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BEN GURION'S DICHOTOMY: THE CREATION OF THE ISRAEL NATIONAL ETHOS *

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Abstract: Proclaiming the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, the founding father of modern Israel, David Ben-Gurion, was not only the primary figure for the creation of Jewish state but also the main leader for constructing nation state building of Israel. As a Jewish state, Israel's self-identification was constructed on the intertwined relation amongst religious and historical narratives of Judaism. Commenced with the Zionist ideology-national movement then followed by the aliyot, all through the re-establishment of Jewish state, religion and historical narratives played a fundamental role whilst building the Jewish identity and the nation state. Correlation between religion, state and Jewish identity had been used as a discourse by many leaders to fulfill the ambition of returning back to promised lands, re-establishment of the Jewish state and Ben-Gurion was one of them. Ben-Gurion was known by his contradictory statements and pragmatic politics during his leadership. Throughout his political career, first as a labour leader of the Histadrut, chair of the Jewish Agency and then later as the founding father, first prime minister and minister of defence, Ben-Gurion's rhetoric on key matters like the socialist Zionism, the formation of Israeli identity, his design on the social construction and nation of Jewish state were amended from time to time. His ideological and intellectual activities aimed at state and nation building of Jewish state, he was aware of the necessity for extended education for the creation of national ethos and need for the historical and religious narrations to form the collective Jewish identity. This article will examine Ben-Gurion's changing discourses on his nation state building

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policies, starting with his early career as a Histadrut leader and following his establishment of the State of Israel. In his early leadership era, he was inspired by the labour Zionism and Ben-Gurion's idea of Zionism was pragmatic and focused on the future, was not longing for the past. He strongly believed in the plausible harmony of Jewish and Arabs communities, sharing an equal right to work and live in Palestine with mutual interest against the landlords. He imagined the viable integration of Jewish and non-Jewish community for the larger prosperity of Palestine. Nevertheless, during his second period as the founding father of Israel, his discourse was enthused more by the religious and historical narratives, converging more on the past sorrowing experiences Jewish people had to go through in order to achieve what was promised to them, the right of the Jewish people to return back to the promised land. Inevitably this article aims to analyze Ben-Gurion's rhetoric in his strong nation-state building, invigorating Jewish culture and identity to secure what was earned after great struggle and suffering for the redemption of Israel.

Keywords: Israel, Ben-Gurion, Nation State Building, Zionism

BEN-GURION'UN İKİLEMİ: İSRAİL'İN ULUSAL KARAKTERİNİ YARATMA

Öz: 1948'de İsrail Devleti'nin kuruluşunu ilan eden modern İsrail'in kurucu babası David Ben-Gurion, sadece Yahudi devletinin kurulmasında baş figür değil aynı zamanda İsrail'in ulus devlet inşasının da baş lideriydi. Bir Yahudi devleti olarak İsrail'in kendini tanımlaması, Yahudiliğin dini ve tarihi anlatıları arasındaki iç içe geçmiş ilişki üzerine inşa edilmiştir. Siyonist ideoloji-millî hareket ile başlayan ve ardından Yahudilerin göçleri (*aliyot*) ile devam eden süreç, Yahudi devletinin yeniden kurulması aşamasında din ve tarih anlatıları ile beraber Yahudi kimliğinin ve ulus devletinin inşasında temel bir rol oynamıştır. Din, devlet ve Yahudi kimliği arasındaki karşılıklı ilişki; birçok lider tarafından vaat edilen topraklara geri dönme, Yahudi devletinin inşası, İsrail'in yeniden kurulması hırslını gerçekleştirmek için bir söylem olarak kullanılmıştı ve Ben-Gurion da bunlardan biriydi. Ben-Gurion, liderliği sırasında çelişkili açıklamaları ve pragmatik politikalarıyla biliniyordu. Siyasi kariyeri boyunca, önce Histadrut'un işçi lideri, Yahudi Ajansı'nın başkanı ve daha sonra kurucu baba, ilk başbakan ve savunma bakanı olarak Ben-Gurion'un sosyalist Siyonizm, İsrail kimliği, Yahudi devletinin toplumsal inşası ve ulusu üzerindeki tasarımı gibi kilit konulardaki retoriji zaman zaman değişmiştir. İdeolojik ve entelektüel faaliyetleri Yahudi devletinin devlet ve ulus inşasını amaçladı, ulusal birliğin oluşturulması için genişletilmiş eğitim gerekliliğinin ve kolektif Yahudi kimliğini oluşturmak için tarihi ve dini anlatı gereksiniminin farkındaydı. Bu makale, Ben-Gurion'un Histadrut lideri olarak kariyerinin erken dönemlerinden başlayarak İsrail Devleti'ni kurmasının ardından ulus devlet kurma politikalarına ilişkin değişen söylemlerini inceleyecektir. Erken liderlik döneminde işçi Siyonizm'den ilham alan Ben-Gurion'un Siyonizm fikri pragmatik ve geleceğe odaklıydı, geçmişe özlem duymuyordu. Karşılıklı çıkarlarla toprak sahipleri karşısında Filistin'de eşit çalışma ve yaşama hakkını paylaşarak Yahudi ve Arap topluluklarının makul uyumuna güçlü

biçimde inanıyordu. Filistin'in daha büyük refahı için Yahudi ve Yahudi olmayan topluluğun yaşayabilir entegrasyonunu hayal etti. Bununla birlikte, İsrail'in kurucu babası olarak ikinci döneminde Yahudilerin kendilerine vaat edilen Yahudi halkının vaat edilen topraklara geri dönme hakkını başarmak için yaşamak zorunda oldukları geçmiş üzücü deneyimlere daha fazla yaklaşılarak söylemi daha çok dini ve tarihi anlatılarla bezenmiştir. Kaçınılmaz olarak bu makale, Ben-Gurion'un güçlü ulus-devlet inşasında, İsrail'in kurtuluşu için büyük mücadele ve acılardan sonra kazanılanları güvence altına almak için Yahudi kültürünü ve kimliğini canlandıran söylemini analiz etmeyi amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İsrail, Ben-Gurion, Ulusal Birlik, Siyonizm

Introduction

Traditional Jewish belief holds that the Land of Israel was given to the Jewish people by God. Nevertheless, it was the strive and struggle of Theodor Herzl, David Ben-Gurion, Chaim Weizmann and Golda Meir, the founders of the modern state Israel, that played an integral role on the re-establishment of a Jewish state in the historic Land of Israel, the Eretz-Yisrael. As famously asserted by Anthony Smith, the nation states were built on the myth of common ancestry, shared historical memories, association with a specific 'homeland' and elements of common culture to provide solidarity. The primordial elements, symbols and myths from the ethnic past and the common origin are mainly used by the governing elites and nationalist entrepreneurs to serve as building blocks in nation building process and national identity construction.

In the nation-state building process of Israel, myths, culture and religion were fundamental narratives for constructing the idea of sovereign Jewish national state and collective Israeli identity. Proclaiming the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 the founding father of modern Israel, David Ben-Gurion, was not only the primary figure for the creation of Jewish state but also the main leader for nation state building of Israel. As a Jewish state, Israel's self-identification was constructed on the intertwined relations amongst religious and historical narratives of Judaism. Commenced with the Zionist ideology-national movement then followed by the aliyot¹, all through the re-establishment of Jewish state, religion and historical narratives played a fundamental role whilst building the Jewish identity and the nation state. Those narratives were functioned as an evidence for the antiquity of Jews in the Holy Land, 'Uniqueness and Mission' doctrine (*Yihud ve-yeud*) was always part of

¹ Aliyot is the plural form of the Hebrew word 'Aliyah' that stands for migration of Jews to Palestine from the Diaspora.

rhetoric for returning back to Zion², the envisioned and long-awaited re-establishment of a sovereign Jewish state in Eretz Yisrael.

Correlation between religion, state and Jewish identity had been used as a discourse by many leaders to fulfill the ambition of returning back to promised lands, re-establishment of the Jewish state, the State of Israel, and Ben-Gurion was one of them. This paper will demonstrate Ben-Gurion's changing discourse on his nation state building policies, starting with his early career as a Histadrut leader and following his establishment of the State of Israel.

1. David Ben-Gurion: Labor Zionism and Envisioned Jewish State

The first part of the Proclamation of Independence (The Knesset, 1948) referred as; "The Land of Israel was the birthplace of the Jewish people. Here their spiritual, religious and political identity was shaped. Here they first attained to statehood, created cultural values of national and universal significance and gave to the world the eternal Book of Books". These were the foremost words Ben-Gurion proclaimed thru his declaration of the establishment of the State of Israel, a great struggle for the realization of the age-old dream, a sovereign national Jewish state.

The founding father of modern Israel, David Ben-Gurion, was born in Warsaw in 1886. Coming from a small town called Plonsk, a town under the Jewish enlightenment. He was enthused by Hibbat Zion movement³ (promoting Jewish settlement and migration to Palestine), and grew up with yoke of religious observance focusing on religious education, learning Talmud, Bible and Hebrew. His father, Avigdor Green, was among the founders of the Zionist movement "Hibbat Tzion" in Poland (Shapira, 1997). As he was raised strongly with the messianic ideology of the future return to Zion, he became one of the founders of "Ezra" a Zionist youth club, and in 1903 he joined the Zionist socialist movement, Poalei Zion. Influenced and named after the book of Ezra, youth club's focus was on the return to Zion, historically narrating from the Babylonian captivity and return of exiles to Jerusalem.

Considering he emphasized the need to build a unique Hebrew culture all his life, even at the age of fourteen Ben-Gurion started to teach local children how to speak and write in Hebrew. In Anita Shapira's biography on Ben-

² According to religious teachings of Judaism, Zion is known as the promised lands to Jews after all the distress they had gone through over the centuries. As Fromkin utters; "The future return to Zion remained Messianic vision until the ideology of nineteenth century Europe converted it into a contemporary political program" (Fromkin, 2004, p. 271)

³ Hibbat Zion was a pre-Zionist movement in the 1880s aimed to promote the return of the Jewish people to Eretz Yisrael. Its followers worked toward the physical development of the Land, and founded agricultural settlements in Palestine. For further readings visit The Knesset https://www.knesset.gov.il/lexicon/eng/zion_eng.htm

Gurion, she quotes Ben-Gurion's preference on language expressed deeply held convictions, he was never intended to learn Polish even if was born and lived in Warsaw until his youth, and even his background offers a perfect condition for Yiddish, he preferred to speak and write in Hebrew mostly "his reservations about Yiddish and enthusiasm for Hebrew reflected his revulsion for the diasporic Jew, the mirror-image of his enthusiasm for everything Palestinian" (Shapira, 1997, p 649). Growing up with a strong Zionist ideology, Ben-Gurion's long desire to return back to the promised land and re-establishment of a Jewish state inspired him to immigrate to Eretz Yisrael.

The ideology of Zionism emerged in the late 19th century in Central and Eastern Europe as a national revival movement towards the re-establishment of Jewish sovereignty in the Eretz Yisrael, in gathering of the exiles, and liberation of Jews from the anti-Semitic discrimination and pogroms in the diaspora. Throughout his life, Ben-Gurion had revolted against traditional Jewish lifeways in the diaspora, he strongly believed that Jews in the diaspora were prevented from their full growth in Jewish individual and national life. He was a true advocator of the immigration to the Holy Land, the promised land of God, to re-establish the Jewish national state.

Even in the declaration of the establishment of the State of Israel, Ben-Gurion was determined on "the Jewish people throughout the diaspora to rally round the Jews of Eretz-Israel in the tasks of immigration and upbuilding and to stand by them in the great struggle for the realization of the age-old dream - the redemption of Israel" (The Knesset, 1948). With rejection of life in the diaspora, young Ben-Gurion migrated with the second aliyah (the migration to Holy Lands), and settled in Palestine as a farmer in 1906. At the age of twenty, he was a settler in Eretz Yisrael, a member of the party's central committee and a formulator of its first political platform in October 1906.

The leader of Labor Zionism, Ben-Gurion was influenced by Harriet Beecher Stowe, Leo Tolstoy and Abraham Mapu. Ideology of the Labor Zionism, which dominated the initial structure of the Jewish community during the pre-state period, aimed for the labour movement in Palestine; "the rebellion against exile, rebellion against the bourgeois way of life in the shtetl (Yiddish for town, refers to small pre-WWII towns in Eastern Europe), the aspiration to a life of labour close to nature, the hope for building a revitalized Jewish society in Palestine" (Shapira, 1997, p 648). Labor Zionism had an influence on major institutions that shaped the modern state of Israel, such as

the Poale Zion⁴ and Hapoel HaTzair⁵, which initiated the foundation of Ben-Gurion's Mapai party and as to modern day the Labour party.

The leading notion in Labor Zionism is that “only the Jewish working class in the Land of Israel could create a Jewish state with rural kibbutzim and moshavim and an urban Jewish proletariat” and the eminent founders among shaped the modern state of Israel are like David Ben-Gurion, Berl Katznelson, Moses Hess, Dov Ber Borochoy, Aaron David Gordon, Nachman Syrkin, Golda Meir (Atmaca, 2012).

One of the founding fathers Dov Ber Borochoy quoted on the ideological basis of the Labor Zionism that the economical inferiority of Jewish society was the result of diaspora and dearth of working class. He named this problematic as “inverted pyramid”, pointed out to the fact that “the Jews, being guests everywhere, were never fully integrated into the class structure of their society... The Jewish class structure formed an “inverted pyramid” with fewer real proletarians and more professionals, intelligentsia and people engaged in non-essential consumer production... As economies developed, native populations produced their own professionals and intelligentsia, and competition for jobs in all spheres intensified. This generated antisemitism, because native populations coveted the jobs and positions of Jews, and it forced Jews to migrate from country to country, in a stychic process.” (Ber Borochoy, 1937) (Atmaca, 2012). Like the labor Zionist ideology encouraged a socialist society, a workers' state in the promised land, Ben-Gurion had supported the idea of national home must be a socialist state from the start quoted by Paul Johnson; “Jewish question could never be solved within a capitalist framework and Jews themselves had to return to their collectivist roots” (Johnson, 1988, p 441)

Ben-Gurion had believed in the revolution and re-establishment of Eretz Yisrael via labor Zionist ideology. He believed that the “Zionist revolution meant the emancipation of the Jewish People via the ingathering of the exiles and the transformation of the Jewish life into a labor-based, productive society, capable of conducting an independent political life governed by civic consciousness and responsibility” (Kedar, 2002). Ben-Gurion's idea of Zionism

⁴ Poale Zion is a movement of Marxist – Zionist Jewish workers founded in cities of Russia, Poland and Europe towards the end of the 19th century. The movement was based on Jewish proletariat whose ideology consisted of a combination of Zionism and socialism Poale Zion party, the Jewish Social-Democratic Workers' Party, launched its operations in Będzin during the 1905-1907 Russian Revolution.

⁵ Hapoel Hatzair was a non-Marxist socialist, anti-militarist Zionist group active in Palestine from 1905 until 1930. Its ideology was to establish a Jewish possession in Palestine through manual labour and agricultural settlement.

was pragmatic and focused on the future, was not longing for the past, "He wanted to extricate the Jewish people from the vicious historical cycle of independence, division, destruction, and exile; in short, to overcome the debilitating impacts of two successive political traditions: that of the ancient state, and that of the diaspora. Hence, Ben-Gurion's ideology with regard to statehood constituted not only a plan for the resumption of the Jewish state, but also a strategy for national rehabilitation. It offered a program of transition and transformation from a diaspora and a non-sovereign community [the Yishuv] into an independent state." (Yanai, 1996). The transformation he desired for Jewish state and society was thru the labor ideology; "Jewish state is Judaism of labor and creativity in every field of economic and scientific endeavor, for all of man's needs" (Tlamim & Zameret, 1999). He was not aiming at the distant past sufferings of Jews in the diaspora and in ancient times like Zionism, a doctrine depends on the political sovereignty of the Jewish state, rejuvenating Jewish culture and identity, in a national state of Jews. Hence Ben-Gurion's ideology was focusing on the future, to build a Jewish state not only independent but also prosperous, as quoted by Nir Kedar he envisioned the transformation it in a broader sense, a political, cultural, economic and social revolution in modern Jewish community for national self-definition (Kedar, 2002).

Ben-Gurion's early leadership era, inspired by the labour Zionism, was pragmatic and focused on the future, not longing for the past. Shapira quotes; "when the topic under discussion was replete with mythical references and directly linked to the ancient Jewish past, such as the August 1929 riots at the Western Wall, Ben-Gurion had little to say about the historical dimensions. He argued for toning down the national/historical rhetoric and recommended emphasis on what was crucial: immigration work, land — not past history." (Shapira, 1997, p 647). As a young activist and leader, he was active in international scene, experienced diverse cultures whilst he was in Istanbul, Salonik and Egypt, worked endlessly in New York at the He-Halutz bureau organizing immigration to Eretz Yisrael and yet he also served in the Jewish legion of British army. In the first era of his leadership, his pursuit was to accomplish three prominent principles that he truly believed; "settlement of the land, structuring new community within a socialist framework and cultural binding of the Zionist society" (Cohen, 2015)

Ben-Gurion continued to support his principles as he transformed Po'ale Zion into Mapai party and the Histadrut⁶ became prominent in Jewish community. Once he became the secretary general of Histadrut in 1921, he

⁶ Histadrut was the Zionist trade union movement of which Ben-Gurion became secretary-general in 1921

revolved the union movement towards managing settlement of the Jewish migrants and construction of the socialist Jewish state. Cohen quotes on the Histadrut's part in building the Jewish state as; 'agent of settlement, an active promoter of agricultural and industrial projects, which it financed and owned, and thus in time a major land- and property-owner, a central pillar of the Zionist-socialist establishment.'" (Cohen, 2015)

His envisioned Jewish state, supported by his distinguishment and belief on the Jewish society, was the nation state of chosen people. Consequently, this nation state of chosen people should reflect the characteristic traits of the nation and built on ethics, moral and intelligence. Shapira quoted his remarks on the chosen people and envisioned state as "cooperative labour settlement, the Israel Defense Forces and the creative intelligentsia composed of scientists, artists and cultural figures" (Shapira, 1997, p. 661) in Israel" expressed his plea on the future vision of the distinctive nation state, Israel.

He imagined a state, a national home, with a possible integration of Jewish and non-Jewish communities for the larger prosperity of Palestine. Unlike his opposite Vladimir Jabotinsky, he strongly believed in the plausible harmony of Jewish and Arabs communities, sharing an equal right to work and live in Palestine with mutual interest against the landlords. Quoted by Fromkin, he was a socialist who believed that Jews and Arabs shared an equal right to work and live in Palestine, sharing common interest and resilience against the landlords as employees having mutual determination towards autonomy. His understanding of the Arab riots in 1920 and 1921 were "the acts of wild men" (Fromkin, 2004, s. 527) that were deluded by the British administration that violence would work in the favour of Palestinians. What is more, it was articulated that Ben Gurion had a strong belief in the cooperation between Jews and Arabs of Palestine to bring prosperity to Palestine, quoted as "he believed that the benefits of Jewish labor and creativity would flow to the Arabs of Palestine as well" (Fromkin, 2004, s. 527).

2. The Architect of Jewish Renaissance: The Nation-State Building Narratives

David Ben-Gurion "the captain piloting the ship of Israel to the promised shore" as quoted by Shapira, during his historical declaration speech he was not only exclaiming the natural right of Jewish people to establish their state but also with his progressive state of mind, he was emphasizing his vision that Jewish people should be masters of their own fate; "impelled by this historic and traditional attachment, Jews strove in every successive generation to re-establish themselves in their ancient homeland" (Shapira, 1997) (The Knesset, 1948) (Aronson, 2011) (Avi-HaÄ, 1974)

His second period as the founding father of Israel, his discourse was enthused more by the religious and historical narratives as could easily be seen in the declaration speech of the state of Israel; "The Land of Israel was the birthplace of the Jewish people. Here their spiritual, religious and political identity was shaped. Here they first attained to statehood, created cultural values of national and universal significance and gave to the world the eternal Book of Books...The State of Israel will be based on freedom, justice and peace as envisaged by the prophets of Israel...We appeal to the Jewish people throughout the Diaspora to rally round the Jews of Eretz-Israel in the tasks of immigration and upbuilding and to stand by them in the great struggle for the realization of the age-old dream - the redemption of Israel" (The Knesset, 1948), Ben-Gurion's rhetoric was converging more on the past sorrowing experiences Jewish people had to go through in order to achieve what was promised to them, the right of the Jewish people to return back to the promised land.

After securing the existence of Israel, the founding father, first prime minister and minister of defence, Ben-Gurion eloquently used historical and religious narrations for nation-state building, invigorating Jewish culture and identity to secure what was earned after great struggle and suffering for the redemption of Israel. Since it is believed that Ben-Gurion had an imperative role on the Israeli historiography and history of the modern Jewish community in Israel, his ideological and intellectual activities aimed at state and nation building of the Jewish state, he was aware of the necessity for extended education for the creation of national ethos and need for the historical and religious narrations to form the collective Jewish identity. He constantly emphasized the need to forge a strong nation via social construction of the Jewish nation state and education for constant elevation of society. Shapira quoted on his anticipation as "His aim is not philosophical or abstract but pragmatic, relevant to current needs: to secure continued Jewish survival - and particularly to ensure the strength of the army." (Shapira, 1997, s. 652)

Ben-Gurion had strived to design a new Israeli culture in the re-established Jewish state, not only a sovereign state but he envisioned it in a broader sense. He envisioned a political, cultural, economic and social revolution in modern Jewish community whilst constructing the national self-definition, his concept of '*mamlakhtiyut*' played a decisive role in both his messianic terminology and his endeavor to design a new Israeli culture. (Kedar, 2002). He knew the necessity of social amalgamation to hold all migrants together to form prosperous, strong nation-state and he felt that "he was responsible not only for moulding the socio-economic foundation and guaranteeing the security of the state, but even for shaping its shared ideological basis"

(Shapira, 1997). In the 1950s the subordination of Labor Israel to the State of Israel was shaped through the Ben-Gurion's doctrine 'mamlakhtiyut', and it was a part of his strive on the national ethos creation. Ben Gurion's mamlakhtiyut' theory focused on the importance of a sovereign state, the legitimization of the use of force and its decisive role (democratic and legal) in society.

Ben-Gurion's idea of the national ethos consisted of intellectual activities and social education aimed at nation state building of Israel. The mamlakhtiyut doctrine played a decisive role in his messianic terminology and historical narratives whilst structuring a new Jewish culture in Israel. Whilst building collective Jewish identity and culture, he was aware of the vital role that education and army would play. In order to define a homogenous and strong "Jewish nation", he had to create a culture that would be fully embraced by the Israeli public, and it was the practice of education that would aid him on his mission. Quoted by Shapira, Ben-Gurion stated the relation between education and army on his envisioned Jewish culture: 'Today the ministry of culture is the ministry of defence. A hundred thousand Jews are fighting for their people's freedom - that is the greatest human creation in our era. It will serve as a source for literature and art for generations to come' (Aronson, 2011) (Shapira, 1997).

The idea of the army as a school, an instrument to re-educate Israeli youth, was incorporated into the first version of the law for army service in Israel, as quoted by Shapira "it obligated all young men and women to serve a year working in agriculture as a positive and time-tested path for the shaping of character. It is clear that Ben-Gurion saw this as a golden opportunity to mould 'this human dust, those in Palestine and coming from abroad, into one people, a people of culture with a mission.'" (Shapira, 1997). As Ben-Gurion emphasized the need to forge a unique Hebrew culture, he believed that the education officers in army should brief new immigrants on Hebrew culture, a way of living, Hebrew names and the Jewish history

"We should make them aware of how the Jewish people has survived over these past four thousand years, and what occurred in that people's confrontations with neighbours, and with the peoples of the world among whom the Jews were dispersed.' They should also be taught the basics of Hebrew literature, 'what the Bible is and the character of modern Hebrew literature'" (Shapira, 1997) (Ben-Gurion, 1987). Ben-Gurion's passion towards the extended education for creation of national ethos was to strengthen the social construction of the Jewish nation state, his books *Netzah Yisrael* (The Eternity of the Jewish People) and *Medinat Yisrael Ha-mehudeshet* (The

Renewed State of Israel) converged with structuring a historical narrative in order to draw the picture of Jewish existence and integrate the Jewish youth and immigrants in the Holy Land.

Uniqueness and Mission (*Yihud ve-yeud*) was another paradigm in this doctrine, it was his private broad-ranging lecture for the IDF (Israel Defense Forces) High Command on the education of the people and the army. The main notions of his "*Yihud ve-yeud*" were;

- a. The national uniqueness and struggle of Jewish people
- b. The struggle against powerful neighbours and secret of Jewish people's survival
"the Jewish people's 'spiritual strength and moral fibre' moulded from ancient times"
- c. Endurance of the Jewish people's historical vision and rejection of forced ideologies
- d. The Jewish people's historical messianic conception
- e. The creation of the national state was the beginning of universal redemption
- f. The mission of the Jewish people for the Ingathering of the Exiles.

(Shapira, 1997, s. 653-654)

It's clear to see how Ben-Gurion's rhetoric focused on historical and religious narratives in his uniqueness and mission paradigm. He knew he need to take advantage of historical and religious narratives justifying as a prominent and influential unifying cultural element for the re-establishment Israeli society. He chose to place emphasis on symbols and values he deemed significant for the national ethos. Since his early leadership era was inspired by the labour Zionism, his second period as the founding father and prime minister mainly emphasized on

Social construction of the Jewish state focused mainly on Bible and religious narratives. Nir Kedar quoted on how Ben-Gurion had apprehended Judaism as a national culture "Ben-Gurion understood that the process of state building requires a reliance on profound shared sentiments of nationalism, culture, religion, and other "identity bonds." (Kedar, Ben-Gurion's view of the place of Judaism in Israel, 2013)

Judaism's major role in public life and foreign affairs stems from its cultural centrality among Jews and even Ben-Gurion was a secular leader, he realized the efficacy of Judaism as a natural culture, a moral idea driving social-political compass of society. He realized religion played an important and cultural role,

thus he used historical and religious narrations like the Bible and Jewish symbols to attract the masses.

Nir Kedar explored Ben-Gurion's instrumental use of Judaism as a component of the civil religion, an ideology he aspired to shape the Israeli society. The return to the promised lands and messianic vision of redemption had been at the core of nation's uniqueness, Kedar quotes on the grand ideology behind his rhetoric as; "Ben Gurion saw Judaism as a national culture extending beyond religion, based on the humanistic political principles articulated by the biblical prophets, which had served as a moral compass throughout Jewish history and also guided the present developing society in Israel, spurring it to be a model society.' (Kedar, Ben-Gurion's view of the place of Judaism in Israel, 2013).

Seeing that Ben-Gurion's rationale on using Bible's historical narratives were that they functioned as an evidence for the antiquity of Jews in the Holy Land, Shapira also touched upon his reflections towards Judaism and nation state building in his biography. She drew attention to the period after securing the existence of Israel, Ben-Gurion used historical and religious narrations in his historiographia claiming that; 'Jewish people's spiritual, moral and intellectual superiority as a precondition for its survival' and that 'it was not Jewish weapons that carried the day but rather the Jewish spirit, ha-ruah ha-yehudit. The historical test of the Jewish people will not be in military force, the economy or the growth of the population, although these are all vital to its existence. That test will be in the mettle of its spirit, its vision, its prophetic and messianic mission.' (Shapira, 1997). She also underlined his referenced to the Bible and use of messianic language, increased considerably, reaching a peak in the second half of the 1950's.

The basis on the amplification of religious narratives were his strategy to define homogenous and strong "Jewish nation", and Judaism had offered him the social amalgam to unite cultural and ethnical diversity of many Jewish groups as a national "religion" to tie all Jews in Israel.

Ben-Gurion insisted on defining Israel as a "Jewish state" in his religious and historical narratives, thus linking the Jewish people to the Land of Israel. The Jewishness of the state was in his eyes not only its *raison d'être* but also a necessary condition for its existence as a sovereign state. He also used these narratives to distinguish his community from the other nations, creating a unique interpretation of Jews 'not like the other nations - the people of Israel. From the beginning, we were a people set apart. We became a people of the book, of prophets, of the End of Days, the Eternal People.' (Shapira, 1997, s. 656). Likewise Kedar quoted on his persistence defining Israel as a "Jewish state" as; "Probably no other Israeli political leader was as involved in the

polemics over Jewish identity and awareness as Ben-Gurion (mainly during the second half of the 1950s) – he initiated symposia on the subject, discussed the question in academic journals and the press, met and corresponded with dozens of intellectuals and interested youth, and urged the Ministry of Education to create a program for the study of Jewish heritage (Kedar, Ben-Gurion's view of the place of Judaism in Israel, 2013). Last but not least Ben-Gurion's comprehend of Judaism built on a combination of humanistic-political values to structure influential unifying esteems for the Jews in diaspora. Accordingly, these values were designed to create a collective affiliation for the Jews in Israel and the diaspora. His grand ideology on Judaism's messianic vision served as a conceptual-moral platform for Zionism, which would imbue significance to the harsh life in Israel and would be embraced by the Israeli public, particularly the masses of traditional immigrants. (Yanai, 1996) (Tlamim & Zameret, 1999) (Kedar, Ben-Gurion's Mamlakhtiyut: Etymological and Theoretical Roots, 2002)

3. Ben-Gurion's Leadership and Vision: Analyzing Changing Rhetoric

The last chapter will analyze Ben-Gurion's fluctuated rhetoric throughout his political career. First as a labour leader of the Histadrut, chair of the Jewish Agency and then later as the founding father, first prime minister and minister of defence, Ben-Gurion's rhetoric on key matters like the labor Zionism, the formation of Israeli identity, his design on the social construction and nation of Jewish state were amended from time to time. The founding father, Ben-Gurion, had utilized historical and religious narratives throughout his political career, but then again in his second leadership era as the prime minister of State of Israel, he escalated his rhetoric on historical ties and religious traditions for nation-state building and securitization of Jewish identity. His rhetoric on historical and religious narratives predominantly rejuvenated Jewish culture to secure Jewish identity shaping its shared ideological basis and aimed at moulding the socio-economic foundation, irrevocably to assure the state's security.

In his early leadership era, Ben-Gurion was inspired deeply by the labour Zionism. His idea of Zionism was pragmatic and focused on the future, that was not longing for the past like the other Zionist ideologies. Even if he was raised strongly with the messianic ideology of the future return to Zion, his historiographical perspective did not extend back beyond the beginnings of the Zionist movement, instead focused on what is not present and what can be achieved from future (Brecher, 2016).

In Ben-Gurion's biography, Shapira emphasized his pragmatic leadership and focus on the future "when the topic under discussion was replete with mythical references and directly linked to the ancient Jewish past, such as the

August 1929 riots at the Western Wall, Ben-Gurion had little to say about the historical dimensions. He argued for toning down the national/historical rhetoric and recommended emphasis on what was crucial: immigration work, land — not past history" (Shapira, 1997, s. 647). Consistent with his labor Zionism ideology and his leadership, in mid-1930s he had two essays that mostly leaves out the ancient history but focused on the transformation of Jewish society *Mi-ma 'atnad le-am* (From class to people) and *Anahnu u-shekheinenu* (We and Our Neighbours) (Shapira, 1997, s. 648). In his memoirs he noted his idea of Zionism as; "Zionism is a modern phenomenon, new in Jewish history. It is not something that existed for many generations and then went through a renewal among us over the last 50 or 60 years" and "Nothing is more dangerous for Zionism than the fatalistic belief in the eternity of Israel" (Ben-Gurion, 1987). As easily can be reflected upon his own words, his version of Zionism was pragmatic and not longing for the past.

Known for his pragmatic leadership and vision, he sometimes contradicted with himself, depending on specific political conditions. Even believing the Zionist movement should be and was focusing on the future, in an event of total consolidation required among Jewish community, he preferred to use traditional beliefs on the historical mission and the promised land to encourage and inspire. After the debate on partition in 1930's Ben-Gurion was among the against partition, he changed his discourse on Zionism and used religious and historical references of Eretz Yisrael. Ben-Gurion quoted by Shapira;

"A true love for the homeland, the eternal yearning for political independence, the glory of the generations in the tree of our ancestors, the echo of ancient prophets and seers, a wondrous attachment to national specificity, and to a historical mission. and above all else: suffering and misery, tribulations and calamity, exile and dependence. These ignited within us the burning desire for and faith in redemption of the people in its land. and the devastation of the land, its desolation and exhaustion, hammered upon the anvil, calling upon us to realize [the dream]." (Shapira, 1997, s. 651)

Ben-Gurion is remembered as a leader with incisive political senses, an iron will and authoritative behavior; a pragmatist with no systematic worldview who adapted his positions to changing circumstances and reality constraints. Yet known by his secular outlook, after the war he knew the necessity of social amalgamation to hold all migrants together to form prosperous, strong nation-state, thus his requisite design of the social construction and nation of Jewish state focused mainly on Bible, in which that he strongly believed people can only understand the Book of Books; "with an open eye and intuitive understanding, a book created in that land by that same people. Only a

generation that renewed its independent existence in the ancient land will comprehend the spirit and soul of his ancestors, who acted, fought, conquered, created, worked, suffered, contemplated, sang, loved and prophesied in that same homeland” (Shapira, 1997) (Kedar, Ben-Gurion's view of the place of Judaism in Israel, 2013)

To illustrate his pragmatism, adapting his position to what was needed for the reassurance of the Jewish state and society, in the second half of the 1950's his references to the Bible and rhetoric on messianic language, increased considerably discrete from his secular ideology (Medzini, 2016)

Even in 1920's his discussion on the borders of Palestine, presenting evidence from the Pentateuch and Talmudic sources contained almost no references to the Bible or history (Shapira, 1997), in 1950's he had realized the process of state building requires a reliance on profound shared sentiments of nationalism, culture and religion. In Tlamim and Zamaret's article of Ben-Gurion's beliefs and public policy they quoted on his dichotomy as;

“Enormous gap existed between Ben-Gurion the political leader, the initiator of cohabitation with the religious parties, and Ben-Gurion the man, who held radically anti-Halakha (Jewish Religious Law) views.” (Tlamim & Zameret, 1999)

Ben-Gurion's understanding of Judaism had derived from its influence and unifying supremacy over creating collective identity for different Jewish ethnicities in Israeli society. His attitude towards the Jewish religion was the inspiration vis-à-vis the broader, cultural and national aspects of Judaism enriched with humanistic and political values and biblical prophets that were always present throughout history in day to day Jewish culture. He was aware of the Judaism's humanistic and political values would help to build collective affiliation for the Jews in Israel and the diaspora. His constructive approach towards Judaism was an understanding like it was a unifying national culture, he did not impose solid rules and regulations on the place of the Jewish religion in Israeli public life. He focused on establishing a Jewish state with mutual understanding and collaboration among citizens whilst forming a national state of Israel. Expressed by Nir Kedar, Ben-Gurion's desire to create a system of agreements and compromises based on a flexible basis for religious and secular groups to live together in harmony. Ben-Gurion believed religious and secular groups should abstain from ineffective disputes over culture and belief, hence focus on how to establish mutual tolerance and partnership as citizens of a Israeli society. In other words, Ben-Gurion was expecting his society to be a pragmatic like himself and unite towards building a strong nation state.

As a leader with secular and labor Zionist ideology, his constructive approach towards Judaism could also be seen via his efforts to include the religious parties in his coalitions, his tolerance for the religious traditions and approval of religious education for many new immigrants.

In the declaration speech of the State of Israel; "With effect from the moment of the termination of the Mandate being tonight, the eve of Sabbath, the 6th Iyar, 5708, we declare the State of Israel" (The Knesset, 1948), he substantiated his commitment to the ultra-Orthodox community leaders. Furthermore, even he did not impose rules or regulations on the place of the Jewish religion in Israeli public life and favored civil marriages, his agreement with Agudat Yisrael, known as the famous "status-quo letter", guaranteed jurisdiction of the rabbinic religious courts over personal status issues like marriage and divorce (Tlaimim & Zameret, 1999). Thus revealing his pragmatism, but also his dichotomy in contrast to his early leadership period thus he strongly believed the progressive, the futuristic vision of the Labor Zionism.

Another dichotomy in Ben-Gurion's discourse was his beliefs on the inborn traits like ethics, moral and intelligence of chosen people, the Jewish community, he constantly expressed his plea on the future vision of the distinctive nation state, the Israel. In his diaries, his belief on the chosen people and nation of the Jewish state was relied as; "Our national awareness as a people separate from others has existed throughout known human history since the Tribes of Israel" (Kedar, Ben-Gurion's view of the place of Judaism in Israel, 2013) (Sayigh, 1984)

Nevertheless in 1960 whilst being honored in a summit at an American University, his rhetoric on the "chosen people" were converted as he declared "I do not hold that we are a chosen people, every people, to some extent, is a chosen people - in its own eyes at any rate; and just as there are shadows in the life of every people, so we know that, in the past as in the present, light radiates from many peoples." and yet again he continued his words indicating the uniqueness of Descartes, Newton, da Vinci, Rembrandt, Beethoven and Einstein" (Ben-Gurion 1960) (Cohen, 2015).

One other dichotomy in Ben-Gurion's discourse was his judgement of Palestinian Arabs. Just after his arrival with the second aliyah he was a strong believer of the possible harmony among Jewish and Arabs communities. He believed that Jewish and Arab Palestinians had an equal right to work and live in Palestine for the absolute prosperity of Palestine. In an article titled "The Rights of the Jews and others in Palestine" by Ben-Gurion he declared that the Palestinian Arabs have the same rights as Jews. Conversely in Shabtai Teveth's official Ben-Gurion biography, quoted on his belief in relation to Arab

Palestinians as; "We do not recognize the right of the [Palestinian] Arabs to rule the country, since Palestine is still undeveloped and awaits its builders. They have no right to close the country to us. What right do they have to the Negev desert, which is uninhabited. They have a right only to that which they have created and to their homes " (Teveh, 1985, s. 38). Teveh also pointed Ben-Gurion's bias on Arab Palestinians, he relied on the idea that Arabs were incapable of developing Palestine and Jews were more intelligent and diligent than Arabs. (Teveh, 1985, s. 12-13)

Conclusion

Myths, culture, and religion were fundamental narratives for constructing the idea of sovereign Jewish national state and collective Israeli identity during the nation-state building process of Israel. Like many political leaders of Israel, the founding father Ben-Gurion, had utilized historical and religious narratives throughout his political career. His rhetoric on the history of chosen people, the Jewish community, via invigorating Jewish culture and identity was to secure what was earned after a great struggle and suffering for the redemption of Israel.

His enduring part in building Israel was not only thru his relentless efforts on the diaspora, migrations, kibbutz, creating revitalized Jewish society but also his narratives for strong nation-state building and creating national ethos. In his second era as a prime minister of recently established state, Ben-Gurion wisely chose his rhetoric based on historical ties and religious traditions. He was aware of the influence and supremacy they possessed on Jewish community, and yet he knew the necessity for extended education for the creation of national ethos and need for the historical and religious narrations to form the collective Jewish identity.

This article examined Ben-Gurion's changing discourses on his policies on nation state building and securitization of the Jewish identity. As a pragmatic and idealist leader, Ben-Gurion's ideology and rhetoric constituted not only a plan for the re-establishment of the Jewish state, but also a program of transition and transformation for prosperous Jewish state. Starting from his early career as a Histadrut leader and followed by his establishment of the State of Israel, he used his ideologies, be it Labor Zionism, mamlakhtiyut or Judaism, as a component of a nation state building and forming collective Jewish identity and culture. During his leadership, his rhetoric changed from time to time, choosing carefully what was needed in order to secure the Jewish state and identity. Despite his changing politics over the years, one thing did not change at all and was certain to everyone the love and devotion he had for the right of the Jewish people to rebuild their national home, re-establishment of the Jewish state in Eretz Yisrael.

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