mizrahi struggle.

However, the critical approach in all its facets, from Swirski's "dependence approach"⁷⁴ to Smootha's "pluralistic approach," was nonetheless limited in its power to explain the modern ethnic organization because most of its arguments

focused on the issue of class; it saw culture as a secondary factor.⁷⁵ The arrival of SHAS on the scene surprised the critical school, since its analysis could not account for the direction SHAS came from (religion) and the engine it drove (*Haredi* anti-Zionism). The critical approach could not satisfactorily explain the perpetual, seemingly paradoxical tendency of the “new Mizrahi” to connect culture and class within the Mizrahi struggle to liberate the entire society from the chains of economic and spiritual oppression. Those who shaped the later conflictual approaches, starting from the late 1980s, incorporated the cultural dimension into the critical approach in order to explain the conflict and the great turnaround in the politics of the Mizrahi struggle.⁷⁶ Yet SHAS was a riddle to them too. At the same time the new Mizrahi discourse emerged with a new journal, *Iton Aher*, edited by David Hemo. *Iton Aher* too was born within the revolutionary critical atmosphere of the Haifa campus. Hemo, one of the early shapers of the radical Mizrahi discourse, co-wrote the important book *Lo Nehshalim ela Menuhshalim* (Not Backward, but Rather Backwarded) with Swirski, and began publishing *Iton Aher* after *Mahbarot leMehkar ve-Bikoret* ceased publication in 1985.

2. The new Mizrahi discourse

The shapers and spokespersons of the new Mizrahi discourse no longer appeared as individuals of a specific ethnicity, nor were they exclusively Mizrahi, or even exclusively Jews. This discourse liberates its spokespersons and their efforts from the manipulation both of “ethnicity” and of “national unity,” which helped the Ashkenazi Zionist political system to apply its divide-and-conquer strategy for more than three decades. In this cultural and national diffusion of the discourse across boundaries, we can see its uniqueness and its success in penetrating the legitimate centers of discourse and definition previously reserved mostly for the Ashkenazi Zionist intellectual elites.

The new Mizrahi discourse is based on two elements: critique of the political system and its priorities, and alternative ideology. The element of critique focuses on viewing the state’s founding and ruling ideology and movement, Ashkenazi Zionism, as a nationalist Jewish European organization, politically neocolonial, economically capitalist, and culturally Orientalist–Eurocentric, as well as anti-Mizrahi.⁷⁷ The alternative element focuses on changing state and society in terms of economy, foreign policy, and culture. Within these broad inclusive lines many shades and nuances coexist, as do more than a few tensions, especially regarding the question of alternative in foreign policy, in the context of the Palestinian national struggle. I will discuss below the theoretical foundation of the new Mizrahi discourse, and mainly the political practice of the struggle.

3. The appearance of SHAS: from ultra-Orthodox anti-Zionism to defining “real Zionism”

The third factor, a decisive political principle that SHAS adopted from the Ashkenazi *Haredi* (ultra-Orthodox) camp, was passive resistance to Zionism,

carried on from the formation of Agudat Israel, the first non-Zionist political religious party. The Ashkenazi *Haredim* were perceived, even before statehood, as an autonomous community that does not threaten political Zionism's hegemony, in spite of their clear anti-Zionist stance. Anti-Zionism in the *Haredi* sense was a religious and Halachic matter, issuing from the ruling that "the new is prohibited from the Torah in all places,"⁷⁸ and the prohibition against "hastening the day of redemption," that is, a strict prohibition against forming a secular Jewish state that is certainly not the messianic Halachah state, and hence that Zionism is a grave sin and Zionists are implicated in sin. This stance differs from that of the radical Left in such movements as MAKI, Matzpen, and SIAH that issues from a view of Zionism as a movement of occupation, displacement, expropriation, and oppression, and from downright rejection of nationalism. Needless to say, the state and the entire political system definitively rejected this leftist anti-Zionism, and the said movements were ostracized and disenfranchised of the political system. HaPanterim HaSh'horim rubbed shoulders with these anti-Zionist circles, but could not enlist political support from Mizrahim for even one Knesset seat. *Haredi* anti-Zionism was met with a more forgiving attitude.

The locus from which SHAS emerged is therefore a critical attitude toward Zionism, within the nonthreatening, legitimate, *Haredi* framework. The nonthreatening component in Ashkenazi ultra-Orthodoxy was the passive character of its opposition to Zionism. Unlike religious-Zionists, the *Haredim* did not promote an alternative to a secular democratic state, and unlike the anti-Zionist Left they did not attempt to convert the national state into a civil or binational alternative.

Despite its clear stance on these questions, SHAS has chosen not to position itself as an anti-Zionist movement, not even in the *Haredi* sense. Nor could it have afforded to do so, as the vast majority of its target audience from Likud and MAFDAL is not *Haredi*—either in its way of life or in identity. SHAS' target audience was mainly the same Mizrahim who voted Likud in the Ballot Rebellion, whose constant demand was for inclusion and equal belonging to Israeliness. For them, saying "I am anti-Zionist" is tantamount to saying "I am not Israeli, I do not belong." A moment before SHAS' power peaked in 1998, only 25 percent of its supporters defined themselves as *Haredi* Jews. The remainder—25 percent religious and 50 percent traditionalist and secular—would not conceive of opposing the national-Zionist character of the state.⁷⁹

SHAS has knowingly decided against the *Haredi* world from which it emerged to try to redefine Jewish identity in Israel.⁸⁰ Thus it became the first Mizrahi movement to propose a complete alternative to Jewish nationalism—to Ashkenazi Zionism. SHAS devised an ideological strategy of double negation. Instead of removing the Mizrahim from the Zionist camp, it defined them as its center—"real Zionism." For the first time since Mizrahim were labeled as "*Edot*" (ethnic groups) both culturally and politically,⁸¹ Mizrahi identity (in Jewish religious garb) took over the center of legitimate Israeliness, marking the remainder of Israelis as "others." The political rhetoric of this ideological strategy was manifest in an emphasis on the value of the Mizrahim, who came not only to belong but also to possess the most legitimate grounds for belonging. In this sense one can view

SHAS as a unique Israeli phenomenon—it emerged in response to Mizrahi living conditions, politics, culture, ethnic relations, and to the relationship between secular and religious in the state, not in the era of the old *yishuv* or the new *yishuv*, or in the diaspora. The caution and gradualism that marked the construction of this ideological message attest to a strong ideological awareness. In 1984, with SHAS' appearance on the national political scene, its political leader, Rabbi Yitzhak Peretz, declared: "We are a Zionist movement in the true, deep, and broad sense of the term Zionism. Our Zionism issues from unconditional faith in the Torah. Our Zionism is a daily, our daily, chant. Indeed, we pray like this three times a day: 'May our eyes witness your return to Zion with your mercy.'"⁸² SHAS' decisive, alternative ideological foundation ("unconditional faith") in the arena of the Mizrahi struggle, as opposed to TAMI's ambivalence and ideological stammer, is evident from its first representative's very first speech in parliament. Later on, in 1989, SHAS' youngest political leader, Rabbi Arye Deri, proceeded with the appropriation of the holiest secular concept: "We made Aliyah to Zion not out of distress, and every day we pray: '[Blessed be] he who assembles the dispersed ones of Israel.' . . . We are willing to participate in the government and to carry the burden." Deri went on to define this Mizrahi "we": "SHAS represents a broad populace in the state of Israel that carries the burden no less than you or I. This is a populace that serves in the IDF, pays taxes, and is as hardworking as the others."⁸³

Deri's emphasis in defining this "we" is on the civil obligations, completed by the aspect of rights, a condition demanding repair and change. In 1992 SHAS' spiritual leader, Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, in an uncharacteristic move, became openly involved in the debate over SHAS' identity, responding to delegitimization attempts on two fronts—by the Ashkenazi *Haredi* camp, which began attacking SHAS after the mutiny against Rabbi Shakh and the final separation from Ashkenazi *Haredi* patronage; and by the Ashkenazi Zionist hegemony, which tried to label SHAS as anti-Zionist. In his first media interview after forming SHAS, Rabbi Yosef again proposed SHAS as "real Zionism":

Those (Ashkenazim) just sought to attack. What is anti-Zionist? Vanity of vanities. It is a term they fabricated. I myself served as Israel's Chief Rabbi for ten years—a top governmental office in the state. How are we not Zionists? We pray for Zion, for Jerusalem and its inhabitants, for Israel, and the teachers, and their students. What are Zionists? By our concept a Zionist is one who loves Zion and practices the *mitzvah* of settling the land.⁸⁴

Only in 1996, after SHAS' Knesset representation had increased to ten seats, and after Deri was edged out of the leadership as a result of criminal charges filed against him, did Deri first come out fiercely and clearly against "their Zionism": "Zionism is a movement of apostasy that wants to create a new Judaism. The Zionist movement is the Zadokites of our generation, that tries to exterminate the Torah, the abiding of Heaven and the culture of Sephardi Jewry . . . The great vision of Zionism has failed, and now the secular fear is that the people of SHAS will change the secular character of the state."⁸⁵ Following these words in 1998, Eli

Yishai, Deri's replacement, sought to revalidate SHAS' unequivocal support of the existence of the state: "Fifty years we've lived within the independent, autonomous state of Israel. I am convinced that all of us, on the Left and on the Right, want the state to continue existing forever."⁸⁶ Yishai appears to seek to rectify the mutinous impression rising from Deri's words. This line of displaying uncritical national loyalty became SHAS' main strategy after Deri, and brought it closer to nationalism.

SHAS represents a Mizrahi collectivity, both on the religious, Sephardi Jewish plane—rabbis from Moroccan, Iraqi, Yemenite, Iranian, and Bukharan descent drawing their authority from Rabbi Yosef, a Sephardi Eretz Yisrael halakhist of Iraqi descent, one of the generation's greatest pundits—and on the political plane—many Knesset members, yeshiva heads, directors of institutes, and field activists working side by side in the most consolidated political movement in Israel, whose theoretical and practical common denominator is being Mizrahi Jews, or Sephardim, as they put it. The radical social-cultural critique of the "new Mizrahim" on one hand and SHAS' religious critique on the other meet back-to-back in the journey of detachment from European Zionism, or in an attempt to redefine Israeliness. The founders of SHAS based their critique on the foundations of the economic and spiritual oppression, though they carefully keep their critique within a religious-ideological framework. Conversely, the new Mizrahim connect the same foundations with universal theories of oppression relations in the context of first world/third world, anticolonialism, postcolonialism and postmodernism, but carefully stay within the framework of Israeli social reality.⁸⁷ The new Mizrahim, as will be shown below, despite the significant radical effects they had on Mizrahi communities that later became SHAS supporters, acted as a radical elite and did not yet participate in an attempt to mobilize mass support, including an electoral candidacy.

Here I wish to lay out possible paths for discussion regarding these two aspects of the Mizrahi struggle over the last two decades, and to suggest some answers to the questions 'What kind of movement is SHAS—*Haredi*, nationalist, social, or revolutionary?' and 'Who does the broad term *new Mizrahim* encompass?' Moreover, are these two hinges of the struggle doomed by geometry to remain parallel lines that never meet, or are we witnessing the formation of a new Israeli political collective—Jewish, Mizrahi, social, and radical—of which these are only the generating forces?

SHAS' leader, Rabbi Ovadia Yosef

Rabbi Yosef is SHAS' single, uncontested leader; his word on anything is the last word. Despite the political leadership he nurtured in the figure of Arye Deri and then in Eli Yishai, Rabbi Yosef remains the center of decision making in SHAS on spiritual and political matters alike. More than a million supporters honor his religious and political decrees, listen to his sermons as broadcast via satellite and printed in the movement's journal *Day to Day*, and in the weekly leaflets distributed in synagogues.

Ovadia Yosef was born in Baghdad in 1920. He was four years old when his family emigrated to Jerusalem and settled in the Bait-Israel neighborhood. The family had many children and made a meager living. Young Ovadia was educated at Bnei-Zion *talmud torah*, and at Porat Yosef Yeshiva in the old city, a renowned Sephardi institution. He stood out immediately as a brilliant pupil and published his first Halachic essay at the age of seventeen. At twenty-four he married Margalit and was sent to Cairo to serve as the magistrate and assistant chief rabbi of Egypt. He remained at his post after war broke out in 1948, despite being submitted to the occasional interrogation by Egyptian security officials. In 1950 he returned to Israel, which had become an independent state, and was appointed chief rabbi of Petah-Tikva. He was later appointed yeshiva head in Jerusalem, then chief Sephardi rabbi of Tel Aviv, alongside chief Ashkenazi rabbi Shlomo Goren, who was also to become his counterpart as chief rabbi of Israel, as well as his sworn ideological rival. From his first day in office Rabbi Yosef worked toward founding yeshivas and education institutions, and appointing many Mizrahim to office at the Tel Aviv rabbinate.

The young rabbi's political rabbinic aspirations were already formed in 1962, in organizing the Ne'emanai Torah group, which spread its message in the journal *Kol Sinai*. Yosef's goal was to build a Mizrahi Jewish collective in Israel, loyal to the Sephardi rabbinate and politically active for improving the status of the Mizrahim: "The Torah-observing Mizrahim that represent a large population in the state. The immigrants from the lands of the East, Sephardim, Yemenite, and the immigrants from North Africa that are not represented in the institutions of the people and the state, and whose aspirations and desires have no independent expression."⁸⁸

Being chief rabbi of Tel Aviv opened the door for Yosef to the position of chief Sephardi rabbi of Israel in 1972, after winning internal elections in the rabbinate, defeating MAFDAL's candidate, the influential Yitzhak Nissim. MAFDAL had already tried to marginalize Rabbi Yosef in 1960, when he first presented his candidacy for the office. The reasons were rooted in ideological-religious differences. MAFDAL sought to establish the view of Rabbi Kook Jr, who saw the secular-Zionist state as the "beginning of redemption," and was very active in the formation of settlements in Palestinian territories after 1967. Rabbi Goren adhered to that line and also led the entry of Jews into sites sacred to both Muslims and Jews. Rabbi Yosef did not share MAFDAL's messianic settlement ideology and forbade pilgrimage to the Temple Mount. He also rejected Chabad's (the Lubavitchers') messianism:

Sephardi Rabbis have told me that in his court he (the Lubavitcher) is not only considered the messiah, but God, God forbid. That one has said terrible words that cannot be repeated, and thus the masses are deceived . . . and they make him God . . . these are terrible words, actual apostasy . . . they make him a God, another God, and it's done with that great Rabbi's agreement.⁸⁹

Rabbi Yosef's view of Halachah is historical, neither poetic nor philosophical. He sided with the Sephardi teaching method of good reason. His decrees are

rational and were sometimes perceived as too liberal by Ashkenazi and Sephardi rabbis alike. The decree for returning territories in exchange for peace was one example; other instances included permitting medical implants and artificial insemination, permitting the running of factories on the Sabbath, permitting plastic surgery, permitting the use of automatic elevators on the Sabbath, and even using a microwave oven on the Sabbath in special cases and circumstances.

In 1983 Likud and MAFDAL decided to terminate the service of Rabbi Yosef, and for this purpose amended the law to limit the chief rabbi's term in office to ten years. Rabbi Yosef's term of service ended a few months later, and SHAS began its path under his spiritual and political leadership shortly after that.

SHAS: Landmarks in the movement's history

In telling the story of the founding and growth of SHAS, I must emphasize the ongoing steady process in the formation of its ideological and structural characteristics. One of these gradual elements, decisive for SHAS' ascent, is a sense of self-confidence and power. As this feeling gradually intensified, it was increasingly translated into growing political demands.

1983, Jerusalem municipality

SHAS' debut in the political arena, as noted by Hanna Herzog, was gradual and began as a list of candidates in the Jerusalem municipal elections of 1983.⁹⁰ Lists related to SHAS also ran successfully in municipal elections in Bnei-Brak and Tiberias, but won little publicity. SHAS won a representation of three members on the Jerusalem City Council, referred to in *Ha'aretz* as "The Black Panthers from Agudat Yisrael."⁹¹ Indeed, the 1983 municipal elections were marked by a rift in Agudat Yisrael, between Mizrahim and Ashkenazim, over the discrimination against Mizrahim in party representation and resource allocation. As in public education, here too Mizrahim protested against racism. Agudat Israel operated two levels of educational services: the high level for Ashkenazim and the low for Mizrahim. Mizrahim in the Agudat Israel communities were haunted by the perpetual humiliation of Mizrahi Jewry, conceived as religiously inferior by the Ashkenazi rabbis who strictly separated their children from Mizrahi children and opposed cross-ethnic marriage. SHAS' separation from Agudat Israel was also an act of liberation and the beginning of building a Sephardi Halachic independence relying on two thousand years of tradition and Halachic—the Mishnah and Talmud (Babylonian and Jerusalem), the Geonim, the Golden Age of Spain, Maimonides, and up to Rabbi Yosef Karo's *Shulhan 'arukh*, and to the giant of recent generations, Rabbi Ovadia Yosef.

Separation from Agudat Israel came after a dispute over representation. According to an agreement within Agudat Israel, the representative for the Mizrahim (Sephardim), Yosef Melamed, was due to enter the Knesset, taking the place of an Ashkenazi representative, but Agudat Israel's rabbis decided to break

with the agreement. This was the last straw for the Sephardi rabbis in Agudat Israel. A year later SHAS was already well on its way to parliament.

SHAS as Rabbi Shakh's protégé party

By 1984 SHAS was already running as a party structurally modeled on Agudat Israel with a Council of Sages headed by Rabbi Yosef, and a list of candidates for the Knesset backed by local representatives of Mizrahi communities, whose role was to get out the vote. In addition to organizing an independent rabbinic leadership, immediately at its inception SHAS had won the blessing and support of Rabbi Eliezer Shakh, leader of the Lithuanian segment of Agudat Israel, as a result of his rivalry with Rabbi of Ger's camp.⁹² SHAS won four Knesset seats in 1984, Likud won forty-one seats, and the Labor Party won forty-four. SHAS' success, though limited, was unexpected, and it was perceived as a branch of the Ashkenazi *Haredi* camp.

Immediately after the election results became known, Rabbi Yosef became the center of renewed public attention. Ample coverage was given to visits by the head of the Labor Party, Shimon Peres, and by Likud's Yitzhak Shamir, in their attempts to secure SHAS' support. Rabbi Yosef chose not to choose, except for what was dictated by Rabbi Shakh, still SHAS' rabbinic patron. Finally a national-unity government was formed, which SHAS joined. Arye Dayan argues that Rabbi Shakh's religious motivation in forming SHAS was different from Rabbi Yosef's; Shakh saw SHAS as the messenger of Eastern European *Haredi* Jewry to the Mizrahi population outside the Bnei-Brak–Meah-Shearim nexus.⁹³ According to Rabbi Shakh's view, only SHAS people, who spoke Hebrew and were involved in Mizrahi neighborhoods and development towns, were qualified for the task of returning Mizrahi masses to religious life. The two spearheads in Rabbi Shakh's new force were young rabbis Yitzhak Peretz and Ben-Shlomo, both Mizrahi graduates of Lithuanian yeshivas, loyal to the Lithuanian rabbinic tradition. Yet, despite their identification as Lithuanian, their first public statements were severe accusations against the secular state headed by MAPAI. As opposed to TAMI, whose intellectual spokespeople spoke of social and cultural discrimination, SHAS offered a discourse not formerly heard from a Mizrahi movement—a scathing indictment of the Ashkenazi Zionist hegemony for severing Mizrahim from the path of Torah, which caused their economic and social inferiority, as Rabbi Peretz said upon being appointed minister of the interior: “SHAS must work to put right the great injustice done to Sephardi Jewry, and I do not mean the economic neglect . . . [but] that they severed our youth from a glorified heritage and turned it to uprooted people who fill the prisons . . . We will turn prisons into yeshivas.”⁹⁴ *Teshuva* (returning to religious life) was SHAS' complete ideological answer to all the Mizrahims' hardship, and the gospel began to trickle down to the communities in Mizrahi neighborhoods and development towns. *Teshuva* as a trend began in SHAS at an early stage, with enlisting the support of Rabbi Reuven Elbaz, known as “the greatest of the *teshuv*a mobilizers.” Rabbi Elbaz's main representative in SHAS was Shlomo Benizri, a young *ba'al teshuva* who was added to SHAS' list of Knesset candidates,

eventually becoming a government minister. SHAS' chief goal, to rebuild Sephardi Jewry, turned it into a *teshuva* movement. This characteristic became its central power because, unlike the Ashkenazi *Haredi* communities, SHAS opened itself up in all directions and called Mizrahim to do *teshuva*, and to come back home.⁹⁵

But the policy of religious openness and promoting *teshuva* proved unsuccessful as a substitute for a serious program for socioeconomic improvement. Throughout its existence SHAS has failed to close the economic and social gaps, as well as to "turn the prisons into yeshivas."

SHAS' first political leader, Rabbi Yitzhak Peretz, was loyal first and foremost to Rabbi Shakh, although he did not get to know him in person before being enlisted by Rabbi Yosef to head the SHAS list. His second priority was to please Rabbi Yosef too, his teacher at Hazon Ovadya yeshiva. Rabbi Yosef's well-formed ambitions demanded more, and during Rabbi Peretz's first year in office, Rabbi Yosef had already begun training his successor—the young rabbi Arye Deri, known as a prodigy in Rabbi Yosef's close circle, and whose loyalty to Yosef was beyond doubt.

The Deri period

The story of SHAS is to a great extent the biography of Rabbi Arye Deri, who won the heart and trust of Rabbi Ovadia Yosef when he was still a top student at the exalted Hebron yeshiva.⁹⁶ The young Deri was a close friend of David Yosef's, the rabbi's son, who always avoided political activity but was highly involved in his father's doings behind the scenes.

Fifteen years earlier, in 1968, the seven-year-old Deri arrived with his family from Meknes in Morocco, a family of the new Jewish middle class. In Israel his father became unemployed for a long period of time, and the family exhausted its savings. Arye and his brothers were sent to *Haredi* boarding schools, moving from one institution to another, until the gifted Arye landed at the renowned Sephardi yeshiva of Porat Yosef. After this he was accepted to the prestigious and demanding Hebron yeshiva. In Hebron the young Deri's talent for Torah shone, and he became a leader, especially of the Mizrahi minority in the yeshiva. He later studied in other yeshivas, such as Mir. Deri briefly experimented with founding a yeshiva at the isolated settlement of Ma'aleh Amos, mostly with *ba'ale teshuva* such as Rabbi Uri Zohar. He then returned to "Hebron" as a brilliant student and teacher. At the age of twenty-two he married Yafa Cohen, and foresaw himself continuing in the yeshiva world, to fulfill his destiny as a yeshiva head. Rabbi Yosef performed Arye Deri and Yafa Cohen's wedding ceremony. Deri was twenty-four when Rabbi Yosef ordained him as a rabbi.

Rabbi Yosef decided to train the young Deri to be SHAS' political leader before he turned twenty-four, and Deri's training advanced in great leaps. With the formation of SHAS as a national party in 1984, Deri was appointed secretary of SHAS' Council of Sages, and a year later became the movement's general manager. Rabbi Yosef was moving to establish SHAS as a Mizrahi movement, independent and free not only of secular Zionist hegemony but also of Lithuanian

Haredi patronage. For this purpose he had to relieve Rabbi Peretz from his leadership role. In 1985 Rabbi Yosef placed Deri in the ministry of the interior, as Peretz's assistant, and Deri was quick to take over the ministry and run it according to Rabbi Yosef's plans, especially in forming the education network Ma'ayan Hahinukh Hatorani (The Spring of Torah Education). Within a year Deri was appointed general manager of the ministry of the Interior, showing the way out for Rabbi Peretz, who was compelled to retire. Without a minister over him, twenty-six-year-old Deri ran the ministry with a heavy hand and prepared himself for his next role as interior minister, to which he was appointed two years later in 1988, as part of the second unity government.

The 1988 elections presented two novelties. Deri, who oversaw the election campaign, introduced a strong Mizrahi element in campaigning with activists and supporters from Mizrahi neighborhoods and development towns, not necessarily *Haredi* yeshiva students. SHAS began to look like a popular movement with a diverse body of activists. And this campaign saw Rabbi Shakh and Rabbi Yosef part ways, after Shakh founded a new, Ashkenazi *Haredi* party, Degel Hatorah, to curb the rise of SHAS. Rabbi Yosef took this to be a betrayal of partnership and threatened to resign. The two met, at Deri's initiative, in Rabbi Yosef's home, a highly unusual step on Rabbi Shakh's part, and reached an agreement according to which Shakh would continue to support SHAS in public, as the representative of the Mizrahim (or Sephardim, the term used by both Ashkenazi and Mizrahi religious Jews). The elections that gave SHAS six Knesset seats established the party's power, and helped Rabbi Yosef on his journey to independence. Clearly, he no longer needed the patronage of Rabbi Shakh and the Lithuanian *Haredi* world.

With the success of the 1988 election campaign, SHAS detached itself from the isolated, strict *Haredi* image and began to establish its status as a popular Mizrahi movement. The next time around, in 1992, separation from the Lithuanians became official as SHAS joined the Rabin government. The political compromises enraged Rabbi Shakh and the entire Ashkenazi *Haredi* world, but knowing their movement's power base, Mizrahi communities in poor neighborhoods and development towns, Deri and Yosef were not afraid of *Haredi* criticism. SHAS' rise to ten Knesset seats in 1996 vindicated their confidence.

The final separation from Rabbi Shakh and the Lithuanians was preceded by a serious rift in 1990, during Deri's attempt to topple Shamir's unity government and form a narrow coalition headed by the Labor Party, in exchange for a budgetary boost for SHAS and Deri's appointment as minister of the treasury. The maneuver, a collaboration between Deri, Rabin, and Peres, became known as the "dirty trick." The aged Rabbi Shakh, who identified Deri's motives as directed only toward strengthening SHAS, thwarted this trick.⁹⁷ SHAS quickly became Rabbi Shakh's scorned enemy. On June 12, 1992, about two weeks before the elections, Shakh publicly expressed his patronizing views, long known to Rabbi Yosef and his disciples in the Lithuanian camp: "It is still early to give power to the Sephardim; they still need to be educated."⁹⁸

A criminal investigation against Deri began to loom over his great success, and the success of SHAS under his leadership. As early as 1990 he was accused of fraud

and bribery, as a minister in the government. The investigation went on for ten years, and came to be known as the Deri affair. It ended with Deri's conviction and incarceration. Two other SHAS leaders, Knesset members Yair Levi and Rephael Pinhasi, had already been convicted on similar charges of embezzlement and fraud. The Deri investigation began only about two months after the "dirty trick," and became known to the public in a series of articles in the *Yedioth Aharonoth* daily newspaper in June 1990. SHAS followers saw ethnic and political persecution as motivating the investigation. Echoes of these accusations were also heard in the responses of many secular Mizrahim. Unlike during the trial of Abu-Hatzeira, as the investigation and trial of Deri advanced, so SHAS' power and popularity increased, along with sympathy for Deri. This was evident in a survey by the Mina Tzemah Center conducted at the time of Deri's release from prison, after a third of his sentence was commuted, which found 83 percent of SHAS voters supporting Deri's return to the movement leadership.⁹⁹ Although the trial was highly publicized, SHAS nearly doubled its Knesset representation in 1996, winning ten seats in the elections. The main factor in this increase was the introduction of a new election system, with a direct vote for prime minister and a separate ballot used to elect a party for the Knesset. This allowed many Mizrahim, especially Likud supporters, to continue supporting Likud by voting for its candidate for prime minister while casting a vote of protest and identification with SHAS' "social" message. The vote separation also allowed SHAS' leadership, for the first time, to emphatically identify with Likud and its candidate for prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu. This should not be viewed as a shift to a more right-wing ideological party line. Rabbi Yosef's agenda had nothing to do with this or that party line but focused entirely on strengthening the status of Sephardi Jewish Halachah, spreading Torah, and bringing the Mizrahim closer to religion. Any association of SHAS with an ideological camp (they joined both the Right and the Left) has been always politically motivated and intended to serve the party's goals.

Rabbi Yosef himself had determined the principles of the relationships with Likud in the 1984 elections, generally supporting the Likud and avoiding ideological confrontations with it, to the point of ignoring Likud in campaigns in order not to divert Mizrahi support from Likud and its leaders. This policy went against his personal leaning and that of his messenger, Deri, who preferred working with both camps with a slight lean toward Labor. The attempt to disengage from the Right was part of SHAS' journey toward independence; it preferred to be to the right of the Left and to the left of the Right, and thus was courted and desirable to any possible coalition government. Deri internalized this maxim and carried it out with great talent, managing to provide Mizrahi voters with a dual, seemingly paradoxical political satisfaction: political independence during elections and ideological loyalty to the pact with the "national camp" after elections, in any given coalition. This policy placed a limit on the liberation of Mizrahi Likud voters and their shift to SHAS. Only the vote-separation into two tickets—one for the Knesset and one for the prime minister—in the 1996 elections, substantially expanded voting for SHAS to ten Knesset seats, then to seventeen seats in 1999. The voters could now vote for the right-wing candidate for the

position of prime minister with one ticket, and vote for SHAS to the Knesset with the other ticket. SHAS' growth gnawed at Likud's power base and diminished Likud to a mere nineteen Knesset seats in 1999. Concerned Likud leaders successfully worked to revert to the old voting system, and in 2003 Likud doubled its strength, not only at the expense of SHAS. SHAS passed the hurdle with relative success, winning eleven Knesset seats from loyal voters.

Identification with the right wing was a decisive milestone in SHAS' path. From 1996 onward, the movement underwent a swift, instrumental rightward shift—an alignment, in fact, with the old “treaty of the oppressed” between Mizrahim and Likud. The process had already begun in 1990 following the “dirty trick,” which attracted much protest from SHAS supporters who still saw themselves as Likud voters. The fierce protest was encouraged by extreme right-wing groups during SHAS' participation in the Labor-MERETZ government headed by Rabin, and SHAS' support of the Oslo Accords (its nonopposition, to be precise). It finally drove SHAS to withdraw from the alliance with Labor and MERETZ into a strong bond with Likud, headed by Netanyahu.

The end of the Deri period: the trial, the conviction, and the implications

On March 17, 1999, at the end of a nine-year trial, the Jerusalem district court convicted Arye Deri in the criminal case. Deri was convicted on the principal count, accepting bribes during the years 1985–1990, when he was serving as assistant to minister of the interior, as the general manager of the ministry, and as minister of the interior. The judges dedicated dozens of pages to describing the method by which, according to them, Deri received bribes from the three other convicted defendants: Yom Tov Rubin, head of Yeshivat Lev Banim; Rabbi Aryeh Weinberg; and the latter's son, Moshe Weinberg. The judges also accused Deri of pressuring witnesses, corroborating evidence, and suborning perjury. They criticized his choice to assert the right to remain silent, regarding it as obstruction and as an attempt to steer the investigation off course.¹⁰⁰

Response by SHAS members and leaders was unambiguous. Rabbi Yosef concluded, “He is innocent,” and shortly this became SHAS' refrain. Deri himself told reporters, “This is a test assigned to me by the Holy Blessed One, and I pray and hope that I will withstand it. I did not take a bribe. The court has made a grievous error.” Deri appealed to SHAS' public to “act with self-restraint, and to respond to the verdict in prayer, and in the voting booth. I beg, and even demand that we continue to be the same men of Torah, heaven abiding, observant of the Torah and commandments. We will walk in the path of the Torah.” SHAS released an official response: “Deri's conviction is the conviction of the whole movement, and it will not pass at the Supreme Court appeal, nor the public opinion.”¹⁰¹ Many Deri supporters published responses supporting him, and condemning the court's decision. Among the wide public of SHAS and the Mizrahi communities in general, the verdict was perceived as the apex of Deri's persecution, as well as the persecution of SHAS and of the Mizrahim as a whole.

About a month later, on April 15, 1999, Deri was sentenced to four years in prison and fined 250,000 shekels. The sentence emphasized that Deri took bribe money, “deposited it in his account,” and used it “for leisure and the acquisition of property for himself. The money is in his pocket. He and the defendants alone are blemished. This is not the crime of an ethnic-group, nor is it the crime of a party, nor of a public. This is the crime of an individual.”¹⁰² Deri said in response that SHAS’ constituency will decide this dispute in the voting booth, on May 17. He accused the court and the prosecution of meddling in the elections in an attempt to damage SHAS. He announced that he would not resign, and put all his energy into the campaign.¹⁰³ As expected, the trial was utilized thoroughly to the benefit of SHAS’ campaign, which called upon the entire Mizrahi public to cast a protest vote against Deri’s conviction. In a sophisticated video release, *Ani Ma-ashim* (I Accuse), directed by *baal Teshuva* Rabbi Uri Zohar, a former secular brilliant filmmaker, Deri and the SHAS leaders came out against the trial and presented it as a “Dreyfus Trial.”¹⁰⁴ Doubtlessly the trial affected Mizrahi voters, who saw the election as an opportunity to protest. This protest advanced SHAS far beyond *Haredi*-Sephardi congregations.

The day of Deri’s imprisonment, September 4, 2000, was the most dramatic and meaningful crystallization of solidarity among SHAS supporters. Twenty thousand people gathered to part with him at the prison gates, headed by Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, who compared Deri to Joseph the Righteous. Leaders of the Ashkenazi *Haredi* community joined a multitude of SHAS men and women from all over Israel, including schoolchildren from SHAS’ educational institutions. Rabbi Yosef’s son, Rabbi David Yosef, announced that “this is the Bastille Day of Sephardi Jewry.” The event was carried live on both national television channels. Thousands attended a solidarity vigil in Jerusalem the night before. Immediately following Deri’s incarceration, a great tent was erected in front of the prison gates, which became Yeshivat *She’agat Aryeh* (literally, the Lion’s Roar), headed by Rabbi Uri Zohar. The yeshiva attracted scores of thousands of SHAS supporters who came to pray; trailer vans as well as water and electricity were soon installed. However, some in SHAS did not approve of the emergence of the mythic hero named Deri. Right at the beginning of the Second Intifada, in October 2000, Deri’s successor, Eli Yishai, called for a break in protest and a mobilization for the war against the Palestinians. Following a long tradition, national security trumped social issues and the issue of Deri’s imprisonment was forgotten while he served out his sentence.¹⁰⁵

After the Supreme Court gave its verdict, Deri adopted the martyred-leader image. In an interview for *Ha’aretz*, given about two months after he began serving his sentence, Deri expressed himself for the first time in a most radical manner, and knowingly employed the politicized term “Mizrahim” rather than “Sephardim”:

Reality is harsh. They better stop shutting their eyes and understand that a very dangerous situation has formed here. For there is a large Mizrahi public here that feels a profound sense of non-belonging. And when such a feeling exists you never know where it may lead. . . . I can not forget that image from election

night, Ehud Barak standing on stage and saying he wants to be everyone's prime minister, and the masses below yelling, "Just not SHAS, just not SHAS." And then SHAS is not allowed to have the Ministry of the Interior. . . . This fire is ever present below the surface. And it takes no more than the smallest spark to raise it. And when I was yesterday at a synagogue with Rabbi Yosef, there were masses there, and I knew that only a hint from me and, forbid, what would have happened. And I, over the years, invest all the powers of my soul to pacify, and to strengthen, and care for one another in a pleasant manner. . . . So I do all I can to keep this up, to pacify, to control. But it may happen some day that someone will get up and say, "Enough." It will certainly not be Aryeh Deri. Aryeh Deri is not made for this. But that man will say, "What Aryeh Deri said, that we will get what we deserve in a democratic way by mobilizing more support, that was naïve. Now we need new ways. Like the Druze in Bait-Jan. Like others." And then woe to us, woe to us if we reach that state.¹⁰⁶

Secular Ashkenazi reaction to SHAS

The trial's peak, the imprisonment, the stormy election campaign and SHAS' electoral achievement, seventeen Knesset seats, also gave rise to a reaction by Ashkenazi conservative forces, manifest not only in the formation of Shinui, a party that declared itself the envoy to stop SHAS, but also among educated people, artists, and others, including a group of eight secular Israelis who announced their wish to form an Israeli colony outside the Middle East, calling themselves "New-Israel."

In an elaborate article in *Ha'aretz* titled "SHASophobia," Neri Livne explored a wide range of reactions to SHAS. Television and radio star Avri Gilad told Livne: "I don't like SHAS. I don't respect SHAS. When I look at the class of SHAS nouveaux-riches, Rabbi Ovadia Yosef's car represents all the corruption of those who pretend to represent the oppressed."¹⁰⁷ Playwright Anat Gov used stronger language: "SHAS really hurts us to no end, but if we think rationally, the Palestinians hurt us more and we're still willing to discuss peace with them. So I say, let's believe in the rightness of our path and things will work out. We will fight. Our parents founded the state and we, the secular, must build our identity." Shulamit Aloni, a former minister of education and civil rights leader, wondered: "How could it be that so much ignorance has so much power?" One Knesset member for MERETZ, Ilan Gilon, was the most emphatic: "What does SHAS have to do with Judaism, anyway? They're neither Jews, nor ants nor flies. What is Judaism at all if not to be free?"

Journalist Silvi Keshet proposed in her weekly column in *Yedioth Aharonoth* the foundation of a separate state for *Haredim*. "And if we are not careful, because of the direct-vote law (to the prime minister), SHAS may yet form the government—they will have a small autonomous, self-governing state with Rabbi Yosef as Pope. Let a *Haredim* have their *Haredi*-Vatican now. As far as I'm concerned, in Jerusalem and its surroundings, including the settlements."¹⁰⁸

Anthropologist Tamar Elor characterized these extreme reactions as anxiety of losing primacy: "Hatred for SHAS makes perfect sense to me, almost immediately.

Not because daily life is harmed. What hurts most is the fact that they do not kneel before our option. They have a completely different story. Once, when faced with our story, they either withdrew to the side, or bypassed it and no one contested our story. The pain issues from the fact that suddenly they come and say, 'Listen, your story is not our story.'" Historian Amnon Raz-Karkotzkin identified in the hatred directed at SHAS a fashioning of an enemy common to all secular Jews: "SHAS provides an outlet to all hatred, it functions as the common enemy against whom all forces unite. Even MERETZ and MAFDAL that served in the same government managed to make a pact based on this common hatred. This in my eyes is the clearest expression of racism in Israeli society."

An extraordinary response to this hatred came from religious novelist Haim Be'er: "Deri is our loss. We will yet bemoan the moment that we did not consent to SHAS' moderate social option, with people like Deri and Ovadya (Yosef), when in the background awaits us a new Mizrahi Jewry, that of Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu and of Yitzhak Levi."¹⁰⁹ Indeed, SHAS had but one escape from these attacks, into the embracing arms of the right wing.

In the elections for prime minister in February 2001, SHAS, already without Arye Deri, who was in prison, began showing signs of internal division between Deri's and Eli Yishai's followers. SHAS again supported Likud's candidate, Ariel Sharon, and joined his unity government with four ministers. Eli Yishai's leadership issued only from his appointment by Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, as opposed to Deri's leadership, which grew with the movement itself and was uncontested even from behind prison walls.

The campaign for the general elections in January 2003 was tough and complex for SHAS. From without, a strong atmosphere of "national security" was clearly going to sweep many voters toward Likud and to the Right in general. From within, Deri had decisively parted from SHAS, and his supporters threatened to divide the movement. Ovadia Yosef sought to stabilize the movement without Deri and his men through the leadership of Eli Yishai. He pressed Deri into signing a letter calling upon those loyal to him to support and vote for SHAS, and to obey the movement's leader. Thus, for the first time, SHAS embarked on an election campaign without Deri and without the activist enthusiasm, with Rabbi Yosef throwing himself into the contest—appearing at conventions and in television spots, writing pamphlets and personal letters sent to every potential SHAS voter. One letter appealed to religious voters in a language that cannot be mistaken in the world of faith: "When you come to vote, remember what has been said, 'Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the Lord.' Examine thoroughly your steps and choose Torah, which is our life and longevity." In the second letter Rabbi Yosef appealed to the general Mizrahi public, addressing SHAS' social duty: "Especially noteworthy is the resolute struggle of SHAS representatives for the weak among the people, the penniless, they who of all people are burdened with many taxes and [budget] cuts, and SHAS' representatives stand firm to alleviate and diminish the burden laid on their shoulders as much as possible, and all out of full abidance by the way of Torah."

Another external factor SHAS faced was the rapid increase of Ashkenazi reaction to SHAS. The Shinui Party agitated secular Ashkenazim against SHAS and called for a mobilization to stop *Haredim* in general, and SHAS in particular. It called on middle-class secular Ashkenazim to protect their way of life, and reaped fifteen Knesset seats in the process, primarily at the expense of MERETZ and Labor. One might say that Shinui assisted SHAS, which made good use of the campaign against itself to promote solidarity among its voters and to prevent them from returning to Likud. SHAS went to extreme lengths to portray Shinui as a threat to its path. In one pamphlet SHAS compared Shinui's campaign with that of the Nazis: "Let the public decide if Yosef (Tommy) Lapid and Shinui's message in the campaign is not strikingly similar to that of the Nazi Party in Germany in the 1930s, replacing the word 'Jews' with '*Haredim*.' Lapid and Shinui: 'A government without *Haredim*'; the Nazi Party: 'A regime without Jews.' Lapid and Shinui: 'The *Haredim* are the source of trouble in government, stop the *Haredim*, the *Haredim* are the state's parasites, send the *Haredim* to work'; the Nazi Party: 'The Jews are our trouble, stop the Jews, the Jews are society's parasites, send the Jews to work.'" The same pages carry a quote from Shinui's web site: "The natural reproductive rate among *Haredi* families is high . . . Within a few generations the majority in the state could be *Haredi* . . . The situation must be changed."¹⁰

Eli Yishai opened the pamphlet with these words: "They want to throw us backwards, to the years in which we suffered from neglect, from discrimination, from persecution and racism without defense. But together, all as one we will stand against the persecutors." Seemingly a surprise, SHAS' campaign in 2003 hardly addressed the "national security" question at all, in order to include within the designation "they" not only Shinui and MERETZ's Ashkenazim but also Likud's.

Between the lines of "Shinui against the *Haredim*" one can read *against Mizrahim, against SHAS*. Shinui was not formed before SHAS' rise to power, and Yosef Lapid focused much of his critique against the *Haredim* on SHAS. Additionally, after the 2003 elections, Lapid announced that Shinui had no principle against serving in the same government as MAFDAL and the Ashkenazi *Haredim* of Yahadut HaTorah but upheld his promise to boycott SHAS' Mizrahim. Shinui eventually joined an extreme right-wing government with MAFDAL and the racist National Union (which promoted the expulsion of Palestinians), but without the Ashkenazi *Haredim* who boycotted Shinui in response to the boycotting of SHAS. SHAS found itself, for the first time, on the opposition benches, devoid of power—but not for a long time. After two years they joined Ohmert's government (after Sharon sank into a coma) following the elections of 2005.

Toward a model for understanding SHAS

Understanding SHAS' rise through existing models in the study of political movements is difficult. SHAS has a little of every model in Israeli politics and outside Israel, both in mainstream parliamentary politics and in extraparliamentary politics. As we turn to examine the different models as possible tools with which

to analyze SHAS, a unique and new phenomenon appears before us, one that is, perhaps, its own prototype. I will examine four central models and try to place SHAS within each: *Haredi* party, national religious party, revolutionary religious movement, and radical social movement. After examining these models I will try to determine the relationships and the radical effects between SHAS and other Mizrahi political movements in Mizrahi politics.

Is SHAS a Haredi party?

Agudat Israel has been the prototypical *Haredi* party since before statehood,¹¹¹ and is also the Ashkenazi *Haredi* movement closest to SHAS in terms of cooperation on religious issues, despite tensions on Halachic questions between the rabbis. Cooperation was primarily Agudat Israel's means of courting Sephardi students, already in Meknes, Morocco, within the Otzar Hatorah school system, and in Jerusalem after the destruction of Porat Yosef yeshiva in the 1948 war. This courting ended only in a few cases with the incorporation of Sephardi students in Lithuanian yeshivas. For the most part, these students were placed in separate systems in Mizrahi localities.¹¹²

The main characteristics of the *Haredi* party model, as based on Agudat Israel, are the following:

- a) rejection of political Zionism of all varieties, and recognition of Israel as a foreign sovereign, not a Jewish one, nor even as "the beginning of redemption" as proposed by Rabbi Kook;
- b) life in segregated communities, separate from and closed to the secular world;
- c) life according to a very strict interpretation of the rules of Halachah that separate, physically and otherwise, the *Haredi* community from other practicing Jews;
- d) no interest in coercive religious legislation but only in retaining the status quo;
- e) no connection with mainstream national life, including abstention from military service, maintaining alternative separate *Haredi* schools, courts, and a self-policing force;
- f) a high level of solidarity of party supporters with leaders and the development of separatist identity symbols;
- g) founding a council of rabbis (*Gedolei Hatorah*), the party's ultimate authority on national policy and political matters;
- h) noninvolvement in the management of the secular state, which is not run according to Halachah, and which damages religious law by its secularity. Actively, representatives of Agudat Israel have supported ruling governments but did not serve as government ministers.

Agudat Israel persistently adhered to these principles. On two matters only did it slightly loosen its grip, both under SHAS' influence. One was in the attempt to pass religious legislation (e.g., a bill banning the sale of pork); the other was partial

involvement in state affairs, as it joined Netanyahu's government with a deputy minister acting as minister of housing, a step beyond the traditional parliamentary roles the party assumed, such as chair of the Knesset's Finance Committee.

Has SHAS adopted the definitive elements of the *Haredi* party model? The answer is "yes", *prima facie*. SHAS appears to share Agudat Israel's characteristics: a rabbinic council, a spiritual leader as the ultimate authority, autonomous alternative structures such as the Ma'ayan Hahinukh Hatorani educational system, and strong supporter solidarity with leaders and party symbols. Yet this does not suffice to define SHAS as a *Haredi* party. SHAS does not follow some of Agudat Israel's principles; some, in fact, it even shatters.

Most important in this comparison is recognition of the state. SHAS has no part in the history of the conflict between, on the one hand, the Zionist movement in Europe (later the *yishuv* leadership) and, on the other hand, the Ashkenazi *Haredi* community that evolved outside the *yishuv*. Eastern European Jewish ultra-Orthodoxy evolved as a reaction to the Jewish enlightenment movement in Europe, and only at the end of the nineteenth century did this orthodoxy begin to form as resistance to Zionism. SHAS is not a branch in the development of this orthodoxy. On this matter I reject the argument that SHAS emerged as an integral part of the *Haredi* movement and is no more than a late reaction to modernism.¹¹³ Such reactionary ideas are discernible among the rabbinic leadership; but in addition to the Halachic aspect of "returning the crown to its former glory," SHAS is also a popular movement, and as such it grew primarily in the poor neighborhoods and development towns after the formation of the state, among those who may be referred to in general, at the beginning of the 1980s, as Likud and MAFDAL voters. Thus the question of recognizing the state is not on SHAS' agenda. For the great majority of SHAS leaders and voters the state is a given and welcome fact; they do not consider it a foreign sovereignty.

One should mention in this context the apparent contradictions in Rabbi Yosef's understanding of the "beginning of redemption." Unlike Agudat Israel, which boycotts the state rabbinate and maintains independent rabbinic institutions such as BADATZ, its rabbinic Court of Justice, Rabbi Yosef has served for most of his life within the state rabbinate. He was a recipient of the Israel Prize for Torah Literature for producing multifarious Halachic literature. However, called to rule on the cardinal question by which a religious Jew's Zionism is tested, whether the formation of Israel is a religious event, Rabbi Yosef rules in the negative. He does not recognize the establishment of the state as a religious-Jewish event, the "beginning of redemption."¹¹⁴ This stance is tested in practice in the saying of Hallel prayer (special praises to God for a miracle) with a blessing on Independence Day. Rabbi Yosef has ruled that one should pray Hallel as a regular reading of the Psalms, without the blessing, as opposed to religious Zionists (e.g., MAFDAL) who see the formation of the state as a Jewish-religious event (like the Exodus of the Israelites from Egypt and the triumph of the Hasmoneans), say the prayer with a blessing, and celebrate Independence Day as a religious holiday in synagogues. Agudat Israel's followers do not celebrate Independence Day in their synagogues at all. They chant a regular daily prayer. *Haredi* hard-liners such

as Neturey Qarta and Toldot-Aharon mark Israel's Day of Independence as a day of mourning, as they consider the state an obstacle to the process of redemption.

Despite his history in the state apparatus, Rabbi Yosef is known for his criticism of the state's juridical institutions. He stresses that the courts cannot stand above Halachah, although halakhically he accepts the principle of *din malkhut* (respecting state laws).

As opposed to Agudat Israel, SHAS was not formed to preserve a community's character through segregation, but to rebuild a Jewish community after about four decades of spiritual and economic oppression, and to "return the crown to its former glory." This is the heart of Rabbi Yosef's ongoing project of unifying the Jewish people around one Halachah. Hence his struggle with the Ashkenazi Halachic establishment, which he argues has subdued and twisted its predecessors, Sephardi rabbis such as Uziel and Toledano.¹¹⁵ The essence of this struggle is to reinstate Rabbi Yosef Karo (1488–1575), author of *Shulhan Arukh* (the set table, a codification of Jewish religious law and practice that is still the standard reference work for Orthodox observance), to his rightful place as the ultimate authority of Judaism—the last of the early authorities, and the first of later authorities—as well as, correspondingly, putting the Ashkenazi interpreter of *Shulhan Arukh*, Rabbi Moshe Isserles (1525–1572), back in his rightful place.¹¹⁶ The *Mapah* (tablecloth), Rabbi Isserles' essay, is metaphorically the Ashkenazi "cover" over the Sephardi *Shulhan* (table). Rabbi Yosef seeks to "remove the cover from the table," meaning to go back to the rulings of the rabbis that preceded the Ashkenazi later rabbis. Or, as in his metaphor, he seeks to unveil the *table*, and reintroduce it as the single unifying ultimate authority in Judaism as a whole. Rabbi Yosef's community of reference includes all Jews, not only Sephardim. He directs his Halachic resolutions, SHAS' work, toward all Jews. This struggle for the primacy in Halachah is Rabbi Yosef's life work, and SHAS is a means to this end. Despite a strategic cooperation on parliamentary matters, Rabbi Yosef is engaged in a perpetual Halachic struggle with Ashkenazi *Haredi* rabbis, as well as with other Mizrahi rabbis who oppose the erasure of ethnic particularity in service of his unification project. The latter include prominent Moroccan rabbis such as Shimon Abu-Hatzeira, who reissued the prayer book in the manner of Moroccan Jewry, against Rabbi Yosef's attempt to devise a unified Sephardi prayer book.¹¹⁷

Another significant difference between SHAS and Agudat Israel is the great geographic diffusion of communities that support SHAS. Despite the existence of concentrations of supporters in poor neighborhoods and development towns, SHAS does not have a distinct, closed community or communities as do Ashkenazi *Haredim* in Jerusalem and Bnei-Brak. One may say that SHAS' community is conceptual, its members scattered throughout the country.¹¹⁸ In this regard SHAS resembles Likud as a national party more than Agudat Israel as a closed sectorial party. Moreover, as opposed to Agudat Israel, which carefully keeps itself separate from Mizrahim, discouraging intermarriage and residential integration, SHAS appeals to Ashkenazi *Haredim* too, and gladly cooperates with them. Indeed, many of SHAS' supporters and activists are Ashkenazi.¹¹⁹

To this one may add Rabbi Yosef's rational interpretation of Halachah. His moderate rulings are well known, as compared to the rulings of Ashkenazi *Haredi* rabbis. This temperance allows for the association of many Mizrahim with SHAS, in circles that keep expanding away from the core, that grow in numbers, and that share varying degrees of affinity and belonging. As was evident in a survey by Ya'ar and Harman, the smallest circle of SHAS supporters is the *Haredi* core, while the largest circle is of the traditional and the secular.¹²⁰ In this context Shlomo Fisher, following Max Weber's analysis, sees in SHAS the "open church" model, as opposed to the "closed sect," which better describes Agudat Israel.¹²¹

SHAS is also unlike Agudat Israel in having a greater affinity to the national center. It demands to be included in every decision-making process, including the appointment of the military chief of staff and of judges. Since 1984 SHAS has been represented by at least two ministers in all but one government, and was fully active in the administration of state affairs, including security matters. Arye Deri pointed this out at the beginning of his career: "We the *Haredim* must be full partners in the state. It isn't possible to deal only with religious matters and say this is my mission."¹²² Early on, when SHAS decided to take on service in government ministries, it effectively distinguished itself from the *Haredi* world. From the moment it joined Rabin's government in 1992, against Rabbi Shakh's dictate, SHAS suffered harsh criticism in the Ashkenazi *Haredi* street but began its expansion among the non*Haredi* Mizrahi population.

The desire to be part of the center is evident in SHAS leaders' frequent media exposure, which has included appearances with their families and the airing of personal biographies, as well as frequent appearances on talk shows, in debates on television and radio, and even in documentary films. For example, Deri appeared as a central character in David Ben-Chetrit's documentary series *East Wind: a Moroccan Chronology*, which aired in 2002.¹²³

A different approach to the army also stands out. Indeed, SHAS supports exemption from military service for yeshiva students, but unlike the *Haredi* world, SHAS voters are not characterized as a skiver from the Israeli Army. Almost all SHAS Knesset members had served in the IDF and make sure to mention this in public. In the elections for the Fifteenth Knesset, 13 percent of soldiers voted for SHAS.

Last in this examination of SHAS' *Haredi*-ness, let us note a poll conducted among SHAS voters during the 1999 elections, according to which only 55 percent aspire for a Halachah state (a tenet of faith and not an active political ideal).¹²⁴ Doubtlessly, a similar poll among Agudat Israel voters would have indicated 100 percent support. SHAS, therefore, does not fit the definition of a *Haredi* party according to the familiar model of Agudat Israel, in spite of its dominant nonZionist religious element and its cooperation with the *Haredim*. In light of this analysis, their insistence on being defined as *Haredim* on every public occasion is peculiar, as is their habit of publicly coordinating positions with the Ashkenazi *Haredim*. This contrasts with the social leanings of many supporters who see SHAS as a popular movement for social change. Yet this demarcation as a *Haredi* movement appears to satisfy the leadership's need to liberate itself from a socio-

ideological responsibility to a very large public of voters, most of whom are neither *Haredi* nor even religious, and whose motives for voting for SHAS (social protest) are not aligned with its central aim, “returning the crown to its former glory.”

Is SHAS a national religious party?

From early on in its political path within the “Mizrahi” movement and “Hapoel Hamizrahi” (The Eastern Worker),¹²⁵ and in spite of ideological differences, the National Religious Party (MAFDAL) greatly resembled the *Haredi* parties. Like them, its initial organization during the *yishuv* era came to fulfill community needs, alongside its direct but separate involvement in the Zionist project. Unlike the *Haredim*, the World Mizrahi Movement and its representatives in Palestine, and later in Israel, maintained a religious–messianic ideological view of political Zionism.¹²⁶ SHAS does not officially adhere to political Zionism; nevertheless, it is careful in criticizing Zionism since most of its supporters come from Likud and MAFDAL. For this reason SHAS leaders appropriate Zionism symbolically, and present their ideology as “true Zionism.” SHAS’ criticism always focuses on the harm Zionism inflicts on Judaism, but it is careful not to attack the nationalist basis of Zionism, which remains the SHAS voters’ principal element of identity. This sidestep is illustrated by Rabbi Elbaz, head of the *teshuvah* movement, a sort of recruiting agency for SHAS activists: “[The Zionists] wanted to destroy us. They sought to uproot our Judaism. But they failed. Why? Because we studied Torah, and taught to have faith in the Holy Blessed One and keep the Sabbath and respect our parents. . . . When we arrived in the land, they wanted to neutralize us from it all. They told us to drop everything.”¹²⁷

MAFDAL resolved the conflict between perpetual aspiration for full redemption and the formation of a Halachic Jewish kingdom on the one hand and active participation in a secular democratic state apparatus on the other by treating Zionism and the secular state as “the beginning of redemption,” a sort of earthly rescue force that would liberate the land and settle it, in anticipation of divine redemption. This active messianic element in MAFDAL’s national–religious faith was reinforced after the occupation of Palestinian territories in 1967, conceived as a sign from above about approaching redemption. Other nationalist right-wing parties emerged from within the religious–national hub of MAFDAL and Yeshivat Merkaz Harav. The formation of the Gush Emunim settler movement and the settlement project in the occupied Palestinian territories, supported by secular Zionism, are the most prominent practical manifestations of the active messianic concept; along with the sanctification of the “wholeness of the land,” they became MAFDAL’s central characteristic.¹²⁸ This is also what distinguishes MAFDAL from the *Haredim*, who maintain a passive messianism.

As opposed to MAFDAL, SHAS does not sanctify the “wholeness of the land.” Prominent in this matter is Rabbi Yosef’s ruling of 1979, during peace negotiations with Egypt, permitting the passing of parts of Eretz Yisrael in return for peace: “If the army chiefs and commanders, along with government members, determine that this is a matter of life saving. . . . that there is an immediate danger

of war. . . and that if territories are given back the danger of war will be averted, and there's a chance for a real peace—the authorities concur: it is permitted to return territories from Eretz Yisrael, in order to achieve this goal.”¹²⁹ This ruling later paved the way for SHAS to join Rabin's government with MERETZ, which created a chasm between SHAS and MAFDAL, drawing fire toward Rabbi Yosef from MAFDAL rabbis.¹³⁰ On the eve of the 2003 elections, Rabbi Yosef reiterated this position in a rare interview in *Yedioth Aharonoth*. When asked if he reneged on the ruling he replied: “I do not renege on what I issued at the time, since for peace with true security it is worthwhile to give up territories. Every Jew is worth an entire world. Every Jew. Listen my dear, this is my opinion based on the Torah. I did not say this only to myself. In every way I follow the saying ‘Learn from all thy teachers.’ I was a member of the Halachic High Court with rabbis Zholti, Goldschmidt and Elyashiv, great men and great sages. We discussed this several times and they agreed with me.” One should add that SHAS does not work to “conquer the land” by intensive settlement, but by empowering its supporters' and voters' communities, most of whom live in development towns and poor neighborhoods within the June 5th 1967 borders. Still, it does not reject living in settlements as a cheap housing solution. Rabbi Yosef made his first visit ever to a settlement in the occupied territories just before the 2003 elections, at the bidding of his advisers, to enhance the party's national image, but even then he chose the *Haredi* settlement of Immanuel, which does not belong to the Zionist settlement movement.

SHAS' approach, like Agudat Israel's and unlike MAFDAL's, prefers doing a lot for one's own people over doing a little for the general public. This has been the practice of the *Haredim* since the *yishuv* era, and more so since they joined the Knesset.¹³¹ MAFDAL, it should be noted, is a party that elects officials and leaders and makes ideological decisions in a democratic fashion, within the constraints of abiding by Halachah and its rabbis even on political matters. MAFDAL had emphasized its distinction from Agudat Israel as early as 1926, when it decided against the *Haredim* in favor of women's right to vote and of serving in parliament alongside women. Nevertheless, to date, only two women have served as Knesset members for MAFDAL. In both these structural aspects SHAS does not fit the national religious party model. It has no binding democratic structure, does not allow women to participate in political activity, and does not allow for democratic resolutions and democratic campaigns for party offices. To use the elements of the national religious model to distinguish SHAS from MAFDAL, we could say that MAFDAL grafted nationalism onto religion as a tool for realizing national goals, and in this sense is more national than religious. Conversely, SHAS grafted religion onto nationalism in order to “return the crown to its former glory”; that is, SHAS is more religious and barely national, except for what is politically expedient. MAFDAL leaders, who witnessed SHAS sway quite a few of its voters, customarily accuse SHAS of non-Zionism. However, SHAS' answer, “Our Zionism is the true Zionism,” has proven itself in the voting booth.¹³²

SHAS fits the MAFDAL model, however, on two matters: active participation in the administration of state affairs; and the formation of a separate, state-funded,

independent education network under official state supervision, though without state system status like MAFDAL's.¹³³ In all other senses SHAS is not a national religious movement.

Is SHAS a revolutionary religious movement?

Does SHAS use religion to promote social change or does it exploit the symbols of social revolution in the service of spreading religion? In other words, is SHAS a revolutionary movement that seeks to fundamentally change the regime and social order? Attempting to answer this question, I will briefly review the Iranian Islamic revolutionary model, within which I will then try to posit SHAS for examination.¹³⁴

First, let us briefly note a similarity in structure and objectives between SHAS and the Muslim Brotherhood movement in Egypt, and then in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, which later gave birth to Hamas.¹³⁵ The analysis is not yet full, but central points of similarity can be noted. Structurally, both movements have a strong community-oriented structure; provide community support services, welfare, and education; and of course, bring people closer to religion. Both maintain alternative, independent institutions, even if those are funded by establishment bodies. SHAS is different in being a senior partner in the ruling coalition and actually administering state affairs. In terms of objectives, neither SHAS nor the Muslim Brotherhood is a nationalist movement; both aspire chiefly for a religious kingdom, but strategically cooperate with their respective national movements, in part out of a recognition of the ideal of unity. Yet, in both cases we also see periods of rivalry and confrontation with the national camp. Another similarity is found in the daily struggle against antireligious, secular values of Western modernism, which was the leading motive behind the Iranian Revolution.

Comparison with the Islamic revolution in Iran is more comprehensive since Iran is a model for a successful religious revolution that started out against a secular national monarchy. I will not present the Iranian model in minute detail, only the central characteristics and values of the revolution in Iran, especially during its first decade, as a basis for comparison with SHAS.

Abrahamian demonstrates the complexity of the Iranian Revolution, ranging from moderate Muslims, through Khomeini and the ayatollahs, to radical Islam in the image of the Iranian mujahideen.¹³⁶ For our analysis, Abrahamian's most important conclusion is that the Shah's oppressive dictatorial regime left the Iranian people with no alternative but a popular revolution, and that religion was the only available channel, the last popular public space the Shah did not dare to block. Every other attempt at organizing was harshly eliminated by the regime, which was enthusiastically supported by the U.S. and European countries (and Israel, to no small extent). The Shah's economic partners preferred him over an independent, democratically elected regime, such as Mossadeq's.

On August 19, 1953, CIA agents in Iran organized the great "mass uprising" against Mohammad Mossadeq and his government, an action that put an end to the attempt to form an independent secular-national-democratic Iran. Shah

Mohammad Reza Pahlavi was reinstated and remained in power for twenty-five years.¹³⁷ Ironically, the same CIA-hired, incited masses turned out to parent Khomeini's supporters a generation later. Less than a decade after Mossadeq was toppled, the Shah exiled the opposition headed by Khomeini, driving it underground. This step signaled the beginning of the Islamic revolution in Iran.

"But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and the more they spread abroad" (Exodus 1:12)—this central motif in SHAS' revolutionary dialectic was also practically the Iranian Revolution's motto, not long before SHAS broke into the Israeli political arena. Islam and the mosque were the Iranian Revolution's spirit and home, and anyone attempting to harm the sanctity of these only fueled its growth and sharpened its stance.¹³⁸ SHAS, which also emerged out of the synagogue's religious space, is today the second-largest party in the Mizrahi neighborhoods and towns, after Likud.

The similarities

At the core is the disappointment of Middle Eastern people, both in Iran and Israel, with Western modernism's promise of a better quality of life and of a life endowed with new meaning.¹³⁹ In Iran, "disappointment" is an understatement. The pro-Western Shah's regime carried out harsh social, political, and economic oppression. Iranian revolutionary leaders saw the shah as the representative of a foreign, colonial regime. The Mizrahims' expression of disappointment in Israel, especially that of SHAS supporters, is leveled at the secular Ashkenazi Zionist hegemony, the self-proclaimed harbinger of redemption, of justice, and of an equality that turned out to be false. Zionism was perceived as the pretentious representative of Western modernism, modern economics, and welfare-state values. Disappointment was felt not only with the economic inequality but also with the anti-Mizrahi cultural attitude. SHAS' rabbis always emphasize the loss of religion and spirituality, especially the corruption of youth to apathy, drugs, and criminality.

Some structural elements are very similar. In SHAS, as in the Iranian revolutionary movement, the spiritual leader stands above all other institutions, although he does not hold any official political office. Alongside Rabbi Yosef serves a Council of Sages, similar to the parallel institution in the Iranian Revolution. Under this leadership serves a political leadership responsible for the day to day activities. Rabbi Yosef and the council's status is anchored in party bylaws and applies to all aspects of life: "The party looks up to the rabbis' council, headed by the HaRishon LeZion, Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, the supreme authority on Torah, Halakhah, ideology and politics in Eretz Yisrael."¹⁴⁰

The Iranian revolutionary movement's central organizational tool was and remains the mosque, where a convention takes place each week, during Friday prayers, with a sermon that is not limited in content to religious life alone.¹⁴¹ The idea of the mosque as a branch of the movement is familiar from the Muslim Brotherhood's first days in Egypt, but there it has been placed under severe restrictions. Once the pattern proved successful in Iran, it was quickly copied by most Islamic movements in the world.

This was also SHAS' great advantage at the outset, as hundreds of synagogues in poor neighborhoods and development towns became movement branches overnight and created a statewide communication network through which the words of the leadership were spread in oral and written form. One may say that SHAS branches congregate twice a day (mostly in the evening) and hold two additional large "assemblies" a week, on Friday night and on Saturday. Add to these the special congregations to watch Rabbi Yosef's sermons live via satellite from Jerusalem every Saturday night in dozens of synagogues across Israel and the world. Of course, in the case of the house of prayer, one cannot separate structure from content. The religious texts are the ideology and the spirit of the movement, and can easily be clothed with daily matters and relevant political purposes. Of course, synagogue population is not homogeneous in every Mizrahi neighborhood and community. Some synagogues clearly belong to SHAS, but more synagogues have many SHAS supporting members without being controlled by SHAS. The synagogue, as is the case of the mosque, was the last fortress that Mizrahim could enter and feel protected from the hegemonic cultural hostility, as put by journalist Iris Mizrahi: "When they closed all gates to the Mizrahim, they forgot to close one gate, which is the gate to the synagogue, and when the Mizrahim had no one left to talk to, they went and talked to God."¹⁴²

Despite the organizational similarity between SHAS and the revolutionary Islamic movement, a reservation is due regarding the issue of a democratic structure. The democratic element is central in Iran, despite its limitations,¹⁴³ and it was Ayatollah Khomeini himself who assigned it utmost importance for the development and stability of the revolution, preaching in favor of elections and democratic resolutions and avoiding making decisions by himself on controversial issues, or on candidate selection.¹⁴⁴ SHAS, as an authoritarian movement whose superleader is expressly named in the bylaws, is completely different in this sense.

In fact, SHAS does not have a single party institution where democratic decisions are made by supporters, activists, or political leaders. The only political institution is the group of individual SHAS Knesset members, created by its very participation in parliamentary life. Its decisions are made by the chairman, instructed by Rabbi Yosef. This variance is manifest in significant differences in the status of activists on the ground in the two movements. In Iran, activists and supporters determined, and still actively determine, the character of the revolution, as illustrated by the influence of moderate students and women in the 1990s that brought about the election of a moderate president such as Khatami, who rewarded them with amendments and reforms. Conversely, in SHAS all is in the hands of a limited kernel, while in the absence of party institutions for communication, participation, and influence, activists on the ground are devoid of any influence. Any attempt to influence the top from the local level, and any manifestation of individual independence at the top political level, is perceived as a rebellion: the contentious element is removed from the party.¹⁴⁵ The decisive consequence of democratic institutions and procedures in Iran (limited as those may be) is stability; the Iranian revolutionary regime survived, and struck root, withstanding the test of continuity and stability after the leader's death. By comparison, SHAS has not

formed any democratic institutions and procedures; it bases its continuity and stability on the leader's authority alone. The question of survival and stability will be tested only after the era of Rabbi Yosef's leadership.

The differences

Significant differences exist between SHAS and the Iranian Revolution that prevent us from calling SHAS a "religious–revolutionary movement." First and most decisive of these is the revolutionary ideology. The Islamic revolution in Iran was born out of the revolutionary idea of uprooting the old regime and replacing it. This idea was formed through perpetual opposition to the regime both in Iran and in exile. With SHAS, local organization for local needs preceded the formation of a mass movement.¹⁴⁶ One may say that SHAS found itself in potentially revolutionary social conditions but did not shape them; on the contrary, in defining itself as *Haredi*, SHAS tries to blur supporters' social–revolutionary awareness, and to enshroud it perpetually in religion, where authority is uncontestable. In this context, the motif that accompanied SHAS since its inception, "returning the crown to its former glory," is indeed religious revolutionary, but it has no revolutionary meaning for a regime change, nor for the amendment of society and the economy in Israel.

Through most of SHAS' history, as opposed to that of the Iranian Revolution, the martyr–leader motif, which provides a revolutionary movement with emotional fuel, is conspicuously absent. Party leaders display a sense of comfort and even indulgence in government corridors, and until 2003 they had not tasted being in opposition. The movement's political leader through its first sixteen years, Rabbi Arye Deri, is a martyr's diametrical opposite, as depicted by Yoel Nir.¹⁴⁷ Nir presents Deri as "the national manipulator"¹⁴⁸ who joined the elites instead of fighting them, a diasporic lobbyist from his very first step into the political arena, whose only ideology is to move money around: "His formula is simple: Take a crisis situation, blow it up to a massive storm, add noisy ethnic hues—and you're done. The millions will flow in abundance."¹⁴⁹ Most important, says Nir, Deri rejected his attorney's strategic advice to turn his trial into an ideological dispute,¹⁵⁰ thus indicating, better than anything else, that he had no revolutionary or radical awareness, at least early on. Only Deri's conviction, after nine years at court during which he acted as a private individual, led him to adopt a martyr position toward his appeal before the Supreme Court, and more so later, on his way to prison. Only as the 1999 elections approached, after Deri's conviction, did SHAS model Deri as a martyr–leader–victim in an election film titled *I Accuse*, and with great success. The very title invokes the Dreyfus trial as marking the birth of Herzl's political Zionism. According to the argument it implies, the roles have been reversed, and now the Ashkenazi Zionist state is persecuting the (Mizrahi) Jew only because he is a practicing, religious Mizrahi Jew. Deri advances this argument in the film, referring to the Eichmann and Demanjuk trials. A mishmash of associations and connotations emerges, since the persecuted "other" in each of those cases stands on a different "side," making the analogies frail and demagogical, as argued in Liora Bilsky's extensive analysis of Deri's trial as a

political trial: "The connection between the Deri trial and the Israeli Shoah trials seems to be more demagogical than a serious claim. Both trials mentioned have to do with the prosecution of those who were considered the ultimate 'other' by Israeli society, Adolf Eichmann and 'Ivan the Terrible' of Treblinka, whereas Deri is considered a known and accepted Israeli political leader."¹⁵¹

Another near constant element in every national and social revolution, but entirely absent from SHAS' pseudo-revolutionary discourse, is the myth of expulsion and exile. Only after a brief withdrawal into the opposition in 2000, and more so with Deri's imprisonment in September of that year, did SHAS begin to develop the myth of the imprisoned and exiled leader, along with the myth of the movement's exile to the opposition, both of great electoral value. Nevertheless, SHAS' perpetual, existential aspiration is to return to the legitimate center, to government, to the business of allocating government revenues. In any case, the leader's and the movement's temporary and symbolic state of "exile" did not drive SHAS to a soul-searching process that may lead to structural or strategic change but was incorporated in the next election campaign. As a result of the 2003 elections, SHAS' path to the government was blocked for the first time, and it began serving in the opposition.

The most decisive revolutionary ideological difference between the Islamic revolution in Iran and SHAS is in relation to the existing regime. The revolutionary movement in Iran, like every revolutionary movement, tied its primary goals together: liberation from oppression and the formation of an alternative regime, based on the critique and the alternative that drove the revolution. SHAS does not connect with this tradition of revolutionary thought. It sees itself as liberating the Mizrahim from the Zionist national manipulation, but it has never advanced the replacement of the regime by a new order. The reasoning is Halachic, as well as structural-political, and practical. Halachically, Rabbi Yosef's stance does not seek to form a Halachah state through politics, though his aspiration and his movement's work to expand the circle of practicing Jews necessarily serves this goal. By his perception, a Halachah state will be formed only by the Messiah who will be Mizrahi: "When he [the Messiah] comes, all will see that he is of the Sephardi ethnic community, and then Sephardi Halachah will rule in the land." Zvi Zohar testifies that this quote, which sounds like another of the rabbi's curiosities, actually summarizes his entire worldview.¹⁵²

As previously mentioned, SHAS conducts itself as the representative of a deprived minority community, in the fashion of community organizations in nineteenth-century Jerusalem. That is, it does not see the potential of its rapid growth as having revolutionary significance. Only with its significant growth did activists begin talking of presenting a candidate for prime minister, but this talk should be attributed to the general protest and provocation following Deri's trial and imprisonment. In practice SHAS preferred to support one of the candidates for prime minister rather than presenting its own candidate in the direct elections for prime minister in 1996, 1999, and 2000.

SHAS also differs greatly from the revolutionary movement in Iran on the question of closedness and openness. The Iranian Revolution addressed all Iranians.

Khomeini, for instance, never addressed Shiites separately, but always “my Muslim brothers.”¹⁵³ Khomeini and the revolutionary leaders made sure to engage moderates and even the educated secular people in the revolution’s and the state’s administration, in order to create a partnership and a shared responsibility by all religious factions for the future of the new independent Iran. However, this openness had, and still has, clear boundaries—the religion of Islam.

Closedness and openness appear to coexist in SHAS. On the one hand, it is politically sealed shut and does not recognize any other Mizrahi political or social organization, rejecting even a dialogue or cooperation with such movements. On the other hand, its synagogues are open to all and even the secular are invited to pray and study Torah and find *teshuva*. This openness is merely ostensible; in practice the synagogues do not serve as channels for participation and influence. Even in receiving services such as kindergartens and schools from the government SHAS is not under the condition of official ideological allegiance. But it is clear that sending children to SHAS’ educational institutions, even without any formal conditions, is accompanied by activities of inclusive and gradual preparation of children’s family members in order to bring them closer to religion as interpreted by SHAS, as an informal condition.

The wide support enjoyed by SHAS among many nonreligious Mizrahim does not depend on its level of openness or closedness but represents the voters’ own political stance: voting-booth protest. This support is mostly transient, as demonstrated by the “Ballot Rebellion” against MAPAI, from which Likud benefited for two decades.

SHAS is therefore not a religious–revolutionary movement according to the model of the Iranian religious revolution. Nevertheless, SHAS sees itself as a revolutionary movement within Judaism at large, wherein Israel as a state is not a religious element. Mizrahim who voted for SHAS out of revolutionary motives, were looking for a radical social movement. Have they found it in SHAS?

Is SHAS a radical social movement?

As elaborated on in the introduction, Tarrow mentions four conditions for defining an organization as a social movement.¹⁵⁴ First is a collective goal of contention through challenges and direct action against the dominant elites, or ruling authority, which disturb the existing order. At times, these challenges manifest themselves in symbolic contentions such as the use of alternative components such as critical symbols, slogans, concepts, music, and clothing. Does SHAS posit a collective Mizrahi confrontation with the Ashkenazi–Zionist hegemony? On the utopian level, the answer is yes, when it seeks to present the world of Sephardi values as an alternative to the Western Zionist world. Practically, in its political activity SHAS does not confront these elites and does not disturb their agenda but fully cooperates with them on socioeconomic and governmental matters.

Tarrow’s second criterion is a shared goal and persistent striving for its realization. The cause that motivates people from different places to organize into one movement is the formation of shared claims against the government institutions

or the dominant elites. He emphasizes that dominant theories of “fun, games, and the madding crowd” ignore a central point—the high risk and sacrifice that come with joining a social movement. Tarrow assumes that people place themselves at prolonged risk only when they have genuine, good reasons to do so. The shared goal is a social movement’s single most unifying factor, even when members know in advance the degree of risk and sacrifice.

SHAS’ founders and activists do indeed have a shared goal, though they are far from the risk and sacrifice that characterize social movements. It is difficult to point out even one case of confrontation with authorities where SHAS activists risked their lives or status, apart from Mizrahi protest activists’ belief, based on past evidence, that they and their movement are closely watched by the state’s security services.

The third condition is solidarity and collective identification. Prominent in SHAS, as opposed to previous Mizrahi movements, is the power of the religious element, in addition to the ethnic, in forming the movement’s solidarity. In SHAS’ case, Mizrahi–religious solidarity gave birth to a strong, unified movement, which still leaves open the question whether SHAS is a social movement.

Tarrow’s fourth condition is persistence and continuous existence of the politics of contention.¹⁵⁵ He discusses continuity beyond the great episode of confrontation that brings the organization to form solidarity and a shared goal. In my analysis of the first condition I have argued that SHAS maintains an atmosphere of confrontation with the European–Zionist hegemony on the symbolic level alone. Regarding the question of persistence, SHAS does persist in symbolic confrontation, but to the same extent it concurrently persists in cooperation with the socioeconomic elites it confronts on the level of values.

I would like to add two elements to Tarrow’s model of the radical social movement. First, not even hinted at in SHAS, is the existence of universal theoretical ties and connections. This bond between practical problems and solutions and a universal revolutionary theory runs like a thread through all radical social movements. Marxism, for instance, in its many variants, has served as a theoretical framework for social movements throughout the world. Thus we can draw a clear ideological line connecting the Black Panthers in the U.S. and HaPanterim HaSh’horim, followed by HaOhalim, which were Marxist in differing ways. The existence of a universal revolutionary ideology and heritage gives a sense of belonging to a strong tradition and a greater movement and takes the movement out of a sense of isolation early on in its path. Moreover, it provides the movement with a larger revolutionary discourse, tools for analysis, similes, symbols, and formulas for struggle.

The second element is the challenge to the existing political and economic order by the posing of an alternative all-inclusive analysis and worldview, not partial and sectorial solutions. For instance, SHAS’ spokespeople never echoed the call from the HaPanterim HaSh’horim, HaOhalim, and other movements for equal opportunities in education for all Israeli citizens. Instead, SHAS speaks of its communities’ particular needs in education, without accounting for a comprehensive change for the general population. As opposed to SHAS, when

leaders of the pedagogical alternative Kedma spoke about and acted for equality in education, they intended to offer a model equitable to the general society, and not to the Mizrahi communities alone. SHAS' sectorial nature was blatantly revealed in the official and publicized persecution of foreign laborers by the movement's top leaders, ministers of labor and of the interior, who accused them of taking jobs away from Israelis, and of causing Jews to intermarry.

Without going into additional characteristics of the social-radical model absent in SHAS, it is clear from this discussion that SHAS is not a social movement according to the terms and conditions presented. SHAS is primarily a participant party in ruling coalitions; it has been a member in almost every government since it entered the political arena.

SHAS between TAMI and the new Mizrahim

Built on the legitimacy of a Mizrahi party alternative paved by TAMI,¹⁵⁶ SHAS identified the potential in the new Mizrahi political possibility, while understanding its ideological limitations within the secular Zionist camp. It therefore appealed to Mizrahim with sharp, black-and-white messages. It offered the only alternative Mizrahim could still call their own: Sephardi Jewish religion, as described by Rabbi Yitzhak Cohen, one of SHAS' leaders: "Our advantage in advocacy is the messages' clarity. It is very easy to speak the truth. When the truth is simple there is no need to squirm."¹⁵⁷

In the case of TAMI's rise and fall, the radical effect worked in reverse. The veteran, politically established Abu-Hatzeira and Uzan took radical steps within the political center, signaling to the radical margins a new possibility in political aims: independent participation in government. The radical effect was positive from the viewpoint of the general Mizrahi political interest, and in the two decades that followed it drew many Mizrahim into the process of Mizrahi political awareness. Like the new Mizrahim, SHAS also emerged from TAMI's radical effect. Nevertheless, we must account for the practical failure of TAMI, for which social change was reduced to a redistribution of public offices. TAMI did not initiate or lead any socioeconomic change to help the Mizrahim out of their inferior status in Israel, the central goal it had set for itself.

SHAS, as opposed to TAMI, appeared with a complete and uncompromising worldview. Rabbi Yosef's plan issues from a comprehensive ideology of spiritual and congregational amendment, in accordance with Torah and Halachah. It is important to stress here that SHAS' starting point is not simply "missionary," but as put in the party's goal list, as an instrument to encourage *teshuva*, or in Rabbi Yosef's own words: "for spreading God's Torah." SHAS' initial political motivation also was the unequal socioeconomic relations between Mizrahim and Ashkenazim, as the movement perceived it in the Ashkenazi *Haredi* communities and in general society. Even when the Ashkenazi patron, Rabbi Shakh, supported SHAS, he did not deem it worthy of leadership, and publicly said so. SHAS' response was to gain six Knesset seats immediately following the final detachment from Shakh's religious and political patronage and from the Lithuanian camp in

1992. With Rabbi Yosef's position as the only spiritual leader, SHAS declared its independence, creating a significant radical effect on Mizrahi politics and marking it for the first time as an independent, alternative Mizrahi movement.¹⁵⁸

SHAS' focus on the establishment of an independent education network, *ulpanas* and yeshivas, synagogues and mikvahs, rehabilitation of convicts and addicts, social support of large families, housing assistance, and the creation of thousands of new jobs in its institutions indicates a clear social (though not socialist) orientation and also points to Ben-Gurion's MAPAI model of dependence, which operates on the principle of fulfilling community needs in exchange for ideological dedication, especially on election day. In this sense, SHAS replaced one system of dependence with another, if independent, Mizrahi. As radical pedagogue Paulo Freire comments, "The authentic solution of the oppressor-oppressed contradiction does not lie in a mere reversal of position, in moving from one pole to the other. Nor does it lie in the replacement of the former oppressors with new ones who continue to subjugate the oppressed—all in the name of their liberation."¹⁵⁹

SHAS does not maintain a dialogue with Mizrahi social movements and does not recognize their activity. Its leaders strictly refer to Mizrahim as "Sephardim," and this is no semantic or sentimental matter. Insistence on the term "Sephardim," which carries purely religious connotations (prayer book, customs, Halachah, and rulings), intends to direct the followers toward the Sephardic synagogue and religious life—the space SHAS considers the most protected Mizrahi space. SHAS' leaders are well aware that use of the new political term "Mizrahim" will force them to expand the address and include within it ideological elements that are unsafe for them, that are outside the religious life, and to widen the boundaries of political activity beyond the synagogues and religious institutions that are the movement's lively local branches. It should be mentioned that Arye Deri began using the term "Mizrahim" only after his release from prison, and his final retirement from SHAS. Deri's public, political (and not just personal) use of this term testifies to the radicalization of his worldview.

SHAS' leaders know that the votes of many nonreligious Mizrahim (at least half of SHAS' voters in 1999, according to the survey cited above) for SHAS are an act of protest and therefore do not feel a need to provide these voters with an ideological home. SHAS' uniqueness as the disputer of Ashkenazi Zionist hegemony, in addition to its moderate approach to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in comparison to the Ashkenazi religious and *Haredi* parties, appealed to many secular Mizrahim at least until the late 1990s. Rabbi Yosef's precedent-setting ruling that permitted the return of occupied territories in exchange for saving Jewish lives drew a clear line between SHAS and the Ashkenazi fundamentalist religious Right, and thus SHAS found itself in 1992 forming a government with the parties of the Ashkenazi Left (Labor and MERETZ), and allowing Rabin and Peres to lead Israel into the Oslo process with the Palestinians. Nevertheless, it should be noted that even on such political matters, SHAS' discourse is unequivocally a discourse of Torah and Halachah, which dictate its actions.

The mutual radical effects that SHAS activated in the Mizrahi political space are worthy of extensive analysis, since it is customary in the Israeli public arena

(and wrongly so) to depict a sharp dichotomy between religious and secular Mizrahim, although a precedent such as TAMI instructs us otherwise. This view was manifest, for instance, in media coverage of the formation of the Mizrahi Democratic Rainbow Coalition (HaKeshet Hademocratit HaMizrahit) in 1997. *Ma'ariv's* headline, for instance, read: "New Mizrahi Social Movement 'the Secular Response to SHAS.'" ¹⁶⁰

Like TAMI, SHAS appealed to the collective Mizrahi Jewish memory. SHAS adopted this mechanism of awareness and revised it significantly. The first revision is the appeal to religion and not to "tradition" (TAMI: the Tradition of Israel Movement), which is vague and open. The second revision is the appeal to all Mizrahim without hinting at one ethnicity or another, as opposed to TAMI's reliance mostly on North Africans. Unlike the Abu-Hatzeira dynasty of rabbis, who are mostly identified with Moroccan Jewry, Rabbi Yosef is of Iraqi descent, had served as deputy chief rabbi of Egypt, and later as Israel's chief Sephardi rabbi; that is, he had acquired an "official Sephardi" status. Community rabbis and SHAS' political leaders are Mizrahim of almost every origin—Moroccan, Tunisian, Yemenite, Bukharan, Iranian, and others. In fact, SHAS' success was in augmenting the reverberation of TAMI's radical effect, which is another link in the chain of the Mizrahi struggle's radical effects. SHAS' electoral success, realizing an independent Mizrahi option, has decisively influenced the course of Mizrahi politics.

Parallel to the emergence of the radical Mizrahi discourse, SHAS is the first Mizrahi political movement to try to create collective Mizrahi myths, two in particular. The first is the portrayal, for the first time, of the entire Ashkenazi Zionist movement (not MAPAI alone) as responsible for the Mizrahim's economic inferiority, by intentionally detaching them from their parents' religious tradition in the name of progress and modernization. Rabbi Deri, on the day he entered Ma'asiyahu Prison in September 2000, referred to this oppression as "spiritual annihilation." One of SHAS' TV ads for the 1984 elections depicts a Mizrahi woman kissing a Torah scroll, accompanied by the voice of Rabbi Yitzhak Peretz: "One Sephardi woman kissing a Torah scroll is worth a thousand professors." This was and remains SHAS' clear consistent message against modernism. The other myth is "returning the crown to its former glory." Aside from Rabbi Yosef's religious—Halachic meaning, a broader channel of connotations echoes from this phrase in the Mizrahi struggle arena. The term *Atara* (crown, kingdom, rule) connotes the religious Jewish context, but in free political translation it is a myth of "Sephardi rule," or "Mizrahi Power," parallel to the phrase "Black Power" for black people in the U.S. Precisely this meaning of the slogan, certainly not accepted by SHAS' leaders, is the most prevalent among the masses of SHAS' protest voters.

Conversely, some view the phrase "returning the crown to its former glory" as a reactionary definition, that is, as bringing back the old order in the way of reactionaries—and in this case, a Halachah state. However, this understanding of the phrase is necessarily very limited. A Halachah state has never existed in Jewish history, so there is nothing to return to; and second, this view does not account for

the social tension that fuels SHAS' growth, and it ignores the chain of the Mizrahi struggle, wherein SHAS is just one link.

As we turn to discuss the development of the new Mizrahi discourse, we must note that of all people, besides HaPanterim HaSh'horim, who had miraculously escaped Israeli socialization, Mizrahim socialized in the Ashkenazi religious or *Haredi* camp were the first to announce the beginning of detachment from the hegemonic Ashkenazi camp, both Zionist and non-Zionist. First was TAMI, in its rebellion against MAFDAL, and then, more vehemently, was SHAS, rending itself from the Lithuanian camp and taking many voters away from MAFDAL. It was precisely from this camp that the most practical and direct political criticism of oppression relations emerged.

Nevertheless, SHAS avoids cooperation with other Mizrahi organizations. Its answer to every dialogue initiative is unequivocal: take upon you the burden of Torah; that is, accept our ideological platform.¹⁶¹

It seems that the new Mizrahim's political identity evolves from the search for a path among Mizrahi political options, and maturity comes out of repeated resounding failures. In this process the new Mizrahim's ideas were sharpened, and ripened to conduct an open, painful dialogue with Israeli society, with Zionism, with the Ashkenazi cultural hegemony, and with the state's oppressive socioeconomic institutions and structures. However, the new Mizrahim's most important dialogue is within Mizrahi society, with Mizrahim of the second and third generations, and at times, with childhood friends and family members, SHAS' voters and supporters. This is a dialogue that has not taken place.

Who is SHAS? A partial summary

SHAS' power increased from one election to the next in two different but closely connected circles, which makes it very difficult to classify it. The first circle is the movement's religious leadership, which is of an elitist nature, headed by Rabbi Ovadia Yosef along with an expanding stratum of "Sephardi" rabbis. The second circle is Mizrahim in general, most of whom inhabit the lower strata of the national economy, who made SHAS their political home, and thus the second largest party in developing towns and Mizrahi neighborhoods.¹⁶² The rabbinic leadership's goals, as shown above, are Jewish and are not limited to Israeli time and space, achieved through the qualitative means of education, religious ruling, and writing and through the quantitative means of bringing tens of thousands of Mizrahim to religious life according to Halachah and the *teshuvah* movement, which is in fact the center of SHAS' activities and institutions.

However, by acting in the Israeli social and political arenas, the leaders of SHAS are frequently required to engage in mundane matters concerning the movement's constituency—mostly poor and working-class voters. As members of government they must also choose a stance on the general national agenda, including economic, social, foreign, and security issues that must be answered in a way that sometimes determines the path for the entire government coalition, as was the case in two Labor governments from which SHAS seceded, following substantial conflicts

with MERETZ. In this sense, the poor and the working-class voters of SHAS' constituency do not influence the rabbinic leadership's decisions; that is, even if reality raises social, not Halachic, solutions, those will not find their way to the movement's decision-making center.

The majority of SHAS' popular layer is not *Haredi*, and half of it is not even orthodox. Its political agenda is therefore not religious–Halachic, but one of social issues. Its political expectations are more earthly: the amendment of the social and economic inequality that harms primarily this population. Nevertheless, the two layers have bound themselves in a political alliance that paradoxically enables the strengthening and consolidation of SHAS as both a popular Mizrahi political movement and an elitist religious movement. This alliance was manifested from SHAS' first election run in 1984, as seen in this election poster:

Who are we and what are we?
 We, simple people, *Edot HaMizrah* from various diasporas
 We keepers of Torah and preservers of generations of Judaism
 We men of hope, vision and creativity
 We, sons of Torah, yeshiva graduates and teachers
 We, men of labor, traders, clerks and workers
 We, the quiet public that yearns for change
 We are all as one man
 Raising the banner of our fathers' heritage
 Believe that a change can be made in the state.

As we have seen, SHAS is not a *Haredi* party or a national religious or revolutionary religious party; nor is it a radical social movement. It is difficult to ignore SHAS' overlap with each of these models, but it is only partial. SHAS operates throughout Israel, but has a significant presence alongside the Ashkenazi *Haredi* communities, with whom it maintains some cooperation in education. The very existence of SHAS is one reason many Mizrahim abandoned MAFDAL, but it cooperates with MAFDAL on the margins, as in referring SHAS youngsters to reside in the settlements,¹⁶³ and on religious votes in the Knesset. Recently, under Eli Yishai's leadership, SHAS has even come nearer to MAFDAL's national positions as winds of war were blowing. SHAS is certainly marked by many characteristics of a religious–revolutionary movement, and especially prominent in this context is its leaders' challenge to the legitimacy of the Israeli justice system. SHAS also wishes to present itself as a social movement whose interpretation of political action is not confrontation with the existing order, but social activity, such as distribution of material assistance to the needy.

SHAS touches all of these, but without holding any one in its entirety. Who, therefore, is SHAS? How may we define it? A nongovernmental aid organization that funds itself politically? A mass *teshuva* movement with a political consciousness? A movement of disappointment and protest? Perhaps all of the above? SHAS, to the best of my understanding, is a rare product of social, cultural, and national circumstances. In a seemingly paradoxical sense, SHAS itself did not

have much influence on the shaping of its political image and character. It intended, at first, to benefit “Sephardi” students of Torah and their families, who suffered racist discrimination in the Ashkenazi *Haredi* educational system. This unpretentious organization arrived at some rare circumstances that turned it into the almost exclusive Mizrahi vehicle for protest in Israeli politics. First, the hope aroused by TAMI disappeared, creating a vacuum; second, already in the 1981 elections, it was clear that the dramatic Mizrahi move from Labor to Likud had begun to crack and show signs of disappointment. Mizrahim began searching for another path, outside Likud, and a return to Labor was inconceivable. The evidence—in 1999 Likud lost thirteen Knesset seats, but Labor also lost eleven seats.

An additional contribution to the forsaking of Likud as an anchor of national identity in favor of SHAS as an anchor of identity came from the few years of the peace process with the Palestinians, which assuaged the burning questions of state politics and allowed the beginning of introspection into the social and cultural conflicts within Israeli society. Nevertheless, issues of state security still take center stage, and the political value of security exceeds that of social justice. We saw a definite example of this in the beginning of the Al-Aqsa Intifada, and the short uprising of Arabs in Israel that followed, when thirteen innocent Arab citizens were shot dead by the police. The intifada broke out at the peak of SHAS’ protest days at the She’agat Aryeh tent outside Ma’asiyahu Prison, where Arye Deri began serving his sentence. Indeed, a day after the intifada broke out, the tens of thousands of SHAS protestors disappeared, and all of their leaders’ attention was turned to state security. Eli Yishai summarized this on radio: “This is not the time for protest; we are now all mobilized in an emergency draft.”¹⁶⁴ SHAS has been moving to the Right since 2000, at least symbolically, in order to join the national atmosphere of warfare, which captivates its supporters, like all citizens of Israel, despite the fact that Rabbi Yosef has not changed his rulings in favor of the peace process. The 2003 elections indicated an Israeli withdrawal to the Right, and stronger right-wing parties formed the first government without SHAS and the *Haredim*. Likewise the 2003 elections proved that SHAS’ show of symbolic national sentiment paid off and prevented it from collapsing under this pressure, as happened, for example, to the Russian immigrants’ party, Israel Ba’aliya.

SHAS’ penetration of all Mizrahi communities, where need, unemployment, and despair were on the increase even at the beginning of the twenty-first century, has made it the sponge of Mizrahi protest. Throughout the movement’s existence not a single significant Mizrahi party has run for the Knesset. SHAS is the only Mizrahi party that stood waiting to receive the votes of these disappointed protest voters, and they delivered again and again, regardless, in most cases, of their religious or secular way of life. SHAS could read the economic disappointment and the termination of welfare service by right-wing economics as a golden opportunity for filling the vacuum, and provided these services itself within a religious framework. The Liberal economists and the wealthy, for their part, found this a convenient solution, as it granted them the silence needed to continue privatizing the market and disassembling the state’s welfare apparatus. That “the

poor take care of themselves” is the false message that SHAS conveys to the economic elites, and the latter continue to support this new distribution of roles.

However, SHAS’ greatest achievement is also its greatest trap. So long as it had four or six seats in the Knesset, its leader-entrepreneurs could successfully define it as “a religious-*Haredi* movement,” shaking off any idea of a democratic social movement. Just as importantly, the message received by the Zionist political hegemony was that SHAS is no threat and need not be feared, since it is no different from other religious and *Haredi* parties that operated within the legitimate boundaries outlined for them. Herzog adds that SHAS was received, at first, as a legitimate religious-Mizrahi party, because of a cultural tolerance toward the Mizrahim that began to appear in the mid-1990s. Evidence for this is the moderate media coverage awarded SHAS in its first two elections, as opposed to the negative labeling of Mizrahi parties before SHAS, which was perceived as threatening.¹⁶⁵ In the 1996 elections SHAS won ten seats, and three years later it became the third-largest party with seventeen seats. From 1996 on, the movement’s religious-Sephardi path was perceived by the Ashkenazi Zionist hegemony on the Right and the Left as a threatening revolutionary ideology. About two hundred thousand additional voters voted for SHAS in the course of three years. In fact, it was a vote of protest against all others, much less a vote for SHAS. They voted “I am an independent Mizrahi,” not “I am a Sephardi *Haredi*.”

About half of SHAS’ voters, the great majority of whom are traditionalist Mizrahim, democratic in their worldview, pose the great test or the great trap for SHAS: should it open up and contain, on the structural and ideological level, voters who continue to forsake Likud and seek a new social ideology and a new movement to lead them? In SHAS they find a sort of waiting post, which is also a trial period for it. Yet that kind of opening up and democratization will terminate the intimate closedness of the core controlling SHAS, mostly through proximity to Rabbi Yosef.

SHAS’ greatest obstacle on the way to opening up and connecting with other Mizrahi and social forces is not its closedness, but its lack of desire to rule. Once this is inverted, if SHAS would aspire to replace the Ashkenazi Zionist ideology and establish a new regime, it will have to form many alliances and cooperate with other Mizrahi and social forces that will completely reject its closed undemocratic structure. As we have already seen, it is difficult to foresee such a development under Rabbi Yosef’s leadership, and it is not clear that SHAS will survive transition to the period after Yosef as a unified mass movement. It is possible to carefully assess whether a return to political life by Arye Deri would necessarily rip SHAS in two. Will he be interested in and capable of making new pacts with other Mizrahi and social movements?

If SHAS survives and the question of alliances rises, it will become clear that this is a difficult, two-way question: how many steps, in the political context, will SHAS be willing to take outside the synagogue? That is, will it accede to the detachment of the political branch from the synagogue? The only meaning of this would be the separation of political work from religious life. There is also the question of democratic Mizrahi activists: how many steps will they be willing to

take toward the synagogue, and even into it? That is, to accept the world of Sephardi Judaism as a crucial component of Mizrahi identity and culture. Is there an ideal middle ground, and is it realistic in the Israeli political reality?

The new radical Mizrahi discourse: radical critique and alternative

Background

Social inequality continues in the 1990s

Socioeconomic inequality between Ashkenazim and Mizrahim continued in the 1990s. The decisive significance of this continued inequality for the Mizrahi struggle is the persistence of the social and cultural struggle's goals. That is, movements and organizations will continue to emerge and try to achieve the goals of the struggle, defined at least two decades earlier by HaPanterim HaSh'horim and those who followed them, and to a great extent even before that, in Wadi A-Salib.

Income and housing

Despite a general improvement in the quality of life in Israel, especially in housing and in the percentage of high school graduates, economic gaps between Ashkenazim and Mizrahim of the second generation remain, and in several fields the gaps have widened and worsened. According to data on differences in income, Yoav Peled finds a "cultural distribution of labor" in 1990s Israel.¹⁶⁶ Among Jews, Mizrahim comprise the majority of the poor layer and the low-income brackets; the lower-middle class are made up of Mizrahim and Ashkenazim, with the latter forming a slight majority; the upper-middle and upper classes are clearly composed of Ashkenazim. The class picture would not be complete without noting that at the bottom of the labor distribution scale in Israel are Arab-Israelis, with Palestinian workers from the occupied territories and foreign laborers brought in during the early 1990s below them. The figures present an institutionalized and perpetuated correspondence between ethnicity and class. Three current sociological studies point to the supposedly surprising fact that the gaps in income and education between Ashkenazim and Mizrahim diminished within the first generation over the years but grew markedly within the second generation.¹⁶⁷ Two processes contributed to this: (1) the accumulation of years of seniority among Mizrahim of the first generation and the completion of education at a later age, mostly among public service workers,¹⁶⁸ when each school year was "worth," up to the mid-1970s, 3 percent of wages, as opposed to the value of a school year in the 1990s, which reached 8 percent;¹⁶⁹ and (2) a general growth of inequality, and with it increased compensation for academic education, as opposed to school years. In this sense, the process of closing the gaps between Ashkenazim and Mizrahim is extremely slow. Thus, for example, in 1995, 20 percent of Ashkenazi men held jobs requiring a university degree, more than three times the number of

Mizrahi men, of whom only 6 percent held such jobs.¹⁷⁰ This gap affected, in the early 1990s, the low percentage (20.6) of Mizrahim born abroad working in high-paying jobs such as professions requiring a university degree or as managers and technicians, compared to the percentage of Ashkenazim born abroad (38.6). For the second generation (those born in Israel) the gap is greater: 21.1 percent Mizrahim to 50.1 percent Ashkenazim.¹⁷¹

The power of inheritance

Another decisive factor in the growth of gaps in the second generation is the level of inheritance passed from the first to the second generation. This is difficult to measure, as there is no inheritance tax in Israel, but a survey by Levin-Epstein indicates that 43 percent of second-generation Ashkenazim received assistance from their parents in buying a residence, as opposed to only 20 percent of Mizrahim of the same generation. In terms of housing prices, the study shows that residences owned by Ashkenazim of the second generation are 65 percent more expensive than those owned by their Mizrahi counterparts.¹⁷² Moreover, the effect of the inheritance factor will be seen in the third generation as well.

Schooling and education

Schooling and education are, of course, the main causes of the gaps in the second generation. There is a 3.7:1 ratio gap in favor of Ashkenazim in academic education as of 1995, and according to Yinon Cohen's calculations, at the current slow pace, the gaps in academic education will not be finally closed until approximately the year 2090. These gaps are rooted in the still unequal educational infrastructure. As of 1995, 45 percent of Mizrahi elementary school graduates are still directed to vocational or only semi-academic high school education. According to data compiled by Jarbi and Levi, only 34 percent of academic high school graduates are Mizrahim, and only 30 percent of those go on to academic studies, on account of the low quality of education in vocational schools.¹⁷³ The gap also persists in the quality of academic degrees. Many undergraduate students study in regional colleges, of whom 73 percent are Mizrahim. Bachelor's degree diplomas from regional colleges (which are in fact branches of the universities but are not research institutions) cannot compete with university diplomas on the job market and in graduate education. The rising number of Mizrahi college students in the 1990s is a result of an initiative by the universities and the Ministry of Education, which sought to liberate the selective universities from a growing Mizrahi demand for academic studies. In the spirit of this initiative, Minister of Education Amnon Rubinstein coined the call: "Don't come to the universities, let the universities come to you."

Income

According to the aforementioned studies, the income gap between Ashkenazim and Mizrahim in the second generation increased from the mid-1970s to the early

1990s by 11 percent, and stands in the mid-1990s at 33 percent in favor of the Ashkenazi male employee of the second generation. Among women the gap in education is similar, but the gap in income between Mizrahi and Ashkenazi women is smaller because of wage discrimination against women in Israel in general, which affects Ashkenazi women as well. Another gap among men is in the income of academics; in 1995 a Mizrahi academic earned 78 percent of an Ashkenazi academic's salary.

However, the more decisive data for income, both socially and in terms of mobility for the next generation, lie in entire families' average income. By this criterion, a gap grew in that period by 25 percent and stood in the early 1990s at 50 percent in favor of the second generation Ashkenazi family. In examining explanations for the gap, Cohen discovers that all existing variables (work hours, age, school years, academic education, financial field, occupation), there remains an "unexplained" gap of 19.5 percent as of 1995. His conclusion regarding this "unexplained" gap is central to the social situation of the early 1990s: "It is safe to determine that the reason for the 'unexplained' gaps in pay between the groups lies in factors irrelevant to the work force, or in other words, a direct discrimination in the work force."¹⁷⁴

I should emphasize that even the "explained" gaps in the second generation are the outcome of socioeconomic oppression when Mizrahim arrived in Israel, in the 1950s and 1960s, which created an entrenched inequality. Two infrastructural elements played a decisive role. First is the unequal system of education, which still keeps the quality of schools low in the lower-income (and predominantly Mizrahi) areas; that is, mostly vocational schools and comprehensive schools of whose students only a third get to study liberal arts and sciences, as opposed to exclusively academic schools in established, mostly Ashkenazi areas. The second is an intergenerational social network surrounding education, media, law, medicine, capital, bureaucracy, and culture. Most of those who are part of this network, as implied by accumulated data, are first- and second-generation Ashkenazim. "Membership" in this social network is a crucial economic asset that passes down from generation to generation, and depends on belonging to a certain ethnicity, family, or movement, and on the shared economic interests that network members are obliged to protect.

This state of inequality stands in apparent contradiction to the growth of the radical Mizrahi discourse and its success in breaking into politics and academia in Israel; the emergent cultural revival in music, literature, research, and cinema; and the rise of educational alternatives from the margins to the center. In fact, the strengthening of the new Mizrahi discourse and culture from the mid-1980s is the outcome of a sober and conscious observation by pundits of the new generation regarding the ongoing economic and cultural oppression, and more importantly, the transition to new battlegrounds such as the media, culture, and academia. The substance of this cultural renewal is a transition of the struggle as seen with African Americans in the 1970s and 1980s from protest to cultural production and community work; that is, from a struggle of external confrontation to a struggle of internal building.

The current thrust of the new Mizrahims' struggle can be described as an internal work of awareness and creativity, alongside legal and legislative activity, and less as a struggle of external confrontation like that of HaPanterim HaSh'horim, HaOhalim, and others. The new Mizrahi discourse, being also a universal class struggle, seeks to promote the betterment of the general Israeli society, as opposed to the old sectorialism that SHAS had reintroduced to the Mizrahi struggle arena.

The new Mizrahim and the foundations of the new radical Mizrahi discourse

The "new Mizrahim" is not the name of a movement but a wave of youngsters, academics, teachers, students, artists, writers, journalists, thinkers, organizations, and movements who have shaped over the last three decades a new discourse for the Mizrahi struggle and for Israeli society in general through production of alternative knowledge. This process takes place in the realms of the economy and society, foreign policy, education, culture, literature, filmmaking, media, and academia. The new Mizrahim are active in small, high-quality groups and organizations that have never put themselves to the electoral test. They do not define themselves as *Edot haMizrah*, or "Sephardim," but as "Mizrahim," referring to a predominantly political identity. That is the essence of the new Mizrahi awareness. Their analysis critiques all social, economic, cultural, and political Israeli structures controlled by the Ashkenazi-Zionist hegemony.¹⁷⁵ The new Mizrahim do not see Israeli society according to the Zionist Arab-Jew dichotomy that seeks to continue to silence the conflicts within Israeli society; rather, they deconstruct this separation into internal categories and present a more complex structure of Israeli society.¹⁷⁶ One of the achievements of the new Mizrahi discourse over the last decade is in inserting this complexity into the social and cultural discourse, appropriating it from the Ashkenazi hegemony's sociology and media, and removing it from the caregiver/patient manipulation described in Shlomo Swirski's work. The new Mizrahi discourse rejects the traditionally accepted division of Israeli politics into Right and Left. According to spokespeople of the new Mizrahi discourse,¹⁷⁷ there are in fact no socioeconomic left-wing movements in Israel,¹⁷⁸ and the division into Left and Right according to one's position on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (what is called "national politics") does not parallel the socioeconomic division. By this concept, the so-called Left, including the kibbutzim, belong to the conservative right in a socioeconomic sense, and, some claim, even regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. By this analysis, the kibbutzim, Israel's myth of a socialist, humane Left, are capitalistic units whose power was built on forceful conquest of land, displacement of Palestinians, and exploitation of cheap labor beginning with the residents of development towns, through Palestinians, to foreign laborers. Above all stands the right-wing economic reality of privatization and globalization supported by all movements commonly referred to as the "Zionist Left." The new Mizrahi discourse also seeks to expose the kibbutzim as an elitist, economic, and cultural Right, sealed off from

the Mizrahi development towns, both in the past and in the present, as gaps between Mizrahim and Ashkenazim widen at an increasing pace.

The radical novelty in the new Mizrahims' critique is in viewing Mizrahim, as defined by Ella Shohat, as the Jewish victims of the Ashkenazi Zionist revolution,¹⁷⁹ after its primary victims, the Palestinians, perceived by Zionism as its enemy. Mizrahim, according to this critique, were brought into the Zionist revolution in circumstances over which they had no influence whatsoever, as masses for Zionism's demographic-territorial struggle against the Palestinians, and in order to form, despite themselves, the proletariat on which the modern Israeli economy was built, the fruits of which they do not enjoy.

Culture: the struggle over Mizrahi collective memory

A central element in the new Mizrahi critique challenges the attempt to erase Mizrahi collective memory and reshape it, through a forced socialization process, the outcome of which is necessarily the suppression of Mizrahi identity and culture.¹⁸⁰ In a way similar to Rabbi Yosef and SHAS' struggle to return the Sephardi-Mizrahi Halachah world to the center of Jewish life, the new Mizrahims' struggle against the erasure of Mizrahi history and culture from Jewish and Israeli history by formulating alternative narratives. The dynamic element is also similar in both camps' struggles: Rabbi Yosef and SHAS struggle while shaping the Sephardi Halachic world through loyalty to its solid sources, but also through awareness of the changes in recent generations;¹⁸¹ the new Mizrahim perceive Mizrahi identity today as the sum of changes over recent generations, both abroad and in Israel, not a simplistic perception that calls for a "return to the origins." Nevertheless, a fundamental difference exists between the two sides of this cultural struggle. SHAS' reform agenda focuses on the Jewish Sephardi-Mizrahi world alone, out of connection and dialogue with the Ashkenazi Jewish world. The new Mizrahi discourse takes place within much wider boundaries and includes, for example, not only the Jewish world but the general Middle Eastern world, the global class struggle, and the struggle against the occupation and for peace.

When Ella Shohat, for example, addresses anti-Mizrahi cultural stereotypes in Israeli cinema, she refers to the Jewish and Arab worlds as one. Shlomo Swirski takes the same approach in criticizing the education system, and the same goes for Alcalay in culture and literature, to name a few. The new Mizrahims' perspective is that of third world people, not necessarily Jews. Hence the obligatory dialogue with the new Palestinian discourse, and that of Arab-Israelis, regarding equal citizenship and cultural autonomy, and the Palestinian national struggle for self-determination and territorial sovereignty.¹⁸²

The struggle over memory is manifest in a wave of literature, journalism, filmmaking, television, and independent research that is liberated from the Ashkenazi Zionist discourse. I will elaborate on the organizations and movements involved in this work.

The socioeconomic Mizrahi Left

In all issues of *Iton Aher* from the mid-1980s, the socioeconomic topic was made the center of discussion—a piercing critique directed indiscriminately at Likud and Labor, and at both Ashkenazi and Mizrahi politicians. Prominent examples are found in two issues, from March 1992 and February 1993. The first was dedicated to a fierce critique of Mizrahi politicians, with a representative examination of Knesset member Meir Chetrit of the younger generation in Likud, who said, on the matter of the Mizrahim in Likud: “Laying full responsibility on *Edot haMizrah* in the Likud for being able to bring about such a change is a bit exaggerated. For what can [the representatives of] *Edot haMizrah* do in that direction? But on the subject of a more equal distribution of resources, I admit that in the Likud era there has been no change.” *Iton Aher*’s editor, David Hemo, wrote about Knesset member Chetrit: “Disowning the population on whose backs Chetrit and his friends have climbed, and betraying it no longer draws even a raised eyebrow, but has become the norm in Israeli politics.”¹⁸³ The second issue was dedicated to a critique of the Rabin government’s socioeconomic policies, with the cover reading “New-Old Right,” and the editorial pressing the point: “The connection between Labor and MERETZ (a political party, stands left to the Labor on the Israeli–Palestinian conflict) has reinstated hypocrisy in Israel, with a wink from old MAPAI, the alienation of the poor population with lip-service.”¹⁸⁴

Prominent motifs of the Mizrahi social Left

The Mizrahi social Left has been characterized by adherence to three prominent principles. First, it has rejected Israel’s unequal socioeconomic structure, which accelerates economic polarization in society between Ashkenazim and Mizrahim, Jews and Arabs, and men and women. Among Jews, this inequality pushes primarily the residents of Mizrahi development towns and poor neighborhoods to the margins of society. This principle is manifest, for example, in the goals of the Mizrahi Democratic Rainbow Coalition: “The movement fights against social inequality and the pushing of the Mizrahi public to the margins, and against the ongoing damage to the neighborhoods, towns and the periphery. The movement will act against economic and social mechanisms and trends that constitute and preserve economic gaps and social stratification.”¹⁸⁵

Second, the Mizrahi social Left has rejected the liberalization and globalization process of the Israeli economy in the 1980s and 1990s at the expense of the working class and the poor, mostly Arabs and Mizrahim, with women at the very bottom. The most prominent expressions of this critique were attacks by many Mizrahi spokespeople against the Rabin government’s plan to privatize the education system in 1993. Those speakers saw the plan as a blatant government endorsement of planned acceleration in privatizing the economy, with increasing government dismissal of its self-proclaimed mission as a “welfare state.” The organization that led this critique was HILA, which held conferences and rallies and publicized the plan.¹⁸⁶ Residents of poor neighborhoods and development

towns also criticized the plan. This struggle failed to stop the wheels of privatization, even in court. Another attempt to stop privatization prevailed after a prolonged public and legal battle by the Mizrahi Democratic Rainbow Coalition against the privatizing of state lands to benefit farmers, mainly established kibbutzim and Moshavim and Moshavot (agricultural settlements).

The third overarching principle is endorsement of a social-democratic socioeconomic alternative based on belief in the role of government in taking a large measure of responsibility for its citizens' quality of life and for the strengthening of democratic civil and community participation. Neo-Marxists will see here a contradiction, since alongside classic, global class values is a prominent element of particularity, highlighting one group, the Mizrahim, who suffer from the right-wing liberal economy. This is also one of the central grievances of Arab-Israelis against the Mizrahi struggle and the new Mizrahi discourse—that is, the issue of distribution and privatization of state lands, the great majority of which were appropriated from Palestinians. This element has changed over the last few years. Thus, for example, the HILA organization, once called the Public Committee for Education in the Development Towns and Neighborhoods, has in the last decade added “and Villages” (meaning Arab villages) to its name, as well as to its agenda and work. The Mizrahi Democratic Rainbow Coalition tried to resolve this incongruity in its general definition: “The Mizrahi Democratic Rainbow is a non-governmental social movement. The movement is Mizrahi in its goals, universal in its values, and open to all who identify with its principles. The movement fights for a comprehensive change in Israeli society.”¹⁸⁷ This definition alone did not resolve the contradiction, and principal ideological disputes over this element have led to the resignation of central activists in the movement. The Adva Center for the Study of Equality in Israel does not enter this contradiction at all, having chosen from the start to focus its research activity on all oppressed groups: Arabs, Mizrahim, women, as well as secondary groups such as Ethiopians and Bedouins.¹⁸⁸

Looking back at the principles presented in the previous chapters, similarity and continuity can be discerned in their shaping of socioeconomic concepts. The prototypical expression of left-wing social principles belongs to HaPanterim HaSh'horim, whose leaders spoke most clearly of socialism and were first to form an ideological and political bond with the socialist and even the communist Left. The primary condition that allowed them to speak of socialism was the fact that the ruling party, then MAPAI, defined itself as a socialist movement, giving legitimacy to HaPanterim HaSh'horim, and making it difficult for the government to attack them on this point. Therefore, all attempts to delegitimize the Panterim were always aimed at their radically left-wing positions on the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. The movements that followed them (HaOhalim, TAMI, HILA, *Iton Aher*, the Rainbow coalition) operated in the age of Likud, when the word “socialism” became a synonym for the odious MAPAI, and the state entered the age of accelerated accommodation of capitalism. The use of left-wing economic terminology became illegitimate in Israeli politics, and, like the other political movements on the Right and on the Left (including Labor), the Mizrahi

movements replaced “socialism” and “equality” with more compromising terms such as “social policy” and “social justice.” Thus, for example, the Mizrahi Democratic Rainbow Coalition reshaped the left-wing economic message in new language: “The movement views the respectable livelihood of workers as a central goal of economic and social life. In order to realize this, the movement will seek to establish their social and economic rights. The movement will work for the democratization of ownership and management of financial institutions both statewide and locally.”¹⁸⁹

The Israeli–Palestinian question

Another aspect of the new Mizrahi discourse is its treatment of the Palestinian question. In general, the new Mizrahi discourse supports the Palestinian national struggle for an end to the occupation, self-determination, and forming a state and identifies with the struggle of Palestinian citizens of Israel for equal citizenship and cultural autonomy. HaPanterim HaSh’horim had already connected the Mizrahi struggle to the Palestinian struggle, mediated first by the left-wing organizations Matzpen and SIAH, and later, to a greater extent, by Charlie Bitton, who joined RAKAH; and by Sa’adia Marciano, who joined Sheli. All this occurred even as Mizrahi Likud voters grew in numbers, though there was nothing in common between this protest vote and the right-wing national ideology of Likud. As a rule, as the state came closer to a compromise on the Palestinian issue and to recognizing the Palestinians’ national demands, the connection made by the new Mizrahim with the Palestinian struggle drew increasing support and identification.

The year 1986 was a milestone in the formal and open relations between the new Mizrahim and Palestinians, with the formation of the Committee for Israeli–Palestinian Dialogue by Mizrahi intellectuals headed by Dr Shlomo Elbaz and Knesset member Latif Dori of MAPAM.¹⁹⁰ In a declaration of principles published on January 26, 1980, they recognized the Palestinian Liberation Organization as the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people and called for negotiations with it on the basis of mutual recognition. They announced a battle for peace and for an end to “ethnic discrimination” in Israel. They also attacked the labeling of Mizrahim as “Arab-haters” and announced that the Mizrahim have the ability and desire to serve as a bridge to peace. Considering the fact that during this period Israel saw its war on the PLO as the essence of its relations with the Palestinians, this was a bold statement, and nonetheless the movement won significant support from intellectuals and public figures such as Sami Michael, Shlomo Bar, and Shimon Ballas. The media, however, ignored the movement and its declaration almost entirely. Likud condemned them, with words borrowed from Europe’s bleak vocabulary, as “an ideological virus.” At the same time, *Al HaMishmar* published an article about Kahane’s Kakh movement, claiming that most Kakh leaders were Mizrahim.¹⁹¹ When Dori asked the paper for those leaders’ names, the journal produced a list of the thirteen central activists (not leaders, for there was no leader but Kahane), among whom there was only two Mizrahim, in minor positions. Dori condemned the paper for attempting to label

Mizrahim as racist Arab-haters precisely at a time when a Mizrahi movement for dialogue with the Palestinians had been formed.

During that same year the Committee for Israeli–Palestinian Dialogue commenced a series of meetings in the occupied territories, and in East Jerusalem with Palestinians, including Hana Seniora, editor of the daily *El-Fajr*. Gideon Giladi¹⁹² believes the Palestinians began to show interest in a possible dialogue with Mizrahim in Israel only after the severe confrontation between HaPanterim HaSh'horim and the Israeli authorities.¹⁹³ This hypothesis is supported by Palestinian research, such as the work of Helda Shaaban Sayaj of the PLO's Research Institute in Beirut in 1972, which surveys the conditions of Mizrahim in Israel and the Mizrahi confrontation with and protest against the government.¹⁹⁴

As a result of the proliferation of meetings between Mizrahim and PLO members, the government decided to prohibit meetings with the PLO, passing legislation officially named the Law for a War on Terror.¹⁹⁵ And yet, representatives of the Committee for Israeli–Palestinian Dialogue announced they would continue meeting with PLO representatives. Giladi claims that meetings with the PLO were held years earlier, by left-wing Ashkenazim, mostly with Isam Sirtawi, but they were never investigated and the government did not see those meetings (of which it received reports from the Israeli representatives themselves) as a threat. Therefore, argues Giladi, the law was not enacted until after the meetings between the Mizrahi Left and the PLO.

Indeed, the meetings that took place abroad were with more senior PLO representatives. In November 1986 the first meeting took place in Romania and received extensive media coverage worldwide. When the activists returned to Israel they were taken in for questioning by the police.¹⁹⁶ The next meeting took place on June 9, 1987, in Budapest, where Charlie Bitton headed the Israeli group, and Mahmoud Abbas led the PLO delegation. The group included twenty-two Mizrahi activists, as well as members of MAPAM and RAKAH. Mizrah for Peace members, headed by Dr Shlomo Elbaz, resigned from the group before it set out, claiming they received threats from the Israeli Secret Service.¹⁹⁷ The results of the meeting that are interesting for our discussion are a declaration of mutual recognition by Knesset member Charlie Bitton and Abu-Mazen. Bitton, the first Knesset member to meet with official PLO representatives, recognized the PLO as the sole representative of the Palestinians and their right to form an independent state alongside Israel. He called upon the Israeli government to join this declaration and enter negotiations with the PLO, about five years before the Oslo process.¹⁹⁸ In the same meeting, PLO representative Abu-Mazen addressed the Mizrahi issue:

Friends, let us speak as frankly as possible about a subject that demands some clarification, by you and us, the image created for the Mizrahim in Israel over the years, most of whom lived with us in peace and harmony for many years. The ruling establishment in Israel, assisted by the very influential Western propaganda system, labeled and depicted the Mizrahim as haters of Arabs and Palestinians. Nonetheless, their very presence here with us as representatives of important segments of public opinion in Israel proves the invalidity of this

claim against you. . . . Therefore, our “welcome” greeting to you is based on your deep awareness of the advantages of justice and peace, in the shade of which we should all live.¹⁹⁹

The most significant meeting, in terms of the new Mizrahi discourse, took place in 1989 in Toledo, Spain. This was the most unmistakably Mizrahi–Palestinian meeting, where only Mizrahi representatives from many organizations in Israel, as well as representatives of two leftist Mizrahi organizations from France, *Perspectifs JudeoArabe* and *Identity and Dialogue*, were the moderators and the organizers. At this meeting Abu-Mazen made an unprecedented announcement:

While the Ashkenazi establishment in Israel refuses to negotiate with the PLO, it is important to negotiate with Mizrahim, who represent the majority in Israel. Because the Mizrahim are a majority in Israel, matters of peace will depend on them. They are an organic part of our culture, of our Arab Muslim society, a part of our history and our memory. We must renew our memory and use our common culture in order to overcome our present and plan our future.²⁰⁰

Other prominent Mizrahim such as Rabbi Moshe Swissa, poet Erez Bitton, actor Yosef Shiloah, filmmaker Simone Bitton, scholar Ella Shohat, Tikva Levi of HILA, and many others participated in this meeting. Prominent among the Palestinians was poet Mahmoud Darwish, who emphasized the importance of the common culture and the fact that Toledo is a symbolic site for the meeting in this sense. For the first time, Mizrahim from outside Israel participated, including Ammiel Alcalay and Serj Bardugo, who noted that 30 percent of Moroccan Jews chose not to emigrate to Israel. The meeting in Toledo was one of the events that shaped the national dimension in the new Mizrahi discourse, since it determined the lowest common denominator from which no new Mizrahi organization or movement backed down: an end to the occupation and the settlements, recognition of the Palestinians’ right to self-determination and a sovereign state alongside Israel, and recognition of the PLO as the Palestinians’ legitimate leadership.

This common denominator was validated and supported unexpectedly by SHAS leader Rabbi Ovadia Yosef. Around the time of the Toledo meeting, Rabbi Yosef was invited by the Egyptian president, Hosni Mubarak, for an official visit to Cairo, the city where he had served as deputy chief rabbi some forty years before. Rabbi Yosef was given a regal reception by the Egyptians, and the visit met with great wrath in circles on the Israeli Right, SHAS’ partners in Yitzhak Shamir’s government, which attended the historic Madrid Convention some two years later. Mubarak, like Abu-Mazen and the PLO leadership, understood that establishing dialogue and contact with the Mizrahim in Israel would affect a legitimization for compromise among Mizrahim. They understood that the Ashkenazi Zionist leadership would be forced to move toward compromise so as not to lose hegemony over Israel’s foreign policy. Rabbi Yosef, who had a decade earlier ruled in favor of exchanging territories for peace, intended to repeat his declaration and ruling during his visit or immediately thereafter, but he was dissuaded by

pressure from Prime Minister Shamir and rabbis of the Ashkenazi religious Right. But even without a repeated declaration, the very visit to Cairo gave legitimacy to the Mizrahims' slow and gradual liberation from the restricting (and false) stereotype of "Arab-haters" placed on them by the Zionist parties as a requirement for acquiring Israeli identity. This gradual liberation contributed to paving the way for SHAS to support a territorial compromise and to support the Oslo process as a partner in Rabin's government. Of course, this process is always dependent on the level of security tension; in a state of crisis, such as the Al-Aqsa Intifada, the process appears to retreat, and once again we find the Mizrahi majority huddling under the wings of Zionist nationalism. At this point in time, a special interest began developing among the new Mizrahim, in SHAS' work, which was seen, despite ample criticism, as a force for liberating Mizrahim from the hegemonic Ashkenazi center.

The new Mizrahi discourse and SHAS: sharp criticism and solidarity of identity

SHAS leaders are chiefly tested, by the new Mizrahim, on their activity or inactivity for inclusive social change, and by their success in improving the quality of life of 2.5 million citizens living in poverty; that is, in achieving comprehensive reform through new social legislation, not merely bettering the lives of a few. Social legislation means, for example, broad application of the Public Housing Act, pushed by the Mizrahi Democratic Rainbow Coalition despite resistance from SHAS, which preferred to keep housing assistance within its own sectorial jurisdiction.²⁰¹ Further social legislation would mean new social laws regarding state land distribution, education, income, welfare, and culture.

In terms of the new Mizrahi discourse, despite SHAS' size and power it has not yet made a significant contribution to the awakening and nascent dynamic Mizrahi identity; to the struggle over literature, art, and music; to the class struggle, and for radical changes in the education system. Nevertheless, the new Mizrahim find it difficult to ignore SHAS' crucial, singular role in mobilizing hundreds of thousands of votes for the independent Mizrahi political process and in consolidating a political collective, mostly liberated from the ranks of Labor and Likud, thus creating a new Mizrahi political reality.

Thus we find the new Mizrahim ambivalent regarding SHAS. On the one hand, there is an immediate solidarity among Mizrahim when SHAS is attacked on racist grounds by Ashkenazi journalists and politicians; times of crisis, as during Deri's trial and imprisonment, see increasing identification of new Mizrahim, who almost automatically side with SHAS in public debate. This solidarity is not merely emotional. The new Mizrahim positively regard SHAS' rise, from one election to the next, as an intermediary stage, detaching the Mizrahi collective of working-class residents of the poor neighborhoods and development towns from the Ashkenazi Zionist parties. On the other hand, the new Mizrahim criticize SHAS for not fighting for comprehensive social and economic change, for not attempting to expand the struggle beyond soup-kitchens and subsidies for its loyal voters.

The new Mizrahim: from awareness to organization

As Tarrow has shown,²⁰² the formation of Mizrahi social movements is always based on collective confrontation, or the awakening of a memory of collective confrontation. From the mid-1980s, new Mizrahi movements and groups have been characterized by acquisition of an independent Mizrahi social awareness, which is politically significant in its collective emergence, but is also a process that individuals experience personally. The personal, individual process of building self-awareness contributes to group solidarity as a system of shared principles and goals eventually form that become a basis for organization as a social movement or group. The individual's coming to awareness is largely irreversible, but facing the difficult, daily confrontation with the world requires the sense of unity in the struggle that group support provides.

The very process of becoming a citizen with social awareness confronts individual Mizrahim with their environment.²⁰³ One begins to experience a radical change. In a way similar to the process of feminist consciousness raising, personal awareness immediately becomes political and the boundaries between the personal and the political are blurred. Those who obfuscated and concealed their Mizrahi identity, in a defensive response to the state's socialization pressure, seek, in the stage of awakening, to rehabilitate their identity.²⁰⁴ As in the process of *teshuvah*, the radicalization of individual action typically yields two results. First, the individual tries to engage his or her social environment, persuade Ashkenazi friends and acquaintances, and draw other Mizrahim into the process. Second, in most cases, the dominant Ashkenazi environment responds with bewilderment and defensiveness, confirming the individual's claims and drawing additional Mizrahim into the discussion.²⁰⁵

This process is notable as it takes place somewhat "naturally," and its power lies in the dynamics of the individual's need to find group support, and to persuade others in order to be vindicated and spread the new awareness. It is encouraged by the movements that see themselves as responsible for spreading Mizrahi awareness, through methodical tools such as conferences, teach-ins, lecture tours, workshops, discussion groups, informational publications, and media appearances.

Out of this group dynamics the first groups were formed that embarked on the path to awareness and its diffusion. The stages of this path include revealing new information, formulating criticism, and designing an alternative narrative. It is important to note that this takes place not only against the hegemonic Ashkenazi Zionist discourse but predominantly between Mizrahim.

The following is a preliminary sketch of the important movements and groups that formed out of the process of Mizrahi self-awareness since the mid-1980s, and which continued to expand and deepen that process.

Bimat Kivun Hadash

One of the groups that began operation as early as 1984 in the the HaTiqva neighborhood in southern Tel Aviv was Bimat Kivun Hadash (A New Direction

Stage), founded by Muni Yaqim, a former HaPanterim HaSh'horim leader, known for his well-formed radical critique of European Zionism and state power. The organization's goal was to promote free expression for Mizrahi thinkers and artists in regular debates, open to the public, in the HaTiqva neighborhood and elsewhere. Leading Israeli politicians were invited, along with their Mizrahi critics. Among the guests were Histadrut Secretary Yisrael Keisar, Minister of Health Mordechai Gur, Ezer Weizman (later president of Israel), Yosi Sarid of the Ashkenazi Left, IDF radio commander Ron Ben-Yishai, and many others. Group activists included Viki Shiran, Yael Zadok, Eli Hamo, Dr Saadiya Rahamim, Louis Cohen, and others. Before its financial collapse, the group had planned to establish a social college and name it after Eliyahu Eliachar. Yaqim remained active for several years more before despairing and leaving Israel permanently. In the last article he published he wrote:

The attack we must launch should function on two planes, the quantitative and the qualitative; we must get as many of our people as possible into universities; this will raise the level and reinstate the lost openness and intellectual honesty in the universities. Our people, due to their class background and Mizrahi ethnicity, are not refugees from cold, distant Europe. Once freed of their psychological fears and competing as equals, they will achieve great things, which will overshadow the achievements of the presumptuous Ashkenazim. Our eyes are on the future, it is in our power to create a revolution, and so we must mobilize our best and believe in ourselves, for if we do not act for ourselves, the Ashkenazim certainly will not do it for us, even if a sword was laid on their necks.²⁰⁶

Iton Aher

The journal *Iton Aher* was first published in 1986. The *Iton Aher* group, which had earlier published the small-circulation *Hadshot Yated*, carrying similar messages, was headed by David Hemo. *Iton Aher* created the infrastructure for the new Mizrahi discourse by forming and maintaining a platform for many educated Mizrahim to write freely and critically. Prominent in the journal was the new Mizrahims' critique of Mizrahi ICs in the large parties, illustrated in the following quote from an article by Yosef Shilo'ah:

Why is the voice of the Beit She'an "transit-camp manager" David Levi not heard, why is he not seen heading the protest of four hundred thousand residents of development towns and Mizrahi neighborhoods, marching and crying out with the "managers" of Qiryat Shmonah and Qiryat Malachi transit-camps? The same "manager" concealed from his 643,000 voters the findings about their poverty. And you, "managers" of Netivot, Ofakim, Sderot, Ashkelon, Hazor, Migdal Haemek and others . . . why are you not seen holding hands and fighting the fight of those on whose backs you have climbed up to that Cinderella carriage?²⁰⁷

The new Mizrahi discourse evolved in the pages of *Iton Aher* until the mid-1990s. The process of shaping the discourse did not end with publishing the journal, distributed in only five thousand copies (in communities, organizations, and universities, as well as on news stands), but broke into national dailies, including *Hadashot*, *Ha'aretz*, and local weeklies such as *HaIr* in Tel Aviv and *Kol HaIr* in Jerusalem through contributors to *Iton Aher* who wrote for those publications as well. Prominent writers from the Ashkenazi Left also wrote for the journal and adopted the principles of the new Mizrahi discourse as part of the new discourse of the Left in general. Finally, even mainstream media adopted parts of *Iton Aher*'s new discourse, in the vein of "political correctness." In recent years, the post-Zionist Ashkenazi Left began appropriating the new Mizrahi discourse for the general framework of criticizing Zionism. In this process, the Mizrahi critique of Zionism was appropriated by the Ashkenazi-dominated Academia and, as a result, went through a process of deradicalization.²⁰⁸

Apiryon

Before *Iton Aher*, and later alongside it, the cultural journal *Apiryon* was published regularly, edited by poet Erez Bitton. In its first years, 1983–1985, *Apiryon* was similar in its critical content to *Iton Aher*, though its language was more moderate. In the following years it began to focus on literature and culture, paying less attention to critical social discussions. Thus, for example, wrote the editor in the first issue:

Instead of generously providing opportunities with education, housing, jobs and livelihood, there is still talk in terms like "rehabilitating *Edot Hamizrah*" and "renovating *Edot Hamizrah*", words that remain in the realm of cosmetics and the conscience pacification. Only an approach that sees *Edot Hamizrah*'s hardship as a product of a horrible migration crisis will pave the way for a new practical concept of substantial, comprehensive solutions.²⁰⁹

The early issue also features first contributions by radical writers such as Dr Asher Idan, Dr Gabriel Ben-Simhon, artist Shlomo Bar, artist Pinhas Cohen-Gan, actor Yosef Shiloah, and others. *Apiryon* did not strongly criticize European Zionism, but criticized state systems perceived as clearly Ashkenazi, as illustrated in the words of Shlomo Bar, the leading spokesperson at the time, against the cultural oppression, in response to an open letter by Yoav Kutner, an Ashkenazi music editor at the IDF Radio, that was published in the same issue:

Your determination that Mizrahi music is "ethnic popular" music is ludicrous. Iraq, Persia and India have classical music, light music and folk music. Your use of the term "ethnic" shows that the West has stamped even your way of thinking with its defects. Anything not "western" is shown through condescending shut eyes as marginal and uniform. . . . In any case you have admitted that radio plays mostly pop/rock music, and that those creating in

these styles are indeed played. You do not listen to me. This is exactly the matter against which I am fighting. I speak of a true revolution in everything you call "Israeli culture." . . . And you, as your dedication to western culture is great, so is your alienation from the East. You block Israelis, with worn-out excuses and self-righteousness, from a great range of amazing cultures, moreover, you erase the traces of half of this people's past. All this when the standards are not qualitative, but driven by ignorance that comes from the West's supremacy blindness, seeing itself as the most beautiful of worlds. . . . If we were a people in tune with itself, connected to its place and its natural and human landscape, the spiritual dialogue between us and the peoples of the region, who live on the same habitat, would be better. Territory would not be a formal structure for dying on its fences.²¹⁰

In those decisive years for the formation of the new Mizrahi discourse, *Apiryon* became a magnet for many Mizrahi artists and thinkers who wrote for it regularly, and turned it into a dynamic discussion forum. Today, *Apiryon* has become a general stage for literature, with a slight accent on Mediterranean and Mizrahi works. Erez Bitton himself served as the national Writer's Union chair, then tried unsuccessfully to be elected to the Labor Party's list of Knesset candidates.

Afikim

Another Mizrahi publication that underwent radicalization in the late 1980s was *Afikim*, the veteran Yemenite Jews' journal edited by Yosef Dahuah-Halevi, one of the fighters for Mizrahi Hebrew culture and language. In recent years, along with studies of Mizrahi history and literature, as well as Sephardi Jewish issues, the journal has published radical and critical Mizrahi perspectives on European Zionism and on state systems as well as traditional critical perspectives demanding integration. Founded by the Afikim Committee of Yemenite immigrants, the journal was known mainly for its battle to expose the abduction of Yemenite children, and it later dealt extensively with the outcome of the story, including the arrest of Rabbi Uzi Meshulam.

HILA

The most important organization for the spread of radical awareness in Mizrahi communities in the 1980s and 1990s was the veteran community-education organization HILA (The Public Committee for Education in the Development Towns, Neighborhoods, and Villages). Founded in 1987 on a critique of the state's unequal education policy endorsed by academia,²¹¹ HILA was active among parents' groups in Mizrahi communities, and in the last decade also in Arab villages, raising awareness of parents', children's, and students' rights, such as the right to equal education in academic tracks; and exposing the evil of the level-grouping system, systematic unjustified referrals to special education and mass

tracking of students to inferior vocational training.²¹² HILA published and disseminated information on the education system's inequality when other organizations had not yet come to address these issues, and academia most certainly did not. Indeed, before various support organizations had emerged to lobby for parents' rights, such as the National Parents Association and the National Council for the Child (NCC), headed by Yitzhak Kadman, HILA was addressing a child's right to equal education in academic tracks. This right, for example, is not part of the agenda of the NCC, which has no problem with a child being denied the right to education in academic tracks as a result of his or her ethnicity or place of residence. The same goes for the Association for Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI), which up until the mid-1990s refused to cooperate with civil lawsuits filed by HILA, arguing they were unrelated to civil rights. Only in recent years did ACRI begin recognizing Mizrahi students' rights within the education system.

HILA's activities and critical publications were direct and confrontational. They had a radical effect not only on parents but also on progressive elements in academia and in the margins of the public education system. HILA also served as a hotline for the grievances of Mizrahi parents and students whose demand for equal education was rejected by the Ministry of Education.²¹³ Thanks to information and awareness, parent groups began to form around specific schools to expose the problems of unequal and inferior education and to demand amendments and change. These struggles, many of them successful, revolutionized educational achievements in specific schools, and even in whole communities, as in Yeruham and Ofakim.

An important side effect of HILA's activity was that the general social and cultural Mizrahi awareness grew. Activity around education led parents who were members of the organization, predominantly mothers, to other radical activities, such as demonstrations against inequality in education, lobbying in the Knesset, and Mizrahi feminist work. HILA's radical effect on Mizrahi communities was in creating, over an entire decade, a consistent dynamic encounter between hundreds of active parents across the country and the new Mizrahi discourse. Both sides were affected. The parents influenced the discourse and were influenced by it. According to Freire's empowerment model, this dialogue-based, nonpaternalistic interaction led to a significant expansion of the new Mizrahi awareness. As a result, other radical organizing efforts took shape, such as the formation of Kedma alternative schools in 1993, along with various attempts at local political organizing.²¹⁴ Apparently paradoxically, the response to SHAS and its educational institutions can be seen as a direct outcome of this awareness.

Kedma

Kedma, the Foundation for Equal Academic Education in Israel, was formed following an awakening of HILA activists in the HaTiqva neighborhood in southern Tel Aviv, in the Qattamon neighborhood of Jerusalem, in Ofakim, and in Qiryat Malachi. It was founded by Mizrahi educators, academics, and parents, including both Mizrahi and Ashkenazi teachers, and opened a new chapter in

Mizrahi awareness. The foundation established three schools and at the peak of its activity included about 150 teachers and activists.

A war against Kedma, waged by politicians of the Right and Left, senior education officials, and state-controlled media, including many Mizrahi ICs,²¹⁵ proves that it came very close to designing an instrument for mobilization and radicalization of Mizrahi awareness in the communities within which it worked. The Ashkenazi Zionist hegemony and its Mizrahi partners felt threatened by the emergence of equivalent academic schools that balanced the curriculum culturally and that rewrote the Mizrahi narrative with input from students and their parents.²¹⁶ It was quickly labeled by the educational and political establishments as segregationist and extremist.

The primary reason for this fear on the part of the establishment is the history of participation in sharp criticism of the unequal education system by the group of founders (Dr Shlomo Swirski, Dr Meir Buzaglo, Dr Henriette Dahan-Kalev, Motti Greenblatt, Eli Sha'aya, Noga Dagan, Yosi Ohana, Ester Asulin, Eli Azriel, Moshe Gamish, Clara Yona, Dudi Mahleb, Moshe Behar, the author, and others). Following that criticism, and parent activism, the concept consolidated into a full-scale educational alternative, a program to develop a model for equivalent academic schools in Mizrahi neighborhoods and towns and in the educational system in general.

The uniqueness of Kedma's pedagogy came from tying pedagogical goals to greater social goals, as manifest in Shlomo Swirski's writing. Kedma had three main goals, among many others:

- 1 To create a model for equal, nondiscriminating liberal arts and sciences education that will lead to success in matriculation exams and to academic studies, as opposed to selective education that is mostly vocational and inferior in quality, perpetuated by the state in Mizrahi and Arab communities.
- 2 To act for parents' right to participate in decision-making and in shaping their children's education, by allowing parents to participate in making both administrative and pedagogical decisions.
- 3 To develop a pedagogically advanced and culturally balanced curriculum for the entire Israeli education system.

Based on these principal goals, Kedma founded three schools, in Tel Aviv, Qiryat Malachi, and Jerusalem. The essence of Kedma's mission was to provide a liberal arts and sciences education without level-groups, tracks, and classifications, through small classes with no more than twenty-five students, and with two teachers collaborating in each class in required fields, using a method developed by Kedma educators and later adopted by some elements at the Ministry of Education. One of the pedagogical innovations at Kedma was in defining the teacher's role. Every teacher also served as mentor to a small group of students, with whom they could develop a close relationship of companionship in studies, social life, and in general. Education in Kedma schools draws on Freire's dialogue-based pedagogy, which redefines the teacher as "teacher-student," and the student as "student-teacher,"

meaning that the teacher is always a student and that knowledge flows bidirectionally in the process of classroom instruction and can come from multiple sources, none of which are categorically rejected.

In terms of curriculum, Kedma's alternative to the general education system is based on balance, in all study content, culturally, religiously and in terms of gender, and on avoiding the official Eurocentric curriculum. For example, at the Kedma school in the HaTiqva neighborhood in Tel Aviv, history and literature were taught without textbooks, but followed progressive guiding principles: history was studied from a plethora of angles and narratives, in an interdisciplinary manner integrating all fields of social studies. Thus, students become researchers and teachers become research advisers, who together practice research and form new knowledge, which is no longer bounded by official textbooks or school walls. Literary studies are guided by similar principles: introduction to all genres through a balanced selection of works from Hebrew and world literature, without the canonizing of specific works or authors. Teachers develop the dynamic curricula themselves through meetings and the exchange of ideas, lessons, and texts. Thus school becomes a formative setting for the acquisition of knowledge instead of a broker for dispensing predetermined, prepackaged state knowledge.

Holocaust Remembrance Day at Kedma in Tel Aviv: a case study

One of the controversial issues on the Tel Aviv Kedma school's curriculum was the study of the Jewish Holocaust and the ceremony held on Holocaust Remembrance Day. As Remembrance Day approached in 1995, the school decided to study the Holocaust and to hold a ceremony with an additional aspect, a general human lesson;²¹⁷ that is, to try to draw a universal lesson from the Jewish Holocaust, to learn about the conditions and circumstances that gave rise to this "human monster," beyond the persecution of Jews in Christian Europe; to learn that in history, under similar conditions and circumstances, similar human evils have arisen that enslaved and exterminated other peoples, such as Native Americans, African slaves, Armenians, Gypsies, various groups such as communists (and victims of communism) and homosexuals during the twentieth century, up to Rwanda at the end of the twentieth century. The principal conditions for the incubation and growth of the "monster" as they were studied are a lack of cultural tolerance; discrimination on the basis of race and creed; power-mongering and greed, ignorance and xenophobia, fear of the different and the other; and persecution and harming of the weak as a way to establish the oppressor's superiority. The main point of discussion was how could all these be prevented? How are the symptoms of this social disease recognized?

No one aimed to make a unification of all holocausts and genocides in history, and the uniqueness of the genocide of the Jews by the Nazis in an advanced and developed European civilization was emphasized. In the ceremony itself, which was rather standard and followed all formal regulations, an additional, seventh candle was lit as a reminder of the terrible potential that always nests within us. The seventh candle was lit by a Holocaust survivor who also spoke with students

and teachers about the universal significance of the Holocaust. Later, the students read aloud the following text:

The Seventh Candle

We, Jews of the third generation of resurrection and independence, do humbly ask to take from the fire of memory of the six million victims of the Jewish holocaust, and make an additional torch to present to the whole world. A Seventh candle.

We have the tragic right to stand here, remember, and warn: There is no people, no culture and no group of humans immune to hatred, racism, persecution and extermination.

Hatred of the other, persecution and extermination of the other are a social phenomenon that could arise against humanity at any time.

We intend by no means to belittle the pain of our people's memory, nor to make a comparison between holocausts.

We ask only to remind all humans that persecution and extermination of the other is a human monster, created by human mind and hands, as learned also by other races and peoples, of different creeds and populations over the course of human history. We must remember that only the human can confront this terrible monster.

We, born out of the greatest horror, stand up tall today, in prayer for peace and fellowship between people, creeds, races and cultures.

The questions asked at the Kedma school in 1995 are cardinal questions that are still relevant for Israel and all of humanity: Were the six million victims of the most horrible atrocity in modern human history, methodically exterminated merely for being Jews, only Jews by identity? Or were they also humans, citizens of this small world? Were the Nazi Party and its terrible leader a temporary European virus that attacked and exterminated the Jews of Europe and left the world, or can we see them as a model for a potential atrocity that lies deep within any human collective mind? A more practical question: Are we, as Jews and Israelis, with our systematic shunning of the holocausts of other people in the past, and of the suffering of other people in the present, more successful in our mission to remember?

Former Israeli Minister of Education Yosi Sarid began addressing this last question when he visited the Armenian Holocaust Museum. He would have never made this step if it was not for the precedent set by the Kedma school, which also included an exhibit of pictures from the Armenian holocaust, showing the same death, and the same sick urge. Kedma was like the child who innocently asks the most difficult questions openly. The "adults" did not understand, or were perhaps startled, and responded in a brutish and vulgar fashion. Persecution of the school intensified after that day. Educators and politicians thought that a school in a poor Mizrahi neighborhood had no right to address the issue of the Holocaust, which they considered a European Jewish matter. Knesset member Limor Livnat started a protest vigil outside the school with members of the BEITAR youth movement and called on the minister of education to shut it down. Prime Minister Rabin

reprimanded Minister of Education Amnon Rubinstein, asking him to clarify the matter. The school was even attacked for playing Hanna Senesh's song "Walking to Caesarea," performed by Shlomo Bar and Habrera Hativ'it Mizrahi style. An enraged woman telephoned the school and yelled: "You Moroccans have already stolen everything from us, but this is it! Don't dare touch our holocaust. You will not steal our holocaust with your belly-dancing."

An editorial in the journal *Hakibbuz* read: "Be mindful of paupers from whom Torah shall issue. Kedma principal has done what none of us had dared. He broke the sanctified framework, created over decades of holocaust remembrance ceremonies, and had the boldness to pour new content into symbols that no one dared touch." Another supportive comment came from a Holocaust survivor: "I bless you for breaking the seal of silence around the genocides committed against Armenians, Gypsies, and others. The power of our outcry as Jews lies in our sensitivity towards other humans, even if they are not Jews." In the following year several educational institutions, including Yad Vashem Holocaust museum, requested a video recording of the ceremony and the text "The Seventh Candle". In a few years the ceremony at Kedma had become a landmark used by various institutions to discuss the universal question of the Holocaust, a question that has become legitimate.

Why Kedma? Why did this message come out of the HaTiqva neighborhood, rather than from academia, the media, literature, or from any of the state's official pedagogical institutions, or any of the museums and institutes for the study and commemoration of the Holocaust? The answer lies in the school's pedagogy. As opposed to the particularistic ("ethnic") image portrayed by the ministry of education, academia, and the media, Kedma was the epitome of multicultural, postmodern pedagogy, based on faith in the side-by-side existence of multiple histories and narratives, not in one narrative that silences all others. It was precisely from this place that the view of additional, panhuman dimensions of the Jewish Holocaust emerged.

The unprecedented attack on Kedma following the ceremony managed to divert public attention from the school's pedagogical activity and its general worldview. Today, after the school in the HaTiqva neighborhood has been eliminated, fear has abated and the Ministry of Education is more open in addressing questions of cultural balance in the curriculum—so open, in fact, as to use former Kedma teachers. One of those, Shira Ohayon, has now developed a more balanced official history curriculum for the ministry, at least a third of which will consist of materials on the history and culture of Mizrahi Jews. In this sense, not only did Kedma's radical effect help other Mizrahi organizations, especially the Mizrahi Democratic Rainbow Coalition, it also expanded the Mizrahi struggle's boundaries into the state's education system.²¹⁸

Although the broad issue of inequality was already on the public agenda, well before HILA and Kedma, HILA and, to a greater extent, Kedma focused the public attention on the education aspect of the inequality. The case of Kedma, too, confirms our findings, according to which the role of a radical group is to strike a new path, and often to disappear in the process. The fruits of the radical effect

have been reaped by moderate, noncritical groups and organizations active in education and other fields.

Kedma schools were persecuted by the Ashkenazi Zionist establishment in education and politics, and by its Mizrahi ICs, until two schools were shut down. The Qiryat Malachi school was closed in 1996, and the Tel Aviv school was eventually shut down by Labor mayor Ron Huldai in 1999. Ironically, the school building became the Labor Party's headquarters, as it sought to symbolically come closer to Mizrahim, or at least to the fine Mizrahi restaurants in the HaTiqva neighborhood. The Kedma school in Jerusalem survived intense struggles and stabilized only after Likud mayor Ehud Olmert decided to adopt it as a city institution.

Interesting for this study is Kedma's radical effect on Mizrahi politics. The organization always believed in Freire's dictum "Education is politics." Nevertheless, it was not a political movement in the simplistic sense. The school in the HaTiqva neighborhood quickly became a home for many Mizrahim from around the country, who sought a point of identification in their journey for identity and awareness. Thus school and community events, conferences, and celebrations became sites of pilgrimage for many educated Mizrahim, who came to show solidarity and to find support. Many teachers came to work in Kedma out of a personal journey for identity. All this occurred before the formation of the Mizrahi Democratic Rainbow Coalition, which was born, in part, out of political encounters and public discussions fostered by Kedma.

Before presenting HaKeshet Hademocratit HaMizrahit, I will mention a few other important organizations among the new Mizrahim that are also worthy of research and extensive documentation. The journal *Hapatish* critically exposed the unequal cultural and social structures. Hamizrah el Hashalom (The East to Peace) and Hahazit Hamizrahit (The Eastern Front) advanced the notion of Mizrahim as a bridge to peace with the Arab peoples, as opposed to the Ashkenazi Zionist Left's notion of Mizrahim as a "barrier to peace."²¹⁹ Other small groups that focused on spreading awareness were Ot Bashchunot (A Signal in the Neighborhoods) in Qattamon, Jerusalem; Tidua (Informing) in Tel Aviv; and various university groups such as TZAH (Social Justice)²²⁰ at the Hebrew University, since the early 1990s, led in various stages by Shiko Behar, Zvi Ben-Dor, Neta Amar, Eli Bareket, Vardit Damri-Madar, Ofer Namibi, and Yuval Ivri. Also worth mentioning are the Programs for Community Involvement established in all Israeli universities, whose members came from poor neighborhoods and development towns, and especially at Tel Aviv University, directed by Asher Idan in the early 1980s. These programs were active among students in the neighborhoods in exchange for scholarships, and alongside this activity also organized teach-ins and discussion groups from which emerged some important spokespeople of the new Mizrahi discourse. Another important organization is the Shahar (Equality Liberty) youth movement headed by Marcello Wexler and Ovadia Golstani, which promotes social awareness and cultural identity among youths in Mizrahi communities.

Especially important among cultural organizations is Bimat Kedem for Theater and Literature, managed by writer Yitzhak Gormezano Goren, who regularly

publishes new Mizrahi literature and has recently begun publishing a new magazine, *Hakivun Mizrah*, with content that is a sort of synthesis of *Apiryon* in its early years and *Iton Aher*. *Hakivun Mizrah* remains the only regular written Mizrahi platform. The organization is also active in theater, producing original plays by Mizrahi writers and others dealing with Mizrahi subjects. In publishing, veteran publishers Brerot and Mifras (managed by Shlomo Swirski), which ceased to exist at the end of the 1990s, brought forth Hebrew translations of important authors, including Paolo Freire, Edward Said, Eduardo Galeano, and Geoffrey Bloom, and made possible the publication of critical essays by Israelis such as Ella Shohat, Eli Avraham, and others. These publishing houses are reincarnated today in the Adva Center for the Study of Equality in Israel, headed by Dr Yosi Dahan, who researches and regularly issues publications in Hebrew, Arabic, and English about the inequality in Israel. The Adva Center's publications have become a reliable, solid source of information for researchers, activists, and organizations.

One organization born recently out of HaKeshet Hademocratit HaMizrahit's activities is a Mizrahi feminist organization, Ahoti. The group registered as an NGO after a crisis in its relationship with Ashkenazi feminists in the Israeli Feminist Organization conference in October 1999. Among the founders are Neta Amar, Henriette Dahan-Kalev, Ilana Bakal, Viki Shiran, Shula Keshet, Vardit Damri-Madar, Ahuva Mualem, Ktsia Alon, Sigal Asher, and others. The group's official goal is "to change the Israeli society's priorities in order to raise awareness among Mizrahi women, and Israeli society in general, of the silenced, suppressed and oppressed status of women. To promote the economic, social, cultural, occupational and educational rights of Mizrahi women specifically, and women in general."²²¹ This is the first Mizrahi feminist organization.

HaKeshet Hademocratit HaMizrahit

It was only a question of time before this chain of radical effects, from the Wadi A-Salib Rebellion, through HaPanterim HaSh'horim, and up to Kedma, would lead to an attempt to found a democratic Mizrahi umbrella organization based on the new Mizrahi discourse: HaKeshet Hademocratit HaMizrahit (the Mizrahi Democratic Rainbow Coalition).

HaKeshet began as a limited conceptual circle of nine members. The circle was formed following an attempt by some educated Mizrahim to work with David Levi and his party Gesher (formed after he parted from the Likud). This group tried to join Levi when he left Likud with his followers, presenting him with a vision for a new social movement. When Levi went back to Likud in 1996, members of this group abandoned him and began meeting freely. These meetings, which began small with random conversation, advanced to a series of eight day-long meetings over six months. The group then brought together about forty additional participants for a marathon of discussions over a weekend in the winter of 1996. Following the success of this first conference, a forum of eighty members gathered for a weekend, at the end of which it was decided to name the group "Israel '96." This temporary forum held several monthly planning meetings before launching

the new Mizrahi social movement. On March 6, 1997, the movement's formation was announced at a convention of three hundred participants, with media presence, in Tel Aviv. A pamphlet describing the process that led to its formation evidences a high level of Mizrahi political radicalism, as well as awareness of the history of Mizrahi politics, its successes and failures. HaKeshet's critique and goals are clear:

The movement will use all necessary democratic means for a comprehensive change in Israeli society, according to its principles and goals: A struggle to realize individual political, cultural, and socioeconomic rights. A struggle for cultural and social pluralism. The movement will act for radical democratization of all areas of life, to empower citizens, residents, workers, women and other oppressed groups. The movement will fight for equal opportunities and fair wages, taking a stance for a just and very broad distribution of resources among all groups of the Israeli population.²²²

HaKeshet's first successful action for the rights of 110,000 public housing resident families, most of whom were Mizrahi, not only enabled these residents to become owners of the government housing apartments they had lived in and paid rent for, for decades, but also had a wide radical effect on Mizrahim in Israel, most of whom are familiar with this issue from their own experience as new immigrants or through their relatives' experience. The issue of housing has always been on Mizrahi protest groups' agenda, and ownership rights to public housing for residents had already been raised by the Bnei Hashchunot organization, headed by Shlomo Vazanah in Qattamon, Jerusalem, and by David Benvenisti in Jerusalem's Qiryat Yovel. Vazanah, who joined HaKeshet at its founding stage, put this campaign on the movement's agenda and led it. The organization's juridical-legislative sophistication in attacking this issue brought about a very high level of awareness of the housing issue in general, and a wave of local organizations that joined the struggle and were empowered by it. The following is the text of a flier distributed by the movement in poor neighborhoods and development towns, under the title "This House Is Mine":

We are hundreds of thousands of citizens loyal to the state, residing in tens of thousands of public housing apartments (Amidar, Amigur, Halamish, Prazot, and more), have paid billions of dollars for decades, and still we are denied the right to ownership of the apartments; This despite the right of continuing sons in moshavim; despite the rights given to kibbutzim members to transfer their houses to their own ownership. . . . We, residents of public housing, demand the right to transfer our apartments into our ownership without any additional payment on top of the billions we have already paid.²²³

In addition to HaKeshet's awareness activity in communities and the media, local citizen groups, and victims of housing policies affected HaKeshet, such as the prominent case of Mevaseret Zion residents led by Oved Abutbul, who held demonstrations and invaded empty apartments owned by the Jewish Agency in

protest against the housing crisis of the second generation in the locality, supplanted by middle-class newcomers who bought municipal lands and built their luxury houses on them. HaKeshet responded with active support of and solidarity with the affected group led by Vazanah but was careful not to become too involved in the confrontation, in order to maintain the legitimacy of the legislative process it was leading in parliament through a lobby led by Knesset members Ran Cohen, Tamar Goz'anski, Maxim Levi, and others. HaKeshet members first tried to form a social coalition with SHAS on the public housing issue, but SHAS chair Arye Deri and his party not only refused but also even fought against the Public Housing Bill initiative, feeling threatened by HaKeshet's sweeping entry into Mizrahi communities on such a crucial issue. The law was finally passed in October 1998.

Although HaKeshet Hademocratit HaMizrahit is clearly a leftist social movement, its choice to be an extraparlimentary movement helped it bring together many organizations and activists from almost the entire political spectrum. Nevertheless, this political diversity also constrained HaKeshet, preventing it from building a Mizrahi political collective, free of manipulation by different parties. In HaKeshet, Likud and HADASH members worked alongside Labor and MERETZ voters, but when elections approached, all scattered to their parties.

Although its activities are directed at the entire population of Israel, HaKeshet's founders chose in advance a limited, democratic, and open movement member model, reminiscent of small left-wing movements in the 1960s. The movement chose to avoid electing a chair, instead electing only a board, whose sessions are run in rotation by members. Other members of the movement can vote in the council, the movement's supreme authoritative body. This leadership structure eventually created a movement with several unelected leaders. Rivalry and tensions between them eventually brought the momentum to a halt and paralyzed the movement's social activity. The first decisive disagreement between movement leaders was on its character: was it to be a mass movement that does not preclude entering parliamentary politics or was it to be a limited movement, a servicing elite that engages not in confrontation and protest actions but in a *qualitative* struggle over the public agenda through media, law, and legislation? The decision was for a limited elitist movement, without popular and mass aspirations. The first split followed, with the resignation of many activists who desired the movement to be a lever for a mass Mizrahi and general social mobilization, toward a comprehensive struggle to stop the process of the destruction of the welfare state. HaKeshet's major accomplishment was achieved through the activity of one of the most successful legislative lobby groups in the history of social struggles in Israel. However, this accomplishment was lost in terms of the ongoing struggle, since it did not serve as a lever for mass mobilization. The movement retained its size and its program. Had the very same legislative tactics as were employed to obtain public housing residents' rights been taken up to stop the privatization of state lands, accompanied by a massive campaign in Mizrahi neighborhoods and development towns, it might have achieved the same legislative results, and on top of that it would have brought about a social awakening and mass mobilization.

However, the elitist structure that HaKeshet chose left it limited in its ability to maintain a prolonged collective confrontation with the government, and to mobilize the Mizrahi public. By contrast, HaPanterim HaSh'horim, for example, managed to maintain a prolonged confrontation, while also steering the majority of the Mizrahi population to fierce protest against the state headed by MAPAI, as manifest in the Ballot Rebellion of 1977. One should note that the choice of a legislative struggle did not only issue from strategic considerations but also suited the movement's leaders' preferences, their way of life, and the level of personal risk each was willing to take. An ideological and physical confrontation with the state requires, first and foremost, personal courage and a capacity for personal sacrifice. As opposed to HaPanterim HaSh'horim, who befitted the Marxist saying that "the oppressed have nothing to lose but their shackles," and in whose political lives the element of personal sacrifice was central, HaKeshet leaders had, and still do have much to lose in their private and public lives, being academics and artists who make a living from state institutions known for their political vindictiveness. Since most of the leaders lacked courage and willingness for personal sacrifice, the movement's activity was never radicalized, and it sank into anonymity, at least among the Mizrahi lower classes. After about a year of work, HaKeshet's presence on the struggle scene was no different than that of cultural centers, and of Mizrahi lobby organizations that have no interest in collective confrontation.²²⁴

Two main questions are relevant to our discussion of HaKeshet Hademocratit HaMizrahit: Where will the movement take the radical effects it has absorbed? What influence does it have over the Mizrahi struggle and the political system in general? By the end of 2003 HaKeshet has had another historic achievement, stopping the privatization of state lands to the kibbutzim and moshavim and returning the lands to the state.²²⁵ HaKeshet has stabilized as a small, high-quality movement that leads the radical Mizrahi discourse and influences many young educated Mizrahim, but it also has given up on expanding and entering a mass (extraparlimentary *and* parliamentary) political struggle. Another question regarding HaKeshet's strategic efficiency: By converging several organizations and groups under one roof, and becoming nearly alone at the radical end of the Mizrahi political axis, did it expand awareness activity and the Mizrahi struggle or curtail it? A thorough examination requires temporal distance. Yet one can already observe the expansion and penetration of the radical Mizrahi discourse into many areas of Israeli life. First, the Supreme Court would not have responded to the petition against state lands privatization without the fierce criticism voiced by spokespeople for the new Mizrahi discourse of the court's seclusion and inattentiveness to the country's social disintegration.²²⁶ Another important influence, born out of the empowering intellectual encounter in HaKeshet meetings, is on Israeli media, which have been forced to face a host of radical, eloquent, sharp, educated speakers, and thus to open programs to them. Several members, such as Viki Shiran and Yosi Dahan, have joined the public executive boards of the national broadcasting networks. This process peaked with the formation of the satellite television channel Breeza, directed by HaKeshet member Ron Kahlili, and with the participation of central media professionals from the

movement, such as Shaul Bibi. Breeza was intended, at least by its own declared goals, to devote its broadcasting to Mizrahi culture, and to social struggle and justice. The actual results have been far short of this, yet it does provide solid evidence of HaKeshet's effect on the media.

Another important radical effect was on the Ashkenazi-dominated academia (predominantly the universities), which on the one hand gave in to the radical analysis by HaKeshet leaders, but on the other hand, in order not to retain its cultural privilege, precious resources, and absolute control of research budgets and the distribution of teaching and research positions, began to appropriate the new discourse for itself without making way for radical educated Mizrahim into the academia. It allowed veteran Mizrahi academics to expand their field of research into the new Mizrahi discourse, addressing such issues as the encounter between Zionism and Mizrahi Jews, the unequal structure of Israeli society, Mizrahi protest movements, and especially the so-called SHAS phenomenon. All these and other influences are an achievement for the radical Mizrahi struggle, but we must bear in mind their limitations: The courts are still controlled by the Ashkenazi Zionist cultural hegemony, obligated to serve primarily its agenda. The media is controlled almost absolutely by this hegemony, and academia is still an Ashkenazi Zionist space, selective toward Mizrahim and Arabs. Does partial adoption of the radical Mizrahi discourse by the Ashkenazi Zionist hegemony deradicalize it, neutralizing to a great extent the tension of the cultural and class confrontation, or is this the beginning of the hegemony's collapse? Time will tell.

Conclusion

The first and general conclusion of this book comes from observing Mizrahi politics as a whole, including the Mizrahi struggle movement's various concepts and generations; in much the same way that American academia and politics consider the general political activity of black people in the U.S. in the 1950s and 1960s as the civil rights movement, with accomplishments measured by the totality of its components. This general view reveals two principal accomplishments of the Mizrahi struggle movement: forcing the state to recognize its own policy of inequality, and attaining legitimacy for the Mizrahi struggle itself, as well as for other Mizrahi movements.

First and foremost, one has to note the state's recognition, though indirect, of its policy of socioeconomic and cultural inequality after many long years of official denial. One can determine that this recognition was forced on the state only after a prolonged collective confrontation, which began in a meaningful way by HaPanterim HaSh'horim and was carried on by other groups and movements into the 1980s and 1990s. The second general accomplishment is attaining legitimacy for the struggle itself from state organs, the ruling parties, the media, and from academia, which lingered behind. This followed at least four decades during which any Mizrahi struggle activity was negatively stigmatized as criminal, and, more than anything, as a threat to central Zionist values such as the "gathering of the exiles" and "merging of the exiles," "the people's unity," and "the state's internal solidity." The Mizrahi struggle concentrated on exposing these values as "false" myths from the point of view of Mizrahim in Israel, their experience of absorption in Israel, and its results. The struggle's legitimacy has two aspects: the first, attained by HaPanterim HaSh'horim, and later more elaborately by the new Mizrahim, on a class and civil foundation that bases equality on principles of socioeconomic justice and cultural freedom, within universal and postmodern theoretical frameworks; and the second, attained through SHAS, founded on Judaism as the only criterion for equality. Indeed, both aspects of the Mizrahi struggle's legitimacy contradict each other in their foundations—open and universal, on the one hand, Jewish particularist on the other. But an overview of the struggle's general goals may consider the two as complementing each other and as marching back-to-back, in parallel paths.

Evaluating the accomplishments of the Mizrahi struggle movement over the generations, including the various attitudes and movements that it comprises, whose

rivalry is sometimes greater than their common opposition to the establishment, reveals that movements and confrontation actions did not always attain their immediate goals as those were defined for a particular struggle. An exception to this rule is HaKeshet Hademocratit HaMizrahit, which won a specific struggle against the public housing and state lands systems. But in the long view, meaningful primary accomplishments were made in relation to the “common” list of goals, chiefly equal integration in Israeli society, together with recognition for Mizrahi cultural uniqueness. The Wadi A-Salib Rebellion led indirectly to an examination of the state of crisis and to the beginnings of awareness; HaPanterim HaSh’horim led to a comprehensive investigation of poverty and to extensive comprehensive changes in the national budget; HaOhalim established a model for community organizing and empowerment; the Ballot Rebellion changed Israel’s political map forever and created an opening for the Mizrahim to leave the Ashkenazi Zionist center; TAMI set the electoral precedent; SHAS succeeded, for the first time, to consolidate an independent collective whose advantages and disadvantages are discussed above; and the new Mizrahim took the Mizrahi discourse beyond the limits of protest and criticism to create actual alternative models in education, culture, the media, academia, housing, and the question of lands. These accomplishments do not belong to any one movement, action, or leader, because they were similarly set as goals by the majority of movements and activists over six decades, and all the participants aimed their political activity toward them.

Another general conclusion arises from the analysis of relations on the axis of radicalism. We see that the two different approaches in Mizrahi politics—identification and integration on the one hand, protest and alternative on the other—and the various shades in between actively existed from the first moment of encounter between the Mizrahim and Ashkenazi Zionism. The two are visible in the rift between Eliyahu Eliachar and Bechor Chetrit over relations with MAPAI’s leadership, and become more visible with the Mizrahi migration of the 1950s and 1960s. Although it is clear that only in the 1980s and 1990s did a stable alternative Mizrahi discourse evolve (religious on the one hand, democratic on the other), it is not to be viewed as a stage in the struggle’s evolution, since parallel to this discourse the approach of identification and participation in the mainstream Zionist movements took root and expanded, in the second generation too, to include the majority of the Mizrahi population. I will elaborate below on the issue of relations between these attitudes on the axis of radicalism.

The third general conclusion is in fact a new question arising from the entire discussion: How was an alternative born out of the enduring demand to belong? How—out of repeated appeals and demands, by all the groups of the struggle all across the spectrum, to realize the Mizrahims’ integration in Israeli identity (as it was shaped by the Ashkenazi Zionist hegemony)—was an alternative Israeli identity born in the second generation, a new complex Mizrahi identity (both religious and democratic) built on the ruins of the first Mizrahi generation’s shattered identities? The analysis of SHAS and the new Mizrahim in Chapter 4 suggested some primary paths toward answering this question. Disappointment with Zionism as the representative of Western modernism is the driving force

behind the consolidation of the alternative Mizrahi identity, perhaps a basis for reshaping Israeliness. As mentioned, this identity has two aspects, but they have the same origin—the rise of SHAS’ religious identity and of the democratic new Mizrahi discourse both originate from profound disappointment with the promises of Ashkenazi Zionism in its three dimensions: the promise of neoliberal modernism, the promise of international Jewish solidarity (both religious and secular), and the promise of Zionist socialism and the welfare-state vision. As the analysis shows, according to the Mizrahi discourse’s critique in the 1980s and 1990s, both by SHAS and by the new Mizrahim, the state has failed to realize its professed Zionist goals—equal opportunities, social and economic justice, and cultural freedom for all—therefore it must clear the discursive stage for a new agenda.

The complex character of this new dynamic agenda proposed by the Mizrahi struggle requires further study. One can already say this alternative is not total—the new replacing the old—but a complex picture. It contains elements of liberalism, but with a postmodern critique; it contains elements of Zionism, but with a radical critique of both civil and religious; and it contains clearly Mizrahi elements, but in a dynamic multicultural shape, born of the encounter between Mizrahi ethnic communities and between East and West in Israel.

Having presented the general conclusions, I can now turn to a summary of the main issues: the Mizrahi collective question; SHAS’ success in this regard; relations along the axis of radicalism; the differences between social confrontation action and a social movement; and, finally, drawing the first traits in the metamorphosis of the Mizrahi struggle discourse.

The Mizrahi collective

In conclusion of this discussion I return to the guiding questions, presented at the opening: Why did the Mizrahim, brought to Israel during the first two decades as separate ethnic communities, not organize into an independent political collective? And how are we to define SHAS in this regard? In light of the general conclusions, one can derive a preliminary question: To what extent, if at all, has Mizrahi independent political activity aimed toward independent collective organization?

To sharpen this question I’ll examine the paradox of Mizrahi political behavior. As we have seen with nearly all Mizrahi movements and organizations, *sectarian organizing is for integrating in the general “Israeliness”*—“to be like everyone else.” That is to say, the means to attain the goal of belonging and integrating is, paradoxically, separate organizing on the basis of difference. Thus, the more the state of economic inequality and cultural oppression endures, the more the urge to struggle for equality and integration increases, leading necessarily to the emergence of many Mizrahi actions and organizations—from the first days of absorption in camps, towns, and moshavim; through the Wadi A-Salib Rebellion, HaPanterim HaSh’horim, and HaOhalim; down to the Ballot Rebellion, TAMI, and the formation of SHAS and HaKeshet Hademocratit HaMizrahit. The aspiration to attain “Israeliness” and integrate as equals was common to all, but

the path to realizing it attained an entirely different, though not opposite, result: a new Mizrahi discourse (with its two separate approaches) and a Mizrahi identity that emphasizes religious–cultural uniqueness, seeing it as one of many variegated identities in a multicultural society.

But this is only an apparent paradox. As we have learned from the black struggle in the U.S., organization was needed in order to embark on a campaign for integration, and organizing was nearly racially homogeneous, because black people were isolated and separated by white people in both religious and civil life. Racial homogeneity was there from the outset, so organizing on such a basis necessarily created an almost natural social and cultural solidarity. This solidarity eventually gave birth to a new identity and cultural awakening. In a similar process, a new Mizrahi identity (not always Zionist) was formed on the path to integration within the hegemonic Zionist identity. The secret is in the content of the struggle, for a social movement’s struggle on an ethnic–cultural solidarity basis cannot be an empty vessel. At first the content is the actual struggle; that is, culture is a culture of struggle, and identity is a struggle identity. Later on the struggle creates solidarity and social and cultural networks that constantly regenerate content out of life experiences and the collective memory of movement members, processed in the collective confrontation and self-determination process until eventually forming as a comprehensive alternative to the hegemony. As we have learned from the experience of black people in the U.S., after attaining the formal goals of legislation and constitutional amendments outlawing racial discrimination, the independent identity and culture born out of the struggle grows even stronger. Such is also the case of the Mizrahim in Israel. This explains, for example, the source of Ashkenazi Zionist frustration, manifest in the simplistic claim commonly made by Ashkenazim (and by the “Ashkenazised”) against the Mizrahim: “Why don’t you stop with this Mizrahiness of yours already, you have attained so much since coming here, and it’s time you be like all Israelis.”

Of course, as we have seen throughout this work, this dynamic is not only an internal process, but is also constantly encouraged by decisive external factors. The first factor is the government’s decisive and determined resolve not to allow, as much as it can, Mizrahi organizing outside the Ashkenazi Zionist framework. The methods used to put down every bud of revolt and organizing—the use both of brutality, detentions, and incarceration, and of psychological acts of negative and criminal stigmatization—were also crucial in delegitimizing the movement and isolating it outside the legitimate national consensus. Additionally, the government cultivated a generation of ICs who joined an alliance of identification and full collaboration with Zionism and the state’s Ashkenazi hegemony, thus shaping Mizrahi political participation within MAPAI and MAFDAL, and later on within Likud and parties of the Right, as worthy and right. One should bear in mind, in this context, that the Ashkenazi Zionist paradigm is wide and complex enough to create a sense among Mizrahim of a diverse political system, open to all: socialism/liberalism, Right/Left, Peace Camp/Nationalist Camp, religious/secular, veterans/new immigrants, and many political shades. The Mizrahim, through the ICs’ brokerage, are invited to integrate in Israeli politics and play the political

game “like everyone,” while the main point has not, in fact, changed: the basic social infrastructure of economy and capital, land and housing, education and culture, academia and the media remains the same, serving mainly the Ashkenazi Zionist collective, as we have seen in the state’s own official statistical data.

The method of putting down Mizrahi organizing attempts, although in most cases it prevailed on the immediate level, was a failure over the long run. It did not take into account such basic processes as the construction of collective memory, and the chain of radical effects. The elimination of the Wadi A-Salib Rebellion registered in the Mizrahi collective memory and encouraged additional attempts at organization in the 1960s. The elimination of HaPanterim HaSh’horim did not prevent the Ballot Rebellion against MAPAI, and the birth of the new discourse. Stopping TAMI did not prevent the birth of SHAS and of the new Mizrahim.

The second key external factor, which is the social basis for the entire process, is the Mizrahims’ socioeconomic inferiority as new immigrants, dependent on the government’s goodwill, and having no control over their destiny, at least during the first two decades. In such a difficult situation everyone was occupied primarily with existential daily survival that displaced regular continuous thought of organizing and struggling, as opposed to contemporary Ashkenazi immigrants who were absorbed by an organized sympathetic political collective, and were free of the need for organizing and collective struggle. Having been introduced by the Zionist movement and the state into the Zionist process as separate Mizrahi ethnic groups, without having any initiative or control over the migration itself and over absorption in Israel, the Mizrahim were never partners to the processes of organizing, managing, and shaping the state’s organs and infrastructure but became, upon being added to the project, “immigrants” in a process of integration and adaptation, in the same way, apparently, as for immigrants in any country. But this was not the way it was. Israel was not, at the time, like any immigrant’s country, for it was formed through immigration itself and began the process of reshaping as a modern industrial democratic state only after “absorbing immigration,” when the number of immigrants exceeded the number of absorbers. As earlier discussion shows, the “absorbers,” that is, the state and the Zionist movement, wished to maintain Ashkenazi dominance in government and to preserve their cultural hegemony. Thus the Mizrahim of the first generation found themselves without any political power, under a decisive oppressive socialization process that presented a mirror before them and urged them to erase the Arab–Mizrahi image it reflected, together with everything it is charged with in terms of culture. Their only advantage lay in being concentrated in multiethnic communities that became, in the second generation, Mizrahi communities in a process of survival struggle and change, and which required solidarity that gave birth to an alternative identity.

The principal question about the existence of an all-Mizrahi political collective is therefore answered in the negative, although I must immediately make a reservation in consideration of SHAS. SHAS is a noncomprehensive Sephardi–Mizrahi political collective, including mainly Mizrahim of a low socioeconomic class, that had become within two decades the only Mizrahi political camp, and the only independent Mizrahi ticket on the ballot. But two

characteristics deny SHAS the possibility of becoming an all-Mizrahi collective. First, it limits itself to Sephardi–religious–Jewish participation, thereby pushing out the secular and traditional democratic Mizrahim, as well as the components of an all-Mizrahi identity that step outside these borders. Second, SHAS’ ideological leadership base is more Jewish than Mizrahi, a fact that indeed gave it very wide support but did not turn it into an all-Mizrahi collective.

The success of SHAS as a link in a chain

This raises the question of SHAS’ success in becoming a mass movement. As we have seen over more than two decades—from 1984 until today—the success of SHAS as a political Mizrahi movement cannot be isolated as a phenomenon from the axis of the Mizrahi political struggle. It is yet another link in the chain of the active struggle, and in this sense SHAS cannot be accounted for without understanding what preceded it, nor will we understand what came after it without understanding the organization. I see SHAS’ success in three main realms, according to the models I have examined. First is the power of mobility and attaining significant, stable, enduring support, which expanded and deepened SHAS’ hold both on Mizrahi communities and on the government and the authorities. By this SHAS has constituted a well-defined Mizrahi political collective for the first time since the beginning of the Mizrahi struggle. The second realm is maintaining a consistent and prolonged ideological collective confrontation, while presenting a clear comprehensive alternative to the dominant Ashkenazi Zionist ideology. On this question one can determine that Rabbi Ovadia Yoseph is the leader of the most consistent, systematic, and comprehensive Mizrahi rebellion against three Ashkenazi establishments: the Halachic, the religious-nationalist, and the secular-Zionist.

However, in political practice SHAS is mainly a government party aspiring to be part of all governments. This is apparently schizophrenic behavior, but we have seen that SHAS constantly maintains two active heads: with one it maintains a prolonged ideological debate and creates a confrontational atmosphere on the radical side of Mizrahi politics, while with the other it maintains a politics of compromise that supports a socioeconomic policy common to all governments in return for government funding for its institutions. Increasing this budget from one year to the next is SHAS’ only index of its political success. SHAS’ third realm of success is its ability to translate Mizrahi consciousness, which has matured among many communities following social actions by other Mizrahi organizations, to mobilize mass support, including electoral protest support. We have learned from Haines that SHAS is the biggest beneficiary of Mizrahi radical effects since HaPanterim HaSh’horim. Moreover, SHAS actually pushes all other Mizrahi organizing attempts to the margins, making itself the only address for Mizrahi votes and protest. By so doing, SHAS absorbs most of the potential for protest and unrest among Mizrahi communities, functioning in fact as the state’s subcontractor for welfare services to the needy. This is a double gain for the Ashkenazi hegemony: this industrial quiet enables the capitalists and their partners in the

higher echelons of the state to continue eliminating the socialist welfare state and making the economy more capitalist-oriented.

The continued growth of SHAS as a Mizrahi collective depends on three internal factors and two external factors. The internal factors are:

- 1 Maintaining the level of collective ideological confrontation and a confrontational atmosphere in Mizrahi localities.
- 2 Continuing to maintain strong internal solidarity—a crucial and burning issue since solidarity was fractured by Arye Deri's demise and his supporters' disappointment with Eli Yishay.
- 3 The ability to respond, in the future, to the expectations of its nonreligious protest voters, who found no appropriate ideological answer in SHAS, beyond the act of protest—that is to say, the beginning of democratization in the movement.

The external factors are:

- 1 The continued satisfaction of the political hegemony and the economic elites with SHAS' function as a stopper and absorber of protest and social unrest. The more SHAS shows an ability to control and gauge protest and unrest, the more it is seen as an essential decisive component in maintaining the existing socioeconomic order.
- 2 The continued relative quiet in the realms of security and foreign relations that may turn public discussion back to internal and social issues, as in the years after the Oslo Accords and before the Al-Aqsa Intifada, during which SHAS' strength grew from six to seventeen seats in the Knesset. If military conflict with the Palestinians escalates, SHAS' protest supporters will likely go back to supporting Likud, to bolster and barricade their national Israeli identity that, within SHAS, relies only on the Jewish basis, a meager unsatisfactory basis in times of war. But the beginning of this return to Likud was already evident in the elections of 2003, with no change since, except the split to Likud and Kadima.

Comparing SHAS' success to other Mizrahi movements before and after it, we notice that HaPanterim HaSh'horim, for example, failed where SHAS succeeded: gathering support and solidarity, maintaining a stable prolonged confrontation, and building significant political and parliamentary power. But evaluating the success and failure of these two movements by using the same measurements is misleading. In the general overview of the Mizrahi struggle movement, HaPanterim HaSh'horim's radical generative role is clearly visible; they set the wheels of Mizrahi consciousness in motion and placed the collective confrontation on the national agenda. HaPanterim HaSh'horim served as radical fuel for the Mizrahi struggle's big breakthrough, and in this regard they were destined to "burn out" and disappear, having performed their generative role. In a view limited by time and circumstances, HaPanterim HaSh'horim's disintegration is indeed a failure, and we have discussed it at length, but we also wish to maintain an overview of the struggle

and its various actors in their varied roles in the struggle according to time and circumstances.

The new Mizrahim, for example, who have been active since the mid-1980s, parallel to SHAS, take only one clear role: shaping Mizrahi consciousness and critical discourse. Because of their nature as awareness organizations (periodicals, parent organizations, ideological groups, musical groups, research and discussion groups, publishers, student and education organizations, social lobbying organizations), they have never set the goals of mobilizing the Mizrahi masses to the ballot; therefore they should not be examined on most points where SHAS has won major success. One point does need to be compared however—maintenance of a prolonged ideological confrontation. As I show in Chapter 4, almost parallel to SHAS, and with very few meeting points, the new Mizrahim have developed the new critical radical Mizrahi discourse, which has gradually attained a central position on the Israeli agenda—in culture, the media, education, and academia. The difference between this discourse and that of SHAS is that the new Mizrahi discourse wishes to change and amend what exists without proposing a comprehensive alternative, and while maintaining a dialogue with all groups in society, including the hegemonic Ashkenazi Zionist group. SHAS' discourse, on the other hand, negates a dialogue outside the religious and ultra-Orthodox world, except as necessary for maintaining a movement in the general Israeli political system. SHAS' discourse, under the Orthodox religious authority, has neither legitimacy nor authority for an ideological dialogue with the secular world. The religious imperative obligates it perpetually to aspire to make comprehensive replacements, and to consider changes and daily amendments as nothing more than good deeds.

Between integration and protest: Mizrahi politics along the axis of radicalism

A central question considered throughout this work is that of political relations within the Mizrahi struggle, among movements, parties, and leaders, and attitudes ranging from identification and integration to protest and alternative ideology. This is, of course, the question of the radical effects and their results, posed by Haines in the context of the black political struggle in the U.S.

In analyzing relations along the axis of radicalism at different junctures and periods, I have found some prominent patterns:

- a) The positive radical effects increase the level of collective confrontation and, following that, arouse public and political discussion on the issue of inequality between Ashkenazim and Mizrahim, a discussion the government and elites wish to silence and pacify.
- b) Mizrahi movements and Mizrahi leaders who have a radical impact on the political system in general and on Mizrahim in particular sacrifice themselves as groundbreakers and do not stand a chance of following the path they have themselves opened.

- c) In every case, the effects act on all organizations and players on the axis and create a movement in the radical direction, the fruit of these effects on the political system being collected by ICs and organizations on the moderate end of the axis, since the government negotiates only with them.
- d) In most cases, movement on the radical axis is from the moderate end to the radical, with radical groups being pushed to the end and disappearing at the conclusion of their role as generators of the radical effects.
- e) A symbiotic couple-relations pattern has formed between the generators of the radical effects and IC fruit-collectors; as soon as the generator of the radical effects leaves the political scene, his moderate partner loses power and position in his party until he too disappears, since he is no longer needed for the balancing task. The decline of Eliyahu Eliachar, for example, led to the disappearance of Bechor Chetrit, and the disappearance of HaPanterim HaSh'horim, HaOhalim, and TAMI led to David Levi's decline in Likud.
- f) SHAS changed the rules along the axis of radicalism—its one hand is on the radical end, where it employs radical effects through maintaining an enduring ideological confrontation with the hegemonic establishment, and out of the atmosphere of conflict on the political scene; at the same time, its other hand, in the form of a moderate government party, picks up the fruit of its own radical effects. It does this in a similar way to Martin Luther King, who maintained a constant radical atmosphere through such radical arms as the student movement, while positioning himself and his movement (SCLC) in the moderate center, which enabled him to negotiate with the government and to reap the fruit. But one difference from SHAS stands out—King's accomplishments in the struggle, in the form of legislation passed, benefited not only the entire black population but American society in general, including all ethnic groups, and future generations. SHAS is not engaged in a struggle for comprehensive social and civil change in Israel, but rather focuses on supporting its religious communities. HaKeshet Hademocratit HaMizrahit, as opposed to SHAS, aims all its goals and struggles to amend Israeli society in general, even when the struggle's starting point is the demand for an equal distribution of resources between Mizrahim and Ashkenazim.

The radicalism axis

Finally, I will examine the radicalism axis through the decades and briefly consider the radical effects during each period.

The first decade: 1948–1960

Apart from one-off protests and local revolts in camps, transit camps, towns, and neighborhoods, the Wadi A-Salib Rebellion stands out as the single organized radical event that, in spite of being quickly put down locally, managed to arouse

the political system and create a rolling radical effect that continued into the 1960s. Two chief influences of the rebellion are worth mentioning. The first was on the rule of MAPAI, which, in spite of stubbornly denying the issues being protested, had to hold an official investigation and then began courting local Mizrahi activists and leaders in order to absorb them into its ranks and pacify the unrest. Other parties followed MAPAI's example. The co-optation had indeed paralyzed protest on the immediate level but gave indirect legitimacy to the questioning of inequality in MAPAI and within state organs. The second, more important influence was on the society of Mizrahi immigrants: news of the rebellion and the sharp confrontation with the government was sown in the fresh soil of their emerging collective memory. Although the quelling of the rebellion restrained most of their political behavior, various attempts at Mizrahi organizing continued during the 1960s, as described in Chapter 2.

A radical actor during the first decade is Eliyahu Eliachar, who, by quitting Histadrut HaSephardim and cutting the tie with Bechor Chetrit, marked the beginning of a sharp criticism of the state, Zionism, and MAPAI's rule. During the 1950s and 1960s, Eliachar in fact sowed the seeds of Mizrahi critical discourse that would find form two decades later.

The second decade: 1961–1970

In the 1960s the absence of the Wadi A-Salib Rebellion's generator, Likud Yotzey Tzfon Africa, the only social movement until its election run, stands out. In the vacuum left in its wake, new radical forces emerged, such as the Fliers Underground and Young Israel, but these failed to establish themselves. Political activity in the 1960s was more moderate, in spite of those phenomena in the radical margins. The absence of the older forces such as Hitahadut HaTemanim and Va'ad HaEdah HaSepharadit's list, also stand out. Bechor Chetrit was co-opted by MAPAI and moved to the moderate end of the axis, while Eliachar continued his radical publication activity, especially in *BaMa'arakha* with young David Sitton. *Young Israel* was near the radical end, not as extreme as the Fliers Underground, whose level of underground conflict with the government was the most radical. On the radical end were found Cohen-Tzidon's HaLikud HaLeumi, and to the conservative side of it the Ahva list. A new actor making an appearance on the moderate side was Herut's David Levi, who became in the following decades a central moderate figure. Also on the radical end were Iraqi activists in the Jewish–Arab Communist Party, but their influence was minor.

During the 1960s, below the surface, social unrest continued, and the conditions for a renewed outbreak of the uprising matured: economic inequality continued with a severe economic recession as a backdrop, and cultural alienation increased. The 1967 war and its results represented a turning point in the Mizrahims' consciousness; they learned that even the "bond of blood" did not gain them an equal share in the benefits of economic growth after the recession was over.

The third decade: 1971–1980

The 1970s was the most decisive decade in Israel's history for the Mizrahi struggle. Two very significant radical effects took place during this time that shaped the struggle and the Mizrahi discourse over the following decades: first and foremost, HaPanterim HaSh'horim's uprising, followed by the 1977 Ballot Rebellion. In 1971–1972 HaPanterim HaSh'horim put in words, loud and clear, the Mizrahi struggle's demands, establishing them permanently on the general Israeli political agenda. In radical confrontation actions against the government they succeeded, in spite of the war in 1973 and its impact on the Israeli agenda, in pulling all participants in Mizrahi politics toward the radical end of the axis—relatively speaking, of course. They managed to force the government and the parties to realize that inequality is a result of an official state policy. This message was well received not only by Mizrahi ICs such as David Levi and Abu-Hatzeira, who translated it into political power, but also among Mizrahi voters who translated it into a Ballot Rebellion, which intensified from 1973 to 1977 and brought about the demise of the MAPAI hegemony. The government's failures in the Yom Kippur War also played an important part in MAPAI's fall—moving Ashkenazi voters toward the DASH alternative, thus creating an atmosphere of legitimacy for the trend of Mizrahi voters toward Likud.

This Mizrahi protest vote does not mean that a more nationalist political home was found, as suggested by popular discussion; rather, it was the result of the search not for a nationalist ideology but for a political home where Mizrahim could attain a legitimacy for their status as equal Israelis, based only on being Jewish (Menachem Begin: "Brothers, Jews!"), in the hope of also finding redress for the state of economic inequality and cultural oppression. This break from MAPAI was, as we have seen, the beginning of a departure from the Ashkenazi Zionist political mainstream that would afterward continue to a considerable degree as Mizrahim left the Likud for SHAS.

The fourth decade: 1981–1990

In the 1980s the two parallel axes were shaped around which the Mizrahi struggle revolves to this day: the political-party axis that began with TAMI and stabilized with SHAS as an alternative religious–Mizrahi discourse, and the consciousness-and-criticism axis manifest in the radical Mizrahi discourse and in a series of organizations and movements doing cultural, educational, academic, media, and community work.

The radical effects of HaOhalim, TAMI, and continued Mizrahi voting for the Likud in 1981 created pressure on David Levi, who tried to bolster his Likud camp and keep Likud voters in it, while objecting to every independent Mizrahi organizing effort that threatened his existence as head of the largest camp of Mizrahi voters in Israeli politics. This pressure increased as an independent Mizrahi voters collective emerged and grew in the form of SHAS, eventually emptying out the David Levi camp in the Likud and becoming the only Mizrahi electoral address.

Since 1991

The fifth decade was characterized by the continuation of the two central parallel processes of the preceding decade, which acquired momentum and sharpened further:

- 1 Continued exodus of Mizrahim from Likud and MAFDAL to SHAS as it became a mass movement, a process that Likud halted in the early 2000s only by changing the election system, canceling the peace agreements, and reoccupying the territories while escalating the military conflict with the Palestinians.
- 2 The establishment of the new Mizrahim as the leading trend of the critical democratic alternative discourse.

SHAS stabilized and positioned itself clearly and strongly as the only Mizrahi electoral option by its rapid growth between 1993 and 1999, as it tripled its parliamentary representation and deepened its grip on the communities. An apparent paradox arises from this axis—the Mizrahi-consciousness organizations that worked among the same communities as SHAS for at least a decade contribute to the growing awareness and to preparing people’s hearts to vote for SHAS. But looking at all the activity as one movement of struggle, this is not a paradox, for all the active bodies served similar goals, in spite of a growing disagreement among them. As SHAS’ power in the Knesset and in government has increased, and as it has entrenched itself in the communities, we have witnessed the disappearance of social movements and protest organizations. Even one-off confrontation actions have become rare; this happens because SHAS functions as a big “protest sponge,” and gauges the degree of collective confrontation according to its political and community needs. SHAS’ growth also encouraged the formation of HaKeshet Hademocratit at the end of the 1990s as an umbrella organization for all Mizrahi-consciousness organizations. HaKeshet itself, that shortly decided to focus on consciousness-raising actions and extraparliamentary lobbying, was naturally compelled to be in touch with the various parties and leaders it wanted to mobilize for its successful campaigns, such as the Public Housing Act and the Supreme Court of Justice land petition. This connection led to a moderation of language and to a lowering of the level of confrontation, which eventually led to members quitting and diminished the movement.

Mizrahi political activity in two parallel axes, both SHAS and the new Mizrahim, brought the first generation of Mizrahi Identifiers and Collaborators to step down and clear the political arena, including Aharon Abu-Hatzeira, Aharon Uzan, Yisrael Keisar, Moshe Shahal, Rafi Edri, and finally David Levi at the head of his camp in Likud. These have been replaced by young ICs who adopt only the jargon of the struggle in its social symbols, such as Meir Chetrit, Moshe Katzav, and Silvan Shalom in Likud, who endorse conservative right-wing economic measures; Benjamin Ben-Eliezer, Shlomo Ben-Ami, Shimon Chetrit, Rafi Elul, Avi Yehezkel, and Ethan Cabel in Labor; and Ran Cohen in MERETZ.

David Levi's attempt to form a social alternative for SHAS under the name Geshet was too hesitant and too late, by which Levi's last window of opportunity in Mizrahi politics closed. The new IC generation in Likud is very narrow in its approach, and collaborates fully with the liberal antisocial economic policies of the various national-unity governments headed by Likud. In Labor, at least two middle-generation ICs were on the rise, Professor Shimon Chetrit and Professor Shlomo Ben-Ami, who served as ministers and maintained an outspoken socioeconomic critique but did not turn it into a struggle banner, in order to avoid the threatening "ethnic leader" image. In spite of all this political caution, both were eventually ejected from party leadership. A more recent and much more significant example is that of Amire Peretz, head of the Histadrut (unified unions), who took over the Labor party in 2005, but lost the general elections and was removed by Barak.

Between social confrontation actions and social movements

Can one discern, in the politics of the Mizrahi struggle, among all the social confrontation actions, a movement that is clearly a social movement? Tarrow distinguishes between a collective confrontation action, with social goals and motivations, and a social movement. Out of Tarrow's criteria I chose two principal tests for defining an instance of Mizrahi organizing as a social movement: first, does it pose clearly significant goals of inclusive (nonsectarian) socioeconomic change; and second, does it maintain an enduring collective confrontation (beyond the initial collective confrontation action) on the ideological level and in political practice? Some of the organizing attempts studied here pass some of the benchmarks, such as solidarity among members, social and cultural networks, a connection with universal social theories, and even occasional confrontation actions, but do not pass these two main tests. Only a few of the Mizrahi movements were also clearly social movements: Likud Yotzey Tzfon Africa, which led the Wadi A-Salib Rebellion in 1959; HaPanterim HaSh'horim, which maintained the longest collective confrontation from 1971 to 1972; the Ohalim movement in Jerusalem at the end of the 1980s, which quickly became instituted within community organizing in the neighborhoods; and finally, HaKeshet Hademocratit HaMizrahit, which maintained an intensive confrontation in its early days in 1997, but later toned down the confrontation, at times to the level of absence from the scene. Still, HaKeshet has stood at the forefront of confrontation on the issues it has placed on the social agenda—housing, land, education, and Israeli historiography—for longer than all social movements.

Thus, even SHAS, the largest and strongest of all Mizrahi political movements, which maintains a prolonged ideological collective confrontation and has even consolidated a real Mizrahi collective, is not a social movement, not merely because it is a government coalition party but mostly because it does not maintain inclusive socioeconomic goals. In other words, it does not aspire to achieve social change for the general Israeli society, but to direct material support toward a sector

of the population. Beyond that, SHAS is the first Mizrahi movement formed first as a party, and only later established as an active movement in Mizrahi communities. This “reversed” evolution shows that forming SHAS as a party is not necessarily its leaders’ last political step.

Most of the social movements I mention arrived, at the end of their paths, at the party action model, and in most cases that was also their last political act. The exception is HaKeshet Hademocratit HaMizrahit, which ruled out an electoral challenge from the outset and considered itself an extraparlimentary social movement.

The metamorphosis of the Mizrahi struggle discourse

A new issue raised throughout this book, which still requires comprehensive study, is the issue of the Mizrahi political discourse in its various incarnations since the 1940s to the early twenty-first century. The 1940s are characterized by the transition of veteran Sephardi politics (and Yemenite politics on its margins) from community work, providing the needs of community members and serving as a go-between connecting the community and the government, to activity in the Zionist *yishuv* political system. In other words, the political discourse until that point was internal, autonomous, and separate even between Sephardim and Yemenites. This was the old discourse of internal classes and codes based on the community and family heritage of the leading families. Transition to an open, comprehensive, democratic politics dictated a new political discourse that could break through community borders and the old internal structure; from now on, community members would be a source of political power, no longer membership dependent on the eternal leadership. As the prestate’s welfare organizations expanded, Sephardi and Yemenite welfare organizations were relieved of power, and solidarity between community members and leadership diminished, until expiring during the 1950s.

With the arrival of hundreds of thousands of Mizrahi new immigrants during the 1950s, the 1940s Mizrahi discourse came to an end. Only one independent branch kept growing, in an entirely different direction—criticism and awareness led by Eliyahu Eliachar. Eliachar’s critical discourse reemerged from a different situation, feeding on a new different reality—the economic and cultural oppression of Mizrahi immigrants. Eliachar was ahead of his time, because he did not stop at protest for survival. Through slogans such as “Bread and Work,” “Enough with Poverty,” and “Enough with Discrimination,” he frequently emphasized and protested against the cultural racism and the crushing of human dignity. Another significant contribution to the discourse was made by the Wadi A-Salib Rebellion that radicalized the naïve discourse of protest and enriched it with brave collective confrontation and independent organizing. In this connection between Eliachar’s discourse and the first collective confrontation led by Ben-Harouche, seeds of the radical class-culture discourse were sown that would sprout in the days of HaPanterim HaSh’horim.

In the early 1970s, during HaPanterim HaSh’horim’s uprising, the Mizrahi political discourse was clearly shaped on direct collective confrontation between ruling Ashkenazim and ruled Mizrahim. Socioeconomic inequality was based on

the overlap of class status and ethnic origins. In a similar way to the discourse of the Black Panthers in the U.S., HaPanterim HaSh'horim (the Black Panthers in Israel) used a universal class language that was simultaneously cultural and local: "The Screwed-up Citizen" next to "They Screw Up the Black People," "Enough with Poverty," next to "Full Representation for Edot HaMizrah." In this respect, the local became universal in the struggle discourse. One should of course mention again the crucial influence of the Panterim's partners, especially young radicals of Matzpen, who were responsible for connecting the local Mizrahi struggle discourse of inequality and poverty with the Marxist discourse of production relations, exploitation, and oppression, and with the Palestinian question. In this regard, the HaPanterim HaSh'horim period radicalized the Mizrahi struggle discourse and established its foundations for many years to come.

A few years later, when critical sociology emerged with *Mahbarot leMehkar ulleVikoret*, followed by Shlomo Swirski's *Lo neheshalim ela menuhshalim*, the academic radical dimension was added to the discourse: empirical studies that grounded and gave words to the class-culture analysis of unequal division of labor, resources, and power in Israel.

In the 1980s and 1990s another dimension emerged—radical criticism of European political Zionism as the generator of social, cultural, and national relations in Israel. Criticism of Zionism came both from a Sephardi–Jewish perspective by SHAS and from a broader postmodern perspective by the new Mizrahim and included recognition of Palestinian national rights.

With the formation of HaKeshet Hademocratit HaMizrahit, the radical Mizrahi discourse distinguished itself from SHAS' Sephardi–Jewish discourse, thereby becoming a complete paradigm belonging to the Left in terms of society and foreign policy. This paradigm covered all realms of life in Israel: nationality, religion, art and culture, society, economy, education, historiography, academia, and media. Common terms in this discourse in its maturity include multiculturalism, egalitarian education, social democracy, state responsibility, civil rights, social justice, community empowerment, Mizrahi feminism, and others; together with the rejection of Eurocentric Orientalism, and left-leaning foundations in foreign policy, such as recognizing the national rights of Palestinians, objecting to the policy of occupation and settlement, and recognizing the rights of Palestinian citizens of Israel in their struggle for social justice and cultural autonomy.

As in the case of the black struggle in the U.S., we saw in the history of the Mizrahi struggle that radical discourse, born among the most stigmatized, dejected, and marginalized Israelis, succeeded over decades in moving to the political mainstream and impacted more moderate movements in a chain of radical effects, until becoming a decisive factor in shaping Mizrahi struggle groups and social movements in Israel. This discourse is largely, through dialogue, responsible for the rise of the critical academic discourse, and even more so for the growth of social politics in general.

An open question

I would like to conclude with a question that remains open to the future: Where is the politics of Mizrahi struggle heading—between assimilation and alternative ideology? As we have learned from current data, Israel is at the peak of a severe socioeconomic polarization process, whose end we cannot predict, except to note that it constantly escalates. Put simply: Israel is dismantling the welfare state and significantly diminishing state responsibility for its citizens' quality of life. The logic of our discussion so far leads us to expect this process to also give birth to political objection, which means the rise of new social forces. Moreover, since the economic polarity still largely overlaps the division by cultural origin, we can expect new Mizrahi initiatives in the social struggle, mainly as disappointment with SHAS as a mass movement concerned with social issues deepens.

Will a continued increase in socioeconomic polarization necessarily keep moving Mizrahim out of the Ashkenazi Zionist political mainstream and all their parties toward an independent alternative provided, for the moment, only by SHAS? Can we expect independent Mizrahi alternatives that will diminish SHAS down to its religious supporters? From what I have learned of the practice and thought of the new Mizrahim, even when their starting point and motifs are Mizrahi, they always connect the particular struggle with the global one. Moreover, they create alliances with other social movements and nonMizrahi forces on the Left, because the new Mizrahims' central goal is always *tikkun* (rehabilitation) of society as a whole, for all citizens. Therefore, should we see new social organizing attempts in the future, I expect their main characteristic to be political alliances based on general Israeli social and cultural goals, mainly because the issue of poverty has become more humanly complex, affecting Mizrahim, Arabs, Ethiopian and Russian immigrants, foreign laborers, single mothers, and women in general.

Any such development crucially depends on the matter of security and foreign policy, for the "iron concept" coined by Moshe Dayan in the late 1960s, according to which the social banner cannot be raised so long as the security banner is up, still dominates Israel. In terms of foreign policy, Israel is going through increasing polarization as negotiations with the Palestinians approach the hard-core questions, suppressed among most Israelis, over settlements, refugees, and Jerusalem. Suppression of these questions is what shattered the peace process, as Israel opted to go back to a nationalist attitude dominated by religious Ashkenazi Zionism, to reoccupy the Palestinian territories and to a dangerous dichotomy of the citizenry into "patriots" versus "enemies of the people." This process, which began in September 2000, was given U.S. and international approval following al-Qaida's terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City and on the Pentagon in Washington, D.C., on September 11, 2001. This atrocity, which killed about 2,800 Americans, at once removed all barriers and doubts from the Israeli government headed by Ariel Sharon, which then canceled the Oslo Agreements and launched a war on the Palestinians—while granted international cover by the Bush administration, a backing that continued to serve Sharon's successor, Ehud Olmert, and his unity government.

In such an atmosphere, when the Arabs became the enemy of humanity in the eyes of the West, Israel has witnessed a wave of “disillusionment” of the “Zionist Left”, moving over to the nationalist Right end. The Labor Party was also absorbed by the Right and finally broke away from what was known during the Rabin government as the Peace Camp. Amid such a nationalist current, the Mizrahim feel threatened about the equality of their Israeli identity and therefore openly display their move rightward. Because the Mizrahim still need to emphasize the national–Jewish element and oppress the Mizrahi–Arab elements in their identity in order to distinguish themselves from the Arab, their cultural look-alike, who is now not only the old enemy of the state from outside and from within, but more than that—the enemy of the “free world.”

Under such circumstances, should the Mizrahim wait for a resolution of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict to liberate themselves of the security trap, and the trap of self-hatred, in order to start advancing toward cultural liberation? For only such liberation will allow them to lead the shaping of a social and cultural alternative to schizophrenic, fragmented Israel. Perhaps the opposite is true. Perhaps only the shattering of the security manipulation through a radical mass social uprising, even during a time of war, can topple this regime and its destructive ideological forces—of both fundamentalist messianic Zionists (religious and secular) and capitalists, who enslave society and its resources to the rich in Israel and around the globe and often adhere to European–American cultural racism. Obviously, such a mass uprising, even if it is led, as usual, by Mizrahim, will not be possible without many political alliances. But, needless to say, this possibility is fantastic in the eyes of most Mizrahi leaders of all shades. They suppress it very deeply, for it holds the prospect of what they consider to be the most horrible Israeli scenario: civil war—or in the language of the Jews: *milhemet ahim*, a “war of brothers.”

I hope we will not have to come to this, that other global and regional processes and changes, such as the new Obama administration and his determination, thus far, to resolve the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, will defeat the destructive regime. I hope this book will contribute something to the awareness of many and promote recognition of the reality of cultural and economic oppression—a necessary condition for understanding the Jewish, Israeli–Palestinian, and Middle Eastern history of the last century.

Notes

Introduction

- 1 General note: please see the bibliography for English alternatives or English versions of Hebrew sources referenced in the notes.
- 2 For an in-depth discussion of this question throughout the history of social movements, see Chapter 1 of S. Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- 3 Ibid., 13.
- 4 See S. Swirski, “Lo nehashalim ela menushalim,” (*Not Backward but Held Back*). Haifa: Mahbarot Lemehkar Ulevikoret, 1981 (Hebrew); English version: S. Swirski, *Israel: The Oriental Majority*, London and New Jersey: Zed Books, 1989.
- 5 B. Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947–1949*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987.
- 6 See the Bibliography list for the publications of: S. N. Eisenstadt, R. Bar Yossef, and C. Frankenstein.
- 7 Y. Peres, *The Relationship of Ethnic Groups in Israel*, Tel Aviv: Sifriyat HaPoalim, 1976 (Hebrew).
- 8 H. Ella Shohat, “Sephardim in Israel: Zionism from the Standpoint of Its Jewish Victims,” *Social Text: Theory, Culture, and Ideology* 19/20, Fall, 1988, 2–3. Shohat’s analysis, previously presented in her Ph.D. dissertation about Israeli cinema of 1986 and later published as a book, provided the most pioneering discussion of the new Mizrahi discourse; see E. H. Shohat, *Israeli Cinema: East/West and the Politics of Representation*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1989.
- 9 E. W. Said, *Orientalism*, New York: Vintage Books, 1978.
- 10 Naturally, in various definitions: “ethnic gaps,” “ethnic distress,” “ethnic deprivations,” “ethnic discrimination,” and other terms, as discussed in the introduction.
- 11 H. H. Haines, *Black Radicals and the Civil Rights Mainstream, 1954–1970*, Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1988, and also detailed discussion later in this chapter.
- 12 R. Hardin, *Collective Actions*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982; R. Hardin, *One for All: The Logic of Group Conflict*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995.
- 13 E. Durkheim, *Suicide: A Study in Sociological Interpretation*, Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1951.
- 14 Tarrow, 1998, 4. Tarrow relies on evidence from Charles Tilly’s papers; see C. Tilly, *The Contentious French*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986.
- 15 A. Sivanandan, *Communities of Resistance: Writings on Black Struggles for Socialism*, London and New York: Verso, 1990.
- 16 Ibid., 125.

- 17 Quoted in H. J. Cone, *Martin and Malcolm and America*, New York: Orbis Books, 1991, 3.
- 18 Regarding unofficial racism, Malcolm X said to journalists in Washington in March 1964, in reference to Senate discussions about proposed civil rights legislation: "If passed, it will never be enforced. You can't legislate good will—that comes through education." *New York Times*, 27 March, 1964, 10.
- 19 In June 1839 a mutiny took place aboard a Cuban ship named *Amistad* transporting fifty-three slaves, and the slaves took control of the ship. When the ship arrived on the U.S. Atlantic coast, abolitionists got involved in the case and the Supreme Court ordered the release of the slaves and their return to Africa. The exact registration of names and numbers of slaves were kept by a couple named Still, whose home in Pennsylvania served as a transfer point for escaping slaves.
- 20 In contrast to Cone, Haines refers to radicals who mostly are not nationalists at all.
- 21 In regard to this definition, there is an argument among American scholars. Jackson (1976), for example, prefers to view the struggle as a series of overlapping movements with various goals and means and not to view it in an artificial way as one movement.
- 22 Haines, op. cit., 2–6.
- 23 W. A. Gamson, *The Struggle of Social Protest*, Homewood, Ill.: Dorsey, 1975.
- 24 J. K. Benson, "Militant Ideologies and Organizational Context: The War on Poverty and the Ideology of 'Black Power,'" in R. J. Laver (ed.), *Social Movements and Social Change*, Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois University Press, 1976, 109–110.
- 25 R. L. Allen, *Black Awakening in Capitalist America: An Analytic History*, Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor, 1969.
- 26 Cone, op. cit., 112.
- 27 *Ibid.*, 226. In this sense, King foresaw the future. The black majority in the big cities, such as New York, Chicago, Washington, D.C., and Los Angeles, and in the southern states allowed them during the seventies and eighties to accumulate significant municipal power and even to control some of these cities. Another development, which King foresaw, was the escape of white people to new and independent suburban towns with elite private schools together with the social and economic deterioration of the city centers, which became more and more homogeneously black.
- 28 Haines, op. cit., 45.
- 29 Cone op. cit., 111–19.
- 30 *Ibid.*
- 31 James A. Colaiaco, "Martin Luther King Jr and the Paradox of Nonviolent Direct Action", *Phylon*, 47, 1, 1986, 16–28.
- 32 *Ibid.*
- 33 Cone, op. cit., 221.
- 34 See the goals and principles of this organization in R. J. Brisbane, *Black Activism: Racial Revolution in the United States, 1954–1970*, Valley Forge: Judson, 1974.
- 35 E. Cleaver, *Soul on Ice*, New York: Dell Publishing, 1968; see also the assessment in Haines, op. cit., 68.
- 36 Brisbane, op. cit., 212.
- 37 Duge McAdam, "The Decline of the Civil Rights Movement", *Social Movements of the Sixties and Seventies*, ed. Jo Freeman, New York: Longman, 1983, 279–319; Aldon D. Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement: Black Communities Organizing for Change*, New York: Free Press, 1984.
- 38 See Frances F. Piven, and Richard Cloward, *Regulating the Poor: The Functions of Public Welfare*, New York: Vintage, 1971.
- 39 Haines, op. cit., 185.

1 The encounter: Ashkenazi Zionism and the Jews of the Muslim world, sociohistorical background

- 1 E. W. Said, *Orientalism*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1978.
- 2 H. Herzog, *Political Ethnicity: Image and Reality*, Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1986, 15–6 (Hebrew).
- 3 Swirski, S., “Lo nehashalim ela menushalim,” (*Not Backward but Held Back*), Haifa: Mahbarot lemechkar ulevikoret, 1981 (Hebrew); English version: S. Swirski, *Israel: The Oriental Majority*, London and New Jersey: Zed Books, 1989.
- 4 *Iton Aher* (literally, “A Different Newspaper”), a radical periodical in both content and discourse, was edited by David Hemo with contributions by many Mizrahi intellectuals for whom it was the central, and at times the only, platform to voice their criticism of Israeli society. The last issue was published in 1996.
- 5 See, for example R. Bar-Yosef, “The Moroccans: Background to the Problem,” *Molad*, no. 17, 1959 (Hebrew); S. A. Deshen, and M. Shoked, *The Predicament of Homecoming: Cultural and Social Life of North African Immigrants in Israel*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1974; S. N. Eisenstadt, *Tradition, Change, and Modernity*, New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1976; C. Frankenstein, *Poverty, Madness, Primitivism: The Problem of Exhibitionism of Lifestyle*, Jerusalem: Henrietta Szold Institute, 1957 (Hebrew); Y. Peres, *The Relationship of Ethnic Groups in Israel*, Tel Aviv: Sifriyat HaPoalim, 1976 (Hebrew); Ministry of Education Report 1957; *Megamot* A, B, and C, 1951–1952.
- 6 Swirski op. cit., 115.
- 7 Said, op. cit., 104.
- 8 C. Frankenstein, “About Ethnic Differences,” *Megamot*, 4, 3, 1951 (Hebrew); C. Frankenstein, “About the Term Primitivism,” *Megamot*, 2, 3, 1951 (Hebrew).
- 9 S. S. Chetrit, “Old Land, New State: The East and the Easterners in the Jewish State of Theodor Herzl,” paper presented at Columbia University, 1991.
- 10 See, for example, *Bama’arkha*, The Sephardi Community Committee, and the Sephardi Party for the Assembly and later for Knesset, the World Sephardi Federation.
- 11 The term *Mizrahim* is understood in the Israeli context—*Ashkenazim/Mizrahim*—only and is therefore less ethnic and more class based. This term cannot contain the entire diverse range of definitions and cultural identities of each ethnicity and community. It means nothing to a Persian Jew of the first generation, or to a Moroccan Jew who is more a Western than Eastern European. Yet, it is widely accepted within the reality of Israeli politics as an identity of struggle. See in this regard: Zvi Ben-dor, “A Short History of the Incredible Mizrahi History,” *News from Within*, January, Jerusalem, 1997.
- 12 S. Swirski, and D. Bernstein, “Who Did What Work for Whom, and for What? Israel’s Economic Development and the Establishment of the Ethnic Development of Labor,” *Mahbarot Le’Mechkar U’ leVikoret*, 4, May 1980 (Hebrew).
- 13 H. Ella Shohat, “Sephardim in Israel: Zionism from the Standpoint of Its Jewish Victims,” *Social Text: Theory, Culture, and Ideology*, 19/20, Fall, 1988.
- 14 Said, op. cit., 268.
- 15 Made popular by such sociological and educational experts as Bar Yosef (1951), S. N. Eisenstadt, *Absorption of Immigrants in Israel*, Jerusalem: Jewish Agency and Hebrew University, 1954 (Hebrew); S. N. Eisenstadt, *Chapters in the Analysis of Modernization Process*, Jerusalem: Academ, 1967 (Hebrew); S. N. Eisenstadt, *Israeli Society: Background, Developments, and Problems*, New York: Basic Books, 1967; S. N. Eisenstadt, *Social Differentiation and Stratification*, Glenview, Ill.: Scott, Foresman and Co., 1971; S. N. Eisenstadt, *Change and Continuity in Israeli Society*, Jerusalem: Van Leer Institute, 1974 (Hebrew); S. N. Eisenstadt, “Notes to the Ethnic Problem in Israel,” *Megamot*, 28, 2–3, 1984 (Hebrew); R. Feuerstein, and M. Richelle, *Enfants Juifs Nord-Africains*, Jerusalem: Youth Aliyah, 1957;

- Frankenstein, op. cit.; O. A. Simon, "On the Double Meaning of the Term Primitivism," *Megamot*, 6, 2, 1951 (Hebrew); M. Smilanski, "Social Examination of the Israeli Education System Structure," *Megamot*, 8, 4, 1957 (Hebrew).
- 16 H. Lu-Yon and R. Kalush, "Housing in Israel," *Israel Equality Monitor*, 4, Tel Aviv: Adva Center, 1994 (Hebrew). All volumes of the *Israel Equality Monitor* appear in Hebrew, English, and Arabic; see <http://www.adva.org>; S. Swirski, *Education in Israel: Region of Separate Trajectories*, Tel Aviv: Brerot, 1991 (Hebrew); S. Swirski, "Education in Israel," *Israel Equality Monitor*, 1, Tel Aviv: Adva Center, 1991; E. Avraham, *Media in Israel: Center and Periphery*, Tel Aviv: Brerot, 1993 (Hebrew); S. Swirski, "Lo nehshalim ela menushalim," (*Not Backward but Held Back*). Haifa: Mahbarot lemehkar ulevikoret (see English translation of this book: Swirski, 1989, 115–33).
 - 17 See Eisenstadt, op. cit., For criticism on Eisenstadt see Bernstein, op. cit.; Swirski, 1981.
 - 18 M. Smilanski, "The Educational System's Treatment of Issues of Underprivileged Students," in H. Ormian (ed.), *Education in Israel*, Jerusalem: Ministry of Education and Culture, 1973 (Hebrew).
 - 19 See, for example, Y. Gormezano Goren, *Alexanderoni Summer*, Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1978 (Hebrew); Y. Gormezano Goren, *A Babylonian Shelter*, Tel Aviv: Bimat Kedem Lesifrut, 1998 (Hebrew); A. Alcalay, *After Jews and Arabs: Remaking Levantine Culture*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993; G. N. Giladi, *Discords in Zion*, London: Scorpion Publishing, 1990.
 - 20 In the 1960s the Israeli state removed from their homes children of Mizrahi descent who were diagnosed with cognitive "abilities" to special boarding schools, where the educational goals were explicitly defined as socialization into modern Western life. The main group to do this work was the Association for the Advancement of Education, which founded two such "Schools for the Gifted." See M. Smilanski, "Suggestion for Reform of the Structure of Post-Primary Education," *Megamot*, 11, 4, 1961; M. Smilansky, "The Education System Coping with the Problems of Children Needing Treatment," in H. Ormian (ed.), *Education in Israel*, Jerusalem: Ministry of Education and Culture, 1973.
 - 21 Kibbutz members in the frontiers did not succeed in this goal as their presence was only symbolic and minimal.
 - 22 M. Shoked, "Aggression and Ethnic Relations," (appeared first in 1981) in S. Deshen and M. Shoked, *Jews of the Orient: Anthropological Studies of the Past and Present*, Jerusalem and Tel Aviv: Shoken, 1994, 151–53 (Hebrew).
 - 23 Herzog, op. cit., 1986, 123.
 - 24 Ibid., 179.
 - 25 One should nevertheless point out here that the religious-cultural meeting took place between the Arab-Jewish and Mizrahi communities, from the time of the destruction of the First Temple and the beginnings of the first exiles in Babylon and Egypt onward, through the first millennium CE, and thereafter in the second millenium via the large cultural centers of Babylon and Spain. On this see A. Alcalay, *After Jews and Arabs: Remaking Levantine Culture*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993.
 - 26 D. Ben-Gurion, *Eternal Israel*, Tel Aviv: Einot, 1964, 30 (Hebrew).
 - 27 These words were spoken at a meeting of the Machon LeYahdut Zmanainu (Institute for Modern Judaism) and appear in Y. Nini, *The Relationship of Hibat Tzion and the Zionist Movement with the Yemeni Aliyah*, Jerusalem: Sifriyat Shazar, Institute for Modern Judaism, 1976, 36. Also see there the discussion of the relationship between Zionism and Mizrahi Jews in general, and Yemeni Jews in particular.
 - 28 J. P. Sartre, *Reflexions sur la question juive*, translated by M. Brinker, Tel Aviv: Sifriyat HaPoalim, 1978 (1944) (Hebrew).
 - 29 A. Sternberg, "The Legal Status of Jews in the Islamic Countries," *Machana'im*, 119–121, 1968, 1–6.

- 30 J. P. Sartre, *Reflexions sur la question juive*, translated by M. Brinker, Tel Aviv: Sifriyat HaPoalim, 1978 (1944), 29 (Hebrew).
- 31 Theodor Herzl, *The Jewish State: An Attempt at a Modern Solution of the Jewish Question*, New York: American Zionist Emergency Council, 1946, 73–84.
- 32 H. Lazarus-Yafeh, *Islam: Basic Principles*, Tel Aviv: Ministry of Defense, 1980.
- 33 See the Qur'an, Sura 5, 62.
- 34 According to a letter from Muhammad to the rulers of the Southern Arabs, from Ibn Hassam, pt. 2, 956.
- 35 Sternberg, op. cit., 1–6.
- 36 It is mistaken to describe Muslim–Jewish relations with the term *anti-Semitism*, as the definition of “Semite” includes both Muslims and Jews in the Arab world and the East.
- 37 See discussion in M. Avitbul, *The North African Jews in the Second World War*, Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institute, 1986; Y. Tsur, *Torn Community: The Jews of Morocco and Nationalism, 1943–1954*, Tel Aviv: Am Oved, Sifriyat HaAfelah, 2001, Introduction and Chapter 1; and also A. Meir, *The Zionist Movement and the Jews of Iraq*, Tel Aviv: Am Oved, Sifriyat HaAfelah, 1993.
- 38 Said, op. cit., 5.
- 39 A. Raz-Karkotzkin, “Exile within Sovereignty: A Criticism of the ‘Negation of the Exile’ in Israeli Culture,” pt. 1, *Theory and Criticism*, Autumn 1993, 23–55; also pt. 2, Autumn 1994, 113–132.
- 40 See the correspondence between Ben-Gurion and the leaders of American Jewry in “In Vigilant Brotherhood,” in *The American Jewish Committee’s Relationship to Palestine and Israel*, New York, 1990, 62–70.
- 41 On this matter see S. Segev, *Operation Yachin*, Tel Aviv: Ministry of Defense, 1984; N. Derwein, *No Magic Carpet: Yemenite Immigrants in Israel, 1881–1914*, Jerusalem: Yad Ben Tzvi, 1981; S. Hillel, *An Eastern Wind: On an Underground Mission to the Arab Countries*, Tel Aviv: Eidanim Publishers, and Jerusalem: Ministry of Defense, 1985.
- 42 A detailed survey of the Mizrahi political organizations in the Zionist *yishuv* period appears in Chapter 1 of H. Herzog, *Political Segregation: Appearance against Reality*, Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1986.
- 43 It is not my intention in this work to enter into a historical review of the Mizrahi and Yemenite waves of immigration, but instead to concentrate on the effects of the encounter with Zionism from a political perspective. See, for example, M. Eliav, *Eretz Yisrael and the Yishuv in the Nineteenth Century, 1777–1917*, Jerusalem: Keter, 1978 (Hebrew); Y. Bertel, “The Old Yishuv and the New Yishuv: Image and Reality,” *Katedra*, 2, 1977, 3–19; Y. Kaniel, *In Transition: The Jews in Eretz Yisrael in the Nineteenth Century—between Old and New, between Settlement of the Holy Land and Zionism, Selected Essays*, Dan Machman and Yisrael Bertel (eds), Jerusalem: Yad Yitzhak Ben Zvi, 2000; E. Eliachar, *Living with Jews*, Jerusalem: Y. Marcus, 1980; S. D. Goitein, “About the Public Life of the Jews of Yemen,” in *Jubilee Volume in Honor of Mordechai Kaplan* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America), 1964, 43–61.
- 44 On the relationship with the Yemenites at that time, see Y. Meir, *The Zionist Movement and the Jews of Yemen*, Tel Aviv: Sifriya Afikim, 1983; Y. Nini, *Did It Happen or Did I Dream a Dream?*, Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1996.
- 45 *HaZvi Monthly*, June, 1910.
- 46 S. Smooha, *Israel: Pluralism and Conflict*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978, 281.
- 47 For a discussion of the terms “Old Yishuv” and “New Yishuv,” see H. Herzog, “The Terms Old Yishuv and New Yishuv from the Sociological Perspective,” *Katedra*, 32, July, 1982.
- 48 See discussion of the question of Zionism and exilism in Raz-Karkotzkin, op. cit., Fall, 1993, 23–55; *ibid.*, 1994, 113, 32; see also Y. Kaniel, *In Transition: The Jews in Eretz*

- Yisrael in the Nineteenth Century—between Old and New, between Settlement of the Holy Land and Zionism, Selected Essays*, Dan Machman and Yisrael Bertel (eds), Jerusalem: Yad Yitzhak Ben Zvi, 2000; see also H. Herzog, “The Terms ‘Yeshuv Yashan’ and ‘Yeshuv Chadash’ in the Eyes of Sociology,” *Katedra*, 32 (July), 1982 (Hebrew).
- 49 E. Eliachar, 1980, *Living with Jews*. Jerusalem: Y. Marcus, 1980 (Hebrew).
 - 50 H. Herzog, *Political Segregation: Appearance against Reality*, Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1986, 28.
 - 51 Y. Nini, *He-hayita, o, Walamti Walom (Did It Happen or Did I Dream a Dream?)*, Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1996 (Hebrew).
 - 52 Herzog, op. cit., 30–33.
 - 53 Nini, op. cit., 1, 179.
 - 54 On the matter of Yavnieli’s mission, see, in general, S. Yavnieli, *Journey to Yemen*, Tel Aviv: Ayanot, 1963; see also discussion in Nini, op. cit., Chapter 2; N. Druyan, *Without a Magic Carpet: Yemenite Settlement in Eretz Yisrael (1881–1914)*, Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institute, 1981 (Hebrew); and Y. Meir, *The Zionist Movement and the Jews of Yemen*, Tel Aviv: Sifriyat Afikim, 1983 (Hebrew).
 - 55 *Chapters of HaPoel HaTzair* 2, 184; quoted in Nini, op. cit., 43. See also the whole discussion of this matter there.
 - 56 Nini, op. cit., 44.
 - 57 Ibid., 36. Katznelson’s words were written against a background of many instances of humiliations and attacks on the bodies and the honor of Yemenite workers by the Ashkenazi farmers, such as the “Macov Incident” in Rehovot, where a farmer, Macov, punished Yemenite women who were gathering vine twigs. Macov beat them and dragged them through the settlement tied to the tail of a donkey. See *HaPoel HaTzair* 6 (5673), 17, 16.
 - 58 Nini, op. cit., 93.
 - 59 See the broad treatment of the affair in the periodical *Afikim* in the years 1993–2000, and see: S. Madmoni-Gerber, 2009, *Israeli Media and the Framing of Internal Conflict: The Yemenite Baby Affair*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
 - 60 See the general and detailed discussion in T. Segev, *One Palestine, Complete: Jews and Arabs Under the British Mandate*, New York: Henry Holt and Co. 2001.
 - 61 Ibid.
 - 62 See N. Menahem, *Tensions and Ethnic Discrimination in Israel: Socio-Historical Aspects*, Tel Aviv: Rubin, 1983 (Hebrew), 114–121; also G. N. Giladi, *Discords in Zion*, London: Scorpion Publishing, 1990, 55–56.
 - 63 Ibid., 54.
 - 64 Eliachar, op. cit., 240.
 - 65 S. Smoocha, *Israel: Pluralism and Conflict*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978; Eliachar, op. cit.
 - 66 See Eliachar, op. cit., 493.
 - 67 S. Swirski, *Education in Israel: Region of Separate Trajectories*, Tel Aviv: Brerot, 1991.
 - 68 Segev, S. *Operation “Yakhin,”* Tel Aviv: Ministry of Defense. 1990 (Hebrew); N. Druyan, *Without a Magic Carpet: Yemenite Settlement in Eretz Yisrael (1881–1914)*, Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institute, 1981 (Hebrew); Y. Meir, *The Zionist Movement and the Jews of Yemen*, Tel Aviv: Sifriyat Afikim, 1983 (Hebrew); Z. Tzameret, *The Days of the Melting Pot: The Investigating Committee on the Education of Immigrants Children* (1950), Tel-Aviv: Am Oved, 2001; N. Giladi, *Ben Gurion’s Scandals*, New York: Glilit Publishing, 1992, and many other works, some of which will be referred to hereafter.
 - 69 Zionist agents often operated using threats and violence against Jews, attributing these operations to the Arabs. In Baghdad, according to a number of scholars, agents threw a grenade into a synagogue named Massouda, killing a woman and a girl and

- injuring people at prayer. See G. N. Giladi, *Discords in Zion*. London: Scorpion Publishing, 1990.
- 70 *Jewish Chronicle*, December 30, 1949.
- 71 On the matter of the development of economic dependency on the ruling elites, see S. Swirski, "Lo nehshalim ela menushalim," (*Not Backward but Held Back*). Haifa: Mahbarot Lemehkar Ulevikoret (English translation, Swirski, 1989), 1981, Chapter 2; and on the matter of the disintegration of the educational institutions of the Mizrahi communities and their loss of control over the education of their children, see Swirski, 1990, Chapters 1 and 2.
- 72 The affair was exposed on Israeli television on the program *Yoman HaShavua* of August 15, 1997.
- 73 See S. S. Chetrit, "I Rebel, Therefore I Am," *Havikum Mizrah*, October 3, 2001 (Hebrew).
- 74 Quoted in Segev 1984, 155. See there further references to the reactions of the leaders of the state to the Mizrahi immigration.
- 75 Quoted in *ibid*.
- 76 Arieh Gelblum, *Ha'aretz*, August 19, 1948.
- 77 Ephraim Friedman, *Ha'aretz*, September 8, 1948.
- 78 M. Lissak, "Immigration Policy in the Fifties," in M. Naor (ed.), *Olim and Ma'abarot*, Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institute, 1986.
- 79 S. Swirski, "'To Progress Personally and to Assimilate . . .': On the Policy of Level-Grouping in Israeli Schools," in S. Swirski (ed.), *Seeds of Inequality*, Tel Aviv: Brerot, 1995, 138–139 (Hebrew).
- 80 "Nine Out of Four Hundred" is also the title of a work by the artist Meir Gal, who presents in a single image the removal of the glory of the Mizrahim from the new Jewish history (self-portrait of the artist holding the only nine pages that cover the history of the Mizrahi Jews, while the other 391 pages "spill" toward the floor). The work can be seen at <http://www.kedma.co.il/KedmaGallery/MeirGal/MiroGalleryImage2.htm>.
- 81 S. Horowitz, *A Brief History of the People of Israel: The Modern Period*, Haifa: Harealy HaIvri School, 1966, pt. 1, 169–170. On the matter of syllabus design in the Ministry of Education, see S. S. Chetrit, "Ashkenazi-Zionist Eraser," *Moznaim*, April 1997.
- 82 S. S. Chetrit, "Old Land, New State: The East and the Easterners in the Jewish State of Theodor Herzl," a seminar paper, Columbia University (unpublished), 1991, 50–51.
- 83 *Ha'aretz*, January 10, 1949.
- 84 T. Segev, 1949: *The First Israelis*, Jerusalem: Domino, 1984, 156 (Hebrew).
- 85 *Ibid.*, 155.
- 86 *Ibid.*, 170.
- 87 *Ibid.*, 155–187.
- 88 On the negative stereotyping and assumptions regarding inferiority of the Mizrahim, see V. Shiran 1978, "Embellishing Letters: Mizrahi Communities in Israeli Society," master's thesis, Tel Aviv University, Criminology Institute.
- 89 H. Malka, "The Selection: (Racial) Selection and Discrimination against Moroccan and North-African Jews, during the Immigration and Absorption Processes in the Years 1948–1956," master's thesis, University of Haifa, Kiryat Gat, Dani Sfarim, 1997.
- 90 Malka, *op. cit.*, 44.
- 91 *Ibid.*, 63.
- 92 *Ibid.*, 69.
- 93 *Ibid.*, 202.
- 94 *Ibid.*, 207.
- 95 Nathan Alterman, *The Seventh Column*, bk. 2, 1954–1962, Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1985.
- 96 *Proceedings of the Knesset*, Sitting 13, July 1959, 4, "The Events in Haifa"; see there further strong words from Snc.

- 97 *Megamot*, vols 1, 2, 3, 1951–52, and especially “Conclusion of the Argument on the Problem of Ethnic Differences,” no. 4, 1952, 319–329.
- 98 Eisenstadt 1, 1, 1966, 2.
- 99 Bar-Yosef, 1959.
- 100 Eisenstadt 1966, 1.
- 101 S. N. Eisenstadt, *Continuity and Change in Israeli Society*, Jerusalem: Van Lir, 1974.
- 102 Eisenstadt, 1966, 1; Bar-Yosef, 1959.
- 103 Y. Cohen, “Socioeconomical Gaps between Mizrahim and Ashkenazi 1975–1995,” *Israeli Sociology*, A1, 1998, 115–33 (Hebrew).
- 104 D. Bernstein, “Sociology Absorbs Immigrants: A Critical Discussion of the Dominant Israel Sociological School of Thought,” *Machbarot Le’Mechkar U’Lebikoret*, 1, 1978 (Hebrew); Swirski, op. cit.
- 105 Swirski, op. cit.
- 106 H. Herzog, *Political Ethnicity: Image and Reality*, Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1986, 18–19 (Hebrew).
- 107 Swirski, op. cit., 17.
- 108 Ibid., 18.
- 109 Ibid.
- 110 Ibid., 19.
- 111 S. Smoocha, “Three Approaches in the Sociology of Community Relations in Israel,” *Megamot* 1984, 29.
- 112 Swirski, op. cit., 19.
- 113 On this matter Lissak wrote, “The geographic separation between new immigrants and old connects—both in the strengthening of the process and of course afterwards—many of the accidents, mishaps and failures which were revealed over the years in the process of the absorption of the large wave of immigration of the fifties.” M. Lissak, “The First Eretz Yisrael and the Second Eretz Yisrael: Accelerated Processes of Socio-Cultural Polarisation in the Fifties,” in D. Ofer (ed.), *Between New Immigrants and Old: Israel and the Great Wave of Immigration, 1948–1953*, Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institute, 1996 (Hebrew).
- 114 Swirski, op. cit., 19.
- 115 E. Shohat, “Sephardim in Israel: Zionism from the Point of View of Its Jewish Victims,” *Social Text*, 19–20, Fall, 1988, 1–35, 140 and 153, respectively.
- 116 E. Shohat, *Israeli Cinema: East/West and the Politics of Representation*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1989.
- 117 A. Alcalay, op. cit., 1993.
- 118 See in the bibliography: S. N. Eisenstadt, *Absorption of Immigrants in Israel*, Jerusalem: Jewish Agency and Hebrew University, 1954 (Hebrew); S. N. Eisenstadt, *Chapters in the Analysis of Modernization Process*, Jerusalem: Academ, 1967 (Hebrew); S. N. Eisenstadt, *Israeli Society: Background, Developments, and Problems*, New York: Basic Books, 1967; S. N. Eisenstadt, *Change and Continuity in Israeli Society*, Jerusalem: Van Leer Institute, 1974 (Hebrew); S. N. Eisenstadt, “Notes to the Ethnic Problem in Israel,” *Megamot*, 28, 2–3, 1984 (Hebrew); O. A. Simon, “On the Double Meaning of the Term Primitivism,” *Megamot*, 6, 2, 1951 (Hebrew); C. Frankenstein, *Youth Neglect: Its Essence, Process, and Reasons*, Jerusalem: Henrietta Szold Institute, 1947 (Hebrew); C. Frankenstein, “Psychological Approach to the Issue of Ethnic Differences,” *Megamot*, 3, 2, 1952 (Hebrew); C. Frankenstein, “Youth Immigration and the Education of Young Immigrants,” *Megamot*, 4, 4, 1953 (Hebrew); C. Frankenstein, *Poverty, Madness, Primitivism: The Problem of Exhibitionism of Lifestyle*, Jerusalem: Henrietta Szold Institute, 1957 (Hebrew); C. Frankenstein, “School without Parents,” *Megamot*, 12, 1, Jerusalem: The Henrietta Szold Institute, the National Institute for Research in the Behavioral Sciences, 1962 (Hebrew); C. Frankenstein, *Unchaining Thinking: Rehabilitating the Intelligence of*

Underprivileged Youth—an Experiment and Its Analysis, Jerusalem: School of Education, Hebrew University, 1972 (Hebrew); C. Frankenstein, *They Started Thinking Again: Restoring Cognitive Abilities through Teaching*, Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1981 (Hebrew); C. Frankenstein, *The Exterior: A Social Problem*, Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1983; M. Smilanski, "A Survey of the Youth Services in the Maabarot (Transition Camps)," *Megamot*, 6, 2, 1955 (Hebrew); M. Smilanski, "Social Examination of the Israeli Education System Structure," *Megamot*, 8, 4, 1957 (Hebrew); M. Smilanski, "A Reform Proposal for the Structure of the High School System," *Megamot*, 11, 4, 1961 (Hebrew); M. Smilanski, "The Educational System's Treatment of Issues of Underprivileged Students," in H. Ormian (ed.), *Education in Israel*, Jerusalem: Ministry of Education and Culture, 1973 (Hebrew); R. Bar-Yosef, "The Moroccans: Background to the Problem," *Molad*, 1959, 17 (Hebrew).

2 The first decade: from shock to protest

- 1 *Report of the Interdepartmental Committee to Investigate the Situation of the Transit Camps*, 1954, State Archives, Section 95, Case number 242105 / 6161 G; quoted in D. Bernstein, "The Black Panthers: Conflict and Protest in Israeli Society," *Megamot*, 1979, 25 (Hebrew).
- 2 S. Swirski, "Lo nehashalim ela menushalim," (*Not Backward but Held Back*). Haifa: Mahbarot lemehtar ulevikoret (see English translation of this book: Swirski, 1989), 1981; S. Swirski, *Israel: The Oriental Majority*, London and New Jersey: Zed Books, 1989.
- 3 M. Lissak, "The First Eretz Yisrael and the Second Eretz Yisrael: Accelerated Processes of Socio-Cultural Polarisation in the Fifties," in D. Ofer (ed.), *Between New Immigrants and Old: Israel and the Great Wave of Immigration, 1948–1953*, Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institute, 1996, 13 (Hebrew).
- 4 For a detailed discussion of the data see S. Swirski and D. Bernstein, "Who Worked on What, for Whom and in Exchange for What, the Economic Development of Israel and the Formation of Community Divisions in Work," *Notebooks of Research and Criticism*, 4, May, 1980, widely published also in S. Swirski, "Lo nehashalim ela menushalim," (*Not Backward but Held Back*). Haifa: Mahbarot lemehtar ulevikoret 1981, Chapter 2, *The Economic Development of Israel and the Formation of Community Divisions in Work*, 12–56 (Hebrew).
- 5 Archives of Histadrut Zionit (Zionist Federation), January 2, 1950.
- 6 *Ibid.*
- 7 Minutes of the meeting of the Co-ordinating Institute, December 10, 1956, S100 511/ Etzem, quoted in Malka 1997, "Selection: Selection and Discrimination in the Immigration and Absorption of Moroccan and North African Jews, 1948–56," master's thesis, University of Haifa, Kiryat Gat, Dani Sferim, 190.
- 8 Swirski, op. cit., 21; see also Bernstein, "Sociology Absorbs the Aliyah: Criticism of Dominating Schools in Israeli Sociology," *Notebooks of Research and Criticism*, 1, October, 1978, 8 (Hebrew).
- 9 *Ibid.*
- 10 D. Giladi, *Agriculture in Israel and the Working Settlements: Collection of Statistical Data*, Tel Aviv: HaHistadrut HaKlalit, HaVad HaPoel, 1970, 51–52 (Hebrew).
- 11 H. Porat, "Geographical and Demographical Aspects of the Settlement of Immigrants in the Negev between 1948 and 1952," in D. Ofer (ed.), *Between New Immigrants and Veterans: Israel in the Great Wave of Immigration, 1948–1953*, Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institute, 1996, 249 (Hebrew).
- 12 See the report of the 1995 Ronen Committee, which was adopted by the Israeli government. In September 2002 the Democratic Mizrahi Rainbow Coalition (HaKeshet Hademocratit HaMizrahit) succeeded in stopping the privatization of the land by appeal to the Supreme Court, more in Chapter 4.

- 13 Israel Central Statistical Bureau, 1963, table 21 45, quoted in Dahan-Kalev, "Structures of Self-Organisation, Waadi Salib and the Black Panthers: Implications for the Israeli Establishment," Ph.D. diss., Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1991, 64.
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 In the fourteenth Knesset the Public Housing Law was passed, which allowed tenants of public housing to purchase their apartments at a great discount, according to the length of time they had lived there and other criteria; this came after an extended struggle led by the Democratic Mizrahi Rainbow Coalition and Knesset members from the social lobby. However, the law provided no justice for those tenants of public housing, some of whom had in fact already paid the price of their apartments and even more over decades of monthly rent payments.
- 16 Swirski, op. cit., 30.
- 17 S. Swirski, *Education in Israel: Region of Separate Trajectories*, Tel Aviv: Brerot, 1991, 49 (Hebrew).
- 18 See the broad discussion of development towns in S. Swirski, and M. Shushan. *Developing Towns: Toward a Different Tomorrow*, Haifa: Yated, 1985 (Hebrew).
- 19 Swirski, op. cit., Chapter 7, for a detailed discussion of Arab education.
- 20 *Ha'aretz*, March 1, 1950.
- 21 A. Lewis, *Power, Poverty, and Education*, Ramat Gan: Turtledove, 1995, 91–92.
- 22 E. Levenburg, *Tales of Kiryat Shmonah*. Tel-Aviv: Schocken, 1965, 12 (Hebrew).
- 23 Swirski, 1991, 52.
- 24 M. Smilansky, "The Social Aspect of the Education System in Israel," *Megamot*, 8, 4, 1957, 133.
- 25 C. Frankenstein, "The Concept of Primitivism," *Megamot*, 2, 4, 1951a, 355.
- 26 Swirski, 1991, 115.
- 27 C. Frankenstein, *Neglected Youth: Nature, Formation, and Signs*, Jerusalem: Salad Institute, 1947, 144 (Hebrew).
- 28 See, for example, the discussion on the matter of liberalism and education in Boweles and Gintis, *Can There Be a Liberal Philosophy of Education in a Democratic Society?*, in H. Giroux and P. McLearn (eds), *Critical Pedagogy, the State, and Cultural Struggle*, New York: SUNY Press, 1989, 24–32.
- 29 A. Yadlin, "The Practical Education Test," in *Open Merger: Days of Study at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem*, Jerusalem: Magnes, 1969, 38 (Hebrew).
- 30 On this subject see the earlier study: R. Rosenthal and L. Jacobson, *Pygmalion in the Classroom*, New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968.
- 31 P. Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, New York: Continuum, 1990.
- 32 Ministry of Education, special circular, 1964; quoted in S. Swirski, *Seeds of Inequality*, Tel Aviv: Brerot, 1995, 133–134.
- 33 See Swirski, 1991, 98.
- 34 A. Abbas 1958, *From Tribe to People*, Tel-Aviv; G. N. Giladi, *Discords in Zion*, London: Scorpion Publishing, 1990, 184–185.
- 35 Swirski op. cit., 138–139.
- 36 See S. S. Chetrit, "Ugly White Story," *Ha'ir*, February 1996; see also S. S. Chetrit, *The Ashkenazi Revolution Is Dead. Thoughts on Israel from a Dark Angel*, Tel Aviv: Bimat Kedem Lesifrut, 1999, 92–95 (Hebrew).
- 37 Jewish Agency, Aliyah Department, *Aliyah Pages*, Jerusalem, 1950, 33–34 (Hebrew).
- 38 Y. Shoval, "Patterns of Ethnic Tension in Israel," in D. Suan, ed., *Testimony and Ethnic Problems in Israel*, Beit Berl: Institute for Enlightenment and Movement Education, 1959, bk. 1 (Hebrew).
- 39 Y. Peres, "Ethnic Identity and Inter-Ethnic Relations", Ph.D. diss., University of Jerusalem, 1968 (Hebrew).
- 40 For a broad discussion of this matter, see S. Luval, "The Dependence between Types of Religious Behaviour with Community Ties and Feelings of Discrimination in the

- Struggle of Two Community Congregations in Israel”, master’s thesis, Bar-Ilan University, 1983 (Hebrew).
- 41 D. Bernstein, “Sociology Absorbs Immigrants: A Critical Discussion of the Dominant Israel Sociological School of Thought,” *Machbarot Le’Mechkar U’Lebikoret*, 1, 1978, 34 (Hebrew).
 - 42 D. Ben-Gurion, *Eternal Israel*, Tel Aviv: Einot, 1964, 34 (Hebrew).
 - 43 *Megamot*, 3B, 4B, 1C.
 - 44 In Ofir 1999, 110.
 - 45 A further 20,000 immigrants were not marked according to their country of origin. Data from *Eleven Years of Absorption: Facts, Problems, and Numbers—15 May 1948–15 May 1959*, Tel Aviv: Jewish Agency Publications, 1959.
 - 46 V. Shiran, “The Staining Labeling. Middle-Eastern Ethnic Groups in Israeli Society,” master’s thesis, Institute for Criminology, Tel Aviv University, 1978 (Hebrew); E. Avraham, *Communication in Israel, Centre and Periphery: A Review of the Development Towns*, Tel Aviv: Brerot, 1993 (Hebrew).
 - 47 On this reason and others for the decline of the old Sephardi community, see H. Herzog, *Political Ethnicity: Image and Reality*, Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1986, Chapter 3, 81–119 (Hebrew).
 - 48 Yoav Peled and Gershon Shafir suggest LSM, Labor Settler Movement, combining both ideological colonial principles of the party, that in the late 1970s changed its name to “The Labor party”: the conquest of labor, and the conquest of the land. See Y. Peled and G. Shafir, *Being Israeli: The Dynamics of Multiple Citizenship*, London: Cambridge University Press, 2002, Chapter 1.
 - 49 E. Eliachar, *Living with Jews*, Jerusalem: Y. Marcus, 1980, 125 (Hebrew).
 - 50 Y. Bartal, “Old Yishuv and New Yishuv: Image and Reality,” *Katedra*, 2, 1977, 3–19 (Hebrew).
 - 51 According to Herzog, there was a strong class dimension among the Sephardi political collective, and the terms “Sephardim” and “Mizrahi community” were already usual, and spoke of the complex picture of the Sephardi reality in the old *yishuv*. Herzog, op. cit., 83–84.
 - 52 Ibid., 102–103.
 - 53 Ibid., 87.
 - 54 Ibid., 88–95, on the attempts of the Sephardim to combat the forces of the Ashkenazi Zionists by founding alternative international bodies such as the “World Sephardi Union” (1925), which met in Vienna, in parallel with the Fourteenth Zionist Congress; also on the success of the Zionist movement in torpedoing these organizations by the divide-and-conquer method and especially the forming of special Sephardi departments in the various Zionist institutions, a method that became a key tool later on, especially in MAPAI.
 - 55 I have already described in Chapter 1 the motivations for the creation of Mizrahi departments, the task given them of controlling the Mizrahi organizations, and the establishment’s ability to mobilize and control the Mizrahi population.
 - 56 MAPAI archive, February 21, 1949.
 - 57 The story was introduced in Esther Shelley-Newman’s essay 1996.
 - 58 B. Berry, *Race and Ethnic Relations*, Boston: Riverside Press Cambridge, 1958, 479–505; see also G. E. Simpson and J. M. Yinger, *Racial and Cultural Minorities: An Analysis of Prejudice and Discrimination*, New York: Harper and Row, 1972, 211–212.
 - 59 Y. Peres, *Ethnic Relations in Israel*, Tel Aviv: Sifriyat Poalim, 1977, 36–41 (Hebrew).
 - 60 For elaboration on the relationship between the state and the Mizrahim, see Shiran, op. cit.
 - 61 S. Michael, *Equal and More Equal*, Tel Aviv: Bustan, 1974; see also S. Michael, *Shacks and Dreams*, Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1979 (all Hebrew).

- 62 S. Ballas, *The Transit Camp*, Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1964; see also S. Ballas, *East Tel Aviv*, Tel Aviv: Bimat Kedem LeSifrut, 1998 and the trilogy *Tel Aviv East*, Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad/Siman Kriah, 2003 (all Hebrew).
- 63 H. Stern, "Unemployment Statistics and Reality," *Kol HaAm*, January 25, 1956 (Hebrew).
- 64 D. Bernstein, "Sociology Absorbs Immigrants: A Critical Discussion of the Dominant Israel Sociological School of Thought," *Machbarot Le'Mechkar U'Lebikoret*, 1, 1978, 11 (Hebrew).
- 65 H. Porat, "Geographical and Demographical Aspects of the Settlement of Immigrants in the Negev between 1948 and 1952," in D. Ofer (ed.), *Between Immigrants and Veterans: Israel in the Great Wave of Immigration, 1948–1953*, Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institute, 1996, 248 (Hebrew).
- 66 *Ha'aretz*, April 26, 1949.
- 67 *Ha'aretz*, May 9, 1949.
- 68 *Proceedings of the Knesset*, July 26, 1949.
- 69 Giladi, op. cit., 253.
- 70 Meeting of the MAPAI council, April 22, 1949, MAPAI archive, section 1, 49/24, vol. 1.
- 71 A. Ofir (ed.), *50 to 1948: Critical Milestones in the History of the State of Israel*, Special Edition of *Teoria Ubikoret (Theory and Criticism)*, 12–13, Jerusalem: Van Leer Institute, and Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1999, 36 (Hebrew).
- 72 The suggestion did not come to pass in the end; see Ofir, op. cit., 50.
- 73 *Ibid.*, 62.
- 74 See detailed examples in Bernstein, op. cit.
- 75 Malka, 1998, 73.
- 76 *Ha'aretz*, March 27, 1953. See also Malka, 1998, 84–86.
- 77 *Haboker*, May 22, 1953.
- 78 Ofir, op. cit., 86.
- 79 R. Gover, *To the Beacons of Lachish*, Tel Aviv: Am HaSefer, 1980 (Hebrew).
- 80 Porat, op. cit.
- 81 H. Stern, *Kol HaAm*, June 21, 1957.
- 82 *Ibid.*, August 1, 1958.
- 83 Minutes of the meeting of the Co-ordination Institute, December 10, 1956, S100 511 / Governmental Military Archive, quoted in Haim Malka, 1997, 190–191.
- 84 Ofir, op. cit., 112.
- 85 On this matter it is said that they talked the talk but did not walk the walk. As we clearly saw, the MAPAM kibbutzim benefited from official discrimination in the distribution of land and resources, and moreover refused to accept Mizrahim as students, claiming they were not ideologically suited to be kibbutz members.
- 86 Ofir, op. cit., 114.
- 87 E. Etzioni-Halevy, "Patterns of Conflict Generation and Conflict Absorption: The Cases of Israeli Labour and Ethnic Conflicts," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 19, 1975, 286–309 (Hebrew); see also H. Herzog op. cit., 142.
- 88 H. Dahan-Kalev, "Independent Organization Systems: Wadi A-Salib and the Black Panthers—Ramifications of the System in Israel," Ph.D. diss., University in Jerusalem, 1991 (Hebrew); H. Dahan-Kalev, "The Wadi A-Salib Events," in A. Ophir (ed.), *50 to 1948: Critical Milestones in the History of the State of Israel*, Special Edition of *Teoria Ubikoret (Theory and Criticism)*, 12–13, Jerusalem: Van Leer Institute, and Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1999, 149–57 (Hebrew); H. Herzog, op. cit., uses the terms "Wadi A-Salib Protest" and "Wadi A-Salib Affair" interchangeably. Devorah Bernstein suggests the term "clashes," see D. Bernstein, "The Black Panthers: Conflict and Protest in Israeli Society," *Megamot*, 25, 1979.

- 89 *HaOlam HaZeh*, July 15, 1959. *HaOlam HaZeh* in the days of Shalom Cohen was ahead of its time, and as early as September 1953 it published a series of articles by Shalom Cohen with a very direct title: "Screwing the Black people."
- 90 Giladi, op. cit., 166.
- 91 Swirski, op. cit., 120.
- 92 All the background data is from *Etzioni Report: Report of the Committee to Investigate the Incidents at Wadi A-Salib of 9/7/1959*, December 17, 1959. *Proceedings of the Knesset*, 24, secs. 28–38. See also H. Dahan-Kalev, op. cit., Chapter 4.
- 93 For example, Ofakim—around 8,000 inhabitants; Beit She'an—around 8,000 inhabitants; Jerucham—around 4,000 inhabitants; Shlomi—around 1,500 inhabitants. See Giladi, op. cit., 131.
- 94 Exodus 6:9.
- 95 Arye Gelblum, *Ha'arets*, April 22–28, 1949.
- 96 Herzog, op. cit., 146–147; D. Bernstein, "The Black Panthers: Conflict and Protest in Israeli Society," *Megamot*, 25, 1979, 68 (Hebrew); Dahan-Kalev, op. cit., 109.
- 97 Herzog, op. cit., 144.
- 98 Dahan-Kalev, op. cit., 109–110.
- 99 Ibid.
- 100 Bernstein, op. cit., 68.
- 101 For a detailed chronicle of events with exact cross-references, see Dahan-Kalev, op. cit., Chapter 4, 108–132, with a short list in appendix A. More can be found in Herzog, op. cit., 143–144; Giladi, op. cit., 166, 221, 252–254. See also the list of letters to newspapers on 126.
- 102 Henriette Dahan-Kalev remarks that the demonstrators were selective from the political perspective—they spared the clubs of "Herut" and "Ahdut HaAvodah," for example. Dahan-Kalev, op. cit., 110.
- 103 According to newspaper reports from the whole period: *Ha'arets*, July 10, 20, 22, 27, 30, and 31, 1959, August 1, 2, 4, 8, 11, 14, 16, 17, 20, 23, and 26, 1959, and September 2, 6, 16, and 23, 1959; *Yediot Acharonot*, July 21, 24, and 27, 1959, August 2, 3, 4, 7, 9, 10, and 16, 1959, and September 2, 1959. Specific references will be given in the body of the text.
- 104 Around forty years later, Charlie Bitton, one of the Black Panther leaders, initiated a commemoration in honor of the late David Ben-Harouche. Together with Nissim Dahan of SHAS, he approached the mayor of Haifa and asked if a street could be named after Ben-Harouche in the Wadi A-Salib area itself. Nissim Dahan (then deputy finance minister) wrote in a letter to the mayor of Haifa: "In my humble opinion, the commemoration of the name of a leader who came from the neighbourhood would be an element of pride and education for the generations to come, and a retroactive recognition of the justice of the struggle of those who came before," (January 17, 2000, from the correspondence on this matter given to me by Charlie Bitton). The mayor agreed, and today what had been called 2639 Street is now named after David Ben-Harouche. Symbolically, from this cooperation between the ex-leader of the Panthers and one of the SHAS leaders, in order to commemorate the first leader of the Mizrahi struggle, we see the existence of a collective Mizrahi memory with a retroactive political consciousness, which I shall expand upon in detail in the pages to follow.
- 105 One should be reminded here that Ben-Gurion also adopted this "republican" approach with regard to the Arabs, to the former members of the Stern Gang and the Irgun Zvai Leumi, to the communists, and toward any phenomenon which endangered, in his opinion, MAPAI's central hegemony. See discussion in D. Horowitz and M. Lissak, *From Yishuv to State: The Jews of the Land of Israel in the British Mandate Period as a Political Community*, Tel Aviv: Am Oved, Sifriya Universitatit, 1977, 276–286 (Hebrew).

- 106 *Proceedings of the Knesset*, Sitting 13, July 1959, 4, 2497, quoted in Dahan-Kalev, op. cit., 118.
- 107 *Yediot Acharonot*, August 17, 1959.
- 108 Etzioni-Halevy, op. cit., 1975.
- 109 *Proceedings of the Knesset*, Sitting 13, July 1959, 4, 2497.
- 110 *Yediot Acharonot*, 16 August, 1959.
- 111 Ibid.
- 112 Quoted in T. Segev, *1949: The First Israelis*, Jerusalem: Domainu, 1984, 119 (Hebrew).
- 113 Dahan-Kalev, op. cit., 126.
- 114 Quoted in Dahan-Kalev, op. cit., 115.
- 115 *Proceedings of the Knesset*, Sitting 13 July 1959, 4, 2501.
- 116 Ibid., 2502.
- 117 See the film by Lina Chaplin in the series *Tekuma*, Israeli television, 1998.
- 118 *Ha'aretz*, September 6, 1959.
- 119 *Etzioni Report*.
- 120 E. Eliachar, *Living with Jews*, Jerusalem: Y. Marcus, 1980 (Hebrew).
- 121 Ibid., 240.
- 122 In addition to which, one should remember that in 1960, the newspapers, like the whole political establishment, were entirely absorbed in the Lavon affair or the "bad business."
- 123 Herzog, op. cit.
- 124 In the oral history of the Mizrahim, it is told that Ben-Harouche had in fact passed the threshold but on instructions from a very high level the results were fiddled in order to prevent the humiliation of MAPAI and Ben-Gurion. Naturally, this story has no evidential basis and it is not clear how it arose other than from the suspicions aroused by activists of the "Union of Jews from North Africa."
- 125 See Herzog, op. cit., Chapters 2 and 3.
- 126 See introduction.
- 127 Ibid.
- 128 I have reservations about the usage made by my predecessors of the terms "ethnic movement" or "community party" in connection to political organizations. Mizrahi political organization did not take place in order to support "ethnicity" in and of itself, but rather the opposite, in order to achieve a parity that would lead to full integration into "Israeliness," and participation in the formation of society and the state.
- 129 The problem with the criterion "extraparlimentary" arises when an undeniably extra-parliamentary movement decides to send a branch to the parliament, whether as representatives of an existing party (for example, Gush Emunim or Shalom Achshav), or via the formation of a parliamentary list, without abolishing the movement itself. The Black Panthers in the U.S. formed a party called "The Black Panther Party" and the Greens in Europe and the U.S. have formed parties and sent numerous representatives to various parliaments. As we shall see in what follows, there was, similarly, among the Mizrahim, no movement which did not participate in elections in some way. This question requires further elaboration and theoretical analysis by itself.
- 130 The term "collective" here means that the conflict divided clearly between Mizrahim and Ashkenazim, despite the existence of other fringe participants in the two camps.
- 131 This remained the case in the decades to follow, where the Ashkenazi leadership of the party would determine the composition of the candidature for the lion's share of roles, and continued until the gradual introduction of the system of primaries in the 1980s (first voted on only by the Central Committee or equivalent and later by the whole party membership) initially in the Likud Party, and later in the Labor Party and the others.

- 132 As far as I am aware, there has never been a social movement in Israel that was not either Mizrahi or Arab which dealt with questions of the economy or society as priorities over security or foreign relations, like, say, Gush Emunim, Shalom Achshav, and even Matzpen and Siach.
- 133 E. Eliachar, *We Need to Prevent Jewish Racism in the State of the Jews*, Jerusalem: Va'ad Ha'Eda Ha'Sepharadit, 1967 (Hebrew).
- 134 Interview with Charlie Bitton, April 2001.
- 135 T. Segev, *1949: The First Israelis*, Jerusalem: Domino, 1984, 184 (Hebrew).
- 136 Ofir, op. cit., 190.
- 137 Herzog, op. cit., 144.
- 138 For a broad and deep study of the issue of Arab–Jewish political activity in the Middle Eastern context, especially in the communist parties, see Behar, *Nationalism at its Edges: Arabised Jews and the Unintended Consequences of Arab and Jewish Nationalisms (1917–1967)*, Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 2001.
- 139 Ofir, op. cit., 126.

3 “Either the pie is for everyone, or there won’t be no pie!” HaPanterim HaSh’horim (The Black Panthers Movement): the generating collective confrontation

- 1 S. Tarrow, *Democracy and Disorder: Protest and Democracy in Italy, 1965–1975*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989; S. Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- 2 S. Swirski, “Lo nehshalim ela menushalim,” (*Not Backward but Held Back*). Haifa: Mahbarot lemehkar ulevikoret (see English translation of this book: Swirski, 1989), 1981, 19.
- 3 See S. Swirski, *Education in Israel: Region of Separate Trajectories*, Tel Aviv: Brerot, 1991, Chapter 2 (Hebrew).
- 4 Lu-Yon, H., and R. Kalush. “Housing in Israel,” *Israel Equality Monitor*, 4, Tel Aviv: Adva Center, 1994 (Hebrew). All volumes of the *Israel Equality Monitor* appear in Hebrew, English, and Arabic; see www.adva.org, 7–10.
- 5 On the matter of the influence of the consequences of war on the Israeli economy see E. Levitan, *Implications of the Six Day War on the Israeli Economy*, Monthly Enquiry: Tzahal Officers Monthly, 3–4, 1987, 50–57; Y. Gelnor, “Social and Political Changes Post-War,” *Ha’aretz*, 47, June 5, 1987, 4b; H. Barkay, *Economic Quarterly*, 39, 138, 1988, 269–282.
- 6 See Swirski, op. cit.; Y. Peled, “Towards a Redefinition of Jewish Nationalism in Israel? The Enigma of SHAS,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 21, 4, 1988, 24–25.
- 7 See E. Sprinzak, *First Signs of Nonlegitimate Politics in Israel, 1967–1972*, Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1973, 4 (Hebrew).
- 8 It should be pointed out here that the process of affiliation of the Mizrahim with the Herut Party and later with the Likud had already begun in the 1950s, when the two sides sought to form a common front against the overwhelming domination of MAPAI. However, as we shall see further on, 1977 was the symbolic turning point in this affiliation. At the same time it is important to remember that from the point of view of the Mizrahi struggle, power remained with the Ashkenazi Zionist hegemony.
- 9 See Sprinzak 1973; E. Cohen, “The Black Panthers and Israeli Society,” *Jewish Journal of Sociology*, 14, 1972, 93–109; Y. Peres, *Community Relations in Israel*, Tel Aviv: Sifriyat Poalim, 1977; D. Bernstein, “The Black Panthers: Conflict and Protest in Israeli Society,” *Megamot*, 25, 1979 (Hebrew); H. Herzog, *Political Ethnicity: Image and Reality*, Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1986 (Hebrew); H. Dahan-Kalev, “Independent Organization Systems: Wadi A-Salib and the Black Panthers—

- Ramifications of the System in Israel,” Ph.D. diss., Hebrew University in Jerusalem, 1991 (Hebrew).
- 10 Interview with Haim Hanegbi, June 2002.
 - 11 Dahan-Kalev, op. cit., 135; see also *Report of the Committee to Investigate the Development of Incomes and the Social Divide*, 1977.
 - 12 Dahan-Kalev, op. cit.
 - 13 See the reports of the International Committee of The United Jewish Appeal, 1961, 1964.
 - 14 Swirski, op. cit., Dahan-Kalev, op. cit.
 - 15 See S. Swirski, *Education in Israel: Region of Separate Trajectories*, Tel Aviv: Brerot, 1991 (Hebrew); S. Swirski, “To Progress Personally and to Assimilate: On the Policy of Level-Grouping in Israeli Schools,” in S. Swirski, *Seeds of Inequality*, Tel Aviv: Brerot, 1995 (Hebrew).
 - 16 S. Swirski, “To Progress Personally and to Assimilate: On the Policy of Level-Grouping in Israeli Schools,” in S. Swirski, *Seeds of Inequality*, Tel Aviv: Brerot, 1995, 119 (Hebrew).
 - 17 See S. Boweles and H. Gintis, *Schooling in Capitalist America*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1976.
 - 18 On this matter see D. Levy, “The Dynamics of Agenda Building: A Study of the Reform of the Education System”, master’s thesis, Political Studies Department, University of Haifa, 1987 (Hebrew); also in Swirski, op. cit.
 - 19 See in general Swirski, op. cit., 118–165.
 - 20 A. Ofir (ed.) *50 to 1948: Critical Milestones in the History of the State of Israel*, Special Edition of *Teoria Ubikoret (Theory and Criticism)*, 12–13, Jerusalem: Van Leer Institute, and Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1999, 178 (Hebrew).
 - 21 All the data above is taken from the *Israeli Statistical Annual*, 1963; Central Statistical Bureau, *Report of the Committee for Examination of Incomes and the Social Gap*, Jerusalem, 1971; Dahan-Kalev, op. cit.
 - 22 Swirski, op. cit., 49.
 - 23 Today the divide is even greater—see Y. Cohen, “Socioeconomic Divides between Mizrahim and Ashkenazim, 1975–1995,” *Israeli Sociology*, 1a, 1998, 115–133.
 - 24 Swirski, 1998.
 - 25 Ofir, 1998, 118.
 - 26 Data taken from Y. Peres, *The Relationship of Ethnic Groups in Israel*, Tel Aviv: Sifriyat HaPoalim, 1976, 126–7 (Hebrew).
 - 27 *Davar*, December 9, 1963.
 - 28 See Zamir, “Beer-Sheva 1958/59—Social Processes in a Development Town,” in S. N. Eisenstadt et al. (eds), *The Social Structure in Israel*, Jerusalem: Akadmon, 1966, 335–65.
 - 29 See S. Hasson, *Protest of the Second Generation*, Jerusalem: Studies of the Jerusalem Institute for the Study of Israel, 1987, 93.
 - 30 On the need for brotherhood in struggle there is a small parable in the Midrash Tanhuma: “Two dogs were bitter rivals. A wolf came and threatened one of them. The other said, ‘If I do not help him now, the wolf will kill him and tomorrow will come for me.’” (Midrash Tanhuma, Balak Siman 3, 4’5 (3)). In the Mizrahi tradition, they continued “to eat one another,” even when the wolf appeared, for the wolf did not merely constitute a source of authority and fear, but also a source of existence and survival.
 - 31 Herzog, op. cit., 151.
 - 32 *BaMa’arakha*, May 1969.
 - 33 *Al Hamishmar*, January 13, 1971.
 - 34 Y. Shapira, *An Elite without Successors*, Tel Aviv: Sifriyat Poalim, 1984 (Hebrew).
 - 35 Interview with Charlie Bitton, April 2002.
 - 36 Interview with Sa’adia Marciano, April 2001.

- 37 *HaSa'ad*, November 1962.
- 38 A. Ofir (ed.) *50 to 1948: Critical Milestones in the History of the State of Israel*, Special Edition of *Teoria Ubikoret (Theory and Criticism)*, 12–13, Jerusalem: Van Leer Institute, and Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1999, 172 (Hebrew).
- 39 *Musaf Ha'aretz*, June 4, 1971.
- 40 Katznelson, K., *The Ashkenazi Revolution*, Tel Aviv: Anach, 1964 (Hebrew). Katznelson did not modify his views until the day he died in 1999. In 1992 he published another book, *The Ashkenazi Account*, in which he repeats his views and “proves” that he was right all along the way.
- 41 *Ibid.*, 198–199.
- 42 See an extensive discussion on the role of the Israeli cinema in defining the stereotypical image of the inferior Mizrahi in Israeli culture in A. Shohat, *Israeli Cinema: History and Ideology*, Tel Aviv: Brirot, 1991.
- 43 *Ha'aretz*, December 26, 1965. I cannot help but wonder: is watching *Salah Shabati* a lesson in citizenship? My curiosity was aroused when reading this article—what kind of movies did the Ashkenazi youth watch?
- 44 *Ma'ariv*, September 10, 1966.
- 45 Ofir, op. cit., 190.
- 46 Y. Talmon, “The Victory of the Six Day War from a Historical Perspective,” *BeIfutzot HaGolah*, year 11, booklet 3/4. Quoted in Y. Nini, “Thoughts on the Third Devastation,” *Shdemot—Platform for the Kibbutz Movement*, 41, Spring, 1971, 5731.
- 47 Later, Yehuda Nini became a historian. Today he is a history professor at Tel Aviv University. He wrote a book about the affair of the Yemenites of Kinneret, *Did It Happen or Did I Dream a Dream?*, Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1996 (Hebrew).
- 48 Nini, op. cit. A short while after publication, this article came to the attention of the Black Panthers, and they began to quote from it in their publications and announcements.
- 49 Interview in the supplement *Hotem of Al HaMishmar*, May 26, 1972.
- 50 From a report of the *Authority for the Evacuation and Building of the Regions of Rehabilitation*, which took place only a year after the outbreak of protests. However, it is reliable because hardly anything changed during that year. The purpose of the survey was to encourage the government to adopt the plans to evacuate the residents of Mousrara to new apartments in a different neighborhood and to redevelop Mousrara as a luxury residential and business area that would join East and West Jerusalem. Details of the report were published in *Yediot Aharonot*, September 1, 1972, 11.
- 51 One must remember that this “criminality” to which the newspapers and academia made such effort to refer was no more than petty juvenile crime such as breaking and entering and shoplifting for such things as food and cigarettes. The police were quick to treat these as criminal cases and the judges swift to condemn such offenders to terms in institutions for juvenile delinquents or jail, where, of course, they would learn real criminality. By comparison, in the kibbutzim for example, at that time and in general, minor shop lifting and car theft within the kibbutz was never reported to the police and was widely considered mere “mischief.”
- 52 Interview with Haim Hanegbi, June 2002.
- 53 *Ibid.*
- 54 S. Vigodar 1999, *The Matzpen Movement*, in Ofir, op. cit., 203.
- 55 E. Sprinzak, *First Signs of Nonlegitimate Politics in Israel, 1967–1972*, Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1973, 14 (Hebrew).
- 56 S. Tarrow, op. cit., 13–31.
- 57 C. Tilly, *The Contentious French*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986, 4.
- 58 I will not cite each event. Sources for the events in this part of Chapter 3, from January 1971 until October 1981, are as follows: *Al Hamishmar*, *Ha'aretz*, *Davar*, *Yedioth Aharonot*, *Ma'ariv*, *Amar*, *Bit'on HaPanterim*, *Bit'on HaOhalim*, and *Proceedings of*

- the Knesset*. See also the *Report of the Prime Minister's Committee for Distressed Children and Youths* (Katz Committee), October 1972. E. Sprinzak, op. cit.; E. Cohen, op. cit., 93–109; D. Bernstein, op. cit.; Herzog, op. cit.; Dahan-Kalev, op. cit. Interviews: Charlie Bitton, 1994 and 2001; Kokhavi Shemesh, 2001; Reuven Averjal, 2001; Sa'adia Marciano, 2001; Haim Hanegbi, 2002; Avner Amiel, 1984; Shlomo Vazana, 1984 and Eli Hamo, 1996.
- 59 *Al HaMishmar*, January 13, 1971.
 - 60 Interviews with Sa'adia Marciano and Charlie Bitton, April 2001.
 - 61 Interview with Kokhavi Shemesh, April 2001.
 - 62 Cohen, op. cit.; Sprinzak, op. cit.; Bernstein, op. cit.; Herzog, op. cit.; Dahan-Kalev, op. cit.
 - 63 Ofir, op. cit., 244.
 - 64 Interview with Sa'adia Marciano, April 2001.
 - 65 Interview with Charlie Bitton, April 2001.
 - 66 Interview with Haim Hanegbi, June 2002.
 - 67 Interview with Reuben Abarjel, April 2001.
 - 68 *Yediot Aharonot*, July 16, 1971.
 - 69 From "The Black Panther," *The Black Panthers Journal*, 3, November 9, 1972.
 - 70 Interview with Sa'adia Marciano, April 2001.
 - 71 *Le Monde*, France, October 15, 1971.
 - 72 It is worthwhile mentioning that there was a tuition fee to be paid for high school education during the 1970s. This payment was another obstacle created by the MAPAI governments on the Mizrahi road to education. The Likud Party abolished this fee when it came to power.
 - 73 This flier was titled *Hardship of Poverty and Housing in the State*, was signed "The Black Panthers Organization, Tel. 83804, Jerusalem 20392," and was distributed between May 18 and 20, 1971.
 - 74 Flier titled *The Black Panthers Organization*, and signed "National Committee, Black Panthers Headquarters, Musrara, Ayin Chet Street 53/20, Tel. 83804," It was distributed the morning immediately following the demonstration—May 19, 1971.
 - 75 Interview with Kokhavi Shemesh, April 2001.
 - 76 Ibid.
 - 77 Interview with Charlie Bitton, April 2001.
 - 78 *Dvar HaPanterim HaSh'horim (Voice of the Black Panthers)* (periodical), issue 1, June 1971.
 - 79 Flier titled *To the Residents of Jerusalem*, and signed "With the blessing of brothers, The Black Panthers,"
 - 80 Interview with Charlie Bitton, April 2001.
 - 81 Flier distributed in Jerusalem on July 15, 1971, titled *The Black Panthers Organization*, and signed "United in struggle, together you and I shall prevail! 'The Black Panthers.'"
 - 82 Interview with Haim Hanegbi, June 2002.
 - 83 Flier from the demonstration, August 23, 1971, quoted in Bernstein 1986, 73–74.
 - 84 The flier was distributed before the demonstration. It was titled *Towards the Zionist Congress*, and signed "The Black Panthers, National Headquarters."
 - 85 Interview with Haim Hanegbi, June 2002.
 - 86 Interview with Kokhavi Shemesh, April 2001.
 - 87 Sprinzak, 1973, 20.
 - 88 *Ma'ariv*, 17 April, 1972.
 - 89 Interviews with Sa'adia Marciano and Kokhavi Shemesh, April 2001.
 - 90 Ibid.
 - 91 Ibid.
 - 92 See Sprinzak, op. cit., no. 47. On the rise of Kahane in general see E. Sprinzak, *The Ascendance of Israel's Radical Right*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1991.

- 93 That of Adi Malka was a very different story. He was from outside this group from a biographical perspective—he was older and had already gone into business when they were still poor youths. He took part in the struggle in his own way, especially when he demonstrated or went on strike over matters affecting his family. With the exception of a few instances of cooperation, he largely worked against the Black Panthers and founded his own national organization, the White and Blue Panthers.
- 94 See Bernstein, op. cit., 70–71.
- 95 Ibid.
- 96 *Haggadah Shel Pesach*, published by the Black Panthers, Pesach 1971.
- 97 According to interviews given by Kiss, Segev, and Amiel to the students Moshe Oppenheimer and Arie Korat, *The Black Panthers*, Seminar paper in the Political Science Department, Hebrew University, summer 1972, supervised by Dr Ehud Sprinzak.
- 98 Tarrow, op. cit., 23–25.
- 99 Herzog, 1986.
- 100 Interview with Charlie Bitton, April 2001.
- 101 Oppenheimer and Korat 1972 (the interview took place on December 8, 1971).
- 102 Interview with Charlie Bitton, April 2001.
- 103 Oppenheimer and Korat 1972 (the interview took place on December 8, 1971).
- 104 Interview with Ayala Sabag-Marciano, March 2001.
- 105 Bernstein, op. cit., 74–75.
- 106 Ibid.
- 107 Ibid.
- 108 Interview with Kokhavi Shemesh, April 2001.
- 109 Swirski, 1989 and 1991; Bernstein, 1978, and 1979, and others.
- 110 Interview with Kokhavi Shemesh, April 2001.
- 111 Interview with Haim Hanegbi, June 2002.
- 112 A. Cohen, op. cit., 102.
- 113 Interview with Kokhavi Shemesh, April 2001.
- 114 Scholars are unanimous on this point: Cohen, op. cit.; Sprinzak, op. cit.; Bernstein, op. cit.; Herzog, op. cit.; Dahan-Kalev, op. cit.
- 115 Tarrow, op. cit.
- 116 Interview with Charlie Bitton, April 2001.
- 117 Sprinzak, op. cit., 16.
- 118 Y. Peres, *Politics and Communitarianism in Three Deprived Neighbourhoods*, Tel Aviv: Centre for Practical Studies, Citizens Information Ltd., 1972.
- 119 Bernstein, op. cit., 76–77.
- 120 *Report of the Prime Minister's Committee for Distressed Children and Youths* (Katz Committee), October 1972.
- 121 Ibid., appendices 4–7, 2.
- 122 Ibid., 19–20.
- 123 Ibid., 38.
- 124 Herzog, op. cit., 157.
- 125 A. Avneri, *David Levy*, Tel Aviv: Revivim, 1983, 146.
- 126 *Ma'ariv*, September 7, 1973.
- 127 Herzog, op. cit., 159.
- 128 Interview with Charlie Bitton, April 2001.
- 129 Sprinzak, op. cit., 15.
- 130 E. W. Said, *Orientalism*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1978. See, for example, E. Shohat, *Israeli Cinema: East/West and the Politics of Representation*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1989; S. S. Chetrit 1998–1999 (3 vols) Tel Aviv: Bimat Kedem LeSifrut.

- 131 See Shohat, op. cit.
- 132 Erez Bitton, from *Minha Marokait (a Moroccan offering)*, Tel Aviv: Eked, 1976, translation from Amiel Alcalay (ed.), *Keys to the Garden*, 267–268 (translated from the Hebrew by A. Alcalay).
- 133 From S. Michael, *Shavim ve-Shavim Yoter (Equal and More Equal)*, Tel Aviv: Bustan, 1974, 10 (Hebrew).
- 134 See S. S. Chetrit 1997, “Ashkenazi-Zionist Eraser,” *Mozraim*, April 1997 (Hebrew) (see Bibliography for English version).
- 135 Nevertheless there were instances of persecution of such scholars by the academic establishment, such as the obvious case of Shlomo Swirski, whose progress and tenure track at the University of Haifa ceased after the publication of his book *Not Backward but Held Back* in 1981; no university in Israel has admitted him since.
- 136 E. Sarousi, *Hannale Hitbalbela (Hannele the Confused)*, in Ofir, 1999, 269–277.
- 137 Ibid.
- 138 On Zohar Argov see S. S. Chetrit, “Badad, Ad Matai Elohai?” *Bamahane*, April, 1997 (Hebrew).
- 139 Sarousi, op. cit., 271.
- 140 See the interview with Zohar Argov, quoted in the film *Sea of Tears*, Channel 2, Shosh Gabai and Ron Kachlili, 1998.
- 141 S. Hasson, “The Protest of the Second Generation,” *Me’hkarei Machon Yerushalaim Le’Heker Israel*, 26, 1987, 30–31 (Hebrew).
- 142 For detailed discussion on the Tents (HaOalim) movement, see S. Hasson, op. cit.
- 143 Interviews with Eli Hamo and Moshe Salah.
- 144 Hasson, op. cit., 108. Another economic supporter was Plato Sharon, who hoped thereby to win the votes of Mizrahim in the elections to the Knesset.

4 The old crown and the new discourse: the era of radical awareness—1981 to the present day

- 1 On the matter of the Herut movement and its direction see Y. Shapira, *To Govern in Our Anger: The Path of the Herut Movement—a Socio-Political Explanation*, Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1989.
- 2 Y. Peled, “Towards a New Definition of Jewish Nationalism in Israel? The Puzzle of SHAS,” in Y. Peled (ed.), *SHAS: The Challenge of Israeliness*, Tel Aviv: Yediot Aharonot, 2001, 12.
- 3 Y. Peres and S. Shemer, “The Community Factor in the Elections to the Tenth Knesset,” *Megamot*, 28, 1984.
- 4 Quoted in A. Avnery, *David Levy*, Tel Aviv: Revivim, 1983, 266.
- 5 Peres and Shemer, op. cit.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 See S. S. Chetrit, “The White Reaction,” *HaIr*, May 19, 1999. See also the rise of Shinui against SHAS: A. Herzog, “The Fantasy of Aptitude,” *Ma’ariv*, March 4, 2003.
- 8 See, for example, Amos Oz’s essay “Make Peace Not Love,” *Yediot Aharonot*, December 30, 1988.
- 9 On the origins of the relationship between the Herut movement and the Mizrahim in the days of the *yishuv* and the 1950s, see S. Resnick, *Changes of Attitude in the Herut Movement towards the Absorption of the Great Aliyah*, in Ofir, A. (ed.) *50 to 1948: Critical Milestones in the History of the State of Israel*, Special Edition of *Teoria Ubikoret (Theory and Criticism)*, 12–13. Jerusalem: Van Leer Institute, and Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1999, 117–141 (Hebrew).
- 10 From “When a Mizrahi Meets a Palestinian: Mizrahi Palestinian Symposium,” *Hadashot* supplement, July 1993, quoted in S. S. Chetrit, *The Ashkenazi Revolution Is Dead*, Tel Aviv: Bimat Kedem LeSifrut, 1999, 173 (Hebrew).

- 11 A. Avnery, *David Levi*, Tel Aviv: Revivim, 1983, 88 (Hebrew).
- 12 Aryeh Dayan, academic paper, 2000, unpublished (Hebrew).
- 13 *Proceedings of the Knesset*, August 3, 1970, 34.
- 14 *Proceedings of the Knesset*, March 30, 1970, 1420.
- 15 *Proceedings of the Knesset*, January 20, 1970, 550.
- 16 *Proceedings of the Knesset*, December 21, 1970.
- 17 It was not this way that David Levi wished to enter public consciousness. For those who are denied entry by the great front door, entry via the back door generally demands a price of a violent image. See the general discussion on this subject in A. Avraham, *The Media in Israel: Centre and Periphery*, Tel Aviv: Brerot, 1993, 61–82 (Hebrew) (see Bibliography for English).
- 18 Avnery, op. cit., 186.
- 19 Ibid., 40.
- 20 See Eli Tavor, “The Ethnic Groups and the Elections,” *Yediot Aharonot*, June 8, 1981.
- 21 Ibid.
- 22 See, for example, *Yediot Aharonot*, June 1, 8, and 15, 1981; *Kol Yerushalayim*, June 12, 1981; *Yediot Aharonot*, August 5, 1981; *Ha’arets*, June 12 and 26, 1981.
- 23 *Kol Yerushalayim*, June 12, 1981.
- 24 Ibid.
- 25 See, for example, *Ha’arets*, December 1, 1982, January 28, 1983, July 5, 1984, *HaIr*, July 30, 1982.
- 26 *Kol Yerushalayim*, June 12, 1981.
- 27 Election advertisement, *Yediot Aharonot*, June 12, 1981.
- 28 Israeli television, May 29, 1981.
- 29 Ibid.
- 30 *Results of the Elections for the Tenth Knesset*, Central Elections Committee, 1981, Jerusalem.
- 31 His cousin, Rabbi Baruch Abu-Hatzeira, vice mayor of Ashkelon, suffered a similar fate when he was investigated and prosecuted. Later he inherited the post of the spiritual leader of the family from his father and become Baba Baruch.
- 32 These words were caught on television cameras and were broadcast at various opportunities. They can also be heard in Lena Chaplin’s film “Second Israel” made for the Israeli television series *Tekuma* in 1998. The words were quoted in A. Ofir (ed.) *50 to 1948: Critical Milestones in the History of the State of Israel*, Special Edition of *Teoria Ubikoret (Theory and Criticism)*, 12–13, Jerusalem: Van Leer Institute, and Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1999, 352 (Hebrew).
- 33 H. Herzog, *Political Ethnicity: Image and Reality*, Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1986 (Hebrew).
- 34 “Nissim Gaon Responds to His Critics,” advertisement, *Ha’arets* and *Yediot Aharonot*, 26 June, 1981.
- 35 To understand the kind of view that the Ashkenazi public took of Nissim Gaon and his involvement in Israeli politics in general, and Mizrahi politics specifically, see the articles by Eli Tavor, *Yediot Aharonot*, June 5 and 7, 1981.
- 36 Herzog, op. cit., 168.
- 37 A. Dayan, *The Overcoming Spring: The Story of the SHAS Movement*, Tel Aviv: Keter, 1999, 128.
- 38 The data and the findings in the survey to follow, unless noted otherwise, are according to Y. Nahon, ‘Community Divides: Snapshots of the Situation over Time’, in *New Directions in the Study of the Ethnic Problem*, Studies of the Jerusalem Institute for the Study of Israel, 8, Jerusalem, 1984, 23–43. The study was based on data from the 1960s and the 1970s (Hebrew).
- 39 Y. Peres, *The Relationship of Ethnic Groups in Israel*, Tel Aviv: Sifriyat HaPoalim, 1976, 159 (Hebrew).

- 40 Ibid.
- 41 See the broad discussion of the matter of Kahane and the Mizrahim in Y. Peled, "Meir Kahana," in A. Ophir, (ed.), *50 to 1948: Critical Milestones in the History of the State of Israel*, Special Edition of *Teoria Ubikoret (Theory and Criticism)*, 12–13, Jerusalem: Van Leer Institute, and Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1999, 321–328 (Hebrew).
- 42 *Israeli Statistical Yearbook 1980*, Central Bureau of Statistics, Jerusalem; data cover population, education, occupation, and housing density.
- 43 G. N. Giladi, *Discords in Zion*, London: Scorpion Publishing, 1990, 192.
- 44 See Y. Yogeve and H. Roditi, *The Advisor as Guardian of the Threshold: The Direction of 'Teunay Tipuach' or 'Mevusas' Students By Educational Advisors*, Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, 1981 See also T. J. Shavit-Streifler, "Tracking in Israeli Education: Its Consequences for Ethnic Inequalities in Educational Attainment," Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin–Madison, 1983.
- 45 See S. Swirski, "Education in Israel," *Israel Equality Monitor*, 1. Tel Aviv: Adva Center, 1991.
- 46 *Iyunim BaHinuch*, 18, 1978.
- 47 Y. Nahon, "Ethnic Gaps: Situation Report throughout Time," *Mehkarei Machon Yerushalaim Le'Heker Israel*, 8, 1984, graphs 4–7, pp. 31–34 (Hebrew).
- 48 Ibid., 35; see also graph 8 on 36.
- 49 See N. Y. Lewin-Epstin Elmelech and M. Semyoniv, "Ethnic Inequality in Home Ownership and the Value of Housing: The Case of Immigrants in Israel," *Social Forces*, 75 (4), 1977, 1439–1462.
- 50 Nahon, op. cit., 43.
- 51 M. Abitbul, *The Influence of the Political Establishment on the Study of the Mizrahi Legacy*, Studies of the Jerusalem Institute for the Study of Israel, 8, 1984, 67.
- 52 I have already mentioned "Fortress Jerusalem," which became an institution at the Hebrew University.
- 53 M. Abitbul, op. cit., 43.
- 54 "Demagogic multiculturalism" is a concept of Bhikhu Parekh, who defines multiculturalism thus: "Multi-culturalism is not just a collection of different cultures, but a community that creates, guarantees and supports spaces in which different communities may flourish with their own rhythm and characteristics. Concomitant to this is the creation of a collective public space in which all the communities can come to interact, to enrich the whole and together to create a consensual culture, in which each community recognises its own participation," quoted in H. Giroux, *Pedagogy and the Politics of Hope: Theory, Culture, and Schooling*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997, 247–248.
- 55 J. Baldwin, *A Talk to Teachers*. Delivered October 16, 1963, as "The Negro Child – His Self-Image"; originally published in *The Saturday Review*, December 21, 1963, reprinted in *The Price of the Ticket, Collected Non-Fiction 1948–1985*, Saint Martins, 1985.
- 56 On the flagrant omission of the Mizrahi from the curriculum, see Chetrit, S. S. "Ashkenazi-Zionist Eraser" April, 1997 (Hebrew) (see Bibliography for English version).
- 57 Amnon Dankner, "I Have No Sister," *Ha'aretz*, February 18., 1983.
- 58 *HaOlam HaZeh*, March 2, 1983.
- 59 Quoted in N. Menahem, *Tensions and Ethnic Discrimination in Israel: Socio-Historical Perspectives*, Tel Aviv: Rubin, 1983, 55–57 (Hebrew).
- 60 Ibid., 52.
- 61 It is worth pointing out here that at the end of the 1990s, Dankner began to present a new approach to Mizrahi questions in which he renounced his views of the early 1980s, especially in his column in the newspaper *Ma'ariv*. Among other things he came out against the prosecution and imprisonment of Ariele Deri and even made a speech to the protesters camped outside the prison in Ramallah (see the film *The Meeting of Deri's Roar*, Scala Studios, Tel Aviv).

- 62 On this matter see E. Avraham, *Behind Media Marginality: Coverage of Social Groups and Places in the Israeli Press*, Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2003. On the matter of the depiction of Mizrahim in the media see also his book *Israel Hidden from the Eyes of the Media*, Jerusalem: Akadmon, 2001, for example, 133–134.
- 63 See the broad discussion in N. Horowitz, “SHAS and Zionism: Historic Analysis,” *Kivunim Hadashim*, 2 (April): 2000, 30–60 (Hebrew).
- 64 L. Cohen, *Let Those With Blood Not Water in Their Veins Rise Up!!*, Kedma (Mizrahi Website), essay, www.kedma.co.il/opinion/opinionfile/LuizCohen150902.htm, September 15, 2002.
- 65 See E. Cohen, “Moroccans and Anti-Establishment Protest: On the Collision of Personal Moroccaness with Ashkenazi Formality,” *Resling*, 8, Autumn, 2001.
- 66 So also with regard to the small number of Syrian and Egyptian Jews, as a result of their retention of the official Arabic language (*fusha*). From this perspective, the Moroccans spoke a language alien to the region.
- 67 See Y. Tsur, *Torn Community*, Chapter 1 and passim, 2001.
- 68 See in general H. Malka, “The Selection: (Racial) Selection and Discrimination against Moroccan and North-African Jews, during the Immigration and Absorption Processes in the Years 1948–1956,” master’s thesis, Haifa University, Kyriat Gat: Danny Sfarim, 1997 (Hebrew).
- 69 Y. Berginsky, *Exile in Distress: A Visit to North Africa, 1955*, Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1978, 165 (Hebrew).
- 70 N. M. Chetrit, *The Terror of the Dream*, 175 (Hebrew). See stories of the selection on 168–177.
- 71 On this matter see the essay by Uri Ram: U. Ram, “Mizrahim or Mizrahiyut? Equality and Identity in Israeli Critical Social Thought,” *Israel Studies Forum* 17, 2, 2002, 114–130.
- 72 See S. Swirski, *Campus, Society, State*, Jerusalem: Mifrash, 1982. See also A. Weiss, *Notebooks of Study and Criticism*, in Ofir, op. cit., 301–311 (Hebrew).
- 73 See Gal Levy and Ze’ev Amrich, “From Natural Workers to *Sephardi-Haredim*: Ethnic Politics from Ornament to Identity,” in Y. Peled, 2001 (Hebrew).
- 74 S. Swirski, “Lo nehashalim ela menushalim,” (*Not Backward but Held Back*). Haifa: Mahbarot lemechkar ulevikoret (see English translation of this book: Swirski 1989).
- 75 S. Smooha, “Three Sociological Approaches to the Ethnic Relationships in Israel,” *Megamot*, 28, 1984 (Hebrew).
- 76 See *Iton Aher* under the editorship of David Hemo from 1985 to 1996; A. Shohat, *Mizrahim in Israel: Zionism from the Point of View of Its Jewish Victims*, in Shohat, 2001, 140–205.
- 77 E. Shohat, *Israeli Cinema: East/West and the Politics of Representation*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1989; A. Raz-Karkotzkin, “Exile in Statehood: Towards a Critique of the ‘Negation of the Exile’ in Israeli Culture,” pt. 1, *Theory and Criticism*, Autumn, 1993, 23–55; pt. 2, *Theory and Criticism*, Autumn, 1994, 113–132; A. Bishara, *The Israeli Arab: Studies in a Split Political Conversation*, in P. Gnusser and A. Barali (eds), *Zionism: Controversy of Our Times*, Midrashat Sde Boker, Ben-Gurion Heritage Center, 1996, 312–339; S. S. Chetrit, “The Dream and the Nightmare: Some Remarks on the New Discourse in Mizrahi Politics in Israel 1980–1996,” *News from Within*, January 1997, Jerusalem; I. Halevy, *A History of the Jews*, London and New Jersey: Zed Books; G.N. Giladi, *Discords in Zion*, London: Scorpion Publishing, 1990; E. W. Said, *Orientalism*, New York: Vintage Books, 1987.
- 78 Talmud Yerushalmi, Zera’im, Orla 21, 3, 7.
- 79 E. Ya’ar and T. Herman, Tami Steinmetz Center, Sikrey Meded Hashalom, 1998. Quoted in R. Baum-Banai, “SHAS—a Haredi-Zionist Movement?” in Peled, op. cit.
- 80 Y. Peled, op. cit.

- 81 Herzog, op. cit.; G. Levi and Z. Emrich, in Y. Peled, op. cit.
- 82 Rabbi Peretz's speech in the Knesset, *Proceedings of the Knesset*, Eleventh Knesset, sixth meeting, September 13, 1984.
- 83 *Al Hamishmar*, 8 August, 1989.
- 84 *Ma'ariv*, December 6, 1992.
- 85 Speech given at Giv'at Ram Stadium in Jerusalem, Passover rally with Rabbi Ovadiya Yosef and SHAS leaders, April 23, 1997.
- 86 Eli Yishai, *Yediot Aharonot*, April 16, 1998.
- 87 E. Shohat, *Israeli Cinema: East/West and the Politics of Representation*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1989, 1991, 2001; A. Alcalay, *After Jews and Arabs: Remaking Levantine Culture*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993; S. Swirski, "'To Progress Personally and to Assimilate': On the Policy of Level-Grouping in Israeli Schools," in S. Swirski, *Seeds of Inequality*, Tel Aviv: Brerot, 1995 (Hebrew).
- 88 From *Kol Sinai*, 1, 6. See quote and extensive discussion of this matter in N. Horowitz, "SHAS and Zionism: Historical Analysis," *Kivunim Hadashim*, 2, 2000, 48–52 (Hebrew).
- 89 Purim 1989, quoted in Y. Nir, *Arie Deri: The Ascendancy, the Crisis, the Pain*, Tel Aviv: Yediot Aharonot, 1999, 383 (Hebrew).
- 90 Herzog, op. cit., 129.
- 91 *Ha'aretz*, November 11, 1983.
- 92 Herzog, op. cit., 130.
- 93 A. Dayan, *The Overcoming Spring: The Story of the SHAS Movement*, Tel Aviv: Keter, 1999, 154 (Hebrew).
- 94 *Ibid.*, 127.
- 95 On this matter see S. Fisher and D. Beckerman, "SHAS: Religion and Social Standpoint," in Y. Peled, 2001 (Hebrew).
- 96 For a biography of Aryeh Deri, see Nir, op. cit.
- 97 For an extensive survey of the move, see Dayan, op. cit., 209–245.
- 98 The taped interview was broadcast on Kol Israeli Radio, Friday, June 12, 1992.
- 99 Mina Tzemah's survey, *Ma'ariv*, July 12, 2002.
- 100 Criminal case 305/93 *State of Israel vs. Aryeh Derei and others*, *Ha'aretz*, April 16, 1999. For a critical analysis of the verdict, see L. Bilsky, "I Accuse: The Der'i Trial and the Collective Memory," in Y. Peled (ed.), *SHAS: The Challenge of Israeliness*, Tel Aviv: Yediot Aharonot, 2001, 279–320 (Hebrew).
- 101 *Ha'aretz*, March 18, 1999; *Ma'ariv*, March 18, 1999; *Yediot Aharonot*, March 18, 1999.
- 102 Criminal case 305/93 *State of Israel vs. Aryeh Derei and others*.
- 103 *Ha'aretz*, April 16, 1999.
- 104 Cf. Liora Bilsky's fascinating analysis of the tape's content: Bilsky, op. cit.
- 105 Of course, I do not mean a social movement here, but only a symbolic atmosphere of confrontation. Further discussion of this follows.
- 106 *Ha'aretz*, July 20, 2000.
- 107 All the following quotes, unless noted otherwise, are from Livne, Neri, "Shasophobia," *Ha'aretz*, August 24, 2000.
- 108 *Yediot Aharonot*, August 17, 2000.
- 109 Both are leaders in the NRP—National Religious Party (MAFDAL in Hebrew), the fundamental messianic Jewish movement. Interview for *Globes*, Rosh Hashanah issue 1999.
- 110 All quotes above are from SHAS' propaganda pamphlet "And Life you shall Choose," January 2003.
- 111 Cf. the discussion in D. Horowitz, and M. Lissak, *Origins of the Israeli Polity: Palestine under the Mandate*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978.

- 112 Horowitz, 2000, 35–45.
- 113 Cf., for instance, Horowitz 2000, 56–57 *inter alia*.
- 114 For a discussion of Rabbi Yosef's halachic outlook, see T. Zohar 2001, *Recrowning Antiquity: Rabbi Ovadia Yosef's Vision*, in Peled 2001, 159–209; and also A. Baruch, *Seder Yom*, Jerusalem: Keter, 2000, 185–202 (Hebrew).
- 115 Zohar, *op. cit.*, 171.
- 116 Cf. S. Fisher and D. Beckerman, *op. cit.*
- 117 Zohar, *op. cit.*, 208.
- 118 The results of the elections for the fifteenth Knesset (1999) are most instructive on this matter: in rural villages and development towns SHAS won 22 percent of the votes; in Jerusalem, 17.3 percent; in Tel Aviv, 10.8 percent; in the settlements, 11.6 percent; in established cities, 11.4 percent; in the Moshavim, 8.4 percent. In addition to the Jewish vote, SHAS also won Arab support: 4.5 percent of the votes in Arab villages, 10.9 percent in Druze villages, and 3.4 percent in Bedouin communities.
- 119 Prominent Ashkenazi *Haredi* leaders include, for example, Rabbi Uri Zohar and Rabbi Krispin of Migdal Ha'emek.
- 120 E. Yaar, and T. Hermann, *Madad Hashalom Suveys*, Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, Merkaz Tami Shtinmets LeHeker HaShalom, 1998.
- 121 S. Fisher, "SHAS Movement," in A. Ophir (ed.), *50 to 1948: Critical Milestones in the History of the State of Israel*, Special Edition of *Teoria Ubikoret (Theory and Criticism)*, 12–13, Jerusalem: Van Leer Institute, and Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 329–37, 1999 (Hebrew).
- 122 *Ha'aretz*, supplement, April 7, 1989.
- 123 David Ben Chetrit, *East Wind: a Moroccan Chronology*, four-part series, aired on Israel's Channel 2 in September 2002.
- 124 Survey by Mina Tzemach, *Yediot Aharonot*, Saturday supplement, May 28, 1999.
- 125 No relationship here to Mizrahi Jews. They used the term Mizrahi (meaning Eastern) to point to Zion, the direction that Jews pray. This way they avoided the use of the term Zion that had many secular associations at that time.
- 126 Shlomo Avineri lists three fundamentals of the thinking of Rav Kook (the elder), "in regards to the contest between the traditionalist religious thought and the national Zionist movement: A. giving an essential religious meaning to the centrality of the physical land of Israel; B. development of a dialectic conception of the relationship between the religion of Israel and the secular Zionist process; C. granting a universal-cosmic meaning to the Jewish revival project within the framework of a religious world-view," see S. Avineri, *The Spectrum of the Zionist Idea*, Sifriyat Ofakim: Am Oved, 1980, 218 (Hebrew).
- 127 *Or Hahaim* 3, Jerusalem, 1987, 77–78; quoted in Horowitz 2000, 51.
- 128 Cf. E. Sprinzak, *Each Man as He Sees Fit: Illegalism in Israeli Society*, Tel Aviv: Sifriyat Po'alim, 1986, the chapter on Gush Emunim. Also E. Sprinzak, *The Ascendancy of Israel's Radical Right*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1991.
- 129 Quoted in A. Baruch 2000, 193 (with no reference).
- 130 Cf. Baum Banai, R. "SHAS: An Orthodox Zionist Movement?" In Y. Peled (ed.), *SHAS: The Challenge of Israeliness*. Tel Aviv: Yediot Aharonot, 2001 (Hebrew).
- 131 Cf. the discussion of sectarian parties in the age of the *yishuv*, Horowitz and Lissak, *op. cit.*
- 132 *Ha'aretz*, 11 November, 1983.
- 133 As opposed to the independent education of "Agudat Israel," which is not supervised by the Ministry of Education to this day.
- 134 Of course, this entire comparison is not intended to offend Jews or Muslims. This is merely a comparison of structures, principles, and processes.
- 135 This comparison does not include the terrorist arm of Hamas, which operated in the second Intifada against the Israeli occupation and is best known for the "suicide bomber" method.

- 136 E. Abrahamian, *Iran between Two Revolutions*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982; E. Abrahamian, *Radical Islam: The Iranian Mujhadin*, London: I. B. Tauris & Co. Ltd. Publishers, 1989.
- 137 Cf. R. Cottam, "Inside Revolutionary Iran," in R. K. Ramazani (ed.), *Iran's Revolution: The Search for Consensus*, Chapter 5, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990.
- 138 Ibid.
- 139 Examples can be found in the sermons of Rabbi Amnon Yitzhak on audio and video tapes, freely distributed in the poor neighbourhoods and development towns, and, more specifically, in the tape "Returning the Crown to its former glory," tens of thousands of which were distributed during the 1999 elections.
- 140 From the State Registrar for Political Parties, official publication. See: <http://www.justice.gov.il/MOJHeb/RashamMiflagot/Matarot.htm>.
- 141 In this analogy I will refer to the first decade of the Iranian Revolution (beginning in 1979), during which the revolution was practically implemented in all areas of life until it stabilized and was established. This is the decisive decade for this discussion.
- 142 Iris Mizrahi, *Ma'ariv*, March 16, 2001.
- 143 Democratic elections take place in every local, national and party institution. Candidacy is open to all, as long as they do not oppose Islam or the Islamic character of Iran, including women, but the candidates must be authorized by a Special Committee of the Revolution. See R. Cottam, "Inside Revolutionary Iran," in R. K. Ramazani, 1990.
- 144 Ibid., 9.
- 145 Cf., for instance, the cases of Rabbis Peretz and Azran, who dared to oppose the opinion of Rabbi Yosef and chairman Deri. They were both removed from the party and boycotted. One can say to a certain extent that Deri too was removed from the party, and with him all his supporters in the party leadership, following his conviction and imprisonment, because of the level of independence that he displayed and the threat he posed with regard to SHAS supporters and activists.
- 146 The first campaign was for the Jerusalem City Council in 1983.
- 147 Nir, op. cit., On this matter see a review of the book, S. S. Chetrit, "Not Shooting and Crying," *Ha'aretz*, May 12, 1999.
- 148 Nir, op. cit., 9.
- 149 Ibid., 21.
- 150 Ibid., 25.
- 151 Cf. Bilsky, op. cit., 3, in Peled 2001.
- 152 Zohar, op. cit., 190.
- 153 R. Cottam, "Inside Revolutionary Iran," in R. K. Ramazani (ed.), *Iran's Revolution: The Search for Consensus*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990, 14.
- 154 S. Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- 155 Ibid.
- 156 Cf. Herzog, op. cit.
- 157 Shlomo Tzezna, *Ma'ariv*, April 9, 1999.
- 158 On Aryeh Deri's break with Rabbi Shakh, and with him that of the rest of SHAS as a whole, following the break with "Agudat Israel" in the negotiation for Rabin's coalition after the elections, see Deri's account given to Yoel Nir in Nir, op. cit., 249–267.
- 159 Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Tel Aviv: Mifrash Publishers, 1981, 45 (Hebrew translation).
- 160 *Ma'ariv*, May 20, 1997.
- 161 During Sukkot of 1998 such a meeting took place, with the mediation of Eli Yishai, between Mizrahi intellectuals and Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, in his office. Most of the conversation resembled a dialogue of the deaf. Rabbi Yosef listened for a few minutes,

- then sent his guests off respectfully with a blessing: "Our door is always open to you, may God give you complete *teshuva* soon, in our days, Amen, if it be His will."
- 162 Y. Peled (ed.), *SHAS: The Challenge of Israeliness*, Tel Aviv: Yediot Aharonot, 2001 (Hebrew); Y. Peled, "Toward a Redefinition of Jewish Nationalism in Israel? The SHAS Riddle," in Y. Peled (ed.), op. cit. Based on income and voting data, it appears that the lower the income, the greater the likelihood of voting for SHAS.
 - 163 Arye Deri himself moved as a youth to the settlement Ma'ale Amos as a cheap housing solution. Cf. Nir, op. cit.
 - 164 On this matter, cf. S. S. Chetrit, "SHAS: Catch 17—between ultra-Orthodoxy and Mizrahiut," in Yoav Peled (ed.), *SHAS—The Challenge of Israeliness*, Tel Aviv: TAPAUCH, Yediot Aharonot, 2001, Chapter 1, 21–51 (Hebrew); on Mizrahi–Palestinian cooperation in Israel, see Ofir 2001, 288–297.
 - 165 Herzog, op. cit., 165.
 - 166 Y. Peled (ed.), *SHAS: The Challenge of Israeliness*, Tel Aviv: TAPAUCH Yediot Aharonot (Hebrew), 2001.
 - 167 Y. Cohen, "Socioeconomical Gaps between Mizrahim and Ashkenazi 1975–1995," *Israeli Sociology*, A1, 115–33, 1998 (Hebrew); Iris Jerby and Gal Levy, *The Socioeconomic Split in Israel*, Jerusalem: Israeli Democratic Institute, submitted paper 21, August 2000; Nili Mark and Hani Gotlibovsky, *Inter-Communal Divide in Israel at the Beginning of the Fifties*, Tel Aviv: E. S. Sapir Center for Development, Tel Aviv University, 2000.
 - 168 Y. Cohen, op. cit.
 - 169 N. Mark, and H. Gotlibovsky, *The Ethnic Gap in Israel in the Early 1990s*, Tel Aviv: Sapir Development Center, Tel Aviv University, 2000 (Hebrew).
 - 170 Y. Cohen, op. cit.
 - 171 See S. Smooha, "Divides in Class, Community, and Nationality in Israeli Democracy," in U. Ram (ed.), *Israeli Society: Critical Perspectives*, Tel Aviv: Brerot, 1998; Y. Cohen, "Socioeconomic Gaps between Mizrahim and Ashkenazim, 1975–1995," *Israeli Sociology*, 1a, 1998, 115–133.
 - 172 Elemelech, Lewin-Epstein, and Semyonov 1997, 1448, table 2, quoted in I. Jerby, and G. Levy, *The Socioeconomic Split in Israel*, Jerusalem: Israeli Democratic Institute, submitted paper 21, August 2000, 36–37.
 - 173 Jerby and Levy, op. cit.
 - 174 Y. Cohen, op. cit., 129.
 - 175 The most important platform for publication of the new social analysis and the new Mizrahi discourse was the radical Mizrahi periodical *Iton Aher*, which was published 1986–1996.
 - 176 The most important contributions to the destruction of this one-dimensional view of Israeli society, so manipulative with regard to the Mizrahim, were the studies of Amiel Alcalay 1993 et al., and Ela Shochat 1989 et al.
 - 177 Among the most important defining spokespeople of the Mizrahi discourse throughout the years were: David Ben Haroush and Eliyahu Eliachar, who preceded everyone else, Shalom Cohen, Saadia Marciano, Kokhavi Shemesh, Charlie Bitton, Reuven Averjal; Moni Yikkim, member of the Black Panthers in the Tel Aviv branch and founder of "Platform for A New Direction"; Haim Hanegbi, leader of "Matzpen" and Black Panther member, journalist and peace activist; Vicky Shiran, one of the more enlightened members of Tami and later a founder of "The Democratic Mizrahi Rainbow" and the Mizrahi feminist organisation "Achoti"; Nahum Menale, author of the radical book *Ethnic Tensions and Discrimination in Israel*; Asher Eidan, one of the younger enlightened participants in Tami; Shlomo Swirski, critical sociologist and social activist, especially in the field of education, founding member of HILA, Parents Organization for Higher Education, and Kedma schools; Tikva Levy, founding member of "Mizrahi Viewpoint," HILA, the Higher Education Parents' Organization,

and the Mizrahi feminist organisation; David Hemo, intellectual, founder and editor of *Iton Aher*; Shlomo Bar, musician and cultural revolutionary; Ela Shohat, postmodernist theoretician and researcher into cultural relations between Mizrahim and Ashkenazim; Yossi Dahan, one of the incomparable scholars of Israeli society, chairman of the Adva Center for the Study of Equality in Israeli Society, and founding member of HaKeshet Hademocratit HaMizrahit; Yossi Yonah, radical scholar of the education system and founding member of HaKeshet Hademocratit HaMizrahit; Shiko Bahar, founding member of the student group Social Justice in the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and researcher into Mizrahi identity and politics in the Arab lands before and after Zionism; Dr Shlomo Elbaz from the movement The Mizrah for Peace; Eli Hamo, longtime activist in every organization from HaPanterim HaSh'horim and HaOhalim, film director focusing on the Mizrahi struggle; Shlomo Vazanah, multidisciplinary artist and radical activist, founding member of HaOhalim, Sons of the Neighborhoods, and HaKeshet Hademocratit HaMizrahit; Henriette Dahan-Kalev, researcher and spokesperson for Mizrahi feminism, founding member of HaKeshet Hademocratit HaMizrahit and the Mizrahi feminist movement "Achoti"; Amnon Raz-Karkotzkin, critical historian of Zionism; Ammiel Alcalay, poet and radical cultural scholar of East-West relations; Yitzhak Gormezano Goren, writer, playwright, film director, and editor of the alternative publisher Bimat Kedem LeSifrut and the Mizrahi periodical *HaKivun Mizrah*; David Ben-Chetrit and Sini Bar-David, radical critical documentary filmmakers, whose most important series, *East Wind: A Moroccan Chronicle*, broadcast on Channel 2 in September 2002, aroused unprecedented public discussion; Simone Bitton, documentary television maker; Meir Gal, social artist; Iris Mizrahi, journalist; and also the author, HILA activist, *Iton Aher* contributor, founding member of the alternative education organization Kedma and of HaKeshet Hademocratit HaMizrahit. Also others who joined the process at the end of the 1990s.

- 178 See, for example, the February 1993 issue of *Iton Aher*, which described the Labor-MERETZ government as the 'Old-New Right'. See Chetrit 1999, collection of essays on the Left and others.
- 179 See especially E. Shohat, *Israeli Cinema: East/West and the Politics of Representation*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1989; Giladi, op. cit.
- 180 See for example, Shohat, op. cit.; Raz-Karkotzkin, op. cit.; S. S. Chetrit, "The Ashkenazi-Zionist Eraser: Curricula on the Mizrahi History, Culture, and Identity," *News from Within*, December (Jerusalem), 1997, 27–35.
- 181 One of the deepest disputes between Rav Yosef and the Ashkenazi leaders is with regard to the latter's dismissal of the later sages and their reliance on the former sages.
- 182 See for example "When a Mizrahi Meets a Palestinian," *Hadashot*, July 1993, appearing also in Chetrit, 1999, 171.
- 183 *Iton Aher*, March 23–24, 1992, 13.
- 184 Editorial, *Iton Aher*, February 25–26, 1993.
- 185 Statement of principles of the organization of April 7, 1997.
- 186 See outline of the program of "open school zones" in Tel Aviv and its critique in *Hadashot Hila*, December 1992, and *Iton Aher*, February 1993.
- 187 Statement of principles of the organization of July 4, 1997.
- 188 See 'Information on Equality' in the bibliography, and also the web site www.adva.org.
- 189 Ibid.
- 190 At a later stage, Shlomo Elbaz founded a different organization called "The Mizrah for Peace," a name intended to dispel the myth of the Mizrahi as antipeace.
- 191 *Al HaMishmar*, 20 February, 1986.
- 192 Giladi, op. cit.
- 193 Giladi, op. cit., 319.
- 194 H. Sha'aban Sayaj, *Racist Discrimination Against the Mizrahi Jews in Israel* (Beirut: PLO, Institute for Studies [Hebrew translation, Nabi Bashir], 1971, reprint.

- 195 Passed by the Knesset on August 6, 1986.
- 196 One should point out here that the Ashkenazi Left activists, who funded it, took over the selection process of the delegation and removed numerous Mizrahi from the list of candidates, particularly Moni Yakim, who was considered by them to be especially extreme. This act led to the repudiation of the delegation by a majority of Mizrahi activists.
- 197 *Ha'aretz*, June 12, 1987.
- 198 *Zu HaDerech* (periodical of the Communist Party), June 10, 1987.
- 199 *Ibid.*
- 200 *Zu HaDerech*, July 12, 1989.
- 201 This law, initiated by the "Mizrahi Democratic Rainbow Coalition," was presented to the Knesset by members Ran Cohen, Tamar Gozhanski and others, and was passed in the Knesset in October 1998, despite the relentless resistance of Prime Minister Netanyahu and of Aryeh Deri. The law allowed residents of units owned by government companies (Amidar, Halamish etc.) to purchase, at a very large discount, the apartments which they had lived in for decades, with all the payments they made to the government before the date of purchase being taken into account. To be discussed further.
- 202 Tarrow, *op. cit.*
- 203 Since the early 1980s this consciousness-raising process has been conducted in an organized and aware fashion, involving several organizations, such as the publishers Mifras and Brerot, who introduced universal radical theories to Hebrew readers, the "Ot" foundation of Jerusalem for the distribution of social consciousness in Israel, and even a college that bore the name "Tidua," inspired by the radical philosophy of Paolo Freire, who spoke much about awareness and empowerment. More than all, however, and in an organized and broad manner, the HILA organization began dealing with this, as I will discuss further.
- 204 Having participated in many conferences of the "Mizrahi Democratic Rainbow Coalition," I can attest to a regular ceremony repeated in every meeting in which newcomers felt the need and were given the stage to stand up and express themselves, announcing their reconnection with their Mizrahi identity. More than once this event was accompanied by great excitement and tears. The essence of these meetings was the acquisition of reinforcements and arguments that will be useful to the new Mizrahi upon returning to his/her environment. In this sense, the "Mizrahi Democratic Rainbow Coalition" serves also as a large support group for many "New Mizrahi," as I will describe further, this collective process preceded the group's founding, as with other groups.
- 205 See for example the exchange of essays between Mizrahi columnists and the reaction to their essays from 1995 to date, especially in *Hadashot*, *HaIr*, and *Ha'aretz*.
- 206 Moni Yakim, "Determinism, Ashkenazim, and Academic Freedom," *Pulmus*, newspaper of the Students of Social Studies at Tel Aviv University, May 1985.
- 207 Yosef Shilo'ah, "Before We Hear a Cry for Three States for Three Peoples!" *Iton Aher*, April 1989.
- 208 See, for example, A. Ram (ed.), *Israeli Society: Critical Perspectives*, Tel Aviv: Brerot, 1993.
- 209 *Apiryon*, 1, Spring 1983, 34.
- 210 *Ibid.*, 38.
- 211 See S. Swirski, 1991. Swirski was a founder member of HILA and its ideological director.
- 212 See S. Swirski and N. Pressman Amor, *A Guide for Parents in Matters of Education*, Tel Aviv: Hila, 1991.
- 213 See, for example, the flow of reports from parents from across the country to the organization in its periodical *Hadashot Hila*, from the years 1992–1996.

- 214 Cf. Paolo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Tel Aviv: Mifras, 1972.
- 215 See the public discussion across dozens of newspaper articles and essays in electronic media from the years 1994–1999, especially in the local newspapers in Tel Aviv, Jerusalem and in the south, but also in the national press. For example: Ronit Antler, “No Ashkenazim in Our School,” *Yediot Aharonot*, 20 July, 1994; Yosef Algazi, “A Chance to Succeed,” *Ha’aretz*, 24 February, 1995; Ilana Dayan, “Take Kedma,” *Uvdah*, Channel 2 (Uri Rozenkratz, director), May 1995; Danny Rabinowitz, “Reform of Reform,” *Ha’aretz*, 2 March, 1997; Shlomo Swirski, “Who Caused Kedma to Fail?” *Ha’aretz*, 2 March, 1997.
- 216 The headteacher of a well-known Tel Aviv high school called the appearance of Kedma a danger to state security, explaining that talk of legitimacy for alternative and multicultural identities would make the basis that unifies Jews in Israel collapse, weakening them against the Arabs. Internal debate on a teach-in for headteachers, Tel Aviv City Hall, April 1995.
- 217 For the sake of candor it is proper to note that I was then the principal of the Kedma school in Tel Aviv.
- 218 On “Kedma” in Tel Aviv and in general, and on the ceremony, see T. Barkai and G. Levi 1999, “Kedma School,” in A. Ofir (ed.), *50 to 1948: Critical Milestones in the History of the State of Israel*, Special Edition of *Teoria Ubikoret (Theory and Criticism)*, 12–13, Jerusalem: Van Leer Institute, and Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1999, 433–439 (Hebrew).
- 219 Cf., for example, the essay “Make Peace, Not Love” by Amos Oz, *Yediot Aharonot*, December 30, 1988.
- 220 Cf. *Azut Metsah*, *Mizrahi Feminism*, the publication of the organization in three issues: 1997, 1999, and 2002. Despite the group’s social involvement, it chose throughout its years not to become a political ticket on campus and not to run in the elections for student union.
- 221 Ilana Bakal, “My Sister Organizes,” *Azut Metsah*, winter, 2002, 35.
- 222 Pamphlet of the movement, May 1997.
- 223 Pamphlet, *This Home Is My Home*, summer 1997.
- 224 See Haim Baram’s essay about the founding of the movement, filled with promise and high expectations, titled “The Near East,” *Kol Ha’ir*, June 6, 1997, and compare it with Gadi Bloom’s essay “Broken Rainbow” a year later, *Iton Tel Aviv*, August 28, 1998. In his essay, Bloom notes the disappearance of the “Rainbow Coalition” from public opinion.
- 225 On the matter of land, see the extensive essay by Oren Yiftahel and Sandy Kedar, “On Power and Land: the Israeli Lands Regime,” *Theory and Criticism*, 16, spring, 2000 (Hebrew). Dr Sandy Kedar is a central member of the Mizrahi Democratic Rainbow and one of the leaders of the land’s struggle.
- 226 Cf., for example, Chetrit, “The Justices Join the Bunker of the Elites,” in Chetrit, 1999, 137–140 (Hebrew).

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