

# **The Watershed Moment: The Influence of the *Soldiers' Talk* and the Movement for Greater Israel on Israeli Discourse<sup>1</sup>**

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The *Soldiers' Talk* and the Movement for Greater Israel were both born during the period following the Six Day War. Even when examined in their early stages of development, both illustrate the different viewpoints of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that have existed from then until today. In order to support this claim, this essay compares the characteristics of the discourse represented by these two opposing pillars, which originated during the shock of the 1967 victory. This is done by analyzing texts that appeared immediately after the war in response to the way the war ended.

Such a comparison between *Soldiers' Talk* and the Movement for Greater Israel has not yet been carried out, and it will depict the beginning of a process of significant and far-reaching change in Israeli society, particularly within the Labor movement and religious Zionism. Prior to the Six Day War, fundamental disagreements about the character of the State of Israel and its relations with its neighbors were marginalized and, for the most part, remained only theoretical in nature. However, the decisive victory of the war, as well as the resulting territorial and demographic expansion, forced Israeli society to face complex issues. The various responses to these issues

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reshaped the political movements in Israel, and over time they dichotomously divided most of Zionist society.

## The Ideological Currents—What Connected and Separated Them

Comparing texts that were written during the first three months after the war—the *Soldiers' Talk* and those connected to the Movement for Greater Israel—is an attempt to investigate the initial and authentic emotions that immediately followed the shock of the Six Day War victory as a basis for understanding the deep-seated ideological currents in Israel that have developed since 1967. The emotional and intellectual expression after the victory created several currents of thought, which reflected attempts to process the intensity of the events and shaped Israeli society and politics in the years that followed.

The immediate expression of these ideological currents included a collection of articles published as *Everything: The Peace Borders of the Land of Israel*,<sup>2</sup> the founders' meeting of the Movement for Greater Israel and its first manifesto, as well as the book, *Soldiers' Talk*. First published in September 1967, *Soldiers' Talk* was based on discussions held after the war with kibbutz members and moderated by a group of young intellectuals also from the kibbutz.<sup>3</sup>

The Movement for Greater Israel and the group behind the *Soldiers' Talk* shared a lot of common characteristics. Most prominently, they both were formed during the “shock of victory.” This shock was created by the sudden transition from anxious waiting in the weeks prior to the Six Day War to the euphoric release following it. The existential anxiety that characterized this waiting period was the combined result of still-fresh Holocaust memories in the collective consciousness;<sup>4</sup> the fear of Egypt, which was at the forefront of the Arab struggle against Israel; and the lack of confidence in the Israeli

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2 Aharon Ben Ami, *Everything: The Peace Borders of the Land of Israel* (Tel Aviv: Madaf, 1967) [Hebrew].

3 Avraham Shapira, ed. *Soldiers' Talk: Chapters of Listening and Looking* (Tel Aviv: A Group of Friends from the Kibbutz Movement, 1968), p. 243 [Hebrew]; The English translation was published in 1971 as *Seventh Day: Soldiers' Talk about the Six Day War*.

4 Ibid., pp. 160–161.

leadership, led by Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Levi Eshkol, who was portrayed as a hesitant decision maker.<sup>5</sup>

The war generated a sudden transformation of consciousness: from the image of a weak and persecuted people to one of a strong and victorious people; from a narrow and besieged state to a state that had tripled in territory and removed the threat to its existence. Following years in which the Zionist movement had adopted the ethos of “the few against the many,” the State of Israel suddenly became a regional superpower.<sup>6</sup> Although “we did not return from battle with the shock of victory”<sup>7</sup>—the opening sentence of *Soldiers' Talk*—and it was not manifested by rejoicing, the term “the shock of victory” accurately captured the time period and the spirit of this collection as well.

This shock was caused also by the encounter with new territories that Israel held as a result of the war,<sup>8</sup> as well as the realization that Israel had taken control of a large population that was not previously counted among its inhabitants.<sup>9</sup> Another shared source of the shock was the Zionist foundation: Both the Movement for Greater Israel and those behind the *Soldiers' Talk* opposed the victory photo albums that appeared after the war. Rather, they suggested an updated agenda which dealt with the new challenges faced Israel after the war, in a way that would ensure a stable, moral, Jewish and

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5 Alon Gan, “The Dying Dialogue? ‘The Culture of Dialogues’ as an Attempt to Create a Unifying Identity for the Second Generation on the Kibbutzim,” (PhD diss., Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, 2002), pp. 65–72 [Hebrew].

6 Haim Gouri expressed this approach well when he coined the term “the besieged and the just.” See Haim Gouri, *The People of Poetry and Time: Pages from a Literary Autobiography* (Jerusalem: Mossad Bialik, 2008) [Hebrew]. The myth of “the few against the many” has been debunked more than once. See, for example, *The Few Against the Many? Studies in the Quantitative Balance of Forces in the Battles of Judah Maccabee and in the War of Independence*, ed. Alon Kadish and Benjamin Zeev Kedar (Jerusalem: Magnes Publications, 2005) [Hebrew].

7 Shapira, *Soldiers' Talk*, p. 5.

8 Ben Ami, *Everything: The Peace Borders of the Land of Israel*, pp. 66–67. The term used in this article is “Judea and Samaria,” due to its frequency of use by the writer. The term that is more common in the Arab countries and the West is the “West Bank” while the term commonly used in Israeli terminology after 1967 was “Judea and Ephraim.”

9 As a result of the war, Arab populations remained in the Golan Heights and Sinai but their size and the challenge of dealing with them were marginal from the Israeli perspective.

democratic state. In the foreword to *Everything: The Peace Borders of the Land of Israel*, Aharon Ben Ami, the editor of the collection, referred disdainfully to these albums, writing that it was worthwhile to ask serious questions about the future, should a lack of alertness lead to the loss of the great achievements, which would leave them with only nice pictures on paper.<sup>10</sup> In the invitation to the discussions sent by the editors of *Soldiers' Talk* to the kibbutzim, Amos Oz, who wrote the text, emphasized that it was “not a victory album and not a collection of heroic exploits, but rather sessions of listening, conversation, and reflection.”<sup>11</sup>

Another commonality between the Movement for a Greater Israel and the *Soldiers' Talk* group was that both had strong intellectual bases. About half of the signatories of the declaration establishing the Movement for Greater Israel were authors or academics.<sup>12</sup> Similarly, the organizers, editors, and some of the participants of *Soldiers' Talk* were members of the Shdemot group—led by Avraham Shapira (Pachi)—comprised of the middle generation of the kibbutzim, who looked up to the pioneering generation of their parents and the 1948 generation and who were involved in academic and educational endeavors.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, both the Movement for Greater Israel and those behind *Soldiers' Talk* had ties to the Labor movement and, in particular, the kibbutz movement. Although the Movement for Greater Israel was pluralistic, members of the Labor movement played an important role in the ideas it spread.<sup>14</sup> *Soldiers' Talk* began at first as an internal kibbutz discourse, in an attempt to provide a place where the kibbutz members who had returned from battle could express their emotions and thoughts, and initially, the intent was to publish the discussion as an internal booklet for the kibbutzim. However, it was the composition of speakers and initiators who turned it into the voice that represented the views commonly held in the kibbutz movement and in the Labor movement.<sup>15</sup>

Nonetheless, the two movements were very different. The Movement for Greater Israel unambiguously opposed returning the territories that

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10 Ben Ami, *Everything: The Peace Borders of the Land of Israel*, p. 5.

11 Gan, *Dying Dialogue*, pp. 84–85.

12 Dan Miron, *Interested Party: Essays on Literature, Culture and Society* (Tel Aviv: Zmora-Bitan, 1991), p. 345 [Hebrew].

13 Gan, *Dying Discourse*, pp. 150–154.

14 Miron, *Interested Party*, pp. 345–346.

15 Gan, *Dying Discourse*, pp. 87–88.

Israel had captured during the war. This was the message conveyed in the collection of articles *Everything: The Peace Borders of the Land of Israel*, at the movement's founding meeting, and in the manifesto of the movement. Its members constituted a mosaic of all parts of the political spectrum in Israel: from Aharon Amir, a secular intellectual, to Rabbi Tzvi Yehuda Kook, the spiritual leader of religious Zionism; from Moshe Shamir, a Palmah veteran and member of the socialist Mapam, to Shmuel Tamir from the Free Center Party.<sup>16</sup> In comparison, *Soldiers' Talk* represented the opposite. It was a platform for viewpoints that were not necessarily consistent with one another.<sup>17</sup> A later attempt to paint *Soldiers' Talk* as a collection with a single voice was way off the mark.<sup>18</sup> In contrast to the diversity of voices in *Soldiers' Talk*, the background of the speakers—both editors and interviewees of *Soldiers' Talk*—was homogenous: The organizers of the discussions who were documented in the book, the editors, and the participants were all secular kibbutz members, with the exception of members of the religious Kibbutz Tirat Zvi.<sup>19</sup> A discussion held at Merkaz Harav Yeshiva between kibbutz members and followers of religious Zionism was another exception, although it was not included in the book. The editors, as mentioned, came from the Shdemot group of intellectuals, and in that sense, *Soldiers' Talk* represented a very defined segment within Israeli society and even within the Labor movement.<sup>20</sup> While the Movement for Greater Israel presented a uniform message by a heterogeneous group, *Soldiers' Talk* offered a non-uniform message by a homogenous group.

The difference between the two camps could also be seen in the literary structures of the two publications. *Everything: The Peace Borders of the Land of Israel* constituted a collection of opinion pieces, most having been published in major newspapers in Israel, including *Maariv*, *Haaretz*, and *Davar*, as well as the *Lamerhav* magazine of Ahdut HaAvoda.<sup>21</sup> All the

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16 Ben Ami, *Everything: The Peace Borders of the Land of Israel*, p. 5.

17 Gan, *Dying Discourse*, p. 91.

18 Ibid., pp. 124–127; Mor Loushy, “Censored Voices,” *Germany and Israel*, 2015.

19 Shapira, *Soldiers' Talk*, pp. 100, 228–230.

20 “Conversation at the Rav Kook Yeshiva,” *Shdemot: Platform for Labor Movement Education* 29 (Spring 5728–1968): 15–27 [Hebrew].

21 Exceptions were the speech given by Rabbi Kook on Independence Day 1967, which was published verbatim, and an interview by Geula Cohen with General Ezer Weizman, then head of the Intelligence Directorate.

articles were written during the two months following the war and Aharon Ben Ami, the editor, gathered them together as a collection with a uniform message. In contrast, the conversations were published almost unedited in *Soldiers' Talk*, in order to express the thinking and the atmosphere that prevailed at the time. Another difference is the contrast between the use of exclamation marks in *Everything: The Peace Borders of the Land of Israel* and the question marks in *Soldiers' Talk*. From its inception, the Movement for Greater Israel made policy recommendations. Thus, the articles in *Everything: The Peace Borders of the Land of Israel* and the speeches made at the movement's founding meeting emphasized holding on to the territories. In contrast, *Soldiers' Talk* was characterized by uncertainty and did not pretend to provide answers but rather expressed doubts.

The two ideological camps also had a generational divide, and each represented a different and distinct age group. In the Movement for Greater Israel, many of the representatives were from the Second and Third Aliyah (Rachel Yanait Ben-Zvi, Yitzhak Tabenkin, Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook, and Shai Agnon), among the founders of Hebrew culture (Natan Alterman, Haim Hazaz, and Yaakov Orland), and from the 1948 generation (Moshe Shamir, Haim Guri, and Zerubavel Gilead). These individuals saw the victory of the Six Day War as the historic unification of the Jewish people with the Land of Israel, which heralded a new era.<sup>22</sup> In contrast, the basis of the group that formed the *Soldiers' Talk* hailed from the middle generation, who had been too young to fight in 1948 and had first witnessed fighting in the war of 1956 or 1967. The book's editors belonged to the generation that came of age after the establishment of the state, except for Abba Kovner who was older. Dan Miron analyzed this phenomenon twenty years later when he wrote about the difference in outlooks between individuals who were already adults in pre-state Israel and saw the creation of the state as insignificant in relation to the great victory of 1967 and the return of Greater Israel versus those who had experienced the establishment of the state as children or youth, and for whom it was a historic moment that was not diminished even by the achievements of the Six Day War.<sup>23</sup>

The two groups also had different perspectives on the outcome of the Six Day War. The Movement for Greater Israel adopted the nationalist

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22 Miron, *Interested Party*, pp. 367–368.

23 Ibid., pp. 337–338.

agenda with all its intensity and passion. The publishing of *Everything: The Peace Borders of the Land of Israel*, which preceded the establishment of the Movement for Greater Israel and the publishing of the manifesto that followed its formation placed the future of the Jewish people, the State of Israel, and the Land of Israel at the forefront of the discourse. The signatories of the manifesto and the writers of *Everything: The Peace Borders of the Land of Israel*, none of whom were at the frontline of the war, had nationalist viewpoints and initially were apolitical, as they did not have any party identity in the early stages of the movement. In contrast, *Soldiers' Talk* expressed a personal experience that lent to the creation of a nationalist perspective. The interviewees and also many of the editors of the book had fought in the war. Although issues on the national agenda dictated the framework of the book, many of the testimonies were in the first person rather than in the collective “we.”<sup>24</sup>

Another distinction between the two camps is that the Movement for Greater Israel expressed an abstract intellectual spirit while *Soldiers' Talk* relayed a discouraging reality. The Movement for Greater Israel, even if it relied on facts and a reality as experienced in the war, was born out of a need to express a political outlook using intellectual tools. In contrast, *Soldiers' Talk* grew out of the horrors of the battlefield. This chasm between a motivation based on a political dimension versus one based on combat experiences informs the comparison between the two ideological currents—their formation, their character, and their legacy.

## The Watershed Moment

Up until the Six Day War, the political camps in Israel clashed over questions of economic and social policy while issues related to the conflict with the Palestinians remained mainly theoretical in nature. The war was a watershed moment and divided the public as the dilemma had become concrete: whether to hold on to the occupied/liberated territories or return them? The answer to this question split Israeli society into two and continues to constitute the main stumbling block in the conflict with the Palestinians.

The decisiveness and certainty of the Movement for Greater Israel, in contrast to the doubts and questions expressed in *Soldiers' Talk*, can explain to a large extent the slow decline of the Labor movement and the Israeli Left

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24 Gan, *Dying Discourse*, p. 85.

and the parallel rise of the “New Right,” which merged from the fragments of the stricken Labor movement. The ability of the camp that advocated for a Greater Israel to staunchly maintain its principles was reinforced by religious faith and its firmly based ideology. These helped it overcome the ethical dilemmas related to holding on to the territories captured in 1967. In contrast, the Labor movement and the Israeli Left found it difficult to justify their position. This is well illustrated by the discourse on four issues: existential security, the transition from strong to weak, the Palestinian population in the territories, and the ethical context.

### Existential Security

One of the main claims of *Everything: The Peace Borders of the Land of Israel* is that prior to 1967, the State of Israel was small and under threat. Indeed, the state and its army were established in 1948, but the feeling that it was under existential threat and that additional territory and secure borders were needed was pervasive. In this context, Yitzhak Tabenkin commented as follows on the Six Day War: “It was not a war of conquest . . . but a war that was forced on us, accompanied by a threat to destroy us . . . for us this was a war over our very existence . . . Therefore, there is nothing more just than our victory, by which we removed the sword of destruction that was hanging over us.”<sup>25</sup> Zvi Shiloah and Azaria Alon reinforced the arguments that the Partition borders had no importance (nor did borders in general in the Middle East) by claiming that they were the arbitrary doodles of the colonial powers. This was an accurate illustration of the compelling desire for security, even if it came at the price of international condemnation.<sup>26</sup> Almost all of the adherents to this approach belonged to the Labor movement. Their conclusion was that the borders of the State of Israel from 1948 to 1967 did not provide the desired feeling of existential security, and therefore, Israel should not give up the new territories, as they promised a guarantee of security.

*Soldiers’ Talk* also highlighted the feeling of an existential threat before the war, primarily during the waiting period, although it also expressed voices that did not feel threatened. In response to Abba Kovner’s question of the threat of destruction hanging in the air prior to the war, Yishai Amrami of

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25 Ben Ami, *Everything: The Peace Borders of the Land of Israel*, pp. 123–124.

26 Ibid., pp.151–150, 166–167.



Ein HaHoresh claimed that he never used the term “destruction” and that he felt like a member of a normal people living on its land. He stated that after the war he found it hard to justify the existential value of fighting for places like Nablus, Ramallah, or Hebron.<sup>27</sup> Another speaker even felt that enlarging Israel’s size had, to some extent, tarnished the small and beautiful country that he had known before the war.<sup>28</sup>

This chasm between feeling under threat and having a basic lack of security within the borders of the existing state on the one hand and doubting the need to expand its territory in order to achieve more security on the other has been at the heart of the debate surrounding the territories. Should they be kept or returned?

### **From Weak to Strong, from Persecuted to Occupier**

For the first time since the Jewish people had returned to their land, their country had tripled in size within less than a week as a result of the Six Day War. This fact led to two opposing reactions: The first viewed the transformation of the status and image of the Jewish people and the State of Israel as completely natural, while the second found it difficult to accept and searched for a rationale that would provide clarity.

A recurrent theme in *Everything: The Peace Borders of the Land of Israel* was internalizing the change in Israel’s status and the demand to solidify its power as a factor that must be considered in the region and beyond. Eliezer Livne claimed that it was no longer possible for the superpowers to make any move in the Middle East without Israel’s agreement, whose position was now equal, at least, to that of Turkey’s.<sup>29</sup> The perception of Israel’s explosive strength emerged like a cannonball, largely as a counterreaction to the feelings of persecution and weakness that were until then embedded in the Jewish ethos.

The perspective reflected in *Soldiers’ Talk* differed with respect to both the fighting and the emotions created by it. Shai from Kibbutz Afikim, for example, told how many soldiers were unable to rejoice following the conquests and the victory, due to their concern for the wounded and

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27 Shapira, *Soldiers’ Talk*, pp. 162, 171–172.

28 Ibid., pp. 172–173, 180.

29 Ben Ami, *Everything: The Peace Borders of the Land of Israel*, p. 41.

their sorrow for the dead.<sup>30</sup> One of the major causes of discomfort for the speakers in the book was their kibbutz education, as one of its pillars was pacifism. The kibbutz movement had created a paradox for itself, which it did not know how to resolve. It had taught its youth the love of mankind, equality, and pacifism, even though the military service—an instrument of nationalism and militarism for all intents and purposes—was the main criterion for contributing to the state and society.<sup>31</sup>

## The Population

The issue of the Arab population in the territories, mainly in Judea and Samaria, was peripheral to the discussion of security, power, and peace and remains so. The interaction with the population during the fighting and primarily in the day-to-day routine that developed after the war forced Israeli society to reflect on how it would adjust—practically and conceptually—to the situation and how it would address the charged issues of ethics in war, Jewish identity, and demography.

*Everything: The Peace Borders of the Land of Israel* was greatly concerned with the question of the Arab population, especially the Palestinians in the territories. The starting point was that the Palestinians should remain under Israeli rule. Although the adherents of the Greater Israel camp were divided in their positions, it is still possible to extract from their ideas a general formula for dealing with the population in the territories: a solution for the Palestinian refugees, granting of equal rights to all new citizens, massive Jewish aliyah from the West in order to solve the demographic problem, settlements in the territories, and encouraging Israelis to move to those settlements. In retrospect, it is perhaps surprising to learn that the Movement for Greater Israel sought almost total Israeli responsibility for the Arab population in the territories. Natan Alterman, who represented the humanistic philosophy along with Yuval Ne'eman and Meir Bareli, claimed that “we must deal with the resettling and rehabilitation of the refugees—those who remained in our jurisdiction—whether or not the Arabs agree to peace talks.”<sup>32</sup> Zvi

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30 Shapira, *Soldiers' Talk*, pp. 54–55.

31 Ibid., p. 274.

32 Ben Ami, *Everything: The Peace Borders of the Land of Israel*, pp. 34–35, 56, 216.

Shiloah proposed resettling the refugees in Syria and Iraq, as a precondition to any future negotiations.<sup>33</sup>

With respect to the status of the Palestinians in the State of Israel, the commonly held view was that they should be included in the state and granted equal civil rights. In theory, this logic violated the goal of preserving the Jewish character of the State of Israel. However, the supporters of this policy, including Moshe Tabenkin, Amnon Rubinstein, Yitzhak Tabenkin, Shmuel Tamir, and Aharon Tamir, felt that this should be done nonetheless and not out of any love for the Arabs. They believed it was preferable to grant the Palestinians rights and to deal with them within Israel's borders rather than return the territory to an Arab country, thus placing the Palestinians behind a border where their hatred of Israel would smolder and they would wait for the day they could destroy it.<sup>34</sup> Palestinian self-determination hardly received any attention then, and when it was mentioned it was usually done disparagingly, as expressed by Yisrael Eldad.<sup>35</sup> Nonetheless, some views did consider the Palestinians' desires in proposing solutions to the issue. For example, Rachel Saborai expressed the idea of partitioning Israel into cantons and Yuval Ne'eman suggested the granting of Palestinian autonomy within the State of Israel.<sup>36</sup>

The broadest consensus in the Movement for Greater Israel centered around the call for mass aliyah, the movement of population to the new territories, and the creation of new settlements. Whether agreeing with Yitzhak Tabenkin's outlook on settlement or reinforcing Natan Alterman's criticism of diaspora Jewry, either way the call for aliyah was at the core of the movement's ideology and was a direct extension of the Zionist vision of Jewish immigration from before the establishment of the state.<sup>37</sup>

In contrast to the ideological and constructive discourse in *Everything: The Peace Borders of the Land of Israel*, doubt and ambivalence regarding the population in the new territories characterizes *Soldiers' Talk*. The direct encounter of its editors and speakers with this population already during the war, sometimes in less than humane situations, provided the book with an important and unique context. Much of *Soldiers' Talk* deals with the ethical

33 Ibid., pp. 144–146.

34 Ibid., pp. 108, 113–114, 117, 127.

35 Ibid., pp. 121–122.

36 Ibid., pp. 34–35.

37 Ibid., pp. 42–43, 49, 61, 125–126, 132–133, 181, 188, 212, 229, 251–252.

elements of warfare, including the treatment of captured soldiers and the civilian population in occupied territories.

In the conversations in *Soldiers' Talk*, a distinction is made between the Syrian residents of the Golan Heights, whom the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) soldiers loathed, and the Palestinians, whom they viewed with more sympathy and more compassion.<sup>38</sup> In a stormy session at Mishmar HaEmek, participants argued about holding on to the territories and its ethical aspects, as one of the concerns mentioned was the demographic threat of absorbing the Palestinian population in Judea, Samaria, and Gaza.<sup>39</sup> One of the participants in the discussion at Kibbutz Yifat suggested that the Palestinians should be given the choice to which country they wanted to belong, apparently reflecting a desire to avoid friction.<sup>40</sup>

Already at this stage, one could discern the signs of dilemmas in managing the conflict, which would become evident in coming decades. In the discussion at Kibbutz Gat, one speaker emphasized the policing tasks and friction with the population, for which they were not prepared.<sup>41</sup> The sense of foreignness that Amos Oz felt in Jerusalem as he expressed in *Soldiers' Talk* was shared by other soldiers in the Palestinian cities of Judea and Samaria, which seemed to them as occupied rather than liberated.

### **Is the Jew Different?**

The last issue that split the discourse between the two movements related to one of the most sensitive topics in Israeli society—Judaism and its many interpretations and variations. The Six Day War was a foundational moment in the Jewish context; many experienced the capture of the Western Wall, the Old City, and Judea and Samaria as a euphoric spiritual uplifting. The State of Israel in general and the IDF in particular—which until then had been identified more with the national-secular component—suddenly became part of the chronicles of the Jewish religion, no less than the Jewish nation. Shlomo Goren, the chief rabbi of the IDF, played an important role in this context. He was present at the various fronts and worked intensively to fan the religious emotions among the soldiers who arrived at the Old City. His

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38 Shapira, *Soldiers' Talk*, pp. 105, 129.

39 Ibid., pp. 108–109.

40 Ibid., pp. 123–124.

41 Ibid., pp. 118–119.

mass prayers created waves of Jewish euphoria, which even penetrated the “protective layer” of the non-religious.

The two currents, one represented by the Movement for Greater Israel and the other by *Soldiers' Talk*, rested on a secular Zionist foundation; yet, both returned to Jewish motifs—religious, national, and cultural. The return to the historic and biblical Land of Israel, and in particular to the Old City in Jerusalem and the Western Wall, focused attention on the Jewish context. Questions of Jewish ethics in warfare also were raised. Unlike on previous matters, both movements gave representatives of the national-religious sector a voice on issues related to Judaism.

Although the Movement for Greater Israel was almost entirely secular and even had a partially anti-religious background, the results of the war led its members to connect closely with Jewish sources. The movement's texts contain actual messianic and spiritual elements, apparently the result of having undergone a genuine religious experience. At the same time, the movement used religion to justify its political and security interests, which implied clear dissent from the source of democratic authority. The movement's manifesto—which was its founding document—states as follows: “and just as we do not have the right to make concessions with respect to the State of Israel, so we are commanded to preserve what we have received from it: the Land of Israel.”<sup>42</sup> The use of the word “commanded” provided the text with a religious connotation. And indeed in *Everything: The Peace Borders of the Land of Israel*, the writers (all of whom were secular, apart from Rabbi Kook and Rabbi Y. L. Rabinowitz) did not hesitate to use messianic rhetoric. Thus, Moshe Shamir described the Temple Mount as being “wrapped in tongues of fire and red skies, as in the days of the Zealots, as the first hour of ‘Paratrooper’ Jerusalem.”<sup>43</sup> Ezer Weizman, who was completely secular, felt that this was “the war to establish the Third Temple.”<sup>44</sup>

In *Soldiers' Talk*, the attitude to Judaism was more complex. Since kibbutz society at that time did not accept any kind of religious association, it was unconventional to exhibit any such connection in public, even if it existed. With their developed Jewish consciousness, the members of Shdemot—who

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42 Aharon Ben Ami, *The Book of Greater Israel* (Tel Aviv: The Movement for Greater Israel, 1977), p. 10 [Hebrew].

43 Ben Ami, *Everything: The Peace Borders of the Land of Israel*, pp. 24–27.

44 Ibid., p. 35.

moderated the discussions and who also edited them—offset somewhat the antagonism to religion, which was characteristic of many of the participants. The discussions show that some of the speakers found it difficult to feel a special connection to the Holy Land or the momentousness of the events. Rather, some were bothered by the military missions carried out in the war and the mental anxiety of battle.<sup>45</sup> Others did not view the religious sentiments as part of the war experience and their experience was nationalistic rather than religious.<sup>46</sup> An exception in this context was the attitude to Jerusalem, which evoked stronger Jewish emotions than other places with historical-religious significance.<sup>47</sup>

The contribution of the religious participants in both movements provided an added value to the discussion in the context of the secular connection to Judaism and to religion. In *Everything: The Peace Borders of the Land of Israel*, it was the contribution of Rabbi Kook and Rabbi Rabinowitz while in *Soldiers' Talk*, it was the members of Tirat Zvi and the students at the Merkaz Harav Yeshiva. The religious public in Israel at that time was relatively marginal as an independent political force, and its voice on questions of policy and security was weak relative to the Labor movement, the Free Center, and the Herut movement. The approach of Rabbi Kook and his students, which shocked the participants from the kibbutzim, was a precursor to the division between the Gush Emunim movement and the Zionist Left in the subsequent decades.<sup>48</sup>

*Everything: The Peace Borders of the Land of Israel* includes the text of Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook's speech on the nineteenth Independence Day of the State of Israel, a few weeks before the war. In it, Rabbi Kook spoke to his students of his yearning for Hebron, Nablus, and Transjordan, which had been cut off from the State of Israel in 1948, and emphasized the connection between the Jewish religion and the Jewish state. A contemporary interpretation of Rabbi Kook's speech would view it as a challenge to both the secularism of the State of Israel and to its borders, which he perceived as temporary.<sup>49</sup> The messianic rhetoric, alongside increasing integration of the religious public within Israeli society and its belief that it is possible to

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45 Shapira, *Soldiers' Talk*, p. 13.

46 Ibid., pp. 230–231, 234.

47 Ibid., pp. 77–78.

48 Gan, *Dying Discourse*, pp. 109–112.

49 Ben Ami, *Everything: The Peace Borders of the Land of Israel*, pp. 66–72.

consider the big picture following the exalted achievements of the war, are the key to understanding this sector's influence on the trends and processes in the Israeli public domain and particularly in the Movement for Greater Israel, which over the years assumed a clear national-religious tone.<sup>50</sup>

The morality of the war also created another gap between the national-religious participants and the kibbutz members. In all aspects related to the ethics of warfare and avoiding harm to civilian populations, it appeared that the two sectors had shared values and believed it was important to behave humanely.<sup>51</sup> They were divided, however, in the discussion of priorities. Thus, national-religious individuals from Merkaz Harav emphasized the defense of the Jewish people from its enemies as more important than behaving ethically in war.<sup>52</sup> In contrast, the representatives of the secular kibbutz approach found it difficult to accept the tension between Judaism's love of mankind and the universal morality of the sanctity of human life.<sup>53</sup> This disagreement, which took place at the margins of the discourse of the Movement for Greater Israel and *Soldiers' Talk*, over time moved to the core of the ideological discourse.

## Conclusion

The difference in positions on the four issues analyzed above—security, Israel's strength, the attitude toward the occupied Palestinian population, and ethics—is what caused the Movement for Greater Israel and *Soldiers' Talk* to embody the ideological split in the public discourse as well as the political discourse in the State of Israel after the Six Day War. These issues also related directly to the core disagreements at the heart of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict—borders, refugees, and Jerusalem.

Five decades after the 1967 War, the public in Israel is divided, although not equally, in its views on whether to return the territories occupied by the IDF during the six days of war. These are the lines drawn by the Movement for Greater Israel and those behind *Soldiers' Talk*, while they were still catching their breath following the shock of victory. Their influence was

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50 Ibid., p. 17.

51 Ibid., p. 21, 25; Shapira, *Soldiers' Talk*, p. 100.

52 "Conversation at the Rav Kook Yeshiva," p. 22.

53 Ibid., pp. 20, 23.

not felt at the time, but the reality that developed steered the discourse back to the foundations they had laid.

Since 1967, the policy of the government of Israel essentially has been to not adopt either of these approaches: Israel has not returned the territory of Judea and Samaria and at the same time it has not given its residents equal rights. The debate between the successors of these two camps—the settlement movement and the Zionist Left—has become even more vociferous. The debate that continues between them expresses the contemporary relevance of the dilemmas that already arose in the initial months after the Six Day War. It also conveys the difficulty in bridging the gap between the two camps or decisively adopting one or the other.