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**Death Coverage of Political and Cultural Leaders in
Israeli Newspapers 1904 – 1995**

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Death Coverage of Political and Cultural Leaders in Israeli Newspapers 1904 – 1995

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Abstract

This article examines the commemoration of three Israeli prime ministers: David Ben-Gurion, Golda Meir and Menachem Begin in Davar, Ha'aretz, Yedioth Ahronoth, Ha'tzofe and Ha'modia daily Hebraic newspapers, following the month after their death. This study focuses, describes and shows the "framework" of the Israeli newspapers' procedures of mediated commemorative patterns. This work links three fields of study: newspapers, political leaders and collective memories. Examining these three factors throughout four decades enables one to point out Israeli journalistic practices regarding death coverage and commemoration of prime ministers. This article investigates pre-conditions that may guide news editors and editorial desks to grant authority to non-journalistic sources such as politicians, historians, citizens and family members in order to shape, and to reshape, collective memories. In addition, the present article describes the numerous ways in which newspapers reflect on the past, present and future, while covering a death of a prime minister.

Introduction

This article examines the commemoration of three Israeli prime ministers: David Ben-Gurion, Golda Meir and Menachem Begin in Davar, Ha'aretz, Yedioth Ahronoth, Ha'tzofe and Ha'modia daily Hebraic newspapers following the month after their death. This study focuses, describes and shows the "framework" of the Israeli newspapers' procedures of mediated commemorative patterns. This work links three fields of study: newspapers, political leaders and collective memories. Examining these three factors throughout four decades enables one to point out Israeli journalistic practices regarding death coverage and commemoration of prime ministers.

This research focuses upon two main dimensions: **journalistic authority** and **collective memory**. The journalistic authority dimension deals both with printed texts, as well as the authorities of various sources. The authority dimension poses two main questions: Who is assigned with the authority to eulogize prime ministers in Israeli printed journalism, and why? This article investigates pre-conditions that may guide news editors and editorial desks to grant authority to non-journalistic sources such as politicians, historians, citizens and family members in order to shape and reshape collective memories.

The **collective memory** dimension describes the numerous ways in which newspapers reflect on the past, present and future while covering the death of a prime minister. With respect to the past, newspapers frequently publish nostalgic stories from the prime ministers' past, shape the prime ministers' narrative, for better or worse, and hence engrave and display certain images. With respect to the present, Israeli newspapers link the leaders' death to present issues, controversies and conflicts in order to serve two main goals: 1) to criticize, or support, political parties and government officials, and 2) to encourage, or protest against, current municipal, regional and national agendas and priorities. Also, journalistic coverage tends to link the prime ministers' heritage and/or vision to the setting of future goals. This study shows that the elongation from the date of death stirs and proliferates alternative discussions and points-of-view that reshape the prime ministers' image in the public memory.

Journalistic Authority in Israeli Newspapers

Zandberg (2010) described the complex process of establishing journalistic authority during Israel's Holocaust Remembrance Days for the duration of five decades. According to him, reporters have consolidated their status as authorities in the field of constructing collective memories mainly by contacting politicians, academicians, artists and Holocaust survivors. From his point of view, the challenging linkage of numerous sources enabled the journalists to establish their authority as shapers of Holocaust collective memories in the state of Israel. In the context of journalistic coverage of prime ministers' deaths, this article examines and demonstrates how Israeli newspapers interviewed, quoted

and covered four non-journalistic sources: politicians, historians, citizens and family members.

Zandberg (2010) found that reporters refrained from speaking their points of view and relied upon non-journalistic sources, who were victims of the Holocaust. In a different vein, the case study of prime ministers' deaths showed that journalists acted as chief spokesmen while negotiating the shaping of the statesmen's collective memory. One can assume that these differences derived from the fact that political leaders' deaths, at least those who were not assassinated, are not considered as extreme, or horrifying, media events, like the Holocaust. Therefore, it seemed legitimate, for reporters and news editors, to publish a wide variety of opinions, discussions and criticisms.

The right to construct the prime ministers' collective memories was mainly handed to members of political institutions. Politicians from Israel and abroad dominated the Israeli journalistic discourse during the week after the prime ministers' departures. Some of them contributed their comments in exclusive columns that eulogized the deceased. Doing so, the politicians impacted the nature of the mediated commemoration in a way that advanced their vision, political party and ideology. At the same time however, in Ha'aretz, Davar and Yedioth Ahronoth newspapers, the commemorative authority was given to the prime ministers' rivals. These politicians "spoke ill of the dead" and exposed complicated relations and spiraling cracks inside the Israeli political ring.

These newspapers have turned to three additional authoritative sources. First, they address writers and historians who have offered unique and alternative perspectives regarding the prime ministers' life-stories. These writers and historians have contributed to the presentations of the leaders' images in a positive fashion, in David Ben-Gurion and Golda Meir's case, and in a negative fashion, with respect to Menachem Begin. At the same time, the second and third types of authoritative sources pointed out differences between the commemoration of Ben-Gurion and Meir to Begin's. The "civil authority", which was based on interviewing "common men on the street", reflected individual, emotional and sensational points of view. More importantly, the "civil authority" practice was found in all five newspapers and enabled newspapers who criticized Begin fiercely, like Ha'aretz and Davar, to balance the general tone. The "family authority" also exposed differences among the three prime ministers. That is to say, while Ben-Gurion and Meir's family members were addressed briefly and laconically, Begin's family-members presence was wide-ranging and practical.

Specifically, the Jewish-Israeli newspapers dealt the authority to shape the collective memory of the three prime ministers among five main sources:

1. **Political authority** – This type of authority was manifested in two main aspects. First, the newspapers largely granted the right to eulogize the prime ministers to "players" from the political field in Israel and abroad. This sort of authority was illustrated through news updates, quotes, opinions and editorial columns. Second, the newspapers guided

and directed the general commemorative narrative according to the political-ideological affiliation of the deceased leader.

2. **Journalistic authority** – This sort of authority derived from the professional aspect, by the fact that the reporter, or the correspondent, was supposed to cover the death of a prime minister due to his\her occupation as a journalist. The ways with which the newspapers pronounced their supportive, neutral, or opposing attitudes towards the dead leader manifested themselves through avoiding, or paying extra attention, to specific sources. Moreover, the journalists created glorifying or oppositional narratives and emphasized their personal points of view.
3. **Literature and historiographical authority** – The newspapers' editors assumed that authors and historians were able to add to the heritage of the prime ministers through their cultural perspectives as those who write, and rewrite, history. Historians, whose profession obligated them to examine and describe the past, were assigned by journalists to "objectively" reveal the past. They were asked to enlighten the readers in a glorifying historical perspective, in Ben-Gurion's case, and offer a denigrating point of view with respect to Begin's legacy.
4. **Civil authority** – This kind of authority was given to "the common men in the street" who, obviously, did not hold a public position. Apparently, journalists found great importance in presenting the citizens' perspectives in order to implant the readers with identification and empathy in respect to the dead prime ministers. Furthermore, the "civil authority" balanced the formal style that the politicians, journalists and historians have offered.
5. **Family authority** – This type of authority focused, analyzed and presented the status and impact of the prime ministers' family members in the course of the journalistic discourse.

Political Authority

One could not ignore the dominant presence of Israeli politicians in shaping the collective memory of the prime ministers in the journalistic discourse throughout the weeks after their deaths. For instance, Israeli parliament (Knesset) members were asked to eulogize and commemorate the prime ministers. The permission given to Israeli politicians was in accordance with two main parameters: 1) current political positions, and 2) personal and/or collegial relations with the dead prime ministers.

The editorial board of Ha'aretz and Davar had objected, in most cases, to Begin's doctrine and political policy during his years as a fierce senior opposition minister and as a prime minister. As a result, one would assume that the week following his death created a dilemma for these news editorial boards. On one hand, after his death, Begin was still considered to be their longtime rival. On the other hand, it would have seemed inappropriate to "speak ill" of a deceased former prime minister. Furthermore, total glorification of his legacy

could have been interpreted as a lack of professionalism compared to what is expected from these Israeli newspapers. Therefore, Ha'aretz and Davar reminded their readers about disputed and volatile events, such as the Israel Defense Force's (IDF) too-long entanglement in southern Lebanon. At the same time, these newspapers presented him respectfully as a worshiped "folk hero" who signed the peace agreement with Israel's most powerful enemy at the time – Egypt.

Although Begin led the Likud liberal right wing party, Ha'aretz and Davar granted the authority to commemorate him, mainly, to left wing ministers. Unlike Ha'aretz and Davar, Yedioth Achronot and Ha'tzofe tended to give the authority to eulogize Begin to right wing politicians who hailed Begin after his death. Therefore, this article argues that both left wing and right-wing representatives declared and bequeathed their historical and ideological points of view. Indeed, a fierce, yet subtle, battle occurred inside the Israeli journalistic community over the shaping of dead prime ministers' collective memory.

Beyond reliance upon eulogies of Israeli politicians, the death coverage of Ben-Gurion, Meir and Begin had focused upon declarations of the international political arena. All five newspapers covered telegrams, condolences, speeches and the presence of foreign representatives and political leaders, mostly from France, West Germany, Britain, Canada and the United States. Foreign diplomats had arrived in Israel in order to pay their last respects both to the dead prime ministers and to the state of Israel. The focus upon the international sphere pointed-out Israel's strive to normalize, maintain and improve its relations with other countries. The focus on foreign representatives illustrated the wide interest that publishers, editors and reporters attributed to international relations. Condolences given by foreign leaders, as well as the diplomats' arrival for the burial ceremonies, transformed and verified the prime ministers as high-ranked, worldwide political figures. These global signs of respect maintained and strengthened Israel's diplomatic relations and positioned Israel as a legitimate partner in the geopolitical arena.

Each prime minister had a different amount of diplomatic representatives at his/her funeral. To be more accurate, after Ben-Gurion and Meir's death, the Israeli government waited a few days, as a Knesset committee in charge of public ceremonies suggested to invite delegations from all over the world. As a result, Ben-Gurion, and even more so Meir, had a significant amount of delegates at their funeral. Unlike them, Begin, who requested in his will to conduct a traditional Jewish burial service, was interred in a modest service at the Olive Mountain in Jerusalem, instead of Hertzl Mountain as the government wished. Following his last demand, carried out by his Knesset member son, Benjamin Ze'ev (Benny) Begin, delegations had no chance to attend the funeral.

Journalistic Authority

Examining the journalistic authority, with respect to David Ben-Gurion, Golda Meir and Menachem Begin's death turned out to be particularly complex.

That is to say, all five newspapers presented a wide variety of opinions and not a one-dimensional narrative. The journalists' authority to shape the memory of the statesmen illustrated the ethical values and the strategies that have steered newspaper coverage. Ha'aretz, for example, showed great commitment to a professional journalistic ethos, which included, besides informative data, a variety of opinions and criticisms hurled at the prime ministers. In point of fact, public criticism towards elite Israeli politicians during the 70's was rare. However, Ha'aretz's journalists displayed an offensive point of view, while attacking the prime ministers' policies and heritage. Ha'modia also offered criticism during the week after the statesmen's deaths. Yet, the criticism painted the death with conservative, anti-secular and ultra-orthodox points of view.

Ha'modia provided a standpoint derived from a distinct ultra-orthodox perspective. The post-death discourse clearly focused upon Ben-Gurion, Meir and Begin's links with the Jewish religion. The linkage with the Jewish tradition was far more intense than, for example, praising their diplomatic achievements, disputes or failures. Concurrently, and not surprisingly, Ha'modia criticized Ben-Gurion and Meir more than any other newspaper and attacked harshly their secular lifestyles and agendas. On the other hand, the same newspaper complimented Begin on his more public-traditional style.

It was certainly interesting to acknowledge a pattern showing how Ha'aretz, Davar, Yedioth Achronot and Ha'tzofe covered the ways in which foreign media had reported the Israeli prime ministers' deaths. This focus unveiled tension between the media and the Israeli government in the week following these three prime ministers' deaths. The foreign media coverage had enabled the newspapers to criticize these leaders and to bypass, in some instances, strict censorship. For example, presenting Begin as a "terrorist responsible for the death of thousands of British, Arab and Jewish civilians" according to British Broadcast Corporation (BBC). Furthermore, the foreign media seemed to offer an elegant way to skip over the unpleasantness of "speaking ill" of the dead. However, at the same time, one can claim the opposite argument, which is not contradictory: quoting foreign media was used as a tool to strengthen social solidarity and erect a "The world is against us" narrative.

Historiographical and Cultural Authority

The field of literature in Israel has been a significant factor, which, in addition to other processes, contributed to the Zionist movement by educating and recruiting Jews for public-altruistic activities. As a part of this cultural development, political parties and newspaper editors encouraged the participation of authors and historians in order to rally their pursuit for mastery in the land of Israel. These cultural figures were not necessarily asked to adjust their writings to the political agenda. Rather, they were asked to show at least a certain portion of affiliation with the party and its leaders. Cultural authority, discussed in this article, was assigned to authors and historians who were associated with the prime ministers, in a friendly, collegial or rivalry manner. These unique

cultural points of view offered alternative observations regarding the prime ministers' life-stories. Generally speaking, the writers presented the prime ministers positively, in Ben-Gurion and Meir's case, and negatively, in comparison to Begin.

The reliance upon these cultural figures deviated from an informative report describing burial services and eulogies. That is to say, this trend illustrated the role of a modern western press, which may see itself not only as a tool for transforming information, but also as a cultural device capable of presenting the values and ethos of the society. The authors and historians in the journalistic discourse illustrated the formation of a multi-dimensional point of view and enriched the journalistic texts and the public discourse.

Davar praised Ben-Gurion in the week following his death. One way of doing so was addressing his personal biographer – Michael Bar-Zohar. Bar-Zohar was picked by Ben-Gurion to document, write and commemorate his life-story after his retirement from politics. Therefore, one may assume that this source would contribute a whole-heartedly loyal and admiring point of view. Ha'aretz had also used the services of a different historian, Shabtai Tevet, in order to shed positive light on Ben-Gurion's image. The platform given to Bar-Zohar and Tevet supported the narrative that presented Ben-Gurion as the founding father of Israel. More significantly, by recruiting these historians to shape and enhance Ben-Gurion's public image, the newspapers, paradoxically, authorized and enabled Ben-Gurion himself to take part in shaping his own immortal memory.

During the week following Begin's death, the journalistic coverage enabled historians to amplify a critical and offensive tone with respect to his militant and political heritage. It seemed as though Begin's past as a 27-year fierce and combative opposition leader, resenting and protesting strongly against the Israeli Labor Party (Mapai), was interpreted as a serious threat to Mapai's hegemony. This political clash led left-leaning newspapers to allow authors and historians, like Teddy Prois, to describe Begin as an enemy of the state who had brought economic crisis, war and death upon Israel.

The apparent difference between recruiting historians in order to eulogize and praise Ben-Gurion while turning to them in order to criticize Begin emphasized the political tendency with respect to certain newspapers. One may assume that the newspaper editors knew what they would hear from the historians mentioned above. Meaning, these authors and historians reflected a hidden agenda, which decisively exemplified and sanctified the newspapers' political ideologies. Although someone else, not including the reporters and/or editors, had signed the complimenting or criticizing articles, it was obvious that the editors could easily anticipate the general tone and content these sources were about to contribute to the shaping of the leader's memory.

Civil Authority

One of the most popular, challenging and intriguing journalistic practices with which Menachem Begin was commemorated was interviewing random ordinary citizens. Despite the fact that newspapers used this journalistic practice to cover David Ben-Gurion and Golda Meir's deaths, it is only fair and worthy to start this discussion of "civil authority" through Begin's death coverage. This is because he was the only leader that all five newspapers used the "common man on the street" practice to praise and glorify. This discussion articulated an emotional and melodramatic approach with which the newspapers cover "media events". This practice was utilized mainly as an opportunity to balance the degrading type of coverage that Begin received from Ha'aretz and Davar.

The newspapers' decision to turn to interviewees located mainly in the streets of Jerusalem enabled them to shape and produce an elusive type of coverage. Meaning, on one hand, Begin's death coverage contained extraordinary compliments like: "The undisputed king of Israel", "We loved him because he loved us" and "I cried this morning because my father died" uttered by a 72 year old vegetable stand owner. On the other hand, although the texts were complimentary and aggrandizing, they came from the streets and the markets, rather than sources who were considered respectful opinion molders, such as historians, clergymen or diplomats. Furthermore, some comments given by the "common man", such as taxi drivers and clothes salesmen, were over exaggerated and highly-emotional clichés.

The "civil authority" was also manifested during the week after Ben-Gurion's death. This kind of authority pointed out the editorial newspapers' ambition to shape an "absolutely glorifying narrative". Yedioth Ahronoth, for example, turned to "the common man on the street" in order to present Ben-Gurion as the greatest leader of the generation. In contrast, reports connecting Meir with "civil" sources were rare. It appears that her image as a tough leader who turned her back on the low social-economic group, Black Panthers, who struggled for social rights and justice, led to the fact that the newspapers refrained to a large extent from interviewing common citizens after her death. It is also possible that the traumatic and tragic memories resulting from the Yom Kippur War (YKW), which occurred when she was the prime minister, caused intense feelings of resentment.

Family Authority

This section analyzes the positions of the prime ministers' family members, as well as their power and authority manifested in journalistic coverage of the deaths. Basically, a funeral is often taken as a personal and saddening somber event that touches, first and foremost, the family members of the deceased. The death of a political leader, however, is often presented in the media as a symbolic ritual that mediates a "collective grief". The dichotomy between the private tragedy and the national interest separates, in most cases, the deceased

leader from his or her biological family and places him/her on a national public pedestal (Ben-Amos 2000).

A central question raised by this article was: How do the prime ministers' family members become represented in the journalistic death coverage? This question pointed to a delicate, sensitive and complex confrontation between the family members, journalistic institutions and governmental agencies. This article's findings showed a significant difference between the passive representation of Ben-Gurion and Meir's family members, in comparison to the more active presence of Begin's family, in particular his son, Benjamin Ze'ev (Benny) Begin, who served as a cabinet minister.

During the week following Ben-Gurion and Meir's deaths, the journalistic coverage indicated a marginal presence of sources that represented the families. Apparently, the newspapers emphasized the rich experience of the leaders both in global and local contexts. At the same time, the newspapers suppressed the family's presence. It seems that the Israeli newspapers tended to cover the news from national and patriotic points of view.

The collision between the grieving family members and data-seeking reporters indicated a huge gap between the private person and journalistic practice. Meaning, Meir's family members, for instance, were quoted as saying: "We are exhausted from and confused by reporters outside our homes"; "We see the press as a nuisance and we have nothing to add to the ongoing discourse". Hence, they asked the reporters to patiently wait until the end of the seven days of grief (Shiva). However, little did they know, journalistic practice follows a deadline. Meir's family members' words would, most probably, lose their newsworthiness after a week; and indeed, after a week, the media moved on to other issues and ignored Meir's family members.

In sharp contrast, after Begin's death, the family's role was significant and influential. This difference was linked with the fact that Begin's son, Benny Begin, acted in accordance with his father's last wish: to be buried right after his death in the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem next to his brothers in arms from the resistance movement for Israel's independence. Despite the Israeli government's regret for his decision and its efforts to persuade Benny Begin to reconsider his father's will, Benny Begin strongly refused. To be more exact, even though the "Symbols and Rituals" committee hoped to allow Israeli citizens to walk past the coffin, to bury Begin next to former prime ministers, and to invite delegations in order to pay last respects, Begin's son insisted on conducting a modest and distant burial. This occurrence demonstrated a rare case in which a family member had more political power than the government.

Collective Memory in Israeli Newspapers

The Israeli newspapers commemorated David Ben-Gurion, Golda Meir and Menachem Begin while referring to three time zones: past, present and future. The past reflections conveyed and sharpened a certain image with respect to each prime minister. That is to say, Ben-Gurion was commemorated as the

"Founding Father", Meir as a "tough leader" and an "Ambassador of the Jewish people" and Begin as a "folk hero". In addition, the journalistic commemoration of these leaders was constructed by a journalistic pattern: the linearization of leaders. This sort of practice linked these three prime ministers to biblical leaders and to other 19th – 20th century well-known leaders. This pattern positioned Ben-Gurion, Meir and Begin, after their death, as part of a respectful and powerful historical Jewish-Israeli-western dynasty.

With regard to the prime ministers' collective memory and the present, Israeli newspapers used the prime ministers' memory in ongoing political and social issues in order to achieve two main goals: 1) to criticize, or support, political parties, politicians and leaders in the contemporary government, and 2) to promote, or restrain, national ongoing developments carried out by the political coalition.

Using the past in order to enhance, discuss and/or criticize future goals enabled the journalists and editors of the various newspapers to create solidarity, to raise questions and assumptions and to justify, or condemn, future national endeavors. Promoting future goals was manifested mainly through Ben-Gurion's vision of inhabiting and developing the southern Israeli desert (Negev). In addition, Ben-Gurion and Meir's political heritage was raised in order to advance public-cultural urgent challenges, such as IDF recruitment and initiating and signing peace agreements with Arab neighboring countries.

Collective Memory and Past

David Ben-Gurion's death occurred five weeks after the Yom Kippur War's cease-fire agreement. Needless to say, the Yom Kippur War (YKW) had immensely damaged the Israeli public morale, the IDF image as an elite force and even led to a governmental aftermath and aftershock. In the 43 years that followed YKW, journalists, historians and political science researchers exposed massive and disturbing evidence of complacency among Israeli intelligence, IDF generals, the Minister of Defense, Moshe Dayan, and the prime minister, Golda Meir. The figures mentioned above appeared to have who caused security failures and close to 3000 casualties on the Israeli side. Surprisingly, despite these painful memories, Israeli newspapers used the traumatic YKW memories in order to praise and glorify Ben-Gurion and Meir after their death.

As stated above, the bleeding fresh memories from YKW were mentioned in order to glorify Ben-Gurion after his death. While the country was still under the traumatic impact of the fatal failure, Yedioth Achronot chose to publish a specific event from Ben-Gurion's past in order to present him as a prophet who had managed to predict this war 16 years earlier. Furthermore, according to Yedioth Achronot, Ben-Gurion managed to specify the risks of this anticipated war, and most importantly – he was clearly alarmed. To be more specific, under the headline: "The leader who saw the future: How Ben-Gurion predicted the next war", parts of a speech given by Ben-Gurion, while standing on a army jeep in the desert in front of generals after the Sinai War in 1956,

was published. In his speech, Ben-Gurion indicated and described the scripts of the future YKW. He warned the listeners of three scenarios: 1) We will not start the next war, but we will be surprised; 2) In the next war, the attackers will be constituted by several armies; and 3) We cannot promise that the public morale will be high in the next war.

It is important to notice how the specific time in which Ben-Gurion passed away affected the shaping of his collective memory. That is to say, given the fact that Ben-Gurion died five weeks after the end of YFW, the newspapers chose to emphasize his greatness, and his alleged ability to predict the future, through this traumatic war. And so, even though he was not officially serving the country during YKW, journalists wrote about tragic misconceptions concerning this war in order to present him as a wise and penetrating leader. Therefore, Ben-Gurion's collective memory was shaped by the journalists not only according to his character, or in accordance to the newspaper's guiding ideology, but also with respect to the circumstances of his date of death.

Strikingly, even though YKW was the most traumatic national occurrence during Meir's time as a prime minister, and although the Agranat Commission found that she shared a significant responsibility for the war's failures, YKW was mentioned in order to compliment and praise her after her death. Ha'aretz, for example, quoted her long-time loyal follower, Shimon Peres, and former IDF general, Haim Bar-Lev, who proclaimed her insight and ability to take strategic military decision under pressure. Davar also enabled its reporters and IDF veterans to hail Meir's action during the war – without a slight reminder of criticism.

The journalistic coverage during the month following Ben-Gurion's death, in all five newspapers, included retelling significant events from his past. The events mentioned were, in a roundabout way, linked to the main milestones of the Jewish people and the state of Israel's history. Almost all of these past stories illustrated Ben-Gurion's unique character and presented him as a rational and pragmatic statesman who controlled the political arena with a firm hand.

The journalistic shaping of Ben-Gurion's collective memory was illustrated by the following item published in Ha'aretz the day after he died. While people were dancing in the streets of Tel Aviv after the declaration of independence, Ben-Gurion's personal notes, which were written that very same night, indicated he was realistic, pragmatic and alarmed. In this context, he wrote: "After the declaration of independence, I went outdoors. It felt as if the whole of Tel Aviv was dancing. Everybody was in a state of bliss. But, I did not feel like dancing, given that I knew: Tonight armed militias shall invade and attack us. And we are not properly armed" (Ben-Gurion: The life, 2nd of December, 1973).

The pattern of glorifying these three prime ministers by comparing them to historical leaders was found in all five newspapers and was named the "linearization of leaders". The fact that this type of journalistic practice was present in all five newspapers, and with respect to all three prime ministers pointed out a motif with which journalists and politicians praised the deceased prime ministers by linking them to well-known highly-ranked statesmen. This

pattern may be explained in three ways: 1) intending to hail an Israeli leader by ranking him next to an internationally high-ranked politician; 2) trying to simplify the death of a leader by comparing it to another tragic event, such as the death of a historical figure; and 3) linking the Biblical-Jewish past to the Zionist movement and the modern State of Israel (Zerubavel 1995).

While the linkage of Ben-Gurion and Meir to Biblical leaders was aimed at glorifying them, comparing Begin to Biblical figures was intended to criticize him. Either way, one can claim that associating the prime ministers with Biblical leaders was used in order to emphasize, justify and demonstrate the continuity between Jewish history and the State of Israel. Furthermore, both types of comparison were aimed at strengthening the grip over the land of Israel.

During the week following the prime ministers' death, they were presented as more talented and dignified than international powerful leaders. For example, after his death, Ben-Gurion was named and exemplified as superior to the following leaders: Napoleon Bonaparte, Vladimir Lenin, Leo Trotzki, Mahatma Gandhi, Winston Churchill and Charles De Gaulle. These comparisons clearly showed, first and foremost, the high, firm and respectful status of Israel's immortal first Prime Minister and Minister of Defense – Ben Gurion.

Collective Memory: Present and Future

During the week following the prime ministers' deaths, the Israeli newspapers used the prime ministers' pasts in order to accomplish two main goals: 1) to criticize, or support, political parties and politicians in the current government, and 2) to encourage, or protest against, ongoing national processes which are handled by the hegemonic political elite. Both the politicians and the journalists, who took part in the journalistic discourse, aspired to shape the collective memory with respect to their own current aims and motives.

The Israeli newspapers utilized Ben-Gurion, Meir and Begin's political heritage in order to criticize the current government. It is important to acknowledge the fact that the specific time in which the prime ministers' deaths occurred had an impact on the newspapers' memory shaping. That is to say, the collective memory was molded not only with respect to the leader's image, or the newspaper's ideology, but also according to the circumstances of the time and place in which they died. To demonstrate, the fact that Ben-Gurion died five weeks after YKW officially ended and Meir passed away while the peace agreement process with Egypt was in progress significantly shaped the ways in which they were eulogized and commemorated.

As mentioned above, Ben-Gurion's death occurred five weeks after the ending of YKW. Despite this temporal proximity, it was most likely to assume that discussing the war, and its aftermath, would not be manifested in direct connection to Ben-Gurion's commemorative coverage, since he did not take part in commanding the military or leading the government during October

1973. Still, the newspapers dealt with the war while yearning for his style of responsibility, wisdom, character and vision.

During coverage of the prime ministers' deaths, Israeli newspapers interviewed politicians in order to initiate, or prevent, political processes in the present. This type of journalistic practice manifested, among other ways, by two events reported simultaneously in Ha'aretz, Yedioth Achronot and Ha'modia after Ben-Gurion died. In the first occurrence, Jerusalem's mayor, Teddy Kollek, seized the occasion by trying to persuade the American delegation to the funeral to provide Israel freedom of action with respect to building in Jerusalem's outskirts. In the second occurrence, during the municipal meeting, Kollek presented Ben-Gurion's vision concerning the Jewish settlement of "greater" Jerusalem.

After Meir died, Israeli and American politicians mentioned her virtues in order to promote the Israeli-Egyptian peace process. Even though Meir was known for her stubbornness, her memory was used as a tool for trying to secure regional peace. In actual practice, both the Israeli president at the time, Yitzhak Navon, and the president of the United States, Jimmy Carter, gave speeches presenting the peace agreement as Meir's last wish.

Not only did the Israeli newspapers promote political processes, they also opted to obstruct and halt other political processes. For instance, Ha'tzofe objected to the Israeli government's willingness to return territories in order to win peace and recognition. In Ha'tzofe's opinion, this type of discussion was considered an American imposition. Hence, Ha'tzofe quoted one of Begin's famous sayings to the United States ambassador, Samuel W. Lewis, when Begin objected giving lands from the Galilee mountains to Syria or Lebanon in 1981: "You must understand that Israel is not a bananas republic which is taking orders submissively from the White House". Ha'tzofe claimed this is the sort of approach it would expect the current government to adopt.

In respect to future references made by these five Israeli newspapers after Ben-Gurion, Meir and Begin's death, the Israeli newspapers tended to present certain narratives that linked the prime ministers' pasts to Israel's future. These kinds of commemorative journalistic practices aimed not only to retell and remember the past, but also to confront future speculations and prevent potential dangers. Israeli journalists encouraged examinations of social and economic possible developments, such as youth education, tourist promotion, immigration to Israel and social-economic development. Furthermore, using the prime ministers' pasts, journalists enabled politicians to criticize governmental master plans and to justify national challenges, such as the peace agreement with Egypt.

Discussion and Conclusions

Examining the death coverage of David Ben-Gurion, Golda Meir and Menachem Begin in Davar, Ha'aretz, Yedioth Achronot, Ha'tzofe and Ha'modia daily Hebraic newspapers showed an incline of criticism directed towards the prime ministers as the years progressed. During the 70's, the newspapers tended to

praise, and in some cases fully identify with, Ben-Gurion and Meir. During the 90's, however, the death coverage leaned towards more critical tones that demonized Begin. These findings showed that during the 70's journalists were clearly supportive of the nation's leaders, rather than fulfilling their professional code as democracy's watchdogs.

Throughout the week following Ben-Gurion and Meir's death coverage, journalists narrated flattering and glorifying stories with respect to the prime ministers' heritage. Therefore, Ben-Gurion's powerful image, as a determined and admirable leader was strengthened. Similarly, even though YKW left Meir's image controversial, she was mostly marked as a successful and tough leader who represented Israel admirably in the international political arena.

The glorifying narratives that were written after Ben-Gurion and Meir's death were considered as a common pro-governmental type of journalistic coverage practice in Israel during the 70's. These worshiping tones could be explained by three main reasons: 1) a social-cultural-religious norm of not "speaking ill of the dead"; 2) an attempt to preserve the left-wing labor party hegemony during the 70's; and 3) an unwritten patriotic code among reporters, editors, publishers, politicians and prime ministers, guarding the leaders from harsh criticism.

In general, praising and worshiping narratives characterized Israeli newspapers after the prime ministers' deaths. With this background in mind, Ha'aretz showed a distinct journalistic style, which manifested itself by focusing upon controversial parts of the prime ministers' heritage. These deceased prime ministers were confronted by reporters and editors who publicly shared anti-hegemonic, critical points of view. Another newspaper that offered a highly critical perspective was Ha'modia. This newspaper offered defiant points of view, in particular with respect to Ben-Gurion and Meir's secular lifestyle.

It is important to acknowledge that the journalistic coverage of each prime minister was not identical. That is to say, some newspapers presented, on the same days, while covering the same events, different points of view. Each of the three prime ministers was treated with a unique approach after they died. These unique approaches were based upon the reporters, editors and publisher's standpoints and relations with each prime minister and their political party. Thus, in an accumulating fashion, the journalists' opinions facilitated the shaping of the prime ministers' public images.

The five Israeli newspapers provided the authority to eulogize the prime ministers mainly in accordance with the deceased leader's political-ideological camp. To be more specific, after Begin died, the eulogizers were mostly veterans of the Revisionist militant group Begin commanded (Etzel) and the right-wing political party members (Likud). Although Begin held the highest governmental position in the state of Israel – prime minister – he was mostly eulogized and commemorated in Israeli newspapers as a fierce militant who commanded the Revisionist Zionist movement and as a long-time opposition leader – who became the prime minister after leading the opposition for 29 years. Indeed, he insisted on being buried next to his brothers in arms, or, alternatively, far from

the hegemonic governmental officials who led Israel for decades, before and after 1948.

Some of the Israeli newspapers presented Begin's radical militant past, which included violent actions against the British mandate, as heroic and epic. These glorifying narratives, taken from his militant underground days, were highlighted and presented as more significant than actions he took as a prime minister. Perhaps, as time went by and past memories became distant and elusive, new temporal perspectives enabled journalists to present these events in consensual and legitimate ways, in order to shape Begin's collective memory as a forceful leader. Actions Begin initiated while commanding the Etzel Underground armed organization, such as The Sergeants Affair and King David Hotel bombing, were perceived, at that point in time, as controversial and destructive. However, as the decades went by, the second or the third thought enabled an alternative perception that calmed the negative aspects and implanted and emphasized glorifying elements that represented the patriotic spirit.

All five newspapers postured themselves as significant institutions in the Israeli political arena after the deaths of Ben-Gurion, Meir and Begin. These newspapers sketched the leaders' portraits through eulogies, columns, opinions, interviews and criticism. The death coverage highlighted the reporters' and editors' points of view, rather than the actual informative descriptions of the funerals. This ability to steer the journalistic discourse, and consequently to shape the prime ministers' public images, emphasized the central position of the papers as a vital part of a functional mechanism in the Israeli society.

In order to contribute to the academic understanding regarding the coverage of political leaders' deaths, further research should compare political leaders' death coverage in Israeli media to parallel contents in international media. For example, we should examine American presidents' death coverage in the Israeli media. Alternatively, and perhaps simultaneously, analyzing Israeli prime ministers' death coverage in American newspapers would be beneficial. These patterns of investigations may contribute to the academic discourse that connects, among other fields, the studies of history, journalism and foreign politics.

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