

WHY ISRAEL IS CALLED ISRAEL AND NOT JUDEA

<https://mosaicmagazine.com/observation/israel-zionism/2021/06/why-israel-is-called-israel-and-not-judea/>

The name Israel came by a process of elimination, because there wasn't time to come up with anything better.

June 10, 2021 | Martin Kramer

About the author: Martin Kramer teaches Middle Eastern history and served as founding president at Shalem College in Jerusalem, and is the Walter P. Stern fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy.

This is the third installment in the historian Martin Kramer's series on how Israel's declaration of independence came about, and what the text reveals about the country it brought into being. Previous installments can be seen [here](#).—The Editors

Modern Zionism was based on the principle that, in the absence of sovereign statehood, Jewish identity could no longer be secured. The world had become divided into nation-states with defined borders; in such a world, Jews could not long thrive, or even survive, as the perennial and universal “other.” But could they really organize, create, and establish a self-governing nation-state? They had lived for two millennia as scattered religious minorities. To do otherwise, they would have to change *themselves*.

Israel's declaration of independence was an announcement to the world that, in fact, a new kind of Jew had been (re)born in the Land of Israel, and this new Jew was fundamentally different from the Jews the world had known, persecuted, and repeatedly sought to eliminate during the two millennia of Jewish dispersion. In the words of the late Meir Shamgar, who for twelve years served as president of Israel's Supreme Court, the declaration of independence was at once “the birth certificate and the identity card of the state as a political, sovereign, and independent entity.”

But if the declaration was Israel's birth certificate and identity card, who issued it, and to whom, and by what authority? The identity of the entity being declared was “a Jewish state in Eretz-



The graves of David and Paula Ben-Gurion. *David Rubinger/CORBIS/Corbis via Getty Images.*

Israel,” but what did “Jewish state” mean to those who wrote the declaration? Can we learn anything about the identity of this new state from its name, and why was “Israel” the name ultimately preferred over other options?

Who “hereby declares”?

If you ask most Israelis who declared the state, they will answer without hesitation: David Ben-Gurion. But the document itself says otherwise:

We, members of the People’s Council, representatives of the Jewish community of Eretz-Israel and of the Zionist movement, . . . hereby declare the establishment of a Jewish state in Eretz-Israel, to be known as the State of Israel.

Each bit of that sentence tells its own story. As we saw in the previous installment in this series, when the thirty-three-year-old lawyer Mordechai Beham was given the assignment to draft a declaration of independence, he went home, pulled out his copy of the American Declaration of Independence, and identified what seemed to him the operative parts. Among them was this:

We, therefore, the Representatives of the united States of America, in General Congress, Assembled . . . and by Authority of the good People of these Colonies, solemnly publish and declare. . . .

Beham simply copied this language and made substitutions as needed. In his first draft he wrote, in English:

We, the representatives of the Jewish people . . . do, in the name and by the authority of the Jewish people, solemnly publish and declare. . . .

In this early draft, those declaring the state appear as “representatives of the Jewish people” and as empowered by that same people—a very large claim. At the time, the Jews in the Land of Israel numbered only about 600,000, while even after the Holocaust there were still 11 million Jews in the world, and it’s anyone’s guess how many of those millions were Zionists in the two countries, the United States and the Soviet Union, where the vast majority of them resided. Certainly they were not represented by any people-wide body.

No doubt this discrepancy also struck subsequent drafters as odd, because from one draft to the next they progressively narrowed both their own representative status and the authority of their popular mandate. In tracing the history of that progression—my main task in this installment—I’ll be simplifying somewhat; the steps have been expounded in detail by the legal scholar Yoram Shachar, whose definitive 2002 [study](#) I’ve relied on throughout.

In his own last draft, Beham split the Jewish proclaimers into two parts: “we, the representatives of world Jewry in the Diaspora, and the Jewish community in Eretz-Israel.” He thus proposed to rely on a bifurcated authority while still giving pride of place to Jewry abroad, in the Diaspora,

over the much smaller Jewish community in the land. This was later modified to “we, the representatives of the *Zionist movement* [emphasis added] in the Diaspora, and the Jewish community in Eretz-Israel”—i.e., those genuinely invested in the project, and organized to advance it.

Next, in the draft of May 9, prepared by Zvi Berenson, there came this refinement: “We, the People’s Council, representatives of the Zionist movement and the Jewish community in Eretz-Israel”: that is, an actual body, the People’s Council, made up of representatives of the various Zionist and other political factions of the local Jewish community—the yishuv.

Another change occurs in the version by Moshe Shertok where “the Jewish community in Eretz-Israel” becomes “the *Hebrew* community” (emphasis added), which is also the formula in the final version—although the official English translation reverts to “the Jewish community.” Then, in making his own, final edit of the document, Ben-Gurion will top things off by reversing the order, putting the yishuv first and the Zionist movement second.

Thus, in its final version, the declaration has two sources of authority: the yishuv in the land and the Zionist movement at large through these two constituencies’ representatives on the People’s Council. Together they make up the authors of the declaration and the founders of the state.

But where does this leave the Jewish people as a whole, who figured so prominently in the very first draft? The answer lies in the declaration, which repeatedly insists on “the right of the Jewish people to national rebirth in its own country,” the “right of the Jewish people to rebuild its National Home,” the “right of the Jewish people to establish their State,” and most famously, “the natural right of the Jewish people to be masters of their own fate, like all other nations, in their own sovereign state.” Moreover, in order to possess his or her share of this “natural right,” a Jew need not even be a Zionist. That universal status will be legally enshrined in Israel’s 1950 Law of Return, which stipulates that “every Jew has the right to come to this country as an *oleh*”—that is, as an immigrant automatically entitled to citizenship by dint of being a Jew.

Still, there is a distinction to be drawn, and it is this: while the entire body of the Jewish people has the right to a state, only the yishuv and the Zionist movement have the *authority* to declare the state, because they constitute those who have undertaken a voluntary act by joining the Zionist movement, or the Jewish/Hebrew yishuv, or both. The Zionist movement claims that right for the Jewish people as a whole; the Jewish/Hebrew yishuv living in the land is the movement’s vanguard. As set up in the successive recensions of the declaration, the relationship among the three elements is called by Yoram Shachar a hierarchy of Jewish parents and Jewish witnesses: “Zionists and Hebrews establish the state, and the rest of the Jews, because they chose another identity, are invited only to stand on the sidelines.”

It was Ben-Gurion who in the final version specified the role of those on the sidelines. The draft that came into his hands included this passage: “We appeal to the Jewish people throughout the world to rally around the Jews of Eretz-Israel, and to volunteer to stand by them.” Ben-Gurion introduced two charged words: “Diaspora” and “aliyah.” His version: “We appeal to the Jewish people throughout the Diaspora to rally around the Jews of Eretz-Israel in the tasks of aliyah and upbuilding.”

This is pure Zionism in the Ben-Gurion tradition: you Jews elsewhere are living in dispersion; your role is to assist us in bringing you home.

Jewish or Hebrew?

The relationship defined by Yoram Shachar as a “hierarchy” has been defined somewhat differently by the Israeli writer and educator Assaf Inbari. For him, it expresses a “fundamental source of tension” within Zionism itself, which “vacillates between ‘the old Jew’ and ‘the new Hebrew.’” The result, according to Inbari, is “a confused definition of self” that in the declaration is to be “found behind the [deceptively] decisive ‘we’ of those who ‘hereby declare.’”

Zionism may indeed vacillate between these two identities. But the declaration really doesn't; it is squarely in the corner of “the new Hebrew.” Its preference for “Hebrew” over “Jewish” is entirely lost in the hasty English translation, which was made for foreign consumption, and also in the official translation that wasn't prepared until 1962. There, *ha-yishuv ha-ivri* is rendered simply as “the Jewish community,” no doubt because the translators felt that “Jewish,” by emphasizing the element of shared solidarity, would resonate with the Jews of America whereas “Hebrew” would have been bewildering if not alienating. Besides, “Jewish community” had been standard English usage in the mandate period, and departing from it would have raised eyebrows.

To the English reader, then, it can all appear seamless: the Jewish people produces the Jewish yishuv, which creates the Jewish state. In fact, however, embodied in the declaration is a contrasting series of ruptures: the Jewish people produces the *Hebrew* yishuv, which creates the *Israeli* state.

Ben-Gurion's emphasis on the Hebrew character of the new state is nicely illustrated in an amusing story from the time. Truth to tell, the 37 actual signatories of the declaration didn't much look like “new Hebrews”; to the contrary, quite a few looked like “old Jews.” Fully 27 of them had been born in tsarist Russia, four in the Austro-Hungarian empire, two in Germany, one in Romania, one in Denmark, and one in Yemen. Exactly one, from Tiberias, was native-born. Of the 36 immigrants, moreover, only nine—the most veteran being Ben-Gurion and Shertok—had come to the country before World War I, with the rest arriving during the British mandate.

Herzl Rosenblum, born in Lithuania, a follower of the Revisionist leader Vladimir Jabotinsky, was one of the latecomers. After studies in Vienna, he arrived in mandate Palestine in 1935, became a journalist writing under the pseudonym of Herzl Vardi (*vered* is “rose” in Hebrew), and in the People's Council would represent a small faction that had broken away from the Revisionists. Here is his account of his signing:

When my name was called, I ascended the platform prepared to sign my name which, as you know, is Dr. Herzl Rosenblum, the name I always use. Mr. Ben-Gurion turned to me and, in a peremptory tone, ordered: “Sign Vardi, not Rosenblum!” Because of

the excitement of the occasion I couldn't grasp why I was asked to sign in this abbreviated way. Vardi was my *nom de plume*, my pen name. . . . Had I been in a more "balanced" frame of mind, I perhaps might have added Rosenblum in parentheses, but at that moment I obeyed him unthinkingly. . . . A year later I did officially change my name [to Vardi], but I don't use it. I leave that to my son. Some time afterward, I encountered Ben-Gurion and asked him why he had requested that I sign as I did. His reply was that he wanted as many Hebrew names as possible to appear on the document.

Ben-Gurion would become well-known for insisting that civil servants and military officers Hebraicize their names. The following month, swearing in the general staff of the new Israel Defense Forces, he insisted that each officer choose a Hebrew name right on the spot. "Some resisted and asked for more time," recalled one senior commander. "But Ben-Gurion, good-naturedly, pushed them: choose a name, or I'll choose one for you."

The chance choice of Israel

At the conclusion of the declaration, another transition occurs: *ha-yishuv ha-ivri*, the Hebrew yishuv, is succeeded by *m'dinat Yisrael*, the state of Israel. The climax of Ben-Gurion's reading came with these words: "We hereby declare the establishment of a Jewish state in Eretz-Israel, to be known as the State of Israel." This was the culmination, the applause line.

Until that moment, in fact, very few people knew what the state would be named. In the declaration's successive drafts, the space had been left blank. In Washington, where the Jewish Agency's diplomats had gone to secure an advance promise of official recognition, they couldn't tell the Americans what the name of the state would be. As Clark Clifford, Harry Truman's legal adviser, would later recall, "most of us assumed the new nation would be called Judaea." Even the letter extending recognition that had been prepared for Truman on May 14 was typed as follows: "The United States recognizes the provisional government as the de-facto authority of the new Jewish state." On it, presumably at the last minute, an unidentified hand would cross out "the new Jewish state" and in its place write "the State of Israel."

How was the name decided? By a vote in the People's Administration, the cabinet-in-waiting, on May 12. The protocol of the meeting, silent on the details of the debate, simply records Ben-Gurion as saying:

We have decided that the name of the state will be Israel. And if we also say [the word] "state," then the State of Israel. . . . To this can be added every word in the [Hebrew] grammatical construct form: army of Israel, community of Israel, people of Israel.

Ben-Gurion then put this "decision" to a vote. According to the protocol, seven of the ten members voted in favor; opposing and abstaining votes weren't recorded. In his 1962 book *Three*

Days, the cabinet secretary Zeev Sharef would write that the decision was arrived at “in the absence of any other suggestion.”

But we do know rather more about a debate that *preceded* this vote, and from two sources: first, what Sharef told a journalist in May 1949, on the first anniversary of independence; second, a recollection by the chief opponent of the name Israel.

This is what Sharef told the journalist Moshe Brilliant, who published his report in what was still called, even in 1949, the *Palestine Post* (later the *Jerusalem Post*):

Most people had thought that the state would be called Judea (*Y'hudah* in Hebrew). But Judea is the historical name of the area around Jerusalem, which at that time seemed the area least likely to become part of the state. Also, it applied only to a very small territory. So Judea was ruled out.

From its outset, as we have seen, Zionism had spoken of creating a *Jewish* state, and so did the UN's 1947 partition plan. As “Jewish” was a derivative of Judea, the name might therefore have seemed a logical choice. But according to the partition plan, all of the traditional geographical area of Judea was slated either to be internationalized (in the case of Jerusalem and its environs) or to become part of the proposed Arab state. A Jewish state named Judea that didn't include the geographical Judea would have been, to say the least, an anomaly.

Moreover, even if it did wind up possessing some chunk of Judea, the Jewish state would also comprise a much larger area than that, including the coastal plan, the Galilee, and the Negev; how could a state be called Judea when most of it was something else? Besides, what would its citizens be called? *Y'hudim*? How would that be regarded by the state's projected half-million Arab citizens?

With Judea ruled out, another suggestion, Sharef told Brilliant, was Zion—“but Zion is the name of a hill overlooking the Old City of Jerusalem” and therefore not intended by the UN's partition plan to be within the borders of the proposed Jewish state. True, even the Bible refers to Jerusalem and sometimes to the entire Land of Israel as Zion, and in that sense the name had been adopted by the “Lovers of Zion” movement in the 19th century and then, obviously, by the Zionist movement itself. But for a sovereign Jewish state-to-be, actual geography mattered; how could such a state be called Zion when Mount Zion wasn't going to be a part of it? And what would a citizen of such a state be called? A Zionist? That would again be to ask a great deal of Arab citizens, while also creating confusion with Zionists living in the United States.

Here is Sharef once more, as quoted by Brilliant: “One man proposed ‘*Ever*’—the root [form] of ‘*ivri*,’ which means Hebrew. No one liked it.” Sharef doesn't say why no one liked it. The word was certainly connected to the idea of the “new Jew” as a Hebrew, and presumably the citizen of such a state would have been called an *Ivri*, a word otherwise beloved by Ben-Gurion and others. But “*Ever*” also had a geographical association, “crossing over,” and in one interpretation it referred only to the land west of the Jordan River, which could have struck some as too limiting.

Again, Sharef: “Eretz-Israel, the Hebrew biblical name for Palestine, was [also] ruled out, because of the dangers involved in its irredentist flavor.”

Why dangerous? Aside from its association with the biblical past, Eretz-Israel under the British mandate had been the official Hebrew name of the entire country—the Hebrew equivalent of “Palestine.” The UN plan had called for a division of “Palestine,” and even though the declaration was careful not to refer to this as a *partition* plan, no one wanted openly to defy the UN, either. Calling the state Eretz-Israel would have sounded like an overt claim to all of mandatory Palestine. So it was ruled out as well.

Back to Sharef:

It was Mr. Ben-Gurion who first suggested “Israel.” It seemed strange at first, and the proposal was received coolly. But members tried pronouncing “Israel government,” “Israel army,” “Israel citizen,” “Israel consul” to see how it sounded. Most were unenthusiastic, but there were only 48 hours left and much urgent work to be done, and the matter was put to a vote. Seven of the ten members present voted for Israel.

The name “Israel” thus came to the state by a process of elimination, because there wasn’t time to come up with anything better. A majority voted for it—unenthusiastically.

The lost case for Judea

This brings us to the most cogent argument *against* the choice of “Israel.” It came from Yitzhak Gruenbaum, the foremost secular leader of Polish Jewry between the two world wars, chairman of the Jewish Agency Rescue Committee during the Holocaust, and Israel’s first minister of the interior.

Years later, Gruenbaum, who had favored the name Judea, explained his rationale in these words:

I opposed the name Israel. It reminded me of the name *israélite* [in French], used by non-Jewish sympathizers and assimilationists instead of *juif*, which was considered derogatory. [But we] Zionists *embraced* the derogatory “Jew,” which was the name of our people since the return from [Babylonian] exile and the building of the Second Temple. The independent Hasmonean state, also after the Roman conquest, had this name. I favored the revival of this name, which the masses of the [Jewish] people accepted in their spoken languages. Another name was liable to divide the state from the Diaspora.

For Gruenbaum, then, reminiscing in 1961, the name Judea had the advantage of creating continuity through the 2,000 years of the dispersion of the Jews, an idea that had also been embraced by the Zionists in campaigning for a Jewish national home and a Jewish state. Calling the state Judea would therefore not only emphasize that continuity in time but would also link the new state to present-day Jews everywhere.

Gruenbaum lost the argument for the reason we've already seen: geographically, Judea was too small and in any case not slated to be in the envisioned state. As he stipulates, "the majority accepted Ben-Gurion's proposal . . . because the borders of our state are wider than those of the Hasmoneans." But he goes on to insinuate that geography wasn't the real reason Ben-Gurion had come to prefer Israel:

I had a feeling that Ben-Gurion didn't reveal the real reason behind his proposal, which was adopted. Unfortunately, it was realized after a few years that the name "Israel" created a misunderstanding among native-born *sabras*. The *sabra* began to see himself as an Israeli and not as a Jew.

In other words, Ben-Gurion's "real reason" was the same as Shertok's reason for preferring the term "Hebrew yishuv" to "Jewish yishuv." What he wanted was not continuity but a *rupture* of continuity—a break with the exilic Jewish past—and not a bridge to the Diaspora but the latter's subordination to and eventual absorption into the new state. By the choice of the name Israel, he was out to create a new identity, building upon Jewish identity but superseding it.

Gruenbaum himself wasn't religious. To the contrary, he was a declared secularist who ended up in the socialist Mapam party. His preference for the name Judea was thus not based in a desire either to shackle the state to religion or to stake a claim to territory. But he did want a name that bound the state to Jewish history and not just to Israelite antiquity. His sense of alarm over secular "native-born *sabras*" ceasing to regard themselves as Jews was directly related to this point.

Nor, in 1961, was Gruenbaum alone among his countrymen in that sense of alarm. Indeed, at that very moment, Ben-Gurion himself had taken a major step toward reminding young Israelis that they were Jews after all. The previous year, Israel had seized the former SS officer Adolf Eichmann, a major organizer of the Holocaust, and in 1961 put him on trial for crimes committed against Jews murdered in Europe before the birth of the Jewish state. Israel's unilateral action aroused its share of critics in the West—among them the editors of the *Washington Post*, who in an editorial asserted that Israel had no claim to represent or to act on behalf of the Jewish people as a whole. Ben-Gurion's reply:

The *Washington Post* writer is perhaps unaware that on May 14, 1948, we proclaimed the establishment of a Jewish state, in accordance with the decisions of the United Nations (which were backed by the United States as well as other countries), and Israel is only the name of the Jewish state.

The state, Ben-Gurion was saying, was a *Jewish* state; its name was but a convenience. Had Ben-Gurion, years after his choice of Israel's name, reached the same conclusion as Gruenbaum? Through the Eichmann trial, was he trying to slow or divert the drift of young Israelis away from Jewish peoplehood? Many historians believe so.

In the end, the choice of the name Israel would pose as many questions as it answered. Meir Shamgar, the Israeli Supreme Court justice whom I quoted earlier, had described the declaration

as Israel's "identity card." In reality, it was and it remains impossible to reduce to a card the identity even of a single individual, and certainly not of a polity as diverse as the state of Israel.

The end of political Zionism

One thing the declaration did do for sure: it affirmed the ascendancy of Israel over Zionism, if not the end of Zionism itself.

Indeed, so fixed is the declaration on the centrality of the Hebrew yishuv that its drafters almost failed to mention Theodor Herzl, under whose portrait Ben-Gurion stood in declaring the birth of the state. It was Zvi Berenson who, when the draft reached him, noticed that although Lord Balfour had earned a mention in connection with the Balfour Declaration, Herzl, the founder of modern political Zionism, was entirely absent.

The omission was duly rectified. But this doesn't change the fact that what stands front and center in the declaration is not the world Zionist movement but the Hebrew yishuv. There is no mention in the document of Zionist diplomacy or of the persistent lobbying and exercise of influence that secured such international licenses as the Balfour Declaration, the League of Nations mandate, and the UN partition plan, and that in 1948 was in full operation to persuade U.S. President Harry Truman to recognize the new state.

Instead, we read that "pioneers, defiant returnees, and defenders made deserts bloom, revived the Hebrew language, built villages and towns, and created a thriving community controlling its own economy and culture, loving peace but knowing how to defend itself." The Hebrew yishuv could certainly take credit for these things (although, initially, the revival of the Hebrew language in particular owed more to Odessa and Warsaw than to Tel Aviv). But in placing the yishuv *before* the Zionist movement in the declaration, Ben-Gurion imposed a clear hierarchy on their relative roles and contributions.

Earlier, and until then, the yishuv had been in a real sense an extension of the Zionist movement. Zionist congresses had convened in Europe, not Palestine, and the yishuv had relied on influential Jews elsewhere to represent its interests in world capitals. In putting pioneering above lobbying, the declaration now proclaimed the independence of the Jews of Eretz-Israel from the Zionist movement. With statehood and sovereignty, the balance of power shifted, and was bound to shift, toward Israel, and there it has remained ever since.

This is best exemplified in the story of a name missing from the list of signatories. Certainly the greatest of the Zionist lobbyists was Chaim Weizmann, who, from the 1917 Balfour Declaration onward, played a crucial if not decisive role in securing every form of international sanction for Zionism. By 1948, Weizmann was old and ill, yet still he traveled to America to put his prestige to work at the last minute in securing the support of Harry Truman.

After the declaration in Tel Aviv, a bellboy at the Waldorf Astoria hotel in New York handed Weizmann a cable from the new Provisional Government. Signed by Ben-Gurion, Shertok, and Golda Meyerson (Meir), among others, it read: “Of all those living, no one contributed as much as you to the creation” of the state. A few days later, the Provisional Government elected Weizmann as Israel’s first president.

Yet Ben-Gurion had not invited Weizmann to sign the declaration of independence. True, technically speaking he wasn’t a member of the People’s Council, all of whom did sign. But the withholding of even an invitation rankled. Norman Rose, one of Weizmann’s biographers, has imagined how so distinguished and venerable—and proud—a figure might have reacted:

Was he not the most eminent of those who had struggled for Israel’s independence? . . . Running his finger down the list of names, he stumbled on non-entities, mere party hacks raised to such heights only through political wire-pulling. He heard the lawyers and pedants arguing that he was . . . ineligible for inclusion among the chosen. But only pettifogging quill-pushers whose minds did not extend beyond their legal jargon would accept this as sufficient cause for his exclusion. Surely these legal niceties were as nothing when thrown into the balance against his record? Was this not, then, a deliberate slight to his person? Weizmann’s suspicious nature would not exclude such an explanation.

Meyer Weisgal, a prominent Zionist activist who was Weizmann’s man Friday, would echo this complaint in his own memoirs. Technically, he admits, Weizmann wasn’t a member of the group entitled to sign. Yet the declaration

was not a technical document. . . . Every name affixed to it was an everlasting honor for the generations to come. Its text and signatories would be reproduced thousands of times over in history books and first-grade primers. Moreover, twelve, I repeat twelve, of the signatories of the declaration of independence were not in Tel Aviv when it was signed. Ten of them were in Jerusalem. Two of them were as far abroad as was Weizmann—in New York. Yet place was left for *their* signatures. Could not the same consideration have been extended to Weizmann? Apparently not. So the question remains: was there design? I have an opinion but not an answer. There was a long-range view of history behind this technical omission.

Weizmann often complained about his exclusion—Weisgal said it “wounded him deeply”—but he was too proud to ask Ben-Gurion or the cabinet for its rectification, or to allow any of his friends to ask on his behalf. In 1957, five years after Weizmann’s death, Weisgal tried to persuade Ben-Gurion to have Weizmann’s signature copied onto the declaration. Ben-Gurion’s reply: “Weizmann doesn’t need it.”

Weisgal was right that a “long-range view of history” was behind the omission, but not in the way he thought. There may be something to his implication that Ben-Gurion was out to grab all the credit for the state’s establishment and write Weizmann out of the story, but we’ve already seen enough to understand that the logic behind his exclusion is to be found in the document itself,

whose wording glorifies the “Hebrew” pioneer at the expense of the Zionist diplomat and demotes the Zionist movement from the progenitor of the state to its subordinate.

Weizmann’s role had been to persuade the likes of Lord Balfour and Prime Minister Lloyd George to issue favorable declarations and uphold them. But the meaning of independence was that Israel henceforth would issue and uphold its own declarations. If none of the signatories on that day had contributed as much, for so long, as Weizmann, it was only because their contributions lay ahead of them. Of the 37 signatories, two aside from Ben-Gurion would become prime ministers, one would become president, sixteen would serve as government ministers, and 25 would become elected members of the Knesset.

So the declaration of the state also declared the end of classic political Zionism in the tradition of both Herzl and Weizmann. Ben-Gurion later went so far as to announce that after the creation of the state, he no longer saw even himself as a Zionist. The goal had been achieved.

And yet: as we shall see in next month’s installment, turning a page on political Zionism was one thing; turning a page on the religion of the Jews would be something else altogether.