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Collective Memory and the Making of Israeli History

"Case Study: The Holocaust"

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Collective Memory and the Making of Israeli History

"Case Study: The Holocaust"

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Declaration:

I certify that this thesis submitted for the degree of Master is the result of my own research, except where otherwise acknowledged, and that this thesis (or any part of the same) has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other university or institution.

Signed ..... Sufian Jaouni Ishtayeh

Date: ..29 Nov. 2001

Collective Memory and the Making of Israeli History

"Case Study: Holocaust"

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Abstract:

This study explores the construction of collective memory as reflected in the Holocaust commemoration in Israel, an important boundary in the historical sequence of the Israeli people being a group moving throughout time. It examines the relation between history and memory at that particular event; the role of commemorative narratives and rituals in contemporary social life, and their impact on the political sphere. It further elaborates on the process through which members of the Israeli society remember and interpret the different events that are being stressed and highlighted through out that period as part of the historical trail of the Israeli people. How is the meaning of the past reconstructed and modified over time?

This study is based on the assumption that collective memory, in Israel as well as in other states in the world, relies solely on the transmission of knowledge from one generation to another[1]. Of course it is this kind of historical narration that influences most members of the community simply because it is what people carry around in their heads. People always look upon the past in a certain way and this determines their ideas about politics and society.

This study also exhibits the wide range of Holocaust commemorations practiced by the Israeli community, both formally and informally, that contributed a great deal to the establishment of a firm base upon which history is remembered and registered in the minds of every generation. An example of these commemorations are holiday

[1] Zerubavel, Yael. Recovered Roots: Collective Memory and the Making of Israeli National Tradition. Chicago and London. The University of Chicago Press, 1995. p. 22

celebrations, festivals, monuments, memorials, songs, stories, plays and educational texts.

In short this study focuses on the role played by collective memory as part of the Israeli nation building process with a special emphasis given to the different stages this collective memory has undergone and the effect of each on the community at the time of its perfusion.

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ملخص

تبحث هذه الدراسة في شكل البناء الاجتماعي للذاكرة الجماعية المستخدمة في موضوع المحرقة "الهولوكوست" وذلك على اعتبار أن المحرقة منعطف تاريخي للشعب الإسرائيلي الذي يعتبر بدوره مجموعة تتحرك وتتقدم في خط زمني معين. كما تبحث هذه الدراسة في شكل العلاقة ما بين التاريخ والذاكرة ضمن الفترة الزمنية المعينة إضافة إلى الدور الهام الذي تلعبه النشاطات الاستذكارية في الحياة الاجتماعية المعاصرة وأثرها على المحيط السياسي. كما تتطرق الدراسة إلى عملية الاستذكار التي تقوم بها الأفراد والجماعات الإسرائيلية من أجل التأكيد على أحداث معينة غيرت مسار الشعب "اليهودي". كيف تمت عملية إعادة إحياء الماضي ضمن سياق الحاضر؟

تعتمد هذه الدراسة على افتراضية ان الذاكرة الجماعية في إسرائيل، كمل في معظم دول العالم، تعتمد بشكل أساسي على عملية نقل المعلومات من جيل الى آخر. ويمكننا القول بأن هذا الشكل من القص التاريخي له تأثير كبير على الناس والمجتمعات لأنه باختصار يترسخ في العقول ويحدد الأفكار والمواقف التي يحملها الناس تجاه السياسة والمواضيع الاجتماعية. وتستعرض هذه الدراسة الأساليب الإستذكارية المتعددة التي استخدمها ويستخدمها الإسرائيليين رسمياً واجتماعياً في سبيل ترسيخ ذكرى المحرقة وتحديد الأطر الثابتة للتاريخ الإسرائيلي

فيما يتعلق بهذا الحدث. ومن ضمن الفعاليات التذكيرية المستخدمة في هذا السياق الأعياد والاحتفالات والأغاني الشعبية واقامة المناصب التذكيرية.

كما تبحث الرسالة ايضاً في حقيقة ان هذه الفعاليات الاستذكارية بدأت بشكل مركز وكبير بعد اقامة الدولة الاسرائيلية وخاصة بعد محاكمة ايخمان في القدس. فقبل اقامة الدولة كانت ذكرى الهولوكوست شبه معدومة بدليل ان اللذين درسوا في المدارس الاسرائيلية في تلك الفترة، سنوات الخمسينات، لم يتلقوا أي معلومات عن الهولوكوست او ذكراها من خلال المنهاج المدرسي.

كما يمكن اعتبار الاحتلال الاسرائيلي للاراضي الفلسطينية في عام 1967 كنقطة تحول في الرؤيا الاسرائيلية للهولوكوست حيث اصبح من المصلحة الاسرائيلية الظهور بموقف الضحية بدل الطاغية المحتل.

أخيراً تبحث هذه الدراسة في الدور الذي لعبته وتلعبه الذاكرة الجماعية في عملية بناء الدولة الاسرائيلية. كما تشير الى المراحل المختلفة للذاكرة الجماعية وأثر كل منها على المجتمع.

Introduction

Israel is a society of settlers (according to Israeli terminology they are referred to as "immigrants").[1] No common history on a joint land is recorded. Yet the Israeli identity has been constructed, its culture revived, and most importantly its past have been "recreated". This process, as will be seen in this study, depended heavily on history and tradition. However, this dependence is proved to be selective, since certain historic incidents emerged as "heroic", others were suppressed to the extent of a complete wipe out. This suppression and elaboration somehow reconstructed a new national memory and tradition for the Israelis, according to which every new Israeli generation is educated and brought up.[2]

"David" for example, is the engine for Israel's imagination and for Israel's public history.[3] This "David" is no doubt a literary imaginative construction made by many hands. No one can get behind that construction. However, that construction is partly deliberate as a means of political propaganda. Such portraits that are generated by a certain memory simply dominate the imagination of Israel.

Collective memory, in the Israeli case as in other cases, simply relies on the transmission of knowledge from one generation to another. The kind of history that has the most influence upon the life of the community and the course of events is the

[1] Zerubavel. Yael. Recovered Roots: Collective Memory and the Making of Israeli National Tradition. Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press, 1995. p. 22

[2] Ibid p. 22

[3] Brueggemann, Walter. David's Truth in Israel's Imagination & Memory. New York, Fortress Press, 1985. p. 14

history that common people carry around in their heads. People, almost always, picture the past in some fashion or another and this picture determines their ideas about politics and society.

The Holocaust has been commemorated throughout the world in various ways and by many different populations.[1] The fact remains that the Holocaust was not entirely an Israeli catastrophic event. Other groups of people, such as gypsies, socialists and intellectuals were equally and dramatically tormented by the Nazis. However, the Israelis successfully used the machinery of commemoration to reflect the Israeli entirety of the Holocaust.

On the other hand, every group that was affected by the Holocaust developed a memory of its own past that highlights its unique identity vis-à-vis other groups. These reconstructed images provided the group with an account of its origin and development and thus allowed it to recognize itself through time.

"Can history be viewed as distinctly parallel to collective memory? The answer is yes."[2] History and collective memory can be portrayed as two polar representations of the past. History is the product of a scholarly scrutiny of the records of the past, while collective memory is viewed as an organic part of social life that is continuously transformed in response to society's changing needs. Thus when tradition weakens and social memory is fading, history emerges as the primary mode of knowledge

[1] Wistrich, Robert and Ohana, David. The Shaping of Israeli Identity: Myth, Memory and Trauma. London, Frank vass, 1995. P147.

[2] Zerubavel, Yael. Recovered Roots: Collective Memory and the Making of Israeli National Tradition. Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press, 1995. p. 22

about the past.[1] On the other hand, historians may strive to become detached analysts, but since they are members of their own societies, they tend to respond to prevalent social ideas about the past. Along that line, some Israeli historians have utilized the basic premises of collective memory into shaping up history.[2]

However, collective memory, in spite of its dynamic character, is not an entirely fluid knowledge nor is it totally detached from historical memory. It continuously negotiates between available historical records and current social and political agendas. For example, in the 1950s, there was no political consensus regarding the Holocaust at that time. The memory of the Holocaust and its victims was accompanied by unending political strife. Therefore it might be true that history and memory do not, after all, operate in a totally detached manner.[3] There is conflict as well as interdependence.

The Israeli society have used a wide range of commemorations, both formal and informal, to fuel the vitality of collective memory and establish a firm base upon which history is remembered and registered in the minds of every generation. Holiday celebrations, festivals, monuments, memorials, songs, stories, plays as well as educational texts, are all being used as means of constructing a collective memory, by which the Israeli identity is firmly rooted within the souls of all Israelis and non-Israelis in order to generalize and monopolize their sufferings. Thus eliminating the

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[1] Ibid p 22.

[2] Zerubavel, Yael. Recovered Roots: Collective Memory and the Making of Israeli National Tradition. Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press, 1995. p. 22

[3] Wistrich, Robert and Ohana, David. The Shaping of Israeli Identity: Myth, Memory and Trauma. London. Frank Cass, 1995. p. 128

possible questioning of the origins of certain historical facts from within the Israeli historical records, and consequently the very core of Israeli identity. One prevalent commemoration form of the Holocaust is individual commemoration basically portrayed through inscription added to individual tombstones.[1]

It is worth noting however, that children in the Israeli society are subject and exposed to such acts of commemoration at an early age.[2] This, in itself, boosts the vitality of collective memory and exceeds the influence of any history book or teacher. So, we may say that early childhood education reinforces shared images and stories that in turn reinforces the group's memory. Through visual arts, the Holocaust is being relived by the Israeli generations.[3] Texts, collections of photographs, and slides are all means of visual arts resources used in schools to enhance Holocaust teaching and commemoration. Students respond more strongly to visual materials than to oral discussions or written texts. Thus teachers, all over Israeli schools, tend to use photographs and films in their curriculum.

In chapter one of this study, collective memory is examined in terms of its relation to the process of building the national and social identity of the Israelis. Emphasis is given to the selectiveness and creativity of collective memory and how it tends to blur the line between the real and the imagined. This chapter further elaborates on how the Israeli reconstruction of symbolic continuities and discontinuities in the Israeli history

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[1]Ibid p. 149

[2]Shimoni, Gideon. The Holocaust in University Teaching. Oxford, Pergamon Press, 1991. p. 1

[3]Ibid. p. 1

was clearly designed to support the ideology of the Israeli national revival. Thus the colonization of Palestine, in Israeli terms, represented a national goal.

Chapter two deals with the political dimensions of the Holocaust Memory in Israel and to what extent does the tendency to view issues through a political prism contribute to the remembrance and conception of the Holocaust during the 1950s. This chapter also focuses on the Eichman trial and its purpose in defining the moral obligation of the world towards supporting the establishment of an Israeli State. Further elaboration is also made in regard to the Israeli attitude towards the Holocaust, which is categorized into four types: the radical, the patronizing, the defensive-consensual and the enigmatic position. Moreover, the political dimensions of the Holocaust after 1967 are also examined in chapter two in terms of the overwhelming silence that that American Jewish leadership abided by before 1967 and the outbreak of commemorating events afterwards. This chapter also exhibits the different patterns of Holocaust commemoration in Israel. These patterns lie beneath the realms of individual and communal rituals. Monuments, memorial stones, commemorative inscriptions, museums, literature, and many others are the ways Israelis commemorated the Holocaust.

Chapter three focuses on the Holocaust narrative and its interpretation, in addition to the political powers of mythic narratives through literature works and political expressions. Additionally, this chapter lists other examples of mythic events such as Tel-Hai, Bar Kokhba and the Fall of Mas'ada. This chapter also sheds some light on the literature of the Holocaust and the importance of art in conveying the required

message and the wanted education. ***Yad Vashem,***[1] which is a major commemorating site in Israel, uses such art in perpetuating the memory of the Holocaust.

[1] *Yad Vashem* (A Hand and A Name)is the name of a prominent Holocaust museum in Jerusalem

Chapter I

Collective Memory in Relation to Building the National and Political Identity

I.1 The Past and the Present and the Emergence of Nations

"Both the past and the present are essential components of time."[1] Thus it is very important to draw a line somewhere in between in order for us to grasp the exact meaning of historical consciousness and historical knowledge. The past can be defined as the period anterior to the events an individual, or community, remembers directly. However, such a line is difficult to identify since neither the present nor the past can be limited to a certain point in time. In that sense, the definition of "contemporary" period in history curricula might be a good start. For example the French revolution is considered to be a turning point in the French national consciousness. Thus the French contemporary history officially begins in 1789. At the collective level, this division between present and past is governed by conscious and unconscious modes of thought. "Most importantly, the perception and segmentation of time with respect to the "before" and "after", whether at the individual or collective levels, are not limited to the distinction between the present and the past. A third dimension might well have its significance and consequence upon the procedure of thought. This third dimension is the future".[2]

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[1] Le Goff, Jacques. History and Memory. New York. Columbia University Press, 1988. P. 3.

[2] Ibid p3.

Nationalism, on the other hand, can be understood through the examination of the large cultural systems that preceded it, out of which it came into being, rather than examining any self consciously held political ideologies.[1] The two relevant cultural systems here are the "religious community" and the "dynastic realm". Both of these two frames of reference were taken for granted at the time of their dominion, just as nationalism today is taken.[2]

The great sacral cultures that existed before incorporated certain conceptions of immense communities. For example the Middle Kingdom, which we think of today as Chinese, imagined itself not as Chinese, but as central. Similarly, Islam and Christianity were imaginable largely through the medium of sacred language and written script. Yet such classical communities linked by sacred languages had a character distinct from the imagined communities of modern nations. This crucial difference is the confidence the older communities had in terms of the sacredness of their language and thus their ideas about membership.[3]

But even though the sacred languages made such communities imaginable, the actual scope and plausibility of these communities cannot be explained by sacred script alone. After all, those who could read then were a minority. This brings forth the need to understand the relation between the literate and the rest of the society.

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[1] Anderson, Benedict. Imagined Communities. London, Verso, 1983. P. 12

[2] Ibid p12

[3] Ibid. p 15.

Yet, in spite of all the powers these religiously imagined communities had, their unselfconscious coherence faded right after the late Middle ages. Among the reasons for this decline was the effect of explorations of other worlds and the conception of other possible forms of human life.[1]

Thus, imagined communities did not emerge as a replacement to the religious communities and *dynastic realms.*[2] Along side the decline that took place in sacred communities, a fundamental change was taking shape in terms of "thinking" the nation. Hence a new way of linking fraternity, power and time meaningfully together came into being. Moreover, print-capitalism made it possible for growing numbers of people to think about themselves and their relation with others in a special way that would ultimately lead to nationalism.[3]

I.2 The act of Commemoration

According to Peter Novick in his book The Holocaust and Collective Memory, [4] the French Sociologist Maurice Halbwachs in the 1920s began to view collective memory in light of the fact that present concerns determine what past to remember, and totally dismissed the idea of collective memory being a product of the past working its will on the present. Collective memory according to Halbwachs is not just historical

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[1] Ibd. P. 16

[2] *Dynastic Realm* is a form of an imagined community that existed in the past and incorporated a certain kind of kingship that derived its legitimacy from divinity.

[3] Ibd p. 36

[4] Novick, Peter. The Holocaust and Collective Memory. London. Bloomsbury. 1999. P. 3

knowledge shared by a group. However, it is some kind of anti-historical sense. Collective memory sees events from a single committed perspective. It simply reduces events to mythic archetypes. Historical consciousness, however, focuses on the historicity of events, their time to happening and the consequences of their occurrence. Moreover, memory has no sense of the passage of time. It denies the pastness of its objects and insists on their continuing presence. Usually, collective memory expresses some kind of eternal and tragic truth about a group.[1] An example of this collective memory is the Holocaust.

One way of looking at the contrasting conceptions of collective memory is to differentiate between what Freud says about collective memory, that it is imposed, and what Halbwachs says that it is chosen.[2] However that choice is not free at all, since it is subject to the circumstances surrounding the time of remembrance. For example, in the case of the Holocaust, these circumstances include the cold war, the conflict in the Middle East, the ethnic differences and their presentation, attitudes towards victims, and strategies of communal survival.

In the final analysis, collective memory seems to be able to transform historical events into political myths. "Through the restructuring of the past, the commemorative process creates a special version of history as it elaborates, condenses or omits all together certain incidents through out the course of historical events".[3] Thus some periods in history enjoy great attention and are considered central to the group's

[1] Novick, Peter. The Holocaust and Collective Memory. London. Bloomsbury, 1999. p. 4

[2] Ibd p. 5

[3] Ibid p4

vision of the past, while other incidents remain unmarked and are far from recognition. These historical times, which fall into oblivion, are usually those that are considered setbacks by policy makers. For example, there is a highly negative portrayal of the *Ghetto*, which was regarded as a crucial counter-model for the construction of a Hebrew identity and was therefore raised as a central theme in the education of the New Hebrew Youth. Therefore, anything that relates to the *Ghetto*, or anything that has something of *Ghetto's* spirit in it, or anything that smells of Ghetto, was kept out of reach of the Israeli youth. The *Ghetto* was thus portrayed as "pollution" or "disease" that might undermine the development of the New Hebrew Man. When Israeli youth's critical approach to the *Ghetto* became more salient during the Holocaust, concerned educators urged introducing a more positive image of Jewish life in Europe and playing up examples of heroic behavior during the *Ghetto* life, to counter balance that cultural trend.[1]

The Israeli suppression of positive aspects of the *Ghetto* life to promote the centrality of the people-land bond was reinforced by its denial of centuries of Palestinian life in Palestine. This double denial made it easier to reshape the period of the *Ghetto* as a temporary regression between the two periods before and after the state, metaphorically suspending time and space in order to appropriate both into the Zionist commemorative narrative.

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[1] Zerubavel, Yael. Recovered Roots: Collective Memory and the Making of Israeli National Tradition. Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press, 1995. p. 22

Parallel to the suppression of the *Ghetto* memories, the Israeli collective memory constructs Antiquity as a period in which the ancient Hebrew nation flourished, enjoying an autonomous political, social and cultural life. Antiquity is thus seen as the nation's Golden Age, the period to which the Israelis wished to return to recover their roots: the national spirit, the Hebrew identity, the Hebrew language, a homeland, and the social, economic, and political structures of an independent nation. In Israeli memory the ancient Hebrews formed a proud nation, rooted in its land.[1] This romantic picture was clearly constructed as the counter image of the *Ghetto*.

The belief in Israeli collective amnesia as far as the national heroic aspects of the past were concerned led to a deliberate Israeli search for suppressed symbols of ancient heroism. Israeli collective memory thus turned to previously belittled leaders and groups involved in the ancient Jewish wars and rehabilitated them as part of Israel's desired national revival. Masada and the Bar Kokhba revolt are two examples on this drastic transformation of their commemoration. This exploitation and use of a dormant "national memory" can thus be seen as an expression of triumph over the *Ghetto* and a means of obliterating its influence. Antiquity thus became both a source of legitimization and an object of admiration.[2]

The Israeli reconstruction of symbolic continuities and discontinuities in the Israeli History was clearly designed to support the ideology of national revival. The dramatic contrast between the repudiation of the *Ghetto* and the glorification of Antiquity

[1] Ibid p. 23

[2] Ibid p. 25

accentuated the appeal of the future national era and highlighted the notion of a new beginning. The colonization of Palestine thus represented a national goal. The reality however is more complex and does not offer a clear-cut sequence. Jews lived in Palestine prior to the first Zionist colonization and continued to live in Jewish communities in Europe even after the beginning of the Zionist colonization and appeared to even flourish more than the Jews living in Palestine. Thus it was only with the Holocaust that the Israeli commemorative narrative was able to draw a clear boundary indicating the end of the *Ghetto* life.

The Holocaust, followed by the foundation of the State of Israel, provided a definite boundary between the ending of the *Ghetto* life and "national" revival. Thus within this semiotic system then the foundation of the State provides a symbolic compensation for the trauma of the Holocaust.

Chapter II

Political Dimensions of the Holocaust Memory in Israel

It is only fair to mention that the Holocaust commemoration began to occupy a huge position in the Israeli discourse only after the Eichman trial in Jerusalem. And the actual commemorating events started to take place shortly after the establishment of the Israeli State. Before the Israeli declaration of an independent state, the Holocaust was officially forgotten, or driven into a silent oblivion. Those who studied in Israeli schools during the 1950s report that the curriculum then mentioned nothing about the Holocaust.[1]

As far as American Jewry was concerned, there has been a change in the attitude towards the concept of victimhood. On the individual level, the cultural icon of the strong silent hero has been replaced by the vulnerable and and verbose antihero. Thus the voicing of pain and outrage became empowering. This transformation was also met by similar changes on the group level. In the 1940s and 1950s, American Jews believed they had more reason to elude a victim identity, which resulted in a conscious downplay of the Holocaust. By the 1980s and 1990s, many Israelis wanted to be known as a victim community.[2] Therefore in the Israeli discourse on the Holocaust, a competition for primacy becomes clear, and the Holocaust becomes advertised as a unique tragedy, unlike other similar tragedies, simply because it

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[1] جريدة الايام. فلسطين. العدد 1909. 14 نيسان 2001

[2] Novick, Peter. The Holocaust and Collective Memory. London. Bloomsbury, 1999. P.9

happened to the Israelis. This exhibits the need of the Israeli people to emerge as a unique nation.

Moreover, the Israeli occupation to the Palestinian lands in 1967 can well be considered a turning point in the way the Israelis looked at the Holocaust. Israel, then, was perceived a strong state that can easily defeat its neighbors who were formerly considered to be a threat to the Israeli security. Consequently, Israel seized control over all of mandate Palestine. Thus a special discourse was due in order to justify the 1967 war and at the same time the wide colonial campaign that was persecuted by the Israeli leaders. Only then, the early features of the Holocaust discourse began to take shape: The world, especially Europe, have no right judging the acts of Israelis since the latter were brutally and fiercely tortured on the hands of the Europeans themselves.[1]

In short, after the Israeli fears of losing their state have conceded, and after attaining a certain degree of social and political stability after 1967, and the Israeli emergence as a major regional power in the area, the role of the Holocaust discourse became more important than ever in vindicating injustice and wrongdoing persecuted by the Israelis against the Palestinians.

[1] جريدة الايام. فلسطين. العدد 1909. 14 نيسان 2001

According to Dan Horowitz and Moshe Lissa, the Israeli society inherited from pre-state Israel a tradition of political activity which was not only intensive but also tended to enter areas of activity which are not necessarily political in other societies. As a result, the politicization of various aspects of life, both in pre-state Israel and after 1948 was far-reaching, with positions in public service being filled according to the political balance of power. Furthermore, activities such as promising employment, education, housing, culture and sport took place, to a certain extent, through the offices of political parties and under their guidance.[1]

The tendency to view issues through a political prism expressed itself in the way society conceived and remembered the Holocaust during the 1950s. There was no political consensus regarding the Holocaust at that time.[2] The memory of the Holocaust and its victims was accompanied by unending political strife. These debates may be understood against the background of events connected with the Holocaust. They included the debate over the reparations from Germany, the crystallization of commemoration patterns and the trial of Malkiel Gruenwald (known as the "Kastner Trial"),[3] during which the line of demarcation between memory and politics was not blurred but simply disappeared. An additional event that should be mentioned in this connection is the trial of Adolf Eichman,[4] which marked the end of

[1] Wistrich, Robert and Ohana, David. The Shaping of Israeli Identity: Myth, Memory and Trauma. London, Frank Cass, 1995. p. 128

[2] Ibid p. 128

[3] Ibid p 128

[4] Berger, Ronald J. Constructing a Collective Memory of the Holocaust. Colorado, University Press of Colorado, 1995. p. 5

the era in which the memory of the Holocaust was first and foremost a point of both emotional and political conflict.

The 1961 trial of Adolf Eichmann marked a turning point in the memory of the Holocaust. The purpose of the trial was not merely to punish Eichmann but to impress on the other nations of the world their moral obligation to support the Israeli State. During the trial, testimonies from scores of witnesses were heard, though more heroic modes of survivor resistance were emphasized,[1] The Eichmann trial was simply an "emotional reminder" that brought Israeli victimization into focus worldwide.

II.1 Political Dimensions of the Holocaust in the 1950s

The Israeli attitude towards the Holocaust can be categorized into four different types: the radical, the patronizing, the defensive-consensual and the enigmatic position. Two political bodies held the radical position on the periphery of the political spectrum: the Israeli Communist Party on the left and the Herut Party on the right. Both parties adopted harsh uncompromising positions in order to de-legitimize their political opponents. The Herut movement wished to undermine the Israeli Labor movement in general and the ruling MAPAI (the Israeli Labor party) in particular. The Israeli Communist party had broader aims and that is to negate and de-legitimize the Zionist movement in its entirety. Despite the fundamental divergence between them, on this matter the two parties kept to a type of secret "lepers' agreement" which sometimes blurred the differences between their positions. The radical position also included *Ha-olam Ha-zeh,* weekly edited by Uri Avneri and Shalom Cohen since 1950. One

[1] Berger, Ronald J. Constructing a Collective Memory of the Holocaust. Colorado, University Press of Colorado. 1995. p. 5

expression of its extreme negation of the Diaspora was to view the Holocaust as proof of righteousness of the path chosen by "Sabra " heroes such as king David, Samson as particularly Judah Maccabee. [1]

The patronizing position was held by the Zionist left and particularly the Kibbutz movements with which it was connected. The Zionist left saw itself as the only legitimate bearer of a resistance tradition during the Holocaust, claiming that this tradition granted it a favored status not only regarding the past but also the present.[2]

The defensive-consensual position was held by the political centrists and particularly the party in power – MAPAI. This defensive position stemmed from two points: first, most of the attacks made by the radical camp were leveled against MAPAI and second, unlike Ha-kibbutz Ha-artzi and Ha-Kibbutz Ha-meuhad, the two main kibbutz movements, MAPAI had no part in the patronage over heroism in the ghettos and forests. The defensive position had an additional aspect – the attempt to reach a consensus. This effort stemmed from several factors: its position in the center of the political spectrum; MAPAI's vision of itself as responsible for crystallizing a new system of national values (including the institutionalizing of Holocaust memory); and finally, visualizing the consensual position as a means of neutralizing attacks leveled against it as a party. [3]

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[1] Wistrich, Robert and Ohana, David. The Shaping of Israeli Identity: Myth, Memory and Trauma. London, Frank Cass, 1995. p. 128

[2] Ibid p. 129

[3] Ibid p. 130

The enigmatic position was connected with the ultra-orthodox world. From public sources, particularly newspapers, it is difficult to determine to what extent at that time it viewed the Holocaust as its main weapon to be used against the secular Zionists. [1]

This diversion in the Israeli perspectives regarding the Holocaust during the 1950s proves that there was no political consensus at that time. The memory of the Holocaust was liable to all kinds of political conflicts, some of which were even violent.

II.2 Transformations in the Israeli Attitude towards the Holocaust after 1967

In the aftermath of World War II, the Zionist movement made good use of the feelings of guilt that were swaying all over Europe, in addition to the historical loss that the European Right registered. Thus the Holocaust was quickly transformed into a rich resource for political and cultural extortion. Finkelstein, in his book, The Holocaust Industry,[2] says that the Holocaust victims and their enormous suffering have absolutely no presence in the arenas of today's Holocaust industry, which aims at nothing but procuring millions of dollars in addition to the political powers attained all through Europe and the United States.

Between the end of World War II and the late 1960s, minimal resources were found that mentioned the Holocaust. There was one University Course that was offered on

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[1] Ibid p. 130

[2] Finkelstein, Norman G. The Holocaust Industry. London. Verso, 2000. p. 13

War priorities. Israel simply capitalized on the Holocaust during the Eichmann trial. The Holocaust proved to be the perfect weapon for deflecting criticism of Israel.[1]

In conclusion of that, we might say that it wasn't Israel's weakness nor was it their fear of another Holocaust, but rather Israel's strength and its alliance with the United States that backed up Israel's campaign of gearing up the Holocaust industry.

II.3 Holocaust Commemoration in Israel

Commemoration according to one dictionary definition means "to honor and preserve the memory of something for all eternity".[2] This is an ancient concept created out of human need to bridge the gap between the past and the future, and to leave a concrete reminder for coming generations. Commemoration comes in many shapes and sizes, depending upon the circumstances of its creation and the desires of its designers. In principle, commemoration is inspired by historical sources but in practice, it begins where history ends.

Commemoration fulfills several needs simultaneously.[3] The first is sociological: the common creation of a memorial or ritual acts as a source for unification and continuity. The second is educational; commemoration acts as a tool to develop and ethos, which may be passed on from one generation to another. The third is psycho-theological: by creating ceremonies and sacred places, commemoration integrates with or substitutes for existing patterns of belief, thereby hastening the recovery

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[1] Ibid p. 30

[2] Wistrich, Robert and Ohana, David. The Shaping of Israeli Identity: Myth, Memory and Trauma. London, Frank Cass, 1995. p. 147

[3] Ibid p. 147

process. However, all forms of commemoration have a common denominator – simultaneously facing the present and future, they almost always serve the interests of the commemorators and not necessarily of those being commemorated.[1]

Since the end of the Second World War, the Holocaust has been commemorated throughout the world in various ways and by many different populations. Commemorations initially began on the individual and communal level. Each form of commemoration arose from a unique blend of cultures: the official local culture, the popular local culture and original culture of the commemorators, many of whom were both immigrants and survivors. The impact of each cultural component differed in accordance with the type of commemoration in question. While national commemoration granted more weight to the first two components, communal and individual commemoration reflected a different cultural admixture. Furthermore, the line of demarcation between Holocaust commemoration and memorialization of the Second World War was often blurred, thus determining the impact of the various cultural components influencing commemoration.[2]

In Germany, Holocaust commemoration arose from a meeting of cultures and a struggle of cultural primacy between Germany's past and present. As a result unique commemorative patterns emerged, such as the "disappearing monument" in Hamburg or the "signpost-memorial" in Berlin. This latter monument, listing names of concentration and extermination camps as if they were train destinations, is located at

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[1] Wistrich, Robert and Ohana, David. The Shaping of Israeli Identity: Myth, Memory and Trauma. London, Frank Cass, 1995. p. 147

[2] Ibid p. 147

the entrance to a central Berlin train station, directing the onlookers to non-existent destinations in today's Germany.[1]

However, in Israel, there is a very special quality to the relationship between the individual and the social collective. This close proximity is apparent when one considers that most Israelis have actively participated in or been exposed to profound collective military, social and historical processes. The Holocaust, for example, have contributed to this proximity that emanates from the fact that modern Israel owes its very existence to this political industry of manipulating the holocaust remembrance that turned the abstract idea into concrete realities.[2]

The purpose of Holocaust commemoration differs from place to place. James Young's study of the texture of memory lists five reasons for establishing Holocaust memorials throughout the world: a desire to educate and generalize the Holocaust experience, the Jewish dictum to remember, the need of European Governments to explain themselves to the public, exoneration of guilt and the desire to attract tourism.[3] In the State of Israel, an added and unique factor comes into play: a sense of Israeli mission born of the acceptance that Israel has become the spiritual and practical heir to all Holocaust victims.

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[1] Ibid p. 148

[2] Shalit, Erel. The Hero and His Shadow: Psychopolitical Aspects of Myth and Reality in Israel. New York, University Press of America, 1999. p. 31

[3] Wistrich, Robert and Ohana, David. The Shaping of Israeli Identity: Myth, Memory and Trauma. London, Frank Cass, 1995. p. 149

For over a generation, National patterns of Holocaust commemoration in Israel were canonized, at least by State leaders and official Israeli institutions. The first serious threat to Israel's primacy in Holocaust commemoration came in 1993, following the establishment of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington DC. However, not only did the Israeli political establishment express primacy in matters of Holocaust commemoration towards bodies outside Israel; for years certain forms of Holocaust commemoration within Israel received almost no acknowledgement from persons and Institutions officially involved in Holocaust commemoration.[1]

"During its first decade of existence, Israel was characterized by a dominant political culture that reflected its national ethos and at the same time ensured its continuity".[2] Side by side with this official culture, a popular "Sabra" culture flourished, promoting the same ethos in a more tolerant manner. These two cultures were ideological, one official the other popular. However, another culture might be considered to have been evolving at that time, and that is the culture of the European Jewish colonizers who, ironically, were scorned by members of the second and third waves of colonization *aliyot* (immigrants of 1904-14, 1918-23).[3] However, later on, with the arrival of the Holocaust survivors, these settlers received a substantial booster. These settlers of the 1930s attempted to use their homegrown culture in order to preserve and later reconstruct a number of European frameworks, which has been devastated by the Holocaust. But they were rapidly confronted by the authorities' frigid almost hostile

[1] Wistrich, Robert and Ohana, David. The Shaping of Israeli Identity: Myth, Memory and Trauma. London, Frank Cass, 1995. p. 149

[2] Ibid p. 149

[3] Ibid p.149

the issue, in one of the USA universities.[1] In a 1961 Commentary Symposium on "Jewishness and the Younger Intellectuals", only two of thirty-one contributors stressed the impact of the Holocaust. Consequently most of the Israeli organizations opposed the mere memorialization of the Holocaust. The reason behind this deep silence concerning such a huge crime, might be the standard explanation that Israelis were only too traumatized by the event, that they suppressed every memory of it. However, there is no evidence to support this saying, but the words that people carry around.

The real reason behind this overwhelming silence was the conformist policies of the American Jewish leadership and the political climate of the United States after the war. Moreover, by 1949, West Germany became an important American ally in the US confrontation with the Soviet Union. Thus it was in everybody's best interest that the Holocaust remained uncovered and overlaid. Additionally, the American Jewish Committee AJC tried to avoid any confrontation with the government of America in order not to be isolated and consequently lose its achievements. Thus opposition of American Jews against the foreign policy of America was totally diminished. On the other hand, AJC feared and tried to avoid at all expense any association with the political left abroad and at home, thus cooperation with anti-Nazi German social democrats was opposed. [2]

Thus the mainstream American Jewish organizations downplayed the Holocaust commemoration in the years after World war II in order to conform to the US Cold

[1] Finkelstein, Norman G. The Holocaust Industry. London. Verso, 2000. p. 13

[2] Ibid p. 17

attitude against the import of any spiritual baggage from the Diaspora, most of which were viewed as a potential danger to the Zionist ethos. As a result the makers of the national culture tended to ignore the existence of foreign cultures transplanted to Israel. In an attempt to blur their centrality in the lives of a complete sector of immigrants, these immigrant cultures were dismissed as "folklore". Nevertheless, the European immigrant culture in Israel continued to flourish in many spheres, both during the 1950s and long afterwards.[1]

The term "individual commemoration" applies to memorialization, which is carried out by the individual, even when the Holocaust is commemorated in its entirety. The term "communal commemoration, on the other hand, has a two fold meaning, historical and anthropological. One sort of commemoration is carried out by bodies functioning in the present as a community. These include organized communities in cities and small settlements which act as communities known as *moshavim, kibbutzim* (agricultural settlements). However, commemoration taking place on the national, municipal, institutional-political, settlement movement and religious levels usually reflect the attitude of official dominant Israel culture towards the Holocaust. Furthermore, other patterns of commemoration were established by *Yad Va-shem*(A hand and a name), the official National Holocaust and Heroism Authority in Israel, and the Ghetto Fighters House, and other institutions of the various settlement movements that are active in the field of Holocaust commemoration.[2]

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[1] Ibid p. 149

[2] Ibid p. 149

in Israel, often financed by the landsmanschaft members living abroad. These first books set the pattern: articles by *Yizkor* books; edited by a professional author; historian or editor. Most of the first *Yizkor* books were written in Yiddish, however multilingual editions remained prevalent for many years, even when all of the *Yizkor* books were published in Israel and their authors could fluently express themselves in Hebrew. The reason behind that is the fact that by insisting to write a portion of the book in Yiddish, landsmanschaft members were making a conscious effort to preserve a small portion of their former communities' cultural life. Furthermore, it enabled those members abroad to read the results of their financing. The other side of the coin was the desire to involve the post war Hebrew and English speaking generations in landsmanschaft activities, and at the same time introduce them to their cultural heritage.[1]

Monuments, Memorials Stones, and Commemorative Inscriptions:

Monuments and memorial stones are another form of holocaust commemoration. Contemporary research considers monuments to be a system of symbols through which one can examine a society's culture and ideology. Some studies concentrate upon the history of a monument, others choose to analyze its artistic effect, a third group deals with its impact on the public. Monuments differ from memorial stones both in terms of location and in the commemorated subject. While monuments are found almost everywhere and can commemorate a person, an event or an ideology, most memorial tombstones are erected in cemeteries and commemorate only the dead.

[1] Ibid p. 152

the plot and stone. Some landsmanschaften covered the

[1] Ibid p. 154

donations; others asked for assistance from members abroad. As communal memorial stones were not erected in the United States – due to the high price of cemetery plots and the desire to bring the martyrs' ashes to their final resting place in Israel- American landsmanschaft members usually answered their brethren's pleas and provided the necessary funds. Thus the creation of a communal memorial stone became part of a series of efforts to cement the bond between landsmanschaft members in Israel and abroad by emphasizing their common culture – the popular culture of European immigrants.[1]

Commemorative Patterns in Present Day Communities:

Commemorative aims of both past and present communities are identical: commemoration for its own sake, a ritual implement, creation of sacred space and an instrument for imparting educational messages. However, members of present day communities commemorate family and not community members, who usually had no historical or geographical connection with each other prior to or even during the war. Consequently, their memorials cannot describe their common life but rather their death.

In principle, Holocaust commemoration in present day communities is parallel to that charted in historical communities. Beginning in the early 1950s, the process reached its zenith in the mid 1970s for three reasons: a growing Holocaust awareness in Israel and abroad, the survivors' aging process and the financial feasibility of carrying out such projects.

[1] Ibid p. 152

Local events were often instrumental in communal Holocaust commemoration. A Holocaust memorial wall was created in Kibbutz Ma'agan only after 1954 airplane incident in which close to twenty participants were killed at a commemorative ceremony killed at the kibbutz. The fact that most of these memorials were empty graves made it possible to locate them anywhere within the community. Most were placed within or just outside of the cemetery wall; some were located in a special commemoratory building; other communities added a Holocaust corner to memorial rooms commemorating Israeli soldiers who had fallen in battle. This third commemorative form appears to stem from the dominant official culture which forged the connection between Holocaust and the establishment of the Israeli State.

A great number of the memorials portray pictures from the Holocaust, lists of victims' names and candles – a traditional Jewish symbol of mourning. However, they also portray motifs connecting Holocaust and the establishment of the Israeli State, such as illegal immigration ships and references to Israel's wars.

Present day communal Holocaust memorials are usually simple and very similar to the commemorative pattern found among Israeli war monuments. Nevertheless, few refer to physical heroism, possibly because only the victims' death, and not their life, is being commemorated.

Moreover, Holocaust commemoration among geographical communities is not unique to Israel, but is found in Jewish communities throughout the world. One example is the collective Holocaust memorial found at the Manchester Jewish cemetery, which bears the names of camps side by side with those of Holocaust victims.

II.3.b Individual Commemoration

One prevalent commemorative form of individual commemoration, are the inscriptions in memory of Holocaust victims, added to individual tombstones. Chronologically speaking, the phenomenon seems to have developed simultaneously both in Israel and abroad.

The growth of Holocaust awareness on both the individual and communal levels appears to have been a major factor behind the dissemination of this commemorative form. Thus, as the level of Israeli Holocaust awareness grew, so did the scope of phenomenon and the circle of people who became aware of and subsequently adopted the idea of commemorative inscriptions. Primary survivors of the Holocaust, their families and those who immigrated to Palestine in the 1930s, are basically those who started this pattern of commemoration.[1]

The phrasing of commemorative inscriptions often points to the image of the Holocaust adopted by the commemorators. Most employ a traditional Jewish form. Some commemorate victims by name, others by relationship to the deceased. There are those who mentioned the place where the victims lived or died. Others adopted the catchall phrase "murdered during the Holocaust" or "denied a Jewish burial". Similar to geographical communities, memorial inscriptions do not commemorate the victims' life but only their death.

Holocaust memorial panels in Synagogues are a form of individual commemoration taking place within a communal setting. Side by side with the memorial panels

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[1] Ibid p. 156

commemorating the community's dead, one often finds an additional panel upon which community members can commemorate Holocaust victims.[1] This custom, European in origin, probably began sometime during the 1950s , reaching its peak during the mid 1970s. the contents and form of memorial inscriptions are similar to those added to individual tombstones. Furthermore, one can even find entire prayer rooms and synagogues dedicated to the memory of Holocaust victims.

Another form of individual commemoration that have become widespread include the naming of children in memory of Holocaust victims, dedicating buildings in memory of Holocaust victims and establishing scholarships and grants in their name.

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[1] Wistrich, Robert and Ohana, David. The Shaping of Israeli Identity: Myth, Memory and Trauma. London, Frank Cass, 1995. p. 162

Chapter III

Holocaust Narrative and its Interpretation

According to Edward Sapir, human beings do not live in the objective world alone, nor alone in the world of social activity as ordinarily understood but are very much at the mercy of the particular language which has become the medium of expression for their society. It is quite an illusion to imagine that one adjusts to reality essentially without the use of language and that language is merely an incidental means of solving specific problems of communication or reflection ... We see and hear and otherwise experience very largely as we do because the language habits of our community predispose certain choices of interpretation.[1]

To a great extent, Holocaust studies have been interdisciplinary in the sense that historical inquiry provokes political and sociological questions while philosophical and religious inquiry inevitably entail larger literary issues. With the rise of contemporary literary and historical theory, scholars of the Holocaust have come to recognize that interpretations of both the texts and events of the Holocaust are intertwined. For both events and their representations are ultimately beholden to the forms, language, critical methodology through which they are grasped. Thus what is remembered in the Holocaust depends on how it is remembered, and how events are remembered depends in turn on the texts giving them form.

Young, James E. Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust. U.S.A. Library of Congress, 1988 p. 6

Historians have enforced the distinction between the hard facts of the Holocaust and the perceived softness in their literary reconstruction. Towards the end of his study of "Jewish History and Jewish Memory", for example, Yerushalmi observes that "the Holocaust has already engendered more historical research than any single event in the Israeli history, but I have no doubt whatever that its image is being shaped, not at the historians anvil, but in the novelist crucible".[1] It is true that the image of the Holocaust is being shaped in fictional narrative, we might ask what the difference is between the "historian's anvil" and the "novelist's crucible". Is it really that between iron hard history and the concoctions of the novelist's imagination? Moreover, are historical tracts of the Holocaust less interpretive than the fictions of the Holocaust? And what exactly are the differences between the kinds of Holocaust knowledge each narrative form brings us?

However, these "metahistorical myths" constitute all that is now regarded the Israeli Historiography. Thus it is not merely the fact that Israelis are not prepared to confront – and thereby record – history directly without the "metahistorical myths" that frame the Israeli discourse, but whether they can record history without these myths. Hard history and memory of specific events may always be subordinate to the meaning of such history, its interpretation within the tradition, and the shape of traditional paradigms after such history.

[1] Ibid p. 7

III.1 The Political Powers of Mythic Narratives:

Literature works and political expressions (speeches by leaders, posters, and election advertisement), the communication media (newspaper articles, television reports, and advertisements), films, and even public posters and graffiti, each contains an ideologically based mythic narrative that is not expressed directly, but can be apprehended as a subtext. The expressions of these mythic narratives in these texts play an important political role in society. For the purpose of these narratives is simply to shape the worldview of the society and to lead to certain action. These mythic narratives have in fact tremendous political powers because of their effective presentation of historical realities. Thus history is transformed into myth. For example, the Arab-Israeli conflict has often been presented as part of the eternal Jewish historical experience of the few threatened by the many, thereby insuring that Israeli Jews will always see themselves as being at a disadvantage in this conflict.[1]

Moreover, the development of national narrative and ritual has provided Israelis before and after the establishment of the state with commemorative frameworks within which to understand their identities. Mythic narratives do in a way maintain a static existence in the Israeli culture.

III.2 Other Mythic Narratives

There are three major events whose commemoration became the kernels of national myths. These three events were Tel-Hai, Bar Kokhba revolt and the fall of Mas'ada. Tel-Hai was unique because it was the only one to take place in the modern period. It

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[1] Eisenberg, Laura Zittrain and Caplan, Neil. Review Essays in Israeli Studies. New York. University of NY Press. 2000. p. 105

emerged as a national myth based on a number of elements: a compelling story that concluded with the dramatic words of the fallen leader of Tel Hai, Yosef Trumpeldor, usually rendered "It is good to die for our country": a sacred site at the cemetery where the fallen defenders of Tel Hai were buried, on which was constructed an impressive sculpture of a lion. Thus the day of the fall of Tel Hai was established as national Memorial Day. The Tel Hai commemorative narrative of a small group of Jewish settlers fighting Arab attackers, became an important paradigm for the mythic narrative of the few against the many which is a matter that played a central role in Israeli culture.[1]

III.3 The Mythic Understanding of the Holocaust

The Ben Gurion era can be seen as the final flowering of the classical Zionist myth of the transformation of the Jewish communities in Europe into a new secular Hebrew state. Yet even in Ben Gurion's day that myth came to be undermined. The Eichmann trial, which was orchestrated by Ben Gurion, can be seen as a retreat from the extreme negation of the Diaspora that was at the heart of Ben Gurion's mythic understanding of Jewish History. The testimony of Holocaust survivors at the trial granted a greater role than had been possible before for the voice of the weakened Diaspora Jew to participate in Israel's commemoration of its past.

The national institutionalized ways of commemorating the Holocaust in Israel, such as the *Yad Vashem* museum and the annual observance of "*Yom ha Shoah*" are well known. Nevertheless, it is not only the political and cultural elite that has engaged in

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[1] Ibid p. 106

the construction of mythic patterns of commemoration. Through individual and communal Holocaust commemoration in Israel, and without the direct sanction of the government, Holocaust survivors found their own ways to commemorate the Holocaust. These acts often reflect a mythic understanding of the past that is very different from the Zionist myth that Ben Gurion had sought to perpetuate in the early years of the state. These grass roots forms of commemoration have included *Yizkor* (memorial) books commemorating Jewish communities in Europe destroyed in the Shoah, communal tombstones marking ashes of transported to Israel from concentration camps and memorial panels in synagogues. These commemorative expressions tend to depart from classical Zionist myth in that they do not generally celebrate Jewish acts of physical heroism in the Shoah that were so emphasized in the official commemoration of the Holocaust in the early years of the state. They also pay close attention to lovingly remembering the life of these Diaspora communities, thereby challenging the standard Zionist negation of the Diaspora. These memorials depart from Israeli mythic self-understanding in another significant way, as well; while the standard Israeli mythic narrative finds comfort after the Shoah in the establishment of the State of Israel, the pain of the survivors who created these memorials was apparently too great to tell their story as if it could come to a comforting conclusion in 1948.[1]

In conclusion, all those myths are to some degree narratives that seek to anchor the present in the past. And the true significance of myths lies in what they can tell us about the ways in which a particular nation, social group of set of individuals seek to organize its collective memory and to establish a distinctive identity.

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[1] Ibid p. 115

III.4 The Literature of the Holocaust

There exists an extraordinary range of Holocaust memories all over the world, in Europe, Israel, and America. However, each place fosters its own texture of memory. So what are the forms and meanings of remembrance engendered by the memorials and museums that are constructed expressly to deepen the memory of the Holocaust? What is the literary process through which memory is constructed using the sophisticated and critical literature now attending the memory of the Holocaust in its literary, historical and religious texts? James Young, in his book Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust , claims that Holocaust monuments reflect particular kinds of political and cultural knowledge even as they determine the understanding that future generations will have of this event.[1]

Thus the available memorial settings, source of funds, size of the artist's studio, kinds of stone, even the casting and the pouring of metal works all contribute to a final version of monumentalized memory. A rosebush at Dachau designated the plot of ground where thousands of prisoners were lined up and shot. One hundred crab-apple trees in the "Babi Yar Park" in Denver, Colorado signify thousands of Jews cut down in a ravine outside of Kiew, Russia. A solitary concrete obelisk amid dozens of mass graves condenses Jewish memory in Bergen-Belsen. Each of these icons displaces a past reality and creates a new one instead, hence an inescapable potential for "historical revision" is founded within the memorialization process.[2]

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[1] Young, James E. Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust. USA. Library of congress, 1988. p. 173

[2] Ibid p. 174

However, these monuments might induce a certain uncertainty concerning its rhetoric and the nature of the evens it commemorates. In contrast to literature for example these more monumental and putatively documentary representations of the Holocaust often cause confusion between memorial texts and remembered events. This confusion is most striking in the case of monuments located at the sites of the original concentration camps where a sense of authentic place tends to literalize the particular meaning assigned. In these "memorial camps", the icons of destruction seem to adopt the authority of original events themselves. Operating on the same rhetorical principle as the photograph, in which representation and object appear to be one, certain memorials (such as those at Majdanek and Auschwitz), are devastating in their impact. They simply compel the visitor to accept the fact that what is shown is real. In both cases, the camps have been preserved almost exactly as the Russians found them at the time.[1] But like photographs without captions, however, these memorial camps remain essentially meaningless, since they derive their significance from their explanatory inscriptions. But just as the silent ruins of the camps are completed by inscriptions, their simple reality as ruins works to strengthen all historical explanations whatsoever.

In the museums scattered around Israel such as Lohamei Hagata'ot, Tel Yitschak, Givat Chaim, Yad Mordechai, and Yad Vashem martyrs' and heroes' Memorial Authority in Jerusalem, Jewish life is given first priority. In Israel, the Holocaust marks not so much the end of Jewish life as it does the end of viable life in exile. It is thus integrated into Israeli history, it may be a turning point, a confirmation of Zionist ideology, but it is linked nevertheless to Jewish life before in Europe and to Jewish

[1] Ibid p. 175

life after in Israel. In fact, Holocaust memory is performed throughout Israel on a number of different levels on Holocaust Remembrance Day – Yom Hasho'ah Vehagvurah initially established by a law of Knesset in 1953 as part of the mandate for Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority (Yad Vashem), Yom Hasho'ah was not officially activated until 1959.[1] Thus a separate day for remembering the Holocaust was assigned, which indicates that it is a national, not religious, day of remembrance. By this the government pulled it out of the religious continuum altogether in order to nationalize remembrance.

III.5 Yad Vashem

"Jewish history and consciousness will dominate for many generations by the traumatic memories of the Holocaust. No people in history have undergone an experience of such violence and depth". [2] This sentence, said by a prominent Israeli figure, Abba Eban, clearly illustrates the Israeli psyche regarding the Holocaust. And whoever visits the Yad Vashem museum in Jerusalem will surely understand those words, because the different sections of the museum and the material exhibited within guides one's mind and soul back to the times of Holocaust.

The primary function of the Yad Vashem is to perpetuate the memory of those who perished in the Holocaust. This function is achieved by establishing memorial projects; publishing testimony of the disaster; and promoting A National Day of Remembrance for the Israelies. The memorial established in Jerusalem comprises a

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[1] Ibid p. 185

[2] Suzman, Arthur. Six Million Did Die: The Truth Shall Prevail. USA, Johannesberg, 1977. p. 65

shrine, a museum and a library and includes a "Garden of the Righteous among the Nations" which "commemorates those Gentiles who risked their lives to save Jews from the nazi terror".[1] To date more than 2250 individuals and members of the their families have been accorded recognition in this Garden. [2]

Of all the memorials to the Holocaust, the vast complex of monuments, shrines, archives and exhibitions at the *Yad Vashem* "Martyrs' and Heroes' Memorial Authority" in Jerusalem represent the most sophisticated and multi-layered commemoration of events. Established by an act of the Israeli parliament on August 19th 1953, partly as a response to the unveiling of "the memorial to the unknown Jewish martyr" in Paris the day before, *Yad Vashem* was authorized expressly to "gather into the homeland material regarding all those members of the Israeli people who were killed by the Nazis and to perpetuate their memory and that of the communities, organizations and institutions that were destroyed because they were Jewish.[3] Among additional tasks are the collection and examination and publication of the testimony of the Holocaust and the heroism it called forth and to bring home its lesson to the people, and to promote a custom of joint remembrance of the heroes and victims. Thus *Yad Vashem* is looked upon as a means for institutionalizing the perpetual activity of Holocaust memorialization in Israel.

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[1] Suzman, Arthur. Six Million Did Die: The Truth Shall Prevail. USA, Johannesberg, 1977. p. 65

[2] Ibid p. 67

[3] Young, James E. Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust. USA, Library of congress, 1988. p. 186

Divided into three principle sections, the exhibition at *Yad Vashem* also reflects a characteristically Israeli gap of events. In the first section, the rise of anti-Jewish laws and actions in Germany between 1933 and 1939 is traced through a mixture of photographs, leaflets, Nazi propaganda, and historical narrative. From this room one goes around the corner into a section entitled "The Struggle to Survive: 1939-41",[1] an extension of the first phase. Then there is a break in the exhibition, and people are moved physically from one hall –i.e. one era – to another. After walking out of this section and back through the museum lobby, there comes another hall which is devoted solely to the killing process itself between 1941 and 1945, the proportions and methods of which were so unlike anything before that it cannot be located iconographically within the context of traditional anti Jewish persecution. A section on the world's silence and sealed ports of refuge is included in this hall. But finally, unlike other memorial expositions of the Holocaust, the history traced at *Yad Vashem* does not end with the liberation of the camps, but continues: in another break from the past, the next hall represents armed Jewish resistance and the Aftermath. Moreover, the Warsaw Ghetto Revolt and Jewish Partisans are both linked spatially to the current historical monument: the State of Israel itself.[2] For as the photographs of survivors coming ashore at Haifa and Caesarea illustrate, the "end of the Holocaust" comes only with the survivors' "return" to and redemption in "Eretz Israel".[3] Then comes a third section, the great memorial hall at Yad Vashem, where a huge megalithix tomb stands. Thus *Yad Vashem* represents Life at the *Ghettos*, memory and redemption.

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[1] Young, James E. Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust. USA, Library of congress, 1988. p. 186

[2] Ibid p 187

[3] Ibid p 187

Conclusion

The Holocaust commemoration is dominating all Israeli past and present. Instead of learning about the Holocaust through the study of Israeli history, Israeli generations are learning the whole of their history through the lens of the Holocaust. Holocaust museums all around the world tend to organize the Israeli culture and identity around this one era alone, rather than representing events as part of a historical continuum. Hence it is obviously true that the Israelies emphasize upon the Holocaust as a central experience of their own history with disregard to all the other groups that suffered along during the Holocaust such as the gypsies, the socialists and intellectuals.

Based on that, the Israeli society used a wide range of commemorations that deal directly with the Holocaust experience, in order to enhance the instruments of collective memory for the purpose of establishing a firm base upon which history is remembered and registered in the minds of every generation. Holiday celebrations, festivals, monuments, memorials, songs, stories, plays as well as educational text, are all used as means of constructing a collective Holocaust memory by which the Israeli identity is firmly rooted.

However, certain questions tend to capitalize upon the fact that the Holocaust, regardless of its extensive tragic consequences on the Israeli people, was actually downplayed by their leaders in the years after World War II.

Between the end of World War II and the late 1960s, minimal resources were found that mentioned the Holocaust. In the aftermath of World War II, the Zionist movement made good use of the feelings of guilt that were swaying all over Europe, in addition to the historical loss that the European Right registered. Thus the Holocaust was quickly transformed into a rich resource for political and cultural extortion.

After the year 1967, the Holocaust has been commemorated throughout the world in various ways on the individual and communal levels. The purpose of Holocaust commemoration differs from place to place. However, the driving forces behind this commemoration is the basic desire to generalize the Holocaust as an Israeli experience, the Israeli assertion to remember, the need of European Governments to explain themselves to the public, exoneration of guilt and the desire to attract tourism.[1]

The national institutionalized ways of commemorating the Holocaust in Israel, such as the *Yad Vashem* museum and the annual observance of *Yom ha Shoah* are well known. Nevertheless, it is not only the political and cultural elite that has engaged in the construction of mythic patterns of commemoration. Through individual and communal Holocaust commemoration in Israel, and without the direct sanction of the government, Holocaust survivors found their own ways to commemorate the Holocaust.

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[1] Wistrich, Robert and Ohana, David. The Shaping of Israeli Identity: Myth, Memory and Trauma. London, Frank Cass, 1995. p. 148

In conclusion, although the Holocaust victimized a large number of Jews, the Israeli leaders' main concern was how to best make use of that tragedy. The result of this was a major campaign for the capitalization of the Holocaust. And it was through that campaign that the Israeli nation building process took place.

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