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Sacred Landscape

THE BURIED HISTORY OF THE HOLY LAND SINCE 1948

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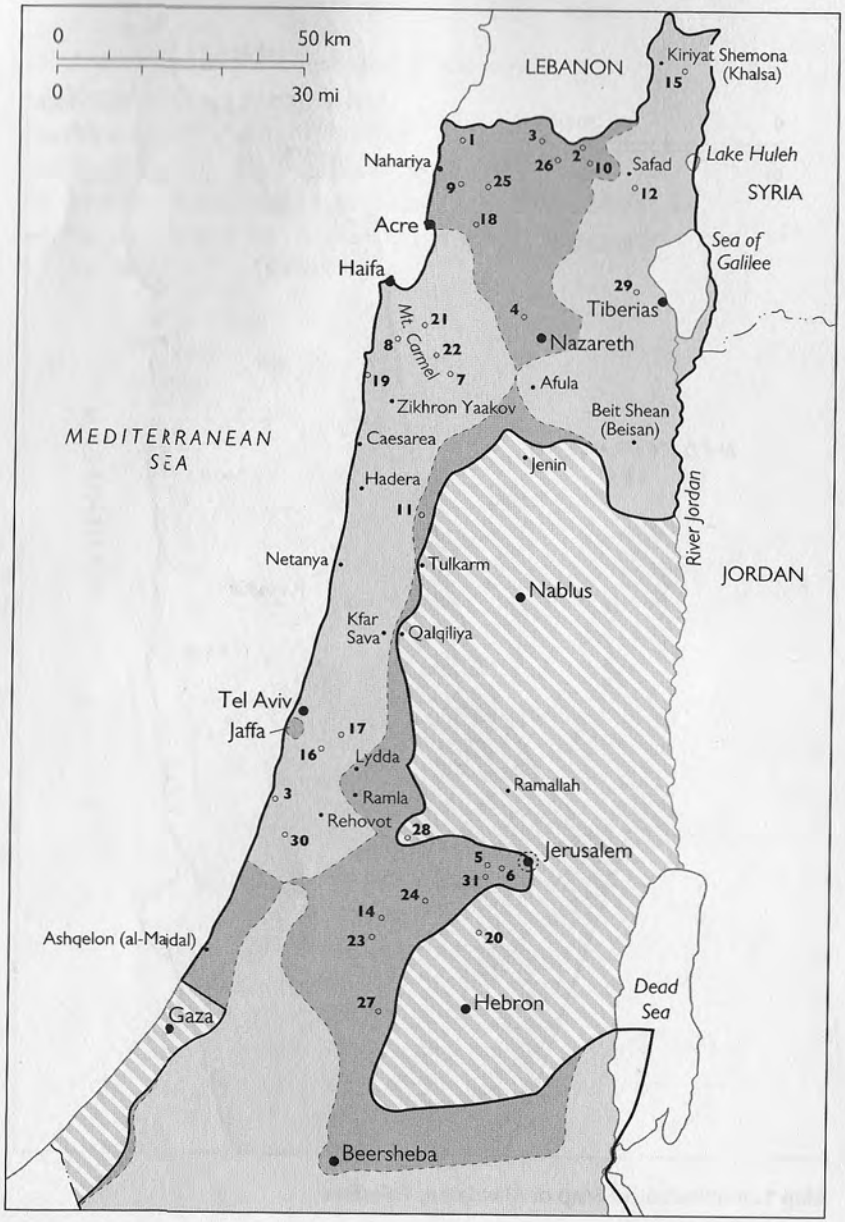

Map 2. Eretz Israel/Palestine (1947–49)

Jewish state according to 1947 UN Partition Plan

Arab state according to 1947 UN Partition Plan (taken by Israel 1948–49)

The West Bank and Gaza Strip

Boundaries of Arab state (1947)

Boundaries of Israel (1949)

Jerusalem (internationalized)

1 Bassa (Shlomi)
2 Kafr Birim (Baram)
3 Iqrit
4 Saffuriyya (Zippori)
5 Qastal
6 Deir Yasin
7 Mishmar Haemeq
8 Ein Hawd
9 Ghabisiyya
10 Safsaf (Sifsofa)
11 Kh. Jalama
12 Akbara
13 Nabi Rubin
14 Zakariyya (Zecharia)
15 Khisas
16 Yazur (Azor)
17 Yahudiyya (Yahud)
18 Birwa (Ahihud)
19 Tantura (Dor)
20 Etzion Block
21 Balad al-Sheikh (Nesher)
22 Abu Zureik
23 Ajjur (Agur)
24 Beit Atab
25 Yehiam (Jidin)
26 Sasa (Sasa)
27 Dawaima (Amazia)
28 Latroun
29 Hittin
30 Yibne (Yavne)
31 Sataf

15. Jewish Houses in a Deserted Arab Village. The abandoned village of al-Maliha is today a Jerusalem neighborhood. Modern Jewish houses are built on the slopes of the village hill, and renovated Arab houses surround the deserted village mosque; however, the minaret still proudly dominates the skyline, as a memorial.

16. A Deserted Mosque. The mosque of Ijzim is situated in the middle of Moshav Kerem Maharal. Some 40 out of 140 mosques remain undemolished, but most of them are in an advanced stage of neglect and deterioration. Some are used as synagogues and others as tourist attractions.

17. Arab Village as a Jewish Artists' Colony. The deserted village Ein Hawd was "an architectural gem" too valuable to allow its destruction. It has been converted into an artists' colony: the houses have become art galleries and summer homes. The photo shows the village mosque, converted into a restaurant and bar. The displaced Arab residents live nearby, in an "unrecognized village."

18. Remains of an Arab Village (Coastal Plain). The deserted village Kafr Lam became a Jewish moshav. Most of its houses have been destroyed, except for those situated on the site of an ancient fortress. Although the round corner towers are from the Ummayad period (tenth century), the Israelis identify them as Crusader, since this period does not contradict the Zionist narrative.

The Hebrew Map

On 18 July 1949 a group made up of nine scholars, well known in their respective fields of cartography, archaeology, geography, and history, gathered at the prime minister's office in Tel Aviv. They were all longtime colleagues who had previously collaborated in the plotting of maps and in joint research projects, and all were associated with the Israel Exploration Society (IES). Bringing together the most respected experts in fields of scholarship related to Eretz Israel (Hebrew for the Land of Israel), the IES initiated research projects and published their findings, and organized conferences that attracted hundreds of enthusiastic participants.

Although similar to geographical research bodies active in many other countries, the IES was held in unique regard by the Jewish public, among whom its prestige and influence were reminiscent of the respect accorded the Royal Geographical Society during the Victorian era, in the heyday of British imperialism. The IES numbered high-ranking political leaders among its members, and its activities transcended the narrow confines of its fields of research, acquiring an almost official status. Just as the British Royal Geographical Society, through its research and its expeditions into the interior of Africa and the heart of Canada, expressed the British desire to learn about the world in order to annex it to the empire, so did the IES articulate the Jewish ambition to lay claim to the ancestral homeland. Its declared objective was "to develop and to advance the study of the Land, its history, and pre-history, accentuating the settlement aspect and the sociohistorical connection between the People

of Israel and Eretz Israel." The IES researchers sought to provide "concrete documentation of the continuity of a historical thread that remained unbroken from the time of Joshua Bin Nun until the days of the conquerors of the Negev in our generation."[1]

PLANTING THE FLAG

Imbued with this sense of mission, the nine scholars willingly responded to the summons from the Israeli cabinet secretary, who, at the behest of Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion, constituted them as the Committee for the Designation of Place-Names in the Negev Region (hereafter the Negev Names Committee, or NNC). Just four months previously, the Israeli army had consolidated its control over the vast expanses of the Negev and Arava—more than half the area of the newly founded state—planting the flag of Israel on the shore of the Gulf of Eilat ('Aqaba) on 10 March of that year. The new committee's task was "to assign Hebrew names to all the places—mountains, valleys, springs, roads, and so on—in the Negev region."[2]

The nine did not wonder what moved the prime minister—beset as he was by the momentous problems of a state that had only recently emerged from the cycle of war and death and had absorbed unprecedented waves of immigration—to concern himself with the names of obscure geographical and cartographic features. They understood the importance of the task laid upon their shoulders by Ben-Gurion, in whose heart beat a vision of the development of the Negev—which he viewed as the supreme challenge facing the new state. Nor did they require any explanation of the significance of the creation of an official Hebrew map of the Negev and Arava. Mapmaking and the assignment of place-names were their fields of endeavor, and they knew that this particular job was neither simply a technical exercise nor merely a work of research—it was an act of establishing proprietorship: they had been asked to draft a deed of Jewish ownership for more than half of Israel's territory.

The members of the NNC did not commence this work only in 1949. As far back as 1920, two of them had been appointed advisers to the British Mandatory government on all matters relating to the assignment of Hebrew names and had fought hard to persuade the authorities to restore biblical Hebrew place-names to the map of the country in place of the Arabic ones currently in use. When the Geographical Committee for Names, which operated under the aegis of the Royal Geographical Society (the only body authorized to assign names throughout the British Empire), decided to call the Mandatory geopolitical entity "Palestine" and the city whose biblical name was Shechem, "Nablus," these Jewish advisers saw this as an act of anti-Jewish discrimination and a searing defeat for Zionism. Suffused with the sense that "it is impossible for a present-day Hebrew map not to identify by name the places of Hebrew settlement mentioned in the Bible and in post-biblical Hebrew literature," they set about identifying these sites and putting them on "Hebrew maps," which they placed opposite the official Mandatory maps.

These scholars regarded their active involvement in the survey departments of the Mandatory government and the British army as a Zionist act that afforded them influence while providing them with military data of use to the Jewish underground militia, the Haganah. In clandestine cartographic offices, the data from British maps were copied and Hebrew maps were produced for use in Haganah operations. When the British captured the Haganah archives in 1946, and these maps were seized as well, the director of the Mandatory Mapping Division asked an Israeli cartographer, with a wink, "Why did the Haganah need to draw its own maps?"[3] This was a rhetorical question. "Mapmaking," write Harley and Woodward in *History of Cartography*, "was one of the specialized intellectual weapons by which power could be gained, administered, given legitimacy and codified."[4] Cartographic knowledge is power: that is why this profession has such close links with the military and war. Accurate topographical maps are often considered highly confidential and are emblazoned with the warning: "This is a classified intelligence document. Its presence in enemy hands will endanger our forces."

Mapmaking is not, however, solely an instrument of war; it is an activity of supreme political significance—a means of providing a basis for the mapmaker's claims and for his social and symbolic values, while cloaking them in a guise of "scientific objectivity." Maps are generally judged in terms of their "accuracy," that is, the degree to which they succeed in reflecting and depicting the morphological landscape and its "man-made" covering. But maps portray a fictitious reality that differs from other sorts of printed matter only in form. Borders plotted on a map, the detailed presentation of certain features and the omission of others, the choice of agreed-upon icons (map symbols), the depiction of the relative size of places of habitation, and especially the choosing of names for features of the landscape and for human settlements—these are in fact the vocabulary with which the "literature" of maps (or their fiction) is written. Benedict Anderson quotes a Thai scholar who wrote:

"A map [is perceived as] a scientific abstraction of reality. A map merely represents something which already exists objectively 'there.' In the history I have described, this relationship is reversed. A map anticipated spatial reality, not vice versa. In other words a map was a model for, rather than a model of, what it purported to represent—it had become a real instrument to concretize projections on the earth's surface."[5]

The members of the NNC needed no lessons regarding the significance of maps. Their decades-long work in designing the Hebrew map of the Land of Israel was proof that their cartographic and historical labors had always been motivated by the desire to concretize the military, political, and symbolic possession of the patrimony of the Jewish people. By virtue of the November 1947 United Nations resolution on the partition of Mandatory Palestine, the Jews were entitled to the Negev and Arava. They realized their claim by conquering the entire area in a brilliant military operation. Now it was necessary to establish "facts on the ground," and the creation of a Hebrew map was an extremely powerful means of doing so, no less important than the building of roads or the founding of settlements. It was, of course, also easier, quicker, and cheaper. In the space of a few months (the committee's work went on for ten months in all), it was possible to compile the entire map and present it to the public, who in any case were unable to visit this inaccessible region, but whom the map infused with the sense that a new—Jewish—reality had indeed been created in the desolate expanses of the Negev. And were the NNC members in need of any further incentive, this was provided by a letter from the prime minister to the chair of the committee, in which he wrote: "We are obliged to remove the Arabic names for reasons of state. Just as we do not recognize the Arabs' political proprietorship of the land, so also do we not recognize their spiritual proprietorship and their names."[6]

MAPPING OF EMPIRE

Ironically, the NNC only was able to successfully accomplish the task of the Hebraization of the map of the Negev thanks to the fact that the very regime and civilization it had come to uproot and expunge from memory had furnished it with all the necessary tools and means. The entire area had been mapped, plotted, and drawn, and names had been collected—by emissaries of the British Empire. As is well known, the British had made mapping the cornerstone of their dominion throughout

the empire. The first official maps they prepared were of Ireland, in 1653, when they wished to confiscate the landholdings of the rebellious Irish and to bestow them on English soldiers and settlers. Ever since then, the surveyor has walked beside the British officer, and sometimes has gone before him.

British officers serving with the Royal Engineers engaged in surveying and mapmaking everywhere in the world: maps of borders, geological maps, administrative maps, explorers' maps, railway maps—large and small scale—replacing the white areas (denoting "terra incognita") on the map of the world with splotches of pink, the color denoting territory that had become a part of the empire, beyond which lay "the other side of the moon," in the words of Lord Salisbury.

The mapping of the empire was, to the people of that day, a task akin to the mapping of outer space in ours. James Morris recounts: "Napoleon, surveying the Great Pyramids of Giza, is supposed to have cried to his veterans: 'Soldiers, forty centuries look down upon you.' The British, almost as soon as they arrived in Egypt, lugged a theodolite to the pyramid's summit and made it a triangulation point."[7]

It is no coincidence that the 1:125,000 scale map that served as the basis for the work of the Israeli NNC had been prepared by two of the most famous figures in the annals of the British Empire, Herbert Horatio Kitchener and T. E. Lawrence (Lawrence of Arabia). The map itself was named for the director of the survey expedition, Captain Stewart Francis Newcombe of the Royal Engineers, who had begun mapping this region in the latter half of 1913 and had completed the job at the end of May 1914, a few months before the outbreak of the First World War. Britain's imperial interests in the Middle East were, of course, related to the Suez Canal and its defense. The British, however, concealed the military objectives of the surveys and of the maps that were based on them, representing them instead as part of a research study whose purpose was to investigate the history of the land of the Bible and to trace the wanderings of the Children of Israel in the desert. Even the body under whose auspices they were working was a civilian one, the Palestine Exploration Fund (PEF), which shall be discussed further elsewhere.

Nonetheless, evidence of the close ties between the British military and cartography, archaeology, and politics can be found in the fact that, over the years, Kitchener the surveyor became by turns a general, a field marshal, and British minister of war during the First World War; Lawrence the archaeologist became an intelligence officer and the moving

force behind the Arab Rebellion, whose crowning achievement was the capture of 'Aqaba from the Turks in 1917; whereas Captain (later Colonel) Newcombe subsequently filled political posts in the Middle East and was responsible for the delineation of the borders of Mandatory Palestine.

Captain Newcombe was not the first to survey the Negev and Arava. He had been preceded by expeditions mounted by the PEF, notably one led by geologist Edward Hull, which surveyed the area in 1883. Kitchener joined Hull's expedition and set up the triangulation network between 'Aqaba and the Dead Sea. The importance of this work was confirmed in 1914, when the Turkish authorities prevented Newcombe from gaining access to the 'Aqaba region and he had to rely on Kitchener's survey. He could not, however, place full confidence in the Arabic names assigned to topographical features in this survey. As Kitchener himself wrote in his report: "Owing to the rapid passage of the party through the country, and the impossibility of getting guides with local knowledge, the names are not, in my opinion, in every case reliable, although I took every opportunity to check them by local information, as much as possible."[8] Collecting names and recording them on the map were, in Newcombe's estimation, vital activities. He, like all British surveyors, ascribed critical importance to toponymy (the doctrine of geographical naming), and not out of geographical-cartographic considerations only. Local names are the essence of the cultural heritage of a place; they commemorate historical events and open the way to an understanding of the local population's worldview. In Palestine, especially, place-names were of crucial importance, since it had been proven that the Arabs had preserved many ancient names that could serve as means for the identification of archaeological sites. This connection between toponymy and archaeology motivated Newcombe to invite two young archaeologists, T. E. Lawrence and Charles Woolley, to survey the ancient sites and to gather names. "Much trouble is being taken to get their names, but there is even more difficulty than usual, owing to the very suspicious nature of the local Bedouins, and though guides with general knowledge of the country are easy to find, those who know the smaller place-names in each locality are not."[9]

On his map, therefore, Newcombe was forced to record place-names gathered by other travelers, especially those collected by the Czech surveyor Alois Musil, who reconnoitered the area between 1895 and 1902. Musil's map was imprecise and had been severely criticized, but this fact did not deter Newcombe, who copied many names from it. From all of these sources he succeeded in compiling a list of some 600 names, which appear on a 1:125,000 scale map, in the sector destined to be included in Mandatory Palestine. Newcombe's map was printed in 1915 and classified as secret. It was used by the British army during the First World War, after which it was published in many editions and was later redrawn by the Survey Division of the British Mandatory government. This map served as the basis for the more detailed ones carried by the Israeli army during its conquest of the area, and the names that appeared on it were the ones the NNC would later turn into Hebrew ones.

"NAMES STRANGE TO OUR EARS"

The members of the NNC—all experts in their professions—were well aware that the place-names were largely inaccurate and that their transliteration from Arabic into English had resulted in further distortion. They had no choice but to rely on them, however, if only because all of the Bedouin inhabitants of the region had been expelled by the Israeli army during 1949 and 1950, and there simply wasn't anyone to ask. They did indeed try to transliterate the Arabic names scientifically, but they did not attach much importance to correcting them. After all, their whole objective was to replace them. "The names that we found," states the NNC's summary, "not only sound strange to our ears, they are themselves inaccurate. Their meanings are unclear and many of them are nothing but random names of individuals or epithets of a derogatory or insulting nature. Many of the names are offensive in their gloomy and morose meanings, which reflect the powerlessness of the nomads and their self-denigration in the face of the harshness of nature."[10]

This contemptuous dismissal of the Arabic names was refuted, to all intents and purposes, by the fact that all the work of the committee was based on these names. All of the new names it chose (except for an insignificant minority) were determined in direct reference to the old names, and no fewer than 333 of the 533 new names were either translations of Arabic names or Hebrew names that had been decided upon on the basis of their similarity in sound to Arabic names. Moreover, the very principle of eradicating the Arabic names was itself not accepted by some of the members of the NNC, and was only approved in the wake of political pressure and the influence of the patriotic arguments put forth by some members.

The serious scientists among the members of the committee were quite cognizant of the devastating consequences attendant upon the eradication of the Arabic names: "The erasure of everything written on the map," said S. Yeivin, "is a scientific disaster." With a clap of the hand they were wiping out an entire cultural heritage that must certainly conceal within it elements of the Israeli-Jewish heritage as well. The researchers did indeed endeavor to identify all those names that had links to ancient Hebrew ones in an attempt "to redeem, as far as possible, names from days of yore." But they could only rely on what was known then, when the historical-geographical knowledge of the area was scanty, and in many cases the identities of the places were hotly disputed. "In my opinion," stated Y. Breslavski, "there is no argument regarding the necessity for Hebraization itself. However, the Arabic names must not be wiped off the map. Otherwise we shall thwart scientific research. It would also be worth our while to leave an opening for the future emendation of our conclusions. Erasure of the Arabic names would be detrimental to both science and the map." And Breslavski argued further, "We must not disregard the Arab population of the country or dismiss its need for familiar Arabic names."[11]

This attitude encountered stiff opposition from another member: "In my opinion there is no point in keeping them (the Arabic names). The claim that this is necessary on democratic grounds is baseless: for the benefit of a minority made up of 10% of the population we cannot compel the 90% who constitute the majority to use the Arabic names: . . . After all, the very source of our information from the Arab community is sealed: the Arabs are no longer there." The committee's chair, Zalman Lifshitz, declared: "Just as the Bedouin of the Negev did not sink roots in that place, so also are the names not rooted there." And in any case, "The Hebraization of the names has a political intent, and that is the direction in which our deliberations must be channeled. The task that has been laid upon us is fundamentally political. In truth, the whole question of Arabic place-names in the Negev has become irrelevant since there are almost no Bedouin there."[12]

Echoes of this debate apparently came to the attention of the prime minister, who intervened by sending a directive "to remove the names for reasons of state." In a compromise, so as to mitigate the "scientific disaster" of "the erasure of everything written on the map," the committee published a gazetteer containing the new names alongside the old ones. This was the last time the Arabic names were published. Indeed,

on the series of maps drawn by the Israeli Survey Department around that time, there was already no reference to the old names. For a time, veteran desert hikers continued to refer to the wadis and wells by their Arabic names, in a sort of ostentatious allusion to their being "old-timers." But even this custom did not last long, and the Hebrew map soon became fait accompli: the concretization of the projection of the Hebrew map onto the rocks of the Negev and the canyons of the Arava was complete.

An entire world, as portrayed in what one member of the NNC called "the primitive names given by the Bedouin," vanished, along with the human beings "who hadn't sunk roots there"—insofar as they had followed a nomadic way of life and eventually were expelled by force. There was no longer anyone to call the geographical features of the land by their "distorted and inaccurate" names, in place of which names "necessitated by the enormous changes that have taken place in the Negev," in the words of one committee member, took root. The maps, the signs directing travelers on the roads and at junctions, names of communities, mailing addresses, and usage in newspapers, guidebooks, and geography texts saw to that. One Arab-Israeli geographer went to great lengths in an attempt to preserve the Arabic names and publish them in books, but no Jewish-Israeli read them. Generations of Israelis became familiar with the names of the historical sites and geographical features of the Negev without it ever occurring to them that these were nothing but distortions of Arabic names. The name of the Ramon Crater, for example, perhaps the most dramatic geological formation in the Negev, "is derived from the Hebrew adjective 'ram' (meaning elevated)," states an Israeli guidebook. The fact that its name in Arabic was Wadi Rumman (Pomegranate Arroyo), and that Timna (the name of the site of ancient copper mines) is a distortion of the Arabic name, Muneiye', and Nahal Roded was Wadi Radadi—was not considered worthy of mention.

"After all," stated the committee, "it is likely that Hebrew names became garbled and acquired an alien form, and these are now being 'redeemed.'" That is to say, it wasn't the Israelis who distorted the Arabic names, but the other way around. This arrogant attitude extends even to Arabic names immortalizing Bedouin tribal leaders or other prominent figures: Abu Jarwal became Goral ("fate" in Hebrew); Abu Rutha changed not only his nationality but also his sex—and became Ruth. Places whose names "possessed a negative meaning" acquired new ones "expressing rebirth and the beauties of the location": instead of Bir

Khandis (Well of the Shadow of Death) they chose the name Be'er Orah (Well of Light), and instead of Ein Weiba (Spring of the Plague) they chose a name with a biblical ring to it—Ein Yahav.

NEW, BIBLICAL WORLD

The effort to find biblical-sounding names that would therefore be regarded as ancient was conspicuous in all the work of the NNC. No Israeli would imagine that the name of Kibbutz Grofit comes from Umm Jurfinat, that Be'er Ada was Bir Abu 'Auda, and that the name of Yerukham (a town near Beer Sheva) replaced the Arabic name, Rakhma. This pseudobiblical ring was necessitated by the dearth of Hebrew names in the ancient sources. Only a small number of place-names are to be found in early Jewish sources, and the NNC consented to make use of Greek and Roman names only if "there was a clear possibility of reconstructing them in Hebrew." Not only were Arabic names unwanted, it seems, but even Greco-Latin names from the fourth century of the common era.

In addition there were (and still are) fierce differences of opinion among scholars regarding the identification of names of ancient places with specific sites. But the committee members could not resist the temptation, and they bestowed names like Yotvata (Yotbatha—Num. 33:33–34), Evrona (Ebronah—Num. 33:34–35), and Mount Hor (Num. 33:37), despite unresolved controversy over the identification of their exact locations. In order to avert criticism, they appended the following disclaimer: "This list (which contained 65 names) is not intended to determine the [scientific] identity of the locations. It includes historical names whose sites have not been identified, but which were chosen to serve as a basis for names of geographical locations." [13] Except that, of course, this disclaimer appears in a forgotten document published in 1951. A traveler parking a car in Yotvata, on the road to Eilat, is convinced that he or she is actually stopping at the site of one of the encampments of the Children of Israel during their wanderings in the desert.

On one notorious occasion the NNC was unable to hide behind the disclaimer that the names were not "intended to designate identity." It had specified the location of Mount Hor, the burial place of Aaron the High Priest (Num. 20:26) as a certain mountain not far from the phosphate mines in the central Negev. This site was designated despite the fact that the location that had been accepted since the first century C.E.

was near Petra in Edom (now Jordan), where the grave of Aaron—venerated by Muslims and Jews alike—is actually to be found. Some twenty years after the name of the place was assigned, it became clear that it was impossible to persist in identifying this mountain as Mt. Hor (which had been a dubious exercise from the start), and it was renamed Mt. Zin. But in order to maintain the honor of the committee, the name Mount Hor was left in parentheses.

The committee members found another "partial solution to the problem of the Judaization of the place-names" when they intensified the pseudobiblical connection via the assignment of no fewer than fifty names of personages from the Bible—"names of our forefathers and our kings"—who had no real connection to those particular sites.

The "primitive names" given by the Bedouin turned out to be well suited not only to distortion "according to similarity of sound" but also to word-for-word translation. Committee members were unable to ignore the extraordinary descriptive aptitude, the beauty of expression, and the sense of rootedness of the Bedouin "who had not sunk roots in the desert"—qualities that were revealed in the Arabic names describing natural phenomena, morphological formations, plants, and living creatures. They therefore translated no fewer than 175 of these names, nevertheless retaining for themselves the right to determine which of them were "accurate," which were "not properly defined," and which were "epithets unworthy of translation."

The nomadic desert dwellers did not invent names while seated around a table in scholarly deliberation. The names they used evolved organically, in the course of a lengthy process—gradual and mysterious—that culminated in the spontaneous assignment of the name best describing the qualities of each place or most aptly identifying its inhabitants (while being both readily assimilable and easy to remember). The Bedouin made no conscious "nationalistic political" effort to cover the lands of their wanderings with a network of "strongholds and settlements" secured via the assignment of names. And only someone viewing the expanses of the Negev from a bird's-eye perspective, on a piece of paper purporting to depict them on a convenient "scale," could possibly perceive this haphazard collection of names as constituting an assertion of "spiritual proprietorship" that must be countered by the immediate launching of a bureaucratic process of "colonization"—of "renaming the mountains and hills, the canyons, the water sources, etc." Qa'at el Qireiq, Ras al-Zuwwayra, Naqb al-Ama'z, Ein Murra, Wadi Hiyyani, and Ein Ghidiyan had not received their names in the same way

as did their Hebrew replacements: HaMeishar, Rosh Zohar, Maʿale Amiaz, Ein Mor, Hiyon, and Yotvata; that is, following a short discussion at a meeting. They were simply there—until certain people came and erased them in the name of "political exigencies."

This excerpt from the minutes of the eighth meeting of the NNC, 20 October 1949, gives us a glimpse of the process of assigning placenames:

> Kurnub:
>
> *Y. Ben Zvi:* I suggest Cerubim. This term has two meanings: a kind of vegetable (cabbage) and angels (cherubim).
>
> *S. Yeivin:* I propose restoring the historical name of Kurnub, Mampsis.
>
> *M. Avi Yona:* Impossible to leave the name Mampsis because it's a foreign name [Byzantine-Greek, appearing on the map of Madaba and in the writings of the fathers of the Christian church].
>
> *B. Ts. Eshel:* The present-day Kurnub is on a hill above the ruins of Mampsis. The name Mampsis can be used for the ruins, and for Kurnub a new Hebrew name should be found that is suitable for a place that is slated to become a population and transportation center.
>
> *A. Y. Brewer:* I suggest Karnov.
>
> *S. Yeivin:* I'm opposed to Cerubim and to Karnov. If we're not going to retain the Greek name Mampsis, it would be best to assign a new Hebrew name.
>
> *Y. Press:* I suggest City of the Negev.
>
> *S. Yeivin:* When people say City of the Negev they mean Beersheba.[14]

The discussion continued at the next meeting, and in the end the committee members decided to call the ruins of Mampsis (the remnants of a large Christian settlement containing the ruins of two churches) Mamshit. In the opinion of the committee, this was the original Hebrew name, which had been distorted by the Greeks. The place "slated to become a population and transportation center" did indeed become a town, and its name is Dimona. "The name is biblical (Joshua 15:22). The sound of this name had been preserved in the Arabic name Harabat Umm Dumna," stated the committee.

Herbert Horatio Kitchener, were he to rise from the dead, would surely be saddened by the loss of the old names that he endured such hardships to collect. But the legendary empire builder—son of an English colonist in Ireland—would have understood the logic of the Israeli bureaucratic campaign. After all, that is precisely how the British had

behaved in every region they chose to colonize—from Ireland in the seventeenth century to the plateaus of Kenya in the early years of the twentieth; in Canada, Australia, and Rhodesia. In every one of these British colonies, topographical maps were plotted, and upon them were printed official names: a mixture of English names (personalities and places in the old country), names chosen by colonists and soldiers, and local "native" names, altered so as "to be pronounceable in a civilized tongue." The natives, who had been "resettled," adapted themselves to the new map, to the point where they themselves often forgot the original names.

Similarly, few among those of the Bedouin who were not banished beyond Israel's borders—but were instead "concentrated" in the northern Negev—remember the Arabic names. And no wonder. The bureaucracy wields tremendous power in its imposition of the new map: road signs, postal cancellations, office correspondence, and journalistic reports all reinforce the effort. The bureaucracy is even mighty enough to have compelled the Bedouin to accept the names it chose for the new communities where they are being "concentrated." One Bedouin town near Beersheba, for example, is called Rahat, a euphonious Hebrew name.

The NNC completed its work on 20 March 1950. According to its official report, the committee held twenty-four plenary sessions and numerous subcommittee meetings, and made an aerial tour of the Negev. It discussed approximately 2,500 proposals and from them chose 533 names, which the report enumerated as follows:

Seventy historical names, which were also given to an additional 50 nearby geographical features	120
Names of biblical figures	50
Translations (from Arabic)	175
Names chosen for their similarity in sound to the Arabic	150
Names that were modernized	30
Names that were left unchanged	8

In addition, the names of 27 existing Jewish communities in the Negev were recorded, bringing the total number of names listed on the 1:250:000 scale map of the southern part of Israel, published in 1951, to 560.[15]

JUDAIZATION OF HILLS AND VALLEYS

The introduction to the gazetteer of geographical names published by the NNC stated: "In the process of Jewish settlement we [the Zionist organizations, see below] have always given Hebrew names to all of our

communities, striving as far as possible to redeem names from ancient times. But we did not initially carry our activities beyond the domain of the settlements, to the mountains and hills, the wadis and valleys." In having done so in the Negev, the NNC had completed the task for which it had been founded. The committee remained in existence, however, because its members wished to "continue their activities" in other areas of Israel as well. They regarded the "Judaization of the geographical names in our country as a vital issue," and the experience they had amassed in the Hebraization of the map of the Negev made it possible, in their estimation, for them to successfully carry out such a mission.

The committee operated for some time without a new mandate until, in March 1951, the government resolved: "To appoint a governmental naming committee whose decisions shall be binding on state institutions." If in its previous role the NNC had created "something from nothing," in its new incarnation it was entering a realm already occupied by a seasoned committee that had devoted decades to determining names for Jewish settlements throughout Eretz Israel. This committee had been set up in 1925 on the initiative of the Jewish National Fund (JNF) and had been in operation ever since. The solution decided upon was to merge the two committees, especially since several members already served on both. However, even though many of the people involved, the level of professional expertise, and the sense of mission were identical for the two committees, there was an essential difference between them. Whereas the NNC had operated under an official mandate from a sovereign state, the JNF committee had functioned as a voluntary body whose authority was solely moral. It was a relic of the prestate period, and its decisions were binding on the Jewish community alone.

During that period, the authority to draw official maps and to assign names to topographical features had been the exclusive province of the British Mandatory regime. The JNF committee could give names only to communities established on land the JNF owned, but it could not venture "beyond the domain of the settlements, to the mountains and hills, the wadis and valleys." The British jealously guarded their exclusive authority in the assigning of official place-names in Palestine. Evidence of this sentiment is apparent in the fact that they compiled, updated, and published gazetteers of official names encompassing thousands of names of communities, ruins, and geographical features; and these names only, in precise spelling (in English), appeared on the maps. The first gazetteer, issued in 1931, was revised in 1940, in 1945, and, for the last time,

in 1948, literally on the eve of the British withdrawal from Palestine. Not more than 5 percent of the names included therein were Hebrew, the remainder being Arabic. The efforts made by representatives of the Zionist community to persuade the Mandatory authorities "to redeem the ancient Hebrew names" had not been successful. The British were, of course, aware of the Hebrew origins of many of the Arabic names, but they were reluctant to open an additional front in the Jewish-Arab conflict and therefore scrupulously preserved the toponymic status quo: the only names they authorized the Jewish bodies to add to the map and the gazetteer were those of the communities that these bodies had founded.

Of course the Zionist organizations were angered by the Mandatory government's position and regarded it as a reflection of a hostile attitude. "Throughout all the years of foreign occupation of Eretz Israel," one member of the committee summarized retrospectively, "the original Hebrew names were erased or garbled, and sometimes took on an alien form." One may therefore understand the sense of the righting of a historical injustice with which the members of the JNF committee hailed the announcement by Avraham Biran, the chair of the new amalgamated committee: "The committee shall have official status. The names assigned by it to the new settlements continually being established and to geographical sites throughout the land shall be published in the official government gazette—*Reshumot*—and their utilization by the state and local authorities and national and public institutions shall be obligatory."[16] Most important, only the names assigned by the committee would be recorded on maps of the State of Israel. To the men who had dedicated their lives to the creation of a Hebrew map, this was the fullest possible expression of Israel's independence and of its national sovereignty in the homeland.

The members of the JNF Naming Committee brought with them an impressive record of achievements: In the course of its twenty-six years of operation this committee had assigned approximately 400 names to Jewish communities. Despite its having been a voluntary body whose authority derived "from the Zionist Congress" (according to the official description of the committee) and the fact that its decisions were binding on the Jewish community only, it nevertheless had official status. The Mandatory government had recognized it as the body authorized to provide it with the names of Jewish communities (in Hebrew and in English transliteration) for inclusion in official publications, in the gazetteer of names, and on official maps.

A community whose name was not listed in official gazettes was not "recognized" as far as the Mandatory authorities were concerned, and was thus unable to conduct its affairs with the authorities. A letter sent to the JNF by the Committee of the Bloc of Jewish Settlements in the Western Galilee in May 1941 endeavors repeatedly to convey the urgency "of the great need for the recognition of the 'points' Shavei Zion, Evron (Ein Sarah), and Mishmar Hayam as 'settlements' by the committee, in the gazette; and that having been done, the mukhtars [Arabic term for settlement headmen] will be able to receive their wages [from the Mandatory government]."[17] Settlement representatives were not the only ones who tried to rush the JNF Naming Committee. The chief secretary, head of the British Mandatory administration, did as well. In June 1928, the chief secretary approached the JNF, requesting the names of the new settlements in order to publish them in the gazette. The naming committee was in no hurry to oblige. In its reply, the JNF informed the chief secretary that committee chair Menachem Ussishkin "has gone abroad and will return in a few months, and it will be possible to convene the committee only after his return."

It was no coincidence that Menachem Ussishkin (1863–1941), chair of the JNF directorate, who ran this key Zionist institution with almost imperial centralization, also headed the naming committee. This man, who for decades had directed the JNF—the Zionist body that acquired land in Palestine and thereby made possible the establishment of rural and urban Jewish settlements—was not occupied with land acquisition alone. The entire course of Ussishkin's life embodied the dedication, the ability to mobilize people and resources and to translate lofty ideals into the language of everyday action, the allegiance to a goal that would brook no scruples or delay, the aggressivity, and the tribalism that carried the Zionist saga to the pinnacles of its achievements.

As one who had participated in the establishment of the Union of Hebrew Teachers in Eretz Israel, Ussishkin well understood the strong bond between the spiritual and material worlds. He was the moving force behind the establishment of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, which he regarded as a "new national Temple, Mt. Zion's palace of wisdom and science." But he stated openly: "Not for the sake of a spiritual center did I make my call, but for the political strengthening of our position in this land. A spiritual center without a political center is a head without a body."[18] Ussishkin did not take part in geographical and toponymic research for its own sake; he was concerned with the establishment of settlements, but he reserved the right to call them by names

that "redeem the name of the place from the oblivion of the ages, restore it to life, and establish the historical Hebrew name on the rightful patrimony of the Jewish people."

It was Menachem Ussishkin who laid out the basic principles for determining the names of settlements:

> First of all, we must examine them from a Hebrew-historical point of view. The historical Hebrew names of places in Eretz Israel are the most reliable testimony that these places have been our patrimony from time immemorial and that our rightful claims to these places and to this land are historical and ancient. Therefore, if the JNF Naming Committee is convinced that a new settlement is located near a place—especially a place where there was a Jewish settlement during one of the periods when the nation of Israel dwelt in Eretz Israel, but whose name was forgotten in the course of generations or was preserved in a different form by various conquerors, reaching us in its present form, embodied as an Arab village, the remains of a "ruin," or an archaeological "tel," or such like—the committee shall assign to the new or restored settlement the historical Hebrew name of the place in its original form. If the committee is not convinced that the new or restored settlement is located in the vicinity of a place where there was a Jewish settlement during a prior period in the history of Israel in its land—the committee shall assign it a name memorializing a personality or a symbolic name.[19]

Of course, the need to provide justification for "rightful claims to these places and to this land" through the revival of ancient Hebrew names made the biblical experts and the scholars specializing in the antiquities of Eretz Israel the most important members of the committee. These experts were equipped with vast stores of knowledge, acquired from primary sources and from the study of the scholarship of generations of researchers in biblical topography, both Jewish and non-Jewish. The problem was that the identification of ancient sites is not an exact science, and thus controversies among the scholars proliferated without there being any concrete evidence to indicate who was right.

ESOTERIC AND SCIENTIFIC MAPS

The desire to reproduce the map of the ancient Land of Israel via the identification of places mentioned in the Bible goes back many years. At first it was motivated not by the need to find a basis for claims of ownership but by religious objectives and the pursuit of historical scholarship. Pilgrims, travelers, and scholars all tried their hand at identifying these sites, relying on ancient traditions and the groundless speculations offered by their local tour guides. In the Middle Ages, for example, the

Philistine city of Ekron was identified with Acre because of the similarity in the sound of their names in European languages; the ancient lighthouse of Acre came to be called "the Tower of Flies," since a temple of Beelzebub (Lord of the Flies) was located in Ekron. Travelers and ecclesiastics sometimes fabricated identities for convenience' sake. When it was dangerous to visit a given site, they would transfer the name of the holy place to a location on a main road. Thus was created a synthetic and esoteric geography that today arouses one's sense of the ridiculous.

It is widely accepted that the American scholar Edward Robinson introduced order to the ancient geography of Palestine; however, Jewish travelers and others who preceded him had already begun the work of identifying biblical sites, based on logical scientific principles. In his book *Biblical Researches in Palestine,* Robinson warns against "all ecclesiastical tradition respecting the ancient places in and around Jerusalem and throughout Palestine."[20] He recommends (with particular emphasis, in the body of his book) that attention be paid to "the preservation of the ancient names of places among the common people." "The Hebrew names of places," states Robinson,

> continued current in their Aramaean form long after the times of the New Testament. . . . After the Muhammadan conquest, when the Aramaean language gradually gave place to the kindred Arabic, the proper names of places found their ready entrance: and have thus lived on upon the lips of the Arabs, whether Christian or Muslim, townsmen or Bedouin even unto our own day, almost in the same form in which they have also been transmitted to us in the Hebrew scriptures.[21]

Robinson proved his thesis to be correct, identifying many dozens of ancient sites in the course of his travels and essentially laying the foundation for the study of the biblical geography of Palestine. Many have followed in his footsteps, collecting names and identifying the sites to which they belong. However, the most thorough survey was not made until the 1870s—by the British PEF, whose activities in the Negev and Arava have already been mentioned. Between 1872 and 1878, the PEF's expeditions, under the command of officers from the Royal Engineers, mapped all of Palestine "from Dan to Beersheba" and published a series of twenty-six maps on a scale of one inch to the mile, the accepted scale in Britain at the time. Their topographical mapping was quite accurate, and, after being updated, these maps served the British army well during the First World War.

The principal contribution of the PEF survey was in the recording of ancient remains and the collection of some 9,000 place-names and

names of geographical features. The commanders of the survey expeditions, following in Robinson's footsteps, were of the opinion that the study of Arabic place-names was the key to identifying ancient sites, and they boasted of their achievements in that area. Claude Conder recounts: "The work [in the Shephelah region] had extended over 180 square miles in the three weeks, and 424 names, only 50 of which were previously known, had been collected including more than 200 ruins."[22] Herbert Kitchener reports that in the year of his term as commander of the expeditions (1878–77), he "described 816 ruins and collected 3,850 names." Conder tells of "new difficulties" that arose as a result of the effect of the scientific identification of a place on the Arabic name by which it was known among its inhabitants:

> The peasantry were convinced that the Franks [Europeans] knew the old names better than they did themselves. . . . at Adullam one man refused to tell me the name of the place, saying that the Franks knew it best. . . . I protest against the immorality of corrupting the native traditions, by relating to the peasantry the theories of modern writers, as authentic facts, for it destroys the last undoubted source of information as to ancient topography.[23]

The more the literature of place identification flourished, the more there developed a "scientific ancient topography" that was no less esoteric and fantastic than the "sacred topography" of the pilgrims, a fact that would have serious implications for "the establishment of the Hebrew name on its Jewish patrimony" and the distortions that it produced in the map of the country. Of the 9,000 Arabic names collected, only a tenth were ancient; the rest were descriptive. The experts working for the PEF went to the trouble of translating all these names into English—not an easy job, since the collection of names was not always an exact process. Many were gathered orally by members of the British expedition, who would give them to a local scribe, who, in turn, would write them down, sometimes on the basis of conjecture. Thus the meaning was often twisted or lost, and the translation erroneous and lacking in credibility. Nonetheless, the volume entitled *Arabic and English Name Lists,* edited by E. H. Palmer in 1881, constitutes a veritable treasure trove for the scholar of the cultural heritage of the Arab population. Sadly, though, scholarly interest has focused on the tenth of the names whose origins are ancient—this was, after all, the motivation behind their collection in the first place—and thus the study of those Arabic names whose origin is not Aramaic-Hebrew has been neglected.

The British Mandatory authorities carried on in the time-honored tradition of their compatriots: the topographical maps that they plotted

served the needs of the Mandatory administration and its security forces. Also, the long-standing interest in remnants from the past and in gathering and recording place-names did not dissipate. Frederick John Salmon, who initiated and executed the series of 1:100,000 scale maps (the standard map of Palestine), recognized the great importance of these ancient remains and ruins, and incorporated them in his maps. Dov Gavish, a scholar of the cartography of Mandatory Palestine, quotes Salmon: "The face of Palestine is covered, not only with existing settlements, but also with a plentitude of visible ruins and sites from periods of the past. . . . Sites like these interest not only archeologists, geographers, and historians, they . . . possess names that must under no circumstances be omitted from the maps."[24] Hence, the maps of Mandatory Palestine were crammed with the names of settlements, ruins, and caves. And all these names were, naturally, Arabic. But the toponymic wealth of the land was greater still. While drawing maps for assessment and taxation purposes (cadastral maps), the surveyors collected thousands of names of plots of land, and these too they recorded on large-scale maps.

The "Arab character" of the land, which became all too clear in the wake of the maps' being filled with Arabic names, upset the Jewish community. On 22 April 1941 the Emeq Z'vulun Settlements Committee wrote to the head office of the JNF:

> The 1:5,000 scale site plan has come into our possession. . . . In this plan such names as the following are displayed in all their glory: Karbassa, al-Sheikh Shamali, Abu Sursuq, Bustan al-Shamali—all of them names that the JNF has no interest in immortalizing in the Z'vulun Valley. . . . We recommend to you that you send a circular letter to all of the settlements located on JNF land in the Z'vulun Valley and its immediate vicinity and warn them against continuing the above-mentioned practice [i.e., the use of] old maps that, from various points of view, are dangerous to use.[25]

WITHOUT "EXCESSIVE FASTIDIOUSNESS"

Although the JNF Naming Committee under Menachem Ussishkin had clearly defined goals, its efforts to effect "redemption" of the names of places and restoration of the ancient Hebrew names encountered difficulties within its own ranks when committee members and experts carried their disputes over biblical geography all the way to the offices of the JNF. On 18 March 1928, committee member A. Y. Brawer requested that the decision of a group of pioneers from Yugoslavia to call their moshav (or smallholder collective) Beit She'arim be reconsidered. In his

opinion, "There is not complete certainty that the city of Beit She'arim indeed stood on the land of the Arab village of Jeda," and he therefore suggested that a different name be given to the place "in order to avoid the possibility of scientific misrepresentation."

Joseph Klausner replied: "If we follow this route, we will never restore a historical name to a new place of settlement, because there is hardly a settlement in Eretz Israel about which there is no controversy regarding whether it stands on the historical site whose name it was given. But we have a national duty to redeem historical names (in accordance with) the opinion of the majority of the experts. And we must not defer it out of excessive fastidiousness."[26]

The chairman had no patience with the academic debate that developed among the committee members, peppered with allusions and quotations in Aramaic and Greek, and he put the question to the vote. Four members supported the name Beit She'arim, and even its opponents were content to abstain. A short while after the name, which remains to this day, was assigned, it was proven beyond a doubt that the historical site of Beit She'arim was located eight kilometers away from the moshav.

The assignment of ancient Hebrew names to modern settlements on the basis of mistaken identity was repeated on a number of occasions. Sometimes names were conferred upon places other than their original locations when the latter were occupied by Arab villages. In 1941 the name Yavne was given to a religious kibbutz, "Purposely 'Yavne' and not 'Yavne Village,' in order to clearly articulate the fact that we are the heirs of ancient Yavne"[27] (the town where rabbinical scholarship was carried on after the destruction of the Second Temple by the Romans). At the time, the site of ancient Yavne was occupied by a large Arab village called Yibna, and no one dreamed that a problem would arise. But early in April 1949, the Arab village, which had been abandoned during the 1948 War, was repopulated, and its new Jewish residents began using the ancient name. The members of Kibbutz Yavne were angered by the abandoned village's new inhabitants' use of "a title that wasn't theirs." They appealed to the committee, requesting that it find a suitable name for the "new site"—Bnayahu, for example.

Sometimes an erroneous name was assigned in response to pressure from settlers, who succeeded in besting the committee's resistance. Early in 1949 a kibbutz was established in the northern Galilee, choosing for itself the ancient biblical name of Yiron. The naming committee rejected the name because the historical site of Yiron was in Yaroun, Lebanon, "regrettably located," wrote the committee, "outside the boundaries of

the State of Israel." The kibbutz members did not give up, and they refused to accept the symbolic name they were offered, Shefer. In spite of "forceful requests" by the committee, the incorrect name remained on the map.

HISTORICAL CONNECTION AND BLOOD TIES

In one case, it was precisely adherence to a biblical name—in its proper place—that aroused anger toward the committee. On 21 September 1939, it received an angry letter from the chief rabbinate in Tel Aviv requesting the "removal of the shameful presence of the names Sodom Colony and Sodom Workers Camp from the map of our land and from among our communities." Sodom, stated the chief rabbis, "which is, in the Bible, the symbol of evil, corruption of human qualities, and social injustice; Sodom, which even in foreign literature is synonymous with impurity (the word 'sodomite' in European languages means a man who burns with desire for homosexual union [*sic*]), cannot serve as a name for a town of Jews in the Land of Israel, and this ugly name must be erased immediately from our maps and our childrens' lips."[28]

On several occasions the committee was forced to choose between two competing supreme national values: revival of a biblical name versus the memorialization of soldiers who had fallen in battle. In March 1949 a heated dispute broke out between the naming committee and the council of the village of Yazur near Tel Aviv. Situated on the road to Jerusalem, Yazur had been the site of an Arab village, and in January 1948 seven Jewish soldiers escorting a convoy were killed there. The village was captured in May of that year, and its Arab inhabitants abandoned it. That October the site was settled by Jewish immigrants, who chose the name Mishmar ha-Shivʿah, in memory of the seven fallen soldiers (*shivʿah*—seven): "Out of an inner desire to recompense, in some measure, the heroes to whom we are indebted for the opportunity given us to live in this wonderful place, to settle here, and to build our lives in the homeland."[29]

To the immigrants' amazement, the committee refused to permit their use of that name and instead assigned the settlement the name Azor, which was the ancient name of the place and had been preserved in its Arabic name. Azor, wrote the committee, "was in the territory bequeathed to the tribe of Dan in the time of Joshua Bin Nun. It was known by this name during the First and Second Temple periods. . . . Today, when the People of Israel is reestablishing the State of Israel on the basis of its rightful historical claims, it is our obligation to renew its ancient glory by restoring the names of the historical places of our land, which are the most reliable testament to the fact that these places are the heritage of the nation of Israel from the very earliest periods of our political existence. We understand and feel the emotional considerations that are motivating you to set up a memorial there to the seven soldiers who fell in this place. However, setting up memorials to our dear martyrs cannot be allowed to take precedence over the historical names of places . . . because the historical connection is what brought the Jewish community in this country and volunteers from abroad to this war and to all that it entailed."[30]

The priority accorded the historical connection over blood ties aroused the wrath of the seven bereaved families whose sons had fallen in the village. In a letter of reply to the committee they wrote:

> Your desire to cancel the new Hebrew name . . . shocked us and badly hurt our sorrowing feelings. . . . The village deserved to receive your encouragement and blessings for this initiative. Instead, what came from you was rigid determination to continue chasing after archeological allusions instead of faithfulness to the claims of our new life and present-day reality. . . . Without getting into a major argument and evaluating every idea associated with assumptions regarding distant past history and ancient names that were never mentioned in Jewish literature, we are opposed to the dropping or changing of the name Mishmar Hashivʿah. [We] believe that you will give priority to the sacred emotions of the present over a sense of obligation to archeology—which hardly expresses what is taking shape at this time in our land and our state.[31]

The naming committee did not retreat from its stance, and in spite of all the pressure, the village was given its historical name, Azor. Even so, a compromise was ultimately achieved between "the sacred emotions of the present" and the "sense of obligation to archeology": a new settlement established on the land of the Arab village of Yazur received the name Mishmar Hashivʿah.

A BLANK SLATE

Such a compromise was certainly possible only because, in the aftermath of the 1948 War and the mass exodus of the Arabs from their towns and villages, the country had become a blank slate upon which the committee could inscribe names as it wished, without being restricted to the very limited areas under Jewish ownership. Now it could restore the names of historical places to their exact sites—most of which had be-

come abandoned villages—perpetuate the memory of war heroes, or give some other symbolic expression to nationalist yearnings. And the committee did indeed behave like one suddenly released from all restraint: in the three years following the establishment of the state, from May 1948 until March 1951, when it was absorbed into the Governmental Naming Committee (GNC), the JNF Naming Committee assigned 200 new names—the same number that it had assigned in the entire twenty-two years of its operation during the British Mandate. The committee's accelerated pace of activity of course reflected the speed at which new Jewish settlements were being established throughout the country during the early years of the state (which will be dealt with elsewhere). Every one of the new settlements required a name, and the committee endeavored to provide one promptly. Gone were the days of lengthy academic deliberations concerning the faithfulness of a particular name to the ancient sources. In fact, the rate of settlement and the pressure from the settlers were so great that the committee was forced to place the onus for providing historical data upon the settlers themselves, and in many cases the corresponding secretary of the committee responded to requests from new settlements with a reply worded something like the following: "In order for us to be able to assign you a name, please send us a list of the hills, valleys, stream beds (wadis), and archaeological tels with distinctive names in Arabic."

Choosing a name for one of the Jewish settlements that were springing up in or beside abandoned Arab villages was generally quite uncomplicated: the committee simply restored the ancient Hebrew name that had been preserved, almost unchanged, in the Arabic one. Thus Faradiyya became Parod; Dallata became Dalton; Kasla—Ksalon; Beit Dajan—Beit Dagon; Yibna—Yavne; and Zir'in—Yizra'el. Biblical names or Hebrew names that appeared in the Mishna or Talmud received distinct priority. When such could not be found, places were named for biblical characters—who did not necessarily have any connection to that particular location—or were given names based on lyrical phrases from the Bible. Over the years, the distinction between names based upon the actual identity of an ancient site, like Yoqneam, and names of biblical characters like Aviel or biblical expressions like Te'ashur—that had been chosen quite randomly—became blurred, and all of these together came to be perceived as "biblical or ancient names."

A classification undertaken by Nurit Kliot determined that "of 770 names of places of Jewish settlements within the pre-June '67 borders of Israel, 350 are names of 'biblical or ancient' places," that is, 45 percent.

The mixing of authentic ancient names with synthetic, pseudobiblical names was done, of course, to provide a basis for "our rightful historical claims," and in retrospect, they were all perceived as being authentically "biblical and ancient."[32]

A special place is occupied by modern Hebrew names that are translations or interpretations of Arabic names, "on the assumption that the Arabic name was based on an earlier Hebrew name." The settlement of Alona was called that because it is situated beside the Arab village of Sindiyanna, which means Oak (Alon): "The name is ancient and one may assume that its source is Hebrew," the committee stated.

On occasion the designation of a Hebrew name bordered on outright falsification. The name of the abandoned Arab village of Deir al-Qasi, which was settled by Jews, was changed to Elkosh. "There are those who are convinced that this was the birthplace of Nahum the Elkoshite," wrote the committee, with full knowledge that most scholars do not agree that this is the true identity of the spot and assert that the prophet's place of birth was in Syria, Lebanon, or near Beit Govrin in the Shephelah (Judean foothills). To salve its conscience, the committee added that Elkosh was so named to commemorate "the prophet's vision of peace: Behold upon the mountain the feet of him . . . that publisheth peace" (Nahum 1:15). That is to say, this name does not necessarily imply the identification of the ancient site. But who takes the trouble to check the committee minutes?

Regarding the Arabic names of ancient villages such as Suhmata and Tarbikha, the committee noted that "there is no historical identification," meaning that they have no Jewish historical connection, or at least that no such connection is known to the committee. For this reason they chose to assign symbolic names in such instances: Hosen (Strength), or Shomera (from shmirah, guarding). Some 70 Jewish communities have symbolic-abstract names of this sort. The names of another 170 were derived from agriculture and nature: Avivim (from *aviv* [springtime]), Goren (Threshing Floor), Shoshanat Ha'amakim (Lily of the Valley), Gefen (Vine), Kfar Zeitim (Olive Village), and the like.

No fewer than 20 percent of the names on the Hebrew map belong to the founders of Zion, public figures of our day, Israeli leaders, and people who have made a significant contribution to the state. Nonetheless, when choosing these names the committee scrupulously "implemented the principle of not employing names in foreign tongues." In most cases, therefore, it used the Hebrew given names of these public figures, most of whom had "foreign" family names, or made use of their

titles, as in the case of Eshel Hanassi—the President's Tamarisk, in honor of Haim Weitzman, the first president of Israel, or Ein Hashofet (Spring of the Judge), named after the famous Jewish U.S. Supreme Court justice, Louis Brandeis. Thus they upheld the principle of the purely Hebrew map, though at the cost of blurring the identity of the very names they sought to immortalize. For how is one to know that behind some forgettable Hebrew given name is hidden a famous personage who is generally known by his or her foreign family name? Another eighty or so place-names commemorate events in the history of the Jewish people, the Holocaust, Israel's wars and their heroes. And a total of about one-third of the names of Jewish communities are based on various aspects of Zionist-nationalist ideology and history. In any case, the balance between "obligations to archeology" and "the sacred emotions of the present" has been scrupulously maintained.

In spite of all its efforts, the JNF Naming Committee did not succeed in erasing all the Arabic names from the map, or even from all Jewish towns (the names of Arab towns and villages will be dealt with elsewhere). Some Jewish communities bear Arabic names that have never been changed: Hadera, Ramla, Hamadiya, Metullah, Hulda. Others carry names that were given a Hebrew form on the basis of similarity to the sound of the Arabic name—Zecharia from Zakariyya, Manot from Manawat, Kamon from Kamana, Gillon from Jalun—without their necessarily being meaningful in Hebrew. But even this fact has become obscured: Who's to know that the biblical-sounding name Tefen, for example, is actually the Arabic name al-Tufaniyya?

The GNC found new territory in which to carry on Zionist activities after the Six-Day War. The settlements being established in the Occupied Territories also required Hebrew names, and the committee applied its tried-and-true principles there as well. Settlements were given place-names from the Bible (Bethel, Shiloh), biblical proper names (Otniel), names of scriptural passages (Alfei Menashe), agricultural names (Katif/Fruit Harvest), symbolic names (Alon Shevut/Oak of Return), names of Zionist personalities (Givʿat Zeʾev, after Zeʾev Vladimir Jabotinski), and names commemorating heroic deeds from Israel's wars.

When the committee began assigning names to Jewish settlements in the Occupied Territories, its task within the boundaries of the State of Israel had already been essentially completed. Not only had Hebrew names been bestowed upon nearly all of the Jewish settlements (with the exceptions noted previously), but all of the geographical features of the

map—streams, springs, mountains, and wadis—as well as ruins and tels, had acquired Hebrew names as well. The discussion will now turn to this tremendous undertaking: the Hebraization of the landscape.

A CLOSED CIRCLE

In embarking on the task of giving Hebrew names to features of the landscape, the Naming Committee followed the well-worn path blazed by the NNC at the time of the assignment of names in the Negev and Arava. It is, however, one thing to assign names in uninhabited expanses of desert and quite another to do so in areas that have long been heavily populated and where many historical sites and places of sensitive symbolic significance are located. First and foremost the committee sought to restore ancient Hebrew names. The difficulties encountered in so doing are recorded in a report it issued in September 1958: "In the Bible are recorded a total of thirty-two names of streams and rivers, of which only eighteen are west of the Jordan River; another five names have reached us from the Mishna and Apocrypha and from Greek and Roman sources—twelve more. This comes to approximately fifty names that we have inherited from the ancients, including duplicate names for one river and names whose location has not yet been identified." Nevertheless, "the committee has given biblical names and names from post-biblical sources to 135 streams, and has given another 85 streams names of personalities from the Bible." In fact, most of the streams were named after plants, birds, or animals, "or according to the translation of the Arabic names or by similarity of sounds."[33] Altogether the mapping of the hydrographic network involved the naming of 780 streams and 520 springs.

The determination of the names of ancient sites, tels, and ruins was apparently particularly difficult for the committee: out of 720 ancient sites, only 170 were identified and assigned their biblical names or presumably authentic names from nonbiblical or postbiblical sources of comparable antiquity. "The remaining sites, and they are the overwhelming majority," stated the committee report, "have still not been identified, and their Hebrew names have been determined in accordance with the meaning of the Arabic name or its similarity in sound, or derived from the surrounding landscape or nearby geographical features." Little by little, then, a "closed circle" evolved: first a mountain, stream, or ruin was assigned a name, and then everything else in the vicinity—

"gullies, plains, caves, hills, and crossroads"—was given a name derived from the first, which often enough had itself been invented "in accordance with similarity of sound."

"Nine years ago the map of our country was poor in names," continues the 1958 report. The compiler of the report knew that this was an incorrect statement, so he hastened to explain what he was referring to: "and particularly Hebrew names." That is to say that if a map was not Hebrew, it was, to all intents and purposes, "empty." The committee summarized, with satisfaction, its nine years of work: "It has proposed some 3,000 names" and is "pressing forward on its mission" to continue the work of getting names onto a detailed map on a 1:20,000 scale. Indeed, the naming committee did continue its activities until the Hebrew map of the Land of Israel, including the Occupied Territories, was completed.

A random selection of the names assigned by the committee and the reasons given for choosing them will demonstrate its method of operation. The following is taken from the minutes of the twenty-ninth session of the Historical Subcommittee (15-11-57):

> Misr'fot Yam/ in Arabic: Minat al-Mushairifa. The name: after the biblical name.
>
> Horbat Ein Kovshim/ in Arabic: Khirbat Ein al-Beida. The name: after the spring (whose name "Conquerors' Spring" commemorates the settlers who established Kibbutz Hanita).
>
> Horbat Bannai/ in Arabic: Khirbat Banna. The name: by similarity of sound (to the Arabic).
>
> Horbat Abbas/ in Arabic: Khirbat 'Abbasiyya.
>
> Horbat Tabour/ in Arabic: Khirbat Tibiriya. The name: by similarity of sound.
>
> Horbat Nemal Akhziv/ in Arabic: Minat al-Zib. The name: by translation of the term "mina" (anchorage/"namal"=port) and after the biblical name Akhziv.

From the 121st report of the Geographical Subcommittee (17-5-59):

> Nahal Hur: Flows into Nahal Kalil, Wadi Hur in Arabic. By similarity of sound.
>
> Ein Guni: Ein Abu Zeina. After one of the sons of Naphtali (Genesis 46:24).
>
> Nahal Selav: After a common fowl (quail).
>
> Ein Dolev: In Arabic Ein al-Dilba. By similarity of sound and meaning (Plane Tree).

Similarly, Jabal Kharuf (Sheep's Mountain) became Har Harif (Spicy Mountain); Jabal Mushaqqah (Split or Forked Mountain) became Har Sulam Tsor (Mt. Ladder of Tyre); Jabal Jarmaq, the highest mountain in Palestine, became Mt. Meron, named for the settlement at its foot. Wadi Hamam (Wadi of the Doves) became Nahal Arbel (named after an ancient Jewish city); Wadi Difla (Oleander Wadi) became Nahal Dahlia (after a Jewish settlement that had adopted part of the Arabic name Daliyat al-Ruha); Tel Abu Hurayra (named for one of the prophet Muhammad's companions) became Tel Haror (by similarity of sound, with no meaning in Hebrew); Khirbat Umm al-Basal (Mother-of-the-onions' Ruin) became Horbat Batsal (Onion Ruin); Khirbat 'Aris (. . . Bridegroom) became Horbat Arissa (. . . cradle); Ein al-Tina (. . . fig) became Ein Uzi (a Hebrew proper name); Bir al-Haramis (Thieves' Well) became Be'er Hermesh (Scythe Well); Khirbat al-Sneineh (. . . the Little Tooth) became Horbat Snunit (. . . Martin or Swallow); Wadi al-Kana (Wadi of Reeds) became Nahal Elkana (a Hebrew proper name). And so it went, on and on and on: thousands of names changed meaning, erasing an entire universe and replacing it with "similar sounds."

HISTORICAL, CURRENT, AND HEBREW

Reading the minutes of subcommittees of the naming committee, one gets the impression that its members were eager to complete their work quickly, and that had they not been in such haste, they would have been able to do justice to the old names, rather than exempting themselves from responsibility via "similar sounds." This haste was not simply the outcome of a strong desire to be rid of the Arabic names and to have them forgotten in a hurry; it also was a response to objective necessity: The names that they assigned became reality only once they were printed on maps. And in order for them to appear on maps, the committee would have to complete all its work, since it was impossible to print maps containing partial corrections and to update them as the work progressed. The committee held an exhaustive evaluation session with the director general of the Government Survey Department at their meeting of 7 February 1960 (meeting number 133). The meeting was opened by committee chair, Professor Avraham Biran: "Our committee has assigned many names; however, they have not yet appeared on 1:100,000 scale maps, and thus the names that we have assigned remain unknown to the public and have not become a part of life. When we re-

quest that people use the names we have chosen, we receive a request in return: 'Give us maps with the new names.'"

The director of the Survey Department, Yosef Elster, replied:

> This year we shall issue a new series of twenty-six 1:100,000 scale maps, grouped according to a new system of classification. We have ascertained that the replacement of Arabic names with Hebrew ones is not yet complete. The committee must quickly fill in what is missing, especially the names of ruins. The Historical Subcommittee is requested to do this at a rate that will allow these names to be printed on the new maps; . . . I am giving you a draft of the new series, with all of the features that still lack a Hebrew name marked. Be so kind as to increase the pace of the assignment of names so that these will appear as Hebrew maps without defect.[34]

One may suppose that this prodding did, in fact, increase the pace of name assignment; it surely influenced the quality of the work. At that same meeting Elster stated: "We are taking strict care not to strike any features from the map, because every feature has great value for purposes of orientation. A ruin of which no visible trace remains will not be listed, since our intention is not to produce a historical map, but a current one." His words were extremely significant, since at the time he uttered them, maps had already been printed with the abandoned Arab villages erased despite the presence of many remnants usable "for purposes of orientation." But even those who used the map for guidance and orientation were destined to pay the price imposed by the Hebraization of the map, as even the state Survey Department addressed itself to concretizing the projection of national interests on the earth's surface.

The committee's hesitation to choose between a "historical map," the "current map," and the "flawless Hebrew map" was obvious in those issued by the Israeli Survey Department during the first decade of its existence. The most dramatic expression of this was a map for civilian use, which was published in two editions, in 1956 (D/2005) and 1958 (D/P 350). These were essentially the Mandatory maps from 1946, printed in English on a scale of 1:100,000, upon which—in a striking shade of violet—was overprinted an "Update of Roads and Settlements." The update designated Jewish settlements that had been established, and new roads that had been built, since 1947. The hundreds of new Jewish settlements were indicated schematically by circles of uniform size (for security reasons). Beside each circle appeared, of course, the settlement's new Hebrew name. All features of the landscape that were in existence

on the eve of the 1948 War (cities, towns, villages, ancient ruins, holy places, and areas of cultivation) were left as they had been on the Mandatory map. The update for most of the Arab localities was expressed by a single Hebrew word, in parentheses, printed beside the Arabic name: *harus* (destroyed). This was a "current map." But the violet Hebrew overprint on the black of the English made it perforce a "historical map," immortalizing the cataclysm of 1948, when the old world disappeared and a new world was founded on its ruins. No wonder that the Israeli Survey Department's "updated" maps are cited in every Palestinian book about "The Catastrophe," often constituting the principal illustrations in the volume: no graphic artist could have created a more apt plastic expression of this event.

The Israeli cartographers certainly had no intention of commemorating the Palestinian catastrophe. The publication of the updated maps was the outcome of time constraints that obliged them to temporarily continue using Mandatory maps. But they wasted no time in their efforts to produce the "flawless Hebrew map," which would erase in print what had already been eradicated in actuality—or that "should have been." At the time of publication of the Updated Maps, a map for exclusive military use had already been issued (1958, number D/2007), in which the update was incorporated into the body of the Mandatory map in such a manner that the changes were swallowed up by the text of the original as if they had been there forever. The Israeli mapmakers used the same type of lettering in the same color print and the same conventional symbols as had their English predecessors to denote the new Jewish settlements (whose names were written in English transliteration). The ruins of the Arab communities, by contrast, were erased as if they had never existed.

Not every detail of the old landscape disappeared, however; ancient ruins, caves, springs, and graves of Muslim holy men were marked as before, only the names of some of them had been replaced by Hebrew names (in English transliteration). Arab villages that had been razed completely disappeared from the map, but the access roads that had led to them, and the areas of greenery surrounding them, remained. Other villages, of which visible ruins survived, were given symbols denoting "ancient ruins," and beside them was written a new geographical term, coined by the committee: *iyim* (heaps). Thus large villages—like Beit Jibrin, Ajjur, and al-Faluja—that had been totally destroyed were completely and utterly erased, whereas others, of which something re-

mained, were denoted by their new Hebrew name, with "Iye" tacked on: Iye Qeratya for the village of Karatiya, Iye Sidim for 'Iraq Suwaydan, and so on.

The speed at which the names were changed on the map was determined by the rate at which the committee worked, so that new Hebrew names (recently changed) appeared side by side with the Arabic names of other places (whose names had yet to be "updated")—both in English transliteration. The process of consolidation of the "current map" with the "Hebrew map" went on as long as the eradication of all signs of habitation in the abandoned Arab villages (which will be dealt with elsewhere) continued; thus were the "ruins of which no visible traces remained" wiped from the map—along with their names. At the committee meeting of 16 August 1959, the chairman, Avraham Biran stated: "We have ascertained that no traces are left of the abandoned villages. Since the locations to which the committee gave the name of 'heaps' no longer exist 'on the ground,' their names are hereby abolished." Accordingly a list was drawn up of dozens of "heaps" that had been "canceled" (and removed from the map). It was no coincidence that Yosef Weitz, the initiator and moving force behind the destruction of the abandoned Arab villages (with which we will deal at greater length later), was one of the most active members of the committee.

By the early sixties a new Hebrew map of the whole country had been published, in a graphic style entirely different from that of its British predecessor. And of course this new map depicted the new reality: settlements, cities, villages, roads, nature reserves and scenic spots, ancient sites and waterworks, canals and pumping stations, all with new Hebrew names: "the flawless Hebrew map." And what of the abandoned villages? One need only quote Yizhar Smilanski ("S. Yizhar"), perhaps the greatest Hebrew writer of this generation:

> Old tales, so well-known we're sick of them. Abandoned villages? And where aren't there? What was the name of this place? A few years ago there was a place and it had a name. The place was lost and the name was lost. What was left? At first, a name stripped of a place. Soon enough, that too was erased. No place and no name. May G-d have mercy. And it was turned on its face, plowed it was, and become a field. Here it is, furrowed and yielding before you, among the stones, young carob trees. What happened to the place happened to its name: for a time the name tarried, hanging there, lingering in the air until it vanished. Names without places hover for a while like bubbles, stay for a while, then burst. Here it is, a leveled hill; they leveled it well. Humble and lacking any sign of life; they have returned it to before it was.[33]

But names are borne in the mouths of human beings and cherished in their hearts; and so long as their tradition is preserved and their memory endures, the names are not truly erased. No "flawless Hebrew map" could ever wipe out the names that the villagers carried with them into exile. They gave streets and neighborhoods in the refugee camps the names of the destroyed villages. They recorded them on their gravestones and immortalized them on maps.

PALESTINIAN SACRED GEOGRAPHY

Palestinian mapmaking has been the reply to Israeli maps. On the Palestinian maps, reality is frozen at 1946. Hundreds of villages and towns, ruins, and hallowed graves that no longer exist fill the map of Palestine, whereas the Jewish settlements appear under the classification of "Jewish Colonies, divided according to the stages of the Zionist conquest, from 1882 to the present." Everything created in Palestine by the Jews was considered an aberration. The Palestinians created their own "sacred geography." They had no interest in the "current map," only in the "historical map" that, in their opinion, proved "the flawless Hebrew map" to be a fabrication and evidence of the plundering of their land, its history, and its civilization. The symbolic act of taking possession, expressed through the assignment of names, was answered by the converse symbolic act, whose purpose was to deny the right to take possession. And the maps became a battleground: I'll destroy your map just as you destroyed mine.

A comparison of the Hebrew and Arabic maps is instructive. The Arabic maps were prepared on a small scale (1:250,000) and are sparsely detailed: their entire purpose was to perpetuate the names of the Arab villages that had been destroyed. However, they portray but a minute fraction of the riches of Arabic toponymy. Even a detailed list compiled and published by the Arab-Israeli geographer Shukri 'Arraf contains only a few of the eradicated names. Palestinian scholar Mustafa al-Dabbagh, whose monumental eleven-volume opus *Biladuna Filastin* (Our Homeland Palestine) is the most comprehensive study of the historical geography of Arab Palestine, proposes many interpretations of the Arabic names, which are notable for his efforts to blur their Hebrew, biblical, or postbiblical roots. The name of the village of Abil al-Qamh, derived from the biblical name Abel Beth Ma'acha (2 Sam. 20:14), is explained thus: "In Arabic the word Abil, in this specific context, means

a hill, and therefore the meaning of the name is Hill of Flour—because of the quality of the flour that was produced in this village." The name of the Arab village of Bir'im, which preserved its ancient Hebrew appellation exactly, is explained as "derived from the Canaanite word 'peryam,' meaning a place where there is much fruit." There is, however, no connection between "Biram" and "Peryam," and if we follow al-Dabbagh's lead, we find that the "Canaanite" word is in origin the Hebrew word *piryam* (their fruits). But the Palestinian scholar is striving to erase any Hebrew connection. Thus all of the ancient Hebrew-Aramaic names are labeled Canaanite, Syriac, or Phoenician, or, of course, Arabic—"according to similarity of sound."

There is no comparison between the level of Palestinian cartography and toponymic scholarship and that achieved by the Israelis. Here as in other realms, the power wielded by Israel—a country that has invested tremendous resources in cartography and related sciences—is considerable. As quoted earlier: "Map making is one of the specialized intellectual weapons by which power could be gained, administered, given legitimacy and codified." Israel has always been aware of this fact. How an official, sovereign entity goes about "gaining legitimacy" for its choice of names is succinctly articulated in an article by Naftali Kadmon, an Israeli expert in toponymistics (the assigning of geographical names) and Israel's representative to a number of international bodies. He explains the steps involved in the standardization of place-names (i.e., getting them approved by the GNC for use on maps and listed in the official gazette): "The first is geographical: the birth of the name. It may be a 'natural birth.' On the other hand, in the event that a name is given by order of an official body, it will be a 'test-tube baby.' For example: In Israel we can regard the [biblical] names Gilgal, the Dead Sea, Jordan, and others as being of the first type; and names like Halamish, Nahal El Al, or Har-El as being of the second type—given by a kind of administrative order from the Governmental Naming Committee."

All of these names are Hebrew, of course—Arabic names were not even "naturally born," let alone "test-tube babies" authorized by an administrative order. According to Kadmon, the reason for the dearth of Arabic names on the map is that "a geographic name has a defined legal status; for that reason existing names require the approval of a responsible authority. Since the committee established by government decision in 1951 was at first concerned with Hebrew names, these were the only ones among the names already in existence to be granted official approval retroactively." Others (most of them Arabic) were local "endonyms" (local unstandardized names); and since prior to the founding of the state no governmental authority responsible for names had ever been set up in this country, these [Arabic] names were not even "standardized endonyms."[36]

The writer might simply have pointed out that the sovereign Israeli authorities chose to grant "legal status" only to Hebrew names, and hence erased every Arabic name that had not gained the "approval of the responsible authority." But then he would have been putting Israel in the same category as totalitarian, colonialist states that assigned names by fiat—only to see the territories so named, upon gaining their freedom and independence, drop the imposed names and return to their former ones: "All changes of name mandated by the state appear to be acts of administrative toponymy," states Kadmon. "Sri Lanka rather than Ceylon, Burkina Faso rather than Upper Volta, Myanmar rather than Burma." One might add the replacement Leopoldville by Kinshasa, Salisbury by Harrare, and hundreds of other such changes.

As far as Kadmon is concerned, Israel does not belong to this group, and in order to prove this manifestly groundless contention, he resorts to half-truths. Supposedly the Israeli GNC dealt "only with Hebrew names in the beginning," from which one might deduce that it intended to deal "afterward" with Arabic names, and not as it actually operated, purposely erasing almost all Arabic names except those of towns and villages populated by Arabs. "Only the Hebrew names gained approval retroactively," as if they had existed from time immemorial and had not been invented "by an act of administrative toponymy." The Arabic names supposedly never gained approval and were therefore never standardized, because "a governmental naming authority had never been set up in the country." The British Mandatory governmental authority, which had scrupulously attended to the standardization of names—perhaps even with excessive zeal—never "existed," in the opinion of this Israeli scholar, since it was a colonial authority rather than a Jewish-Israeli one. In any case, the names it assigned had never had any legal validity, according to Kadmon, and Israel was entitled to expunge them. Thus does this scholarly piece of professional research affirm the legitimacy and legality of the Hebrew map—the very device by means of which "power could be gained and administered."

However, there remained a need to add to the narrative told by the map itself another narrative explaining how the map had been drawn—in terms of historical rights—and justifying it in legal terms. This need was not a manifestation of remorse. The hand of the draftsman of the

Hebrew map did not tremble, and the work was accomplished without either guilt or hesitation. Brimming with a burning faith in the right of the Jewish People to return to its homeland, the Zionists strove to anchor this right in the landscapes of the Bible. They established a connection with the ancient landscapes, and this connection could be made concrete only by the use of the ancient names—since the actual physical landscape they found was alien, threatening, and populated with alien, threatening people. The resurrection of the ancient Hebrew names domesticated this alien landscape and served as a powerful means for turning the spiritual homeland into a real, earthly homeland.

BRIDGING THE ABYSS OF EXILE

Like every immigrant society, the Zionists endeavored to erase foreign names from the map of the country and tried to domesticate the new landscape by naming its features in their own tongue, giving them names that were meaningful to them, exactly as the English had named New England, New Zealand, New York. But the comparison becomes strained because, unlike other immigrants, the Zionists were able to renew their connection with landscapes from which their ancestors had been exiled 2,000 years before—a connection that had been severed physically but not spiritually. The Jews had not forgotten the names, and for 2,000 years they had borne with them the Hebrew map—containing not only the memory of the places but also the intimate recollection of the changes in the seasons, of the varieties of plant life, of seed time and harvest. They had repeated the names of communities that had been eradicated from the face of the earth and had vowed to return to Zion and rebuild them. Generations of Jews in the Diaspora lovingly compiled all the geographical names that appeared in the Holy Scriptures and published them in books written in Hebrew. They did not know a thing about those vanished communities, but they knew the names by heart. It is no wonder, then, that when the first Zionist immigrants "returned," they strove to affix these ancient names to concrete locations and thereby to bridge the abyss of a 2,000-year exile.

The irony was that the Jews were returning to their ancient homeland, but were able to identify the places there only because the people who had inhabited them during the Jews' long absence had preserved their names. Had the Arabs not adhered closely to the ancient Hebrew-Aramaic names, the Zionists would not have been capable of reproducing a Hebrew map. In turn, however, they rewarded the Arabs by erasing the Arabic names from the map: not only were names of biblical origin Hebraized, so was virtually every Arabic name, even if no ancient Hebrew name had preceded it. This was an act of sheer ingratitude; the destruction and eradication of all record of the 2,000 years of their absence from the land and of the civilization that had existed there in their stead, only because of their desire to make direct contact with their own ancient heritage.

Perhaps this ingratitude was inevitable. After all, naming is a declaration of exclusive proprietorship, and making such a claim over one's homeland is the essence of nationalism. Or perhaps this immense effort to eradicate the non-Hebrew heritage arose from a sense of the rootedness and power of the Arabic names, which, if not extirpated, were liable to imperil the new map. This was not a show of contempt for the Arabic heritage. On the contrary, it was a declaration of war on it. The effort the Zionists invested in this project is proof of their recognition that the Arabic shadow-map—that rests alongside the Hebrew map—had not vanished but in fact would remain very much in existence as long as there were people living in this land who took care to preserve it.

And indeed, Israelis whose business is the historical and cultural geography of Eretz Israel/Palestine are fully aware of the wealth and magnificence of the geographical tradition they have been endeavoring to erase. Some even harbor feelings of remorse for the reckless and unforgivable acts that were committed in the nationalist fervor of the first decade of Israel's existence. To this geographical heritage, buried beneath the "stratum" of the Hebrew map, we shall now turn our attention.

ARAB GEOGRAPHICAL HERITAGE

The Arabic map of Palestine was not created by administrative fiat, nor was it drawn for the purpose of providing the basis for a claim to proprietorship: it took shape through an evolutionary process, layer upon layer and generation after generation. The Arab conquerors who colonized the land following the conquest of 638 C.E. settled among its Jewish, Samaritan, and Christian natives. They easily assimilated the Hebrew-Aramaic geographical and topographical names, and, their language being closely related to the Semitic languages spoken there, they made only slight changes in spelling and pronunciation. They had no difficulty finding Arabic forms for names such as Ashkelon—which they transformed into Asqalan—Beit Horon to Beit Ghur, Beersheba to Bir Saba'a, and Eilat to Aila. Aramaic names were easily adapted (Matsuba

became Khirbat Ma'asub), and Greek and Roman names were assimilated as well, Qarantana and Neapolis becoming Qarantal and Nablus. New communities, and geographical features that had no ancient names (or at least not ones that were known to the Arabs), were given authentic Arabic names.

All these names appear in the writings of Arab and Muslim geographers, who produced numerous descriptions and chronicles of Palestine, beginning in the ninth century C.E. In addition, others are to be found in documents from the Crusader and Mamluk periods and in the writings of Christian and Jewish travelers. To the approximately 1,200 names of places known to have existed during the period preceding the Ottoman conquest of 1517, thousands more were added in succeeding centuries. In the late nineteenth century the British PEF gathered and published some 9,000 Arabic names, about a tenth of which were of Hebrew-Aramaic origin, the remainder dating from the 1,400 years since the Arab conquest.

It is difficult to categorize these names according to distinguishing characteristics and even harder to investigate their origins, since they evolved by an ongoing, spontaneous process. The question of how and why various names were chosen is addressed in an Arab legend told to Alon Galili.[37] Galili recounts that the old people of the Bilad al-Ruha district, south of the Carmel ridge, tell the following story: A father whose time to die was drawing near decided to divide up his property among his sons. To do so, he went with them on a tour of his landholdings, and so that they would not mistake one place for another and quarrel over them, in the course of their tour he gave each place a name. Beside the first spring that they found, they saw a drunk old man. "Remember, my sons," said the father, "this spring will be called Ein al-Sakran (Spring of the Drunkard)." When they ascended a hill, they beheld a ridge from which flowed eight wadis, and so they called the mountain Ras al-Matmuniya (the Octagonal Head). On their way they came to a village and "they were greeted by the mukhtar, who had just awakened from his night's sleep and was still bareheaded, his hair blowing in the wind." They therefore called the village Abu Shusha (Father of the Forelock). From there they walked in the valley, where they encountered camels loaded with sacks of salt, and they named the valley Wadi Milh (Salt Wadi); they met some pretty young women and called their village Umm al-Zinat (Mother of the Pretty Women). They came to a high hill from which a breathtaking view could be observed, and so they called it Umm al-Shuf (which means Mother of the Sights); they

encountered some people who annoyed them, and called their village Kafr 'Ara (the Damn Village). Finally, as they approached their home, the girls of the village came out and danced before them and beat on drums, so they named the place Umm al-Dufuf (Mother of the Drumming Women). The whole region was called Bilad al-Ruha (Land of the Winds) because of the pleasant sea breezes that blow there.

The legend provides an explanation for names whose origins are in forgotten events, shrouded in the mists of folklore, or are simply impossible to place in rigid categories. According to a study conducted by Nurit Kliot of names of Arab communities in Israel and the Occupied Territories (excluding those that were destroyed and their names eradicated), 57 percent of the names are of unknown origin. That is, "the various lexicons could not provide an explanation for the origin of the name or were divided in their opinions regarding it."[38] Approximately one-quarter of the 584 Arab villages that were standing in the 1980s had names whose origins were ancient—biblical, Hellenistic, or Aramaic. Ten percent had symbolic names (like House of the Dawn, Place of Rest, the Green Village, or the Seven). The names of about 5 percent of the villages were taken from nature, agriculture, and the geographical surroundings, and another 5 percent were named after their founders or Muslim saints. This classification suffers from a deficiency, however, in that it does not include the nearly 400 permanent villages that were destroyed between 1948 and 1950, but more especially, because over 8,000 Arabic names of geographical features other than villages are neither mentioned nor classified.

A POETIC QUALITY

The wealth of Arabic toponymy is astounding in its beauty, its sensitivity to the landscape, its delicacy of observation and choice of images. Its metaphors have a poetic quality; its humor is sometimes refined, sometimes sarcastic. The knowledge of the climate, the familiarity with nature and inanimate objects is absolute. The people who chose these names had no need to articulate their love for their land in vast lyrical creations or to sing songs of longing from a distant Diaspora. They expressed it by naming a piece of land the Setting of the Moon; a spring of pure water, the Blue Spring; and a picturesque village, the Charming Village. "One who lives with his heart's beloved does not feel the need to express his feelings for her in poetry, since she is tangible to him," claimed a Palestinian in response to a Jew who had mocked him, saying

that he had not found expressions of feeling for the homeland in Arabic literature like those to be found in Hebrew writings, both ancient and modern. "Only one who has lost his beloved or is far from her needs to give poetic expression to his longing for her. We are connected to the stone fence that our father built and the fig tree that our great-grandfather planted. One doesn't write poems about such connection."

And perhaps because of this intimate, unmediated relationship with the land and its names, Arab scholars did not engage in the systematic collection and analysis of the names. But the tragedy of their uprooting caused them, too, very quickly to begin writing songs of yearning for the lost homeland; and the old names, the former expression of their connection with the land, were largely forgotten. Arab writers living in Israel proper began using the new Hebrew names for their own landscape—since these were the only ones to appear on the maps—not knowing that many were nothing but Arabic names that had been Hebraized "in accordance to similarity of sound," distorted, their lyrical meanings lost.

Perusal of a list of the lost names allows one a glimpse at the world and the culture of the Arab inhabitants of the land. These names, too, can be divided into a number of categories. In one we have names describing the topographical and physical characteristics of the sites (shape, color, conspicuous features): Jabal Muntar (Lookout Mountain); Jabal Tawil (Long Mountain); Tel al-Safi (Bright or White Tel); Wadi Zarqa (the Blue Stream); Tel al-Asmar (the Black Tel); Khirbat Ruseis (Ruin of the Pebble); Ein al-Beida (White Spring); Umm al-Shuf (Mother of the Sights); al-Mushairifa (the High Place or Altar); Bat al-Jabal (the Mountain's Armpit); al-Bassa (the Marsh); Abu Hushiya (Father of the Parched); Ein al-Shuqaq (Canyon Spring); Tantura (the Peak); Wadi al-Qarn (Stream of the Horn); Qasr al-Sename (the Camel's Hump Fort); Ein al-Maiytah (Dead Spring); Qubayba (Little Dome); Khirbat Umm al-'Amud (Ruin of the Mother of the Columns); Khirbat al-Jubbain (Ruin of the Two Pits); al-Farsh (the Carpet, i.e., level ground).

The names in the second category describe properties attributed to the place or some activity connected with it: Ein Weiba (Spring of the Plague); Jabal Kafkafa (the Delaying Mountain); Tarbikha (the Prosperous); Jabal 'Arus (Bridegroom's Mountain); Wadi Haramiyya (Robbers' Valley); Ein al-'Ajla (Spring of Haste); Ein Sakran (Drunkard's Spring). A third category, animal names, encompasses hundreds, many of which are repeated in several different locations throughout the country. The animals in these names include lion, panther, bear, water buffalo, wolf, fox, hyena, jackal, gazelle, buzzard, raven/crow, dove, and other kinds of birds, dog, donkey, pig, camel, cow, sheep, kid—as well as snake, bee, scorpion, lizard, mouse, fly, and others. It is hard to know how one ruin acquired the name Khirbat al-Asad (Lion's Ruin) and another came to be called Khirbat al-Namus (Mosquitoes' Ruin)—or when it was that bears last waded in the Bears' Stream.

A place of honor is occupied by names associated with historical or legendary figures: prophets, saints, heroes, famous women. We shall consider the names of sacred sites in another context, but there are also places that have been given the names of common people whose qualities excited the imagination of the villagers. Anton Shammas, in his book *Arabesque,* relates the story of the origin of the name of a piece of land near his village, Fassuta:

> At the turn of the century, Zeinab was the most beautiful woman in the Galilee. Folk poets spent many long nights rhyming songs in her praise. . . . But the men of her village did not look kindly upon the beautiful woman, and they began to spin the web of her death. First they spread rumors about the fiery lust between her legs and said that there was no man alive who could satisfy her appetite. . . . Thus the elders gathered one night to consider how to put an end to the scandal. At dawn several young men of the village burst into Zeinab's house, dragged her from the bed of her husband and brought her to the outskirts of the village. There they bound her hands and her feet, lifted the hem of her dress and poured gunpowder into her underpants, inserted a wick in her private part, lit it and ran for their lives. And to this day the place is called Khallat Zeinab (Zeinab's Plot).[39]

And in what category might we fit names such as Father of the Nipple, Father of the Hats, Stream of the Father of the Beard, Barefoot's Spring, Beggar's Ruin, Stream of the Forelock, the Crazy Stream, Repose, Dungheap Stream, Hindrance, One-Eyed Man Stream, Mother of the Brides, Cave of the Skulls, Valley of the Righteous, Wadi of the Lance, Spring of the Mother of the Flame, and Treasure Spring?

Several of the Israeli students of the Land of Israel who participated in the naming committee in its various incarnations were renowned experts in the field of Arabic toponymy, and they loved its richness and rootedness. One of these, Yeshayahu Press, included in his Hebrew *Topographical-Historical Encyclopedia of the Land of Israel*[40] thousands of Arabic names—in Arabic script—and also interpreted them. However, his profound knowledge of these names was not a hindrance when, as a member of the committee, he was called upon to uproot them from the map one by one. On the other hand, another eminent scholar, Yosef Breslavski, requested of the committee "not to be in a hurry to

write new names, . . . and to leave all the Arabic names on the map." He recommended "preserving the Arabic names alongside the Hebrew ones," and he himself designed a bilingual map, with the Hebrew and Arabic names appearing together. But the committee had no interest in such bilingual or bisocietal proposals, since the very essence of its purpose was to secure the absolute and exclusive dominion of the Hebrew names.

Had the committee not been so locked in to its rigid conception of Hebraization at any price and of dissociating the new names from the Arabic social-folk tradition, it might have found a golden mean, allowing both Hebraization and preservation of the Arabic past. After all, there was no reason to change the Arabic name Khirbat Ngeass, whose meaning was Ruin of the Pear (Horvat Agas in Hebrew) to Horvat Nagos, which has no meaning, or the name Khirbat Ruseis (. . . pebbles) to Horvat Rotsets, again meaningless; or the name of the "Salt Wadi" to Yoqneam Stream—a Hebrew name that no one uses, because everyone calls it by its Arabic name, Wadi Milh. They could have translated most of the Arabic toponymy, and not hidden it and distorted it through the "assignment of names in accordance with similarity of sound." How the map would have been enriched, since many of the landscape's qualities, whose picturesque Arabic names these sites had been given, had not changed. But there was a compulsive need to give a black tel—whose Arabic name was exactly that: Tel al-Asmar—a meaningless Hebrew name, Tel Ashmar, simply because the former name was Arabic and it was a national duty to change it.

BILINGUAL NAMES AND COEXISTENCE

There are many countries in the world where double, bilingual, names are commonly in use. Any place where a person encounters road signs that display two different names for the same place or different names on a postal cancellation, he or she knows is a country where socioethnic coexistence prevails. In Israel, on the other hand, although many signs appear in the scripts of the two languages, the Arabic is simply a transliteration of the Hebrew name. Most ironically, Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salaam, a community of Jews and Arabs living together in Israel, has two official names, but the official road sign shows only Neve Shalom—the Hebrew name—in two scripts.

The erasure of topographical names that are not the ones generally used by members of the ruling majority and the prohibition of the use

of such names are typical symptoms of ethnic oppression and efforts to blur the identity of minorities. The erasure of names, which is widespread in countries where ethnic conflict reigns, is sometimes carried out in conjunction with the prohibition of the teaching of the minority language in the schools and of the use of family names that identify their bearers as belonging to a specific ethnic minority. "Ethnic cleansing" of maps has been carried out in a large number of countries at different periods of history, such as in South Tyrol (Alto Adige) in the Italian Alps; in the Kurdish regions of northern Syria; in the Balkans and other countries of Eastern Europe. In biethnic or multiethnic countries like Belgium, South Africa, and Canada, legislation guarantees equal status to bilingual and/or bisocietal variants of place-names. For example, an agreement between the Nisga'a nation, Canada, and the Province of British Columbia (1997) stipulates that Nisga'a names and background historical information for geographical features will be recorded in the official Names Database and also that Nisga'a names will replace English names on maps.

International charters for ethnic minorities and international treaties (such as that between Italy and Austria regarding the German-speaking region of South Tyrol) recognize the rights of ethnic and linguistic minorities to "equal status . . . in all fields of toponymy." This is defined as a "fundamental right," encompassing not only the prerogative of ongoing use of such names but also the stipulation that "[names of] places shall . . . where necessary, be re-established to their original form."[41] Thus, names that were given by the dominant majority or an occupying force can be superseded by the original name of the place.

In most cases Israel is careful to use Arabic names for Arab communities and to provide road signs in the two official languages (as well as English), with the exceptions mentioned above. However, the Arabic toponymy of all geographical features that are not existing Arab settlements has been erased—with the legal argument (that does not stand up to critical examination) that the Arabic names had never been officially approved, even during the Mandatory period, and therefore have not been standardized.

There are few examples elsewhere in the world of such radical alteration of the map. In other places where population exchange has taken place in the wake of war, such as Silesia, Sudetenland, and Asia Minor, there was also a wholesale change of place-names, but the new names were always ones that had been continuously utilized by a population belonging to the neighboring socioethnic group, which became official

when this group came to power. Thus Danzig became Gdansk, Breslau became Wroclaw, Fraustadt was replaced by Wschowa, Karlsbad by Karlovy Vary, Eger by Chev, Smyrna by Izmir, and Meander by Menderes. But in the overwhelming majority of cases, these names had existed for countless generations in all of the languages of the region: German, Polish, Czech, or Greek and Turkish, as the case may be, each ethnolinguistic group having its own version. It seems that only in Israel was a new toponymy imposed by an official naming committee, which invented most of it. Hundreds of ancient Hebrew names were, indeed, revived in a way not essentially different from that used in other places, but these were in the minority. The drawing of the Hebrew map mirrors the ferocity of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and its vengeful nature: "I'll destroy your map just as you destroyed mine."

But the map is only a symbolic expression of the aspiration to Hebraize the landscape. The makers of maps and assignors of names were following in the footsteps of the builders of cities and villages, planters of trees, pavers of roads, and destroyers of Arab communities—and sometimes went before them. As S. Yizhar writes: "They even gave new names to them all. More civilized of course, and from the Bible, too. They covered over and inherited from those who were on their way into exile. And may there be peace over Israel."[42] But there was no peace over Israel; and as long as maps serve as an article of faith and a battle cry, and not as a means for geographical orientation, there is no chance that it ever will come.