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DIRECTORATE OF  
INTELLIGENCE

# Intelligence Memorandum

*Israel: Problems Behind the Battle Lines*

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
Directorate of Intelligence  
10 May 1972

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

Israel: Problems Behind the Battle Lines

The world's view of Israel has been focused on the military and diplomatic conflict with the Arabs: the latest border clash; an Arab fedayeen bomb attack; a hijacking; a dramatic Israeli military exploit; or a new diplomatic maneuver. This is hardly surprising. Israel began fighting with its neighbors even before its birth on 14 May 1948 and has been in a state of armed confrontation in the near quarter century since then. The dust of continuous conflict has diverted attention--both Israeli and foreign--from some of the cracks and crevices in Israeli society and has shrouded significant social changes behind the cease-fire lines. Some of Israel's domestic problems, such as the rift between the Ashkenazi and the Oriental Jews and the declining immigration rate, may prove critical; others, such as the Sabra - Old Zionist generation gap and the religious-secular disagreements, are more irritating than profound. In any case, the problems that have begun to surface during the recent period of relative calm indicate some of the domestic difficulties that Israel's leaders will face should peace ever settle over the Middle East.

Note: This memorandum was prepared by the Office of Current Intelligence and coordinated within CIA.

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### Background

1. Articulate Israelis tend to disagree on many issues of politics, economics, and religion, but they are generally agreed on one thing: that their revived Jewish state must survive and that this takes precedence over all other questions, both domestic and foreign. The origins of the survival syndrome are found in the long, often hard, years of Jewish history--the dispersion of Jews from the Holy Land, the ghettos and the pogroms of Eastern Europe, and, above all, the trauma of the Nazi holocaust. While domestic squabbles and differences are thus suppressed in times of threat and stress, they break out when the external pressure is reduced and the shooting is minimal.

2. Despite the fits and starts of fedayeen action along the Israeli-Lebanese border and an occasional warlike statement out of Cairo on the liberation of Sinai, the pressure on Israel since the standstill and cease-fire along the Suez Canal in August 1970 has been very much reduced. The toll of Israeli casualties on all the cease-fire lines since August 1970 has not reached the monthly casualties of mid-1969 on the Suez Canal alone. The year 1970 was, in fact, a kind of milestone for Israel in the Arab-Israeli struggle. Two events occurred in September of that year that heartily pleased Tel Aviv: King Husayn crippled the Arab fedayeen movement in Jordan, and Israel's long-time nemesis, Egyptian President Abdul Gamal Nasir, died. Although the Arabs still refuse to make peace on Tel Aviv's terms, the Israelis are sitting squarely on the vastly expanded territory with no prospect that they will be pushed off. The occupied Arab territories total about 26,500 square miles; before 1967, Israel proper reached a little over 8,000 square miles. The current cease-fire lines are, however, shorter than the 1949 armistice lines. The Arabs in the occupied territories, although clearly unhappy with their

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situation, seem to be moving toward a pragmatic accommodation with the Israeli authorities, and Israel is rapidly consolidating its hold on the conquered lands. In this situation, domestic problems in Israel have begun to surface.

### The Changing State

3. Israel today is not the utopian rural agricultural state originally envisioned by the Zionist pioneers who sought rebirth of body and mind through hard manual labor and close association with the soil. On the contrary, because of continuing Arab hostility and because of a predominantly Western cultural orientation, Israel has become a modern, industrialized state with a standard of living far in excess of its neighbors and approaching that of Western Europe. Despite meager natural resources, Israel has, largely by virtue of the technical skills, tenacity, and determination of its people, become a state that produces all but a few of its most sophisticated weapons. Indeed, it is beginning to produce some of those. Agriculture is still important; it supplies about three quarters of the food consumed in Israel (by value), and exports of foods exceed imports. But in 1969, the agricultural sector accounted for only seven or eight percent of goods and services produced and for only ten percent of employment. The industrial sector, on the other hand, accounted for 25 percent of the domestic product and employed 26 percent of the work force in 1969.

4. The popular image of Israel as primarily a nation of kibbutzim or other collective systems of agriculture is now inaccurate. In December 1969 there were some 600 collectives of varying degrees of communalism, with only 212,534 residents, about 8.5 percent of the total Jewish population (2,496,000 in December 1969). Only 3.4 percent of the communal agriculturalists were specifically on kibbutzim. Growth in the collectives over the past 12 years, moreover, has been slow. Between 1957 and December 1969, while Israel's Jewish population was increasing by nearly a million, no more than 18 collectives were added, and the population in all the collectives had increased by only some 11,000.

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5. This leveling-off points to the problem of keeping the Israeli down on the farm and in finding new immigrants who are willing to live communally in the countryside. More important, however, may be the dwindling supply of reclaimable land and the near-exhaustion of the nation's precious water resources. These factors make farm expansion costly and difficult. The Israel of 1967 had about five million acres; of this area, the Israelis estimate, 1.3 million are suitable for cultivation, and as of 1969-70, 1.045 million acres were already under cultivation. Any significant agricultural expansion would appear to lie in the desalination of large amounts of sea water or in permanent expansion beyond the 1949 borders into the occupied Arab lands. The shortage of new cultivable land and of water, in fact, gives the Israelis an added bonus in their control of the occupied territories. The standard Israeli justification for the establishment of Jewish settlements in the occupied territories (now some three dozen) has been that they were required for defensive reasons--the need for secure borders against any future Arab incursions. But the economic advantages must also be tempting to the Israelis, particularly if they want to double their population, as they say they do.

6. In any event, while the kibbutzim continue to provide some of the old pioneer mystique and elan and a disproportionate number of ex-kibbutzniks still hold important positions, the economic role and influence of the agricultural collective are on the decline. The kibbutzim, in fact, seem to be joining the industrial trend; at least 200 of them have established their own industrial enterprises to supplement their agricultural activities. One report set the output of kibbutz industries last year at \$240 million.

7. Instead of a peaceful agricultural rural utopia, then, Israel has become a hard-driving, fiercely competitive industrial society. It is heavily urban; about 69 percent of the Jewish people in Israel are concentrated in the narrow 60-mile-long coastal strip between Tel Aviv and Haifa. Israel is beginning to experience the usual urban

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ills--noise, overcrowding, pollution, housing shortages, large slum areas, traffic jams, a small but growing drug problem, juvenile delinquency, and a rising crime rate.

The Sabra vs. the Old Zionists

8. Some of the change in Israeli society is the natural result of the passage of time--the aging of the old Zionist pioneers who control the Israeli establishment and the growing numbers of the Israeli-born, the Sabra (named for a desert cactus), who are eager to take over. In 1969 native-born Israelis numbered some 1.1 million, between a third and a half of the total Jewish population. The Sabras are descendants of Ashkenazi or Western Jews, the Oriental Jews (who came mostly from the Middle East, North Africa, and Asia), and other Sabras. Ashkenazi-descended Sabras tend to fare better economically and politically than those of Oriental descent, reflecting the deep social, political and economic cleavage between the Ashkenazi and the Oriental groups.

9. Whether of Ashkenazi, Oriental, or Sabra parentage, the dominant experience of the native-born Israeli has been within Palestine/Israel. Unlike his parents, the Sabra has no personal knowledge of anti-Semitism, the ghettos of Europe or the Middle East, the pogroms of Eastern Europe, or the Nazi holocaust. His life has consisted wholly of the military battle with the Arabs and the struggle to fashion a viable Israeli state. He is said to be more concerned with the here and now; he is less interested in the Jewish past than in the job of consolidating the Israeli state. He is also said to be less moved by ideology than his parents, and less Zionist in the classic sense. He feels little strong connection to the Jews who voluntarily remain outside Israel. In fact, he is said to feel disdain for those who, while donating money to Israel, choose the more comfortable life abroad.

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10. As the old Zionists die, the Sabra element of Israeli society will begin to move toward power. They believe that while their elders should be revered for their role in settling and establishing the state, they have had their day. Israeli statistics indicate that, as of 1969, the Sabras already had an edge over the foreign-born Ashkenazi and Oriental Jews in professional, scientific, and technical jobs as well as in administrative, executive, and managerial posts. They have been less successful in pushing the establishment out of the top political jobs.

11. The old Zionist pioneers born in Eastern Europe--typified by 74-year-old Prime Minister Golda Meir, 63-year-old Finance Minister Pinhas Sapir, and 61-year-old Minister without Portfolio Israel Galili--are still very much in political control. Mrs. Meir has indicated she plans to step down following the 1973 elections, but Sapir is expected to replace her. The political system is such that those who control the Israeli Labor Party control the country's political institutions--and the old Zionist establishment controls the party. For example, although Defense Minister Moshe Dayan, a Sabra, is immensely popular, he has only limited influence within the ruling party. However impatient they may be to assume political control, Dayan, Deputy Prime Minister Allon, and other prominent Sabras have chosen to bide their time rather than challenge the political system that allows the old Zionists to rule. And well they might; the establishment is aging and shortly will be forced to pass the torch to the Sabras. When this happens, the Sabras probably will make no basic changes in Israeli policy, but the manner in which policy is conducted will doubtless change. The Sabra will act even more independently than his predecessors, because he is less concerned over Israel's image abroad and less susceptible to foreign influences.

#### The Oriental-Ashkenazi Split

12. By far the most important domestic social problem--one with a potential for political instability--is the deep cultural, economic, and political differences between the Ashkenazi and the Oriental

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Jews. The only bond between the Ashkenazi and Oriental seems to be their mutual adherence to Judaism and allegiance to Israel. Great differences exist in cultural background, education, social values, and even in physical characteristics. The Orientals, who often have darker skins, are sometimes referred to as "black Jews;" they maintain many of the characteristics and habits of their original non-Western environment. The Oriental Jew is most often poor, ill-educated, and has few skills; he generally has a larger family than does an Ashkenazi. Most Oriental Jews are latecomers to Israel (in the 1950s) and are on the bottom of the socio-economic ladder; they are not well fitted to compete in an industrial and basically Western society.

13. Status and power in Israel lie with the Ashkenazi Jews and their Sabra descendants. Pioneers from Russia and Poland were the principal Zionist activists, the early settlers, and the leaders of the labor and kibbutz movement. They were, in short, the dominant figures in the formation of Israel. The Ashkenazim are usually highly literate, European in culture and technological skills, and imbued with the Western work ethic.

14. The overwhelming majority of Oriental Jews are drawers of water and hewers of wood. In 1969 only about seven percent had made it up to professional, scientific, and technical jobs, and only about ten percent were administrators, managers, executives, or clericals. In 1969 the annual income of the Oriental family, while increasing, was still well below that of both the Ashkenazim and the Sabras. As a result, the Oriental is not a large consumer, cannot afford adequate housing and most often lives in the big-city slums. He finds that higher education is almost entirely reserved for his European or Sabra neighbors. Enrollment in high schools and universities in Israel is based on performance in competitive national examinations, which put Oriental students

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at a disadvantage. Moreover, higher education is expensive. Both high schools and universities have tuition fees. Many of the Oriental students who do enter high school drop out before graduation.

15. Although the Ashkenazim are in the driver's seat now, the Orientals have outnumbered them since the early 1960s and are growing more rapidly than the other two groups. An estimate made by the US Embassy in 1965 indicated that by 1980 the balance between Ashkenazi and Oriental Jews might be on the order of 35-65 percent. This has raised concern among the Ashkenazim that in time their influence will be diluted and that Western-oriented Israel might ultimately become another Levantine state.

16. Though a community of over one million people, the Orientals do not yet appear to be organized politically. They are spread through several political parties from left to right. In the October 1969 parliamentary elections, the Young Israel Party, which perennially runs on the specific platform of increased influence for the Orientals, won a miniscule 2,000 votes out of 1.36 million votes cast--not enough for one seat. Of the 120 members elected in 1969 for the current Knesset, only 13 are Orientals; there is only one Oriental in the 18-man cabinet (the Minister of Police). The Orientals are heavily represented in the police force, but at best have only token representation in the rest of the civil service. There are two Chief Rabbis, one Ashkenazi and one Oriental. Mrs. Meir's Labor Party in June 1971 named a Yemeni Jew, Yisrael Yeshayahu, as secretary general of the party, apparently to underscore its awareness of the problem. Yeshayahu has since been Speaker of the Knesset.

17. The apparent widespread apathy of the Orientals and their inability or unwillingness to act as a unified political force have stemmed in part from their basic conservatism, but they may be becoming more aware of their political potential and majority position. In the spring of 1971, a

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small group of Oriental youths, calling themselves "Black Panthers," staged a series of public demonstrations in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. With an assist from some splinter Communist groups, they protested discrimination against Orientals in housing and jobs and brought the plight of the Oriental Jews to public attention. They were particularly disturbed that the new immigrants from the Soviet Union (most of them Ashkenazim) and other Western immigrants were being given priority in jobs and new housing. Recently an Oriental leader was quoted as saying, "If we ever get peace in the Middle East, we will have civil war at home." Another likened the situation to that of Ulster, comparing the Catholics in Northern Ireland to the Oriental Jews in Israel as the large-family, low-paid class of society, and the Protestants to the Ashkenazi Jews, "who have the power and large incomes."

18. These statements may be overblown, but the discontent is real, and the problem probably cannot be indefinitely set aside. The government is trying to bridge the gap between the Orientals and the Ashkenazim. The major effort is directed at recasting the Oriental in a Western mold--mostly through Hebrew language training, special educational benefits, agricultural and other vocational training, and army service. But progress is slow, both because of the nature of the problem and because of limited finances. The government will have to run hard just to keep ahead of the Orientals' rising expectations. The eventual assumption of power by the Sabras could bring an evolutionary solution--there seems to be less awareness of "differentness" among younger Israelis.

#### The Immigration Problem

19. The Israelis are faced with high Arab birthrates both inside and outside Israel. The Jewish birthrate in Israel in 1969 was 23.4 live births per 1,000 population. The US birthrate for 1970 was 18.2 live births per 1,000 population. The Arab birthrate in several nearby Arab states

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and in Israel approaches 50 live births per 1,000 population. A recent study within Israel of the "Gross Reproduction Rate," based on the average number of daughters a female has, listed the Israeli Muslim female the highest with a reproduction rate of 4.39; the Oriental Jewish female followed with 2.05; the Sabra female, 1.38; and the Ashkenazi female, 1.28. Thus, the Israelis have always regarded a steady stream of Jewish immigrants from the Diaspora as crucial to the long-term survival of Israel as a Jewish state. After defense, immigration has the top national priority. Last year, for example, Finance Minister Sapir called for the doubling of the Jewish population in Israel in the next decade by natural increase and by the addition of one and a half million immigrants. Since this would require 150,000 immigrants per year, Sapir's was probably an unrealizable hope. In the past 18 years since the great waves of immigration after World War II and in the very early 1950s, the number of immigrants has averaged 40,000 per year. The emigration of Soviet Jews currently permitted by Moscow is encouraging, but there is always the fear the Russians may not allow this to continue very long.

20. In 1970 there were an estimated 13.9 million Jews in the world, including the 2.5 million in Israel. The two largest blocs outside Israel are the approximately 5.8 million Jews in the US and the 2.6 million in the USSR; sizable groups are also in Europe and Latin America. The problem is that relatively few Jews in the West want to settle in Israel, and Moscow until recently would not let Soviet Jews emigrate. Not many American Jews have emigrated to Israel--or stayed when they did. Before 1967, immigrants from the US numbered only some 600-1,200 annually, and approximately half of these did not stay. Since the 1967 war, with the heightened emotions it evoked, Jewish immigration from the US to Israel rose from about 2,100 in 1967 to about 7,800 in 1970, but this rate now seems to be leveling off.

about 8,500 Jews went to Israel from the US and Canada in 1971.

21. When Moscow broke relations with Tel Aviv over the 1967 war, it also shut off the pre-war trickle of emigrants. In mid-1968 Moscow, for reasons not fully clear, began again to permit a few

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Soviet Jews to leave the USSR. According to Israeli figures, some 3,000 Soviet Jews emigrated to Israel in 1969, only about 1,000 in 1970. In the spring of 1971, however, the rate suddenly jumped to 1,000 per month and hit a rate of 100 per day (3,000 a month) in December. The total permitted out of the USSR in 1971 is estimated at 14,000, the largest yearly total ever. The high rate of December has dropped in the spring of 1972 to about 74 a day. This is still a substantial number, however, and, if maintained, would bring a record 27,000 Russian Jews to Israel in 1972.

22. Israel has a whole array of institutions and organizations actively trying to attract the immigrant and to ease his integration into Israeli society. Besides basic arrangements for temporary housing, employment, and language training, there are many inducements for the new immigrant, including customs exemptions, easy mortgages, tax concessions, free or subsidized housing, and business loans. The privileges given to the immigrant have been a source of irritation to many Israelis, particularly the Orientals. While there may be some reduction of special concessions as a result of this domestic discontent, the need for immigrants is so overriding that a large cutback is not likely.

23. Residence in Israel for many Jews is a considerable cultural shock. Some of the immigrants are totally ignorant of the different living conditions in Israel, and the contrast to their idealized "land of milk and honey" produces severe disillusionment. The general anxieties and uncertainties of immigration are complicated by a new and strange land and language. Most Western immigrants resist pressure to get them into the less settled rural areas; they want to settle in the more heavily populated coastal urban area or in Jerusalem. The less affluent Oriental Jew is often the one who ends up in the country or the newer development towns. Immigrants frequently want to live in a certain town with their own countrymen or with relatives and are frustrated when they cannot. For some, the standard of living in Israel is lower than what they were used to. Unfamiliar Israeli professional and educational standards are an obstacle to employment or:

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schooling. In fact, considerable numbers of new immigrants reconsider and try to emigrate elsewhere.

24. If the Israeli attitude on immigration is larded with more hope than fact, information on emigration from Israel is even more cloudy. Emigration from Israel is a real problem, and Tel Aviv is sensitive about it. In some years, Israel has had a minus net immigration because of departures of erstwhile Israeli settlers. In the 20-year period, 1948-1968, about 220,000 persons are believed to have left. The average number of departees probably remains about 9,000-10,000 annually. Most important, those who leave tend to be Western, young, and professional--the very type of people Israel needs to keep.

25. In sum, barring a world crisis or events abroad that threaten the Jews, immigration is likely to remain constant or even to decrease, which augurs ill for the concept of Israel as a Jewish state. A professor at Weizman Institute said in February 1971 that, because of the high birthrate of the Israeli Arabs, the population balance will eventually shift to the detriment of the Jews if 60,000 Jewish immigrants do not come to Israel annually. Some demographic experts have predicted that the Arabs in Israel will have numerical equality with the Jews by the year 2000.

#### The Orthodox Versus the Secular Majority

26. Another domestic problem that has long plagued Israel is the battle of the largely secular majority against religious strictures demanded by the small, but powerful, Orthodox minority. The current political maneuvering over the coming elections of two new chief rabbis, the recent harassment and violence against doctors performing autopsies and violators of the Sabbath, and the frequent threat by the religious parties to bring down the coalition government all illustrate this problem. For most Israeli Jews, being Jewish is cultural rather than religious, and they observe only a minimum of the religious requirements.

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27. The Israeli Government does not endorse the concept of a theocratic state--as sought by some of the ultra-Orthodox--but the Orthodox rite is nevertheless the only form of Judaism recognized in Israel. Virtually all Israelis are considered adherents of Orthodox Judaism, no matter how secularized they may be as individuals. This monopoly gives the Orthodox hierarchy power to rule on questions such as marriage, divorce, conversion, and burial. There are 14 congregations of lesser Orthodoxy in Israel, five Conservative and nine Reform congregations, but these groups must call on Orthodox rabbis to perform every personal religious ceremony.

28. These powers stem from the fact that since 1948 religious political parties have been called upon to fill out the coalition governments. Israel has yet to have a single-party majority--although the Israeli Labor Party-MAPAM Alignment came very close in the 1969 elections. Over the years labor has traded off control of religious affairs in return for political support from the religious parties. The National Religious Party, the largest religious party and principal coalition partner, won only 12 Knesset seats in 1969 (out of a total of 120) but it controls three cabinet posts out of 18--the ministries of Religion, Social Welfare, and Interior. The Interior Ministry does not control the police, but is concerned with local institutions and government services, including population registration.

29. The ultra-Orthodox political party, Agudat Israel, is the country's second largest religious party. It represents Israel's "true believers." It won four seats in the Knesset, but was given no cabinet posts. Not until 1948 did Agudat put aside the belief that the coming of the Messiah might be endangered if the party engaged in partisan political activity. Agudat wants a theocratic state based on total conformity with Orthodox religious doctrine. It opposed Israeli statehood and now opposes a written constitution, military service for women, secular control of the schools, and such anti-Orthodox practices as working on the Sabbath and mixed swimming. Militant and aggressive, Agudat uses violence and demonstrations to make its points.

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30. Poaeli Agudat Israel, the smallest religious party, is the labor wing of Agudat and was formed to protect Orthodoxy in the labor movement. It has participated in the government--usually at sub-cabinet levels, did not oppose statehood, and has founded and supported its own rural collectives. It holds two Knesset seats. The Neturei Kuxta, the "Guardians of the City," is another extremist Orthodox group. Its several hundred members live in Jerusalem. It is not a political party; its members absolutely refuse to recognize the existence of the secular Jewish state and frequently engage in violence and mass protests on religious issues.

31. A total of 18 Knesset seats are held by the religious parties, representing just short of 15 percent of the votes cast in 1969, a little over 200,000 votes. Their influence is out of proportion to their vote. Successive labor governments beginning with Ben-Gurion's have felt it necessary to "bow to the rabbis," and the religious parties have consistently exploited their advantage.

32. One of the ministries they hold, the Ministry of Religious Affairs, has the legal responsibility for all religious communities in Israel--Jewish, Muslim, and Christian. It oversees the establishment of religious councils and courts, the appointment of religious judges and some religious leaders, and the registration of marriages and divorces. The supreme religious authority in Israel is vested in a six-member Chief Rabbinate headed by two Chief Rabbis, one Ashkenazi and one Sephardi\*.

*\*The terms, Sephardic Jew and Oriental Jew, are not synonymous. The Sephardim are those Jews expelled from Spain in the 15th century and their descendants, wherever resident. Many of the Sephardim settled in North Africa, Italy, Egypt, Palestine, Syria, the Balkans, and the Turkish Empire, notably at Salonika and Constantinople. Others went to England, Germany, France and elsewhere in Western Europe, as well as to the West Indies and to North America. While all Oriental Jews (those from North Africa, the Middle East, etc.) are Sephardic, the reverse is not true; many Sephardim--notably those who went to Europe, England, and North America--do not regard themselves as Oriental Jews, but as Sephardim. The Sephardic rite and tradition are quite different from that of the Ashkenazim, the former going back to Babylon, the latter to Palestine.*

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There is also a 12-member Supreme Rabbinical Council, which is equally divided between Ashkenazim and Sephardim. The Chief Rabbinate decides on questions in Jewish church law that are not within the jurisdiction of the rabbinical courts, supervises dietary laws and regulations, and issues marriage permits. It also approves the ordination and appointment of the clergy and religious teachers. There are ten Rabbinical Courts: the Rabbinical High Court of Appeal and nine Regional Rabbinical Courts, which have exclusive jurisdiction over Jews in such matters as marriage, divorce, and alimony, and with agreement of concerned parties, in cases of wills and probate, custody of children, paternity, and adoption.

33. This pervasive authority is often galling to the non-Orthodox and secularized citizens who form the majority of the population. Many of these fail to understand the retention of power by theocratic elements in an otherwise largely secular state. Resentment arises over the definition of "Who is a Jew?", over marriage, and divorce laws, over the unacceptability of non-Orthodox conversions. Another frustration is the Toraic prohibition of work on the Hebrew Sabbath, between sundown Friday and sundown Saturday. Full observance of Orthodox tradition would mean that all work, production, transport, and services would stop except when necessary to save life. Such a standstill has been unworkable and unacceptable, and compromises have evolved. Urban bus lines stop, but intercity services and taxis keep working. Israeli airlines do not fly, but foreign airlines maintain schedules. There are no movies, but there are radio broadcasts. The introduction of a new taxicab service in Tel Aviv in 1968 provoked demonstrations by religious groups who claimed the "status quo" agreement prevented them from running on the Sabbath. When television was introduced in late 1969, the religious parties forced Mrs. Meir to seek a court injunction against Sabbath programming. Another irritant is the requirement that most hotels and restaurants, government cafeterias, and armed forces kitchens observe the dietary laws.

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34. The death in July 1970 of Interior Minister Haim Moshe Shapiro, the leader of the National Religious Party, may be working to exacerbate religious contentions. Shapiro, a moderate, had worked hard to control the party's religious extremists, and his death has caused a power struggle within the party. The Agudat is apparently taking advantage of the turmoil to enhance its own position. The ultra-Orthodox party is believed to be behind the harassment against Israeli doctors performing autopsies, and it is apparently promoting its own candidate for Chief Rabbi.

35. The perennial religious question that provokes secular-minded Israelis and has threatened cabinet splits is, "Who is a Jew?" The question comes up frequently as a result of mixed marriages between Jews and non-Jews. The problem arises of determining the personal status and citizenship of the non-Jewish spouses and their children in Israel. According to Halakic (religious) law, a Jew is one born of a Jewish mother or one who has converted to Judaism. Two relevant cases in 1970 threatened to lead to full-blown cabinet crises. In one, an Israeli-born Jew, married to a non-Jewish woman (both were atheists), sought to have his children registered as of Jewish nationality, but of no religion. In a compromise that narrowly averted a political showdown, the children were registered on a one-time basis, but religious law was upheld. The second case involved an American-born Israeli woman, a convert to Judaism by the Reform Movement, who sought to register as a Jewish national. The Orthodox religious groups, through the National Religious Party, were able to force a re-conversion by Orthodox procedures before she could be registered.

36. The so-called "mamserin" (bastards) case is another example of the religious problem and its injection into politics. Jewish religious law considers a child born of a married woman, but fathered by a man not her husband, to be a bastard and outside the religious community. In 1966 a young Israeli soldier applied to the Chief Rabbinate for a wedding license. He was denied permission on the grounds that he was a bastard--his mother, a Polish immigrant, had remarried in Israel without divorcing

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her Polish husband. He and his sister unsuccessfully contested the ruling for over five years. Defense Minister Dayan turned the case over for study to the chief army chaplain, Rabbi Shlomo Goren. Although Goren, now Chief Rabbi of Tel Aviv, found flaws in the first marriage that could render the second marriage valid, neither Dayan nor the Labor government has been able to persuade the Chief Rabbis to reconsider. Frustrated, the government apparently now hopes to solve the case by making Rabbi Goren its candidate to replace 87-year-old Chief Rabbi Unterman, a proposition vigorously opposed by the Orthodox community.

37. Since the establishment of Israel, control of the Chief Rabbinate has been a prize sought by the contending political parties. In March 1964, the candidates of the National Religious Party won both the Ashkenazi and Sephardi posts for Chief Rabbi; Yitzak Nissim, the Sephardi Chief Rabbi, overwhelmed his opponents, including the Labor candidates, while Isser Unterman, the Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi, barely beat the Labor candidate. For reasons not entirely clear, there have been no elections since that time, although the term of the rabbis is five years. Drafting a Chief Rabbi Election Bill has been a long, involved process, with both the government and the religious parties attempting to get the best bill for themselves. There have been disputes over age qualifications and over whether there should be both an Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi and a Sephardi Chief Rabbi. In any event, the secularists and religionists are girding for battle in elections now scheduled to take place before 30 June.

38. Much of the religious pressure in Israel seems somewhat irrational and anachronistic not only to the outsider but also to many Israelis. But religious influence is a fact of Israeli life, and the religionists show little sign of weakening in their struggle for conformity to the Orthodox. Certainly things will change if the Labor Alignment achieves a Knesset majority in its own right and no longer depends upon the religious parties for political support. Even then, however, it seems unlikely

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that the religious structure can or will be dismantled easily or quickly. One way or another, the religious influences that kept Israel a nation during the long centuries when it could not be a state seem likely to remain alive now that a state is in being; they will persist in the day-to-day affairs of a largely socialist government and a largely secular people.

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