

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN COLLECTIVE TRAUMA AND CIVIL SOCIETY: JEWISH CITIZENS OF ISRAEL AS A CASE STUDY

Seda KIRDAR

Uzman

TEPAV Dış Politika Çalışmaları

Abstract: *This research examines how past trauma is experienced collectively by a society and how it manifests itself within public opinion and policy. Collective trauma is a key concept that sheds lights on to the intricate interaction between trauma and civil society. This case study examines the tragedy of the Holocaust and its shared meaning to the Jewish citizens of Israel. It is intended to elaborate Jewish citizens of Israel's attitude toward outsiders by exploring their traumatic past. The study uses social-psychological approaches as a starting point for conflict analysis since these approaches consider the variegated nature of the human experience alongside the social factors that are inherent in every conflict. The deep sense of past and its linkage to the present created a role of victimization within Jewish citizens of Israel. This victimization is psychologically embedded within institutions such as the education system as well as the media. Both systemically rationalize discrimination toward the Palestinians and justify the harsh political and military tactics employed against them. Therefore, to maintain the state's existence and preserve its identity, the society is more likely to comply with aggressive policies through militaristic ventures that are allegedly undertaken to ensure survival. This cycle of violence, intolerance and dehumanization hinders Jewish citizens of Israel ability to achieve peaceful relations with the Palestinians.*

Keywords: *collective trauma, Holocaust, identity, Israel, memory*

KOLLEKTİF TRAVMA VE SİVİL TOPLUM ARASINDAKİ İLİŞKİ: İSRAİL'İN YAHUDİ KÖKENLİ VATANDAŞLARI ÜZERİNE BİR VAKA İNCELEMESİ

Öz: *Bu araştırma, geçmiş bir travmanın toplum tarafından nasıl kollektif bir şekilde yaşandığı ve kendini kamuoyu ve kamu politikalarında nasıl açıkça gösterdiğini incelemektedir. Kollektif travma, travma ve sivil toplum arasındaki*

karişık ilişkiyi açıklığa kavuşturan temel bir konsepttir. Bu vaka çalışması, Holokost trajedisini ve onun İsrail'in yahudi kökenli vatandaşları tarafından paylaşılan anlamını incelemektedir. İsrail'in yahudi kökenli vatandaşlarının travmatik geçmişlerini irdeleyerek, onların dışarıya karşı tutumlarını açıklamayı amaçlamaktadır. Çalışma, çatışma analizi için, her krizin içinde yer alan toplumsal faktörlerin yanında insan tecrübesinin çok yönlü doğasını da göz önüne alması sebebiyle başlangıç noktası olarak sosyo-psikolojik yaklaşımları kullanmaktadır. Geçmişin köklü bilinci ve şimdiki zamanla bağlantısı İsrail'in yahudi kökenli vatandaşları arasında kurban olma sıfatını yaratmıştır. Bu kurban olma hali psikolojik olarak kurumlara olduğu gibi eğitim sistemine ve medyaya da nüfuz etmiştir. Hepsi, sistematik olarak Filistinlilere karşı ayrımcılık yapılmasını ve onlara karşı sert politik ve askeri yöntemlerin kullanılmasını rasyonelize etmişlerdir. Bu yüzden, devletin varlığını devam ettirmek ve kimliğini korumak için, toplum, muhtemelen devletin hayatta kalmasını sağlamak adına yürütüldüğü söylenen askeri teşebbüsleri içeren saldırgan politikalara uyum göstermektedir. Bu şiddet sarmalı, anlayışsızlık, ve insanlıktan uzaklaştırma hali İsrail'in yahudi kökenli vatandaşlarının Filistinlilerle barışçıl ilişkiler kurma olanaklarını engellemektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kolektif Travma, Holokost, kimlik, İsrail, bellek

FROM INDIVIDUAL TRAUMA TO COLLECTIVE TRAUMA

Social-psychological approaches provide a starting point for conflict analysis since these approaches deal consider the variegated nature of the human experience alongside the social factors that are inherent in every conflict. For a comprehensive understanding of conflict, social psychology as a frame of analysis should be employed. The suffering and trauma are the results of the conflicts and war and without addressing them; there can be no mitigation of the conflict and healing process. These less-visible consequences of violent conflict should be paid more attention for the sustainability of the peace. Godobo-Madikizela, a well-known South-African psychologist for her contributions to the study of social influence in social psychology argues "In South Africa, the past continues to exist, because it is not past. The traumatic events seem still so vivid that it is as if they are happening in the moment. The uses of tense defy the rules of grammar cross the boundaries of past and present in an illustration of the timelessness of traumatic pain."¹ The literary historian Lawrence Langer has called this concept of "durational time", in relation to camp survivors after the Holocaust. Durational time refers to camp memories which remain forever present in the minds of many former prisoners. It is the time- camp time,

1 Pumla Godoba Madikizela, *A Human Being Died That Night: A South African Woman Confronts the Legacy of Apartheid*, New York: First Mariner Books, 2004, p.89

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frozen time- in which many of them could not put their traumatic memories behind them.² For many of these former prisoners the past and the present are a continuous time phrase which has mass of myths, lies and fantasies.

Psychological analyses also have so much to offer regarding the aftermath of trauma. Glynis Breakway argues that tremendous disruptions like trauma threaten a person's identity. The processes of identity (assimilation, accommodation, and evaluation) are unable to comply with the principles of continuity, distinctiveness, and self-esteem, which habitually guide their operation.³ Not surprisingly, we can expand the argument to encompass that of nation states. Here, collective trauma threatens the nation's collective identity and challenges continuity of both beliefs and behavior. It also challenges distinctiveness in various ways. When the event happens within the community, it threatens the self-understanding or collective myth of being a special community. As mentioned, this collective trauma arises from a huge number of traumatized individuals within a community. In this case, the individuals have been directly or indirectly exposed to the traumatic event. Collective trauma then emerges from the pain that is radiated by individual trauma onto the community. According to Heinberg, in the aftermath of trauma, a whole culture can be threatened in its existence, and this loss, cultural bereavement, affects the individuals, comparable to the loss of their own identity, with culturally specific symptomatic results.⁴

THE JEWISH CITIZENS OF ISRAEL AND THE MEANING OF THE HOLOCAUST

Yad Vashem sits upon the west side of Mt. Herzl, the Mountain of Remembrance, as a "commemorative" site that houses the collective memory of the Jewish people. The original name of Yad Vashem derives the Biblical verse: "And to them will I give in my house and within my walls *a memorial and a name (Yad Vashem)* that shall not be cut off"⁵ The complex contains the Holocaust History Museum, Museum of Holocaust Art, International School for Holocaust Studies, sculptures, outdoor commemorative sites, archives, a research institute, library, educational center and a publishing house. It has more than fifty million of pages of documents, thousands of collection of testimonies of the Holocaust survivors, photographs and films. Established in 1953 through the Yad Vashem Law, this museum is Israel's official memorial to the Jewish victims of the Holocaust. One and a half million

2 Lawrence Langer, *Admitting the Holocaust and Holocaust Testimonies: The Ruins of Memory*, New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1993, p.20.

3 Glynis Marie Breakway, *Coping with Threatened Identities*, New York: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1986, p.76.

4 Richard Heinberg, catastrophe, "Collective Trauma & the Origin of Civilization", <http://www.newdawnmagazine.com>, accessed on January 10, 2009.

5 Isaiah, Chapter 56, verse 5.

people visit the museum every year including Heads of States. The museum's message is clear; "the uniqueness of the Holocaust and its universal lessons" must never be forgotten.⁶

However, the memorial places the Holocaust within the broader context that chronicles Jewish suffering and persecution through the ages. Starting with a verse from Exodus, The Torah urges the Jewish people to remember the past, demanding that Jews, "remember this day on which you went free from Egypt, the house of bondage, how the Lord freed you from it with a mighty hand."⁷ The museum continues displaying the continuous memory of the Jewish people by a citation from Elkhanan Elkes, leader of the Jewish council of Kovno, Lithuania, "Remember that which Amalek did to us: remember everything, do not forget for the rest of your lives, and pass on as a holy testament to the coming generations that the Germans killed, slaughtered and murdered us..."⁸ According to this view the Holocaust is a singular episode in the long saga of Jewish people and historical memory is the key for Jewish people. Elkhanan Elkes associated Amalek, the leader of a tribe hostile to the ancient Israelites, with Nazis. The museum also commits itself to the revindication of Jewish people –"when they kept their hands raised in the way of the new Israel- and to the ultimate defeat of the eternal foe, "God said to Moses: Write this remembrance in the book... that I will surely erase the memory of Amalek from under the heavens."⁹ At the last corridor, Yad Vashem leaves the visitor with a strong emphasis on educating the younger generations about the Holocaust by using the Jewish tradition of "Vehigadeta Lebincha" (And you will tell your children).¹⁰ Each succeeding generation must remember the Nazi genocide against the Jewish people and pass the story of it to their children.

Today in Israel, every citizen knows the history of the Holocaust. There are special programs dedicated to the Holocaust Studies. The media broadcasts Holocaust documents and the stories of the survivors. In the Israeli cities there are benches and gardens dedicated to the victims. It is not surprising to see a black-white picture of a Holocaust victim shown by his or her relatives over a conversation at the street. Second- and third-generation survivors integrate the Holocaust into their identity through their relationships with their parents. Meanwhile, all of these accumulated memories of Holocaust are ensconced in the Israeli educational system and other Israeli institutions. Shimon Peres, President of the State of Israel, verified this notion on his speech at the opening of Yad Vashem, "If you will take away from our people the memory,

6 Yad Vashem-World Center for Holocaust Research, Education, and Commemoration, <http://www.yadvashem.org>, accessed on 27 March 2009.

7 Exodus, chapter 13, verse 3.

8 <http://www.yadvashem.org>, accessed on 27 March 2009.

9 Exodus, Chapter 17, verse 14.

10 Avner Shalev, Message from the Chairman of the Directorate, *yad-vashem booklet* (English edition),p. 3.

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we shall not have a future. If you will take away our heritage, we shall not have a vision. And we need a memory and a future, a heritage and a vision.”¹¹ Erna Paris observes:

*The Jews remember their history as they are enjoined to do by their ancient texts. The ultra-Orthodox remember that the Messiah will arrive at the end of days and that Jews are commanded to prepare for that joyful event; Jewish humanists remember the biblical prophets and their insistence that responsible men and women must try to make the world a better place for all peoples, the religious nationalists living in their barricaded Israeli settlements also remember- they have no doubt that the soil on which they have built their homes is the Land, a realization of God's ancient promise to his people, secular Zionists remember their faith in the values of physical labor, productivity, communal sharing and a defended homeland. But the collective memory of Israel as refuge and homeland continues to permeate the entirety of Israeli society. In Israel no memory is more powerful than the Holocaust, and at its core lies the belief that Jews were deserted by the world.*¹²

Nancy Coover Andreasen explains trauma as, “a psychological feeling of intense fear, helplessness, loss of control, and threat of annihilation”¹³. At the collective level, “it is a real or perceived threat to the survival of individuals, or a support system, or a larger community or culture.”¹⁴ This phenomenon can negatively impact even the largest and most diverse societies even if the majority of individuals do not experience the trauma or tragedy first hand. As Paris observes, just as the Holocaust and its trauma imposed a posthumous collective identity on its six million victims, so it formed the collective identity of Israel, not just for the survivors who immigrated to Palestine after the war but for all Israelis.

JEWISH-ISRAELI IDENTITY FORMATION

“We will not let the Holocaust deniers (referring President of the Islamic Republic of Iran; Mahmoud Ahmadinejad) perpetrate another Holocaust on the Jewish people,” Benjamin Netanyahu, Prime Minister of Israel said in his speech at the Yad Vashem Memorial on the Yom HaShoah (Holocaust Remembrance Day), He continued; “This is the highest responsibility of the

11 Peres speech, <http://www.yadvashem.org>, accessed on 12 March 2009.

12 Erna Paris, *Long Shadows: Truths, Lies and History*, New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2001, p.319.

13 Nancy Cover Andreasen, Posttraumatic Stress Disorder’ in *Comprehensive Textbook of Psychiatry*, 4.ed. H. I. Kaplan, B.G Sadock, Baltimore: Maryland, Williams and Wilkins, 1988, p. 4.

14 Barry Hart, *Peacebuilding in Traumatized Societies*, Lanham: Maryland, University Press of America, 2008, p.6.

State of Israel and of myself as prime minister.”¹⁵ From all appearances, his policy would emerge from this dictum.

Established in April 12, 1951 through the Knesset, Yom HaShoah is commemorated with candle lighting, speakers, poems, prayers, and singing. Every year on the Holocaust Remembrance Day, at ten in the morning, a siren is sounded where everyone stops what they are doing and stands in remembrance. Often, six candles are lit to represent the six million who perished in the genocide. Holocaust survivors speak about their experiences and remind the populace of the traumatic events. At the ceremonies people read verses from Torah for in an effort to remember those that died and to try to reach an understanding of the huge number of victims.

In Israel no memory is more powerful than the Holocaust. The memory of the Holocaust shapes the society, culture as well as the politics of the state itself. Tom Segev observes that, “the most fateful decisions in Israel; such as the mass immigrations of the 1950, the Six-Day War, and Israel’s nuclear project were all conceived in the shadow of the Holocaust.”¹⁶ Since the establishment of Israel, the Holocaust has been the event around which policy makers have fashioned both domestic and foreign policy. The collective memory of the mass murders have mobilized the society around a seize mentality that has consistently shaped identity and driven state initiatives.

The Holocaust had a profound foundation from the very beginning of the foundation of the State itself. On the other hand with the foundation of Israel, the new Jewish-Israeli identity was created. As Professor Garshin Baskin suggests:

The collective identity is part of a process of two thousand years of exile and persecution. The Jewish people have a collective identity of being persecuted, being discriminated against wherever they are. The Zionist movement which began over a hundred years ago aimed to change that, to create a different, positive identity. There is a very famous play that was written in the early years of the Zionist movement by an author named Haim Hazaz. The playwright had a court room which he put Jewish history on trial and what he said in the play was Jewish history was guilty of being passive. Something always happening to the Jews rather than the Jews determining what has happened to them. The moral story was of course the Zionism was a break away from the Jewish history. We are going to stand up and say “We are independent, free people. We are going to fight for the freedom

15 Etgar Lefkovits, “PM: We Won’t Allow another Holocaust”, The Jerusalem Post, 21 April, 2009, <http://www.jpost.com>, accessed on 25 April 2009.

16 Tom Segev, *The Seventh Million: The Israelis and the Holocaust*, New York: Henry Holt, 2000, p. 11.

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*and independence. We are going to seek to have our own state. We are going to make history. The history is not going to be done to us.*¹⁷

To reach a better understanding of how the memory of the Holocaust has shaped Israeli identity and policy we must turn to specific events following the creation of the state in 1948. These events illustrate the ways in which Israeli policy stood justified in accordance to the events of the Second World War. That said, while leaders around the world recognized that the Holocaust had driven a consensus for Jewish State and indeed, Jewish leadership would continually take the traumatic event as license to expand the State's border, Israeli citizens themselves were reluctant to make this immediate connection. Naturally, in the immediate wake of the horrific event, many Jewish people sought to bury the weight of such extreme terror. By 1948, the year that Israel formally achieved statehood, most Israelis maintained silent recognition surrounding the Jewish victims of the Holocaust. Even through the 1950s, newcomers to Israel continued this silence over the Holocaust. This began to permanently change by early 1960s when West Germany brought the notorious Adolf Eichmann to trial. Eichmann's orchestration of the systemic killings thrust the issue to the fore once again. In the midst of the 1961 trial, Israelis articulated a deeper meaning to the Holocaust and began to shape their identity and policy around it. This reached a climax with events of the Six-Day War in 1967 and would bring about a set of territorial arrangements that continue to engender conflict through the present.

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1950s, THE GREAT SILENCE

The 1947 UN Partition Plan designated 55 percent of the area for the future Jewish state while 45 percent was designated for the Arab population.¹⁸ At the end of the 1948 war, the proportion of the newly born state of Israel changed to about 80 percent for the Jewish people and 20 percent to the Palestinians. Moreover, the 1948 War displaced over 700,000 Palestinian Arabs – all of whom became refugees while the remaining Arabs within Israel's newly expanded borders were placed under martial law. Taking up residency in refugee camps, most found themselves impoverished within months and having lost everything that they had once claimed for their own. Martial law had a catastrophic effect on the Arab population in Israel as they now found themselves economically and socially isolated from the society. This situation continued through the 1950s.¹⁹

17 Gershon Baskin, "Interview by Author", Israeli-Palestine Center for Research and Information (IPCRI), 9 July 2009.

18 United Nations General Assembly Resolution 181, *Future Government of Palestine*, 29 November 1947, www.un.org, accessed on 25 April 2009.

19 Tom Segev, *1949, The First Israelis*, trans. Arlen N. Weinstein, Owl Books by Henry Holt and Company, 1998, p. 298.

Since Israel's creation came at a high cost to the Palestinian population and resulted in the refugee problem, Israel came to justify their actions in the name of unity. The first and strongest justification was that, "the Holocaust had proven once again that the only solution to the Jewish problem was an independent state in Israel" and no matter at what cost this was going to be achieved²⁰ The declaration referred to the Holocaust. As the first prime minister of Israel, David Ben-Gurion, read from the scroll of independence at Knesset;

The catastrophe which recently befell the Jewish people - the massacre of millions of Jews in Europe - was another clear demonstration of the urgency of solving the problem of its homelessness by re-establishing in Eretz-Israel the Jewish State, which would open the gates of the homeland wide to every Jew and confer upon the Jewish people the status of a fully privileged member of the comity of nations. Survivors of the Nazi holocaust in Europe, as well as Jews from other parts of the world, continued to migrate to Eretz-Israel, undaunted by difficulties, restrictions and dangers, and never ceased to assert their right to a life of dignity, freedom and honest toil in their national homeland.²¹

According to this view, Eretz-Israel was the homeland for the Jewish people and they could only be expected to find safety and security in their national homeland. Second, Israeli military leaders claimed that an Arab displacement never occurred. In this view during 1948 and 1949, by the call from their leaders, Palestinian refugees ran away of their own accord and voluntarily left their homes and properties. Since it was a war, "most Israelis accepted this myth as the core of Israel's self-perception"²² By denying that the any forced displacement had occurred, Israelis could more easily justify that they were not stealing occupied land but rather, merely rightfully repopulating their ancestral homeland.²³

In July 1950, the Israeli government passed a law called "The Law of Return". The Law of Return stated that every Jew in the world has the inherent right to settle in Israel as an automatic citizen; it emphasizes the purpose of Israel as a homeland for all Jews. However, the law does not define the term Jew. According to Judaism to be considered Jewish, the person's mother has to be a Jewish. Law of Return gives the right to return to even non-Jews who are either children or grandchildren of a Jewish person, regardless of gender. It gives them the right to immigrate to Israel and become a citizen upon arrival.

20 Ibid. p. 185.

21 Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *The Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel*, 14 May 1948, <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA>, accessed on 27 April 2009.

22 Simha Flapan, "The Birth of Israel: Myths and Realities", in *The Palestinian Problem* eds. Andrew C. Kimmens, New York: H. W. Wilson, 1989, p.194.

23 Edward W. Said, *The End of the Peace Process*, London: Granta Publications, 2002, p.9.

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When David Ben-Gurion drafted this law in the shadow of the Holocaust, the definition of who was properly Jewish seemed self-evident. It meant that whomever the Nazis deemed Jewish and sent to the death camps was to be offered refuge in the newly established State of Israel.²⁴ From time to time he would state; “Aliyah (immigrating to Israel) saves Jews from destruction... We must do everything to save them.”²⁵

According to Tom Segev, the most vital reason for promoting immigrants was to secure the state’s borders and enhance its military power. Ben-Gurion believed the only way to make this a reality was to secure a steady stream of Jewish immigrants who were actively ready to contribute to the state’s security. By steadily absorbing immigrants, Ben-Gurion believed that, “We might have captured the West Bank, the Golan, the Galilee, but those conquests would not have reinforced our security as much as immigration. Immigration gives us more strength. The future of the state depends on immigrants.”²⁶ But these intentions never came to the fore as strongly as a discourse on the Holocaust and preserving Jewish identity within the contours of a nation-state. Indeed, Ben-Gurion, instead of verbalizing the true importance of immigration and the constant growth of Israel asserted that Holocaust demonstrated an utter lack of compassion for the Jewish people. Thus, the only remedy was an independent state that would guarantee the security of Jewish people.

Not surprisingly, Israel’s first foreign policy initiative was to facilitate the departure of Jews from around the world and bring them to Israel as citizens of the new nation. Israel, the young state which had fought for its independence, was welcomed with sympathy from its Western allies, such as the US, England and France as well as West Germany, Soviet Union and Poland. It was seen as a democratic, well-intentioned state, a home for the survivors of the Holocaust and for the refugees that were being oppressed by every regime in their past. Of course it was also a place where these nations could send their own Jewish populations.

By 1949 newcomers began arriving to Israel from Eastern Europe, Asia, North Africa, West Europe and America.²⁷ When they arrived to this newly established country, they were all strangers to each other with little in common other than their religion. They all spoke different languages, had adopted different cultures, and had wildly divergent economic backgrounds and skills.

24 Debate on the law of return and law of citizenship, July 3, 1950, *Proceedings of the Knesset 6* (Jerusalem, 1951) trans., S. Weinstein, in Paul Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz, eds., *The Jew in the Modern World: A Documentary History*, 2. ed. Oxford University Books, 1995.

25 Tom Segev, 1949, *The First Israelis*, p.97.

26 Ibid.

27 Ibid. p. 96 “The largest group of immigrants to arrive in 1949 was from Poland (47,000), North Africa (39,000), Yemen (35,000), Turkey (26,000) and Bulgaria (20,000)”.

Although the Holocaust provided the moral and political exigencies for the state's creation as well the justification within the Knesset for aggressive foreign policy geared toward expansion; there was seldom mention about the Holocaust within the society. The memory of the Holocaust was individual rather than being a collective memory.²⁸ First of all, the Holocaust was specific to the Ashkenazi Jews – all of whom had their personal catastrophic stories. The other newcomers immigrating from North Africa, the Middle East or Latin America were not subjected to such annihilation. Moreover, it was already hard to live together. The economy soured. The country had to be rebuilt again after the 1948 War. Therefore, there was a mutual unspoken agreement about the silence within the society. Holocaust survivors decided to keep their memories in private. Instead of looking at the past and memorizing the suffering of the Holocaust, they preferred looking at the morally better future and rebuilding their country.

Tom Segev makes a point by saying when the state of Israel brought into existence, the central emphasis was on the idea of the “new Jew”. As he notes:

*The “new man” that Zionism wished to create would be the opposite of the persecuted and submissive “old Jew” ... The new Zionist society would represent creative, socialist, secular progress, imbue its children with sovereign pride and with the ability to defend themselves and their honor.*²⁹

However, this unspoken silence had consequences on the society. Vamik Volkan discusses this silence in terms of what he calls a “chosen trauma, a disaster in which an identifiable enemy group has intentionally inflicted pain, suffering, shame humiliation, and helplessness on its victims.”³⁰ He argues that, “in psycho-political terminology, chosen traumas are not mourned.”³¹ He on continues that this “may happen because a group feels too humiliated, angry, or helpless to mourn its chosen trauma and so instead passes on the memory ... ethnic identity evolves through history, as the inability to mourn the chosen trauma influences the social and political ideologies of the particular group.”³² In other words, when a trauma occurs, there's anxiety and helplessness. But if the trauma is caused by others, and if the affected people remain passive, then the emotional impact is more widespread and shared. Among the attributes emerging from form of trauma are helplessness,

28 Paris, p. 328.

29 Segev, *The Seventh Million: The Israelis and the Holocaust*, p.515.

30 Vamik D. Volkan, Gabriele Ast, William F. Greer, Jr., ed., *The Third Reich in the Unconscious; A Study of Transgenerational Transmissions of Shared Trauma and its Consequences for Identity Formation*, Philadelphia: Brunner-Routledge, 2001, p.13.

31 Vamik D. Volkan, 'On Chosen Trauma.' *Mind and Human Interaction*, 3: 13, 1991.

32 Volkan in *The Third Reich in the Unconscious: A Study of Transgenerational Transmission of Shared Trauma and its Consequences for Identity Formation*, p.13.

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shame, humiliation and inability to be assertive. Volkan mobilizes the following as evidence of this phenomenon:

A large number of the survivors who arrived in Israel in the 1940s, without families, were put immediately into mental hospitals for depression. Many of these patients' official files did not even mention that they were victims of the Holocaust; among certain mental health professionals, there was a conspiracy of silence. The Holocaust survivors could not relate their experiences openly. They were given the nicknames "soaps" implying that they were weak people who could easily be washed away. It was only years later that the nickname publicly known: Nazis used to make soap out of the bodies of victims. The effort to ignore the Holocaust was short-lived and ineffective.³³

Volkan goes to note the transgenerational transmission that occurs when an older generation externalizes their traumatized self on to a new generation. The new generation then becomes a reservoir for the unwanted, troublesome parts of an older generation. Because the elders have influence on a child, the child observes their wishes and expectations and is driven to act on them. It becomes the new generation's task to mourn, to reverse the humiliation and feelings of helplessness pertaining to the trauma of their descendants.³⁴ Volkan also makes a critical point by suggesting the usage of the chosen trauma by political leaderships. He states:

A chosen trauma reflects the "infection" of a large-group's mourning process. A reactivation of a chosen trauma serves to link the members of a large group. Such reactivation can be used by the political leadership to promote new massive societal movements, some of them deadly and malignant.³⁵

As Volkan observes, years later by the new generation, the Holocaust would indeed become a collective remembrance and key to the memory of the Jewish people. It was also going to be used by political leaders to strengthen their position or mobilize the public.

THE DECISION TO REMEMBER: KEEPING THE MEMORY ALIVE, EICHMANN TRIAL

In his book *Eichman In My Hands* Peter Malkin, the Israeli secret policeman, who captured Adolf Eichmann on the streets of Buenos Aires talks about the

33 Vamik Volkan, *Blood Lines: from Ethnic Pride to Ethnic Terrorism*, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1997, p.45.

34 Ibid., p.43.

35 Volkan in *The Third Reich in the Unconscious: A Study of Transgenerational Transmission of Shared Trauma and its Consequences for Identity Formation*, p.37.

hours he spent with him after his capture and before Eichmann was sent to Israel for his trial. Malkin expresses his frustration in trying to discover some elements of humanness in Adolf Eichmann. At one point, Malkin told Eichmann about his sister's son and how he was taken away to be killed in the Auschwitz: "He was just your son's age. Also blond and blue-eyed, just like your son, and you killed him," Malkin iterated to Eichmann.³⁶ Eichmann looked, "genuinely perplexed by the observation", as if Malkin said something wrong. He waited for a moment to see if Malkin would clarify his statement. Then Eichmann responded: But he was Jewish, wasn't he?"³⁷ At another point in their conversation Eichman added, "You must believe me! I was always an idealist. Had I been born Jewish, I'd have been the most fervent Zionist."³⁸ Malkin reports that Eichman expressed no conscience and humanness. However, Malkin reported a change within himself:

Those sessions changed me to reflect on my own actions in ways I never had before. I realized that in the course of my career I had participated in the actions that were unjust, perhaps even criminal. Always I had followed my supervisor's orders absolutely; most of the time for what seemed noble reasons...yet also because it was also a matter of habit. I would never be that easy on myself again, or find excuses to deny the hard evidence of my eyes, and ears, and heart. For the fact is as simple as it is inescapable: if the conscience stops functioning, even occasionally, one is in mortal danger of losing oneself.³⁹

After Malkin captured Adolf Eichmann, he informed Ben-Gurion of it. After a short while of his capture, Eichmann was brought to Israel. On 23 May 1960, Ben-Gurion made one of the most dramatic announcements of Eichmann's capture at the Knesset:

It is my duty to inform you that a short time ago the security services apprehended one of the most infamous Nazi criminals, Adolf Eichmann, who was responsible, together with the Nazi leadership, for what they called 'the final solution to the Jewish problem' - in other words, the extermination of six million of Europe's Jews. Adolf Eichmann is already imprisoned in this country, and will soon be brought to trial in Israel under the Nazi and Nazi Collaborators (Punishment) Law of 1950.⁴⁰

36 Peter Z. Malkin, Henry Stein, *Eichmann in My Hands*, New York: Warner Books, 1990, p. 214.

37 Ibid.

38 Ibid., p.213.

39 Ibid., p.220.

40 Segev, *The Seventh Million: The Israelis and the Holocaust*, pg. 326.

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The trial began in April 1961, and took four months from April to August 1961. As a witness Eichmann, spoke as though he had no conception as to why he faced arrest. To him, he was merely there to clear up a misunderstanding. After all, it was not his decision to have initiated the annihilation of the Jews. He claimed that he was simply part of the division of labor that carried out the task. He had only done what he had been told to.

Structured by the Israeli government, the trial was closely watched throughout the world. From West Germany to England, Poland to the USA, the whole Western world followed the trial with sympathy. The only countries that were skeptical and distant to Israel were the Arab countries in the Middle East because of Israel's war crimes and expulsion of the Palestinian population in the 1948 War. Ben-Gurion knew that Israel as a state should have depicted themselves innocent and vulnerable to be able to have the sympathy of the world. Fritz Bauer, a German Jew who was the chief prosecutor for the West German state of Hessen, and Isser Harel, the director of MOSSAD between 1952-1963, were told to create a rumor that Adolf Eichmann had a sanctuary in Kuwait and like other Nazi criminals who were hiding in Arab countries, he was working from there to destroy the Israel and commit another Holocaust on the Jewish people.⁴¹

Within a week after the Eichmann's capture the silence that dominated the Israeli society in 1950s was broken with publicity that the trial generated. Within the twenty four hours Eichmann's capture and apprehension in Israel for trial were the headlines on all of the newspapers. The TV channels started broadcasting the news live in front of the building that Eichmann was being held in.⁴² The nation was stunned. It was a dramatic shift in the way Israelis related to the Holocaust. The whole of Israel was reading the news from the papers and watching the TV broadcasting on the upcoming trial. It was one of the most emotional and shocking incident that hit the Israelis.

Eichmann's capture was perceived as a great victory in Israel. Putting Eichmann in a Jewish court and jail was a great honor for the society. Finally a huge silence was broken within the Israelis. The trial of Eichmann brought the horrifying memories of the Holocaust survivors to a surface. The shame, denial and humiliation of the Holocaust that covered the society in the 1950s were replaced by the victory, revenge and punishment. The unexpected announcement of Eichmann's capture along with the emotional explosion resulted in the Israelis expressing their unspoken anxiety. It was as if any lapse in mission, national unity, or identity since the 1948 War and the Declaration of Independence had evaporated with the capture of Eichmann

41 Isser Harel, *The House on Garibaldi Street: Classics of Espionage*, Routledge, 2. Edition, 1997, pg. 161

42 David S. Wyman, Charles H. Rosenzweig, *The World Reacts to the Holocaust*, Baltimore M.D.: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996, pg. 873

and the broader national discussion on the meaning of the Holocaust that it ultimately engendered.

1967 SIX DAY WAR

In the spring of 1967, Syrian government stated that Israeli forces were massing in northern Israel to attack Syria. Clashes between Israel and Syria had been escalating for more than a year. The tension rose up with the Israeli leaders verbalized that it might be necessary to bring down the Syrian regime if it failed to end Palestinian commando attacks against Israel from Syrian territory. Responding to a Syrian assistance, in May 1967 Egyptian troops entered the Sinai Peninsula. Couple of days later, Egyptian president Gamal Abdel-Nasser asked the UN Force stationed between Israel and Egypt to evacuate their positions. The Egyptians occupied Sharm el-Sheikh and proclaimed a blockade of the Israeli port of Eilat, arguing that access to Eilat was through Egyptian territorial waters. Nasser then signed a defense agreement with Jordan complementing Egypt's existing cooperation with Syria. Thus, Israel was surrounded.⁴³

Israel's held their collective breath. These measures shocked and frightened the Israeli public. Within couple of days volunteers started coming to serve for the army.⁴⁴ Elderly people and children prepared bomb shelters. Volunteers who arrived to Israel dig up part of Tel Aviv beach for sandbags.⁴⁵ People emptied shelves in the stores, filled sandbags.⁴⁶ The Chief Rabbinate declared 1st of June 1967 a day of fast and prayer at this crucial hour for the nation.⁴⁷ It was the first time in the country's history after the 1948 Independence War that nearly all Israelis were standing shoulder to shoulder with apprehension and solidarity. Jews who were not subjected to the Holocaust, this time felt that if they did not survive this time, their fate would be the same as the

43 Ian J. Bickerton, M.N.Pickerson, *The Arab-Israeli Conflict: A History*, Melbourne, Australia: Longman Cheshire, 2.ed., 1991 pg. 131.

44 "Thousands Volunteer for Israel: Ten of thousands of American Jews are expected to turn out on Sunday for what the organizers say will be the support for Israel. The Israeli Embassy in Paris has so far registered 500 names from the hundreds of volunteers wishing to fight for Israel in the event of war", The Jerusalem Post, Friday, 26 May 1967, Eyyar 16, 5727, Safar 17, 1387, Vol. XXXVII, No: 11969, accessed at archives of National Library, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, accessed on 12 July 2009.

45 "Volunteers dig up part of Tel Aviv Beach", Photo by Miller, Photographers note:"The people of Israel have risen in a way that is admirable almost beyond belief", The Jerusalem Post, Monday June 5 1967, Eyar 26, 5727, Safar 27, 1387, Vol. XXXVII, No.11977, accessed at archives of National Library, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, accessed on 13 July 2009.

46 "Stocking a Shelter: Hega, the civil defense authorities have issued posters explaining how to shock a communal shelter in a multi family dwelling or factory", The Jerusalem Post, Monday 30 May 1967, Iyar.20, 5727, Safar.21, 1387, Vol. XXXVII, No:11972, accessed at archives of National Library, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, accessed on 12 July 2009.

47 "Rabbinate Calls for Fast on Thursday", The Jerusalem Post, 31 May 1967, Iyar 21, 5727, Safar 22, 1387, Vol. XXXVII, No. 11973, p.5, accessed at archives of National Library, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, accessed on 13 July 2009.

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European Jews. With the influence of the media and the politicians, a lot of people believed in the assumption that it was not a war for the 1948 occupation but rather, a religious war that aimed to annihilate the Jewish people.⁴⁸ The whole speech, who was a commentator and a former Knesset member for Mapai:

*What is at issue is the existence or nonexistence of the Jewish people. We must crush the new machinations of the New Hitler at the outset, when it is possible to crush them and survive. It is irresponsible not to believe Nasser has been writing and saying for the last twelve years. Neither the world nor the Jews believed the sincerity of Hitler's declarations. Nasser's fundamental strategy is the same as Hitler's.*⁴⁹

The newspapers also compared Nasser's speech; "If Israel wants war-fine: Israel will be destroyed" (Nasser, 1967) with the Hitler's speech; "If the Jews drag the world into war, world Jewry will be destroyed" (Hitler, 1939).⁵⁰ The newspapers also covered Nasser's involvement in the Yemen civil war and Egyptians used chemical weapons in the civil war with the help of German scientists. All of those headlines brought back the depression and anxiety of the old Holocaust. The Jewish people once again believed they were in danger of being obliterated.⁵¹

On May 14 1967, The Jerusalem Post published a special edition for the Arab's hatred for Jews. David Kimche states:

*A new ideology based on hatred of the Jew, General Yehoshafat Harkabi, who has made a special study, has shown how the Egyptians have developed their own brand of anti-Semitism. Israel is presented as a cancer in the body of the Arab world which must be removed.*⁵²

As a similar note thousands of Readers' Letters to the Editor of the Jerusalem Post reflected the same mentality. As one these letters states:

Israel has been continuously threatened with simple psychical destruction, meaning genocide, completing Hitler's job by responsible

48 Donna Rosenthal, *the Israelis: Ordinary People in an Extraordinary Land*, New York: Free Press, 2005, p. 207.

49 Segev, *The Seventh Million: The Israelis and the Holocaust*, p. 391.

50 Ibid.

51 Michael Brecher, *Decisions in Israeli's Foreign Policy*, New Haven: Yale University, 1975, p. 333.

52 David Kimche, "As the Arab Seeds", *The Jerusalem Post*, Monday 14 May 1967, Eyar 4, 5727, Safar5, 1387, Vol. XXXVII, No. 11959, accessed at archives, National Library, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, accessed on 12 July 2009.

*Arab leaders, such as Nasser and his aide Shukelry, and others. These declarations represent official policy and not newspaper of rhetorical threats.*⁵³

The war ended on 5 June 1967. The Israeli army conquered the Gaza Strip, the Sinai Peninsula, the West Bank, the East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights in six days. Israelis embraced the war with great triumphalism. On June 7 1967 Minister of Defense, General Moshe Dayan's message was on the first page of all Israeli newspapers:

*I would like to thank you all of those who have expressed their good wishes on my appointment as Minister of Defense. To all of Israel and to the Israel Defense Forces, I extend my wishes for victory in our struggle.*⁵⁴

The victory of the 1967 War and the fear of the second Holocaust brought the Israelis into a national identity. The Holocaust would indeed become the key to the Israelis. From that day until today the Holocaust was always going to be used, mentioned and be remembered in every debate, political speech or even a simply conversation. After the 1967 War, the more time passed, the more the Holocaust became the part of the society. The Holocaust became an event to all citizens of Israel no matter what their origins and culture were. It would indeed become the identity of the Jewish soul. A survey conducted by The New York Times Israel Poll in 1989 showed that 68% percentage of Israeli people still believed that "If they could, Arabs would commit a holocaust against the Jews in Israel"⁵⁵

Erna Paris makes a point suggesting the Israeli pollster Hancock Smith's findings on Israeli society. She argues that Jewish citizens of Israel believe that the Western power did nothing to save the Jews during the Second World War. She continues by adding: "This is a powerful indictment and it has a strong influence on the way Israelis act. The point is that people here start with the belief and it colors what they see."⁵⁶

THE INSTITUTIONS OF MEMORY

In today's democracies, collective memory is increasingly shaped by specialized institutions such as schools, courts, museums, and the mass media.

53 "Tell World the Facts" by Reuren Avnari, Readers' Letters to the Editor, *The Jerusalem Post*, Haifa, 12 June 1967, Sivan 20, 5727, Rabia Awat 21, 1387, Vol. XXXVII, No. 11996, accessed at archives, National Library, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, accessed on 13 July 2009.

54 General Moshe Dayan, Minister of Defense, *The Jerusalem Post*, Wednesday June 7 1967, Eyar 28, 5727, Safar 29, 1387, Vol. XXXVII, No. 11979, accessed at archives of National Library, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, accessed on 13 July 2009.

55 *New York Times Israel Poll*, March 1989, www.icpsr.com, accessed 21 February 2009.

56 Erna Paris, *The Garden and the Gun: A Journey Inside Israel*, Toronto: Semaphore Press, 1991, p. 52.

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The growing number of “ideas, assumptions, and knowledge that structure the relationship of individuals and groups to the immediate as well as the more distant past”⁵⁷ is formed, interpreted and preserved by public institutions. In Israel, schools and media are other important vehicles besides museums to transmit the past of the Jewish people to the new generations.

Today, the most important role in the construction of collective memories is played by the mass media. The shift from relying only on face to face exchanges to electronic processing on the word brought a new conception of the past and thinking of the societies. The input of media on how and what we remember is a crucial factor influencing the society’s approach to the outside. Prof. Baskin criticizes the Israeli media’s approach to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. He states:

Media and press play a big role in Israel and it is populist. They want to sell newspapers. Television channels want to increase their ratings. Unfortunately violence sells, peace doesn't sell. Bloody pictures give rating on the television. Story of school children from Israel and Palestine meeting each other and playing soccer is not news. But if there is a football game and an Arab kid stabs a Jewish kid, it's on the first page.⁵⁸

Another important vehicle for the preservation of the memory is the educational system. In 1980, a special curriculum of the Holocaust was introduced at the schools. In schools students started creating their family trees. The survivors of the Holocaust started telling their stories in classes as guest speakers. In secondary schools, children started to watch movies about the Holocaust in classes and reading about the memoirs of the survivors. However, there is a common sense that children should not be learning about the Holocaust when they are too young. The underlying reason of it is young children are not able to understand past versus present. Teaching about the Holocaust to the young generation may re-traumatize the younger generations leaving them with unmerited burden of humiliation, anger, fear, and hatred. As Yaniv, a Tel-Aviv resident, states:

I was almost five when the teacher started talking about the Holocaust. And I remember already knowing that there was a really bad man named Hitler who killed almost all Jewish people. I also remember having discussions with my classmates about all the specific horrors that happened in the Holocaust.⁵⁹

57 Daniel J. Sherman, *The Construction of Memory in Interwar France*, Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1999, p. 2.

58 Baskin, interview by author.

59 Yaniv Segalovich, “Interview by Author, Tel Aviv, 20 July 2009.

“I think every child in Israel have a story like this,”⁶⁰ Alon, a 28 year old movie director, states; “When I was four or five, I remember having nightmares about Hitler coming into my room, taking me to a forest, and killing me. And the paradox is I am a Mizrahi Jew. None of my family members were subjected to the Holocaust. My family has immigrated to Israel from Iraq and they did not have any traumatic experiences.”⁶¹

With the beginning of the decomposition of the Eastern bloc, and opening of Poland, school trips to Poland started. However, these trips receive some criticism.

Yoav Shamir, an Israeli film maker directed a documentary called Defamation (Hashmatsa) about anti-semitism in today’s world in 2009 summer. The film is presented as the journey of a young man who has grown up in Israel without experiencing anti-Semitism on a quest to discover what it is and how it affects people.⁶²

Yet, the most affecting scenes in the documentary involve the class of Israeli teenagers visiting Auschwitz, a former Nazi death camp in Poland. The students speak beforehand of how they are taught that anti-Semitism flourishes everywhere in the world and that by traveling beyond their nation’s borders they are constantly at risk. For instance, at one scene, one of the tour guides at the bus warns the students not to speak Hebrew on streets of Poland and to be careful of the anti-Semitism.⁶³ There is another scene of children eating snacks on the bus while going to Auschwitz and watching historical footage of emaciated Jews in the notorious concentration camp. The documentary depict the youngsters making the emotional journey from giggling innocence and guarded fear into the camp’s horror where the crushing images leave them distraught and weeping, and then outraged.⁶⁴

ENEMY IMAGE; DEHUMANIZATION PROCESS

Heidi Burgess defines the “enemy” as anyone that is not in our own group.⁶⁵ “Our group” can be clarified as any identity, our ethnicity, race, language or religion. In conflicts people from the same groups tend to see the opposing group as, especially negative. This negative image creates the “other” in the

60 Alon Levi, “Interview by Author”, Tel Aviv, 20 July 2009.

61 Ibid.

62 *Defamation (Hashmatsa)*. Dir. Yoav Shamir. 2009. Film.

63 Ibid.

64 Ibid.

65 Heidi Burgess, *Enemy Images; In-Groups and Out-Groups*, October 2003, Beyond Intractability, <http://www.beyondintractability.org>, accessed on 12 September 2009.

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eyes of the group members. The opposing group becomes inferior to one's own group and is seen as "enemy".⁶⁶ Alternatively, anthropologist Howard Stein notes that "enemies are neither 'merely' projections, nor are they 'merely' real,"⁶⁷ concluding, they are both. Since groups externalize and project their unwanted elements onto their enemies, they are also products of the group's fantasies. Volkan makes a contribution to the topic stating that:

*When neighbors become enemies, they do not wish to acknowledge any degree of similarity, for that concession would diminish the distinctions between them. Enemy neighbors who do share similarities will stress and elevate the importance of major differences, such as language, skin color, religion, history, food, music, dance, or folklore and exaggerate the importance of minor differences.*⁶⁸

At the checkpoints of Israel, one could see a definite "us" versus "them" attitude. Palestinians who line up for hours to pass the check points to get to work receive countless orders to stand straight, look forward, or not to look in the eyes of soldiers. They are even ordered to sing the Israeli national anthem or to swear or say derogatory words that humiliate Palestinians. The Israeli soldiers spend hours taking Palestinians apart and lining them back together to assure that they do not carry any bombs or are smuggling anything. Sometimes a person who waits for hours at the checkpoint is rejected for the entrance and asked to come back another day.

Bernard Ottenberg furthers the topic of "us" versus "them" by suggesting "two types of splitting."⁶⁹ He explains that in the first phase, a splitting between "us" versus "them" is created by the group. "Them" is the enemy that is outside the group. If this splitting is too strong, in where members of the opposing group are considered to be less than human, the "other" becomes a target for dehumanization.⁷⁰ According to Ottenberg, dehumanization is "a composite psychological defense which results in a diminished perception of and feeling for humanness in oneself and others"⁷¹ Neve Gordon adds that this process occurred extremely rapidly in Israel. He argues:

A few months following the eruption of the second intifada, thousands of billboards , posters, bumper stickers and graffiti began to appear;

66 Ibid.

67 Howard Stein "On Professional Allegiance in the Study of Political Psychology", *Political Psychology* 7, 1986, p.248.

68 Volkan, *Blood Lines: From Ethnic Terror to Ethnic Terrorism*, p.108.

69 Bernard Perry Ottenberg and Fritz Redl, "Dehumanization: A Composite Psychological Defense in Relation to modern War" in eds. Milton Schwebel, *Behavioral Science and Human Survival*, Palo Alto CA: Science and Behavior Book, 2003, p.64.

70 Ibid.

71 Ibid. p.78.

with slogans like “No Arabs, No Assaults”, “Expel Arafat”, “Kahane Was Right⁷²” and “The Criminals of Oslo Should be Brought to Justice”. But , as it turned out, this was just the beginning, Stickers stating “No Leftists, No Assaults” were printed to accompany the ones exclaiming “No Arabs, No Assaults”, while little by little a whole new brand of posters directed against Palestinian citizens of Israel appeared on the scene: “Do Not Employ Arabs”, “Enemies Should Not Be Offered a Livelihood”, “ We Will Assist Those Who Do Not Provide Work for Arabs”. One poster even provided a detailed list of taxi companies that employ Arab citizens and companies that don't.⁷³

A pioneering research study conducted by Daniel Bar-Tal, one of the leading political psychologists, shows that an Israeli Jewish sense of victimization has been perpetuating the conflict with Palestinians. Bar-Tal argues that “Most of the nation retains a simplistic collective memory of the conflict, a black and white memory that portrays Jews in a very positive light and the Arabs in a very negative one.”⁷⁴ This memory along with the ethos of the conflict and collective emotions such as fear, hatred and unresolved anger, turns into a psycho-social infrastructure by society that have involved in an intractable conflict. Bar-Tal argues that this infrastructure gives rise to the culture of conflict in which Israelis and Palestinians are deep immersed, fanning the flames and preventing progress toward peace. He claims that in this type of environment it is almost impossible to imagine a possibility that the two societies will be capable of overcoming the psychological obstacles without outside help.⁷⁵ Bar-Tal concludes his study as suggesting: “The sweeping support for Operation Cast Lead confirmed the main diagnosis that Israeli Jews’ consciousness is characterized by a sense of victimization, a siege mentality, blind patriotism, belligerence, self-righteousness, dehumanization of the Palestinians and insensitivity to their suffering.”⁷⁶

CONCLUSION

Chosen traumas happen when a group feels too humiliated, angry, or helpless to mourn its trauma, so it passes on the memory to the next generations. As the new generation receives the trauma, it becomes their responsibility to

72 Rabbi Meir Kahane, an American who founded the Jewish Defense League in the 1960s and later immigrated to Israel, founded the Kach party, which advocated expulsion of the Palestinians. In 1988 Kach was declared a racist party by the Israeli government and was banned from the Knesset. In 1994 following the attack on Muslim Palestinians praying at a mosque in Hebron by a Kahane follower, Kach was outlawed. Rabbi Meir Kahane was assassinated in New York in 1990.

73 Neve Gordon, “The Enemy Within”, in *The Other Israel: Voices of Refusal and Dissent*, p. 101.

74 Akiva Elder, “Is an Israeli Jewish Sense of Victimization Perpetuating the Conflict with Palestinians?” An Interview with Daniel Bar-Tal, 30 January 2009, Haaretz, accessed on 31 January 2009.

75 Ibid.

76 Ibid.

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mourn. Therefore chosen trauma becomes of the person's identity. Having an enemy enhances group cohesion. The negative image of the enemy creates the "other" in the eyes of the group members. The opposing group becomes inferior to one's own group. Extreme fear and uncertainty strengthens the enemy image and dehumanizes "the other". The group starts seeing "the other" inferior and as a threat for their existence. During times of conflict with the negative impact of institutions such as education system and media the group portrays their aggression as a largely defensive effort while designating the aggression of the other party's offensive. Modifying such a relationship would likely threaten many people in Israel by being a part of this cycle of violence.

Yehezkel Landau gives an example of this vicious cycle of violence and dehumanization process:

During the Lebanon War in 1982, one of the soldiers who returned from the front to protest against the war was named Shuki. He told a story about his experience going into the Ein Al-Hilweh refugee camp outside Sidon, where his unit was ordered to clear the camp of PLO fighters. Shuki and his comrades fought their way into the camp, shooting as they went, taking care not to harm civilians. Suddenly two refugees came in their direction carrying an object and yelling at the soldiers. Shuki and his buddies screamed back at them, urging them to get out of the way. Since the two men were only about 20 yards distant, the soldiers could quickly make out that they were carrying a crate of Pepsi Cola and could decipher their screams as invitations to have a drink! Shuki later reflected: "If they had been 200 yards away, we would have shot at them and been glad to hit them." And he asked: "How far away does a human being have to be before he becomes a target? How close must he be before we see he is human?"⁷⁷

Breaking the cycle of violence is essential not only to create sustainable peace but also to free the society of fear, anxiety and paranoia. First of all, in societies trying to break the cycle of violence, hatred, and revenge, it is crucial to acknowledge the human rights abuses that were committed by both sides. It has been documented that ordinary people under certain circumstances are capable of greater evil than we could have ever imagined.⁷⁸ If ordinary people are capable of greater evil, then they should be capable of greater virtue as well. The first step to break the cycle of violence in Israeli -Palestinian is to acknowledge the human rights violations that were committed by both sides. The second step is creating a dialogue between Jewish citizens of Israel,

77 Yehezkel Landau, "Rehumanizing the "Enemy" and Confronting Ourselves" in *Palestine-Israel Journal of Politics, Economics and Culture*, Vol.3, No.1, Jerusalem: Al Amal Press, 1996.

78 Please see Elie Wiesel, *Night*, New York: Hill and Wang, 1960; John Conroy, *Unspeakable Acts, Ordinary People: The Dynamics of Torture*, New York: Knopf, 2000.

Palestinian citizens of Israel, and Palestinians. Dialogue, of course, will not solve every problem faced by these groups. But dialogue creates availability for broadening our models of justice and for healing deep wounds in these groups by acknowledging and recording what has been done. Dialogue humanizes the dehumanized and confronts perpetrators with their wrongdoing. Through dialogue, victims as well as the society “come to recognize perpetrators as human beings who failed morally, whether through coercion, the perverted convictions of a warped mind, or fear.”⁷⁹ At this point, creating a national language for collective reconciliation is crucial. This occurs through institutions such as the media and educational system.

As geopolitical forces continue to shift dramatically, new means of conflict resolution will become paramount toward building and ensuring a peaceful future. The goal among policy makers then must be to emphasize the use of human centered approaches, taking into account the intricate methodologies of social and psychological relationships rather than violence and military adventurism.

79 Godobo-Madikizela, p. 119.

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