**Introduction**

Menachem Begin (1913-1992) was a pillar of the Betar Youth Movement in Poland in the late 1930s, leader of the Etzel paramilitary organization (also known as the Irgun) during the Yishuv period (1944-1948), and the sixth Prime Minister of Israel (1977-1983).

He was born in Brisk (in today’s Belarus), and joined the Revisionist Movement in his youth after hearing the speeches of its founder, Ze’ev Jabotinsky, and being captivated by his arguments and personality

After the outbreak of the Second World War, Begin fled to Vilnius, where he was arrested in September 1940 by the Soviet NKVD. He was sentenced to eight years for his Zionist activities, but was released in the winter of 1941 in order to enlist as a soldier in Ander’s Army, the Polish force established to fight the Nazis, and whose prospective route would pass through Palestine. In late 1943, after his discharge from Ander’s Army, he was appointed the commander of the Etzel, the underground paramilitary group that was associated with the Revisionist party but not under its direct control. At the end of January, he ordered the Etzel headquarters to publish a “declaration of revolt,” and to begin a violent campaign against the British that would cease only with their removal and the end of the British Mandate, despite the fact that the Yishuv, headed by David Ben-Gurion, opposed this step.

With the establishment of the State of Israel, Begin founded the Herut Movement from the ranks of former Etzel members and Revisionist supporters, which raised the banner of the Greater Israel ideology combined with liberal socio-economic positions.

After twenty-nine years, most of which he spent in the opposition, the Likud party, with Begin at its head, won the 1977 elections. This was the first time that Israel had been headed by a Revisionist leader, and for that reason the victory was coined “the upheaval.” His tough rhetoric notwithstanding, Begin surprised many in 1979 when he agreed to return the Sinai Peninsula to Egypt in exchange for the first peace accord signed between Israel and an Arab state. In his second term as Prime Minister (1981-1983), the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) began what was meant to be a limited incursion forty kilometers into southern Lebanon. However, operation “Peace for Galilee” led to Israel’s entanglement in war in Lebanon. Against the backdrop of these bloody events, Begin resigned before the end of his term, in August 1983, and lived a reclusive life until his death.

**Works by Begin and Anthologies of Primary Sources**

Begin did not keep a diary or leave behind a complete autobiography. However, he wrote two books of an autobiographical nature, Begin 2007 and Begin 2008, that end in the period before the establishment of the state. Begin 2011 gathers his selected speeches as leader of Herut in the 1950s in a booklet that expresses his worldview on national, social, and economic topics. The books in series Begin 1956-75 include many records and proclamations that Etzel published and which were, for all practical purposes, written by him. They are thus instructive of Begin’s early worldview. The more recently published Israel State Archives 2013 contains a selection of primary source records and documents that provide a survey of his lifetime of activity overall.

Begin, Menachem. 2007. *The Revolt: Memoirs of the Commander of the National Military Organization in the Land of Israel*. Translated by Samuel Katz. Bnei Brak: Steimatzky.

This book recounts from a personal perspective the history of the underground under Begin’s leadership (1944-1948). The first edition was published in the early 1950s. The book does not refer to any documents, but instead relies on Begin’s own recollections, and is full of anecdotes and historical polemics with the organization’s opponents.

Begin, Menachem. 2008. *White Nights: The Story of a Prisoner in* *Russia*. Translated by Katie Kaplan. Bnei Brak, Steimatzky.

This book, too, was written in the early 1950s, and deals with a formative period in the young Begin’s life, from the occupation of Poland by the Germans until his enlistment in Ander’s Army. The main part of the book concerns the account of his arrest, trial, and imprisonment by the NKVD for the crime of Zionist activity and “collaboration with British imperialism.” The central tenets of his Zionist worldview are presented in the framework of debates with his interrogators.

Begin, Menachem. 2011. *Hashkafat hayim ve-hashkafah le’umit* [Life view and national view]. Jerusalem: Menachem Begin Heritage Center.

This is a collection of speeches delivered by Begin in the early 1950s on the topics of nationalism, society, economics, and politics, and help clarify his worldview as a politician. In his speeches, he emphasized personal liberty and minority rights in a democratic society, as well as the need for an independent judiciary, while at the same time presenting a hardline perspective on questions of state and security.

Begin, Menachem. 2001. *Mori, Ze’ev Z’abotinsky*[My mentor, Jabotinsky]. Edited by Ephraim Even. Jerusalem: Begin Heritage Center.

Despite this book’s ideological goal — proving the intellectual continuity between Jabotinsky and Begin — which is not historically accurate, it contains articles, documents, and speeches by Begin that shed light on his opinions. The book includes an introduction by Begin’s successor, Yitzhak Shamir.

Begin, Menachem. 1956-75 *Ba-mahteret: Ketavim* [In the underground: Writings]. 4 vols. Tel Aviv: Hadar.

A collection of proclamations and documents published by Etzel, in four volumes. As the commander of the organization, Begin was deeply involved in writing many of the proclamations — even though he did not sign them with his name — and reading them aids in understanding the motivations behind his actions.

Israel State Archives. 2013. *Menachem Begin, the Sixth Prime Minister: Selected Documents from His Life (1913-1992).* Jerusalem: Israel Government Press. (Hebrew)

A collection of records and documents encompassing Begin’s life from beginning to end. The majority are devoted to the period of his premiership, 1977-1983: the peace process with Egypt; neighborhood renewal projects; “Operation Moses,” which began the significant immigration of Ethiopian Jews; the bombing of the Iraqi nuclear reactor; and the First Lebanon War.

**General Overview**

Shavit 1986 demonstrates how Begin, like many others in the Revisionist school of thought, was influenced by Polish integral nationalism in his path to adopting a hardline Jewish nationalist position. At the Betar world congress held in Warsaw in 1938, he represented the movement’s radical stream, and declared that Zionism needed to move to the violent phase of “military Zionism.” Although Jabotinsky opposed Begin’s position, Begin’s proposal triumphed in a vote, as Shindler 2010 shows. This confrontation between Begin and Jabotinsky is meaningful in understanding Begin’s subsequent path. Shavit 1986 shows that as the commander of Etzel (and throughout his life), he continued to present himself as Jabotinsky’s heir. However, as Kaplan 2007 demonstrates, he steered the movement in a different and less liberal direction than its founder, with respect to Judaism and the particularism that distinguished him from Jabotinsky’s cosmopolitanism.

Nevertheless, Weitz 2007 discusses how, as the leader of Herut, Begin adhered to liberal positions on issues related to civil rights.

As long as David Ben-Gurion remained Prime Minister (1948-1963), Begin was considered an outcast and outside the political consensus. The occupation of the territories in the Six Day War turned Begin’s territorial ideology, considered extreme until then, into a mainstream view in Israeli society; his political power increased accordingly. Shapiro 1991 describes how Begin led his party to victory in the 1977 elections. For his decision to withdraw from the Sinai Peninsula in exchange for a peace agreement with Egypt, which also included an agreement on limited autonomy for the Palestinians, Begin was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1978. Just before the elections to the tenth Knesset, in June 1981 he ordered the Israeli Air Force to destroy Iraq’s nuclear reactor. Perlmutter, Handel, and Bar-Yosef 2008 write that this successful operation was considered an expression of the “Begin doctrine,” meaning that Israel would not allow any enemy country to develop atomic weapons.

Shavit 1987 discusses how in his second term as Prime Minister (1981-1983), Begin formed a more hawkish coalition. Begin resigned before the end of his term for several reasons:

Schiff and Yaari 1984 investigate the entanglement of the First Lebanon War; Peleg 1987 notes the role of conflict with the Reagan administration over the American peace plan and the US government’s reservations regarding the bombing of the reactor; and Begin’s health continued to deteriorate during his terms in office.

Shavit, Yaacov. 1985. “Between Pilsudsky and Mickiewicz: Policy and Messianism in Zionist Revisionism.” *Zionism* 10: 7-31. (Hebrew)

This important article was one of the first to note the association between Revisionist ideology and Polish nationalism, and their mutual influence.

Shindler, Colin. 2010. *The Triumph of Military Zionism*. London: I. B. Tauris.

In this impressive scholarly work, Shindler examines the roots of Revisionism, and also analyses Israel's Begin-led shift to the right. He demonstrates how, because of Begin's selective interpretation of his mentor's thought, under his rule Israel drifted away from Jabotinsky's ideas towards a maximalist Zionism.

Eran, Kaplan. 2005. “A Rebel with a Cause: Hillel Kook, Begin and Jabotinsky’s Ideological Legacy.” *Israel Studies* 10, no. 3 (Fall): 87–103.

Kaplan concisely and interestingly describes three different iterations of the Revisionist movement: Jabotinsky’s original approach which tended towards a more liberal direction; Begin’s blending of religion and nation in Zionism; and the civic nationalism developed by Kook, the Etzel representative in the United States during the Yishuv period, which led him in an almost post-Zionist direction after the founding of the state.

Shavit, Yaacov. 1986. *The Mythologies of the Zionist Right Wing*. Tel Aviv: Beit-Berl, 1986. (Hebrew)

Shavit presents, inter alia, the differences between Jabotinsky’s original conceptions and Begin’s positions as the commander of Etzel during the revolt against the British, and argues that it is unlikely that Jabotinsky would have supported the revolt, in contrast to the direct line that Begin wished to draw between himself and the founding father. On Begin, 125-152.

Weitz, Yehiam. 2007. *Ha-tsa‘ad ha-rishon le-kes ha-shilton: Tenu‘at ha-Herut 1949–1956* [The first step to power: The Herut movement, 1949–55]. Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi.

In his book, Weitz provides a thorough account of Begin’s political struggles against the more radical wing of his party and his insistence on directing Herut to political successes by democratic and not revolutionary means.

Shapiro, Jonathan. 1991. *The Road to Power: Herut Party in Israel.* Albany, NY: SUNY Press.

An innovative and important socio-historical study of the Likud’s rise to power from the days of the Revisionist movement to the 1980s. Shapiro emphasizes the connections between Fascist positions and those of the Revisionist movement, as well as Begin’s use of manipulative rhetorical means to gain the popularity of immigrants from Islamic countries. The study highlights the demographic changes that were underway in Israeli society from the 1950s and which aided Begin’s transformation from a shunned politician to Prime Minister.

Perlmutter, Amos, Michael Handel, and Uri Bar-Joseph. 2008. *Two Minutes over Baghdad*. New York: Routledge.

A detailed account of the way Israel dealt with the Iraqi nuclear buildup between its launch in 1974, during Yitzhak Rabin’s premiership, and the destruction of the reactor on June 7, 1981 under Begin’s government. For Begin, nuclear weapons in the possession of an enemy state constituted the threat of a second Holocaust against the Jews. He therefore ordered the destruction of the reactor even at the potential cost of military confrontation with Iraq and diplomatic confrontation with the West and the Soviet Union.

Shavit, Yaacov. 1987. "Ideology, World View and National Policy: The Case of the Likud Government 1977-1984." *The Jerusalem Journal of International Relations* 9, no. 2: 101-115.

An interesting analysis of how Begin’s interpretation of Revisionist ideology shaped his government’s economic, diplomatic, and military policy.

Schiff, Ze’ev and Ehud Ya’ari*.* 1986. *Israel’s Lebanon War***.** London: Counterpoint.

In this book, the Hebrew version of which was published in 1984, two journalists analyze the beginning of the entanglement in Lebanon on the basis of wide-ranging interviews and primary sources, and emphasize Begin’s dysfunction and his inability to oversee developments.

Peleg, Ilan. 1987. *Begin’s Foreign Policy, 1977–1983: Israel’s Move to the Right*. New York: Greenwood Press.

Peleg, a political scientist, impressively analyzes Begin’s hawkish tendency against the backdrop of his interpretation of Jabotinsky’s teachings and his attraction to the Jewish paradigm of persecution and redemption. Alongside a tendency to decipher the psychological dimension of Begin’s character, the study describes how Israel’s foreign policy changed after twenty-nine years of Mapai rule.

**Biographies**

Shilon, Avi. 2012. *Menachem Begin: A Life***.** New Haven: Yale University Press.

A comprehensive and critical biography based on a wide range of primary sources and interviews with figures who accompanied Begin over the course of his life. It analyzes Begin and his activity from personal, political, and historical perspectives.

Perlmuttuer, Amos. 1987. *The Life and Times of Menachem Begin*. New York: Doubleday.

A biography mainly focused on the personal aspect, and based on intimate interviews with his associates.

Temko, Ted. 1987. *To Win or to Die: A Personal Portrait of Menachem Begin*. New York: William Morrow.

Temko sees Begin as a perceptive and powerful politician who “always led by assuming responsibility for both victories and defeats.” This supportive biography should be read carefully, but it is instructive of Begin’s motives.

Silver, Eric. 1984. *Begin: A Biography*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson.

A balanced biography that is inclined to present the duality in Begin’s character and action, but does not supply meaningful ideological insights. The sections dealing with his premiership are weaker than earlier chapters.

Hurwitz, Harry. 2004. *Begin: His Life, Words and Deeds*. Jerusalem: Geffen. (Hebrew).

Hurwitz, Begin’s friend and advisor when he served as Prime Minister, describes Begin from an admirer’s perspective. This is not a scholarly biography, but nevertheless contains interesting personal anecdotes that reveal Begin’s personality and worldview.

Grosbard, Ofer. 2006. *Menachem Begin: Deyukano shel manhig: Biographyah* [Menachem Begin: Portrait of a leader — a biography]. Tel Aviv: Resling.

A psychological profile of Begin based for the most part on secondary sources, including interviews and journalism.

Sofer, Sasson. 1988. *Begin: An Anatomy of Leadership*. Oxford: Blackwell.

This is less a conventional biography than an analysis of Begin's ideological background and a critical evaluation of his policies as prime minister.

Gordis, Daniel. 2014. *Menachem Begin: The Battle for Israel’s Soul*. New York: Schocken.

This biography includes few primary sources and is based for the most part on earlier studies, but focuses on Begin’s attitude toward tradition, a topic worthy of discussion in the study of Begin, as well as an interesting comparison between American neo-conservatism and the conservative position in Israel.

Shindler, Colin. 2015. *The Rise of the Israeli Right: From Odessa to Hebron*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

This is an impressive and deep study of the Zionist right from its beginnings in the twentieth century to Netanyahu. While Begin is not the book’s only hero, he is a central focus of the study, and the book helps locate Begin in the context of the historical development of the Zionist right. On Begin, pages 212-329.

Haber, Eitan. 1978. *Menachem Begin: The Legend and the Man*. New York: Dell Publishers.

A journalistic biography, most of the importance of which lies in the details of Begin’s role in the peace process with Egypt.

**Memoirs Authored by Close Aides**

Avner, Yehuda. 2010. *The Prime Ministers*. Jerusalem: Toby Press.

Avner, who served as Begin’s advisor, tells many anecdotes from an admiring perspective of Begin’s days in power. While the book is not based on rigorous research, Avner’s close familiarity with his subject, evidenced in the book’s personal descriptions, helps form a more complete picture of Begin’s personality.

Naor, Arye. 1993. *Begin ba-shilton: ‘Edut ishit* [Begin in power: A personal testimony]. Tel Aviv: Yedioth Ahronoth. (Hebrew).

Naor, a political scientist, was also a secretary in Begin’s cabinet (1977-1982), and he describes Begin’s leadership style on the basis of his recollections and documents dating to his premiership, emphasizing central events: the peace with Egypt and the First Lebanon War.

Michelson, Menachem. 2013. *Yad yemino: Ha-biyografyah shel Yehi’el Kadishai, mazkiro ve-ish sodo shel Menahem Begin*[His right-hand man: The biography of Yechiel Kadishai, secretary and confidant of Menachem Begin]. Jerusalem: Geffen. (Hebrew).

Michelson, a journalist, ostensibly wrote a biography of Yechiel Kadishai, Begin’s assistant from 1964 until his death and the closest person to him outside his family. However, the book in fact describes various chapters in Begin’s political life. Kadishai’s recollections are not critical and objective, but because of his personal closeness, the book includes several important anecdotes from Begin’s life that only Kadishai witnessed.

**Begin as Commander of Etzel**

As Bell 1978 describes, the period of Begin’s command of Etzel (1944-1948) constituted the height of its activity against the British. Lev Ami 1975 explains how, on assuming the role, he enacted a reform in the structure of the organization and its goals; his central decision was to begin a violent revolt against the British that was publicly declared at the end of January 1944. The decision to declare the revolt was taken against the wishes of the leadership of the Revisionist party, and also led to violent clashes between the Haganah and Etzel, though, as Shavit 1987 notes, Begin instructed his followers to attempt to prevent a “civil war” between Jews.

Although Begin was designated the commander of Etzel, in practical terms he had a unique form of leadership: Begin was the political commander who delineated the overall policy, and he left the operational details to his deputies. According to his biographer Shilon 2016, this same model was in place during his days as Prime Minister.

Bell, John Bowyer. 1978. *Terror out of Zion: The Fight for Israeli Independence*. New York: Avon Books.

Alongside a detailed chronology of Etzel’s operations during the period of Begin’s leadership, the book also offers an analysis of the ideological motivations underlying the group’s terrorist activity.

Lev-‘Ami, Shelomoh. 1975. “Ha-protokolim shel mifkedet ha-Irgun ha-Tseva’i ha-Le’umi, Yuli–November 1944” [The minutes of the National Military Organization headquarters, July–November 1944]. *Zionism* 4: 395–96.

Most of the minutes of the meetings of the Etzel command were lost or destroyed for fear that they would fall into the hands of the British. Shelomoh Lev-‘Ami, a member of the command, published in this article the small amount of material that remained. He provides Begin’s radical assessment of the British as Etzel commander, as well as his positions on the internal struggle in the Yishuv between Etzel and the Haganah.

*Herut*. 1944. “Hakhrazat ha-mered” [The declaration of revolt]. 26. February 6, 1944.

The complete text of the declaration of revolt in which Begin justifies the revolt against the British, among other reasons, because of the similarity between the Mandate and the Nazi regime regarding the ban on immigration to Palestine by Jewish refugees from the Holocaust.

Shavit, Yaacov. 1976. *Onat ha-tsayid: Ha-sezon ben “ha-Yishuv ha-me’urgan” le-irgune ha-mahteret, 1937–1947*[Open season: The *saison* between “the organized Yishuv” and the underground organizations, 1937–47]. Tel Aviv: Hadar.

The most balanced and exhaustive summary of the period of the *Saison*, when, under the authority of the Jewish national institutions, members of the Palmach (the elite fighting force of the Haganah) pursued and captured members of Etzel. The book comprehensively discusses both Etzel’s calculations and those of the leaders of the Yishuv in taking active measures against them, and is based on primary sources and eyewitness testimony.

Shilon, Avi.2016. “I’m Responsible, You Decide: Menachem Begin's Detached Leadership Pattern in the Etzel.” *Iyunim Bitkumat Israel* 26: 280-249. (Hebrew).

A new article examining Begin’s leadership style in the Etzel as a key to understanding his style of leadership later as Prime Minister. Begin tended to fix overall objectives and not to dwell on the details, but he knew how to take responsibility for the actions of his subordinates, even when they acted without his authorization, in exchange for their absolute loyalty to him.

Markovizky, Jacob. 2012. *Ha-mefaked: Menachem Begin ke-manhig shel irgun gerilah ‘ironit* [The

commander: Menachem Begin as leader of an urban guerrilla organization]. Jerusalem: Carmel. (Hebrew).

This book is based on primary sources and focuses mainly on Etzel’s military tactics under Begin, the central argument being that under Begin Etzel made advanced and clever use of guerilla fighting techniques.

Markovitzky, Jacob, ed. 2008. *Ha-mordim* [The rebels: Etzel’s struggle against the British (1944-1948)]. Jerusalem: Begin Heritage Center and Haifa University. (Hebrew).

A collection of articles dealing with the historical, sociological, military, and social analysis of Etzel during the period of Begin’s leadership. The chapters detailing with Begin’s ethics and his command style are found on pages 93-139.

Alfasi, Yitzhak, ed. 1994. *The National Military Organization: Sources and documents*. 6 vols. Tel Aviv: Jabotinsky Institute. (Hebrew).

A collection of documents and primary sources, including many documents from Begin’s time as head of the organization.

**Begin in the Political Arena**

Naor 2011 discusses how, in 1948, Begin founded the Herut movement, which aspired to be the largest opposition party and to offer an intellectual alternative to Mapai. Begin also fought to instill the narrative that Etzel contributed to the establishment of the state. In parallel, he was forced to tackle internal criticism within the party, especially from Jabotinsky’s son, Ari, and former members of the Etzel branch in the United States. Miller 2004 discusses their criticism. Herut received fourteen seats in the first elections in 1949, and in 1951 was left with only eight seats. Weitz 2005 focuses on Begin’s resignation and his disappearance to an unknown location. Begin returned to active political life at the beginning of 1952 in order to head the campaign against the reparations agreement between Israel and West Germany (Weitz 1995).

From the mid-1950s, Begin worked to stake out a more conventional position and to subdue the perception of Herut as extreme. In order to do so, Begin worked to unify Herut with the Liberal Party, a process that was completed in 1965. For the sake of forming Gahal (*Gush Herut-Liberalim*), as Goldstein 2011 notes, Begin was willing for the first time to abandon the clause in the party platform calling for the realization of Greater Israel.

In the face of the fear that seized the political system during the tense days leading up to the outbreak of the 1967 war, it was decided to form a national unity government. In June 1967, Begin was appointed a minister (without portfolio) for the first time (Goldstein 2017). He resigned in 1970 as a result of his opposition to a policy calling for the return of territories in exchange for peace. In 1973, before the Yom Kippur War, he established the Likud party from Gahal and satellite parties that also opposed the return of the territories. Weitz 2005 discusses how, with the establishment of Likud, Begin completed a process of transforming Herut from a tiny party of Ashkenazi secular bourgeois into a popular party that brought along in its wake Mizrahim, religious Jews, and those holding liberal economic views.

Arian 1980 delves into Likud’s victory in the 1977 elections and Shapiro 1980 analyzes its political ramifications within the Knesset. Flik 2010 argues that one of the reasons for Likud’s success is connected to the inclusive populism that characterized the party under Begin. Shindler 2005 discusses the Likud from Begin onward.

Naor, Arye. 2011. “Ha-ide’ologiyah shel Menahem Begin bi-tekufat hakamatah shel tenu‘at ha- Herut” [The ideology of Menachem Begin in the era of the establishment of the Herut movement”]. In *Me-Altalenah ‘ad henah: Gilgulah shel tenu‘ah, me-Herut le-Likud* [From the Altalena to the present: The metamorphosis of a movement, from Herut to Likud]], edited by Avraham Diskin, 44-66. Jerusalem: Carmel. (Hebrew)

Naor examines Begin’s affinity for nationalism with an attachment to religion, on one hand, and his support for expansive liberal legislation in the sphere of individual rights, on the other.

Miller, Orna. 2004. “Ha-bataliyon he-hatukh ve-ha-netiyot ha-‘kena‘aniyot’ ba-Etsel u-vi-tenu‘at ha-Herut: Me-‘ha-Va‘ad ha-‘Ivri ‘ad ‘la-Merhav’; Opozitsiyah le-hanhagat ha-Etsel ve-Herut” [The severed battalion and the “Canaanite” tendencies in Etzel and the Herut movement: From “the Hebrew Committee” to *la-Merhav*; Opposition to the Etzel and Herut leadership]. *Iyunim Bitkumat Israel* 14: 153–189. (Hebrew).

Miller’s article conveys the tension between Begin and Herut members who were Etzel activists in the United States and France before the establishment of the state. After 1948, they sought to propagate a civic nationalism, inspired by the Canaanite idea, in which religion is separate from the state. Their struggle with Begin over these issues ended with their dismissal from the party ranks and Herut’s adoption of a pro-traditionist stance.

Weitz, Yechiam. 2005. “Where’s Menachem Begin? His Disappearance in 1951 and its Significance.” *Israel Studies Forum* 20, no. 2: 115-137

Until today, it is not known where Begin disappeared after his defeat in the elections for the second Knesset. This article attempts to shed light on the circumstances of his disappearance and its meaning as one of the keys to understanding his personality.

Weitz, Yechiam. 1995. “The Political Dimension of Holocaust Memory in Israel during the 1950s.” *Israel Affairs* 1, no. 3 (Spring): 129-145.

Against the background of the debates over the issue of Holocaust memory in the formative years of Israel, this article describes Begin’s attitude toward the memory of the Holocaust, his outspoken opposition to the reparations agreement with Germany, and his utilitarian political calculations.

Goldstein, Amir. 2011. “Crisis and growth in Menachem Begin’s path to the Israeli political center.” In *Me-Altalenah ‘ad henah: Gilgulah shel tenu‘ah, me-Herut le-Likud* [From the Altalena to the present: The metamorphosis of a movement, from Herut to Likud], edited by Avraham Diskin, 116-148. Jerusalem: Carmel. (Hebrew)

An important article that analyzes the changes in Begin’s rhetoric and political approach, from the establishment of Herut to the founding of Likud, that were designed to pave his way to the political mainstream.

Goldstein, Amir. 2017. “Menachem Begin and Gahal During the Waiting Period.” *Israel Affairs* (Summer): 1-27.

An original article which explains the political constellation that first brought Begin and Herut to join the Mapai coalition within the framework of the national unity government.

Weitz, Yechiam. 2005. “The Way into the First ‘Upheaval’: The History of the Herut Movement, 1948-1977.” *Israel Studies*10, no. 3 (Fall): 54-86.

The main importance of this article is its chronological summary of the critical turning points in the process that aided Herut’s transformation from an ostracized and radical party to a mainstream party.

Arian, Asher. 1980. “The Israeli Election in 1977.” In *The Election in Israel 1977*, edited by Asher Arian, 253-276. Tel Aviv: Ramot.

An important article analyzing aspects of voting behavior that influenced Likud’s victory.

Shapiro, Yonatan. 1980. “The End of the Dominant Party System.” In *The Election in Israel 1977*, edited by Asher Arian, 23-32. Tel Aviv: Ramot.

Another article from the same book that considers the transition from the period of a single dominant party (Mapai), which characterized the Israeli political system until 1977, to the two-bloc system that characterized it from then until the beginning of the twenty-first century.

Filc, Dani. 2010. *The Political Right in Israel:  Different Faces of Jewish Populism***.** Routledge: London.

An original book that describes Begin’s fusion of populist positions and an ideology inclined to embrace the lower classes — mainly Mizrahim — in a modern Jewish nationalism as a key to his success as head of Likud.

Shindler, Colin. 1995. *Israel, Likud and the Zionist Dream: Power, Politics and the Zionist Dream from Begin to Netanyahu*. London: I. B. Tauris.

This book focuses on the years 1977-1992, from the “upheaval” to the victory by Yitzhak Rabin’s Labor party, and presents the connection between Begin’s ideology and his government’s policies and those of his successors in the leadership of Likud.

**Begin’s attitude toward the Land of Israel**

As Naor 2015 notes, Begin was characterized throughout his life by his maximalist ideological position concerning Greater Israel. He justified the Jewish people’s right to the entire Land of Israel (including both sides of the Jordan River, in his early life) on the basis of Jewish history and security requirements, as his successors did, but also prominently employed the argument that the attachment to the land is grounded in the covenant that God made with his people, as depicted in the Bible (Naor 2005).

Begin called the territories in the West Bank that Israel conquered in the Six Day War by their biblical names, Judea and Samaria. When he agreed to return the Sinai Peninsula in exchange for peace, he justified it, among other reasons, by the fact that it was never part of the Land of Israel whose territory he was not willing to cede. Lustick 1997 analyses Basic Law: Jerusalem, Capital of Israel, enacted during Begin’s premiership, in July 1980, which establishes that unified Jerusalem is the capital of Israel. In December 1981, Begin’s government passed a law establishing that “the laws, courts, and administration of the state shall be in force in the territory of the Golan Heights” (Maoz 1994). Naor 2001 places Begin’s attitude toward the Land of Israel within the broader discussion about the place of the land within Zionist discourse.

Naor, Arye. 2015. “A Simple Historical Truth: Judea, Samaria, and the Gaza Strip in Menachem Begin’s Ideology.” *Israel Affairs*21, no. 3: 462-481.

A comprehensive analysis of Begin’s rhetoric and ideology regarding the territories conquered by Israel in the Six Day War.

Naor, Arye. 2005. “Hawks’ Beaks, Doves’ Feathers: Likud Prime Ministers between Ideology and Reality.” *Israel Studies* 19, no. 3 (Fall): 154–191.

This article emphasizes Begin’s inflexible and religious dimension as it relates to the Land of Israel, in comparison to the positions of his successors — Shamir, Netanyahu, and Sharon — who continued the attachment to Greater Israel but explained it in historical and security terms.

Lustick, IIan. 1997. “Has Israel Annexed East Jerusalem?” *Middle East Policy* 5, no. 1: 35.

This article discus the ambiguity of the Basic Law: Jerusalem, Capital of Israel with respect to the difference between “annexation” and “sovereignty.”

Maoz, Asher. 1994. “The Application of Israeli Law to the Golan Heights is Annexation.” *Brooklyn Journal of International Law* 20: 355-396.

Maoz claims that, although the Golan Heights Law did not stress it explicitly, the correct interpretation of it is annexation.

Naor, Arye. 2001. *Erets Yisra’el ha-shelemah: Emunah u-mediniyut* [Greater Israel: Faith and policy]. Haifa: Haifa University and Zmora Bitan. (Hebrew).

Naor analyzes the relation to the Land of Israel among Zionist leaders and thinkers of different streams, and, inter alia, emphasizes the religious dimension that characterized Begin’s connection to Greater Israel. The discussion of Begin is found primarily on pages 60-80.

**Begin and the Holocaust**

For Begin, the Holocaust served as a horrifying proof of his earlier beliefs regarding the fate of Jews in the diaspora and the world’s conscience as it relates to the Jews. Peleg 2015 discusses his intimate understanding of the power and scope of the Holocaust (his father, brother, and mother, all of whom remained in Brisk, were murdered by the Nazis), which forged the foundations of his nationalist conception into an overall worldview that was a central part of his decision-making and actions as a political leader. Begin’s conception of the centrality of the Holocaust in the formation of modern Jewish nationalism was clearly expressed in his speeches from 1952, when he led a riotous protest against any relations with Germany as a response to the reparations agreement that the government reached with West Germany as a compensation for the Holocaust (Brosh 1993; Begin 1952). Naor 2003 analyses how the memory of the Holocaust also served as a justification for not returning the territories on the grounds that this would lead to the destruction of the state.

Peleg-Oziyahu, Amir. 2015. “Menachem Begin and the Holocaust: History, Politics and Memory.” Phd diss., Ben Gurion University. (Hebrew)

As far as I know, this is the only study on Begin that focuses solely on his relation to the Holocaust. Peleg-Oziyahu argues that it is impossible to understand Begin without reckoning with the centrality of the Holocaust in the formation of his worldview, and, in that way, the memory of the Holocaust also influenced his decisions at different turning points in his life as a leader.

Brosh, Tamar (Ed.). 1993. “Dvarim ba-atzeret ha-hamonim neged heskem ha-shilomim ‘im Germania” [Statement against the reparations agreement by Menachem Begin]. In *Ne’um le-kol ‘et* [A speech for every time], 130-135. Ra’anana: The Open University and Yediot Achronot.

This book, a collection of the most important speeches in the history of Israeli politics, includes the complete text of Begin’s speech in the Knesset against the reparations agreement; his claim that the Germans represent the reincarnation of the biblical Amalek is prominent.

Begin, Menachem. 1952. “‘En davar ba-‘olam she-yatsdik masa u-matan ‘im rotsʹhim Germaniyim” [There is nothing in the world that justifies negotiating with German murderers]. *Herut*. January 6, 1952.

The full transcript of Begin’s public speech at another demonstration against the reparations agreement in Jerusalem’s Kikar Zion, in which he accused Ben-Gurion of tyranny and of wronging Jewish history.

Naor, Arye. 2003. “Lessons of the Holocaust Versus Territories for Peace, 1967-2001.” *Israel Studies*8, no. 1: 130-152.

This article analyzes the use of the memory of the Holocaust from a rhetorical and conceptual perspective as it relates to the need to either return the territories captured in 1967 or keep them under Israeli control, including the way in which Begin would relate the Holocaust to Israel’s contemporary security needs.

**Begin and Judaism**

Begin was not an observant Jew, but he followed certain traditional religious practices, generally in the Orthodox manner. Unlike many Zionist thinkers and leaders, who saw their Zionist activity as a revolt against the Jewish way of life in exile, Begin identified in Zionism instead the realization of the national aspirations that existed in traditional Jewish writings. As Don-Yehiya 2011 shows, he did not wish to exchange traditional Jewish character for that of the Zionist “new Jew,” but rather to draw from tradition for modern needs.

He was devoted to the connection between religion and nation and between religion and state, and thus, for instance, insisted that the state needed to define a person as Jewish by Orthodox standards of *halakhah* (Don-Yehiya 2002).

Begin’s Zionism thus did not seek to draw a straight line from biblical days to the modern age through an erasure and negation of the period of the Exile, as did Ben-Gurion, for example. Instead, Begin included all the historical periods in the life of the people as a single unit, and emphasized the necessary combining of religiosity with nationalism. In many ways, Shilon 2016 claims, he created a “political theology.” Similarly, according to Karni’el 2000 and Arian 1989, his hardline national security worldview resonates with an intellectual paradigm of the type “a people that dwells apart” (Numbers 23:9) and “the chosen people,” basic concepts in traditional Jewish culture that influenced his policies.

Don-Yehiya, Eliezer. 2011. “Ben le’umiyut le-dat: Yahadut, dat u-masoret bi-tefisato shel Menahem Begin” [Between religion and nationalism: Judaism, religion, and tradition in the outlook of Menachem Begin]. In *Me-Altalenah ‘ad henah: Gilgulah shel tenu‘ah, me-Herut le-Likud* [From the Altalena to the present: The metamorphosis of a movement, from Herut to Likud], edited by Avraham Diskin, 67-91. Jerusalem: Carmel. (Hebrew).

Don-Yehiya, a political scientist, points to the importance of Begin’s attitude to the Jewish tradition in his domestic and foreign political decisions.

Don-Yehiya, Eliezer. 2002. “Dat, zehut le’umit u-politikah: Ha-mashber be-she’elat ‘mihu yehudi,’ 1958” [Religion, national identity and politics: The crisis over the question ‘who Is a Jew’, 1958]. In *Shene ‘evre ha-gesher: Dat u-medinah be-reshit darkah shel Yisra’el*[Two bridge crossings: Religion and state at the beginning of Israel], edited by Mordechai Bar-On and Zvi Zameret , 88-143. Jerusalem: Yad Ben Zvi. (Hebrew).

In this article, Don-Yehiya delves extensively into the rifts in Israeli politics against the backdrop of the different approaches to the question “Who is a Jew?” The article dwells on Begin’s position that, on the one hand, was inclined to accept the Orthodox opinion that a Jew is defined by the *halakhah* (the son of a Jewish mother, or a halakhic convert), but, on the other, requested that the rabbis define Jewishness leniently for the sake of national needs.

Shilon, Avi. 2016. “Menachem Begin's Attitude Toward the Jewish Religion.” *The Middle East Journal* 70, no. 2 (Spring): 275-249.

Shilon characterizes Begin as adhering to a “political theology,” and argues that his approach to religion is pivotal in understanding his positions both on matters of foreign relations and security and on Jewish identity in Israel.

Karni’el, Mordekhai.2000. *Menachem Begin: Deyukan shel manhig* [Menachem Begin: Portrait of a leader]. Jerusalem: Re’uven Mas. (Hebrew).

According to Karni’el, Begin based his opposition to foreign policy concessions on his reading of Jewish religious sources, in which he found proof that human society had advanced thanks to those who did not compromise and fought for their principles.

Arian, Asher. 1989. “A People Apart: Coping with National Security Problems in Israel.” *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 33, No. 4 (December): 605–31.

Arian argues that central concepts influenced by the Jewish religious paradigm permeated the hawkish political positions of Israeli leaders, especially Begin.

**Begin and the Mizrahim**

Arian and Shamir 1983 show that the support of Jewish immigrants from Muslim countries (Mizrahim) for Likud aided in its rise to power. Many scholars attempted to make sense of the connection between the Mizrahim and the Polish Begin. One explanation for this connection is Mizrahim and Revisionists’ shared feeling of being discriminated against by the establishment and the followers of Mapai. Cohen and Leon 2014 survey the way in which, under Begin’s inclusive ideology, the Herut party worked to integrate them in the movement apparatus during the 1970s. Cohen and Leon 2008 also show how, under Begin and Likud rule, the status of Mizrahim improved. This, they claim, helps to reveal the logic behind their attachment to Begin and Likud and to refute the emotional explanation offered in Shapiro 1991. Another factor aiding the relationship was the similar conception of the meaning of Zionism in the continuum of Jewish history. Shilon 2016 explains that when Jews from Muslim countries were exposed to the Zionist idea they, like Begin, saw it as a natural continuation of the traditional Jewish lifestyle; that is, as a modern manifestation of the national dimension of the religious writings, and not as a revolutionary idea influenced by European nationalism and ideologies. Likewise, as Shokeid 1995 notes, Mizrahim held a moderate approach toward religion, similar to Begin’s tradionalist (and not fully observant) way of life. Leon 2009 argues that Begin’s attitude to religion continued to influence the political system even after his retirement.

Shamir, Micahal and Arian Asher. 1982. “The Ethnic Vote in Israel's 1981 Elections.” *Electoral Studies*, *1*, 315-331.‏

Mizrahi support for the Likud in the 1977 elections — especially among the second generation —was not a one-time event, and this article emphasizes the intercommunal rift between Ashkenazim and Mizrahim as a key to understanding Begin’s victory in 1981 as well.

Cohen, Uri and Nissim Leon. 2014. “The Mahapach and Yitzhak Shamir’s Quiet Revolution: Mizrahim and the Herut Movement.” *Israel Studies Review*, 29, no. 1: 18-40.

In this article, the authors follow the way in which Herut apparatchiks, Yitzhak Shamir foremost among them, implemented Begin’s inclusive ideology towards Mizrahim and integrated Mizrahi activists in the party institutions — unlike the Labor party — in order to strengthen the Mizrahi public’s support for the movement.

Cohen, Uri and Nissim Leon. 2008. “The New Mizrahi Middle Class: Ethnic Mobility and Class Integration in Israel.” *Journal of Israeli History* 27, No. 1: 51–64.

This article emphasizes the correlation between the rise of Likud to power and the improvement in the socio-economic status of the Mizrahim in Israel, and vice versa.

Shapiro, Yonathan. 1991. *The Road to Power: Herut Party in Israel.* Albany, New York: Suny Press, 4.

Shapiro claims that Begin manipulated Mizrahim by evoking cultural myths which galvanized them to take action against Mapai and the Labor Zionist movement. His argument was popular among scholars from the “old” generation.

Moshe Shokeid. 1995. “The Religiosity of Middle Eastern Jews.” In *Israeli Judaism: The Sociology of Religion in Israel*, edited by Shlomo Deshen, Charles S. Liebman, and Moshe Shokeid, 255-84. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.

Shokeid maintains that Mizrahim held moderate attitudes toward religion, seeking neither to rebel against it nor to radicalize it, despite the fact that most of them did not follow all the religious commandments. In that sense, the Mizrahim and Begin shared a common “traditionalist” viewpoint.

Leon, Nissim. 2009. “Mahapakhe ha-mishneh be-1977 u-mekomam bi-tsemihtah shel tenu‘at Shas” [The aftershocks of the 1977 political “upheaval” and their role in the rise of Shas]. *Israel* 15: 1–32. (Hebrew).

Leon sociologically analyzes the rise of Shas as a pro-Zionist Haredi-Mizrahi movement as an expression of the legitimization that Begin gave to this position, and points to the establishment of Shas as a party in 1984 as a response to the need to fill the niche left unoccupied by Begin’s departure from the political system.