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Author(s): Orit Rozin

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FOOD, IDENTITY, AND NATION-BUILDING IN ISRAEL'S FORMATIVE YEARS

Orit Rozin

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Abstract: This article portrays the shaping of the Israeli nation and the shaping of the Israeli family at the early stages of statehood and nation-building, in times of economic strain, austerity, and massive emigration. Food supply, food consumption, and food distribution will be discussed. It is assumed that these aspects of daily life express, construct, produce, and reproduce social relation and hence have close affinity to both social and national order. Israeli legislators discussing the austerity policy, Israeli housewives struggling to feed their families, and food habits of immigrants under economic and cultural duress are some of the topics discussed. The study portrays the role of the state in building the nation's social net and constructing its character through food repertoire. The role played by the state will be compared to that of other social and cultural agents.

Keywords: Ashkenazi, collective identity, cultural repertoire, food, nation-building, national cuisine, *Tzena*

When David Ben-Gurion, Israel's first prime minister, stated his vision of the newly created Israel Defense Forces, he envisioned an army with a mission that transcended combat. In a letter written to Chief of Staff Yigael Yadin in November 1950, he articulated a mental picture of a military that also performed civilian duties, as a critical role in building the new nation. One such area was assisting new immigrants, and Ben-Gurion referred specifically to those from Yemen, a population that suffered from high infant mortality. Ben-Gurion also demanded that children be given "better nourishment, hopefully away from home, as the Yemenite father does not care for his children and family the way we do, and is unaccustomed to ensure that his

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children have eaten all they need before he himself has eaten.”¹ These words express not only the prime minister’s personal views but also the prevailing social repertoire of the time, as well as the social and cultural hierarchy of the period. The statement also reflects the prominent and clear connection between food, parenting, the status of children, and nation-building. Food, family, and social structure are the topics of this article.

The drama of forming the Israeli family during the period of *Tzena*, austerity measures, is the focus of this study. *Tzena* affected, first and foremost, everything connected with food—supplies, consumption, its division within the family and between population groups—and the relation between these arrangements and the national order. All these aspects of food will be discussed here.

The underlying assumption is that food—and the complex of human activities connected to it, including physical restraint and curbing impulses—communicate cultural values which express, construct, replicate, and create social relations (Charles and Kerr 1988: 2). This assumption directs us to some of the questions this article aims at answering—some dealing with collective identity and others focused on individuals organized in the framework of families: Was there a link between limiting food consumption and the national desire to shape a worthy individual and a worthy society? Did *Tzena*, enacted at the end of the 1948 war, contain and conceal the idea that bodily needs should be controlled and minimized and bodily pleasures curtailed in order to answer a higher call? Are we confronting a way of thinking that suggests that if people sacrifice some or all of their pleasures, they will attain a higher level of human existence? What does this entire discussion mean when we are talking about the construction of an Israeli nation?

In the context of the construction of the Israeli family, other questions come to mind: What were the national roles played by women at the time? How did women react to the *Tzena*? How was their struggle related to their national role? How was food distributed within the Israeli family and why? What kind of social order does this food allocation project? Other questions are linked to immigrant absorption, and to the social image of immigrant families: What was the nutrition condition like for immigrant families? How were they affected by shortages? How were Mizrachi families seen in veteran perspective through the food prism? How did veterans inculcate ‘normative’ cultural values through food?

These questions involve many research topics, and we shall have to address them only after making some preliminary remarks—about food and identity; about women and national movements in general; and about women in Zionism in particular. Only then can we deal with the relationship between food shortages and the nation-building process in Israel. Turning from the ideological field to the field of practice, the general historical background of

Tzena will be presented, as well as the special connection between women and food. Then we shall find out what happened to veteran Israeli women during *Tzena* times and learn more about veteran Israeli families coping with shortages. Once we understand the power relations inside veteran families we will examine the relationship between veterans and immigrants through the food shortage prism. Finally, we will point to the way in which a new cultural repertoire or a new national cuisine was beginning to formulate at the end of *Tzena* times.

Food and Identity

Food, argued Carole Counihan, is at the core of our sense of identity. Food, she wrote (1999: 9–10), is intimate, personal, and emotional. Even nowadays, but more so prior to the intense globalization processes during the past 50 years, the flavor and smell of the food we share with our family, especially our holiday foods, are deeply intertwined with our personal, familial, and communal identity. Food consumption transcends the boundaries of that which is outside us and that which is inside, thereby integrating exterior and interior. We absorb food and internalize it, which is why there seems to be a strong relation between food and identity. This is reflected in the German saying: “Man ist was man isst” (You are what you eat) (L’orange Fürst 1997: 441). Because this belief was widespread, food had (and in some respect it still has) social implications. Food may be one of the factors inducing familiarity. This is true especially in a period of nation-building entwined with mass immigration when culture agents are engaged in construction of a national cuisine and more importantly a national cultural repertoire.

Food is so basic to our lives that immigrants may be willing to forgo their native tongue, beliefs, and customs, but hold on fast to their food. Food taboos even nowadays delineate the boundaries of a group, create culinary and social stratification, and formulate norms. All these combine to form contexts of location and meaning in the social world (Helman 2003: 75–76; L’orange Fürst 1997: 441).

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Nationality, Gender, and Body

The perception of nation as a metaphoric family created emotional ties between hitherto unrelated groups and individuals, alongside an age- and gender-based hierarchy that led to building national identities (Blom 2000: 8). Zionism, especially in *yishuv* (pre-statehood) days, held a dual view of

women and womanhood. Women were perceived as mothers of the nation but also as external to it, and womanhood symbolized all that is good in a nation and its land, and simultaneously, all that is bad in the Diaspora (Boyarin 1997: 123–124; Gluzman 1997: 146–147, 156). A comparative study by Ida Blom regards this duality as characterizing nationality in general: only men enjoyed complete civil rights in all new nations. Women were granted full citizenship rights only in a piecemeal fashion, when the values inherent in womanhood were perceived as contributing to society something *different* than those contributed traditionally by men, a contribution necessary to round off a nation's value system (Blom 2000: 9–13). Studies of women's participation in Jewish nationality in the *yishuv* and after statehood present a similar picture of gender polarization and place a significant emphasis on women's designated maternal and domestic roles (Berkowich 1997: 277–278; Melman 1994: 255).

Despite the tendency toward gender-based polarization, culture in the *yishuv* and in Israel was of a revolutionary nature, and this revolution also affected the family. Major change took place in the kibbutz and within socialist-collectivistic groups, but because these forces were dominant, their influence was far-reaching. The prevailing discourse was that a man's duty is to provide for his family and to go to battle during wartime, and the woman's duty was to bear children, educate them, and nurture them. However, in certain realms of society parents became marginal in the lives of their children, with schools, youth movements, and the army creating a new, "native" culture, almost a counterculture that aimed at neutralizing the harmful influences of home and parents (O. Almog 2004: 1195).

One source of national Jewish strength in *yishuv* times was that Zionism confronted not only the Other, but the Other Self—the pre-Zionist Jew. Zionism was closely related to modern values, and as such eager to change the existing order. Zionism was also preoccupied with the physical aspects of the Jewish body (mostly, but not solely, the male body) (Boyarin 1997; Gluzman 1997; Melman 1994: 256), representing another departure from the traditional repertoire. During the three decades (1918–1948) of British Mandate, the *yishuv* was involved in an extended process of nation-building that centered on redesigning the Jewish self. In the early years of statehood, this process legitimized interference on the part of the state and its agencies in private spheres of individuals and families.

Shortages and Nation-Building

In Israel's collective memory, *Tzena* is associated with a series of products—food, clothing, and household—and for the most part, with the lack

thereof. Intended as a market regulatory measure, *Tzena* actually meant that certain nutritional ingredients were limited or lacking. Against this background we should turn to examine the meaning of food avoidance, and the interpretation of the decision made by representatives of the collective to withhold some foods from the public and themselves.

In contemporary culture, food avoidance has three manifestations (discounting food shortages or religious considerations): body-shaping diets aimed at achieving a “fit” or “healthy” body; illness, usually among adolescent girls (e.g., anorexia nervosa) (O. Almog 1999: 26–27; Bell and Valentine 1997: 25–42; Counihan 1997: 76–92); and hunger strikes intended to focus public attention on a particular issue. In all three cases, an individual or a group of individuals is at the center of this avoidance, even in widespread weight-reduction diets. *Tzena* represents the opposite of individual choice or situation, and translates into a degree of unification and standardization of the consumption for the entire population. For many, such standardization meant enlarging the daily menu (as was the case in Britain during World War II) (Nelson 1993: 104; Zweiniger-Bargielowska 2000: 44). However, for some this policy yields decreased food consumption, followed by lower consumption of other consumer products.

It is important to clarify that *Tzena* was imposed for practical reasons. It was seen as a rational measure that befitted the goals of Jews in Israel and of would-be immigrants. However, once imposed, various rationales appeared, with some relating to the Spartan ideology adhered to by immigrants to Israel in the first half of the twentieth century. Other reasons resonated with semi-religious overtones.

When Minister of Supplies and Regulation Dov Yosef first announced *Tzena*, he was careful to state that the policy was rational, aimed neither at abstention nor related to semi-religious motives (*Divrey ha’Knesst* [Knesset proceedings], 26 April 1949: 402). Based on a socialist worldview, he saw *Tzena* as applying basic egalitarianism, and believed that it was incumbent upon a state to care for the welfare of its citizens and therefore be involved in economic life. The policy was also based on a desire to control and direct resources toward the national goal of absorbing immigrants (*idem*). Ben-Gurion presented the *Tzena* policy as a moral issue, “We have neither right nor moral justification for adapting the number of immigrants to economic needs, real or imaginary” (*Divrey ha’Knesst*, 26 April 1949: 399). Knesset Member Eliyahu Elishar (of the Sepharadim Party) said that the Knesset must vote against harming immigration and absorption because “this is the soul of the nation, the very soul of the state. Furthermore, it is not only the soul of nation and state, but also the souls of our brothers who are in danger” (*Divrey ha’Knesst*, 27 April 1949: 419).

Judging by public rhetoric across the political spectrum (e.g., Israel Rokah of the General Zionists, *Divrey ha'Knesst*, 2 May 1949: 450–451), *Tzena* was perceived not only as a means of lowering the cost of living but as a means of building a collective identity, a society in which the strong sacrifice or completely relinquish some of their pleasures for the benefit of the collective's weaker members. Underlying the *Tzena* decision was the assumption that the success of the Zionist project rested on benefiting the collective, not individuals within. Forgoing bodily pleasures was presented as helping weaker members of society. However, it was not an expression of empathy toward them, but rather an expression of an effort toward nation-building. Because sharing food expresses closeness, family ties, and friendship (Luton 1996: 37), I suggest viewing *Tzena* as a demand from the more established members of society to invite new immigrants and people of meager means to sit at their table. This symbolic meal was an imaginary social tool or event meant to be a building block for a nation that was just and worthy. The presence and the absence of food function, in this case, as markers of the boundaries of the collective and as a means of forming a collective identity with positive self-awareness.

Uri Zvi Greenberg, a poet and member of the Herut party in the Knesset,² called for preceding *Tzena* measures with a change in spiritual values, demanding lifetime austerity. Speaking in the Knesset, Greenberg said that if all were convinced that Ben-Gurion leads the state justly, then all should stand by him during the period of economic cutbacks and *Tzena*, “As it was in the days of the Temple, we will stand close to each other yet have the space to bow.” (*Divrey ha'Knesst*, 27 April 1949: 418).

It was not by chance that Greenberg mentioned change of heart and the Temple. What Greenberg implied is a desire to turn the body into a temple of worship of a higher, more spiritual existence. The aim of economic leaders at the time, especially those from MAPAI (the dominant labor party, and Ben-Gurion's party), was much more down to earth. They saw *Tzena* as directing and restraining consumption to allow for the absorption of new immigrants. *Tzena* was intended as a temporary measure; it was not aimed at creating “an austere pioneer society,” (*Divrey ha'Knesst*, 27 April 1949: 417) but rather a society whose members enjoy welfare and good health. The heads of MAPAI (like Greenberg) (*idem*) were convinced that pioneering is done by the select few. At the same time, MAPAI's and Greenberg's demands share two things in common: Although at opposite sides of the political spectrum, both adhered to the cultural belief that an individual's body is a legitimate arena for social-normative intervention and that bodily restraint has moral value, not only practical purpose. They shared the belief that the degree to which individuals succeed in restraining their body reflects the general cultural level of society as a whole (Hertzberg 1950: 124).

Start here

The *Tzena* Policy: A Narrative

→ In April 1949, toward the end of Israel's War of Independence, the government decided to impose an austerity policy, *Tzena*. The policy was not aimed at creating total equality, but rather intended to enable a modicum of equal accessibility to food, and later to other consumer products as well. The economic policy was an outcome of the immigration policy, with immigration perceived as a strategic need for the state whose Jewish population, just prior to statehood, numbered 650,000 (in 1949 there were 160,000 Arab-Palestinian citizens in Israel) (Lustick 1985: 82). The influx of immigrants from 1948 to 1951 added 700,000 Jewish citizens to the new state.

Tzena was only one aspect of the many arenas in which the government was involved in economics. However, *Tzena* was unique in that it touched upon the lives of all segments of the population, with food rationing creating greater hardship for the urban population than for the rural one.

Austerity programs were not an Israeli invention, having been enacted locally by the British Mandate during World War II, and this administration left regulations for consumer behavior under supervision. A similar program was enacted in Britain during the war and maintained during post-war rehabilitation and through the elections of 1951, abandoned only in 1955 (Zweiniger-Bargielowska 2000: 6).

During its first nine months, *Tzena* seemed successful. Black-market activities were relatively rare, and, for the most part, the population was compliant. However, by January 1950 the government was struggling to supply sufficient quantities of protein (meat, poultry, eggs, and milk) and began cutting down ration size. When rations decreased, so did compliance—and black-market transactions were on the rise.

In 1950 and 1951, the government tried to strictly enforce *Tzena*, even inspecting the bags of bus riders or shoppers at markets. Government agents even entered homes and checked cupboards and refrigerators (or, in most homes, iceboxes). A special headquarters for combating the black market was formed by Ben-Gurion toward the end of 1950, and he personally got involved in focusing attention on economic transgressions. However, despite enforcement measures, and despite the special Courts for Price Gouging and Scalping and efforts to bring black-market sharks—rather than mere peons—to trial, the rationing and supervising system continued to crumble. As the situation deteriorated, and the state was critically short of foreign currency and lost its international credit rating, the government changed its economic policy. *Tzena* was affected politically by results of the elections to the second Knesset, where the Tzionim Klaliyim (General Zionist) party gained sharply. Election results reflected support of this party's free-market economy. The economic situation also put an

end to the free immigration policies. In addition, budgetary restraint was enacted—inflationary funding policies were curtailed, currency rates updated, and prices soared, including food prices.

One major reason for *Tzena*'s failure was an increasing unwillingness on the part of housewives to comply. To understand this shift in attitude we must examine the relationship between gender identity and food, and the relationship between *Tzena* policies and housewives.

Women and *Tzena*

Women and Food

Women, who generally manage the routine of daily meals, are also those who instill social codes related to food and eating. Unborn babies and breastfed babies derive their sustenance from women's bodies. In addition, most of the work connected with food is women's work. It was through food-related work (including shopping, cleaning, preparation and cooking, serving, clearing, and washing dishes) that women established their place in the world, influenced others, and defined themselves.

Unlike today, in Israel of the 1950s it was not customary for men to prepare meals; thus, cooking was solely the woman's domain (*Ha'olam Ha'ze*, 23 March 1950: 16). Food preparation is a daily chore. It is routine and frequent, and, most prominently, it is not something that can be postponed. Tasks of this type are usually low-status, and entrusted to those who have little control over their time. I will demonstrate that regarding accessibility to food and nourishment, women have a great degree of power as well as great vulnerability (L'orange Fürst 1997: 443; Van Esterik 1999: 226, 230).

Housewives and Tzena

Early in the first debate held in the Knesset about *Tzena*, it was clear that women played a major role in implementing the new policy (*Divrey ha'Knesst*, 25 April 1949: 441, 445, 451; 27 April 1949: 416, 424; 11 May 1949: 497). Israeli housewives stood at the forefront of the economic policy, just as British housewives did before them. To a large degree, it was up to them to successfully implement the policy aimed at yielding equality and maintaining the nation's physical health and morale (Zweiniger-Bargilowska 2000: 99).

In Israel of the early 1950s, most women of marriageable age were, indeed, married. Most of them, even those employed outside their homes, were housewives and entrusted with family nutrition. The main burden of

rationing fell upon non-rural women, meaning not only city dwellers but also women in *ma'abarot*, tent camps or hut camps for the temporary housing of new immigrants. Our discussion will now turn to housewives in the veteran Israeli population, and will subsequently address immigrants.

Stop Here

Tzena: Management and Difficulties

During the *Tzena*, the urban housewife started her day by searching for food in the local shops. Shopping did not involve choice; each family was assigned a specific list of suppliers, including grocery store, vegetable shop, butcher, fish store, and milkman. Other consumer products could be purchased wherever they could be found. Just as families were assigned suppliers, each supplier was assigned customers, and merchandise was supplied according to the list of customers. Each family held a book of government-issued coupons, and payment was accompanied by handing over coupons to assure regulation and monitoring by the Ministry of Supplies.

Notices of distribution of merchandise to the stores were published in the daily newspapers and over the radio. However, a housewife who went to the store was often turned away with “Well, so go buy it from the radio” (*Ha'aretz*, 10 October 1950, 9 January 1951; *Ha'boker*, 13 March 1950; *La'isha*, 28 September 1950: 7). The discrepancy between announcements and shortages was a source of much complaint and bitterness (*Ha'aretz*, 9 January 1951). Newspaper satires were quick to criticize political leaders (*La'isha*, 29 November 1951: 2). In essence, housewives were hostages in the hands of shopkeepers. With demand far exceeding supplies, the latter became abusive, adding insult to shortage.

The housewives also complained about the many hours they had to spend on line, an average of three hours a day, rain or shine. Despite all difficulties, housewives did their best to maintain a routine and provide their children and husbands with reasonably tasty and reasonably nutritional meals. They saw this as their duty and did their best to fulfill it.

The housewives developed several strategies to cope with the shortages. One was to publish complaints in the press—female reporters shared their personal tribulations, and male reporters recorded their impressions of the situation. Writers wanted to express their readers' views, and give them the feeling that someone was aware of their problems, felt their hardships, and aimed to alleviate their loneliness. Housework is a solitary occupation at the best of times (Oakley 1974: 52),³ and loneliness is exacerbated by hardship.

The complaints printed in the newspapers sounded the voices of all urban housewives. Despite the daily competition for food products, especially those sold without rationing, the women felt bonded and developed solidarity. The

printed complaints were also meant to be read by the husbands, who, the women felt, were rather oblivious to the difficulties that were the precursor to their daily meal. The complaints were meant to enlighten the men as to the work and talent of the women who managed to feed a family and satisfy it despite shortages (*La'isha*, 5 October 1950: 1). Finally, policymakers were an address for complaints, with editors and journalists feeling that if these officials were aware of the reality and mood of housewives, the government would be persuaded to alleviate the shortages and improve its attitude toward the public (*Ha'aretz*, 21 March 1950).

Another strategy for managing shortages was to provide practical advice for improving nutrition, for instance, instructions on growing vegetables in urban patches or on balconies (akin to Victory Gardens in the United States during World War II) and even raising chickens (*Davar*, 5 April 1950; *La'isha*, 1 February 1950, 8 February 1950). The women's sections in the daily newspapers and *La'isha*, Israel's women's magazine, printed recipes specially adapted to conditions of shortages. The Ministry of Supplies and Rationing also printed and distributed recipes of its own (Segev 1984: 286; Zweiniger-Bargielowska 2000: 340). Humor was another way to cope with difficulty, and jokes were the safety valve that helped society as a whole, and women in particular, manage their frustration (*Ha'aretz*, 23 February 1950, 27 February 1950; *Herut*, 4 October 1950; *La'isha*, 15 March 1950; *Ma'ariv*, 4 January 1950).

Compliance—a Housewife's Dilemma

A daily dilemma faced by a housewife was whether she could and ought to comply with *Tzena*, or try to purchase necessary products on the black market. A perusal of the written press—newspapers and women's magazines—reveals that as long as only adults in the family were affected by shortages, women were compliant. However, when it came to children and babies, even the most loyal and patriotic woman found it difficult to obey the law. One way to maintain a proper diet for children, without turning to the black market, was to give a parent's rations to the children. In theory, the rationing was supposed to fit everyone's nutritional needs based on criteria of age, type of work (with privileges for those doing physical labor), state of health, and gender (with privileges for pregnant women and nursing mothers). However, no one supervised food distribution within the family, and domestic practices led to the eventual deterioration in maternal health, as mothers in particular shared their food (mostly protein-rich food) with their children (*Ha'boker*, 13 March 1950). By fall 1951, definite health problems began to surface, with a sharp increase in women's morbidity, including spontaneous abortions, preterm births, and intrauterine

death. Doctors could not determine whether these were due to deteriorated physical health or to the stress of standing in endless lines and the uncertainty of obtaining food (*Ha'aretz*, 3 September 1951; *Ha'boker*, 2 September 1951; *Herut*, 2 September 1951).⁴

It seems, then, that women sacrificed themselves for the sake of their families. The government advocated limiting consumption and making sacrifices to help the incoming brethren, and, within the family, the mother made an additional self-sacrifice. According to Carol Gilligan, the female definition identifies good with self-sacrifice (Gilligan 1995: 100). This self-perception drove women to give up their food for the family, because they saw their self-worth as measured by their ability to care for others, and first and foremost, feed their children. Giving the best food to the children has also been attributed to Jewish mothers of Eastern European origin who immigrated to the United States, where health-care workers thought that Jewish mothers overindulge their children (Gabaccia 1998: 128). A study of the influence of austerity on the British public found that self-sacrifice on the part of mothers was common there, too, especially in 1946–1948 (Zweiniger-Bargielowska 2000: 124–125). Charles and Kerr, who studied food distribution in British families in the 1980s, found that women cook and prepare food in accordance with the preferences of family members, especially their husbands, completely overlooking their own preferences. The researchers claimed that women sacrificed their own taste to the point of completely obliterating it (Charles and Kerr 1988: 63). These findings may indicate that this type of sacrifice is widespread and related to gender and society, transcending the boundaries of Israeli society during *Tzena* (Counihan 1999: 63; Van Esterik 1999: 229).

Several normative commandments converge on this alter of self-sacrifice: The mother perceives her own main function in line with a gender-based and national perception, as entrusted with feeding her family and ensuring her children's welfare. In times of shortage, the only way to sustain these values is via self-sacrifice, or by restraining or subordinating the mother's body. This norm was prevalent among veteran Israeli mothers, and was used to form attitudes toward the other—the immigrant, as will be demonstrated later in this article.

If so, veteran Israeli women had to choose between two opposing perceptions of good: One was rooted in identifying with the general good, especially with the weak members of society and called for obeying the limitations imposed by *Tzena*. At the opposite end was a perception rooted in identifying with the woman's role in her family, which in reality calls for breaking the *Tzena* regulations. Nationalism, particularly Zionist nationalism, conveys the message that women's primary role in nation-building is their maternal role. Zionism, as an agent of modernity, also imprinted

the idea of the Good of the Child upon them. Furthermore, as educators of their children, they were in charge of passing on the Zionist ethos and the modernist ethos, and therefore had made their decision. This is consistent with the fact that heretofore women still perceive themselves, and are perceived by their surroundings, as those responsible for nourishing the family (L'orange Fürst 1997: 441–442; Van Esterik 1999: 229).

Self-sacrifice may also be locally interpreted as an act of pioneering. It is conceivable that for some women, if not for all, this was yet another means to express their identification with the values of the Zionist revolution, assuming a role alongside the male warriors. Self-sacrifice and self-denial establish a woman's body as the locus of sacrifice, a sacrifice made to feed the children or to construct a definition of appropriate womanhood (Brumberg 1997: 168–174; Goldin 2002: 37).

Mothers and the Black Market

Handing food over to the children was just one way to overcome shortages. It also included obvious shortcomings, such as the fact that it simply did not offer a solution. There was a serious shortage of basic baby food, which at times could be obtained only on the black market. Turning to the black market was also a result of years of educating the public that children required a varied diet. Furthermore, weight gain was considered a conclusive measure of a child's good health. Weight gain requires food, and the black market was the place to get it (*Devar Ha'polet*, 1 February 1951: 211; *Ha'boker*, 28 September 1950).

When supplies first dwindled, women felt that circumstances forced them to break the law. The outbreak of several epidemics such as scarlet fever and the menace of polio contributed to reliance on the black market. To help protect children, doctors told mothers to fortify them with good food to build up their immune system (*La'isha*, 31 May 1950).

As those responsible for feeding their families, women were clearly the main consumers of black-market goods. As such, they bore the public onus of responsibility for its growth and for the accompanying damage to national economy. Men were portrayed as the gatekeepers of morality. They set the policies, served in the various enforcement agencies, and sounded the call for equality and protection of the weak. However, after a day of gate-keeping, they would come home to a meal that—more often than not—contained black-market ingredients.

Women expressed their outcry in the polls. In the local elections of November 1950, the big winner was the *Tzionim Klaliyim*, a party that advocated free-market, liberal economic policies; concurrently, socialist MAPAI

lost many seats. The next day, the press described the results as women's rebellion against Dov Yosef and *Tzena* (*Ma'ariv*, 16 November 1950).

A search of Israeli archives failed to produce any voter breakdown, but one could compare with the British elections that took place at about the same time and under similar circumstances. The 1950 and 1951 elections in Britain revealed the political power of housewives frustrated with years of austerity. The Conservative Party promised to improve supplies and gradually eliminate the austerity programs, and it garnered the women's vote. The Labor Party lost its hold, and the 1951 government was Conservative (Zweiniger-Bargielowska 2000: 252–253).

When elections for the second Knesset approached, the competing parties made an all-out effort to win over the housewives. One manifestation of this effort was enacting The Law for Equal Opportunities for Women, passed by the Knesset two weeks before Election Day (Rozin 2002a: 209–210). Hence, *Tzena* and its political outcome led to a considerable improvement in women's rights.

Nutritional Deterioration

A report delivered in a pediatrics conference held in the winter of 1951–1952 revealed that children's morbidity and infant mortality had risen considerably (*Ha'aretz*, 6 December 1951; Rozin 2002b: 221). In the summer of 1952, the Medical Counsel on Nutrition stated that the nutritional needs of those who live on rationed food only are not met (*Herut*, 18 August 1952). The Counsel subcommittee called for an urgent improvement in food supplies, especially for younger children. Doctors demanded larger rations of eggs, milk, dairy products, and other foods (*Ha'boker*, 12 September 1952). While those forced to live only on rationed food faced harsh difficulties, the condition of those who could not even afford to purchase rationed food was desperate. According to the press, the number of people who could not afford rationed food grew during the fall of 1952 when food prices escalated sharply, and edible food rotted on the shelves for lack of customers.⁵ During this period, a United Nations expert on nutrition visited Israel. The ensuing report on the condition of the weaker segments of society turned out to be an embarrassment to the government and its policies. The expert stated unequivocally that the number of cases of malnutrition he encountered in Israel outnumbered any he had seen elsewhere in the world (*Ha'aretz*, 22 October 1952).

The situation improved somewhat toward the end of 1952, taking a turn for the worse in early 1953 when food prices rose sharply. Higher prices meant that more immigrants and people in poverty-stricken areas were forced to sell their rations for bread.⁶

Food and Cultural Identity

The Right to Food, the Right to Culture

The government saw itself responsible for the nutritional needs of all its citizens. The policies of Israel's first governments made this clear, and the obligation was further manifested in enacting the *Tzena* policy. This obligation meant that people have the opportunity to earn a living, that food supplies reach remote locations, that food prices be protected so that people of modest means can afford to eat, and that welfare policies exist for those unable to earn. However, as in other cases of supplying food in times of emergency (Van Esterik 1999: 228), the government was hard-pressed to provide its citizens with culturally acceptable food. Life in the immigrant camps was not conducive to ensuring proper nutrition. Although meals were prepared to meet caloric needs, the lines for the communal dining halls were long, and people waited for hours to get a table. Once inside, the atmosphere was strained, sitting at tables with strangers, all from different cultural backgrounds. The food was far from tasty, and furthermore, not to the liking of even one group. Thus, quite literally, cultural reasons prevented some immigrants from enjoying even what food was available (Rubinstein 1993: 51–52). Even when immigrants moved from the camps to *ma'abarot* and to new villages, supplies did not meet their taste and customs.

When the Knesset first discussed *Tzena*, MP Rachel Cohen turned to Supplies and Rationing Minister Dov Yosef and drew his attention to the diversity of the Israeli population. She claimed that rations could not be standardized and had to meet the needs of different groups. She mentioned the difference between the dietary needs of Jews and Arabs during the World War II austerity program, when Jews had a glut of margarine while Arabs were forced to pay exorbitant prices for oil. Arab women went to Jewish homes and sold sugar in exchange for rice (*Divrey ha'Kneset*, 27 April 1949: 424). Minister of Labor Golda (Meirson) Meir attacked party member Dov Yosef, saying that equal rations meant mechanical equality but not real equality, as the immigrants could not use the supplies provided and therefore remained hungry.⁷ A similar claim was made by MP Recanati, of Sephardic descent, who claimed that the food given to immigrants from Muslim countries not only damages their health but forces them to “become Ashkenazi,” compelling them to relinquish their cultural identity.⁸ It is interesting to note that despite this comment, Recanati himself showed lack of cultural insight, when he suggested that immigrants from Muslim countries be given Kasseri cheese and yogurt, which are part of the Balkan diet but not the entire non-Ashkenazi one.

When Pinchas Lavon replaced Dov Yosef, as the minister responsible for food consumption, he assumed a scientific view of the issue, regarding his nutritional advisers as the ultimate experts. Decisions made by the Nutritional Institute were scientific and therefore binding.⁹ Responding to Recanati's question, Lavon rejected the suggestion not only on organizational and budgetary grounds, but also on *public and national ones*,¹⁰ expressing his conviction, a conviction shared by many others (*Ha'boker*, 16 March 1950), that eating habits, just as other cultural elements ("sleeping in a bed, cooking on a kerosene stove, sending children to school, buying goods, frying eggs, eating bread"¹¹), are tools for building a homogeneous nation. Underlying this perception is the idea that man is what man eats, and reshaping eating habits will help build a new, unified society, one that eats civilized food. This argument echoes Reformist thinking in the United States in the early decades of the twentieth century. The Reformists wanted to reshape the dietary habits of immigrants and adapt them to the rational thinking of the American kitchen—whatever that was (Gabaccia 1998: 122–125). Ben-Gurion's attitude was diametrically opposed to that of Lavon—after meeting with representatives of women's organizations he noted in his diary that special food is needed for immigrants from Yemen, Iraq, and Persia, who sell their eggs on the black market to buy oil and other foods.¹²

Food supplies were dictated by the purchasing policies of the ministers in charge of implementing *Tzema*. Special instructors were sent to show women immigrants how to make the most of available foods. Mostly, the instructors tried to teach the use of products with which the immigrants were not familiar and which would provide protein and sometimes fat. Not all immigrants received this much-needed instruction, which was important for their survival, and especially for the survival and development of their children. Because they were unfamiliar with the foods, many immigrants avoided buying them, thus contracting nutritional-deficiency illnesses.¹³ In contrast to Lavon's authoritarian perception, the nutritional experts managed to introduce unfamiliar products, doing their best to adapt them to the palate of each group.¹⁴ However, this cultural sensitivity was not always adhered to, and the instructors—mostly veteran Israelis—began teaching the immigrant women some of their own recipes and nutritional habits (*Davar*, 23 August 1955).

The scientific view held by the authorities, at times referred to as "rational nutrition," (compare Gabaccia 1998: 126) presented the immigrants' diet as "not rational" (Ben-Ari 1951: 11; Hirsch 2000: 68–69). This attitude was sometimes shared by veteran Israeli women who tried to instruct the newcomers in "proper" nutrition. This was done privately when the two women met, usually one as lady of the house, the other as the cleaner (Livne 1951).

Children, Food, and the Image of Immigrants from Muslim Countries

Veteran Israelis and the establishment perceived immigrants from Europe as good parents who cared for their children's welfare, while immigrants from Muslim countries were considered unable to care for theirs. This inability was attributed to a basic cultural shortcoming; these groups do not place their children's needs foremost on their list. They were also portrayed as lacking parenting skills due to their ignorance and lack of understanding, a portrayal that cast aspersions on these immigrants and led to the idea that their habits must be changed, especially in caring for infants and babies (Rozin 2002b, 2005).

The following information and the ensuing discussion refer to texts authored by the veteran population, and reflect their point of view.

It was not only food and cooking that separated veteran Israelis from immigrants from Muslim countries, but the image of food distribution within the family, meal structure, and the actual way of eating. All were central to the involvement of veteran Israelis in the life of immigrants, and were also the foundation for the wall that separated the two populations.

That veteran Israelis in the 1950s were interested in immigrant cultures and lifestyles, is abundantly clear to anyone reading newspapers of the period. Journalists reported from the immigrants' camps in Israel and went to their countries of origin, prior to the group's immigration to Israel. They examined the way potential immigrants cared for their children and studied the children's nutrition. An interesting example is a report by Yitchak Ziv-Av, a reporter for *Ma'ariv* who traveled to Persia before Persian Jews immigrated to Israel and focused on the children. He visited the Alliance School and asked teachers about children's nutrition, noting in his article that the children ate three *pitas* with cheese every day, and that the children received no cooked food. After his visit to school, Ziv-Av went to the Jewish ghetto to find out what the women did while the children were in school (*Ma'ariv*, 29 November 1950). The article indicates that dealing with the quality of child nutrition was seen as a litmus test of the parenting skills of potential immigrants. This issue was prominent not only in the press but also in various decision-making forums, indicating the great importance attributed by the veteran population, especially the women, to child nutrition.

Veteran Israelis, decision-makers and the general public alike adopted a critical and judgmental attitude toward immigrants from Muslim countries, accusing them of neglecting and abusing their children, even starving them.¹⁵ Accusations were rampant toward the Yemenite population; the picture popularly portrayed depicted Yemenite fathers as forcing a life of destitution on their families because they were reluctant to work or

because they spent most of their income on themselves (Segev 1984: 181–182; Tehon 1969: 215–216). Men from Muslim countries were said to be selling their children's rations for alcohol instead of caring for their hungry kin (Carmeli 1950; *Ha'dor*, 14 June 1953).¹⁶ Although much of the blame was placed on the fathers, there were also descriptions of mothers who ate special, rare foods intended for their children. To solve this problem, mothers were ordered to feed their children under supervision within the facility where the food was supplied. While mothers were explicitly accused of deliberately neglecting their children, the instructors who worked with the immigrants (and were responsible for instilling proper parenting patterns in the immigrants) also blamed some of the children's nutritional problems on the meager welfare budget that did not afford a bare existence. Ministry of Health files contained reports of children from Muslim countries who suffered from malnutrition and therefore contracted deficiency illnesses.¹⁷ The newspapers, including even a Sepharadi magazine (*Hed Ha'mizrah*), perpetuated the image of hungry children and neglectful parents. They criticized the fact that milk and other rations intended for children were given to the parents rather than the children, who should eat and drink them in the communal dining halls.¹⁸ Even agents of change, such as Hadassah health workers and physicians, doubted that the parents would give their children the necessary foods, even if they had them.¹⁹ Despite the fact that the new economic program meant that many people could ill afford even rationed foods, as their prices soared and coupons had to be sold for bread, parents who sold their children's rations were still described as poor parents (*Ha'dor*, 14 June 1953; *Yediot Aharonot*, 8 February 1952).

In general, the press did greater disservice to the immigrants than the official reports. However, these reports also shared the view that it was not only the shortages that caused neglect, but a *basic cultural disability* in parenting skills of *some* people of Muslim-country origin. A contemporary study claimed that in Yemen the custom was to give the father the best part of the food, leaving the lesser parts for mother and children (Tehon 1969: 212). Later reports also wrote about the Yemenite custom of separate meals for men and women (Dorsky 1986: 66). However, another report about family life in Yemen before immigration to Israel stated that the family always partook in meals together (Mizrahi 1999: 94). According to a recent report, women in Yemen eat less protein than men, because they eat after the men have had their meal, and make due with leftovers (Sattar 1999).

That differences in food distribution within a family exist in pre-modern societies was as well known in the 1950s as it is now. It was also known that these differences delineated boundaries of gender and generation (Shack 1997: 120–121; Van Esterik 1999: 227).

Furthermore, among the poor in England before 1900, men received most of the food and the better parts of it, while women and children suffered malnutrition to a greater degree than did men (Nelson 1993: 103). Studies conducted in twentieth-century France and England indicate that men (and not women and children) received high-status food (including meat and alcohol), and that women internalized this inequity and explained that it answers different physiological needs (Charles and Kerr 1988: 2–3). This would lead us to believe that in the view of veteran Israeli and institutions, the culture of immigrants from Muslim countries was, yet again, identified with old-fashioned norms, which clearly preferred the needs of the patriarch.

One outcome of the image of parents starving their children was the separation of parents' food from that of children. Such was the practice in the immigrant camps, where food distribution was exclusively in institutional hands, which was not the case in the *ma'abarot*. In the camp at Rosh Ha'ayin, whose main dwellers were from Yemen, food was distributed to adults, while children up to the age of 12 were fed separately (*Ha'boker*, 29 May 1950). The same happened in the Sha'ar Ha'aliya camp, where immigrants who waited for permanent housing were separated from their children at mealtime. Parents received three meals a day, and the children were given five meals that included eggs, milk, and fruit—all expensive items in those days. People who ran the camps reported that when food was distributed to the families, fathers ate the best parts and women and children received leftovers. Therefore, despite parental protest and claim that it was their right to determine what their children would eat, a separate dining hall was opened for the children. The authorities claimed that in addition to receiving food that had been previously denied them, they also learned to eat at a table (as opposed to sitting on the floor with their parents), use cutlery, and wait *patiently* for their food to be served. An article describing this separate food serving presented the parents as diametrically opposed to all that the state and the authorities working on immigrant absorption stood for. The state was portrayed as progressive, and its goal was presented as turning the young immigrants into healthy, educated, productive, grateful, and happy citizens. The authorities overseeing absorption were nothing but the outstretched, benevolent hands of the state (Adams Stockler 1977: 121; *Jerusalem Post*, 28 March 1953). In general, various institutions saw themselves as educators of the next generation, *in loco parentis*.

Images of neglect and hunger served as a moral and national justification for veteran Israelis to intervene, and at the same time justified the existing social stratification, in which the absorbing Ashkenazi population was superior and benevolent, and immigrants from Muslim countries were inferior, requiring guidance and instruction. Feeding served more than

just nutritional intervention for improving children's health; it was also a means to remove children from the clutches of an inferior culture. Clearly, table manners and an appropriate cultural level went hand in hand, and instruction for immigrants was based on Western principles (Elias 1982). During the early twentieth century in the United States, children learned at the dining table "the virtues of self-control, self-denial, regard for others, good temper, good manners, pleasant speech" (Richards 1900; quoted by Gabaccia 1998: 126).

Not all children who came from Muslim countries lacked Western table manners. During the winter of 1950–1951, a special project titled "Under a Roof" took children from the camps and *ma'abarot* and placed them for the winter with veteran families. A study conducted later that year revealed that many children from Iraq, Egypt, and Turkey had received a proper upbringing—they knew how to use utensils, did not start eating before the grown-ups, and did not take the last slice of bread left on the table. Other children, who had not received appropriate upbringing, adjusted to the accepted table manners within a short time (Sapir 1951: 32).

Some visitors describing immigrants' eating habits reported that often food was not consumed at regular hours, nor did they have family meals. One researcher told that mothers did not offer their children any food and fed them only when the children repeatedly demanded to be fed (*Al Ha'mishmar*, 16 April 1953; Feitelson 1953: 108; Qullas 1969: 168, 176). The concept of a family meal was then and to a great extent remains to this day a formative key ceremony that re-enacts and defines the proper Western family (Charles and Kerr 1988: 19–22; Douglas 1997; Mitchell 1999).

Instilling Western repertoire in the immigrant population was an opening through which veterans hoped to inculcate a culture that would be common to both old-time citizens and new immigrants. The health of immigrant's children, in and of itself, and building a strong generation of new Israelis were foremost on the veteran Israeli's list of priorities. Instilling changes was a process inspired by the desire to incorporate the immigrants, or at least their children, into the collective.

The attitudes held by the establishment toward the cooking and eating habits of immigrants from Muslim countries, as well as its attitude toward other cultural parameters, underwent change, with some of it rocky, during the first decade of statehood (Lissak 1999: 72–74). In 1958, policy advisers addressing food consumption among these immigrants recommended that their traditional ways of eating be preserved. Although they regarded the melting-pot process to be positive, facilitating the building of a nation with unifying cultural attributes, they also believed that each ethnic group must add its part to the overall reservoir of Israeli culture, and that all groups should participate in creating the national repertoire. They considered the

foods of some groups, such as those from Iraq and Yemen, to be suitable for partially adapting into the overall Israeli culture.

These policy consultants criticized the fact that the establishment—entrusted with regulating the food market through controlling import and export—ignored the distinct needs of the different ethnic groups, with some foods not in supply and others scarce and expensive. This situation caused mental stress among those sectors of the population that had to adjust to changes in their diet.

A survey that examined changes in diet among immigrants from Yemen and Iraq—both new immigrants and those who had lived in Israel for a number of years—found that instead of immigrants adding their traditional food to the general population, as had been suggested, they began eating and cooking Western food. The study revealed that children were pivotal agents of change, strongly influencing not only domestic food consumption but also mothers' attitudes toward traditional food. Childless women preferred traditional foods to a much larger degree than did women with children.

The recommendations show a clear preference to maintaining and preserving ethnic diets, rather than the tendency exhibited by immigrants (to a large degree by the Yemenite ones, and to a lesser degree by those from Iraq) to adjust to Western food. They cautiously indicated that the change to Western food diminished the joy of eating. Although they did not elaborate on the issue of enjoyment, but rather addressed the more rational-scientific aspects of nutrition, such as its suitability to the climate and physical requirements, it seems that they believed that the pressure of changing eating habits was unnecessary and perhaps detrimental.

One interesting recommendation in the report has to do with school meals. The writers recommend increasing the prestige of the *Mizrachi* dishes by feeding them to all children in the school.²⁰

A Retrospective Conclusion

The decision to enact *Tzema* in Israel in the 1950s was a necessary economic answer to mass immigration, consistent with the egalitarian social-economic views of most members of the first Knesset. In addition, *Tzema* was meant to be a means for constructing a collective identity.

The hardships encountered by immigrants through the process of immigration were compounded by a lack of familiar foods and meddling in their respective lifestyles. However, despite this suffering, it must be recognized that the government's policy was aimed at caring for the physical welfare of immigrants, and, at least to some degree, maintaining their dignity. With

all their faults, the intentions and acts of policymakers cannot be ignored. They did their very best so that immigrants, most of whom arrived in Israel on rescue missions (Lissak 1999: 6–7), would not starve to death in their new homeland.

Veteran Israelis found it difficult to live under conditions of *Tzena*, aimed at ensuring the survival of immigrants, and those who suffered most were women. Married women, especially those with children, felt that their identity was tied in with their ability to feed their families, and adopted two major ways to cope with the diminishing supplies. One was to sacrifice their health and give up important ingredients in their own diet for the benefit of their children; the other was to break *Tzena* laws and buy black-market products. One way or another, the results were harsh, leading either to their physical deterioration or to the lowering of their public and personal image. Their desire to associate with the collective led to a struggle with the details of the *Tzena* policy and to support for political parties that called for a change of economic policies and provided legitimization for freedom of purchasing ('The successful slogan used by the *Tzionim Klaliyim* was "Let us live in this state.'). In fact, the only way they could resolve the inherent conflict between their national role as mothers and their national role as citizens was to reduce solidarity and support instead those who proposed a new, liberal economic policy.

The period of mass immigration and *Tzena* reflects somewhat of a cultural turning point for veteran Israelis. The state's heavy-handed interference in their lives caused veteran Israelis, especially women, to resist the policy. This resistance delineated the boundaries of that which is private—that which should be beyond the reach of the state. This resistance also indicated that veteran Israelis were undergoing a process of individualization (Rozin 2002a), while the immigrants' dependence on the state for their physical existence made them its subordinates. Among the immigrant communities, those from Muslim countries were more subordinate than others, with the state appropriating their children to the parenting of the collective rather than that of their biological parents. As with other areas of life (for example, settling away from the center of the country), it was the immigrants who carried the main burden of the revolution, while the veteran citizens—at least in part—began to shake off the yoke of the very same revolution, or at least ease the burden.

The temporary removal of children from their parents and turning the state and its agents into benevolent parents, added to the immigration crisis and diminished parental authority, a process that has been widely reported (Naor 1986: 166; Segev 1984: 184, 192–193). It was thus that immigrants experienced the full impact of the revolution discussed in the opening section of this article—a revolution that demanded changes within the

family—whereas for the veteran population the impact lessened with time (Talmon 1983: 59).

Heretofore, we have discussed that which is not worthy of eating—the food eaten by the weaker parts of society. We will now turn to that which should be eaten.

As I have shown, the effort to change habits during *Tzema* assumed several guises. Lavon's approach, as presented here, links between a rational diet and nation-building. Lavon adds a stratum to this basic perception, namely, his desire—and that of others—to build a unified society. Another approach, one espoused by women's organizations and by Ben-Gurion, claimed that immigrants should eat according to their preferences and taste. This would seem as if there was no attempt to include the immigrants within the collective through standardizing foodstuffs. However, if we try to interpret this approach, we may find several ramifications. First, that my opening statement about the relationship between what we eat and the group we belong to is erroneous. Another reading into this approach could be that there is a greater degree of freedom in establishing the boundaries of common identity than I had initially assumed, or, conversely, that there was no desire whatsoever to include immigrants in the immediate reference group. I believe that there is no single answer to this question, yet I would like to suggest an explanation.

As I have tried to show, the greatest amount of interference vis-à-vis food was done with children. As we have seen, especially regarding immigrants from Yemen, this also led in time to a significant change in their eating habits, and children played an important part in affecting their mothers' attitudes.

It would seem that the desire to change immigrants' eating habits took on a more refined and simultaneously a more practical shape in the approach of women's organizations. They intervened primarily through changing the feeding patterns for infants and young children (Rozin 2005). They left it to the children, who had already experienced Western food in their various educational facilities, to change the mothers' attitude toward this food. They were not any less eager than the policy makers to unify food consumption, and did not hesitate to say so openly (Wizo 1958: 3), but chose a very different venue. Women in the veteran Israeli population, or rather the establishment itself, were quite open to non-Ashkenazi food, and willing to include *Mizrachi* and local ingredients and dishes in the rational, efficient Israel kitchen. Furthermore, the acceptance rituals of immigrants in the *yishuv* days included adapting to local foods such as olives and tomatoes (Agnon 1947: 50, 69, 79–81). The food they attempted to introduce to immigrants from Muslim countries included not only European staples but primarily local food, which veteran Israelis had grown accustomed to over the years, namely, local-Palestinian food

and the cooking of the Sephardic community in Jerusalem. If so, local Jewish cuisine was not really purely Ashkenazic, but rather a culinary mosaic. If we accept the assumption that food is related to the shaping of a collective identity, this admixture would seem to indicate a degree of freedom and openness regarding food, even if it involved a process of eradicating identity, appropriation, and nationalization (Bell and Valentine 1997: 10; Friedman 1995: 83). We may further assume that the acceptance of recipes and the inclusion of *Mizrachi* food into the canonical cookbook of the day, *Thus We Cook*, under the separate heading of *Mizrachi* Foods, reflects not only distancing and boundary setting, but also inclusion of the women who cook these foods, whose dishes were gradually making their way on to everyone's table without losing their own label.²¹

Thus, it seems that there is more than one way to create unity. One was Lavon's method, one that dictated to a large degree which supplies would be available. Another was the path assumed by women's organizations, which was to tie the richness of diverse cuisines into the forming Israeli identity, even if each cuisine is not equally represented. This gradual method does inculcate customs of the dominant group into those of newcomers, but also opens the door to their foods (Wizo 1958).²² Because of women's relatively marginal position in the national scene in the early 1950s, they had the freedom to act differently than the dominant masculine norm (Parush 2001). Women understood and appreciated two central elements in their experience: authenticity and uniqueness. As every household is, ultimately, a family subculture that gradually takes shape, women in the veteran population could be relatively open despite cultural differences and accommodate other women's foods, and especially their rights to feed their families as they saw fit. It can also be assumed that the relative openness exhibited by veteran women to the distinct needs of the immigrant women had its origins in their own awareness that in most cases women carry the burden of group heritage in its essential aspects of individuals' lives (Bell and Valentine 1997: 66; Narayan 1997: 179), to a large degree similar to those expressed in gender-based definitions of the overall national ethos.

In the years since the wave of mass immigration, major changes have taken place not only in the customs of immigrants but also in those of the veteran population, including changes in diet. In the "Queen of the Kitchen" competition held in 1963, the first prize was awarded to an Arab woman from Nazareth, and the second to an immigrant from Bulgaria. The text accompanying the recipes discussed the distance between East and West, expressing a hope that these boundaries would become more fluid: "Rosewater or coriander have not yet wafted out of the *Mizrachi* pot, while the Western vanilla, rum, and mustard have not yet made their way into

it. There are only hints of “herbal intermarriages,” and we hope that it will not be long before each one discovers the magic they could work on each other’s spices” (B. Almog 1963: 13). After over fifty years of living together, Israelis share a common cuisine, exchange recipes, and relish in the mingling of East and West. Today’s integrated cuisine is, to a degree, a basis for identity. Like other cultural components it replaces the attempts of the first government to construct a common identity, one which was expressed by *Tzena* on the one hand, and in various manifestations of cultural unification on the other.

Notes

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1. BGA (David Ben-Gurion Archive, Sde Boker), David Ben-Gurion to Yigael Yadin, 27.11.50.
2. For more about his role, see Weitz (2002: 188).
3. Labor Movement Archives, file 32-5-230IV.
4. CZA, F-1868-49, *Wizo in Israel*, 5 (3), p. 13.
5. CZA S71/1731, “Matsav ha’tezuna” [The status of nutrition], *Herut*, 18 August 1952; Y. Kimhi, “Tafrit raze ba’hagim” [Lean menu at the holidays], *Ma’ariv*, 12 September 1952.
6. CZA S71/1731, “Ha’ala’at mehinei ha’mazon me’sakenet et ha’briut” [Increased food prices endangers health], *Yediot Aharonot*, 6 January 1953.
7. Israel State Archive, Protocols of the Second Government, vol. B, 6 December 1950, 24.
8. Israel State Archive, Dept. of Agriculture, “She’iltot” [Queries], C (Hebrew Gimal) 0433/4472, 4 June 1951.
9. Israel State Archive, Dept. of Agriculture, C (Hebrew Gimmel) 21/2413; LLMA (Lavon Labor movement archive), IV 230-6-189.
10. ISA, Dept. of Agriculture, “She’iltot” [Queries], C (Hebrew Gimmel), 0433/4472, 27 June 1951.
11. CZA, S71/932, Regina El-Azeri, “Bemahane Gimal shel Rosh-Ha’ain ha’kol kmo az” [Nothing has changed at camp C], *Ha’dor*, 15 April 1953.
12. BGA, Ben-Gurion Diary, 28 August 1951. See also ISA, DJA (Dov Joseph archive), “Hitya’atsut al Darkei ha’milhama ba’shuk ha’shahor” [Consultation about the ways to fight the black market], P (Hebrew Pe) 16/714.

13. ISA, Dept. of Health, C (Hebrew Gimmel) 12/160.
14. ISA, Dept. of Agriculture, C 2413/21, "Din ve' heshbon shnati al pe'ulot ha'mahon le'hadraha tezunatit" [An annual report of the Institute of Nutritional Guidance], April 1950. For a later study, see the Israel Institute of Applied Social Research and the Department of Preventive Medicine of the Hebrew University–Hadassah Medical School, *Changes in Food Habits in the Yemenite and Iraqi Communities in Israel* (Jerusalem, August 1958), 8.
15. ISA, protocols of the Second Government, vol. 1, 22 November 1950, 35; ISA, Dept. of Health, C (Hebrew Gimmel) 12/160.
16. ISA, C (Hebrew Gimmel) 14/160.
17. ZA S71/933, David Ben-Mordechai, "Zehu "mahane ha'olim" Be'Pardes-Hana" [This is the immigrant camp at Pardes-Hana], *Ha'boker*, 25 February 1954; ISA, Dept. of Health, C 12/160.
18. CZA, A 430/78 Aleph-Bet. D. Suzin, "Rishmei bikur be'mahane ha'olim be'Givat Shaul B" [Impressions of a visit to the immigrant camp at Givat Shaul B], *Hed Ha-mizrah*, 17 March 1950.
19. CZA, J 113/2273. ISA, Dept. of Health C 12/160.
20. From a 1958 report of the Israel Institute of Applied Social Research and the Department of Preventive Medicine of the Hebrew University–Hadassah Medical School titled *Changes in Food Habits in the Yemenite and Iraqi Communities in Israel*. On the acquisition of 'ethnic' food habits, see Gvion (2005) and Sheridan (2000).
21. WIZO (1958: 215–216): Matkonim Mizrachim [Mizrachi recipes]. Other Mediterranean dishes are included in the book without the title 'Mizrachim' (see pages 122 and 127–128). Compare pages 94 and 102 with Roden (1980: 197–198, 223). About the relationships between Ashkenazi veteran women and immigrant Mizrahi women, see Morag Talmon (2001); see also Rozin (2005). For comparison, see Narayan (1997: 163–164, 173, 179–180).
22. In a private conversation with Ella Nemlich (teacher, researcher, and editor of culinary topics) on 8 September 2003, Ms. Nemlich said that the WIZO book marks a hybrid cuisine, one which represents interaction between the local-Palestinian cuisine (with all or some of its different manifestations), the Sepharadi-Jerusalemite cuisine, and the Mizrahi-Tunisian or Turkish cuisine mixed with Ashkenazi dishes from different European origins.

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