Israel in Transition from Zionism to Post-Zionism

By HERBERT C. KELMAN

ABSTRACT: Since the original goals of Zionism have largely been accomplished or are less relevant today, conditions are ripe for Israel's transition from Zionism to post-Zionism. A post-Zionist Israel—while maintaining its Jewish character and special relationship to world Jewry—would be a state primarily committed to protecting and advancing the interests of its citizens, regardless of ethnicity. In a post-Zionist Israel, the status of non-Jewish Israelis would be upgraded and the status of non-Israeli Jews downgraded. Moreover, Israel would be integrated into the region and engaged in normal, peaceful relations with its neighbors. Many forces are promoting this transition, including the peace process, changes in Israel-Diaspora relations, and the liberalization of the society. Countervailing forces stem mostly from the ultra-nationalist and orthodox religious sectors in the society. To advance the transition, Israel will have to address four major divisions within the society: the divisions between citizens and noncitizens, Jewish and Palestinian citizens, Ashkenazi and Sephardi Jews, and religious and secular Jews.

Herbert C. Kelman is Richard Clarke Cabot Professor of Social Ethics at Harvard University and director of the Program on International Conflict Analysis and Resolution at the Center for International Affairs. He has chaired Harvard's Middle East Seminar for the past twenty years. His most recent book, coauthored with V. Lee Hamilton, is Crimes of Obedience: Toward a Social Psychology of Authority and Responsibility. *He received the 1997 Grawemeyer Award for Ideas Improving World Order.*

THE thesis of this article is that the Israeli state and society are undergoing a major transformation, which can be described as a transition from Zionism to post-Zionism. The beginnings of this transformation can be traced to the Egyptian-Israeli peace process in 1977; it received a significant further boost in the aftermath of the Oslo agreement between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in 1993.

The term "post-Zionism" is used in a variety of different ways.[1] It has been applied, in particular, to the writings of Israeli revisionist historians and critical sociologists who have questioned some of the dominant national narratives and have challenged widely accepted myths about the origins of Israel and the Arab-Israeli conflict. These writings can all be described as post-Zionist in that they dispute Zionist historiography and ideological assumptions, although the authors do not necessarily identify themselves as post-Zionists.[2] My own analysis, though partly influenced by this scholarly debate, is not anchored in the post-Zionist literature.

My focus in this article is not on the past—that is, on a critique of Zionist ideology and historiography—but on the present and future. I use the term "post-Zionism" in a descriptive as well as a normative sense: to refer to a shift in ideology that is gradually taking place in Israel and that, I believe, needs to and ought to take place. It is a shift in the way Israel is viewed by its Jewish population: a shift from exclusivism to pluralism, from domination over the Palestinian population to equality and partnership, from isolation and a hostile relationship with its neighbors to integration into the region.

I am not suggesting that there has been a widespread ideological shift among Israeli Jews from Zionism toward this kind of post-Zionist view. Zionism remains the ideology of the state and the ideology with which, however passively, the vast majority of Israeli Jews identify themselves. Moreover, the post-Zionist vision is frightening to various elements of the society, and the intensity of their resistance to a shift in this direction has increased as the peace process has made it appear more imminent. There is clearly a bitter internal struggle ahead, and it is difficult to predict its outcome. What I am proposing is merely that the objective agenda of the state and the subjective preoccupation of significant segments of the population are shifting from Zionist to post-Zionist concerns.

The analysis to be presented here is not based on systematic research but on the informal observations of a social scientist who has been visiting Israel on a regular basis and following events there over many years. The focus of my own work for more than two decades has been the Arab-Israeli—and particularly the Palestinian-

1. For discussions of some of the different meanings of the term, see David R. Adler, "Post-Zionism: Toward a Working Definition," *Response: A Contemporary Jewish Review*, 66:7-13 (Summer/Fall 1996); and Chaim I. Waxman, "Critical Sociology and the End of Ideology in Israel," *Israel Studies*, 2(1):194-210 (Spring 1997).

2. A good example here is Simha Flapan, *The Birth of Israel: Myths and Realities* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1987).

Israeli—conflict and the possibilities for its resolution. The conflict, therefore, provides the particular lens through which I look at developments in Israeli society. Accordingly, one of the questions of central concern to this analysis is how the Arab-Israeli peace process furthers the transition from Zionism to post-Zionism and how that transition, in turn, furthers the peace process.

The article begins with a discussion of what I mean by "Israel's transition to post-Zionism" and what such a transition implies for Israeli society and its domestic and foreign policy. It then proceeds to describe some of the forces that contribute to this transition and those that stand in its way. Finally, it explores the role in this transition process of four major divisions within Israeli society: the division between citizens and noncitizens, between Jewish and Palestinian Arab citizens, between Jews of European origin and those of African and Asian origin, and between religious and secular Jews.

ZIONISM AND POST-ZIONISM

The central goal of political Zionism was to "solve the Jewish problem" through the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine. A state was the answer to the dual threat faced by Diaspora Jews: the threat of anti-Semitic persecution and the threat of assimilation. A Jewish state, devoted to the ingathering of the exiles, was seen as a haven for individual Jews and Jewish communities under threat, as well as the only basis for the long-term security of the Jewish people. But the purpose of the state went beyond its protective function. It was seen as a vehicle for national liberation in all its aspects: a base for expressing Jewish identity, for developing the national culture and language, for building new social and economic institutions, and for enabling Jews to live the life of a normal people that had been denied to them in the Diaspora.

The establishment of the state of Israel was a momentous step in the fulfillment of the Zionist project, but it did not by any means complete the agenda of the Zionist movement. The leadership of the new state faced the same tasks of institution building and nation building that the leaders of all new states confront. But the Israeli leadership, in fulfilling the Zionist mission, saw its task as building a state not only for the Yishuv—the Jewish population in Palestine—but for the entire Jewish people, dispersed around the world. Moreover, it had to build this state in a country with a sizable non-Jewish population who claimed the land for themselves, and within a region in which a Jewish state was not welcome. Under these circumstances, pursuit of the Zionist mission—securing a state in Palestine for the Jewish people—remained an active part of the agenda of the state of Israel. The mission expressed itself in a variety of institutional structures and policies directed at maintaining a Jewish majority and Jewish dominance in the state, building close relations with world Jewry, enabling and encouraging immigration of Jews from different parts of the Diaspora, expanding the international legitimacy of the state of Israel, and

maintaining a strong military capacity and security apparatus to confront Arab hostility and denial of Israel's legitimacy.

Perhaps the prime example of the institutionalization of the Zionist mission in the state of Israel is the Law of Return, which grants Jews from any part of the world the automatic right to settle in Israel and attain Israeli citizenship. Another example is provided by the official status within Israel of Zionist institutions, such as the Jewish Agency and the Jewish National Fund, and their role in ensuring Jewish ownership of land and facilitating Jewish settlement. Zionism has also expressed itself in Israel's readiness to absorb large migrations of Jews from around the world. Thus, in the years after the establishment of the state, Israel experienced a vast and rapid growth in the population with the large migration of Jews from Arab countries. In the 1980s and 1990s, Israel's commitment to the Zionist project received a major boost with the large migration of Jews from Russia and elsewhere in the former Soviet Union and the much smaller but highly dramatic migration of Jews from Ethiopia. The absorption of immigrants and, even more so, Israel's frequent wars, the constant threat of war, and the extensive military apparatus designed to meet these dangers have called for a sustained level of mobilization and sacrifice of the population that is more characteristic of a national movement than an established state.

If these are some of the ways in which Zionism continues to express itself in the state of Israel, what would it mean for Israel to move in the direction of post-Zionism? Post-Zionism, as I see it, does not mean rejection of the Zionist project, nor does it mean a loss of the Jewish character of the state. In a post-Zionist Israel, with its Jewish majority, the dominant language would still be Hebrew; Jewish culture and history would still play a prominent role in shaping the national ethos, values, symbols, and memories. Indeed, given the history of the Jewish people and the origins of the state, a post-Zionist Israel would, for some time to come, maintain the commitment to open its doors to persecuted Jewish communities elsewhere in the world. But, in a post-Zionist Israel, the primary commitment of the state would be to protect and advance the interests of its citizens. A post-Zionist Israel would be a pluralistic democracy in which the full exercise of citizen rights is unrelated to ethnicity.

At the risk of oversimplification, post-Zionism can be said to imply an upgrading in the status of non-Jewish citizens of Israel and a downgrading in the status of non-Israeli Jews. Thus the transition to post-Zionism calls for a review of laws and state practices that systematically favor Jewish over non-Jewish citizens in such areas as land use, housing, economic development, municipal services, social services, and educational opportunities. Similarly, it calls for a review of immigration laws and policies and a reexamination of the automatic right of any Jew to settle in Israel and attain citizenship. For the foreseeable future, Jewish ethnicity may well be a relevant criterion for the right to immigration to Israel,

particularly in cases in which the immigrants are victims of anti-Semitic persecution. But it would need to be one of a number of criteria, all embedded in a general, comprehensive immigration policy in which the right of Jews to immigrate to Israel is neither automatic nor exclusive.

In short, in a post-Zionist Israel, in which the state's primary commitment is to protect and advance the interests of its citizens, Palestinian Arabs would be full citizens in all respects. The state would be committed to the welfare and security of these citizens and to the development and effective functioning of their institutions and communities, as much as it is to its Jewish citizens. Diaspora Jews would be seen unambiguously as citizens of their respective countries, with familial, cultural, and religious ties to Israel, and not as candidates for immigration and future citizenship. In a post-Zionist Israel, one would not expect planeloads of Hasidic Jews from Brooklyn flying in to cast their ballots in the Knesset elections.

Post-Zionism also implies an Israel that is less beleaguered, less isolated, and less anxious about its security than it has been throughout most of its history. This, of course, requires a change in Israel's relationship with its neighbors. The relationship must be one in which Israel's legitimacy has been accepted, the threat of military attacks and territorial incursions from its neighboring states is minimal, diplomatic ties have been established, and a normal pattern of interstate interaction—in the form of trade, tourism, and regional cooperation—prevails. As a

consequence, Israel will be free of the claustrophobia, the sense of siege, and the constantly high level of mobilization that have been part of its reality. The sense of threat and isolation reinforces the continuing prominence of the Zionist project. Only with a change in the relationship between Israel and its neighbors does the transition to post-Zionism become a realistic possibility.

To what extent do the conditions for such a transition exist now? What are the forces that facilitate this transition and those that impede it? I turn to these questions next.

FORCES FACILITATING AND IMPEDING THE TRANSITION TO POST-ZIONISM

I propose that the objective conditions for transition from Zionism to post-Zionism are in place because the original goals of Zionism have to a large extent been accomplished or become less relevant in the contemporary environment. The Jewish state has been established and has been a stable part of the international system for almost half a century. Israel is economically strong and militarily powerful. It has signed peace agreements with Egypt and Jordan, is engaged in peace negotiations with the Palestinians (although these are stalled at the time of writing in July 1997), and has established diplomatic or economic relations with several other Arab states. There is no imminent threat to Israel's existence or to the Jewish character of the state. Broad acceptance of Israel's legitimacy by its neighbors (which is the ultimate foundation of national security) and integration in the re-

gion are now within Israel's grasp. Finally, there are no sizable Jewish communities around the world that see themselves in imminent danger and in need of rescue. Thus, with the major tasks of Zionism completed and the potential threats to the Zionist project abated, the conditions are ripe for post-Zionism. Ironically, the greatest threat to at least two of these achievements—to the Jewish character of Israel and to the growing integration of Israel in the Middle East—comes from those elements within the Zionist movement itself that are pursuing an expansionist doctrine and are still unwilling to agree to the partition of Palestine between the two peoples, which the Zionist mainstream accepted fifty years ago.

The achievements enumerated do not imply that Israel is free of problems and can rest on its laurels. For one thing, Israel's acceptance and integration in the region, which, I have argued, are now within its grasp (largely as a consequence of the Oslo accord), depend very much on what happens in the peace process. Unless there are major changes in the course pursued by the current government, the promising opportunity for a new relationship between Israel and its Arab neighbors is likely to be lost. Furthermore, Israel still faces major challenges in state building and nation building. Many of these are linked to the divisions in Israeli society to be discussed in the final section of this article. However, at this stage in Israel's development, these tasks—short-range and long-range—are best conceived as tasks that must be tackled by the Israeli government and people, rather than as a continu-

ing part of the Zionist project. In fact, I believe, these tasks can be carried out more effectively by a post-Zionist Israel than by a Zionist one.

I have argued that the objective conditions for a transition from Zionism to post-Zionism now exist. A variety of forces have facilitated this development and are likely to continue to do so; others are impeding it. Several of these forces warrant some elaboration.

The peace process

The Arab-Israeli peace process is probably a sine qua non for the transition from Zionism to post-Zionism. One cannot assign a precise date to the beginning of a historical process, but President Anwar Sadat's peace initiative in 1977 represents a good starting point for analytic purposes. Sadat's visit to Jerusalem—which I was fortunate to witness firsthand—had an electrifying effect on Israeli society, as evidenced by reactions on the street, by public opinion data, and by subsequent policy. For the first time, the Israeli public had the sense that a new kind of existence was possible for Israel in the Middle East—an existence characterized by peace with its neighbors, normal relations, the end of isolation, the end of a state of constant mobilization. When the Egyptian-Israeli negotiations began to falter, the Peace Now movement, led by military reserve officers, sprang up; its primary message was that peace with Egypt was an opportunity that the country could not afford to miss.

The Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty was eventually signed. The normali-

zation process has been much less rapid and extensive than Israel would have liked it to be, largely because Egypt, eager to be reintegrated into the Arab world after its separate peace with Israel, wanted to keep its distance from its peace partner. The Egyptian-Israeli peace remains a cold peace to this day. Yet, the peace with Egypt made an enormous difference to Israel's national security and well-being. Israel's western border was quiet. With Egypt out of the military equation, the threat of war was greatly reduced; the Lebanon War, as Prime Minister Menachem Begin said, was a war of choice rather than necessity. Diplomatic relations between Egypt and Israel remained in place, despite periodic tensions resulting from the Lebanon War and the *intifada*. For the first time, Israelis were able to travel to an Arab country and did so in large numbers.

Psychologically, these changes had a great impact on the Israeli public. Israelis' sense of rejection and isolation in the region, reinforced by the geographic reality of being surrounded by enemies and being able to leave the country only by sea or air, was significantly relieved. Most important, many Israelis saw the peace with Egypt as an opening, with the anticipation of further changes to come. They developed a sense of hope, based on the new-found belief that it would be possible in time for Israel to make peace with its other neighbors, become integrated into the region, and function as a normal state. This hope set the stage for the emergence of a post-Zionist vision, in which Israel would no longer require constant mobilization and struggle in

order to establish the legitimacy and security of the Jewish state. .

The vision of peace and integration in the region—most clearly articulated by Shimon Peres—moved closer to reality with the Oslo accord of 1993. The mutual recognition between Israel and the PLO and the ongoing negotiations between the two opened the door to further significant changes in Israel's relations with its neighbors. In fairly rapid succession, an Israeli-Jordanian peace treaty was signed, followed by the initiation of diplomatic relations and a variety of cooperative projects; formal and informal relations between Israel and other Arab states were established; Israel played an active role in a series of regional economic meetings, alongside many of its Arab neighbors, and began to participate in the economic life of the region; political and economic ties increased between Israel and non-Arab countries in Asia and Africa that had previously avoided relations with Israel out of solidarity with the Palestinians; even the relations between Israel and European states improved; and, presumably in response to these developments, the Israeli economy was booming. Altogether, with Israel's movement toward peace, normality, and integration, it seemed that the task of Zionism was nearing completion and the time for transition to post-Zionism had come.

The relationship between the peace process and the transition to post-Zionism works in both directions. On the one hand, the peace process has helped to create the conditions for a post-Zionist Israel. On the other hand, continuation and ful-

fillment of the peace process require movement within Israel toward post-Zionist thinking and attitudes. To bring the process forward, Israel has to show that it is ready to declare the Zionist project complete and to be integrated into the Middle East—to live as a good neighbor in the region, to accept final borders, and to agree to drawing these borders in a way that will enable the Palestinians to establish a viable independent state of their own in Palestine.

Israel-Diaspora relations

Changes in the relationship between Israel and the Jewish Diaspora are also furthering the transition to post-Zionism. The ingathering of the Jewish people in its historical homeland, through *aliyah* (literally: ascent) from the countries in which it is now dispersed, remains one of the stated goals of the Zionist movement. Mechanisms and policies for encouraging *aliyah*, including laws that facilitate resettlement of Jewish immigrants to Israel, are still in place. There continue to be individual Jews and Jewish families from different countries, including the United States and elsewhere in the Western world, who choose to make *aliyah*; in recent years, the new immigrants from the West have increasingly come from the Orthodox religious sector. But there is no plan, either in Israel or in the Diaspora, to turn the ingathering of the exiles into an operational goal, and there is no expectation that this will happen and even no desire to make it happen. Israeli leaders are, on the whole, satisfied with the current situation in which

there are strong Jewish communities in the United States and elsewhere in the West that identify with Israel and provide financial and political support to it. Some would even argue that, in contradiction to Zionist ideology, the state of Israel has found it in its interest to perpetuate Diaspora communities.[3]

An important element of Zionist ideology has been its stress on the precariousness of Jewish communities in the Diaspora and the need for a Jewish state to provide them a haven when they are faced with persecution and threats to their existence. The large-scale immigration of Jews from the former Soviet Union, starting in the late 1980s, and the rescue of the Ethiopian Jewish community gave renewed impetus to this concern and reinvigorated Zionist ideology. These two projects, however, are now virtually completed. There may well be some small Jewish communities that are still physically, economically, or culturally endangered. Moreover, anti-Semitism continues to exist, and there is no assurance that it may not at some point in the future become an existential threat to a Jewish community somewhere in the world. But, at least in the United States, in which the largest Jewish community resides, as well as in other parts of the world, anti-Semitism has declined. There seem to be no large Jewish communities that are in imminent danger and in need of rescue. At the very least, there seem to be no Jewish communities that perceive such a threat and whose members are

3. See Boas Evron, *Jewish State or Israeli Nation?* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995).

seeking settlement in Israel in large numbers.

In sum, the prevailing relations between Israel and the Jewish Diaspora call for a reexamination of the view of Israel as a state for the Jewish people worldwide, and a transition to the post-Zionist view of Israel as a state for its own citizens—albeit with continuing close ties to world Jewry.

Internal changes

Changes within Israeli society itself have also helped to create the conditions for transition to a post-Zionist Israel. The younger generations have no direct experience with Diaspora anti-Semitism or with the struggle to establish a Jewish state in Palestine. They were mostly born into Israel as an established state and think of it as a given reality. They often react to the invocation of Zionist ideals as sentimental preaching by their elders. They are concerned with pursuing their careers, improving the quality of their lives, and living as normally as possible within the constraints of a universal draft, arduous military reserve duty for men, and antiterrorist vigilance. They tend to embrace Western culture with its stress on individualism and consumer orientation. Without implying that these generations are more selfish and less idealistic than their predecessors, it seems reasonable to conclude that they are less receptive to the communitarian appeals and the demands for self-sacrifice based in Zionist ideology.

Along with the changes in value orientation, there have been significant changes in the Israeli economy.

The economy has shown considerable growth, in part attributable to the impact of the Oslo accord. In terms of such indicators as gross national product and per capita income, Israel is now within the range of Western democracies. Israeli business and industry are active participants in the global economy, and they are eager to continue in that role. These developments have been accompanied by a process of liberalization in the economy and the society in general, that is, a reduction in the role of the state. Yoav Peled of Tel-Aviv University has described this liberalization process as a transition of Israel from a frontier society to a civil society.[4] As a frontier society, Israel was in a high state of mobilization, with many of the characteristics of a garrison state and a corporatist economy. As a civil society, Israel requires not only greater scope for private enterprise but also the continuation of the peace process, which facilitates Israeli participation in the global economy. Within the framework of the present argument, the liberalization process both reflects and promotes the transition from Zionism to post-Zionism.

Impeding forces

The peace process, changes in Israeli-Diaspora relations, and internal changes in Israel have created forces that make Israel's transition to post-Zionism both more possible and more necessary. There are also im-

4. Yoav Peled, "The Transformation of Israeli Citizenship: Peace, Liberalization, and Resistance in the Post-Rabin Era" (Paper delivered at the Middle East Seminar, Center for International Affairs, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, 20 Feb. 1997).

pediments to this transition, stemming mostly from the ultra-nationalist and the Orthodox religious sectors in the society.

For the ultra-nationalists, who now control the Israeli Government, the Zionist project is far from completion and the Zionist struggle still has a long way to go. Their vision of Zionism calls for Jewish sovereignty over the entire Land of Israel—that is, the area of mandatory Palestine—and they are struggling for control over Judea, Samaria, and Gaza, the areas the Palestinians claim for their own state. Their struggle is thus against the Oslo accord, in which Israel agreed to withdraw from these territories, although the precise borders and the status of the Jewish settlements within the territories were left to be negotiated in the final agreement. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu—whose advocacy of privatization, incidentally, is in conflict with his opposition to the peace process—has already compromised on the ultra-nationalist ideological stance by agreeing to pursue negotiations based on the Oslo accord and by withdrawing from Hebron and some other West Bank localities. But his image of the future map still precludes the establishment of a viable, contiguous Palestinian state and presumes Israeli control over the entire land.

The ultra-nationalists stand in the way of the transition to post-Zionism not only because they are still engaged in an intense struggle to fulfill their particular Zionist vision but also because they lack a viable post-Zionist vision. Post-Zionism implies the integration of Israel into the Middle East and a peaceful, cooperative relationship with its neighbors, which in turn presupposes a willingness by Israel to leave some space in the land for Palestinian self-determination. Furthermore, it is far from certain whether the ultra-nationalist ideology can accommodate the kind of pluralism and the kind of relationship to Diaspora Jewry that a post-Zionist Israel would pursue.

The Orthodox religious sector, which I see as the other major impediment to a transition to post-Zionism, has to be divided into at least two parts, the religious Zionists and the ultra-Orthodox, each of which is in itself far from monolithic. Within the religious Zionist movement, there is an old tradition of political moderation, which has not entirely vanished; there is, in fact, an active religious Zionist peace movement. However, the National Religious Party is now dominated by ideological proponents of Jewish settlement in the occupied territories and constitutes one of the most hawkish elements of the current coalition. These religious Zionists stand in the way of a transition to post-Zionism for the same reason as the ultra-nationalists, except that their commitment to settlement in the West Bank and to maintaining Jewish sovereignty over the entire Land of Israel is magnified by messianic fervor.

The ultra-Orthodox community includes anti-Zionist, non-Zionist, and Zionist elements. Most of the ultra-orthodox have no commitment to the concept of a Greater Israel, and, indeed, some ultra-Orthodox leaders—especially in Shas (Sephardic Guardians of the Torah)—have supported territorial compromises for

the sake of peace on religious (halakhic) grounds. These parties have generally preferred to join coalitions with Likud, not in order to support Likud's nationalist Zionist agenda but because Likud governments have been more amenable to supporting their legislative agenda—for example, on questions of religious conversion and Sabbath laws—and the religious and educational institutions of the ultra-Orthodox groupings. Beyond their affinity for right-wing coalitions, the ultra-Orthodox elements, although they may have no interest in the Zionist project, are more likely to deviate in a pre-Zionist than in a post-Zionist direction. Many of them do not share the Zionist commitment to the unity of the Jewish people and reject religious pluralism within Judaism, even if they work inside the government in order to further their parochial goals. They would surely find it even more difficult to overcome the ethnocentrism and xenophobia fostered in ultra-Orthodox circles and embrace the ethnic and religious pluralism of a post-Zionist society. They would also not find Israel's integration into the Middle East and closer ties with its non-Jewish neighbors particularly attractive.

DIVISIONS WITHIN ISRAEL AND THE TRANSITION TO POST-ZIONISM

To move toward post-Zionism, the country needs to address several major divisions within the society that have a bearing on the transition from Zionism: the division between citizens and noncitizens, which must be eliminated before post-Zionism can be realized at all; the division between Jewish and Palestinian Arab citizens, which must be eliminated in law and practice as a defining feature of post-Zionism; the division between Jews of Ashkenazi and Jews of Sephardi origin, which must be reduced in order to enhance support for post-Zionism; and the division between religious and secular Jews, which must be accommodated in order to ensure maximum freedom with minimal coercion for both communities.

Before addressing each of these divisions, let me comment briefly on the desirability of a transition from Zionism to post-Zionism. I have already pointed to some of the reasons why such a transition is both possible and necessary in light of changing historical circumstances, although it is not likely to proceed uncontested. But why and on the basis of what value preferences do I consider it desirable?

First, it would enable Israel to move ever further in the direction of a liberal, pluralistic democracy, which shuns exclusiveness and is dedicated to protecting and advancing the interests of all of its citizens regardless of ethnicity. This can be accomplished without sacrificing the Jewish character of the state, as expressed in the Hebrew language and the prominent role of Jewish culture and history. The pluralism would extend to religious as well as ethnic diversity, giving full scope to freedom of religion without encouraging domination by a single tradition.

Second, it would create the opportunity to continue and expand the

peace process, leading to a peaceful and just solution of the Palestinian problem and to a normal existence for Israel, in a state of peace within the region. It would enable Israel to establish diplomatic relations and a security community with its neighbors; to become integrated in the region; and to pursue common, mutually beneficial endeavors in trade, tourism, public health, environmental protection, utilization of natural resources, and educational, scientific, and cultural exchange.

Third, it would foster a more creative relationship between Israel and Diaspora Jews, based on mutual respect rather than mutual exploitation. It would allow American and other Diaspora Jews to develop their own identities as ethnic or religious communities within the societies of which they are a part. A mutually enriching interaction becomes more possible when Diaspora Jews are less dependent on Israel for their identity and Israel is less dependent on the Diaspora for financial support.

For all of these reasons, the transition from Zionism to post-Zionism, in my view, represents an opportunity for positive change within Israeli society itself and in Israel's relations with its neighbors, with the international community, and with world Jewry. Exploiting this opportunity, as always, entails a price: it requires active and imaginative grappling with some of the thorniest issues that confront Israeli society. I shall identify four such issues in terms of major divisions within the society that bear on the possibility of Israel's evolution into a post-Zionist state.

Citizens and noncitizens

The Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza—a population of some 2 million or more people—live under the control of the state of Israel. For much of this population, a degree of self-government is now in place, but the security, the economy, the resources, and the movement of goods and people within the areas under the Palestinian National Authority are in effect controlled by Israel and closely tied to the Israeli system. Although these Palestinians now have passports of their own, the Palestinian Authority lacks the right and the capacity to offer them most of the benefits and protection that citizenship normally entails. They can be reasonably described as disenfranchised subjects of Israel, as they have been since 1967. Clearly, that situation is inconsistent with a post-Zionist state, which—as a liberal democracy—cannot contain a vast population that does not have and is not able to achieve citizen rights.

The enfranchisement of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza can, in principle, take one of three forms. First, Israeli citizenship could be extended to all Palestinians, which would in effect make Israel a binational state. This is a solution that is probably most consistent with the principle of pluralism that is one of the features of liberal democracy. The vast majority of Israelis oppose this solution, however; even Israeli doves and proponents of post-Zionism would object because they want to preserve the Jewish character of the state, which requires maintaining a

clear Jewish majority. The large majority of Palestinians oppose this solution because they want to establish an independent state, although it is an option that is increasingly proposed by Palestinian intellectuals who have become doubtful that a Palestinian state is in the offing.

A second option, toward which Prime Minister Netanyahu seems to be leaning, is to offer nominal statehood to a series of Palestinian enclaves, surrounded by Israeli land, roads, and settlements, with no contiguous territory and no effective control of the population. This entity could offer its residents citizenship but it would lack sovereignty, security, and viability and would be completely dependent on Israel. Such a solution would perpetuate the status quo. It would be inconsistent with a post-Zionist Israel, since it would offer a group of residents the pretense of citizenship, reminiscent of the South African Bantustans, while depriving them of citizenship rights in the polity that controls their lives.

The third option is to offer Palestinians citizenship in their own independent state in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Whether this state is to enter into a federation or confederation with Israel and/or Jordan would be up to Palestinians to decide. The state would probably be subject to certain constraints, particularly on the kinds of weapons systems it could acquire—which is not unprecedented in the international system. It is essential, however, that it be a state that is sovereign, secure, and viable. This seems to be the only acceptable option for providing Palestinians

genuine citizenship and ending their decades of disenfranchisement.

A two-state solution would put an end to the current situation of a large disenfranchised population under Israeli control, which is a prerequisite for Israel's transition to a post-Zionist state, enjoying peace with its neighbors and a liberal democracy at home.

Jewish and Palestinian Arab citizens

Palestinians in Israel are now full citizens, with the right to vote, to run for office, and to receive state services. As a group, however, they remain in a disadvantaged position. The differences, measured by such indicators as average income, educational achievement, and professional status, are partly differences in outcome; in part, however, they are differences in opportunity. As has already been indicated, in view of the official status of Zionist institutions like the Jewish Agency and the Jewish National Fund, there are certain rights and benefits available by law only to the Jewish citizens of the state. Furthermore, the per capita expenditure of state funds for education, road building, housing, social services, and municipal services in the Arab sector has tended to be consistently lower than in the Jewish sector.

The elimination of differences in law and in practice that discriminate against the Palestinian citizens of Israel is a central feature of post-Zionism as I have defined it. The primary commitment of a post-Zionist state is

to protect and advance the interests and well-being of its citizens, regardless of ethnicity. As noted earlier, the transition to post-Zionism, therefore, requires a thorough reassessment of laws and practices that favor Jewish over Palestinian citizens in order to ensure full citizenship rights to all. Full citizenship and equal opportunity for individuals are not inconsistent with the maintenance of Arab-language educational and cultural institutions, as long as this is the preference of the Palestinian community in Israel. As an indigenous people in the land, Palestinians are entitled to the same support for their language and culture as the state provides for the Hebrew language and Jewish culture.

Ashkenazi and Sephardi Jews

The Jewish population of Israel is almost evenly divided between Jews of European background and Jews of Afro-Asian background, most of the latter coming from Arab countries in West Asia and North Africa. The rather imprecise terms "Ashkenazi" and "Sephardi" are often used as shorthand designations for these two groups. Although the gap between the two communities has been closing and, in particular, Sephardim have been gaining in political power, as a group they continue to be lower than Ashkenazim in educational achievement, income, and occupational status. They tend to live in poorer towns and neighborhoods and have fewer opportunities to look forward to. Moreover, the cultural norms of the Ashkenazi sector have been dominant throughout Israel's history, and Sephardim have felt devalued as a culture and as a group. Both the economic and the cultural exclusion have for long been a source of bitter resentment among Sephardim, particularly among the working class.

There is no particular reason to assume that Sephardim as a group are, in principle, more hawkish or more anti-Arab in their attitudes. There is, for that matter, a Sephardi peace movement in Israel. Nevertheless, Sephardim, more often than Ashkenazim, have tended to vote for right-wing parties. This tendency is at least in part related to long-standing resentment of the Labor Party, which was in power during the large immigration of Jews from Arab countries and is blamed by many Sephardim for the discrimination they experienced. Labor intellectuals in earlier years also wrote about the Sephardi immigration as backward and a drain on the state—another source of resentment of Labor. Menachem Begin was effective in capitalizing on these anti-Labor sentiments to gain electoral support in the Sephardi community. He also addressed the Sephardi sense of exclusion by stressing that their Jewishness alone made them valued members of Israel—that nothing more was needed. In recent years, many Sephardim have voted for Shas, the Sephardi ultra-Orthodox party, which is now the third-largest party in the Knesset. Although most Sephardim are not ultra-Orthodox, many support Shas because it ap-

peals to their ethnic identity, their traditionalist orientation, and their alienation from the dominant Western cultural values and ways of life.[5] Interestingly, they are joining forces with another element of Israeli society that is outside of the Western-oriented mainstream and whose Jewishness is at the heart of their Israeli identity.

Post-Zionism and the associated peace process have less of an appeal to Sephardim for several reasons, related to their position of relative disadvantage within the society: they are less likely to be participants in the global economy and beneficiaries of the liberalization process than Israelis of Ashkenazi origin; they may be less open to a view of Israel as a state for all of its citizens, regardless of ethnicity or religion, because their Jewishness is the basis for their own advancement within society; and they have developed the habit of supporting right-wing parties. Active efforts to reduce the socioeconomic gap between the Ashkenazi and Sephardi sectors are critical, therefore, to widening support for the transition to post-Zionism within Israeli society.

Religious and secular Jews

I have already identified the religious sector—which in the Israeli context means the Orthodox sector—as a major source of resistance to the transition to post-Zionism. Within the religious Zionist camp and its settler movement, the resistance stems

5. For a portrait, in this context, of Shas leader Aryeh Deri, see Yossi Klein Halevi, "The Unorthodox Politics of an Ultra-Orthodox Rebel," *New York Times Magazine*, 1 June 1997, pp. 5f-60, 85.

from an ideological commitment to continue the Zionist project and establish exclusive Jewish sovereignty over the entire Land of Israel. Within the ultra-Orthodox camp, the resistance stems from a culture marked by clannishness and from expedient alliances with right-wing forces. The religious parties exercise disproportionate power because, since the beginning of the state, they have provided the essential votes to make or break a government coalition. They have often used that power to exercise religious control over various areas of life against the preferences of the secular majority.

Insofar as the transition to post-Zionism is blocked by religious opposition, its success depends on limiting the power of the religious elements and creating a proper balance between them and the secular, non-Orthodox, and non-Jewish elements in the population. In part, this is a matter of electoral politics. The Israeli political system will need to find ways of reducing the dependence of governing coalitions on the votes of the religious parties. What might help in that regard would be a willingness of the major parties to accept Arab parties unambiguously as coalition members. Beyond electoral politics, there is a need to curb the coercive role of religion in politics—to establish the principle of separation of religion and state as part of the basic law. Certainly, Orthodox Judaism in all its varieties must have freedom to flourish in Israeli society, but there is a need for constitutional and political constraints in order to prevent an Orthodox establishment from denying the same freedom to

other religions, to other branches of Judaism, and to secular elements of the population. Like other states in the region, Israel must confront its own problem of religious fundamentalism if it is to move into its post-Zionist phase.

CONCLUSION

Post-Zionism, for the purposes of the present article, was described as an ideological shift in Israel from exclusivism to pluralism, from domination to equality and partnership, and from isolation and hostile relations with Israel's neighbors to integration into the region. The objective conditions for post-Zionism seem to be in place, because many of the tasks of the Zionist movement have been accomplished, others have become largely irrelevant, and strong forces favor the transition. Yet one cannot assume that the emergence of a post-Zionist Israel is inevitable or that it will occur in the foreseeable future. There is a continuing struggle against this transition within Israeli society, just as there is in societies elsewhere in the world controlled by ethnonational movements and their religious supporters. At best, therefore, the shift to pluralism, equality, and regional integration is a gradual and uneven process, and there is no certainty that it will ultimately succeed.

To advance the transition to post-Zionism, Israel needs to address the four major divisions within the society discussed in the preceding section. A shift from Jewish exclusivism to pluralism calls for ensuring full equality in law and practice for Jewish and Palestinian Arab citizens and curbing the coercive power of the religious establishment through separation of religion and state. A shift from domination over the Palestinian population to equality and partnership requires the enfranchisement of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza through the establishment of an independent Palestinian state and—again—full equality for Palestinian citizens within Israel proper.

Finally, a shift from Israel's regional isolation and hostile relationship with its neighbors to integration within the region requires serious attention to all four of the divisions. In order to demonstrate respect for its neighbors and readiness to live in peace with them, Israel will have to negotiate the establishment of a sovereign, viable state for Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza and will have to guarantee to Palestinian citizens within Israel full citizenship rights, equal opportunities, and equal support for their educational and cultural institutions. Furthermore, in order to overcome domestic obstacles to peaceful integration into the region, Israel will have to raise the status of the Sephardi sector of the society and integrate it fully in the Israeli mainstream, giving it a stake in Israel's regional integration, and it will have to create a better balance between the Orthodox groupings and other sectors of the society.