

# **ISRAEL**

STUDIES IN ZIONISM AND THE STATE OF ISRAEL  
HISTORY, SOCIETY, CULTURE

The Chaim Weizmann Institute for the Study of Zionism and Israel was set up in 1962 at Tel Aviv University through the initiative and with the assistance of the Executive of the World Zionist Organization, with the aim of furthering the research and the teaching of the history of the Zionist idea, the Zionist movement and the Land of Israel in modern times.

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## Summaries

### Motti Golani

#### The Rapid Rise and Protracted Fall of Manya

The odds were great that Israeli collective memory would forget Manya Vilboshevit-Shohat (1879–1961), even though, by the end of the 1920s — at age 30 — she already had to her credit many years of revolutionary activity in Russia, as well as Jewish security, settlement and political activity in Palestine. Despite her membership in the emerging leadership of Palestine’s Jewish labor movement, it was precisely at that time that she began her extended political downfall. Manya, who worked closely with Ben-Gurion and his colleagues, was nonetheless suspected by some of the leading activists of cultivating factionalism and internal subversion within the movement. For this reason, she soon found herself relegated to the second and third tier of leadership of the organized Zionist Jewish community in Palestine.

Despite her political downfall, interest in Manya Vilboshevit-Shohat and her criticisms has continued to be expressed in literary, biographical and historical writings since the 1920s, and even more markedly since her death in 1961. The question arises why Manya is more fascinating than women and men who played more central roles than she did. This article maintains that her appeal stems from the position in which she, along with her colleagues and adversaries, located herself within Israeli memory. With considerable help from her primary political rival David Ben-Gurion, Manya was positioned within collective memory alongside biblical heroines such as Sarah and Deborah the prophet, and contemporary figures such as Hanna Senesh, Rachel Yanait Ben-Zvi and Deborah Dayan. Manya’s political failings have been largely forgotten, while there is fluctuating interest in her as a historical character.

### Tuvia Friling

#### Between Power and Knowledge: On Shlomo Aharonson’s Book, *David Ben-Gurion: The Renaissance Leader and the Waning of an Age*

In his multifaceted and richly detailed book, Shlomo Aharonson considers two central questions that Ben-Gurion posed himself, the connection between these two questions, and the answers he believes Ben-Gurion arrived at: How do we achieve a state, and what do we need to do so as not to lose it? Aharonson’s version of Ben-Gurion’s responses to these two questions comprises one level of the book. The other level — more polemical but no less important — is an examination of the way in which these answers have been presented in the historiography and in the public discourse from the end of the 1960s to the present day. Hence, Aharonson’s book is both about the “history” and about the “past” of those formative years. It is also a gripping and important attempt to offer a different “history” of the story of Ben-Gurion and to

undermine what Aharonson regards as false versions of history, deliberately created by intellectual elites who freed themselves from the ethical rules governing their fields of study, thus in effect becoming politicians. No longer content with merely writing history, they wished also to participate in making it.

### Anita Shapira

#### Golda: Femininity and Feminism

The world of Golda was mainly a world of men, which treated assertive, forthright women with ambivalence at best. But Golda was impossible to ignore. Did this help her or hinder her? This article examines Golda's own attitude, and the attitude of those with whom she was in contact, to the fact of her being a woman. Golda was not a feminist, as far as that word implies an active struggle for women's rights. Throughout her life, as a pioneer on Kibbutz Merhavia, as Minister of Labor and as Prime Minister of Israel, she felt a constant need to create an aesthetic, warm and pleasant environment for herself which would give her a sense of being at home. The symbol that embedded itself in the national collective memory in this regard was "Golda's Kitchen." The contradiction between the feminine softness, which she was not afraid of showing in public, and her forceful personality and the rock-hard self-confidence she radiated, was one of the reasons why the men around her found it so hard to accept her: on the one hand, she was playing in the men's field, with skill and power that dwarfed the men with whom she came into contact; on the other hand, Golda maintained her feminine characteristics and refused to accept the masculine rules of the game. She wanted to be a woman, a mother, and a public figure, and did not want to give up any of these roles. In her generation, this was considered an impossible task, perhaps even an unforgivable sin.

### Aviva Halamish

#### Meir Ya'ari: A Collective Biography

This article argues that the life story of Meir Ya'ari (1897–1987), who was the leader of Ha-Shomer ha-Tza'ir for about half a century, could well be entitled: "A Collective Biography," and presents a number of reasons to substantiate this claim. First, out of the three organizational frameworks constituting Ha-Shomer ha-Tza'ir (a Zionist youth movement; a network of collective agricultural settlements, Ha-Kibbutz ha-Artzi; and a political party), Ya'ari was above all the leader of the kibbutz movement. Second, his biography as a leader is by definition the story of the collective he headed. Third, one of the most significant and unique features Ya'ari imprinted on his movement was collective ideology. Fourth, Ya'ari and his lifelong comrade, Yaacov Hazan, were known as the collective leadership of the movement — although Ya'ari was considered the prime leader — functioning in a rare kind of symbiosis and cooperation. And finally, the adjective "collective" could also be applied to the process of writing Ya'ari's

biography. The biographical genre is inherently a collective endeavor, but this was even more marked in this case, where the hero made attempts to influence the historiography, while those who have written about his movement have tended to emphasize points that they deemed worthy of his future biographer's attention.

## Zeev Tzahor

### Yaakov Hazan: The Vicissitudes of the Historical Leadership

For over 65 years, Yaakov Hazan, together with Meir Ya'ari, led the Ha-Shomer ha-Tza'ir movement. That movement had three branches: the youth movement, the kibbutz movement (Ha-Kibbutz ha-Artzi) and a political party, Mapam (the United Workers' Party). Among the prominent figures of the *Yishuv* (Jewish community in pre-state Palestine) and the State of Israel, Hazan was unusual. Though he never filled a managerial role, his position as one of the two leaders of the Zionist left was unshakable.

The paper examines the source of Hazan's power, the nature of his bonds with his disciples in the movement, and his form of leadership. It focuses in particular on his ideological path, placing particular emphasis on the Soviet Union's role in the ethos of Ha-Shomer ha-Tza'ir, Hazan's part in shaping that ethos, and the problem of the tension between these radical left-wing Zionists' admiration for the Soviet Union and their Zionist convictions. Hazan presented the Soviet Union as an example of how a handful of dedicated people could change the course of history, but he also had strong reservations about the Soviet regime. However, his followers did not make this distinction and remained captivated by the USSR. Hazan felt himself responsible for his followers and, as a conscientious leader, was deeply distressed when their admiration for the Soviet Union overstepped the bounds. During the tortuous and gradual process of reducing its link with the Soviet Union, the movement declined, along with Hazan's influence.

## Nakdimon Rogel

### *Hankin's Project: An Exercise in Futile Diplomacy*

On 26 March 1920, Yehoshua Hankin signed "on behalf of the Zionist Organization in Palestine" a pact of political cooperation with a group of Muslim and Christian Arabs, self-styled representatives of the "National Party in Syria and Lebanon." Some historians have erroneously identified them as representatives of al-H'izb al-Watany al-Sury. This strange agreement is hardly mentioned at all in the history of Jewish-Arab relations in the crucial period preceding the granting of the mandates and the demarcation of the northern borders between British Palestine and French Syria and Lebanon. The Hankin agreement was usually attributed to his own private initiative. Documents in the Central Zionist Archives reveal that not only Ussishkin, Deputy Chairman of Va'ad Hatzirim (Zionist Commission), but also Weizmann himself were

fully informed by Hankin from the start and gave him their benediction. They also empowered him to sign the pact, although they had been warned that the so-called representatives of the National Party of Syria and Lebanon were a bunch of journalists of no political consequence, who had no mandate to negotiate an agreement, nor to sign it, and whose sole aim was to milk the Zionist cow. For months, their spokesman and leader Najib Aziz Sfeir claimed the funds allegedly promised him by Weizmann and Hankin, in order to finance pro-Zionist propaganda in the Arab world. Weizmann, who initially urged that Sfeir be paid, subsequently developed reservations about him. Doubting that an agreement could ever be reached with the Palestinian Arabs, he may have thought that any plan to circumvent them and treat with influential prestigious groups outside Palestine was worth trying.

### Zohar Segev

Between the Tennessee Valley and the Jordan Valley:  
American Zionists and the Arab Question in the 1940s

American Zionists were closely involved in the fundamental problems of the Zionist movement during and after World War II, in particular the issues of Jewish–Arab relations and the assimilation of the Jewish State into the Middle East. American Zionist leaders initiated the preparation of the Lauder milk program and established special committees and research institutions on the Arab question. Their views on political solutions to the question of Palestine were bound up with their general world outlook. The American Zionists' desire to take an active part in influencing the Zionist movement and the future Jewish State, and not merely to provide passive economic and political support, was strongly opposed by Israeli leaders, including, for example, David Ben-Gurion.

### Uri Cohen

*My Michael* and the Transition from Revolutionary Elite to Middle Class

Amos Oz's *My Michael* reflects the rapid, fundamental changes in the institutional organization and way of life of the first generation to grow up in the Hebrew culture of Palestine under the British Mandate. The novel focuses on the transition from a Jewish community to a sovereign state and the formation of a new middle class as the dominant group. The group shaped its path as a separate social category with a collective consciousness and a common solidarity. One of the most important formative experiences of this group was its ability to establish exclusive access to the academic institutions, especially the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. This differential access became a powerful and significant means of organizing all other social categories. *My Michael* exposes the major conflict between the new ethos of academic life and the pioneering ethos, and its consequences.