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HISTORICAL TRAUMAS, IDEOLOGICAL CONFLICTS, AND THE PROCESS OF MYTHOLOGIZING

> And, if we wonder why the mythmaker resorts to myths when he has more sophisticated tools at hand, the answer is that, although he doubts whether his mythical argument can stand alone, he regards it as being more lucid and compelling than an argument from abstract principles.[1]

The research on which this paper is based analyzed selected material in the printed media during and following the 1973 Yom Kippur War,[2] including coverage of the war in three Hebrew dailies with the highest circulations in Israel. The research sampled verbal expressions used by reporters, commentators, publicists, and politicians, and those found in readers' letters published by the dailies, during a period of twenty years following the Yom Kippur War. The findings show that a dynamic process of mythologizing the Yom Kippur War had already become apparent by the time the Israeli government officially announced its consent to a cease-fire with Egypt. The head of the opposition in the Israeli Parliament (Knesset), Menachem Begin, accused the incumbent Labor Party government of a great omission (*mehdal*) before and during the Yom Kippur War. Begin's accusation symbolized a sharp turn in parliamentarism in Israel—perhaps the most important since the 1948 Arab–Israeli War.[3] This was the first time in the history of Israel that, during an official parliamentary session, an opposition leader openly accused the government of an omission, particularly in reference to a war that was widely perceived as traumatic. Begin then succeeded in gathering support from other members of the Knesset. Use of the specific expression "omission" since then has evoked memories of governmental misconduct before and during the Yom Kippur War.

The omission myth has been analyzed and discussed in a vast body of literature. However, the comprehensive research on which this paper is based shows that during the months and years following the Yom Kippur War, a pattern of multiplicity in mythologizing that war appeared in Israel parallel to an escalation in internal ideological conflicts. On the one hand, there was wide support for Begins' criticism of the

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Israeli Labor government on the grounds of omission. Moreover, for the first time in the history of Israel, a state committee (the Agranat committee) was named to examine the government's policy and the process of decision-making before and during the Yom Kippur War. On the other hand, the expressions in the printed media show that the conceptualization of the Yom Kippur War varied within Israel along social and political lines. The ideological conflicts that stood out the most were those among sociological cohorts, as well as those between the political right and left. The Yom Kippur War was conceptualized in terms of the collective memory of the Israeli public as a whole but also in terms of rival ideological groups. This pattern of constructing the collective memory remained long after the Yom Kippur War had officially ended. Moreover, this phenomenon had practical implications in Israel. Opposing groups screened issues concerning the Israeli–Arab dispute using their specific representations of the Yom Kippur War. Twenty-five years after Israel's 1948 war, the Israeli public had matured as a unified political entity. However, the split along lines of ideology and the process of mythologizing the Yom Kippur War had critical implications for issues that required the nation's unity and consensus.

There is vast literature on the functionality and implications of mythologizing in modern societies. The functionality of mythologizing a perceived traumatic experience in which ideologies come to play a central role in the political agenda is the focus of this paper. The significance of this paper and its contribution to mythologists therefore lies in understanding the process of mythologizing and its implications in the framework of a three-dimensional relationship—a perceived traumatic experience, the evolution of ideological conflicts, and the pattern of mythologizing that shared experience.

A myth in its modern sense is a collective project of a social group.[4] Ernst Cassirer claims that the most typical feature of the myth in any modern society is its nonpersonal characteristic—that is, it lacks individualistic impressions.[5] In most modern societies, social processes participate in shaping, and gradually in appropriating, impressions of events experienced by the group as a whole in its collective memory.[6] The individual in this sense is a co-owner of the myths, which are accepted and supported by his fellow owners solely as a result of his being part of that group. Thus, the collective as a whole accepts certain myths as though these were the accurate representations of the group's history.

The process of mythologizing involves the objectification of social experiences to shape and control them. It can be defined as interactive, creative, and functional.[7] Recent theorists have focused on the functionality and implications of mythologizing for traditional and modern societies. In modern societies, according to Charles Liebman, mythologizing becomes most significant in cases of national defeat or other national disaster. Liebman argues that national tragedies challenge a society's sense of security and self-confidence, as well as its beliefs in its leaders and core values, symbols, or myths. A dominant myth supported by the Israelis is the Jewish Holocaust (the Shoah): through this myth, Israeli society can show that the Jewish Holocaust was not only a tragic historical event but that it also had a constructive purpose. Death was not in vain. The Jewish Holocaust was the declared universal legitimization for the establishment of the State of Israel, an act supported by Zionism. The Holocaust myth, as explained by Liebman, points to a collective effort to find meaning for the death of 6 million Jews, a theme with Jewish roots. This perspective inevitably

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leads to the conclusion that the functionality of a myth for modern society is most significant following a historical event that a certain group conceives as most tragic.

According to Emmanuel Sivan, myths became vital in modern times when the masses entered the political scene. It is common knowledge that appealing to one's emotions rather than reaching out to people through methodical, rational teaching facilitates their mobilization. Accordingly, says Sivan, a political myth is functional essentially in satisfying two important objectives. The first is explaining and evaluating specific historical events: mythologizing an idea or a shared experience adds meaning compatible with the memory and the ideologies of a group; history thus can make sense in its past, present, and future dimensions. The other is achieving major goals of any ideology. The war myth, which is based on the assumption that only when people are united will victory over enemies be achieved, is an example. The war myth is effective for mobilizing people to sacrifice themselves for the sake of their country, whereas in the myth's absence, war would be perceived only as battles.

Branislaw Malinowski describes the functionality of mythologizing in terms of satisfying society's physical needs. Myths may be functional in increasing solidarity, although groups that shared the experience of a certain historical event may represent it differently. The phenomenon of multiple conceptualizations of an event may be dysfunctional for the group's solidarity.

This view is supported by Lev Grinberg's analysis. Discussing the collective memory of Yitzhak Rabin in Israel, Grinberg focuses on mythologizing as an important interactive and collective process of constructing and strengthening the consensus and unity within nations. However, Grinberg feels that as things now stand, the contesting interpretations and interests of groups in Israel that supported Rabin are counter-productive and dysfunctional in mythologizing him as a symbol of unity.

In sum, myths are conceived as functional in several ways. Mythologizing may shape perspectives of a group's history, as well as of its present and future, and become functional for self-orientation in times of national disaster. However, there are aspects of mythologizing a traumatically perceived shared experience that still need to be developed and discussed. For Malinowski, mythologizing satisfies physical needs of social solidarity, self-identity, and unity, whereas others, such as Grinberg, show how competing ideologies can be counter-productive for these processes.

This paper focuses on these seemingly contradicting perspectives about mythologizing and positions them in the context of a perceived traumatic shared experience. The main objective is to theorize the inter-relationship among a traumatically perceived experience, the development of ideological conflict, and the process of mythologizing that experience. In other words, the idea is to facilitate the understanding of how mythologizing a critical historical event such as the Yom Kippur War can be functional for a society in which polarized ideological views are activated or stimulated. This objective involved looking at the pattern in which the critical event was narrated, remembered, and mythologized, as well as at the relationship among the various conceptualizations and narrations of the event and ideological conflicts. The second objective, which was more specific to the case of the Yom Kippur War, was to uncover shared or opposing ideological undercurrents that were stimulated during and after the Israelis experienced the Yom Kippur War and perceived it as traumatic.[8]

The main assumption of this paper is that perceived tragic and traumatic shared

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experiences might under certain conditions lend themselves to divergent interpretations and conceptualizations. In such situations it is probable that major ideologies that have been dormant in the specific society will be rediscovered and even born anew. This leads to the main hypothesis that, in terms of functionality, the process of mythologizing an event, under such circumstances might produce a dominant pattern of multiple myths that are both compatible and opposing. Contrary to Grinberg, and partly in line with Malinowski and other students of myths cited earlier, various ideological groups that share a traumatic experience, and appropriate and dramatize it, may articulate it in compliance with their ideological framework and register that experience in their collective memory as a myth that suits their particular values. Thus, each may benefit from the significant meanings they attribute to the shared experience, build up and maintain their in-group solidarity and self-identification, and defend their particular attitudes concerning profound existential matters pertaining to the society at large. Finally, the pattern of multiplicity will probably be maintained as long as the overarching narrative of the same traumatic experience is supported.

The empirical material analyzed in this paper consists of printed primary sources in Hebrew, such as documentation of the *Divrei Ha'knesset* (Proceedings of Parliament) and reports from press conferences. Printed material was collected also from secondary sources, such as military bulletins; school publications; *Ha'aretz, Ma'ariv*, and *Yedi'ot Aharonot,* the three most widely distributed Hebrew dailies; a selection of journals; and commemorative printed material.

All the articles, commentaries, and editorials concerning the Yom Kippur War that were published in these sources during the first year following the war were searched for verbal images and representations.[9] These were categorized according to their sources—that is, political, civilian, or military; politically rightist or leftist; type of article, such as commentary, letters, interviews, or news reports; and sociological cohorts. These categories also indicated the attitudes and ideological orientations of their authors.

THE OUTBREAK OF THE YOM KIPPUR WAR

The Yom Kippur War broke out on the holiest day in the Jewish calendar, Yom Kippur, which fell on 6 October 1973. On that day, Israel was attacked on two fronts. In the south, the Egyptian army attacked Israel along the Suez Canal, and in the north, Syrian forces advanced through the Golan Heights. While the Syrian army advanced into the Golan, the Egyptian army crossed the Suez Canal relatively easily and advanced into the Sinai Peninsula. The Israeli army withdrew, and parts of the settlements in the Golan area were evacuated. Israeli tanks were moved to the battlefields, even through they were under-equipped with ammunition and other necessary weapons. The Israeli army suffered its heaviest losses since the 1948 Arab–Israeli War.

Surveys show that, as reports of the war reached the home front during the first days of the conflict, signs of decline began to show up concerning the credibility of the army and the political leadership in Israel.[10] Still, some level of national consensus was usually maintained regarding the credibility of the Israeli leadership at this critical time. As we shall see, the discourse analysis shows that this was the case until the

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Israeli government made its official announcement consenting to a cease-fire on 23 October 1973.

During the Yom Kippur War, the mass media portrayed an atmosphere of co-existence on the social, political, and ideological levels. Moreover, the dominant perspective and narrative of the Yom Kippur War seem to have been those of the political and military leadership. Prime Minister Golda Meir, at the Knesset session on 16 October 1973—the first to take place following the outbreak of the Yom Kippur War—said, "[T]here is no doubt that the war aimed against the very existence of the Jewish State has been renewed. This is a war threatening our very existence as a nation and a state."[11] This official, public speech to the nation was followed by supportive comments by members of the Knesset although a small number had already raised "[q]uestion marks concerning what happened before the outbreak of the war and during the first days of fighting."[12] Opposition leader, Menachem Begin, of the rightist party Gahal, said at that Knesset session that he accepted the responsibility of a political-opposition leader in times of a crisis to support the government's policies. But his rhetoric had a dissenting overtone regarding the government's policy on the eve of the Yom Kippur War:

> An opposition in the House of Representatives in a democratic and free country is there sometimes to express differing views on issues considered by the government. . . . But there comes a time when the opposition is there to look after national unity. . . . We are determined to postpone all the questions . . . about what had happened between *kesse ve'asor*, and from the day of Yom Kippur until after the victory.[13]

The claim implied by Begin's use of the phrase "between *kesse ve'asor*" not only related to the duty of the Israeli political leadership; it also echoed the broad consensus for this claim later expressed by other Israeli politicians.

"The Great Victory" (*Hanitzachon Hagadol*) was a commonly used expression when discussing the Yom Kippur War. However, does the printed media's frequent use of the expression indicate a broad consensus in Israel in conceptualizing the Yom Kippur War?

Historically, the Israeli media frequently used this expression in relation to Arab–Israeli wars, probably to raise the public's morale. Use of this expression was also common in the dramatization of the Yom Kippur War by the political and military leadership, as well as in the printed media coverage of the war. It was commonly found in two main sources: in official announcements made by military and political leaders and in newspaper reportage and commentaries.

Official Announcements by Political and Military Leaders

In her official announcement transmitted to the Israeli public through the electronic media at the outbreak of the Yom Kippur War, Prime Minister Meir expressed full confidence and spoke about *Hanitzahon Shelanu* (Our Victory). She was confident about this outcome of the war and spoke about the end of the war in terms of *Chatima Tova* (a Good Ending).[14] Minister of Defense Moshe Dayan, in his official announcement, promised a "smashing ending," naturally trying to raise the national morale. We are able to hit the enemy, he said, "thigh over hip" (*Shok al Yarech*).[15]

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In his official announcement, Chief of Staff David Elazar also expressed his confidence in the "final victory" of the Israeli army while reviewing the army's achievements since the outbreak of the war. According to Elazar, "The generation of 1973 excelled relative to the generation of 1967, which excelled relative to the generation of 1956, which excelled relative to the generation of 1948."[16] Elazar sent a clear message that, since 1948, Israel had been fighting wars of a few against many.[17] In spite of Israel's inferiority in the terms of the number of its soldiers, the army would surely win victory in a defensive war, Elazar said. His confidence in the power and vitality of the Israeli army was expressed in vibrant rhetoric: "we will break their bones!"[18]

At the same time, Dayan expressed deep grief in his official announcement as he spoke about "heavy and serious losses" and about "heavy fighting."[19] Aharon Yariv, who was nominated as an official representative of the chief of staff during the Yom Kippur War, described the war using expressions similar to those used by the Elazar, including "a war different [from] what was expected" and "serious fighting."[20] The expression "different [from] what was expected" does not require any explanation. Yariv also used expressions such as "heavy losses," "heavy fighting," and a "test of nerves." "After only three days, Israeli losses are heavier than all its losses during the 1967 war," he said. "[T]here is still some more heavy fighting ahead of us." Yariv's advice was not to indulge in "visions of victory and occupation of the enemies' land." Evidently, the perception among the army's high-ranking officers of the Yom Kippur War was that it was exceptional in military terms.

Still, the Great Victory image was more frequently repeated in the Israeli media, and the army's chief commanders dramatized the Great Victory image during the Yom Kippur War.[21] Most army units printed material containing mainly messages from the commanders to their soldiers.[22] The headlines in these publications dramatized the strength and ability of the Israeli army to confront any "external threat." Their rhetoric contained technical terminology that described developments in the battles in an optimistic manner. In *Notes for the Soldier* (8 October 1973), the battles were narrated with pathos: "[t]he army applied pressure on the enemy in the north and is re-forming itself in the south." The Navy organ *Bein Hagalim* (Between the Waves) used amplifying expressions such as, "Superb fighting achieved overwhelming results" (8 October 1973), and "The power, the guns and the methods have been in our possession since ancient times" (10 October 1973). There were also some motivating messages, such as, "We shall attack," "We shall destroy," "We shall hit," "We broke the backbone of the enemy." In the air-force organ *Ba'krav* (At War), the typical messages were, "So far we have hit between 100 to 200 of the enemy's planes" (9 October 1973), and "On the first day we ploughed, on the second day we sowed, and from the third day onward the picking season started" (10 October 1973). As the war drew to an end, the chief commander of the air force summarized it in *Ba'krav* by saying that, after eighteen days of persevering fighting by the air force pilots, they had achieved "superiority in the skies," and he described the situation as "a very unique chapter" in the history of the Israeli air force (26 October 1973).

The repetitive chain of expressions that represented the Israeli army as a powerful army was seldom disrupted. For example, when soldiers described their fighting in *Ba'machane* (In the Camp), they referred specifically to the great effort they had

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invested in battles: "very cruel and difficult fighting," "a very long and difficult battle," "continuous crushing battles on the Golan," and even "fighting for our lives." But these expressions were overshadowed by stories of heroism, with titles such as, "The Team That Destroyed Thirty Tanks," which indicated confidence in the army's ability to overcome its enemies in almost any situation.[23]

The few-against-many image was expressed literally in some of the military organs. The addition of this vital dimension indicates an increase in general confidence in the ultimate heroism and extraordinary achievements of the fighters. For example, "Few against Waves of Steel and Fire" reads one headline in *Dapei Krav* (Battle Notes) issued to commemorate the anniversary of the armored forces (29 October 1973).

Newspaper Reportage and Commentaries

From the second day of the Yom Kippur War onward, the headlines in *Ha'aretz*, *Ma'ariv*, and *Yedi'ot Aharonot* were filled with emotional descriptions of the fighting on both the Egyptian and the Syrian fronts. The first reports described heavy attacks against Israel. Emotion-laden details of the army's success in warding off the attacks soon filled those headlines, constructing a coherent image of the Great Victory that Israel was going to win. Some of the expressions were in line with the expectations stemming from the euphoria of the Great Victory in Israel after the 1967 war. Typical examples that stand out are: "a glorious and speedy victory,"[24] "termination," "blasting," and "causing alarm and anxiety" to the enemy. Typical descriptions found in the dailies on the second day of the war include "heavy defensive fighting in the Sinai Peninsula and the Golan."[25] But from the third day onward, the dramatization of a turnabout in the strategic position of the Israeli army was more dominant, and the main message was "from defensive fighting—to a massive Israeli attack."[26] In line with such descriptions were reports about "a counter-attack," "a superior position in the skies over the Golan and the [Suez] Canal," and "destruction" of dozens of the enemy's missile batteries, equipment, and forces. Other headlines reported "burned Syrian tanks decorating the road [to the Golan] Heights,"[27] adding that, in the south, the "great turning point" was about to be reached. Reports about the enemy's deteriorating morale—the enemy is in a state of "alarm," "the Egyptians and the Syrians cried for help," the Damascus airport was bombed until "panic seized the Syrian Capital"—added vitality to the army's image.[28]

Editorials and commentary about the Yom Kippur War were optimistic. Their dominant message was complete belief in the Great Victory of Israel. Commentators measured Israel's achievements in the war in terms of a few hours, whereas the swift, great victory of the 1967 war was measured in terms of days. By highlighting the swiftness of the turnabout in the army's position—from a "defensive" to a "counter-attack" strategy on the third day of the Yom Kippur War—the commentators strengthened the impression gathered from the headlines that the Israeli army was omnipotent. For example, one commentator noted "impressive achievements for the Israeli army after only eighty hours."[29] The editorials used similar expressions, such as, "We have succeeded in . . . repulsing the Arab momentum of attack."[30]

On 12 October, Prime Minister Meir reported to the Israeli media about the ongoing battles using less optimistic language than she had previously. The dominant message

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in the dailies' headlines was in line with Meir's, reporting, for example, that members of the Knesset had convened in an "atmosphere of severity suiting the situation," that the war was "a bitter war," and that there was "fierce fighting."[31] Generally, the message only temporarily directed the attention away from the accomplishments of the army and the prospects for a Great Victory and toward the "heavy price" and "the terrible price." Minister of Defense Moshe Dayan used gloomy expressions to deliver his feelings to the Israeli public, saying that this war had seen "heavy days" and that it had taken "heavy, bloody tolls."[32] However, the Yom Kippur War was still broadly narrated in terms of a Great Victory until the Israeli government accepted a cease-fire with Egypt on 23 October 1973. The question remains: was there a broad consensual conceptualization of the Yom Kippur War?

THE NARRATIVE FOLLOWING THE OUTBREAK OF THE YOM KIPPUR WAR

On 23 October 1973, Prime Minister Meir announced in the Knesset that Israel's government had agreed to a cease-fire. Meir reported on the heavy losses suffered during the war; at the same time, however, she spoke about the army's accomplishments. These she described as a "historical turning point" and speculated about the opportunity then available to Israel, after the signing of a cease-fire, to replace the "route of blood" with a "road leading to peace." Not the Great Victory but, rather, the historical turning point from times of war to times of peace was dramatized in Meir's narrative of the Yom Kippur War:[33]

> Members of Parliament. . . . The cease-fire and the initiation of a direct negotiation for peace may signify a *historical turning point* in the developments in the Middle East, *turning from war to peace*. An initiation of a direct and serious negotiation may *convert the route of blood*, which was forced on us in the past, into *a route leading toward peace*.[34]

No national consensus was reached at the 23 October Knesset session. Different views of the circumstances surrounding the government's agreement to a cease-fire were expressed. Moreover, members of the Knesset, including opposition leader Begin, used insolent language when addressing the prime minister and her ministers and accused them of omissions in managing Israel's security immediately before the war.

During that Knesset session, fierce arguments broke out over two main issues. The first concerned the government's agreement to a cease-fire; the second concerned the question of whether the Israeli government could have avoided the Yom Kippur War if it had taken more precautions. Yigal Horowitz of the National Movement used harsh words when addressing the government members. He accused them of omissions that had led directly to the "grave war" and its aftermath.[35] Shmuel Tamir of the Free Center Party held the government responsible for a "series of omissions" and for a "shocking failure" in "a major issue concerning our existence on the eve of the war."[36] In the parliamentary opposition, Begin criticized the manner in which the government had functioned before the Yom Kippur War, characterizing it as "reckless behavior."[37] He then accused the government of "committing a serious mistake" in its policy. "When Israel goes through a crisis, when the government commits a serious mistake, we criticize it, fulfil our commitments, and demand a change in the policy," he said.

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Begin's accusations were echoed in the rhetoric of other Knesset members from the political right and left. The government was confronted with demands for self-examination from the nation's representatives in the legislature.

The printed media also reflected a split in the consensus concerning government policy before and during the Yom Kippur War. Earlier, details about what happened in the Yom Kippur War were interpreted and screened through various points of view and ideologies that represented the various attitudes of the members of the Knesset. In other words, the Yom Kippur War became a subject open to interpretation. This obviously had important implications, as we shall see.

As the Knesset members' criticism of the government for its omissions before the Yom Kippur War was made public, more political parties and interest groups expressed dissent vis-à-vis the government's policy. Soon they began demanding the immediate resignation of the government.[39]

In the rest of this paper, I will discuss the pattern of narrating the Yom Kippur War after the cease-fire. Attention will be given to the growing split between ideologies in Israel and to the process and pattern of mythologizing the war. As we shall see, the Yom Kippur War served as a background while swords were sharpened in the ideological arena between the political right and left, among social cohorts, and between intellectuals and others. Various ideological groups used their typical conceptualization of the war to establish and express publicly their political views on the Israeli–Arab issue.

What follow are the main narratives that were created around the Yom Kippur War. The discussion is based on a selected sample from the printed media that appeared during the year after the Yom Kippur War (October 1973–October 1974).

The Omission Narrative (Narrative Ha'mehdal*)*

After Begin accused the incumbent government of a "serious mistake" and "an omission" on 23 October 1973, these expressions became focal in other critics' rhetoric. Examples of the use of the expressions "omission" and "serious mistake," for instance, are found in journalistic criticism after 23 October. Indeed, Israelis who were interviewed randomly as early as two days after the outbreak of the war were already using the term "omission" when asked about the functioning of the government in the period preceding the Yom Kippur War.[40] However, the linguist Moshe Goshen-Gotestein has found that the word "omission" became a symbol in Israel for the political leadership's faulty functioning before and during the Yom Kippur War only after the war had ended.[41] Not surprisingly, a survey conducted six months after the war showed that public support for Prime Minister Golda Meir had dropped to only 1 percent, its lowest level ever.[42]

The omission narrative was formed around the widely accepted notion that the Israeli government's omissions and serious mistakes led directly to the Yom Kippur War, which was widely conceived as traumatic. The broad acceptance of the narrative marked a turning point in the level of trust the Israeli public was prepared to place in its government. The saying, "Respect but Be Wary of Them" describes the changed relationship clearly. Different ideological groups accepted this narrative. Significantly,

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some used the metaphor of an "earthquake" (*re'idat adamah*), emphasizing the irreversible after-effects of such an event, in the context of this narrative. In the context of the Yom Kippur War, the earthquake metaphor, evoking as it does a natural phenomenon resulting in irreversible physical changes or total destruction, signified a permanent rupture in the relationship between a great portion of the Israeli public and its government. Thus, the earthquake image was intrinsically linked to the concept of omission. Many Israelis felt that the omission had caused the earthquake in their relationship with the incumbent government. As a result, abandoning the existing political system and replacing it with a more democratic one seemed to be legitimate goals.

During and after the Yom Kippur War, the Hebrew dailies linked the trauma experienced by the Israeli public at the outbreak of the war with problems in the functioning of some of the government ministers. These were described by the dailies as "leaders who disseminate a fog of jokes and words lacking in significance, such as 'defensive battles,' and 'warding off the attack.'" Such expressions were described as "sterile," "lacking color," and creating "an unreal and meaningless climate."[43] These were leaders who had promised, during the six years that followed the June 1967 war, that the Israeli army was relatively strong and that the borders of Israel were relatively secure. "The country shall be quiet for forty years," they said.[44] These leaders now "lost their immunity to merciless public criticism."

The omission narrative not only dramatized what happened before and during the Yom Kippur War. It also dramatically criticized "deeply rooted faulty governing patterns in Israel" and protested against the "lack of attention paid to public opinion" by the government. According to the literature, there was a marked increase in the number of protest groups following the Yom Kippur War.[45] Their main complaint was about the non-democratic procedures in Israel.[46] They claimed that the governments in Israel regarded the public as inept and prevented their participation in political decisions.[47]

Further events that stimulated public criticism allowed the Yom Kippur War to be mythologized in line with the main concepts of the omission narrative. The omission myth reflects consensus in the Israeli public's collective memory. The trauma that many felt at the outbreak of the Yom Kippur War was symbolized collectively in the expressions "the destruction of the Third Temple" and the "second Massada."[48] However, one of the main lessons derived from the omission narrative is that, because an omission is basically a correctable behavior, the future existence of the Jewish nation in Israel was safe.[49] The conceptualization of the Yom Kippur War as an omission and its registration as such in the national collective memory seemed to be a compromise between differing ideological and paradigmatic sub-currents. The dominant themes remembered by most Israelis following the Yom Kippur War were "omission," "surprise," "trauma," and the "earthquake" that beset Israel at the war's outbreak.[50] Indeed, Meir's conceptualization of the war as a "historical turning point" and as a Great Victory for Israel gained very mild support in the Knesset and in the public sphere.

During the Yom Kippur War, but especially after it ended, alternative and sometimes opposing images and representations of the war were gradually gaining support in the mass media. These were apparent first in the Hebrew dailies. My analysis of the sampled printed material showed how the pattern of narration of the Yom Kippur

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War developed as the conflict among ideologies of groups in Israel became more pronounced. The question that merits further research is: did the ideological rift influence the pattern of narrating and the process of mythologizing the Yom Kippur War, or vice versa? That is, was the pattern of narrating and the process of mythologizing the war responsible for the emergence of pronounced ideological rift? One of the conclusions of my research is that the multiplicity pattern in the narration and mythologizing of the Yom Kippur War was not static. It developed parallel to further critical events pertaining to the Israeli–Arab relationship that the Israeli public experienced in the years after the war. These in turn were conceptualized in line with distinctive ideologies and were supported by and supportive of their "suitable" myth of that war.

As mentioned earlier, the narration of and process of mythologizing the Yom Kippur War was a collective project that involved political and social ideologies. The omission narrative represented the point of view of most social and political groups in Israel regarding the Yom Kippur War. However, the overall pattern of narrating the war reflected distinctly rooted ideologies, which will be discussed later.

The Sobering Narrative (Narrative Ha'Hitpak'hoot*)*

Those who supported the sobering narrative were mostly intellectuals and educators enthusiastic about Zionist values and who dedicated themselves to spreading Zionist ideals.[51] Like most of Israeli society after it had experienced the Yom Kippur War, this distinct group was supportive both of the criticism of the Israeli government and of the omission narrative. However, this group conceptualized the Yom Kippur War in yet another way, interpreting the war as a significantly important historical event in the process of realizing the Zionist ideology of re-establishing a better society. "Sobering" and "earthquake" were two of the most common expressions in this group's rhetoric. Members of the group used the term "sobering" to draw a mental picture of waking up to a new reality. They believed that the social reality in Israel before the Yom Kippur War was an illusion—a false and distorted reality—as one of the commentators stated: "we were called from our satiated armchairs and from our clubs of visions and illusions."[52] "Sobering" symbolized the beginning of a constructive era. It also indicated that a disaster could lead to a constructive turnabout and to a new era—a new era that would be marked by the creation of a "purified . . . balanced . . . abundant . . . strong, and united society rising from the miseries of the war."[53]

Yaacov Jacob Malkin, a theorist of communal dialogue, contributed to the central theme of the sobering narrative in an article: "sobering from an illusion—as a source of encouragement and hope."[54] Malkin's message was one of hope. Yitzhak Shapira, a renowned Zionist and intellectual, examined the situation from the perspective of a veteran educator in Israel and described the war as a vital event in Zionist history. Through its sobering effect, he said, past illusions would be shattered and negative tendencies and norms would undergo a change toward a better society. Sobering was a precondition, said Shapira, a "momentum towards changed values." The sobering narrative contributed a positive dimension to the perception of the war, despite the general impression in Israel that the Yom Kippur War was a failure. Shapira suggested that the Yom Kippur War should be registered in the collective memory of Israeli society not as a "bitter and bloody event" but mainly as an event that could breed the

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seeds for "completing our establishment as a nation and a state according to any criteria."[55] Yehoshua Gilboa, a prominent researcher of Jewish culture, supported Shapira's views about the important social implications of the Yom Kippur War. According to Gilboa, the dominant impression most of the Israeli public had of the war was as an "earthquake" that had shaken them at the outbreak of the war. This, said Gilboa, had a sobering effect: "[i]t is inconceivable that we will ever see reality in the same way as we did in the past, or that we shall live our lives in the same style as in the past."[56] Using the image of an "earthquake" had an operative social effect in that it implied the beginning of thorough social reform (*bedek ba'it*) based on Zionist values.

Other expressions to the same effect that were typical in the rhetoric of the Zionist intellectuals when referring to the Yom Kippur War were "a rehabilitating turbulence," "an exodus from Egypt," "a purifying event," and "a historical opportunity." The traditional Jewish expression "*me'az yatsa matok*" (disasters breed success), a dialectical concept—reflected these images of the Yom Kippur War.[57] It was the dramatic turn from defensive to offensive strategies that the Israeli army made three days after its enemies' initial attack that inspired the use of these images in the rhetoric of the adherents of the sobering narrative.

Finally, the major function of the sobering narrative, according to its supporters, was to bring about a renewed Zionist aspiration to construct an independent and reformed society in Israel.

The Miracle Narrative (Narrative Ha'ness*)*

The miracle narrative of the Yom Kippur War reflected traditional Jewish overtones and highlighted both the "critical position" in which Israel and the Israeli army found themselves during the first days of the war and their "miraculous" escape from it.

At the height of the defensive battles, when Israeli soldiers were warding off attacks by the Egyptian and the Syrian military, the general impression on the Israeli home front was that within a few days the Yom Kippur War might end with a Great Victory. Descriptions of the "critical position" of Israel during the first days of the Yom Kippur War[58] were abundant in the printed media coverage only when the war ended. However, on the front lines, soldiers identified their situation with other critical events in Jewish history—events when total destruction seemed imminent. When the Israeli army succeeded in fending off the enemy attacks and took the offensive during the Yom Kippur War, the soldiers felt that the same phenomenon that typified the history of the Jews in the Diaspora—always doomed but saved miraculously from total destruction—was repeating itself. The passage from defensive to offensive strategies symbolized a miraculous intervention, a core value in the Jewish paradigm.[59]

The main contributors of the miracle narrative were soldiers on the front lines who expressed a renewed belief in the Jewish nation and in the Jewish God (*Zur Yisrael*): "I am not familiar with the prayers, but if I were, I would have thanked God every morning . . . especially for making me Jewish."[60] According to Itamar Yaoz-Kest, a researcher of Judaism, the Israeli soldiers' return to their Jewish roots was part of a process that was taking place in the larger Israeli society: "Israeli society is in the process of returning to the encircling ring of the Jewish fate."[61] The traditional Jewish terms "*kesse ve'asor*" and "*chatima tovah*," used by Begin and Meir, respectively,

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support Yaoz-Kest's argument. It shows how the linking of the Yom Kippur War to the Jewish holy day on which it occurred contributed to the predominance of Jewish perspective on that war among politicians and others. Dayan's biblical reference to "*Shok al yarech*" is also significant. Other biblical terms quoted earlier, such as "the country shall be quiet for forty years," "destruction of the Third Temple," and "second Massada," are also instructive in this connection, because they reflect a renewed belief in the Jewish tradition among Israeli secularists. In his book *The Terrible Days* (*Hayamim Hanora'im*, 1973), Chaim Herzog then the national commentator of the Yom Kippur War, developed the core themes of the miracle narrative. He agreed that the term "miracle" became a central theme within the secular Jewish population in Israel during that period and said that there were signs of renewed religious belief in secular Israeli society. Referring to the term "miracle," Herzog remarked, "a great miracle occurred to our people a week ago, and those who fought and were killed are part of the Ness."[62] He continued, "We are here where we are, today, after being saved miraculously, after escaping an attempt to destroy us."[63] Herzog commented that this was no passing feeling: "we are too close to the events in order to fully appreciate their significance. However, when things clear up, we will . . . appreciate the miracle that occurred . . . learn to appreciate those who saved this nation during those fateful moments." According to Herzog's interpretation, it was not only the superior fighting of Israel's soldiers that helped them survive and overcome the mighty enemy attack. It was also because of the miracle in which many believed—a miracle in the sense of belonging to a nation in whose history miracles occurred when its people were in danger and threatened with destruction.

Finally, the uniqueness of the miracle narrative seems to lie in its emphasis of the Jewish dimension as a core value in the conceptualization of the State of Israel. However, it also points to a renewed belief in a deterministic Jewish fate. Therefore, those secularists who reidentified with the Jewish fate, as reflected in their memory of the Yom Kippur War, believed that the physical existence of the State of Israel would not be possible unless the ties to Jewish history and faith were renewed and strengthened.

The Sons' War Narrative (Narrative Milhemet Ha'banim*)*

The generation whose self-identity as a cohort was shaped mainly by the 1948 Arab–Israeli War adhered to the sons' war narrative of the Yom Kippur War. This group can be characterized as a social cohort that perceived the Yom Kippur War as an event that jeopardized the very existence of the State of Israel and their major achievement: the independence of Israel in 1948. This group's view of the Yom Kippur War was screened through its myth of the 1948 war—that is, that the 1948 war was a major turning point in the history of the Jewish nation and an important step toward the materialization of the Zionist idea and the establishment of a "safe shelter" for the "persecuted" Jewish people. Thus, for members of this group, the first days of the Yom Kippur War were registered in collective memory and narrated as a direct threat to the accomplishments of 1948 and to the Zionist endeavor in general.

According to the sons' war narrative, the 1948 war resulted in Israel's independence and in international acknowledgment of Israel's sovereignty; the sons (*Habanim*), however, almost did away with the accomplishments of the 1948 generation.[64] The

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1948 generation expressed disappointment with the generation of the sons. "[t]he 1948 generation no doubt remembers how we conquered villages, swept across the country and attacked strongholds," wrote one commentator.[65] Another commented, "The real difference between the War of Independence and the Yom Kippur War is that we knew then that we were a fighting nation. . . . This time we did not know."[66]

The 1948 generation felt pride in establishing the State of Israel and emphasized its share in the achievement. It was relatively imbued with fear of another flare-up between Israel and its Arab neighbors. This cohort believed that the Israeli army was its ultimate savior, and that the sons must be motivated mainly toward guarding against the enemy's constant military threats to the sovereignty of the State of Israel. This group's narrative of the 1948 war dictated, "Since the war did not end in 1948 . . . it is doubtful whether it will end in 1973."[67]

Finally, the sons' war narrative presented the sons as a generation that wished to benefit from the fruit of the 1948 generation's achievements but did not deserve it. The 1948 generation concluded that the share of the sons' generation in securing Israel's sovereignty was not fulfilled. A commentator wrote, "The Yom Kippur War found us without a flag. . . . In the past we had a flag. The boys were dressed in khaki and gave up all other activities in order to establish a state. . . . There was a goal, because there was a flag."[68]

The Eternal Binding Narrative (Narrative Ha'Akedah Ha'nitz'hit*)*

The inspiration for the eternal binding narrative emerged on the front lines during the Yom Kippur War. The biblical story of the binding of Isaac explicitly describes Abraham being commanded by God to sacrifice his son but stopped at the last minute; soldiers at the front lines witnessed what they perceived as the sacrificing of the sons' generation.

The eternal binding narrative reflected its supporters' view—which contrasted with that of the 1948 generation as described earlier—that the Israeli–Arab dispute was not deterministic.[69] The eternal binding narrative was supported by the cohorts of the 1973 Yom Kippur War whom the 1948 generation called the sons' generation. The 1973 cohort perceived the Yom Kippur War as proof of its fate to be born into a reality of a constant state of war. From this group's point of view, the Zionist promise of safe shelter in the land of Israel did not materialize. The majority of the 1973 generation felt that the present state of affairs would lead inevitably from one state of war and bloodshed to another. The Yom Kippur War was presented cynically by the 1973 generation as an eternal binding and as an "abnormal Jewish existence"—not unlike the typical historical fate of the persecuted Jewish people. It stripped the biblical binding of Isaac of its educational value and lessons—that is, the love of God versus the love of a father for his son.[70] Thus, the traditional symbolism of the binding of Isaac was reinterpreted by the 1973 generation to suit its unique ideological views. The rhetoric of the supporters of the eternal binding narrative was full of resentment and disbelief in the "sacredness of the mission of sacrificing oneself for his country." Moreover, members of the 1973 generation felt that this impossible and frustrating situation had been imposed on them—they felt unwillingly committed to the ideals of the 1948 generation and to that group's way of dealing with the Israeli–Arab conflict.

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The 1973 generation suggested a more practical solution to the "unbearable situation" of the eternal binding. Its members spoke about a "battle for peace," maintaining that peace could be achieved through diplomatic negotiations.

This ideology, rooted in the Jewish and Israeli paradigms, was apparent in the eternal binding narrative that appeared in most of the Hebrew commemorations of fallen soldiers in the Yom Kippur War. What makes the description of the war in these commemorative publications so noteworthy are the expressions of anger, criticism, deep self-examination, and uncertainty regarding war in general and the Yom Kippur War in particular—messages that were also dominant in the printed media of 1973–74. Some expressions even indicated that soldiers in the Yom-Kippur War died in vain and that the high death toll could have been markedly reduced.

In an often quoted article published in the Kibbutz movement's journal *Shedemot*, expressions of despair from the Yom Kippur War were central.[71] The article's title, "An Invitation to Cry," speaks for itself.[72] The author, then a young soldier from a Kibbutz, expressed "total despair" in reaction to a reality that "lacks even one ray of light." He described his life in Israel in terms of the biblical image of "a land that devours its inhabitants." A response to "An Invitation to Cry" likened the Yom Kippur War to a battlefield on which soldiers were killed in vain.[73] The author of the response criticized the validity of Zionist ideology and the Tel-Hai myth.[74] His protest against such collective ideals was based on what he had experienced during the Yom Kippur War: "[t]o be a Jew in Israel means to live constantly with death."

In a series of articles published in *Ha'aretz* in September 1974 under the title "Question Marks of High-School Graduates," the journalist Nathan Ribbon described the pessimistic mood that prevailed among high-school students.[75] Ribbon described life in Israel after the Yom Kippur War as overshadowed by memories of death in the war. Basic values that were cherished in Israel were shattered. The youngsters felt that their identity was threatened, and asked questions such as, "After three wars . . . who are we?"[76]

Artistic circles in Israel included some youngsters from the 1973 generation. Their rhetoric recorded on artifacts and monuments contained a protest against the war in general and particularly against sacrificing one's life in the name of ideals that they found unacceptable.[77] According to Esther Levinger, the strongest expressions against the Yom Kippur War are those on the monument built by Arik Ophir in Jerusalem's Peace Park in 1974. The monument contains maps, illustrations of military maneuvers, and excerpts of what soldiers at the front lines were saying about the Yom Kippur War, such as, "*In'al Deenak* [an Arabic curse] this whole war. Who invented it? Madness!" and "Fighting and being killed."[78] Arie Knispel constructed a monument in Haifa in 1974 in memory of those who had fallen in one of the battles of the Yom Kippur War. For the iconography, the artist used the words of Yeshaya Leibowitz: "there are no stones, not even the stones in the Wailing Wall, that can atone for the death of human beings."[79]

Finally, the eternal binding served as a narrative of self-identification for the 1973 generation. By means of this narrative, the 1973 cohort satirized the ethos and perception that the hostility of the Arab nations against Israel was doomed to continue. Thus, the 1973 generation differentiated itself from the 1948 generation and communicated its conscious rejection of basic concepts accepted by the 1948 generation.

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The Outstanding Israeli Army Narrative (Narrative Zahal Ha'mufla*)*

Israel's army leaders and statesmen during the Yom Kippur War—including Chief of Staff David Elazar, the army's high officers, and Defense Minister Moshe Dayan—called the war "the greatest war of the Israeli army." They frequently described the Israeli army as an outstanding army. Their narrative described how Israeli soldiers attacked while being "exposed in the turrets of their tanks." The Israeli soldiers "erupted like boiling lava out of a volcano" and "turned the bowl (*Ke'ara*) upside-down," even though their initial prospects were poor.[80] "The soldiers of '73 were superior to the soldiers of '67, who were superior to the soldiers of '56, who were superior to the soldiers of '48," said Dayan.[81] Such expressions were found to dominate in their rhetoric, while details of the outbreak of the Yom Kippur War were hardly mentioned. This rhetoric and use of patriotic images was reflected in the dailies' commentaries, which sometimes symbolized the Yom Kippur War as a victory of a few against many: "[o]pposing the millions and the millionaires there stood a tiny nation."[82]

Paradoxically, the supporters of the outstanding Israeli army narrative were part of the 1948 generation—or supporters of the sons' war narrative. Thus they shared some beliefs about historical events and social processes in Israel. They believed that during both the 1948 war and the Yom Kippur War, two major contrasting factors were at work, with crucial implications for the existential conditions in Israel. On the one hand, the Arabs' hatred of Israel remained unchanged while the threat of destruction and danger of losing the Zionist accomplishments of the 1948 generation continued. On the other hand, the Israelis' determination to preserve their nation's sovereignty continued regardless. This conception implied their belief in the Israeli army and in the Great Victory of Israel in the wars. Thus, we find that the same 1948 generation—a group of high-ranking army officers—generously glorifying the soldiers of the Yom Kippur War whose fighting gained a Great Victory for Israel. Gradually, the outstanding Israeli army narrative gathered wide support within army circles. It seems that this narrative was meant to serve their interests. Praising the soldiers who "fought for their country" and presenting the Yom Kippur War as a great victory were essential for them because they, of course, were the statesmen and military officers of the war.

CONCLUSION

Political myth is a collective construction that is linked to processes of remembering and forgetting. Factors such as political culture and representations reflected in the political discourse play major roles in these processes.[83] Moreover, various political needs of active groups within societies may be predominant in the construction of political myths and in the support gained by those myths. In a reality of constant Israeli–Arab conflict, national security has become an important and central issue for Israelis. Collective memory plays an important role in providing a background for shaping reality. Perceptions about reality are created and in turn shape society's collective memory.

In this paper, I explored the dynamics of collective interpretations and perceptions of the Yom Kippur War to reach conclusions about the pattern of mythologizing the

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traumatically perceived experience of the Yom Kippur War in the context of ideological rifts. My main assumption was that perceived tragic and traumatic shared experiences under certain conditions might lend themselves to divergent interpretations and conceptualizations. In such situations, it is probable that major ideologies that were dormant in the specific society would be rediscovered and even born anew. This led to the main hypothesis that, in terms of functionality, the process of mythologizing an event under such circumstances might produce a dominant pattern of multiple myths that are both compatible and opposing. Contrary to Grinberg, and partly in line with Malinowski and other students of myths, various ideological groups that share and dramatize a traumatic experience may articulate it in compliance with their ideological framework and register that experience in their collective memory as a myth that suits their particular values. Thus, each may benefit from the significant meanings he or she attributes to the shared experience by building up and maintaining in-group solidarity and self-identification and by defending particular attitudes about profound existential matters pertaining to the society at large. However, in the long run, the pattern of multiplicity is usually maintained as long as the overarching myth of the traumatic experience is supported.

A vast body of literature studies national mythic narratives as a means by which societies negotiate their past, present, and future.[84] Some of the literature demonstrates cases of co-existence of competing mythic narratives when a shared experience is widely perceived as traumatic.[85] The development of national myths surrounding a shared experience is common; examples of contradicting myths surrounding a shared experience have been found to be less frequent. The unusual case of mythologizing national and particular versions of the same experience simultaneously has been hardly documented until now.

Studying the process of mythologizing a traumatically perceived experience in the context of socio-political ideological rifts may benefit from the conclusions of this paper in several ways. First, in the case of a shared experience that most of the participants perceive as traumatic, the dynamics of socio-political solidarity often come into play, finding their consensual expression in the national collective memory. This conclusion is supported by several studies.[85]

Second, as this paper shows, a shared memory of an experience that develops into a consensual process of mythologizing may co-exist with particularistic oppositional or compatible mythic narrations that reflect the memories and perceptions of competing ideological groups in the subject society.

Third, this paper suggests that the functionality of a traumatically perceived experience is manifold. Particular sub-groups as well as the whole collective objectify a shared, traumatically perceived event. When particular memories of shared events are shaped as distinct myths, they become functional in lending support to particularistic arguments concerning issues on the national agenda. The memory of the traumatic experience therefore participates in defining identities of a subject society, as well as in creating new identities. As long as the collective memory of a shared experience is articulated through mythic narratives relating to issues contained on the national agenda, the particular memories of the same experience may be useful for supporting "suitable" attitudes bearing on the same national agenda. The passage of time may be detrimental to such processes. Further shared experiences pertaining to the same pub-

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lic agenda may lead to the trivialization of previous mythic narratives, especially when those newly shared experiences attract more attention. The process of mythologizing critical events is unending. After all, myth and mythologizing serve a society in their dialogue among past, present, and future. Myths provide ways to understand reality better, especially when shared experiences are perceived as tragic or exceptional.[87] Myths stimulate socio-political dynamics, whether on a national or particular basis. Mythologizing a shared traumatically perceived experience, in line with particularistic values, may be vitally useful for the realization of major political needs, as well as social solidarity.[88]

In summary, the political discourse during and after the Yom Kippur War shows that the Israeli public was traumatized by this shared experience. The political discourse also reflected the accentuation of ideological cleavages rooted in three traditional paradigms: Zionist, Jewish, and Israeli.

The Israeli public expressed its disappointment with the functioning of its political leadership in the omission narrative. The collective memory concerning the omission marked the first serious cracks in public trust enjoyed by the Israeli political leadership. The wide consensus regarding the omission narrative provided justification for public criticism of the government's security policy after the Yom Kippur War ended.

Additional interpretations attached to the experience of the Yom Kippur War were articulated through the examined discourse. These reflected and supported core values of different socio-political streams within Israeli society. The narrative of the political right identified the Yom Kippur War as a historical continuation of the "persecuted" Jewish people who are always saved by a supernatural miracle. The focal point of a competitive stream, articulated in the outstanding Israeli army narrative, was that Israel "won" the war despite its initial disadvantages solely because of its fighters.

Deep ideological rifts are reflected in the contradictions between the sons' war narrative supported by the 1948 generation and the eternal binding narrative supported by the 1973 generation. The 1973 generation's narrative developed as a protest against the constant demand imposed on its members to be prepared for war in order to maintain the "national independence" won at such a high price by the 1948 generation. The 1973 generation perceived the concept of binding as problematic after its experience during the Yom Kippur War. This generation's interpretation of the Yom Kippur War led it to preach about fighting for peace by means of compromise and reconciliation.

The process of self-searching began when the army reserves were released after the Yom Kippur War. This was the optimal time for educators and intellectuals to act. They spoke about the Yom Kippur War as a sobering event that awaked a need to resume the process of social reform that had halted after the 1967 Arab–Israeli war.

More than two decades have passed since the Yom Kippur War, and the dynamics of mythologizing it appear to have decreased gradually. When one pages through the main Hebrew dailies issued in September 2001, the twenty-eighth anniversary of the Yom-Kippur War, one finds that most of them repeat the omission narrative. Moreover, the impact of the Yom Kippur War is evident in a general mood of despair and anger. Israelis mainly remember the Yom Kippur War as the greatest national disaster that has occurred in modern Israeli history.

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NOTES

Author's note: The research on which this paper is based was carried out as a part of my doctoral thesis, "Political Myths—Preservation and Change. The Development of Political Myths Surrounding the Yom Kippur War, Amongst the Secular Jewish Population: From the Yom Kippur War until the Oslo Agreement." The thesis was written for the Political Science Department, Bar Ilan University, Ramat Gan, Israel, and approved in 1997. I thank my mentor, Professor Charles S. Liebman, for his guidance in writing the doctoral thesis.

[1]Henry Tudor, *Political Myth* (London: Macmillan, 1972), 127.

[2]The 1973 war was named the Yom Kippur War for two main reasons. First, Israel was attacked on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement and the holiest day in the Jewish calendar. And second, according to Jewish tradition, Yom Kippur is the day on which God decides people's fate, for better or worse. Indeed, many Israelis perceived the first few days of the Yom Kippur War as existentially threatening.

[3]In Israel, the 1948 war is commonly called the War of Independence.

[4]See Tudor, *Political Myth*, 46–60; Robert Wistrich and David Ohana, ed., *The Shaping of Israeli Identity* (London: Frank Cass, 1995).

[5]Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, vol. 2, trans. R. Manheim (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1963).

[6]Yael Zerubavel, "The Historic, the Legendary and the Incredible: Invented Tradition and Collective Memory in Israel," in *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity*, ed. J. R. Gillis (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994), 105–23.

[7]See Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. A. Lavers (London: Jonathan Cape, 1972); Maurice Godelier, "Myth and History," *New Left Review* 69 (1971), 93–104; W. H. Leatherdale, *The Role of Analogy, Model and Metaphor in Science* (New York: American Elsevier Publishing, 1974); Lev Grinberg, ed., *Contested Memory—Myth, Nation and Democracy* (in Hebrew) (Beer-Sheva: Humphrey Institute for Social Research, Ben-Gurion University, 2000); Claude Levi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology* (New York: Basic Books, 1963); Charles S. Liebman, "The Myth of Defeat: The Memory of the Yom Kippur War in Israeli Society," *Israeli Society of Middle Eastern Studies* 29 (1993): 399–418; Branislaw Malinowski, *A Scientific Theory of Culture* (New York: Galexy Book, 1960); Yoram Peri, *The Assassination of Yitzhak Rabin* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2000); Emmanuel Sivan, *Arabic Political Myths* (Tel-Aviv: Am Oved, 1988). The literature pertaining to modern myths, such as David Ohana and Robert S. Wistrich, ed., *Myth and Memory: Transfigurations of the Israeli Consciousness* (in Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Van Leer Jerusalem Institute & Hakibutz Hameuhad, 1997), cite Levi-Strauss's structural study of myth for its functionality. According to Levi-Strauss, myths function in cultures to provide a logical model capable of overcoming a contradiction that may consist of believing in two precisely opposite things. Levi-Strauss emphasizes that these contradictions characterize every culture and that these contradictions have to be reconciled logically. Levi-Strauss has been criticized since *Structural Anthropology* was published in 1963 for providing explanations that favor science over "myth," because he insists that his method is scientific and therefore is better than other methods. This is a deconstructive reading that is identified mainly with Jacques Derrida. According to this criticism, the reader reconstructs every "text" in his or her own mind; thus, the stability of a linguistic construction is seen as non-existent—in other words, this is a subjectivist approach that claims that stability of things rests solely in our minds.

[8]In "The Myth of Defeat," Liebman found that the majority of Israeli society narrated the Yom Kippur War as a traumatic experience.

[9]The method of analysis applied in this paper can be described as discourse analysis. Political scientists generally use the term "discourse" (and the method of discourse analysis) in a more concrete way, concentrating on language at the micro level. In political science, discourse is basically the public discourse about a certain topic or theme; thus, discourse analysts write on political debates about specific issues. Following Peri, *Assassination of Yitzhak Rabin*, I analyzed technical expressions used in the sources selected for the study to extract the main narratives of the Yom Kippur War. Then I estimated the relative popularity of certain narratives in comparison with others. In extracting the main narratives, I paid attention to rhetorical style—that is, figurative language and other stylistic means used by the writers—to reconstruct the collective memory of the Yom Kippur War. For instance, the concept omission was explicitly used in all of the material checked. It was also described in detail when discussing the misdeeds of the government before

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and during the war. Another example is the concept of *Akedah*, which many writers who had fought in the war used explicitly. Detailed descriptions of this concept are found in printed commemorative material, in interviews with soldiers, and in letters and articles written by soldiers that spoke about the war as a continuous and pointless sacrifice. Through these means, I identified the main narratives as reflecting Zionist, Israeli, or Jewish undertones. My research showed that these narratives emerged as an integral part of the collective memory of sub-groups. They were regarded as factual history and were used by sub-groups as such whenever the national agenda called for supportive argumentation. Thus, for instance, Moshe Dayan, a supporter of the outstanding Israeli army myth, argued on different occasions that the Yom Kippur War was won because of the outstanding power and skill of the army.

[10]Hava Etzioni-Halevi and Rina Shapira, *Political Culture in Israel: Cleavage and Integration among Israeli Jews* (New York: Praeger, 1977), 207.

[11]*Divrei Ha'knesset* (Parliamentary Proceedings), sess. 461, 16 October 1973, 4474.

[12]Gideon Hausner, in ibid., 4483.

[13]In Jewish tradition, *kesse ve'asor* is a ten-day period immediately following the Jewish New-Year devoted to repentance. See also Menachem Begin, in ibid., 4480.

[14]*Chatima Tova* is a traditional Jewish blessing. The implications of such traditional expressions in regard to the process of mythologizing will be developed later.

[15]*Shok al Yarech* is a biblical expression that signifies a tremendous blow. See also Moshe Dayan's official announcement in *Yedi'ot Aharonot*, 7 October 1973, 2.

[16]David Elazar, official announcement *Ma'ariv*, 9 October 1973, 1.

[17]"A few against many" is a mythical image found in biblical stories such as that of David and Goliath. It developed into a mythic theme and has been supported by the Zionist movement since its inception: see Oz Almog, *The Sabra—A Profile* (in Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1997). In essence, the myth describes a final act in a well-known drama in which the few achieve victory over the many and the strong: see Nurit Gertz, *A Few Against Many* (Siman Kriya, 1983), 16–17, 106–14. Viewing the Israeli–Arab dispute through this image signifies a situation in which the land of Israel will always serve as a safe shelter for the few, the minority, in their successful defense against their enemies, the Arab majority.

[18]David Elazar, official announcement, *Yedi'ot Aharonot*, 9 October 1973, 1.

[19]See also the headlines in *Ha'aretz*, 7 October 1973.

[20]Aharon Yariv, official announcement, *Ma'ariv*, 9 October 1973, 1.

[21]This is obvious because the army's chief commanders, more than any other Israeli group, had to mobilize all possible support for the war machine.

[22]Many publications were issued by the Chief Officer of Education of the Israeli Army (*Zahal*) and by army officials—for example, *Dapei Krav* (Battle Notes) was issued by army units during the Yom Kippur War, as were special issues of *Ba'machane Gadna* and *Ba'machane.*

[23]"The Team That Destroyed Thirty Tanks," *Ba'machane*, 6 (31 October 1973), 24.

[24]The name "Six-Day War," as the 1967 war is called in Israel, symbolizes the swift victory of the Israeli army.

[25]Headlines, *Ma'ariv*, 7 October 1973.

[26]Ibid., 8 October 1973.

[27]Ibid., 10 October 1973.

[28]Ibid., 9 October 1973.

[29]Yoel Marcus, "Achievements by Zahal Already after Eighty Hours," *Ha'aretz*, 10 October 1973, 1.

[30]H. Rosenblum, "The Time Factor" (editorial), *Yedi'ot Aharonot*, 8 October 1973, 2.

[31]See *Ha'aretz*, 17 October 1973, 6.

[32]See *Ma'ariv*, 15 October 1973, 1.

[33]Ochs contends that narrative is a genre of discourse that does not necessarily concern the past alone; it may also be about present or future chains of events. Mythic narratives usually negotiate among past, present, and future events: see Elinor Ochs, "Narrative," in *Discourse as Structure and Process: Discourse Structure and Process*, ed. Teun A. Van Dijk (London: Sage Publications, 1997), 185–207.

[34]Golda Meir, *Parliamentary Proceedings*, session 462, 23 October 1973, 4509; emphasis added.

[35]Yigal Horowitz, ibid., 4521.

[36]Shmuel Tamir, ibid., 4530.

[37]Menachem Begin, ibid., 4539.

[38]Ibid., 4541.

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[39]See also Etzioni-Halevi and Shapira, *Political Culture*, 77.

[40]Oded Kotler, "An Instant Poll; Interviewees: An Israeli Omission," *Ha'aretz*, 8 October 1973, 3.

[41]Moshe Goshen-Goteshtein, "The Great Mehdal," *Ha'aretz*, 9 August 1974, 19.

[42]P.O.R.I. survey, *Ha'aretz*, 10 May 1974, 5.

[43]Ben Evron, "The Fog and the War," *Yedi'ot Aharonot*, weekend supp., 12 October 1973, 2.

[44]This expression has implications in the process of mythologizing the Yom Kippur War, as we will see later: see editorial, *Ma'ariv*, 24 October 1973, 2.

[45]For instance, Sam Lehman-Wilzig, *Public Protest in Israel 1949–1990* (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University, 1992).

[46]Protest groups such as the "Our Israel" Movement organized spontaneously, calling for a thorough change in the political game. In addition, the Shinuy movement was established. One of its goals was to function as a political party to achieve its goals through parliamentary political activity.

[47]At that time, surveys showed a significant increase in the public's willingness to influence government policy: see Etzioni-Halevi and Shapira, *Political Culture*, 80.

[48]These are two hypothetical dramatic events that Jewish Israelis have dreaded throughout their history. Minister of Defense Moshe Dayan used these expressions after he visited the northern front on the third day of the fighting.

[49]Liebman, "The Myth of Defeat."

[50]Israeli army strategists claimed that the Yom Kippur War had taken Israel by surprise.

[51]The Jewish people defined Zionist values at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. Zionism instructs the Jewish people who are scattered throughout the world on how to survive and live an independent life. Zionists chose to live independently in the land of Israel, which they believed was promised to their biblical ancestors.

[52]Moshe Shamir, "Permission to Talk," *Ma'ariv*, 9 November 1973, 18.

[53]Yehoshafat Harkabi, "Changes in the National Values," *Ma'ariv*, 1 November 1973, 5.

[54]Yaacov Malkin, "The Sobering Effect—A Resource for Encouragement and Hope," *Ma'ariv*, 14 December 1973, 20.

[55]Yitzhak Shapira, "Yom Kippur War, Viewed by an Educator," *Ma'ariv*, 16 November 1973, 22.

[56]Amos Gilboa, "The Minimum," *Ma'ariv*, 27 November 1973, 5.

[57]Malkin, "Sobering Effect."

[58]The most common images were "Auschwitz," "genocide," and "destruction of the Third Temple." These represent events in Jewish history of being close to total destruction. For instance, in "An Internal Calculation," *Ma'ariv*, 2 November 1973, 26, Y. Sharet wrote: "[Israel's] existence was hanging on a hairbreadth."

[59]Such "miracles" are also thought to have occurred in other cultures.

[60]An Israeli war-plane pilot, as quoted in "Geula Cohen: An Intimate Conversation with a Pilot," *Ma'ariv*, 2 November 1973, 23.

[61]Itamar Yaoz-Kest, "An Israeli Image and a Jewish Fate," *Yedi'ot Aharonot*, 23 November 1973, 8.

[62]Chaim Herzog, *Ha'yamim Ha'noraim* (The Terrible Days) (Jerusalem: Ma'ariv Library, 1973), 32.

[63]Ibid., 31.

[64]These were the Yom Kippur generation—that is, the 1973 generation.

[65]Yoel Marcus, "The Image of the Arab Soldier," *Ha'aretz*, 15 October 1973, 5.

[66]Yehuda Bar-Yosef, "What Is a Fighting Nation?" *Yedi'ot Aharonot*, weekend supp., 29 March 1974, 15.

[67]Shabati Tevet, "Deep Breath," *Ha'aretz*, 10 October 1973, 9.

[68]Amos Bachar, "A New Flag," *Yedi'ot Aharonot*, weekend supp., 8 March 1974, 13.

[69]*Akedah* is the biblical story of the binding of Isaac.

[70]The biblical narrative of the binding of Isaac has been studied widely. See A. Sagi, "The Meaning of the *Akedah* in Israeli Culture and Jewish Tradition," *Israel Studies* 3 (1998): 45–61. The latest transformation of the major lesson learned from this biblical narrative replaces the love of God with love of the country. It teaches about sacrificing oneself for the good of the country, a universal theme in many cultures.

[71]The Hebrew word *kibbutz* means a settlement based on a socialist ideology of sharing assets, working for the benefit of the collective and fulfilling Zionist ideals.

[72]Arnon Lapid, "An Invitation to Cry," *Shedemot* 53 (1974): 270.

[73]Rubik, "A Time for Crying" in ibid.: 57.

[74]The battle of Tel-Hai became a central myth in the reconstruction of a Jewish image in Israel. Tel-Hai

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is a settlement where Jewish guards were killed while protecting it. This caused them to be remembered as heroes, an example for others.

[75]Throughout this series of articles, it is clear that during this period macabre jokes such as "See you on the commemoration board" were common among the young generation: see Nathan Ribbon, "In the Shadow of Death," *Ha'aretz*, weekend supp., 23 September 1974, 9. Youngsters described their lives as a process whereby you graduate from high school, join the army, enroll for officer's training, and, at age twenty, get killed in a war "for the sake of the country."

[76]Doron Rosenblum, "Please Decide," *Ha'aretz*, weekend supp., 1 March 1974, 13.

[77]Esther Levinger, *Monuments for Dead Soldiers in Israel* (Tel-Aviv: Hakibutz Hameuhad, 1993), 78.

[78]Ibid., 106.

[79]Ibid.

[80]This expression symbolized a complete positive transformation in the strategic situation of Israel after it was heavily attacked during the Yom Kippur War.

[81]Moshe Dayan, "The Enemy Will Pay Dearly," *Ma'ariv*, 7 October 1973, 7.

[82]Ephraim Kishon, *Ma'ariv*, 12 October 1973, 4.

[83]Eliezer Don-Yihia and Charles S. Liebman, "The Dilemma of Traditional Culture in the Modern State: Changes and Developments" (in Hebrew), *Megamot* 28 (1984): 461–85. Ohana and Wistrich, *Myth and Memory*; Michael L. Geis, *The Language of Politics* (New York: Springer-Verlag, 1987).

[84]See, for instance, the Rabin myth, "Death for the sake of peace," in Peri, "Rabin Myth and the Media: Reconstruction of the Israeli Collective Memory," *Devarim Ahadim* 1a (1997): 51–65. The values reflected in the collective memory of Prime Minister Itzhak Rabin, who was assassinated by a rightist Jew on 5 November 1995, are hegemonic, says Peri. However, this paper shows that in the case of the Yom Kippur War, the overarching national narrative, adopted by the majority of the Israeli public, reflected opposing values. In other words, the Yom Kippur War, which was widely perceived as traumatic, unified the Israeli public, whose collective memory described the war as an omission.

[85]Zerubavel, "The Historic"; Yael Zerubavel, "The Politics of Interpretation: Tel Hai in the Israeli Collective Memory," *Associated Jewish Studies Review* 16 (1991): 34–46; Shoshana Blum-Kolka, "Hegemonic, Oppositional, or Polisemic Discourse? News and History: The Case of Dir-Yasin," (in Hebrew) in *The Book of Nir Raphael*, ed. O. Schwartzwald (Rodrig), Shoshana Blum-Kolka, and I. Olstein (Jerusalem: Ministry of Education, 2000), 199–223.

[86]Liebman, "The Myth of Defeat," in *Arabic Political Myths*; Wistrich and Ohana, *Shaping*; Peri, *Assassination of Yitzhak Rabin*.

[87]Sivan, *Arabic Political Myths*; Liebman, "The Myth of Defeat."

[88]Malinowski, *Scientific Theory.*

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