Chapter 7
National-Liberty
Reflections of the
Exodus Myth in
Palestine–Israel Print
Media Advertisements,
1923–1958

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ABSTRACT

Focusing on the exodus from Egypt myth, an integral component of the Jewish people’s religious and cultural consciousness, the current research highlights the advertising role in utilizing myth as both reinforcement, and as an agent of change in building the collective memory of the Jewish population in Palestine–Israel. The research claims that the local advertisers present their products and services to the local consumers in accordance with the ideology, interests and needs of Zionism. It points to various means for expressing the Zionism “national liberty” meaning of The Exodus myth. These means include the freedom to earn a living in the Land of Israel, the struggle for national liberty, and the “holiday of liberty” as the Israeli Independence Day.
INTRODUCTION

In everyday usage, mass media primarily uses the term “myth” in order to indicate an erroneous belief. No less popular is the use of the phrase “shattering myths,” meaning the revelation of the “false” foundations of various beliefs and concepts commonly held by different audiences, and proving that they have no scientific, factual or historical footing. The current study does not intend to shatter accepted myths or undermine their veracity; on the contrary, as myths are important and play a significant role for various groups within society, they are a worthy and important field of study. The definition of the term “myth” in the current study is ‘an important story playing a role among its believers’. This definition neutralizes the discussion on whether the myth is true or false, because belief is not contingent upon historical truth or upon scientific evidence.

Attention to media and collective memory began with crowd psychology as developed by Gustave Le Bon (1841-1931). Le Bon argued that individuals lean towards conformism and their personality melds into the opinion of the dominant group (Le Bon, 1895/1963). He showed that the behavior of a crowd is based on emotions, myths, images and symbols, and tends to follow rituals. The term “collective memory” was coined by philosopher and sociologist Maurice Halbwachs (1950) who defined it as a memory shared by all members of society, which includes events from the past that were transmitted in detail by others (Le Bon, 1895/1963). To create collective memory out of past events, it is necessary to have mediating mechanisms, primarily national organizations and institutions (including the media, educational system, public memorials and academia) shaping memory and making it collective. As a result, society, government, and organizations have the ability to shape societal memory about their history, and only ideologically-chosen details are perpetrated and preserved in society’s collective memory. According to Halbwachs, all groups develop a collective memory about their past, which highlights the identity that distinguishes it from other groups. This process builds the group’s myth of origin, the story that explains the emergence of the existing order. Simultaneously, a myth of origin justifies the existence of this order.

The group’s myth of origin is constructed from a sequence of collective memories about the group’s source and about its development over time. Structuring a myth of origin out of memories is a political action undertaken by the powerful groups in society that shape its group identity. Therefore, the emphases and memories of past events are subject to change over time. Collective memory is constructed over time based on the interests and needs of power groups and society. Historical memory of national identity (preserved in the collective memory) gives the nation state its national historical recognition, bestows moral legitimacy on the state, and transforms the nation state from a secular-political entity to a secular-sacred one.
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