5

Indigeneity after Destruction

Religious Zionist Settlers in Halutza

HAYIM KATSMAN

On a hot summer day in August 2019, I met with a farmer from Bnei-Netzarim inside one of his many greenhouses. We sat on the sand, while his Thai workers picked tomatoes behind us. I asked what brought him, a devoutly religious person who previously studied Torah full-time in a yeshiva and worked as a *sofer stam*[1] and *mohel* (circumcizer), to move to the Israeli desert and establish an agricultural business. The farmer said that it was his rabbi, Tzvi Thau, who told him that settling in the Halutza Sands is "the next national mission." He proceeded to tell me about his first visit to the area:

> I was never here before, I didn't know what it was, so I opened Google Maps to see what it was about. I saw fifty kilometres by fifty kilometres, these are firing zones, brother … We took a bus from Ariel and we got here to Dekel. Because everything was closed, that is where the road ended at the time. Uri Naamati [the former chairman of the Eshkol Regional Council, in which the settlements are located] met with us and said: "It will be seven kilometres from here." It felt like kindergarten, someone drawing pictures in the sand. But suddenly one woman from our group took her shoes off on the sand and said, "We've come home." I went back to Ariel and told my wife "Yalla, we're going."

The farmer's story epitomizes the paradox of the Halutza settlers, who attempt to create a sense of indigeneity and "coming home" in a place where they have never settled before. Settlers come to terms

with this paradox in different ways, which I will analyze after describing the background behind the decision to establish three religious Zionist settlements. I will also examine the motivations behind the internal migration of the settlers themselves. Based on fieldwork carried out during 2019, and through the analysis of thirty-five in-depth interviews, this chapter traces the explicit and implicit efforts to feel at home in the remote, not-yet-settled desert.

The paradox addressed in this chapter is not exclusive to settlers in the Halutza Sands, but rather has characterized Zionist immigrants to Palestine beginning in the late-nineteenth century and continuing after the establishment of the Israeli state in 1948. The notion of Zionist Jewish immigrants being non-indigenous to Palestine is a key theme in the scholarship that applies the settler-colonial framework to Israel/Palestine.[2] Ilan Pappé describes early Zionist settlers' feelings of estrangement and alienation from the local Palestinians and attributes the efforts to expel Palestinians and create a homogenous Jewish society to an attempt to create indigeneity in the homeland. This logic, he argues, persisted after the establishment of the state.[3] The newly established State of Israel made strong efforts to "Judaize" Palestinian space physically, by establishing Jewish settlements, but also mentally, by giving places Hebrew names. This was a blatant attempt to claim the space as Jewish-controlled and symbolically rule out Palestinian return, but also forcefully to construct a sense of indigeneity for Jews, creating a feeling of walking in the Biblical homeland.[4]

After the 1967 war and the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, the Jewish religious Zionist settlers of Gush Emunim – the religious nationalist movement that demanded the creation of Jewish settlements in the Occupied Territories – faced a similar challenge. To justify the establishment of settlements in densely populated Palestinian areas and their opposition to a "two-state solution," they framed their act of settlement as "returning home." In some cases, these were places in which Jews have lived in recent history, like Kfar Etzion and Hebron, and, in other cases, these were places mentioned in the Bible, like Shilo and Beit Horon. However, Michael Feige distinguishes between this sort of "historic memory" to the concomitant use of "meta-historic" memory by Gush Emunim. The meta-historic memory understands settlement in the Land of Israel as a general fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham, rather than a return to specific places settled by Jews in the past. Therefore, the entire Land of Israel is a space that must be "redeemed" by Jewish settlement.[5]

The religious Zionist settlers in the Halutza Sands continue to struggle with the Zionist challenge to create a sense of indigeneity in a space that was never settled before by Jews. There is no archeological evidence that Jews have ever settled in this area. Moreover, most of the settlers follow the ideology of Gush Emunim and view their settlement in metahistorical terms, as fulfilling the covenant between God and the People of Israel. However, no Palestinians are living in the land that they are settling, so there is no need to "redeem" it. Also, many of the settlers came to Halutza after facing the trauma of being evacuated from their homes in Gaza by the Israeli state. Therefore, these settlers felt the need to create a new sense of meaning and justification for their decision to settle in the Halutza Sands. As I will show, the settlers in the three Halutza villages demonstrate different modes of indigenizing. Settlers of Naveh describe a process of spiritual indigenization through their interpretation of their acts of settlement as means to achieve religious purity and "virtuous influence." In Bnei-Netzarim, the settlers emphasize the political aspects of indigenizing – primarily, overcoming the trauma of their evacuation from Gaza. In Shlomit, which is the least cohesive community of the three, there was no mode of indigenization shared by all settlers. However, I describe a common theme: the will to live in a place with no Arab population as a mode of indigenizing. Therefore, the analysis of this case contributes to the discussion of settler indigeneity in this volume on several levels. First, by adding to the views advocating for the erasure of the Green Line, arguing that efforts of colonization are present to this day not only in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, but also within the Israeli 1967 borders. I show that new settlers within the 1967 borders share similar efforts to construct indigeneity with West Bank settlers. Second, it demonstrates the difficulties of creating indigeneity in a place that was never settled by Jews. And finally, it highlights the unique emotional struggles of these settlers in their attempts to recreate a sense of indigeneity after being evacuated from their homes in the Gaza Strip.

INITIAL ESTABLISHMENT

On 15 July 2001, Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon brought to the cabinet a governmental decision to establish five new settlements in the Halutza Sands. The Halutza Sands are an area of approximately 350 miles square (around 905 kilometres square), located near Israel's southwest border with Egypt. The name Halutza was taken from the

Arabic "Al-Khalasa," a village originally established by the Nabateans in the fourth century BCE as a station in the perfume route from Petra to the west. In the early-twentieth century, Bedouin from the Al-Azazame tribe resettled the abandoned village. The village was conquered by the Israeli forces in the 1948 Arab-Israeli war, and was left abandoned afterward.[6] Trying to erase the former Arab presence, Israelis named the place "Halutza," which sounds similar to Al-Khalasa, and is Hebrew for "female pioneer."

The sands are bordered on the northeast by Route 222 between Mashabei Sade and Magen, on the southeast by Route 211 connecting Mashabei Sade and the Nitzana border crossing, on the west by the Egyptian border, and on the northwest by the Shalom settlements (figures 5.1 and 5.2). The sands are mostly unsettled (besides the three new settlements), and their main use is as military fire zones for the National Centre for Land Training located near Ze'elim and operated by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). The three settlements were planned in the northern part of the sands, just a few kilometres south of the Shalom settlements. The primary objective behind the Sharon's government settlement decision was an attempt to prevent the evacuation of these lands as part of a future peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinians. The Halutza Sands are within the 1967 borders, but, due to their proximity to the Gaza Strip, the Israeli representatives at the Geneva Initiative negotiations intended them for a "land swap" in exchange for the settlement blocs in the West Bank.[7]

The blunt political incentive behind this decision raised opposition from several members of the Knesset (MK), who wondered why the government did not allocate funds to strengthen the existing Bedouin desert dwellers. According to MK Taleb Al-Sana, this decision was not simply meant to prevent peace but rather was an attempt to "Judaize" space. Al-Sana mentioned the struggle of the Al-Azazme Bedouin tribe, which had requested permission to establish a permanent settlement in proximity to that area, specifically to resettle Al-Khalasa, which they were dispossessed from in the 1948 war. In the past, he said, the government objected to the establishment of an Arab settlement in the Halutza Sands for "security concerns," claiming the area was a military "firing zone." "When the government wants to establish a Jewish settlement, the firing zones are annulled immediately," Al-Sana said bitterly.[8]

Government officials moved ahead with the planning and zoning of the settlements despite the political opposition, yet it was unclear who would eventually live there. Discussing this plan in his 2003 book,

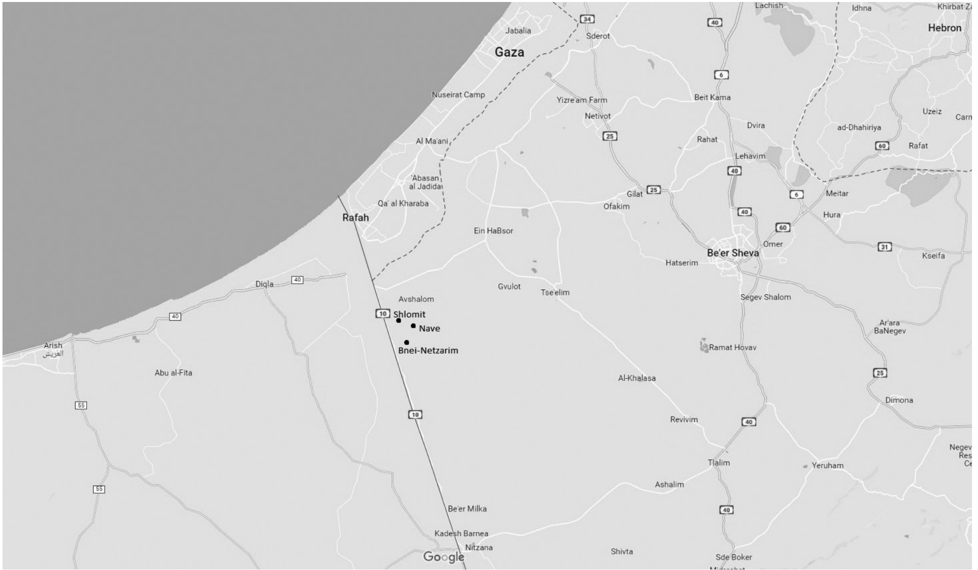


Figure 5.1 Location of the three Halutza settlements.

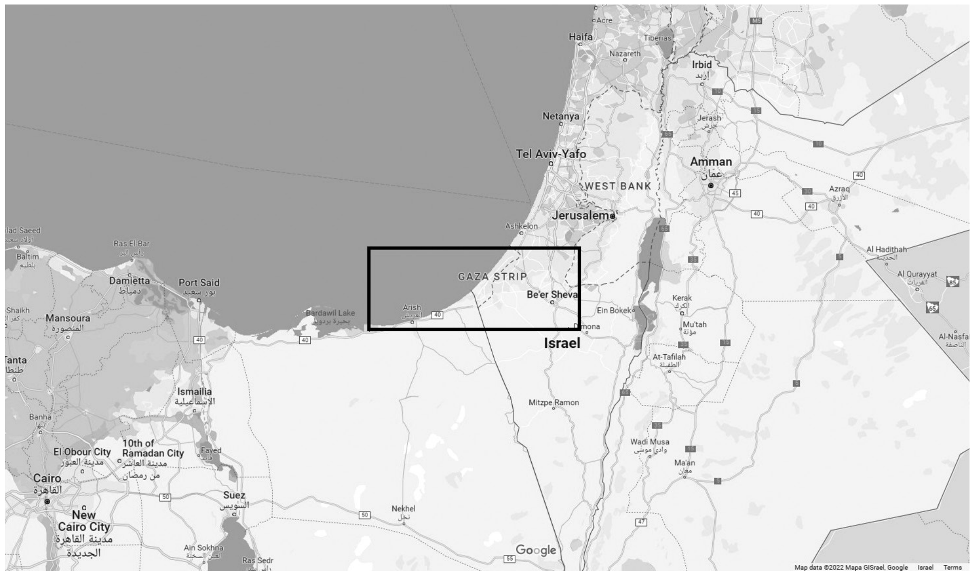


Figure 5.2 Location of the three Halutza settlements.

Israeli geographer Elisha Efrat wrote that "there is a doubt if the Halutza Sands could provide the infrastructure for massive settlement … it seems that settlement in that area is a futile and pointless step."[9] Indeed, for years the government was not successful in attracting people to settle in the area. The solution came eventually only in 2005, just after Ariel Sharon completed the "disengagement plan," his plan to evacuate eight thousand Jewish settlers who lived within the densely populated Palestinian Gaza Strip. Two of the uprooted communities reached an agreement with Sharon to be allowed to settle in the planned Halutza Sands settlements. The same people who were evacuated from their homes in Gaza by the decision of Ariel Sharon were also those who went on to make material his vision of settlement in the Halutza Sands. As we will see, the irony in this development did not go unnoticed. On the contrary, many residents take pride in this ironical historical development and see it as a sign of divine intervention.

Today, there are hundreds of families living in three thriving religious communities in the Halutza Sands. While all three communities are religious Zionist, each has unique characteristics. The variation is a result of the different historical trajectories of their establishments, and they preserve their cultural differences through a vetting process for new members. The settlements also vary in their formal organizational structure: Naveh and Bnei-Netzarim were each established as a *moshav*,[10] and Shlomit is officially a "community settlement" (*Yishuv Kehilati*).[11]

ARE THE HALUTZA DWELLERS SETTLERS?

The settlers in Halutza offer a unique perspective on settler claims to indigeneity, as these settlements are located within the 1967 borders. In contrast to the settlements in the West Bank, which had a specific political goal – taking over Palestinian land – the Halutza Sands are already controlled by Israel. This presented a challenge for some of the Halutza settlers, who have been accustomed to finding pride and a sense of purpose in where they choose to live. The following vignette illustrates this tension.

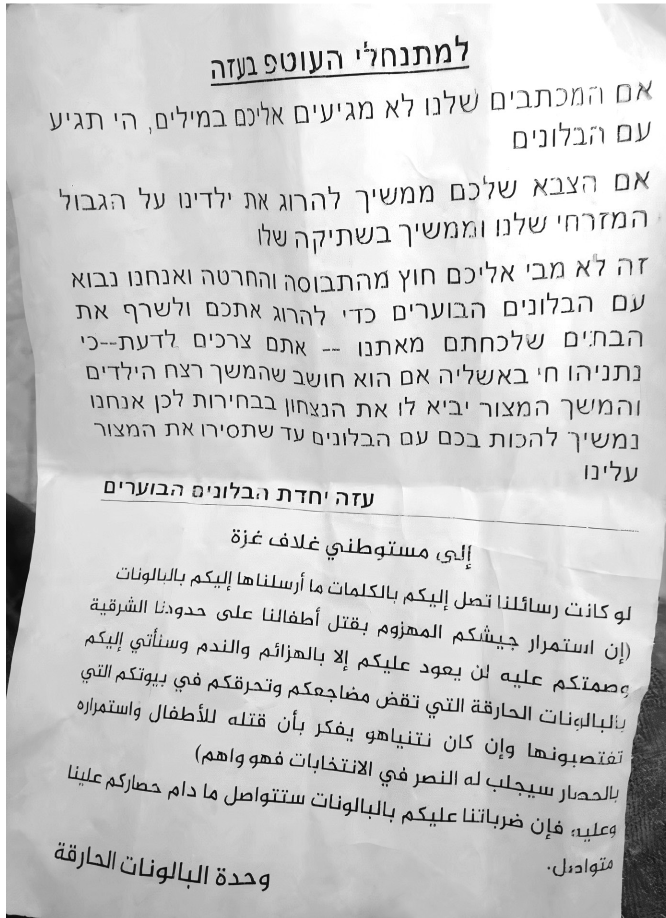
In 2019, Gaza militants were sending incendiary kites and balloons over the Israeli fence, protesting Israel's blockade of Gaza. These kites and balloons were mainly designed to set fires in Israeli fields, but some of them also carried messages to the Israeli citizens. On one of these balloons, a dual Hebrew-Arabic message was attached from

"The Gaza Inflammatory Balloons Unit" and addressed to "The Settlers of the Gaza Envelope."[12] The letter threatened that, if the IDF did not cease murdering protesters on the border, they would use the balloons to kill the settlers and "burn the houses that you took from us." Sara Kostiner, a Halutza settler from Bnei-Netzarim, posted a letter (figure 5.3) to the Eshkol Regional County's Facebook group, and wrote: "Did you see? To the *settlers* of the Gaza Envelope. Nice. Does that mean that I am back to being a settler? Interesting. Turns out that we are all settlers, and they want to burn all of us."[13]

To understand Sara's point, we must recognize that "settlement" can translate as two different words in Hebrew. As noted by Joyce Dalsheim and Assaf Harel (2009, 230): "The verb *hityashvut* and the noun *mityashev* (settler) index secular settlement activities within the 1949 Armistice lines and carry a sense of moral legitimacy. The verb/noun *hitnachlut* and the noun *mitnachel* (settler) index Jewish settlement in the territories occupied by Israel after the 1967 war and connote moral illegitimacy."[14]

Sara is arguing against a common political position of the Israeli left, which holds that the settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories are the main obstacle in the process of reaching a two-state solution for peace with the Palestinians. What Sara is saying is that the Palestinians (and Sara herself) do not buy in to that liberal Zionist distinction, and that Palestinians view all Israeli settlements as "*hitnachaluyot*," which must be destroyed. In other words, it doesn't matter if the Jews settle within or outside the 1967 borders, because Palestinians are going to oppose the settlement violently anyway. While this is probably true, it is most likely that the person writing the message is not so versed in nuanced Hebrew distinctions, but rather that this is just a result of using "Google Translate" for the term (*mustawtanat* = settlements).

This dual translation of the term "settlement" is not merely a linguistic matter, but rather influences these settlers' identities and sense of meaning. Many of the Halutza settlers used to live in the West Bank or Gaza. Therefore, their move to Halutza changed their status from *mitnachalim*, who are (in their own eyes) fulfilling an important Zionist mission, to the benign *mityashvim*. While they are settlers living in a settlement, they do not enjoy the same political clout. However, some of them still believe that their settlement is fulfilling a national mission. That is why Sara was so proud about the letter from Gaza. The purpose of posting it was not only to make a point in the political discussion



למתנחל'י העוטפ בעזה

אם המכתבים שלנו לא מגיעים אליכם במילים, הי תגיע
עם הבלונים

אם הצבא שלכם ממשיך להרוג את ילדינו על הגבול
המזרחי שלנו וממשיך בשתיקה שלו

זה לא מבי אליכם חוץ מהתבוסה והחרטה ואנחנו נבוא
עם הבלונים הבוערים כדי להרוג אתכם ולשרף את
הבתים שלכחתם מאתנו -- אתם צרכים לדעת--כי
נתניהו חי באשליה אם הוא חושב שהמשך רצח הילדים
והמשך המצור יביא לו את הנצחון בבחירות לכן אנחנו
נמשיך להכות בכם עם הבלונים עד שתסירו את המצור
עלינו

עזה יחדת הבלונים הבוערים

إلى مستوطني غلاف غزة

لو كانت رسائلنا تصل إليكم بالكلمات ما أرسلناها إليكم بالبالونات
(إن استمرار جيشكم المهزوم بقتل أطفالنا على حدودنا الشرقية
وصمتكم عليه لن يعود عليكم إلا بالهزائم والندم وسنأتي إليكم
بالبالونات الحارقة التي تقض مضاجعكم وتحرقكم في بيوتكم التي
تغتصبونها وإن كان نتنياهو يفكر بأن قتله للأطفال واستمراره
بالحصار سيجلب له النصر في الانتخابات فهو واهم)
وعليه، فإن ضرباتنا عليكم بالبالونات ستتواصل ما دام حصاركم علينا
متواصل.

وحدة البالونات الحارقة

Figure 5.3 Letter from Gaza.

with the left. Sara took pride in the fact that she is once again considered a *mitnachelet*. In her eyes, the fact that Palestinians see her in a negative way reinforces her sense of meaning and indigeneity – as if there were no difference between her current home and the previous one.

This is not the only way in which Halutza settlers strive to gain a sense of indigeneity. The fact that all these communities were just recently established enabled me to shed light on the reasoning behind the families' decision to join them and witness their active attempts to indigenize in this unpopulated region. The families that were evacuated from Gaza had other viable options. Why, then, would a young

family decide to move to a settlement that has not yet been built, in a remote area of the desert that is under a constant security threat?[15] Some of the people I interviewed mentioned the affordability of houses as an important factor, although no one presented this as a primary consideration. Being raised in an education system that sanctifies the Land of Israel and sees the settlement as a national mission, they could not think of this decision as merely an individual matter. As a religious Zionist, you cannot just "go and live somewhere." The place where you choose to live and build your house carries a moral weight. Almost all the community members I spoke with, in all settlements, emphasized the national significance of settling the area. Nevertheless, they differed on the precise nature of this significance.

In the following sections, I will illustrate how the attempts of the Halutza settlers to indigenize their new settlements is expressed through three different modalities. In Bnei-Netzrim, indigeneity is related to restoring national unity. Suffering the trauma of evacuation from Gaza, which divided the Israeli society into two brutally opposed political camps, these settlers wanted to overcome their personal and national trauma by establishing a community that would serve the people of Israel as a united nation. As settlement and indigeneity are already perceived by them as intertwined, they have sought to reconnect to the Jewish national mission. In Naveh, we can see that indigeneity is linked to purity. Naveh is an explicit attempt to purify religion and establish a pious religious community from scratch. Their desire for purity is rooted in a mystical perception of the implications of living according to God's word in the Land of Israel, strengthening their connection to the homeland. The third settlement, Shlomit, is different than the other two, as it was not established by a cohesive ideological group. However, I will demonstrate how settlers there are united in the desire to feel like settlers (*mitnachalim*), without the risks and fear of living close to Palestinians.

PURITY: NAVEH'S "VIRTUOUS INFLUENCE"

The settlement of Atzmona was initially established in 1979 in Sinai, as a protest against the Camp David accords.[16] In 1982, the Israeli government evacuated Atzmona's residents and resettled them in the Gaza Strip. In 2005, just before the evacuation of all Jewish settlements in Gaza ("Gush Katif"), some settlers from Atzmona reached a secret agreement with the government.[17] According to the agreement,

they were to evacuate their settlement peacefully and would be given the opportunity to re-establish their community in one of the intended settlements in the Halutza Sands.[18] After the evacuation, there was a split within the community, and sixty-five families established a protest camp of tents near the southern city of Netivot and eventually agreed to settle in Shomriya, closer to Israel's centre. A smaller group, of approximately thirty families, moved to temporary housing in Yated to prepare for their move to the future settlement nearby in Halutza. At the time, they say, there was nothing in Halutza. The road just came to an end, and all one could see was sand. Only after four years of intensive development was the settlement ready for the first families to move in.

After Atzmona's rabbi moved to Shomriya, the remaining community was in need of a spiritual leader. During the period in Yated, they asked Rabbi Mordechai (Motti) Hass, head of a religious institution in the West Bank settlement of Eli and a close disciple of Rabbi Tzvi Thau (head of the Har HaMor yeshiva in Jerusalem), to be the spiritual leader of their community. Rabbi Hass held a unique vision for the creation of an ideal ultra-religious Zionist community in line with Rabbi Kook's theology, and he moved to Yated with a group of his followers from Eli with the intention of realizing it. Very soon, the original settlers from Atzmona stepped aside from the leadership (some left Naveh), and Rabbi Hass and his followers became the dominant figures in the community's leadership.

By 2019, Naveh was a moshav of approximately 130 households.[19] There is a consensus among residents in the area that it is the most religiously conservative among the three settlements.[20] Unlike most residents in the other settlements (and in the religious Zionist community in general), all of my male interviewees from Naveh undertook extensive religious studies in a yeshiva, at least into their late twenties. The majority studied in Rabbi Tzvi Thau's conservative "institutions of the line" (Yeshivot HaKav).[21] Although it is formally registered as a moshav, its economic structure is intended to support the residents' Torah learning and therefore deviates from most settlements in which each farmer cultivates his own share of land. Here, the agricultural lands are not allocated to the residents, but rather are held and cultivated by a communal agricultural association.[22] Naveh runs a network of religious educational institutions, most notably the Otzem Mechina (a pre-military preparatory institution).[23] In addition, in Naveh, there are two religious elementary schools and two high

schools (separate institutions for boys and girls), as well as an intensive-study yeshiva for high-school graduates. All educational institutions are privately funded by the village, by tuition, and by private donations. and are therefore not subjected to the curriculum requirements of the ministry of education.[24]

The residents of Naveh are close followers of Rabbi Thau and adhere to his "statist" approach (see discussion on Bnei-Netzarim below), and the idea of settling in the Halutza Sands as part of a national mission was a common theme in their responses. The former minister of education, Rabbi Rafi Peretz, who was evacuated from Atzmona and is a current resident in Naveh, said in an interview: "I told Arik Sharon: 'You expelled me from my house.' He said: 'I have a mission for you, for years now we are trying to settle the Halutza Sands and have been unsuccessful.' I replied: 'Mr. Prime Minister, I am going with you on this mission hand-in-hand.'"[25] Nonetheless, despite the reference to themes of national unity, the significance of this settlement mission turned out to be in creating an ideal of religious purity. While residents of Naveh mentioned personal, social, and political motivations, they see their settlement first and foremost as a religious mission. To explain that point, they draw on the theological teachings of Rabbi Kook.

Rabbi Kook's Kabbalistic-mystical theology takes a dialectical view of history. A social struggle between two opposing world views creates a new synthesis that advances the people of Israel to the "next level" in the process of divine redemption. Colloquially, Kookists (i.e., followers of his disciple Rabbi Thau) will refer to this idea as "clarification" (*berur*), "sharpening" (*khidud*), or "ascending to the next level" (*La'alot koma*). The idea acknowledges the fathomless polarization between the sacred and the profane. The struggle between these two domains, they maintain, is just a veneer blurring the mystical truth that both opposites derive from the same divine unity, eventually to reveal itself. Applying this mystical framework to the Israeli reality, Kookists interpret religious Zionism as a synthesis resulting from the struggle between the nationalist-secular Zionism and the non-Zionist ultra-Orthodox. However, they emphasize that there is a difference between themselves and mainstream religious Zionists. Their interpretation of religious Zionism is not a middle-ground hybrid identity that results in a compromise. On the contrary, for them, Jewish nationalism is rooted in a strong principled religious world view.[26] Religious nationalism is not a benign pragmatic solution. They are nationalists *because* they are religious, and not despite their religion. To demonstrate that

point, many of the settlers I interviewed referred to a quote by an ultra-Orthodox (Haredi) rabbi, who stated that Rabbi Thau is "more Zionist than the Zionists and more Haredi than the Haredim."

The people of Naveh see the disengagement from Gaza not only as a trauma, but also as an opportunity. For them, the evacuation was necessary to enable the establishment of Naveh – a purification and materialization of the authentic religious Zionist vision. This idea came up in a conversation I had with a rabbi at Otzem, who explained to me what drew him to move across the country with his family to the newly established settlement:

> When I heard about this [idea to establish Naveh] I said "Wow! This is amazing!" Out of the rupture, from destruction – to the settlement of a new region. And this is even more challenging because it is in the desert, and it is hot, and the area was never settled before. To create a religious Zionist settlement that is more authentic, more original, more of a role model for how things should be – I want to be a part of that ... But should we cooperate with the same regime to that extent?! It is Ariel Sharon who built everything here ... On the contrary! Within the same vessels, the same state, we must stream new forces and push them to engage in settlement ... During the year before the disengagement, Rabbi Thau gave lessons discussing this process, how [we should] comprehend it. This led to Halutza. At one point he pointed to the area, even before the disengagement ... Among ourselves, we said that until the last moment we hope that nothing will happen, but if it will – that is a sign that we must ascend to the next level.

In other words, as opposed to most settlers who merely aim to support the State of Israel by settling a necessary region or by merely re-establishing their settlement, the people in Naveh see themselves as avant-garde and the establishment of their settlement as a religious, pioneering mission. They see Halutza as the "next level" of synthesis between religion and nationalism. This is how they come to terms with their evacuation from Gaza. It is God pushing them to "clarify" and "sharpen" their synthesis of Judaism and Zionism. It is not enough to be a religious supporter of Zionism, but rather Zionism should be a national religious project. One resident explained to me how Naveh is the genuine realization of Rabbi Kook's vision:

> Rabbi Kook saw Jewish settlement as one of the most crucial things … Why is it such a great thing? Because the whole point of the Return to Zion is the negation of the exile. In the exile, the Torah manifests itself only as the driver of the community and the family, and that is a great thing we did in the exile … In the return to Zion the Torah must be the driver not just of communal life, but of national life. As long as the Torah does not appear as the engine, the vitality of the Jewish people's national existence in their homeland, the Torah does not reach its ideal, it is a partial appearance … That is a desecration of the name of God because it suggests that God is left out of the most central stage.

This settler is explaining that building a settlement requires Jews to deal with public matters according to the way of the Torah. This could not happen when Jews lived in the diaspora, and therefore, now that Jews have a state of their own, it is time to advance to the next level. But how does dealing with public matters advance religious purity? One settler described to me how the economic dependence between the settlers, stemming from the administrative structure of the settlement of the moshav, contributes to the community's ability to think about the place of religion in the public sphere:

> I think that what makes Naveh unique is that it is a group of people that have a strong desire to establish a village that truly follows the path of the Torah, of our "rabbis in Jerusalem," Rabbi Thau, Har HaMor, etc. Can I tell you that everyone understands exactly what this means? Of course not. But it is a certain way, a trajectory that has in it a desire to build a full life, a practical life. We have businesses, we have agriculture … In a regular religious "community settlement" people are neighbours, they pray together, but the interconnection is limited. Once you have a shared economy, the interconnectedness among the people of the community is constantly present, because every decision made by a community member has a direct influence on pocket … When the economic situation is not good, it is time for clarifications [*Berurim*] – Who are we? What are we? What is the appropriate proportion between the agricultural business and the community? … Do we distribute revenues as dividends to families or do we balance the budget of the *Talmud Torah* [religious elementary school for boys]?

When I pointed out that Naveh is also just a community and not the nation, one settler explained to me how a remote agricultural community can eventually have a national influence:

> This is something that also secular Zionism always knew. The initial cell that builds the nation is a settlement … Urban living is possible also in exile because someone else takes care of the infrastructure, the earthlier systems … You can see our influence first and foremost at the most practical level. We constantly draw interest. Not to mention the interest in other settlements in the area that is growing rapidly since we came. People in the regional council say this did not happen before we arrived. But on top of that, we also draw interest from secular, national figures. They say "This is a great project, it is amazing! We neglected this for twenty years! Greenhouses, six thousand dunams, and in such a place! We want to help, to contribute." Tourist groups come here, religious, secular, even from abroad. It reminds them of things. On the one hand, it is nostalgic, but on the other hand, it is modern. Nice roads, nice houses, nice gardens.

The establishment of the settlement is perceived as a prototype, preparing the religious-nationalist Jews to run the state in the future. It gives them experience in development and building infrastructure. However, the most important way that Naveh sees their influence on the broader Israeli society is the mystical "virtuous influence" (*hashpa'a segulit*): "There is also something that we call 'virtuous influence.' The fact that there are Jews engaged in settling the land, but out of the religious ideal of Mount Sinai, this has a great influence, a virtuous one, mystical. But this does not contradict the visible, practical influence."

Another couple from the settlement shared with me a somewhat ambivalent view of this idealist vision of religious purity. They see it as an important ideal, but at the same time narrow-minded and a potential cause for resentment. Residents who do not strictly adhere to the rules of purity dictated by the settlement's leadership are shown the way out. The couple described to me how these high religious standards held by members of the settlement (and enforced by the leadership) sometimes lead to absurd situations. For example, they

told me that, just the week before the interview, two secular couples in the process of getting closer to religion were supposed to visit their community for a Sabbath. However, no family would agree to host them because the women's dresses did not meet their high standards of modesty. Surprised, I asked how they expect to influence broader populations in the Israeli society with this kind of attitude.

> The people of our settlement say that first, there must be one religious settlement, devout, pure, God-loving. This for itself, before I even turn outside, has the greatest influence, virtuous. That is what is called a virtue [*Segula*]. How much do I open myself to external influences? I will dictate the terms. Like the Haredi. Are you interested? Then come to study a course we offer. But come modestly. We will not host a woman wearing short sleeves … The spiritual world is much stronger than the material world. One Jew who studies the Torah quietly day and night is the most influential thing in the world. There is nothing superior to that.

However, while they believe in the idea of devotion to religious values, they think that the people of Naveh might have taken it too far. For them, the high standards that the settlement is trying to enforce are too extreme, and therefore unrealistic in the long run. The wife says: I don't mind that my daughter needs to wear a long skirt to school. I support that, I really do. I also don't mind that they cannot watch movies … But this uptight attitude … It has reached a point that one girl can't visit her friend's house. That's insane. There is hysteria … I am curious to see what will be here in ten years. Will it explode or split apart?

In conclusion, the settlers of Naveh see their settlement primarily as a national mission. However, residents of Naveh emphasize the religious significance of this national mission. Their sense of indigeneity stems from their self-perception that Naveh is the ideal religious Zionist community. They intend to create a pure religious settlement that will serve as a role model for the entire Jewish society. Redemption of the land is not enough. It is what kind of settlement you create that matters. They find pride in the chance given to them to establish a settlement "from scratch." They see it as a unique opportunity to create a society that adequately achieves their religious ideals. As opposed to the original sense of redemption held by Gush Emunim,

in which the land is redeemed by Jewish settlement, settlers in Naveh expect that the establishment of an ideal religious Zionist community will have a mystical effect that will promote redemption.

UNITY: "FROM UPROOTING TO PLANTING" IN BNEI-NETZARIM

Like Naveh, Bnei-Netzarim was also established because of a split within a community of evacuees from Gush Katif in the Gaza Strip. Netzarim was initially established in 1972 as a military base in the outskirts of Gaza City and was populated by temporary settlement groups. The Jewish enclave turned into a religious kibbutz in 1984 but was not able to attract many families willing to deal with the risk of living in the area. Finally, in the early 1990s, a group of students from Merkaz Harav yeshiva joined, and the kibbutz turned into a community settlement in 1992. After the Oslo Accords, Netzarim was completely isolated from the other Jewish settlements in Gaza, and travel to or from the settlement required an armoured military convoy.[27] The settlers of Netzarim refused to negotiate with the government before the 2005 evacuation, hoping that the plan would not be executed. Consequently, they had no living arrangements after the evacuation and were placed temporarily in student housing in Ariel College in the West Bank. While at Ariel, a debate emerged within the community. Learning about the plans of their friends from Atzmona to establish new settlements in Halutza, some wanted to join them, while others preferred to stay at Ariel. This debate tore the community apart, and they decided to hold a vote, resulting in only a slight majority who wanted to move to Halutza. Therefore, the community decided to split (many members recall this decision as traumatic), allowing each household to decide individually if it wanted to stay at Ariel or move to Halutza and establish a new settlement.

Unlike Naveh, the original settlers of Netzarim are still dominant in the community leadership, and they see themselves as a direct continuation of the original community in Gaza. Some residents told me that arguing for a certain policy because "that is how it was in Netzarim" is common in the settlement's general assemblies. This idea of continuity is also indicated by the name of the settlement ("Bnei-Netzarim" is Hebrew for "children of Netzarim").

In 2019, out of forty-five families from Netzarim that initially moved to Yevul, only twenty-two were still living in Bnei-Netzarim.

All in all, approximately 130 families live in the settlement.[28] Bnei-Netzarim is also considered to be extremely religious, but it allows more heterogeneity than Naveh. All my male interviewees from the settlement went to "yeshivas of the line," but only a few of them continued with their studies into their late twenties. The model in Bnei-Netzarim is closer to the original idea of the moshav, and many individuals cultivate their agricultural lands.[29] My impression was that most men and women in Bnei-Netzarim are teachers, entrepreneurs, or college-educated professionals. A small minority receives a stipend for full-time Torah study.

Similar to Naveh, Bnei-Netzarim operates several educational institutions. All these educational institutions are supported by the settlement, but also rely heavily on the money of Zionist donors.[30] Unlike Naveh, however, in Bnei-Netzarim the gender-separated elementary schools are public. Therefore, they are required to accept religious students from all settlements in the regional council, and the curriculum is subjected to the requirements of the ministry of education.[31] A private male-only religious high school with dormitories (*Yeshiva-Tichonit*) also operates in the settlement, in which students work in agriculture for half a day and study (mostly religious studies) for the rest of the day. As in Naveh, there is a yeshiva for high-school graduates. Other than the educational institutions, the settlement operates a guest house for conferences and workshops. Within the settlement, there is also a large regional health clinic, a privately owned small grocery store, a yoga studio, and some other small businesses.

The establishment of all three settlements is a direct result of the evacuation of the Gaza Strip settlements in 2005. This was traumatic for the religious Zionist community for various reasons.[32] First, the overwhelming majority of Gaza settlers were religious Zionists.[33] Even those who were not personally affected by the decision had friends and families that lived in the settlements. Second, religious Zionists interpreted the disengagement as a political failure. They led the political struggle but failed to gain the support of the broader Israeli community, which did not join their protests.[34] Perhaps more importantly, though, was the theological crisis. Following Rabbi Kook, religious Zionists hold a strong "statist" ideology (*Mamlachtiyut*). They believe that the Israeli state has divine significance, being a materialization of God's throne in the world. Therefore, any uprooting of Jewish settlements, which are a redemptive fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham, by the state itself, seemed incomprehensible.

One prominent rabbi, Mordechai Eliyahu, even went as far as to predict that "it shall not come to pass."[35]

During the struggle against the evacuation, the settlers' leadership sought to prevent violence and keep the protests within legitimate bounds. They obeyed the military's orders in most cases, and violence was rare and limited.[36] Retrospectively, many religious Zionists pointed to the peaceful tactics as the cause of the struggle's failure. As a response, they adopted a "post-statist" world view. The state is not intrinsically holy, they maintained, but rather holds only instrumental importance and only as long as it advances religious goals. Therefore, there is no religious imperative to abide by state laws, and further evacuation of settlements must be fought at all costs.[37] This notion fuelled violence against police officers during the evacuation of Amona in 2006,[38] and more recently in the phenomenon of the Hilltop Youth and "price tag" violent incidents.[39]

As followers of Rabbi Tzvi Thau, who was known for his opposition to direct confrontation with the state, most of my interviewees in Bnei-Netzarim rejected the "post-statist" trend.[40] Rabbi Thau is considered to be one of the closest disciples of Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook and is the founder and president of the Har HaMor yeshiva in Jerusalem. Disciples of Thau are known for their ideological rigidity and strictly follow his leadership. This has given the institutions affiliated with his ideology the nickname "yeshivas of the line" (*Yeshivot HaKav*), suggesting that they all uncritically adhere to the same ideological line.[41] During the struggle against the disengagement, Rabbi Thau called on followers not to break ties with the state, and he and his disciples refused to publicly support civil disobedience as a form of resistance.[42] After the disengagement, Rabbi Thau believed that it was necessary to "settle in the hearts" of Israelis, in order to prevent future evacuations. Some interviewees told me that it was Rabbi Thau who personally encouraged them to move to Halutza, stating that it is "the new national mission."

The sense that the unity of the Jewish people must be maintained was a common theme among residents of Bnei-Netzarim. When I was talking about the 2005 events with an evacuee from Netzarim, she pointed out that I used the word "expulsion" (*Gerush*), which is a term used by religious Zionists, instead of "disengagement" (*Hitnatkut*), which is considered more value-neutral and used by the general Israeli population. Surprisingly, my interviewee said she herself prefers the word "disengagement."

> I will tell you why I do not like the word "expulsion." That is because that word means "something has been done to *me*." Is that the problem? We? Are the eight thousand people that were evacuated really the problem?! … The biggest problem is that the People of Israel are amputating their own limb … The symbol that appeared on TV during the disengagement was a star of David, half blue and half orange, breaking apart – that is the problem![43] That is why we refused to fight, would not walk into that war plan they intended for us. This is what the struggle was truly about – Do the People of Israel despair? Are we a united nation? Is the Land of Israel part of our life or just real estate? That is the reason why we decided to establish a settlement here. We are not breaking the rules of the game or saying "tit for tat." In the end, there is no us and them. It is all us.

This woman sees her settlement in Bnei-Netzarim as an attempt to come to terms with the personal loss of her home and finds it helpful to view her new settlement as a mission with national significance. Her house in Halutza is merely a continuation of her lifelong devotion to the People of Israel and the settlement of the Land of Israel.

While the disengagement was traumatic, settlers emphasized that they interpreted the disengagement as merely a temporary crisis (*Mashber*), and not an irreversible fracture (*Shever*). For some, the establishment of a new settlement also served to heal the personal trauma. One evacuee, who completed his military service shortly before the evacuation, described his feelings: "They broke us mentally. The way we were treated was inconsiderate, not empathetic, violent in many instances, and I think that somewhat cracked my faith in nationalism, partnership, mutual responsibility … Some of your friends still serve in the military, you meet your battalion commander in demonstrations … What's going on here? My battalion commander is on one side and I'm on the other?!"

When I asked if he felt that the crack was still there, he replied:

> Not as much today. It did not break. And that is actually the significant point after the expulsion. When we were temporarily living in a hotel in Jerusalem, me and a group of friends asked ourselves, "What now?" It was clear to us that we need a mission, to prevent a personal crisis, a much deeper crisis … Many friends

> told us we were crazy, turning the other cheek. "You were just evacuated, and now you are going to another pioneering mission?! Go live in the state's centre, take advantage of the financial compensation you received" … The people that I came with from the Gush and went through the trauma knew how to direct it to creation and growth in the most abandoned place, at the end of the world.

Both these quotes show that settlers of Bnei-Netzarim see a direct link between their evacuation from Netzarim and their decision to resettle in Bnei-Netzarim. Despite the traumatic events they experienced and the misery inflicted upon them by the state, they decided not to break ties with the state and the People of Israel. On the contrary, they see the establishment of a new settlement as a service to the People of Israel, demonstrating the unity among them. This is also what gives settlers in Bnei-Netzatrim the sense of indigeneity, even in a land that they are new to. Just like the meta-historical memory of Gush Emunim settlers, in this case as well the indigeneity is not in relation to a specific geographical space. It is the broader theological-political mission that connects them to the land. The idea that both in Netzarim and in Bnei-Netzarim they lived their lives in the service of the People of Israel allows them to see the new settlement as merely a continuation of the old one.

SHLOMIT: "ONE KHAN-YUNIS IS ENOUGH FOR A LIFETIME"

The third settlement, Shlomit, has quite a different character from Naveh and Bnei-Netzarim, and its establishment followed a unique trajectory. Shlomit was initially planned to be a small town, which would eventually settle five hundred families and serve as a social and commercial centre for the region.[44] The state did not intentionally plan the settlement for a religious Zionist community.[45] For a long time, the state was not able to find enough people (secular or religious) who would agree to settle this undeveloped area. Eventually, the initial *Gar'in* (settlement group) for Shlomit consisted mostly of graduates of the Otzem Mechina (religious pre-military preparatory institution), who were all young religious couples with one child or more. These first families moved to Shlomit only in 2011, after Naveh and Bnei-Netzarim were already established in their current locations.[46]

In contrast to Naveh and Bnei-Netzarim, the people of Shlomit did not have a predetermined religious or symbolic vision for the settlement. Primarily, they were interested in living within a national religious community with like-minded neighbours. At first, residents hoped that secular Jews would also join the settlement, but none showed interest. Today the settlement is officially open to accepting couples from the entire range of the religious Zionist spectrum, but the majority of residents are affiliated with the more conservative Hardal (Hebrew acronym for "national-ultra-Orthodox") subculture.

In 2019, only seventy families lived in Shlomit. Due to the relatively low housing prices, it has been growing quickly, and only a few settlers moved into their permanent homes. Construction was visible all over the settlement. The members of the community in Shlomit are relatively younger than those in the neighbouring settlements (mostly under thirty-five) and consist of college-educated professionals. From a religious point of view, Shlomit is the most heterogeneous settlement among the three. All my interviewees continued their Torah studies after high school, but many of them also served in the military for the full three-year term.[47] Being a "community settlement," Shlomit does not possess any agricultural land, and its only source of revenue is donations and "community taxes" paid by residents. As a result, Shlomit lacked the means for independent development, and the public areas in the settlement were far less developed that those of neighbouring settlements. Many of the roads were not paved, and only a few streets had sidewalks. Shlomit's synagogue was still in a temporary building and is the least impressive among the three settlements. There was one daycare in Shlomit, but older children are educated outside of the settlement, mostly in the Bnei-Netzarim elementary school.

Residents of Shlomit expressed different motivations for their decision to move to the new community. Growing up in the religious Zionist community, they also viewed the settlement of the Land of Israel as a sacred ideal. Nonetheless, unlike Naveh and Bnei-Netzarim, Shlomit lacked a collective vision, and even though some residents were evacuees from Gaza, the evacuation did not seem to play a large role in their considerations. Therefore, I tried to understand why they chose Shlomit rather than some other place. The religious commandment of settling the land can be fulfilled anywhere in Israel. None of my interviewees had an ideological objection to settling in the West Bank, and some have even lived there or in Gaza settlements before moving to Shlomit. Why not settle in the West Bank, then?

The first theme that came up was personal sacrifice. Many residents emphasized that living in Shlomit was a "mission" (*shlikhut*) and described the everyday hardships of living in the geographical periphery – being far from family, friends, and public services. In Shlomit, it is also common for people to describe the personal benefits of living in the area – low housing prices and a supportive community. However, they did not view their decision to move to Shlomit as one led only by individual interest, but rather because Shlomit is where they felt they were "needed" most. As one couple told me: "There are different kinds of religious commandments. There are commandments that there is no one else who can do. A commandment that at this point of time you can fulfill and others cannot is considered to be more valuable." Another woman told me: "We wanted to live in a place that will be more meaningful, challenging." However, unlike settlers in the other settlements, most residents in Shlomit described in detail the economic benefits of their decision, which led me to believe that they decided to move there primarily out of self-interest, while the "national mission" was secondary – important, but only a by-product of the initial personal motivation.

Many of the residents in Shlomit used to live in West Bank and Gaza settlements, located within densely populated Palestinian areas. Interestingly, while they still support these settlements ideologically, some residents explicitly described their desire not to live among Arabs as an important consideration in their choice of Shlomit. One woman, who grew up in a small settlement near Hebron, and is married to an evacuee from Gush Katif, said: "We did not want to live in the territories. I am afraid of the Arabs." When I said I found that hard to believe, since she lived there her entire life, she explained: "That is precisely the reason. Some things that used to be clear to me my entire life … after I became a mother, I said that I do not want to raise my children in this fear or have to look [Palestinians] in the eyes … you live with them! You take the fear with you wherever you go. My husband also said he doesn't want to live somewhere he might be evacuated again. We wanted a place where we could build a home, but we did look for a meaningful place."

In some cases, this reasoning took a gendered form, as the husbands made a point of stating that they did not mind living in a West Bank settlement, but it was their wife who objected. One couple, both of whom did not grow up in settlements, said that they did consider living in a settlement, but the wife could not bear living among Arabs: "We

checked out some places, Har Bracha, for example. It's in Samaria, not far from her parents. We passed through Hawara, and once she saw 'our cousins' [Palestinians], she said 'No way!'"

Another resident, whose wife was an evacuee from Gaza, described their considerations when choosing a place to live: "My wife told me 'I will never again be a settler!' Not in the Samarian mountains … She did not want to see Arabs nearby … poor woman, now because of work she has to meet them all the time at events … but she did not want to live across the Green Line. She did not want stones thrown at her. 'One Khan-Yunis [a city in southern Gaza] is enough for a lifetime,' she said. We did not know where to live, and then a friend told me about Halutza."

This theme is extremely interesting, because it points to the failure of Gush Emunim's efforts to artificially create a sense of indigeneity for settlers in the West Bank. All the attempts to create new maps, to name places in Hebrew, to find archeological evidence of prior Jewish settlement, and other practices described in this volume, were not able to erase the existence of Palestinians as the true indigenous people of the land. In my interpretation, it is not merely the physical security threat that they fear, but, in a deeper sense, the existence of Arabs is a constant reminder that they are perceived as foreign colonizers. Therefore, the opportunity to settle in Halutza, where there are no Palestinians around, provides them with a sense of true indigeneity.

CONCLUSION

This chapter follows the constant struggle of settlers to create a sense of indigeneity in a new land. I showed how indigeneity is not only connected to a physical space, but also to ideas. The settlers in Halutza face several unique challenges. First, unlike settlements in the West Bank, where Jews claim to have lived in the near or distant past, there is no evidence that there was ever a Jewish settlement in Halutza. Second, the settlements in Halutza were established for communities that suffered the loss of their homes as part of the Gaza evacuation. The settlers needed to actively find ways to recreate their sense of indigeneity after the destruction of their original communities.

The different modalities of indigeneity and indigenizing exemplified in these three communities, each struggling to find its unique sense of meaning, broaden our understanding of what indigeneity is, and where and how it is constructed. In Naveh, settlers understood the

establishment of their settlement as an advancement to a higher religious level, fulfilling the authentic Kookist vision of a pure religious Zionist settlement. In Bnei-Netzarim, settlers aimed to rectify their commitment to the state and maintain the unity of the People of Israel. They considered that their settlement was fulfilling a national mission, similar to the way they understood their previous settlement in Netzarim. In Shlomit, settlers mentioned their reluctance to live near Palestinians as a primary consideration for settling in Halutza rather than the West Bank.

The unique circumstances in which these settlements were established, as well as their organizational structure, produce distinct senses of indigeneity that cannot be found among settlers in the West Bank. This article also provides some trajectories for further research, which I hope will be picked up and elaborated on. Most importantly, these new forms of religious Zionist settlement offer more evidence of the mental erasure of the Green Line and the growing acceptance of a one-state reality between the river and the sea.

NOTES

1 A *sofer stam* is a Jewish scribe who can transcribe Torah scrolls, *tefillin* (phylacteries), and *mezuzot*.

2 Lorenzo Veraclini, "What Can Settler Colonial Studies Offer to an Interpretation of the Conflict in Israel-Palestine?," *Settler Colonial Studies* 5, no. 4 (2015): 268–71.

3 Ilan Pappé, "Shtetl Colonialism: First and Last Impressions of Indigeneity by Colonised Colonisers," *Settler Colonial Studies* 2, no. 1 (2012): 39–58.

4 Meron Benvenisti, *Sacred Landscape: The Buried History of the Holy Land since 1948* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); Noga Kadman, *Erased from Space and Consciousness: Israel and the Depopulated Palestinian Villages of 1948* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015).

5 Michael Feige, *One Space, Two Places: Gush Emunim, Peace Now and the Construction of Israeli Space* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2002) (in Hebrew).

6 Walid Khalidi, *All that Remains: The Palestinian Villages Occupied and Depopulated by Israel in 1948* (Washington, DC: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1992), 75–6.

7 The Palestinians rejected this proposal during the negotiations, arguing that it is desert land. The final Geneva Initiative document does not include the Halutza Sands in the areas intended for land swap. Menacem Klein, *The Geneva Initiative: An Inside View* (Jerusalem: Carmel Press, 2006) (in Hebrew).

8 Knesset protocol, 18 July 2001, http://knesset.gov.il/tql/knesset_new/knesset15/HTML_28_03_2012_09-20-03-AM/20010718@225-01JUL18@047.html

9 Elisha Efrat, *National Planning and Development in Israel in the 21st Century* (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University Press, 2003), 99 (in Hebrew).

10 Originally, the idea of *moshav* was conceived in the 1920s as a smallholders' co-operative community. In accordance with the Socialist-Zionist ideology, the moshav was based on communal values. The agricultural land is collectively owned by the moshav, but each household is considered an independent economic unit and entitled to an equal share of the land, which it is expected to cultivate. Due to government economic policies and a general decline in agricultural income, today residents in *moshavim* hold various occupations, and most of them lease their agricultural land to larger farms. Since the residents of the moshav received the land in order to cultivate it, leasing it is formally illegal. However, it is a known secret and in most cases the state turns a blind eye toward this violation, as long as the land is not used for purposes other than agriculture.

11 A "community settlement" is a newer type of settlement, which was conceived and developed under the right-wing "Herut" government after 1977 in order to settle the West Bank. As a result, the community settlement is based on liberal-individualistic values and usually has no agricultural lands and no collective ownership. Nonetheless, despite the different economic models, both community types have a general assembly, an executive board, and committees that enable them to democratically reach collective decisions and preserve the sense of a community. Perhaps most importantly, these communities have an "absorption committee" (*va'adat klita*), which is intended to preserve social homogeneity within the community by vetting potential members. David Newman, "The Development of the Yishuv Kehilati in Judea and Samaria: Political Process and Settlement Form," *Tijdschrift voor economische en sociale geografie* 75, no. 2 (1984): 140–50.

12 A term used to describe the populated areas of Israel that are within 7 kilometres (4.3 miles) of the Gaza border.

13 https://www.facebook.com/sarale118/posts/2230965487220491.

14 Joyce Dalsheim and Assaf Harel, "Representing Settlers," *Review of Middle East Studies* 43, no. 2 (2009): 230.
15 Due to the proximity to the Gaza Strip and Egyptian border, there is a constant threat of rockets and terrorist infiltration.
16 On 17 September 1978, Israel and Egypt signed a peace agreement. According to the agreement, Israel was to withdraw its troops and evacuate all settlements from the Sinai Peninsula, which it had occupied since the 1967 war.
17 This is a sensitive issue among the evacuees, and I have heard various stories about it. Some people deny that an agreement was reached before the evacuation.
18 Some people told me that it was the farmers from the settlement who pushed to accept this agreement, because they already had agricultural land in the area.
19 Eventually, the plan is for the settlement to include 350 households.
20 Some even say it is the most conservative religious Zionist community nationwide.
21 "The line" refers to a specific tone within the Hardal subculture, which follows Rabbi Thau. The most notable institution of "the line" is Thau's Har HaMor Yeshiva, and the yeshivas in Mitzpe Ramon and Hebron are also affiliated with "the line." The name comes from the ideological rigidness in the institutions, which requires students to adhere to Rabbi Thau's ideological "line."
22 The settlement's collective agricultural association employs workers, some of them from the settlement, to manage the collective property and cultivate the lands. This arrangement does not necessarily stem from an egalitarian world view but is rather to enable most residents to focus on the study and teaching of the Torah.
23 Otzem was initially established in Atzmona by Israel's former minister of education, Rabbi Rafi Peretz, who currently lives in Naveh. The Mechina is considered prestigious among religious Zionist circles and draws religious youngsters who want to strengthen their religious identity before enlistment.
24 In 2011, 2013, and 2016, math proficiency tests, the boys' elementary school was ranked in the lowest decile.
25 Interview with Rafi Peretz, Ma'ariv, https://www.maariv.co.il/elections2019/news/Article-689490.
26 Charles Liebman and Eliezer Don-Yiḥya, *Civil Religion in Israel: Traditional Judaism and Political Culture in the Jewish State* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983).

27 On 4 May 1994, Israel and the Palestinians signed an agreement in which Israel would reorganize its military presence in the Gaza Strip. The new arrangement limited the Israeli military's ability to guarantee the security of drivers on the road connecting Netzarim to the other Gaza settlements. As a result, if they wanted to visit other Gaza settlements, they had to leave the Gaza Strip completely and enter it from the other border crossings.

28 Like Naveh, Bnei-Netzarim is planning to include 350 households.

29 The settlement's lands that were not claimed by individual farmers are leased to large agriculture companies by the settlement's collective agricultural association, which generates revenues for the community. Today, individuals who want to join the settlement and claim agricultural land must go through a trial period.

30 The settlement does not accept donations from Christian organizations. A member of the community told me that once they even insisted on returning a significant donation, after retroactively finding out that it was from a Christian source.

31 This fact has caused extreme tensions between the settlers of Naveh and Bnei-Netzarim, which eventually led to Naveh's decision to establish their own private girls' elementary school, in which they can enforce their religious standards. This move stirred feelings of resentment, and residents of Bnei-Netzarim have told me that they felt personally insulted by the fact that people in Naveh do not consider them religious enough.

32 Motti Inbari, *Messianic Religious Zionism Confronts Israeli Territorial Compromises* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

33 Out of twenty-one settlements, only five permitted driving on the Sabbath within the settlement.

34 Eitan Alimi, *Between Politics of Connection and Disengagement* (Tel Aviv: Resling, 2013) (in Hebrew).

35 Moshe Hellinger, Isaac Hershkowitz, and Bernard Susser, *Religious Zionism and the Settlement Project: Ideology, Politics, and Civil Disobedience* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2018), 202.

36 Anat Roth, *Not at Any Cost: From Gush Katif to Amona: The Story Behind the Struggle over the Land of Israel* (Tel-Aviv: Yediot Aharonot, 2014) (in Hebrew).

37 Hellinger, Hershowitz, and Susser, *Religious Zionism*; Asaf Harel, "Beyond Gush Emunim: On Contemporary Forms of Messianism among Religiously Motivated Settlers in the West Bank," in *Normalizing Occupation: The Politics of Everyday Life in the West Bank Settlements,* edited by Ariel Handel, Marco Allegra, and Erez Maggor, 142–62 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2017).

38 Alimi, *Between Politics*; Roth, *Not at Any Cost*.
39 Hellinger, Hershowitz, and Susser, *Religious Zionism*.
40 Since then, Rabbi Thau has changed his attitude and now expresses a militant opposition to the state, though his objection focuses mostly on gender issues and "postmodern" influence.
41 Other than the Har HaMor yeshiva, other notable institutions identified with "the line" are the yeshiva in Mitzpe Ramon, the yeshiva in Eilat, and the pre-military academies (*Mechinot*) in Eli and Naveh.
42 Rabbi Thau and rabbis identified with his "line" did support "passive disobedience" on an individual basis, in which soldiers will say they cannot carry out the task and ask to be assigned to other missions.
43 During the protests, orange was the colour identified with protesters against the disengagement, and blue was identified with supporters.
44 There are discussions of extending the settlement to fifteen hundred families, but those plans have not yet been submitted.
45 A resident told me that the settlement was initially planned by an architect who used an urban neighbourhood as a model. Therefore, residents complain that the village zoning lacks plans for sufficient buildings for community gatherings, education (due to the high number of children), and synagogues.
46 https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4116115,00.html.
47 In the Hesder yeshivas, most students defer their service and enlist for a shortened term of sixteen months. In the "yeshivas of the line," it is common for students to defer even longer and enlist only for six to nine months.