

***EXODUS (1960): A MOVIE WITH A MESSAGE... THEY LISTENED!***

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A Thesis

Presented to the

Faculty of

San Diego State University

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

in

History

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by

Galit Goltzer Stam

Summer 2012

**SAN DIEGO STATE UNIVERSITY**

The Undersigned Faculty Committee Approves the

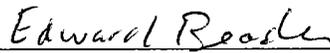
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*Exodus* (1960): A Movie With A Message ... They Listened!



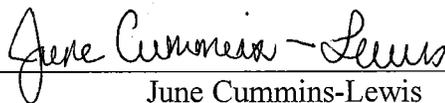
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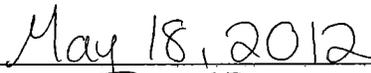
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## DEDICATION

For my Sabiem, with love.

This is for my Savta, Shifra Teitelbaum, of blessed memory, a wonderful, gentle soul and true hero who endured the absolute worst and created the very best. Her will to lead a good life amazes me every time I think about her and her history. My passion for art, dance, and a real appreciation of my family's history and culture, in addition to my desire to become a compassionate "peaceful warrior" (by becoming an educator), stems directly from her influence. Savta, you are part of me, always. May peace be upon you. And for my kindhearted Saba, Zigmond Teitelbaum, also a venerable survivor, who succeeded in making a beautiful family and whose memory is sacred.

And for my dotting grandparents, my Sabiem, Hela and Mischo Goltzer: courageous, noble survivors, passengers on the 1947 Exodus ship, and builders of the new state of Israel. They worked tirelessly to create a respectable, peaceful life in their kibbutz and continue as volunteers helping their community.

You are all truly superhuman. May your souls and spirits be forever blessed.

.

## ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

*Exodus* (1960): A Movie with a Message... They Listened!

by

Galit Goltzer Stam

Master of Arts in History

San Diego State University, 2012

Based on the melodramatic 1958 novel by Leon Uris, Otto Preminger's 1960 film, *Exodus*, is a movie with a message. Melodramas are generally characterized by the use of stereotyped characters with exaggerated behaviors, emotions, and language, simplistic morality, and conflict. They focus on an exciting, sensational plot filled with romance and drama and employ emotive music to evoke excitement. *Exodus* leverages these tools to invoke interest and affect audiences' emotions and attitudes. The storyline served as effective propaganda to counter continuing anti-Semitism and anti-Israel sentiment and to promote pro-Jewish and pro-Israel philosophies.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
ABSTRACT.....	v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	ix
INTRODUCTION .....	1
CHAPTER	
1 INFLUENCE OF MOVIES.....	13
Movie Popularity .....	13
Vicarious Experiences .....	14
Regulations .....	17
The Influence of Preconceptions, Stereotypes, & Familiarity .....	19
The History of Jewish Stereotypes & Anti-Semitism.....	21
Jewish Stereotypes in Movies.....	24
Fear Provoked Removal of Ethnic Traits in Films .....	25
Changing the Face of the Jewish Image (& Combatting Anti-Semitic Stereotypes) in <i>Gentleman’s Agreement</i> .....	26
Fear of Increased Anti-Semitism in the Late 1940s Led to Studies .....	31
2 REPETITION STRENGTHENS CONNECTIONS TO HELP <i>EXODUS</i> CREATE A PRO-JEWISH IMAGE.....	37
Repetition Strengthens Connections Senses of Sight & Sound.....	37
Biblical Associations .....	38
Modern History.....	41
Movie Ads & More Familiarity .....	43
<i>Exodus’</i> Characters Create Pro-Jewish Image by Proving Anti-Semitic Stereotypes Wrong.....	45
Ari Ben-Canaan: An American-Like Jewish Israeli.....	45
Strong, Steadfast Survivors & Sabras.....	49
Daring, Dauntless, Defiant, Deserving Dov .....	53
Kind, Compassionate, Comforting Karen.....	55
Non-Jewish Good, Better, & Ugly Characters Combat Anti-Semitism .....	57

Caring Kitty: The Redeemer.....	57
Supportive Sutherland: Righteous Humanitarian .....	63
Callous Caldwell & Nasty Nazi: Evil Villains .....	64
Somewhat Familiar vs Sharply Alien .....	67
The Mission of Each Character.....	70
3 PROOF IS IN THE BOOK & FILM REVIEWS, ADS, & PUBLIC OPINION POLLS .....	72
Reviews & Ads for Uris' 1958 Novel Built Great Anticipation for the Film.....	72
Good Reviews Are Great Advertising .....	73
Reviews of Novel as Unrealistic or One-Sided .....	73
Novel's Message is Real (Projected via Creative Narrative).....	78
Novel is a Positive & Genuine Reflection of the Past .....	79
Mikey, They <i>All</i> Like It! The Novel's Great Success.....	82
Great Increase in Tourism to the Holy Land Attributed to <i>Exodus</i> .....	84
Book Reviews, Ads, & Movie Previews Popularize & Promote Film .....	87
Influence of Film Reviews.....	88
Negative Nazis .....	90
Historically Misleading?.....	91
History Restrained to Reduce Tension .....	94
Hart's Misleading Review .....	94
Diverse Perspectives .....	96
To Discuss or Not to Discuss? Anti-Semitism as Portrayed in <i>Exodus</i> .....	101
Erroneous Criticism .....	103
Seems Real.....	104
Historical Validity & Evenhandedness.....	104
Balance, Clarity, & History Convey Important Messages.....	105
Fictionalized but Not Fiction .....	107
<i>Exodus</i> Creates Compassion.....	108
Reviews Proclaim: <i>Exodus</i> is Good for Everyone.....	109
Best Pic of the Year .....	110
Hip, Hip, Hooray! <i>Exodus</i> Garners Several Awards .....	110
Good Reviews Attract & Entice; Good Films Affect & Inspire.....	111

Public Opinion Polls Display Change in American Anti-Semitism .....111  
    Discrepancies in Opinion Polls .....112  
    Polls on Anti-Semitism .....113  
    Jewish Neighbors .....116  
    Polls on Israel.....118  
    Polls Confirm: Films Reflect & Influence American Sentiment .....120  
CONCLUSION.....121  
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....126

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Over the last years, several wonderful people helped guide, mentor, and motivate me while positively influencing my life, educational experiences, and teaching objectives. I would have never led classrooms, completed my education, or finished this thesis without your help. You held me up and pushed me forward when I wondered what I was doing here. I admire you all and sincerely appreciate your kindness, support, and friendship.

I am extremely thankful for the generous, positive words, fantastic education, and assistance my professors provided me. First and foremost, in addition to being a great human being, Laurie Baron, my Graduate Advisor, Thesis Chair, Professor of Jewish, Film, and Genocide History, and scholarly and life mentor, has been instrumental in the completion and success of my graduate career and this thesis. Your expertise and advice in several subjects, historical sources, research ideas, and teaching associate positions, your meaningful lectures and songs, and your kind support, have been tremendous throughout my entire SDSU journey. I am so grateful for the opportunity to learn from you. You will always be an amazing inspiration for me, and I am forever indebted to you.

Another outstanding influence in my life, Edward Beasley, was my first Professor of History at State and essentially taught me how to write. Your encouragement, benevolence, warmhearted approach to teaching, and critical assessments of my graduate works significantly shaped my ability to think, write, and analyze history. You are the type of educator I aspire to become: one who cares and teaches with enthusiasm and humor. June Cummins-Lewis is another shining example of a kindhearted, inspiring professor. You generously helped me along my thesis-writing path, renewed my enthusiasm for higher learning, and gave me confidence in my abilities to succeed.

Additionally, Professor Beth Pollard, an excellent, caring educator and mentor, taught me several great teaching methods that I employ in my classrooms. Your good energy, assiduousness, and devotion to high-quality education, as well as the dedication and care you give to your beautiful family, are inspirational! Professor Steven Colston is another terrific history teacher whose passionate story telling is stirring. Having the amazing opportunity

work for these two fantastic role models has been an extraordinary experience. I am also extremely fortunate to have Professor Kendra Jeffcoat as my compassionate mentor and wonderful teacher. Your thought-provoking courses in adult post-secondary education endowed me with knowledge of good learning and teaching practices that I consistently utilize. I am very thankful for the knowledge and wisdom you all shared with me and for being such positive influences.

I have to thank my super friends, whose bright smiles and words of encouragement keep my passion alive. Jeff Baumann, my all-star colleague and friend and a true inspiration, Daniel Driskill, Guy Mount, Ola Hadi, Ryan Wingerd, Sarah Cristal, Jen Lindell, may she rest in peace, and all my other brilliant fellow TAs and classmates made brainstorming, teaching prep, and learning a real pleasure. Elizabeth and Kin Carmichael, my fabulous, fun, dear friends and genuinely good people, the “Omegamaniacs” and our adventure crew, Sammy Shoostary, my inspirational, hard-working friend, and my bighearted “Beam Club” family all encouraged my aspirations. Notably, Dr Gersham Stein, the world’s best chiropractor and healer, truly saved my life, shaped my spirit, and showed me the path to faith. You beautiful people helped me look for the good with hope and courage, taught me wisdom, helped me focus on the important stuff, showed me kindness and love, and kept me going, and I am eternally grateful for your friendship.

I must give special thanks to my family. The history of my affectionate, munificent grandparents, Shifra and Zigmond Teitelbaum, of blessed memory, and Hela and Mischo Goltzer, inspired this thesis. They, along with my sweet uncle, Efraim, and our special Goltzer family, presented me with a personal connection to Israel, which roused my interest and provoked my investigations. Due to the very sensitive nature of this subject matter, I only learned about my family’s direct relationship to the historic events presented in *Exodus* months after I began my research! This newly discovered link granted me a very interesting, emotionally challenging, and fulfilling research and writing experience.

My wonderful parents, Shari and Yosi Goltzer, deserve a great deal of credit. In addition to unlimited support and love, you provided me with a terrific education and a strong sense of family and culture, and you endowed within me a life-long love of learning. I am so fortunate. My brilliant, loving brothers, Oren and Daniel, regularly inspire me and push me to try my best and have as much fun as possible! It has been great watching you two

grow into such fantastic men. Moreover, my other marvelous parents, Ralph and Jeanne Stam, immediately welcomed me into the family and encouraged my endeavors, and I am grateful. You two, along with my warm, affable sister, Kari Heydt, provide me with never-ending kindness and are great examples of benevolence. And Grammie Kelly Howard, of blessed memory, you inspire me to be myself and to enjoy life. I am so thankful for my amazing family. I love you “the whole world!”

Finally, one person who truly went above and beyond, who nourished my soul, who supported me in every way, who sacrificed time and energy, who fed my frequent desire to hike and spend time outside, who re-arranged schedules for me, who encouraged my incessant need to study, who taught me grammar and read and helped edit this thesis countless times, who provided me with clean clothing and food, and who loved me unconditionally, Brandon Stam, is exceptionally superhuman. You are my rock, my cheerleader, my personal comedian, my confidante, my soul mate, and my best friend. I know that, with you around, all will be good. You challenge and motivate me to become a better person. I could never have done this without you, and I am so very blessed to have you in my life. Anee ohevet otcha kol kach harbeh! And, though I know it’s silly, I also need to thank Kaya, my beloved doggy, who spent almost every moment that I worked on this project by my side. You bring joy, fun, and sunshine into my life every day. You’re the best! Woof (that means “I love you” in Dog)!

## INTRODUCTION

When the film *Exodus* premiered, the State of Israel was twelve years old, and the Holocaust had been over for fifteen years.<sup>1</sup> However, anti-Semitism still prevailed in the United States, and Israel was still in dire need of political, military, monetary, and social support.<sup>2</sup> Some Americans felt a special connection to Israel and were compelled to advocate for what they believed was the noble cause of Zionism, the movement promoting and supporting the “return” of the Jewish people to their historic, biblical homeland in the Holy Land of Israel. This support can be attributed to several reasons. In many ways, Israel and the brave, strong “New (Israeli) Jews” resembled America and Americans.<sup>3</sup> Compared to her neighbors, Israel stood out as an anomaly in the Middle East, with a westernized, democratic government, and political goals similar to America’s. Judeo-Christian beliefs and principles and a shared biblical history were additional connections between the two nations.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, some people felt that not enough had been done to help protect the European Jews who suffered the horrors of the Holocaust.<sup>5</sup> Supporting Israel was a virtuous and respectable way to pay homage to the six million murdered and to those who managed to survive.

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<sup>1</sup> Otto Preminger, *Exodus* (Los Angeles: United Artists, 1960), DVD.

<sup>2</sup> Charles D. Smith, *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict: A History with Documents*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2001).

<sup>3</sup> “New Jews,” represent a new image of strong, valiant Jewish figures, who are contrasted against traditional, inhibited, repressed “Diaspora Jews.”

<sup>4</sup> Faithful Jews and Christians both believe in the Torah, the Hebrew Bible, which some call the Old Testament.

<sup>5</sup> For information on what American Jews knew and how they memorialized the Holocaust, please see Hasia R. Diner, *We Remember With Reverence and Love: American Jews and the Myth of Silence After the Holocaust, 1945-1962* (New York: New York Press, 2009). In addition to support of Israel, other forms of Holocaust remembrances, memorialization, and displays of reverence include the writing of new songs, poems, newspaper articles, and other forms of literature, the creation of new synagogue-based youth groups and secular “new Jew” cultural practices, public displays including physical memorials, and political activism, among others.

The champions of Zionism employed various tools and methods to garner support for Jews and Israel from the American public and government, including utilizing the persuasive influence of film.<sup>6</sup> Filmmakers had long recognized their potential to affect moviegoers with emotionally touching productions, and *Exodus* was no exception. The epic, poignant, sensational film illustrated the difficult, harrowing history of Jews and the challenging years leading up to the establishment of the State of Israel. *Exodus* created universal appeal by portraying imagery and symbols of American-like triumphs, ethics, and heroes typified through empathic “New Jews:” powerful, brave, moral, and benevolent Israeli characters that Americans could readily identify with. Filmmakers desired for these American-like figures to connect non-Jewish Americans to Jews and Israelis with the hope of reducing anti-Semitism and garnering support for the new state of Israel.<sup>7</sup>

*Exodus*, produced and directed by Otto Preminger, is a melodramatic film that promotes a peaceful message; its “good” characters offset the “evil” ones, and certain causes and issues are emphasized or downplayed to create a more evenhanded, benevolent image of the past. In some ways, Preminger intended to create an optimistic, mollified depiction of specific events in Israel’s history, so he counterbalanced character-types of each represented group. In his autobiography, he said, “It’s an American picture, after all, that tries to tell the story, giving both sides a chance to plead their case.” Thus, the film portrays contrasting images of Arabs, British, and Jews, as well as an American who evolves from “negative” to “positive.”<sup>8</sup>

For example, the “bad” British soldier, Major Fred Caldwell, an anti-Semitic, cold-hearted imbecile, is countered by the “good,” kindhearted, intelligent British officer, Brigadier General Bruce Sutherland who tries to support the Jewish cause and has sympathy

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<sup>6</sup> Siegfried Kracauer, “National Types as Hollywood Presents Them,” *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 13, no. 1 (Spring, 1949): 57.

<sup>7</sup> Preminger, *Exodus*.

<sup>8</sup> Otto Preminger, *Preminger: An Autobiography* (New York: Doubleday, 1977); Deborah Dash Moore, “Exodus: Real to Reel to Real,” in *Entertaining America: Jews, Movies, and Broadcasting*, ed. J. Hoberman and Jeffrey Shandler (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 211. In 1905, Otto Preminger was born into a Jewish family in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, in what is now Ukraine. At the age of 10 the Premingers moved to Vienna. His father, a renowned lawyer, was pressured to convert to Catholicism, but stayed true to his Jewish heritage. In 1935, Otto made his way to Hollywood to work for Joseph Schenck and Darryl F Zanuck in their new company, Twentieth Century Fox.

for Jewish Holocaust survivors. “Bad” Arabs, who ally with Nazis, are contrasted against “good,” benevolent Arabs, including Taha, who is friends with Ari Ben-Canaan, the Jewish protagonist, and his Jewish community, and protects them with his life. The Irgun, a militant group of Holocaust survivor Jews, use physical force to promote their cause. They contradict the philosophy of the “good” Jewish political group, the Haganah, whose members denounce violence and promote peace through negotiation and compromise. These counter-representations juxtapose the many beliefs and political viewpoints of this era using exaggerated characteristics that clarify and distinguish between each character-type.

Though the storyline is somewhat balanced with positive and negative types, *Exodus* is not a complete and thorough history. The underlying theme emphasizes the plight of the Jews and their need to live with dignity and autonomy in a homeland free of anti-Semitism and persecution. The object of *Exodus* is to impart the goals of Zionism and to reduce anti-Semitism. Consequently, not all British, Arab, American, German, and Jewish viewpoints are delineated. For example, the Arab plight and the British struggles are underrepresented. Though Taha and his Palestinian Arab family, in addition to Mandria the Cypriot, are likeable and friendly, the Arab version of this time in history, including the desire of the Palestinian natives to control their homeland, is not really discussed. Also, the film portrays a few British characters as a bit obtuse with the Jewish groups constantly tricking them; however, these events focus more on the intelligence and cunning of the Jews rather than the gullibility of the British. Hence, though opposing characters from each group are presented, there is a clear, positive, idealized emphasis on the Jewish narrative of events leading up to the creation of the State of Israel.

The writer of *Exodus*, Leon Uris, was commissioned by Dore Schary, the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, Inc (MGM) studio production head, to write the historically-based, though fictional, story about the creation of the State of Israel.<sup>9</sup> Uris spent months in the “farms and cities of Israel,” doing research and conducting interviews to create, what he considered, an

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<sup>9</sup> American Film Institute, “*Exodus*,” AFI Catalog of Featured Films, accessed December 15, 2010, <http://www.afi.com/members/catalog/DetailView.aspx?s=&Movie=53140>. Leon Uris was born in Baltimore, Maryland to Jewish-American parents. His father was a Polish-born immigrant and his mother was a first-born Russian-American. Uris’ work originated as a screenplay, but for a few reasons, MGM lost interest in producing a film, and Uris decided to write a novel instead.

allegorically accurate representation of the past.<sup>10</sup> This included the real, raw emotions and difficult experiences the World Jewry suffered through the two-thousand-year Diaspora, culminating in the Holocaust.<sup>11</sup>

Uris described his work as a chronicle of “the greatest miracle of our times...” and explained, “It tells the story of the Jews coming back after centuries of abuse, indignities, torture, and murder to carve an oasis in the sand with guts and blood.” Though the story is based on real, historical events and characters, Uris made it clear that the narrative is fictional. To ensure that his readers understood his intentions, in the very beginning of his novel, even prior to the Table of Contents, Uris stated, “Most of the events in *Exodus* are a matter of history and public record. Many of the scenes were created around historical incidents for the purpose of fiction... All characters in *Exodus* are the complete creation of the author, and entirely fictional.” Nevertheless, though *Exodus* includes some fabricated characters and historical inaccuracies, the heart of the story, including many events, character-types, and emotions, is sincere and realistic.<sup>12</sup>

Employing Uris’ emotive storyline and characters, Preminger created a more balanced, and in some ways optimistic, narrative by including multiple, different perspectives of the historic events. However, due to Uris’ negative depiction of some ignorant, boorish British and intolerant Arabs, in addition to the lack of a more complete version of the Arab frustrations, some British and Arabs disapproved of the story. These issues in the book, which was published two years prior to the film, triggered fear of a possible boycott of MGM studios and the future film. Nevertheless, with the desire to share an incredible, moving story

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<sup>10</sup>Christopher Lehmann-Haupt, “Leon Uris, 78, Who Wrote Sweeping Novels Like ‘Exodus,’ Dies,” *New York Times*, June 25, 2003, B8. According to Christopher Lehmann-Haupt, to research for *Exodus*, Uris read hundreds of books and interviewed over 1,200 people.

<sup>11</sup> The Jewish Diaspora is the two thousand year period of “exile” that began when the Jews were kicked out of their homeland of present-day Israel. The first Diaspora began around 587 BCE and the second around the year 70 CE. In every Afro-Eurasian and American nation Jews lived in they were persecuted, though some nations were much more cruel and intolerant than others. For more information on Jewish history, please see Lloyd P. Gartner, *The History of the Jews in Modern Times*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001) and Paul Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz, eds., *The Jew in the Modern World: A Documentary History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

<sup>12</sup> Leon Uris, *Exodus* (Bantam Books, New York: 1958), Contents. All characters in the film are fictional, other than public figures like Churchill, who are mentioned by name. Nevertheless, it is clear for those who know Israeli history, that many characters are *based* on real people.

with American audiences, Otto Preminger proposed to purchase the rights to the film from MGM. He argued that, as a private producer, a boycott would not affect him.<sup>13</sup> Apparently, this fear was great, as the film rights were sold to Preminger for a miniscule cost.<sup>14</sup>

Though there were some initial worries, Uris' novel quickly became an extremely popular best seller with millions of copies sold in numerous languages and nations. The huge success of the novel brought fame and renown to the *Exodus* name, which, in turn, helped the film become extremely popular. Additionally, countless reviews of the novel and advertisements for the novel and film increased the visibility of *Exodus*, promoting it as a must-read and must-see. The high acclaim, book sales, and readership of the novel, in addition to the film's incredible box office statistics demonstrate the success of the storyline. Millions of people were exposed to, and were likely influenced by, the narrative, which included *Exodus*' pro-Jewish, pro-Israel messages of love, peace, and tolerance for the "other."<sup>15</sup>

Moreover, a comparison to studies conducted on the influence of the 1947 film, *Gentleman's Agreement*, supports the hypothesis that *Exodus* affected and inspired its audiences. This film attempts to teach viewers about the evils of anti-Semitism in order to reduce hate and intolerance towards the Jewish "other." The results of these studies substantiate this assertion. The majority of the people who saw *Gentleman's Agreement* displayed a reduction in levels of prejudice and bigotry, proving that films have the power to

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<sup>13</sup> For more on the sale of the *Exodus* Film Rights, please see: the Notes section in the AFI Catalog Featured Film, *Exodus*. Lehmann-Haupt, "Leon Uris, 78;" Preminger, *Preminger*.

<sup>14</sup> The fear of an Arab boycott and a negative perception of the film by the British, in addition to Dore Scharey, the main promoter of *Exodus*, no longer working at MGM, led to the film rights being sold to Preminger. He paid only \$75,000 for the rights to Uris's manuscript in 1957, a very minimal amount, especially considering that the book quickly became a number one seller for nineteen weeks, and was a top contender for over a year. This information is found in Lester Friedman's *The Jewish Image in American Film* (New Jersey: Citadel Press, 1987), 162, and in Moore, 210-211.

<sup>15</sup> *Exodus* was translated into over fifty languages and sold millions of copies throughout the world according to Moshe Dor, "The Critics Condemn- The Dollars Pile Up," *Ma'ariv*, March 30, 1984, quoted and translated in Rachel Weissbrod, "Exodus as a Zionist Melodrama," *Israel Studies* 4, no. 1 (Spring 1999): 141. Furthermore, according to Lehmann-Haupt, by 1965, over five million copies of the book sold in the US alone. Lehmann-Haupt, "Leon Uris, 78." Showings sold out for months! For details, please see Pyr, "Exodus: Important Human Drama. Boffo Boxoffice Results Strongly Indicated," *Variety Magazine*, December 14, 1960, accessed at Margaret Herrick Library, Los Angeles, CA. Also, Jesse Zel Lurie, "Preminger's 'Exodus' Beats Book: Magnificent Four-Hour Film is More Accurate Story," *Jerusalem Post*, December 2, 1960, vii.

persuade. The studies also confirmed that more exposure to and education about the “other” can create familiarity, breed understanding, and lead to increased open-mindedness and acceptance.<sup>16</sup> Additionally, public opinion polls conducted from the years prior to, and after, *Exodus* demonstrate an overall reduction in American anti-Semitism. Though infallible empirical evidence connecting these two films to the overall reduction in anti-Semitism is lacking, it is clear *Gentleman’s Agreement* and *Exodus* truly affected the American people.

More than fifty years after its publication, this story is still a hot topic. In recent decades, several authors have taken a look back at *Exodus* to evaluate its realistic and created images, the purpose and message of its narrative, the methods the filmmakers used to influence audiences, and audience receptions. Each author concentrates on different aspects in his or her analysis, but all discuss prominent, critical issues, including the representation of the Jewish image in film.

In a short review in her book, *The Jew in American Cinema*, Patricia Erens describes film reviews from 1960. She presents the analysis of Will Frischauer, who described political objections to the film by various groups, including moderate Israelis, who resisted all violence, the Jewish Irgun, “freedom fighters,” who wanted more credit for the beneficial influence of their past actions, and Egyptians, who generally opposed the existence of Israel. This analysis clarifies the diverse perspectives on the political events, social experiences, and cultural tensions of the early 1960s. Erens also assesses a critique by John Stone, who explained the purpose of the film is to display “Jewish heroism in their struggle for freedom.” Erens understands that creating awareness of, and empathy for, the courageous struggle for freedom and peace was imperative in the attempt at increasing viewer support for Jews and the Zionist cause.<sup>17</sup>

Author Yosefa Loshitzky also explores the images and purpose of the film, emphasizing how the portrayed similarities between Israel and America connected Christian-American audiences to Jews and Israel. The “Hollywoodization” of various character-types,

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<sup>16</sup> Irwin C. Rosen, “The Effect of the Motion Picture ‘*Gentleman’s Agreement*’ on Attitudes Toward Jews,” *Journal of Psychology* 36 (1948): 525-536; Russell Middleton, “Ethnic Prejudice and Susceptibility to Persuasion,” *American Sociological Review* 25, no. 5 (October 1960): 679-686.

<sup>17</sup> *John Stone Report*, no. 142 (February 23, 1961), quoted in Patricia Erens, *The Jew in American Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 219.

which refers to the modification of historical characters and events into “idealized” American images, and the transformation of poor, weak, wretched Holocaust survivors into strong, brave, American-like “New Jews” are analyzed. This delineates the purpose of the film: to show American audiences that modern Jews and Zionism are very similar to Americans and Western philosophies. Loshitzky also discusses “redemptive Zionism,” which refers to people who are not “real” Zionists but support the cause as a means of combating anti-Semitism. She does not explore the main illustration of this, portrayed through the transformation of the Christian protagonist, Kitty Freemont; however, this example displays how the filmmakers wanted to convince the audience to positively alter their perspective on Jews and Zionism, and thus, must be discussed.<sup>18</sup>

Moreover, Loshitzky argues a pro-Arab position and gives an alternative or oppositional reading of the film, highlighting the way Arab troubles are somewhat minimized. Though she mentions how “good” Arabs provide Jews with land, a differentiation between the portrayal of good and bad Arabs is missing from her analysis. She also compares the Holocaust and the term “Jewish Question,” coined by Nazis in reference to their desire to somehow get rid of the world’s Jewry, to what she calls “Arab question,” suggesting that some Israelis wanted to rid their Jewish homeland of Arabs. Furthermore, she discusses the connection between Arabs and the Soviet Union during the Cold War to present one reason why America became Israel’s ally. These are important analyses of the function of the film and of American sentiment towards Arabs, Jews, and Israel in the 1960s. Though Loshitzky’s points are well argued and supported, her assessment regarding the Arab side of the story in *Exodus* is fairly one-sided and overlooks many other factors.<sup>19</sup>

Another historian who assesses the portrayals of Jews and Israel in American films is Michelle Mart, who wrote, *Eye on Israel: How America Came To View Israel as an Ally*. In her book, she explains how Sabras, native-born Israelis, are depicted as both “tough and tender:” they can be strong and defend themselves when threatened but also personify

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<sup>18</sup> Yosefa Loshitzky, *Identity Politics on the Israeli Screen* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001), Chapter 1.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, Chapter 1.

morality with virtues of gentleness, kindness, and compassion. Mart describes the image of the Jewish, masculine, superman, Sabra, Ari Ben-Canaan, as the quintessence of an extraordinary soldier, industrious pioneer, and assiduous yeoman farmer, all of which were highly valued characteristics in America in the 1960s. She also compares Israel's modern, westernized political and cultural traits to America, ties Christianity to Judaism, and connects Kitty to America in the role of a mother taking care of her "infant" Jewish state.

Additionally, Mart discusses how the "bad" Arabs in *Exodus* are portrayed as irrational, brutal, primitive thugs who collaborate with Nazis, and how this extreme, negative representation of evil counters a much more benevolent image of Jews. She asserts these associations forged an emotional, cultural, and sympathetic bond between Americans who viewed the film and Jewish Israelis.<sup>20</sup>

Author Lester Friedman also discusses how filmmakers used movies to change perspectives on anti-Semitism. He explains how Jewish films made in the 1960s with Jewish topics and characters, like *Exodus*, confronted very serious, unpleasant issues, such as the Holocaust, anti-Semitism, and the Jewish struggle for freedom and independence. However, Friedman asserts that Jewish filmmakers felt great concern over any public discussion of these topics, with fear of fueling anti-Semitism rather than causing it to abate. Thus, filmmakers were quite sensitive about portraying these subjects. As an example, he analyzes Otto Preminger's hope that the presented similarities and connections between Israel and America would improve relations between the two nations and between Jews and non-Jews.

Friedman also asserts that the main focus of the film is the "blond, Presbyterian American," Kitty Freemont, played by Eva Marie Saint. This essay will assess the causes of her transformation from a "detached cynic," and a "Waspish, soft anti-Semite" with "vague anti-Semitic notions based on ignorance rather than malice," to a pro-Jewish, Zionist warrior who recognizes and sympathizes with the Jewish plight and the need for a Jewish homeland. As an American Gentile, Kitty is the film's strongest connection between American Jews and non-Jews. Friedman points out that her altered perspective is due to spending time with Jewish people, which helps Kitty and, more importantly, the American moviegoers, realize

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<sup>20</sup> Michelle Mart, *Eye on Israel: How America Came To View Israel as an Ally* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006).

that Jews are good people. This essay will explore the audience's connection to Kitty, and her role in positively changing the perspectives of the American audience to reduce anti-Semitism and increase support for Israel.<sup>21</sup>

Friedman discusses a few other connections between Israel and America. He analyzes the portrayal of the protagonist, Ari Ben-Canaan, played by Paul Newman, who is clearly Jewish though lacking any noticeable religious characteristics, and compares him to a "fighter who resembles John Wayne." Ari is the type of character, Friedman believes, "with whom American audiences can easily identify," and this is important in assessing the impact of Ari's character on the American audience. Friedman also explains how, for Preminger, "Palestine functions as a kind of mini-America," connecting the Jewish struggle for freedom and independence to the similar American struggle in the Wild West. He believes these character illustrations and connections between America and Israel helped promote the idea that Jews are like Americans, and Israel is a noble, deserving, and logical ally for America.<sup>22</sup>

Author Deborah Dash Moore develops this point, looking at the goals of the makers of the narrative, who hoped to connect the story to the audience. She says that the imagery in *Exodus* resembles "American westerns and war movies," with scenery comparable to American frontier land.<sup>23</sup> Moore also explains that Leon Uris conducted many interviews and took many photographs in Israel, in order to depict a realistic, truthful image of Jews as "fighters" in his book.<sup>24</sup> This image, of Jews as a people who can stand up for themselves,

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<sup>21</sup> "Detached cynic," Friedman, 161-165. "Waspish, soft anti-Semite," Loshitzky, 7. "Vague anti-Semitic notions based on ignorance rather than malice," Mart, 170.

<sup>22</sup> Friedman, 164.

<sup>23</sup> Moore, 211. In general, there is consensus on Preminger's narrative strategy; however, critics and supporters of the film are divided on whether it served American and Israeli interests with a kind of Manifest Destiny justification for Israel, or whether the narrative was justified given the recency of the Holocaust and Israel's isolation in the 1950s. My vote is for neither option. The establishment of Israel was necessary as a haven for the Jewish survivors of the Holocaust and of pogroms and persecution in Russia and in several Arab and Muslim nations. The native Arabs and Jews who had peacefully lived together on the land for centuries might have continued to work nicely together (or in two separate but friendly states), had the leadership allowed and promoted peace.

<sup>24</sup> In order to sell to a wide American (and world) audience, Uris' realistic descriptions of real events are buttressed by creative writing filled with some invented intrigue, drama, and narrative (for example, some of the characters are based on real people, but the love stories are invented). Moore believes Otto Preminger purchased the film rights at a paltry sum (\$75,000), "given the novel's subsequent popularity, which rivaled *Gone With the Wind* in sales." Moore, 210.

was new to this era. Previously, Jews were depicted as meek, “cowardly,” “Diaspora Jews.” However, *Exodus* changed that image to portray “New Jews” as ready to fight and die with honor, strength, and dignity in order to live without restraint in their own land, like American cowboys would.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, rather than focus solely on facts, Moore explains how Otto Preminger wanted to create an American image that juxtaposed good and bad characters and events in a humorous and entertaining manner to attract, and connect to, American audiences. This is why, Moore asserts, some of the film’s depictions are more positive, balanced, and include invented narrative rather than complete facts. Nevertheless, it is clear, based on the great popularity and success of the film, that the factual inaccuracies did not matter to the wider audience.<sup>26</sup>

The storyline in Preminger’s film is primarily based on Uris’ book, but there are numerous differences between the images portrayed, based upon the ideological desires of author, Uris, versus producer, Preminger. This important discussion is explored in Rachel Weissbrod’s essay, “*Exodus* as a Zionist Melodrama,” where she delineates some of the differences between real history and the distinct narratives portrayed in both the book and film. For example, Weissbrod explains that Uris includes scenes that are more critical of the British and of most Arabs, whereas Preminger’s version is more benevolent. She also explores the film’s use of comedic elements, especially in regard to some of the villains, which are utilized to lighten the mood.

Weissbrod also elucidates how both Uris and Preminger use non-religious images and melodramatic methods to clearly define and emphasize the differences between “positive” and “negative” characters and events, and to connect to a diverse audience. These methods “flatter the members of the audience and give a stamp of approval to the values, opinions, and beliefs they already hold.” This approach to storytelling creates dramatic contrast and impels the audience to connect to, and identify with, the “good” characters and their positive

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<sup>25</sup> The word “cowardly” is quoted from the film *Exodus* by a Holocaust survivor on the Exodus ship, hoping to arrive in Palestine. The term “New Jews” is commonly used to describe the proud, strong, warrior-like Israeli Jews who were willing to die with dignity while fighting for what they believed in. This is very different from the image of “Diaspora Jews” who tried to quietly blend into the societies they lived in to avoid persecution and discrimination.

<sup>26</sup> Moore, 207. The success of the film will be discussed later in this essay.

ideals. Weissbrod's analysis describes the reception of the book and film in Israel, and this essay will continue the discussion regarding its reception in America.<sup>27</sup>

To delineate a deeper understanding of *Exodus* and its effects on the American population, some of the subjects and analysis these authors have mentioned will be expanded upon in this essay. It is clear Uris, Preminger, and the film crew recognized the repercussions of the Holocaust and saw the continuation of global anti-Semitism as a threat to Jews and to Israel. They knew a great way to combat and decrease anti-Semitism is through knowledge acquisition and positive images, which can lead to understanding, tolerance, and acceptance. Hence, the story-makers desired not only monetary and popular success, but also promoted more profound goals. In particular, they wanted the story to connect to their audiences to promote the idea that, in general, Jews are good, regular people like Americans. They hoped that audiences' exposure to *Exodus*' likeable heroes would establish bonds and create sympathy for the Jews, their heartrending history, and their long, arduous struggle for freedom and a home in their ancient land. With any luck, this would lead to American Jews being treated as regular Americans and not as the "other," and the fledgling state of Israel would prosper with sustained American support. Thus, the storyline's characters and the historical and biblical events portrayed were utilized to help support the underlying causes.

When the story came out, many readers and viewers, including diplomats and state officials, professional literary and film critics, and millions of Americans and others across the globe critiqued *Exodus*, and though there were a small number of negative reactions, it was generally a huge success.<sup>28</sup> Uris and Preminger created a fictional narrative based on historical events; however, it was received by the general public and by professional reviewers as an historically accurate depiction of the recent past. Even most of those who understood that *Exodus* was not completely accurate still approved the storyline. For example, David Ben-Gurion, the Prime Minister of Israel in 1960, supported the narrative and its message as a positive form of propaganda. He acknowledged the lack of historical accuracy but understood the story was not created to tell the whole history; rather, *Exodus*

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<sup>27</sup> Weissbrod, 133.

<sup>28</sup> Regarding the viewing of the film by US State Department Officials, please see Moore, 211. Regarding the viewing by UN Representatives in Israel, please see Weissbrod, 144.

represented an emotional truth to gain sympathy for a worthy cause.<sup>29</sup> Overall, the inaccuracies did not detract from the film's popularity, and the millions of people who watched *Exodus*, in addition to the millions who read the novel, vicariously lived the difficult, exciting adventures of the heroic Jewish protagonists.

The entertaining plot taught millions of Americans lessons on morality, tolerance, and the evils of hate and anti-Semitism to create empathy and compassion for Jews, Israel, and Zionism, and to decrease anti-Semitism. The story's messages, in addition to other factors and evidence delineated in this essay, lead to the conclusion that *Exodus* was successful in achieving its intangible goals. The melodrama both reflected and supported a reduction in anti-Semitism, bigotry, and prejudice while generating an increase in congeniality towards Jews and the Zionist cause.

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<sup>29</sup> Adam Kirsch, "Macho Man," *Tablet Magazine*, last modified February 1, 2011, <http://www.tabletmag.com/arts-and-culture/books/57525/macho-man/>. Ben-Gurion's quote is also found in the notes pages in American Film Institute, "*Exodus*," <http://www.afi.com/members/catalog/DetailView.aspx?s=&Movie=53140>.

## CHAPTER 1

### INFLUENCE OF MOVIES

Films both reflect and influence societal values and beliefs, creating, altering, and/or reinforcing ideologies and stereotypes. Many filmmakers understand that visual, musical, and emotional tools can connect a film to its audience and, in turn, shape public opinion. Otto Preminger was no exception, as seen in *Exodus*. He recognized the power of films and, like many other moviemakers, he used engaging characters and a compelling storyline to impart specific philosophies and unifying principles to broad audiences.

For many Americans, especially in the beginning and middle of the twentieth century, movies became a dominant cultural medium, “providing new values and social ideals,” based on the viewpoints and values of the filmmakers (and the pressures and influences they felt from public and government representatives). Additionally, in general, even when viewers know they should question the authenticity of a historically based film, the emotions evoked, and the events, figures, and images portrayed, whether real or created by filmmakers, likely shape the audience’s understanding of the past and create a collective memory for the viewers.<sup>30</sup>

### MOVIE POPULARITY

The assertion that films are extremely influential was well established by the middle of the 1900s, years prior to the time *Exodus* was being produced. Though the motion-picture industry was only decades old, by the late 1940s, it was absolutely clear that Americans believed in the strong capacity for films to influence mass viewers. Writer and historian Robert Sklar asserted, from 1896 to 1946, movies became “the most popular and influential medium of culture in the United States.” Films “rose to the surface of cultural consciousness.”<sup>31</sup> This statement is easily supported by simple facts: “In 1908, investigators

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<sup>30</sup> Robert Sklar, *Movie Made America* (New York: Random House, 1975), 161.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

for a civic group found more than six hundred nickel theatres in New York, with a daily attendance roughly estimated at between three and four hundred thousand admissions, and gross receipts running over \$6 million for New York City alone.”<sup>32</sup> Neal Gabler of the *New York Times* puts the estimate at 550 theatres.<sup>33</sup> To reiterate, *every day in one city*, New York, 300,000-400,000 people viewed a movie. Across the States, at a nickel or dime a piece, moving pictures were fairly affordable for most people to experience on a fairly regular basis, especially for the young, educated, and/or affluent. In 1946, weekly attendance for film showings was almost three quarters of the potential audience, the film industry’s estimate of all the people in the nation capable of going to the movies. An outing to the movie theater became a favored activity for Americans, and the average moviegoer saw three films a month.<sup>34</sup> This proves that many viewers were able to experience and appreciate the magic of film. With such a large American and global audience, Sklar explained, “movies have historically been and still remain vital components in the network of cultural communication... [they help] shape the character and direction of American culture as a whole.”<sup>35</sup> Thus, regardless of content, it is clear that movies, with so many viewers, had the potential to touch the hearts and minds of the masses.

### VICARIOUS EXPERIENCES

Moving pictures are powerful because they employ the senses of vision and hearing, characters that audiences can relate to, and poignant narratives to evoke imagination, recollections, and emotion. Being entertained helps moviegoers grasp concepts and ideas as they become affected by the storylines and easily learn without intentionally working or thinking too much. This is because “On the [movie] screen, the whole process of observing,

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<sup>32</sup> F. H. Richardson, *Motion Picture Handbook* (New York: Kessinger, 1910), 160, quoted in Sklar, 16.

<sup>33</sup> Neal Gabler, “Now Showing: A Cast of Millions,” *New York Times*, January 25, 1998, <http://www.nytimes.com/1998/01/25/nyregion/now-showing-a-cast-of-millions.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm>.

<sup>34</sup> Sklar, 269. These statistics are from 1946. The percentage of potential moviegoers did not take into account those too ill, young, old, in institutions, or those without access to theaters.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, vi.

describing, reporting, then imagining has been accomplished for [the viewers].”<sup>36</sup> Hence, films become easily comprehensible, creative, educational teaching tools.

Alison Landsberg also discusses the possible affect of films on audiences, which generate, what she calls, “prosthetic memories,” or memories that “are adopted as a result of a person’s experience with a mass cultural technology...that dramatizes or recreates a history he or she did not live.”<sup>37</sup> As one of many tools employed to positively alter opinions on Jews, the makers of the *Exodus* film hoped that moviegoers would vicariously, prosthetically experience the events and emotions projected on the movie screen.

With the potential to connect audiences to ideas, images, and messages on a mass scale, it is likely that films, especially popular ones, affected (and continue to affect) the shape of American culture and viewpoints. Landsberg asserts, “the cinema transports people into lives that they have not lived in the traditional sense but that they are nevertheless invited to experience and even inhabit, albeit briefly.” Being taken, through the magical empathic powers of films, “to faraway places and alternative temporalities,” allows audiences to sympathize and, perhaps even empathize, with the storyline and the heroic protagonists of the film. If the sensory experiences generated by *Exodus* would “become as vivid as realities” for audiences, Americans’ opinions on Jews would likely improve.<sup>38</sup>

Akin to Sklar and Landsberg, Eric Johnston, the President of the Motion Picture Association in the 1940s, considered movies “an instrument for the promotion of knowledge and understanding among peoples,”<sup>39</sup> and writer Joel Rosenberg believes films can be a “potent vehicle of acculturation.”<sup>40</sup> If, for example, a movie promotes the idea that, when in love, it is acceptable to have sex before marriage, this once-taboo notion becomes more acceptable. In present times, as premarital sex has become much more of a norm, it is easy to

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<sup>36</sup> Walter Lippmann, *Public Opinion*, 16<sup>th</sup> ed (New York: MacMillian Co., 1957), 92.

<sup>37</sup> Alison Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 28, 29.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*, 12.

<sup>39</sup> “Motion Picture Letter,” *Public Information Committee of the Motion Picture Industry* 5, no. 6 (June 1946). Also in Kracauer, “National Types,” 57, 70.

<sup>40</sup> Joel Rosenberg, “Jewish Experience on Film- An American Overview,” *American Jewish Year Book* 96 (1996): 12.

find films portraying casual sex and multiple partners. Though many people still value one-partner relationships and sex only after marriage, it has become much more socially acceptable, partly due to the images and stories projected in mass media.<sup>41</sup> While these examples pertain to the negative influences of film, they also allude to a film's ability to inject positive cultural messages into large audiences.

In 1946, Jack L. Warner, the head of Warner Brothers, asserted that motion pictures portray "honest entertainment" by depicting images of truth, democracy, and international understanding. Though not everyone agrees on what "truth" or "international understanding" is, the images and lessons portrayed have the potential to be viewed by mass audiences, and can influence the assessment of information, creating what is perceived as "truth."<sup>42</sup> This idea has frustrated many historians who view movies as an effective means of teaching about the past, but who loathe the lack of accuracy observed in many historically based films. Nevertheless, as Robert Toplin explains, "Cinematic history excites inordinate public interest and critical attention," which is important and useful because many people "obtain a good deal of their understanding about the past from dramatic films... rather than nonfiction history books." Toplin asserts, people "learn history from the dramas they see on the screen."<sup>43</sup>

On the other hand, Toplin contends, "cinematic historians [can] lose their audiences in a labyrinth of detail and complexity." Thus, filmmakers "leave out many details in order to make their stories simple and understandable" and add other elements, such as romance, to provide entertainment. Without these (and other) aspects, films would not have enough

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<sup>41</sup> Similar to studies on sexual images on film, studies have been conducted on the link between smoking in movies and the general American population's smoking habits. One study's conclusion: "This study, which had high reliability, dense sampling, and covered a long time period, indicates that tobacco content has declined in top-ranked U.S. movies since 1950 with a trend in total tobacco content that closely paralleled the drop in per capita cigarette consumption and the increase in significant tobacco control efforts." Patrick E. Jamieson and Dan Romer, "Trends in U.S. Movie Tobacco Portrayal since 1950: An Historical Analysis," *The Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania*, last modified April 15, 2010, [www.annenbergpublicpolicycenter.org](http://www.annenbergpublicpolicycenter.org).

<sup>42</sup> Jack L. Warner, "What Hollywood Isn't," *Hollywood Citizen News and Advertiser*, 1946, accessed at Margaret Herrick Library, Los Angeles, CA. Also, Kracauer, "National Types," 57.

<sup>43</sup> Robert Brent Toplin, *Reel History: In Defense of Hollywood* (Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2002), 5, 9.

market appeal to be successful. Hence, while historical completeness and accuracy would be ideal, filmmakers hope to at least convey some thoughtful perspectives of the past.<sup>44</sup>

Though viewers judge films based on their personal and group experiences, most popular movies are shown across the United States, thus potentially presenting all moviegoers with the same images, ideas, and lessons, underpinned by the same truths and propaganda, thus creating similar prosthetic memories. Siegfried Kracauer, a social psychologist, agrees with this assessment. In 1948, he explained, “Hollywood, and any national film industry... is both a leader and follower of public opinion... It reflects...popular attitudes of the time, but it also turns these often vague attitudes into concrete images.”<sup>45</sup> A concept or stereotype can gain credence and clout when supported by mass media culture. Kracauer continues, “Films supplement real life. They lend color to public opinion polls... The makers of films are vitally interested in the mass public [as films] can be assumed to bear on the attitudes, desires, and reactions of many, many people.”<sup>46</sup> This is quite a strong assertion; however, most filmmakers and analysts agree with this assessment.

## REGULATIONS

Most film scholars, film-makers, and social critics of motion pictures hold the impression that, while entertaining, movies provide audiences with easy-to-grasp and memorable images, ideas, and messages. Fearing the negative influence of films, the Catholic Church spent a great deal of time and energy in the first half of the twentieth century attempting to prevent certain films from reaching their prospective audiences. In the 1930s, a petition by the Catholic-based Legion of Decency gained eleven million signatures in ten weeks, including those of many Jews and Protestants. Its desire was to regulate the

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<sup>44</sup> Toplin, 1, 18.

<sup>45</sup> Kracauer, “National Types,” 53.

<sup>46</sup> Siegfried Kracauer, “Those Movies with a Message,” *Harper’s Magazine* (June 1948): 567. (for biblio: #s: 567-572). This correlates with Landsberg’s ideas in *Prosthetic Memory*. Mass media, films in particular, project ideals to establish new truths and memories, caused by sympathy and empathy in audiences.

movie industry to prevent “inappropriate matter” from being shown, as it was believed certain ideas could be detrimental to societal norms and established principles.<sup>47</sup>

The film industry tried to avert federal regulation by creating the Production Code Administration, led by Will Hays, to monitor the images and concepts being presented by films. This was established to succor the fears, demands, and desires of the Legion and their governmental and social supporters. As a Presbyterian deacon and one-time chairman of the Republican Party, Hays had the qualifications to be supported by religious and conservative groups who feared the possible harmful influence of particular films. Furthermore, many members of government, including representatives in the White House, Congress, and the State Department, believed filmmakers “had demonstrated remarkable skill at infusing social myths and dreams with humor, sentiment, and a sense of moral precepts and responsibilities” and had the ability “to convince [their] audiences.”<sup>48</sup> This demonstrates that many Americans adhered to a firm belief in films’ ability to shape American culture and values.

The demand to regulate films came mainly from those who enjoyed the status quo, especially in the first half of the twentieth century. The leading members of American cultural, economic, and political society feared the presentation of new ideas in mass media, as any new concepts or information could instigate change and alter their status. In 1926, Wilton A. Barrett, the executive secretary of the National Board of [film] Review, wrote that the motion picture was a “purveyor of ideas and symbols and secrets,” that “could narrate facts to the great majority and offer suggestions which the jealous minority did not intend,” the “jealous minority” being white, Christian, nativist, elites.<sup>49</sup>

For example, showing elite white men and women in immoral or corrupt acts offered visual suggestions that undermined their status and authority. Because films can be so believable and influential, if white women were prostitutes on film, perhaps they could be so in real life as well. The image of white men as gamblers and thieves in the movies nurtured

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<sup>47</sup> Sklar, 173-175. Some methods used by the Legion of Decency include boycotts of particular films that were deemed offensive.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, 214.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid, 123. Also, Wilton A. Barrett, “The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science: The Motion Picture in its Economic and Social Aspects,” *American Academy of Political and Social Science* 128, no. 217 (1926), 1-208.

the idea that these characters actually existed. Thus, if people saw films with vulgar behaviors by white actors and believed and learned from these films, the confidence in the idea of white moral supremacy at home, and American exceptionalism abroad, would become discredited. Caucasians could be stripped “of their aura of rectitude and moral power” and “the doctrine of white superiority” would be subverted.<sup>50</sup> Thus, if upper class whites could limit the access of information to all other types of people, especially by controlling “ubiquitous, inexpensive, and...easy to understand,” films, they could “limit the ability of the lower classes to gain knowledge about the social systems in which they lived,” thus, keeping knowledge, and the power that comes with knowledge, for themselves.<sup>51</sup>

Glamorous depictions of lewd acts, such as crime and sex, by any movie star, were believed to negatively influence youth, working classes, immigrants, and racial minorities. This assumption followed that those who belonged to the lower social groups would be easily manipulated, turning to crime and promiscuity, which would generally ruin American society. Hence, the *potential* for films to influence was very threatening to those who enjoyed the status quo. This helps explain why there were so many who desired strong regulation of all ideas presented in movies, and why so many believed in and feared the possibility of films to teach and influence mass society.

### **THE INFLUENCE OF PRECONCEPTIONS, STEREOTYPES, & FAMILIARITY**

Recognizable images and preconceptions have the ability to influence, and some films reinforce these to increase impact. Walter Lippmann explains that preconceptions “mark out certain objects as familiar or strange, emphasizing the difference, so that the slightly familiar is seen as very familiar and the somewhat strange as sharply alien.”<sup>52</sup> Familiarity with a film’s philosophy and main characters helps audiences understand and relate to the storyline and sometimes allows the movie to affect perceptions by creating prosthetic experiences. Thus, a movie’s heroes should be recognizable, traditional, and

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<sup>50</sup> Sklar, 225.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid, 123.

<sup>52</sup> Lippmann, 90.

acceptable to mainstream culture; otherwise, the theme and message portrayed by the characters may not be well received by the viewers.

A good example of this is the juxtaposition between good and bad characters in the *Exodus* film, who are, respectively, more or less familiar to Americans, and are utilized to strengthen the message of the film. The heroic protagonists, Ari the Israeli native, Kitty the Christian American, the British General Sutherland, and the Holocaust survivors Karen and Dov, are ideal characters, with high-quality traits and “good,” universal qualities. Their attractive looks, high moral fiber, and outstanding leadership qualities fit in well with American ideals. It is through a bond with these characters that the audience identifies with the experiences and lessons these characters learn and convey, including the film’s message. Opposing this image, the film’s villains, including British officer Caldwell and the Nazi-associated Arabs, are negatively coded. Their expressions, appearances, and philosophies are an affront to American values and render them “sharply alien.” In general, the preconceptions established regarding the villains makes it easier to support the more sympathetic heroes and their ideologies.

Preconceptions easily turn into stereotypes, which are oversimplified, standardized, familiar generalizations focusing on images or ideas one person or group accepts as true about another. There are some practical uses for certain stereotypes: in order to have a positive, effective interaction with a member of a different group, it is important to understand which actions that group likely deems agreeable or objectionable.<sup>53</sup> Contrarily, many stereotypes are developed about the “other” in derogatory, defamatory ways to make their own “in-group” seem superior, and the other “out-group” seem a threat to accepted norms. For example, if “we” are generous, “they” must be greedy, and if “we” are civilized, “they” must be barbarous. These contrasting images ensure that the “we” group perceives itself as somehow better than “them.”

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<sup>53</sup> An example of a positive use of a stereotype can be found regarding religiously orthodox people. It is said that they live “by the book” and, following traditional laws, do not curse. If a non-religious person desired a positive interaction with a religious person, it would be in his/her best interest to carefully avoid offensive curse words. Thus, even though some religious people curse, this stereotype can be useful in interactions with the majority of religious people.

## THE HISTORY OF JEWISH STEREOTYPES & ANTI-SEMITISM

In general, negative characteristics of Jews and “others” have been perpetuated for thousands of years by long-standing religious, political, and social stereotypes of them. Starting before the Jewish Diaspora, which began in the sixth century B.C.E., Jews have been viewed as different and persecuted in every Afro-Eurasian nation in which they lived.<sup>54</sup> Though they participated in each city-state’s economic, civic, and social life, Jews were viewed as a separate group based on their cultural and religious differences.<sup>55</sup> They were the minority in predominantly Christian or Muslim societies, and with growing nationalism, failing economies, and the need for a scapegoat, hostility toward Jews intensified, and they were perceived, more and more, as foreigners who promoted the lifestyles and philosophies of “others.” Political and religious leadership found anti-Semitism quite useful in their quest for power, and in many cases Jews were seen as enemies of the state.<sup>56</sup> Peter Schafer asserts, throughout recorded history, “the Jews [have been] the innocent victims of a political [and religious] conflict of interests.”<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> The second time the Jewish homeland of Israel was conquered (the first time was in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE), it was by the Romans around 70 C.E., and the great majority of Jews fled to other regions of the globe for safety. In each city-state they were treated differently, sometimes poorly, sometimes better, but almost always as second class citizens and outsiders, even after living in the same place for hundreds of years.

<sup>55</sup> Jews also drove pseudo-separation from mainstream society, living in unconnected enclaves to ensure the proliferation of their culture and traditions. It is easier to marry one of your own, and have children raised in your culture, if you live near, and associate with, those who follow the same mores.

<sup>56</sup> Jehuda Reinharz, *Living With Antisemitism: Modern Jewish Responses* (Hanover: Brandeis University Press, 1987), 297, 299. Also, Gartner, 283, 243, 219, 223, 229, 299. Examples include the German Catholics’ Christian Socialist Party and Austria’s Social Democrats in the late 1800s.

<sup>57</sup> Peter Schafer, *Judeophobia: Attitudes Toward the Jews in the Ancient World* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 137-145. One example Schafer describes is from the first century in Alexandria, Egypt, where polytheism ruled and leaders were perceived as having divine right. A historian named Philo described the anti-Jewish sentiment of a Greek leader of the Roman Empire, Gaius, who was angered that the Jews refused to acknowledge him as a godly figure, and called their beliefs and customs “unfortunate” and “foolish.” Another Greek ruler, Flaccus, decimated Jewish synagogues, then issued a proclamation denouncing Jews “as foreigners and aliens” as a means of abolishing Jewish citizenship and their “participation in political rights.” Subsequently, Jewish homes and businesses were pillaged, Jews were forced to the “Delta” quarter of the city, the “first known ghetto in the world,” and many Jews died of starvation or were lynched for leaving the ghetto in search of food. These are a few, out of countless examples, of political and religious leaderships attacking Jewish communities.

In America, prejudice against Jews was recorded as far back as 1654. In New Amsterdam, for example, the Christian settlers “deemed it useful” to require Jews to leave. Peter Stuyvesant, one of those settlers, wrote to the Amsterdam Chamber of the Dutch West India Company, calling the Jews “the deceitful race, such hateful enemies and blasphemers of the name of Christ,” and asked that they “be not allowed further to infect and trouble this new colony.”<sup>58</sup> Though it was sometimes difficult being Jewish in the United States, they were emancipated in 1787 with the creation of the Federal Constitution. Thus, when fleeing severe persecution and violent pogroms in Europe in the early 1880s, large waves of Eastern European Jewish immigrants fled for safety to the United States, where they had some rights and freedoms.<sup>59</sup>

Though Jews came to America seeking safety, peace, and wellbeing, these immigrants threatened the customs and prominence of traditional, white, nativist, Christian Americans. Generally, unassimilated Jewish immigrants to America were noticeably different in dress, custom, language, and religion. “Their” new, peculiar Jewish traditions and values were an unfamiliar, scary threat to long-established American ones, and disparaging anti-Jewish stereotypes developed and strengthened, especially as immigrant numbers increased. By assimilating, some Jews became successful; however, by and large, Jews grew into a role of being *considered* timid and submissive in social life and miserly and crafty in business.

In the 1920s, America saw a rise in social and political anti-Semitism, including the Temporary Suspension of Immigration Law for Jews by the Congressional Committee on Immigration. There was a fear that Jews were “an impoverished and racially deficient people... seen as carriers of the Bolshevik revolution, which they intended to use for the purpose of overthrowing Western Civilization.”<sup>60</sup> The Jewish “other” was perceived as a

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<sup>58</sup> Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 170-172.

<sup>59</sup> This well-known fact is cited in many scholarly publications including Walter Laqueur in *The Changing Face of Antisemitism: From Ancient Times to the Present Day* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 78. Alleged reasons for pogroms included an economic depression, demographic changes as Jews moved into positions of influence, and the influence of charismatic, anti-Semitic European leaders.

<sup>60</sup> Mendes-Flohr and Reinhartz, 512.

threat to established political philosophies and the economic standing of natives, as immigrants and their children could influence policy and “steal” jobs. Henry Ford, the automaker, agreed with, and promoted, this sentiment. He published and widely distributed *The International Jew*, an English version of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. This literary hoax, anonymously authored by a malicious anti-Semite, was written as though by Jewish leaders, supposedly bent on dominating the world. It was an appalling attempt by anti-Semitic racists to trick the world into believing that Jews were malevolent, greedy, power-hungry traitors of every nation.<sup>61</sup> These rumors spread and cemented ugly stereotypes that many Americans believed.

By the late 1930s and 1940s, a majority Americans felt that Jews “had a variety of objectionable traits,” such as “greed, unscrupulousness, an inordinate concern with money...pushiness, aggressiveness, selfishness... bad manners, a lack of cleanliness, an unrefined nature...”<sup>62</sup> Jews were disparaged as undeserving, second-class citizens and social discrimination prevailed. “Jews were barred from private resorts, social clubs, and private schools- institutions of the upper classes. The older social elite were striving to secure their position and to fend off the intrusions” of Jews and other citizens deemed as unworthy and second-class.<sup>63</sup> The Manhattan Beach Company, for example, forbade Jews on their beach or in their hotel with the explanation that they “are a pretentious class...who give us more trouble on our road and in our hotel than we can stand... [and] are hurting us in every way... They are a detestable and vulgar people.”<sup>64</sup> Public opinion polls from the mid-

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<sup>61</sup> Several times, over the course of many years, parts of the bogus *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* were published in Henry Ford’s private newspaper, *The Dearborn Independent*. Ford was openly anti-Semitic, and though he was forced to publish an apology in 1927 (due to a libel suit brought against the newspaper), the damage he caused was severe, extensive, and lasting. For details, see Robert S. Wistrich, *Antisemitism: The Longest Hatred* (Great Britain: Methuen London, 1991), 118. Also, Mendes-Flohr and Reinharz, 367. Ford was not the only prominent American to espouse evil anti-Semitic viewpoints. The Detroit-based radio priest, Father Charles Coughlin, who had an estimated audience of 15 million, regularly broadcast attacks on Jews with ideas that had originated in Nazi Germany. Over 67 percent of his regular listeners and 51 percent of his occasional listeners “approved of his violently anti-Semitic message.” Deborah E. Lipstadt, *Beyond Belief: The American Press and the Coming of the Holocaust, 1933-1945* (New York: Collier Macmillan, 1986), 127.

<sup>62</sup> Mart, 6. Study by Charles H. Stember, Marshall Sklare, and American Jewish Committee, *Jews in the Mind of America* (New York: Basic Books, 1966), 54-56, 65.

<sup>63</sup> Mendes-Flohr and Reinharz, 466.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid, 466.

twentieth century also displayed prejudice against American Jewry, as many Christian Americans asserted that Jews are greedy, rich, and shrewd. Jews were called clannish and aloof, loud and aggressive, pushy and arrogant, and were said to complain a lot.<sup>65</sup> These examples display the perpetuation of defamatory stereotypes against Jews and a significant level of anti-Semitism in the United States in the first half of the twentieth century.

### **JEWISH STEREOTYPES IN MOVIES**

In accordance with anti-Semitic stereotypes, many forms of cultural communication in the early 1900s, including American motion pictures, depicted Jews as foreign outsiders. However, in general, in the first decades of the twentieth century, most films were created for an immigrant audience, by immigrants or first-generation Americans, as a means of forming old-world community and culture in their new, foreign home, America. Jewish, Yiddish culture thrived in various forms of entertainment, connecting immigrants to their cultural roots, and this included stereotypes. The portrayed stereotypes about their own kind were often humorous and meant to alleviate the hardships of life in overcrowded, urban tenements.<sup>66</sup> Various stereotypes prevailed for Jews on film, such as comedic characters and the “shelmiel,” a clumsy, dopey, inept person. Others were portrayed in business positions deemed lowly, unethical, or immoral, such as pawnbrokers, money-lenders, haberdashers, and peddlers.<sup>67</sup> It would seem, with so many pejorative, distasteful Jewish character representations, that the moviemakers were either anti-Semitic or had a strange, dark sense of humor; however, the great majority of movie moguls were, in fact, Jewish.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> National Opinion Research Center [NORC], “NORC Survey #1955-0379: Foreign Affairs,” November 1955, United States, Roper Center for Public Opinion, n.d. Between 19% to over 40% of people polled answered with these defamatory descriptions.

<sup>66</sup> Rosenberg, 8.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid, 8. Jewish stereotypes in films are also discussed in: Friedman, 30, and in Mendes-Flohr and Reinharz, 509.

<sup>68</sup> This is excluding pre-1920 films, as Thomas Edison was a major film producer. However, the majority of Hollywood founders were Jewish, and were either immigrants or first generation Americans. They included MGM Studios (Marcus Loew, Joseph Schenck, Samuel Goldwyn, and Louis B. Mayer), Paramount (Aldolf Zukor, Jesse Lasky, B.P. Schulberg), Columbia (Harry and Jack Cohn), Warner Brothers (Jack and Harry Warner), Universal Pictures (Carl Laemmle, Irving Thalberg), and 20<sup>th</sup> Century (Joseph Schenck), which later merged with Fox (William Fox). The only other major studio at the time was United Artists, which still had connections and sympathy toward the Jewish community. For more details, see: Rosenberg, 10, Friedman, 34.

## FEAR PROVOKED REMOVAL OF ETHNIC TRAITS IN FILMS

In the early years of moving pictures, Jewish characters, and all the stereotypes that came along, were fairly prominent in feature films. However, by the 1920s, with popular culture promoting acculturation and assimilation, an increase in middle-class audience members, and then the rise of Hitler and Nazism in the 1930s, on-screen characters and storylines began to lack identifiably Jewish traits.<sup>69</sup> New Americans, including moviemakers, recognized “old” American hostility toward “otherness,” which was deemed a threat to the “real” American way of life. Hence, rather than push against Americanization, new immigrants promoted assimilation, integration, and similarity as their ideal lifestyle. As a result, the Jewish image “was often muted or placed in disguise,”<sup>70</sup> and “otherness” virtually disappeared from film.

Furthermore, when Hitler rose to power in 1933, an acute fear of increased anti-Semitism across the globe became prevalent. Eric Goldman explained that Hollywood’s Jewish producers, whose two-thousand-year history in nations across Europe was filled with anti-Semitic persecution, wanted no attention brought upon their ethnic, Jewish origin.<sup>71</sup> Thus, rather than portraying positive images of Jews or negative images of Nazis, both representations were severely restrained. Unconcealed Jewishness was replaced by subdued, hidden Jewish themes, and Jewish actors even took Americanized “show-biz” names, in an attempt to hide their true Jewish identity. Additionally, beginning in 1930s, the Hays Office, through its Motion Picture Production Code (the film industry’s self-regulating “watchdog”), ensured any offensive or “inappropriate” references to national origin were purged from films, including any real image of ethnicity, cultural traits, or diversity.<sup>72</sup> This self-censorship was an attempt “to ward off boycotts by conservative political and religious

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<sup>69</sup> Rosenberg, 5. Also, Friedman, 30, 33.

<sup>70</sup> Rosenberg, 5.

<sup>71</sup> Eric A. Goldman, *The American Jewish Experience through the Lens of Cinema: Film History as Haggadah* (New York: American Jewish Committee, 2008), 6. This is projected in a scene in the film *Gentleman’s Agreement*.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid*, 6.

organizations,” such as the Catholic Legion of Decency.<sup>73</sup> Thus, out of fear of increased anti-Semitism, harassment, and discrimination, and also due to fear of Congressional hearings and formal government censorship, even positive images of Jewish, ethnic, and immigrant culture and origin were removed from film.

**CHANGING THE FACE OF THE JEWISH IMAGE (&  
COMBATting ANTI-SEMITIC STEREOTYPES) IN  
*GENTLEMAN’S AGREEMENT***

In 1947, a daring film came out that spoke directly to the American audience about the evils of prejudice, stereotyping, and anti-Semitism, albeit without really presenting ethnic diversity, since there was continued fear of “stirring the pot.” Judith Doneson explains that the film *Gentleman’s Agreement* does not portray the stereotypes that shaped the American image of the Jew; however, it does delineate the inherent danger that results from these stereotypes.<sup>74</sup> The film portrayed how multiple types of anti-Semitism are all evil and must be combated.

*Gentleman’s Agreement* was a loud-and-clear “call to duty” for Americans to stand up against hate and take action against prejudice. The handsome, likeable protagonist, Philip Schuyler Green, played by the Hollywood star Gregory Peck, is a reporter for a supposedly open-minded, tolerant journal, “The great liberal magazine that fights injustice on all sides,” and is asked to write a moving, out-of-the-ordinary story on anti-Semitism.<sup>75</sup> Phil decides to approach this task with an “angle” by telling people he is Jewish in order to *experience* what it would be like to be treated as a Jew. Focusing on assimilation and Americanization, any ethnic features or stereotypes are ignored, as Phil explains that this idea can work because he “looks just like” his Jewish childhood friend Dave, with dark eyes and dark hair, and similar features. Phil awakens to the fact that many Jews and Gentiles have similar physical traits and shares this realization with the audience.

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<sup>73</sup> Rosenberg, 15.

<sup>74</sup> Judith E. Doneson, *The Holocaust in American Film* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2002): 54.

<sup>75</sup> This is a quote from Phil Green’s Jewish secretary, who was denied a job under her real name, “Estelle Walovsky,” but got the job under a Gentile-sounding name, “Elaine Wales.” Elia Kazan, *Gentleman’s Agreement*, Los Angeles: Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation, 1947, DVD.

When he pretends to be Jewish, Phil encounters anti-Semitic sentiment and discrimination, by diverse people, in many places. For example, he realizes a posh hotel is “restricted” and bars Jews; even though he has a reservation, he is denied a room. His young son, Tommy, who is “in” on the secret that his father is pretending to be Jewish, is tormented by young bullies, who call him “dirty Jew” and “stinking kike.” The “liberal” company he works for denied a position to his secretary when she applied under her real, Jewish, name, but when she applied a second time with the exact same application, but under a Gentile name, she received the job. A drunk patron at a restaurant harasses Phil’s Jewish friend, Dave, and makes atrociously anti-Semitic remarks to him. Moreover, Dave is offered a great job but has trouble finding a home to rent in the area, because he is Jewish. A real-estate-based “Gentleman’s Agreement” prevents landlords from renting to Jews with the belief that they will bring down the property value of the neighborhood.<sup>76</sup> Like in real life, these anti-Semitic actions portrayed in the film were carried out by unabashed anti-Semites who were frank about their bigoted attitudes. This anti-Semitism caused great anger and insult to the unprejudiced, rational protagonists, including Phil Green, and his girlfriend Kathy (played by Dorothy McGuire).

Unfortunately, there are more subtle, yet just as harmful, types of anti-Semitism: the kind that perpetuates hate and bigotry by inaction against the evil and the intolerant. In the movie, it is Kathy’s idea to write an article on anti-Semitism; however, when it comes time to stand up for what is right, she, like most “good” Americans, sits on the sidelines. One example occurs when Kathy is at a dinner: she hears a man tell a repulsive, upsetting, anti-Semitic joke and later explains that she wanted to do something or say something, but she, and all the dinner guests (who also, supposedly, despise anti-Semitism), never said a word. Furthermore, she owns a vacant cottage in a high-class area where her sister lives, but she is

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<sup>76</sup> This is based directly on real “gentlemen’s agreements” in real estate, country clubs, and other social institutions. An infamous example is in La Jolla, CA where, according to local social customs, Jews and other minorities were not permitted to live. This changed by the early 1960s, when the scholar, Dr Jonas Salk (who invented the polio vaccination), was to become a professor at University of California, San Diego, but could not find a place to live near the campus because he was Jewish. With the help of Roger Revelle, the founder of UCSD, this “gentleman’s agreement” was eventually invalidated so that Salk and numerous other revered Jewish professors could find homes near the campus. Sue Garson, “The End of Covenant,” *The San Diego Jewish Monthly*, last modified September 1, 2010, <http://web.archive.org/web/20080723060708/http://www.sdjewishjournal.com/stories/jewishnewsstory.html>

afraid of renting to Dave because it will “stir things up,” causing tension in the neighborhood. When Tommy is called names (“dirty Jew” and “stinking kike”), Kathy reacts by telling him it is all a big mistake because he is not Jewish; however, the “right” response (according to Phil, the filmmakers, and all who do not approve of racism or anti-Semitism) would be to explain that those types of names and any anti-Semitic comments and actions are completely unacceptable and un-American! The lack of action that Kathy displays corresponds to the way many people in the mid twentieth century reacted (and continue to react) to acts and words of racism and bigotry.

For example, in 1964, a public poll asked, “If a candidate for congress should declare himself as being against Jews, would this influence you to vote for him or to vote against him?” 5% declared they would vote for him, displaying unabashed anti-Semitism. Over 57% said they would vote against him, exhibiting intolerance towards bigots, racists, and anti-Semites (if only silently and anonymously, with their hypothetical vote). However, over 33% said it would “make no difference” to them if a congressman was openly anti-Semitic. Sadly, this 33% did not recognize this type of action as immoral, condoning racist hate, and harmful to society. Other possible reasons for this apathetic reaction are that the respondents just did not care about anyone other than their own kind, or they really did not like Jews but refused to admit it. Perhaps this group would not take action or be violent against a Jewish person, but they likely would not stop one from being assaulted either.<sup>77</sup>

Phil learns a few things during the few weeks he pretends to be Jewish, and shares this wisdom with the audience. He says, “I’ve come to see lots of nice people who hate [anti-Semitism] and deplore it and protest their own innocence, then help it along and wonder why it grows. People who would never beat up a Jew. People who think anti-Semitism is far away in some dark place with low-class morons. That’s the biggest discovery I’ve made. The good people. The nice people.” These types of people are the big problem in American society: they say anti-Semitism is “awfully wrong,” yet they do nothing to stop it from spreading.

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<sup>77</sup> Roper Commercial Poll, “Roper Misc Poll 1964- ANTISEM in the United States,” October 1964, *Survey Research Center, Anti-Defamation League of Binai B’Rith*, United States, Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, n.d.

In the end, Kathy learns this lesson too and decides to rent her cottage to Dave. She plans to stay at her sister's to ensure Dave and his family feel safe, comfortable, and welcome in their new neighborhood, and she will prevent or stop any anti-Semitic neighbors who decide to behave poorly. This is a great relief to Phil, who previously ended his engagement to Kathy due to her lack of response against anti-Semitism. Her great accomplishment in learning that it is her duty, as a good American, to stand up and fight for what is right, teaches moviegoers that they, too, can improve America by taking action to stop bigotry. Fighting for what is honorable, just, moral, and the American way, Phil teaches by example and with his words. Kathy and the American audiences learn from him that passivity is harmful and those who fight against bigotry represent real American values.

It is the wish of the filmmakers that Phil, and all the other likeable characters in the movie, gain the audience's empathy. If moviegoers relate to Phil, a highly admired character, they will likely learn from him and recognize that anti-Semitism, and all other types of bigotry and discrimination, are atrocious, unacceptable prejudices that lead to inequality and are, therefore, un-American. When Phil experiences anti-Jewish bigotry first-hand, he fully comprehends that anti-Semites are "more than nasty little snobs...They're persistent little traitors to everything this country stands for and stands on, and you have to fight them! Not just for the poor, poor Jews, but for everything this country stands for!" Most moviegoers in the mid-twentieth century understood and related to Phil's realizations. By empathically experiencing the *feeling* of being treated as second-class, inferior humans for no legitimate reason, their level of tolerance and open-mindedness increased. With any luck, these audience members would then take action to fight religious, racial, and ethnic prejudices.

The film *Gentleman's Agreement* was closely based on Laura Z. Hobson's novel, which was written after Senator John Rankin was applauded in Congress after making very anti-Semitic comments.<sup>78</sup> With the realization that anti-Semitism was still so prevalent in the supposedly great, tolerant, open-minded country of America, Darryl F. Zanuck decided to

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<sup>78</sup> Laura Z Hobson's novel, *Gentleman's Agreement*, published by Simon and Schuster in 1947 reached #1 on the *New York Times* best sellers list in April that year, selling over 1.6 million copies, and received rave reviews from many renowned newspapers and magazines. Hobson was Jewish by birth, but considered herself agnostic. See Erens, 176-180.

purchase the rights and produce the film. “He saw anti-Semitism as an American problem, not just an issue for Jews.”<sup>79</sup> Zanuck’s decision came after the Nuremberg Trials, where gruesome, shocking details of what had actually happened in the Nazi death camps were delineated.<sup>80</sup> While the great majority of Americans deplored what had happened to the Jews in the Holocaust, many were still quite anti-Semitic and would never stand up against anti-Semitism. Zanuck and the other people involved in the film knew something had to be done to show the world that anti-Semitism is intolerable and must be stopped.<sup>81</sup>

Zanuck recognized the wickedness of anti-Semitism and, as one of the few non-Jewish film industry leaders, felt he might be able to influence other Christian Americans to join the crusade against prejudiced hate. Nevertheless, due to the high prevalence of anti-Semitism across America (and the globe), and with the belief that “Jewish-friendly” films were connected to Communism, there was great concern that the film’s theme would provoke and stir up more racism.<sup>82</sup> Thus, Zanuck, and the film director, Elia Kazan, were approached by numerous apprehensive Jewish studio heads who appealed to the filmmakers not to make the film. They preferred to deal with the problem of anti-Semitism quietly with the belief that if they just blended in, no one would know they were Jewish, and perhaps anti-Semitism

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<sup>79</sup> Goldman, 7-9. Zanuck was also provoked by the Los Angeles Country Club, who denied his membership with the mistaken belief that he was Jewish. See article Jabotinsky International Center, “Looking Back: *Gentleman’s Agreement*,” Fight Hatred, last modified April 18, 2010, accessed May 5, 2012, <http://fighthatred.com/fighting-hate/people/674-looking-back-gentlemans-agreement>. The Manhattan Beach Club (in New York) had similar rules restricting minorities, Jews in particular, from joining their club and even from enjoying the paid amenities and public beach adjacent to their property. Article by Stanley McKenna, “Reviving a Prejudice: Jewish Patronage Not Welcomed at Manhattan Beach...” *New York Herald*, July 22, 1879. See Mendez-Flohr and Reinhartz, 465-466

<sup>80</sup> The Nuremberg Trials took place in Germany from November 20, 1945 to October 1, 1946 for the prosecution of high-ranking, notorious Nazi political, military, and economic leaders.

<sup>81</sup> Goldman, 7. Also, George Mosley, *Zanuck: The Rise and Fall of Hollywood’s Last Tycoon* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1985), 140.

<sup>82</sup> The belief that Jews were linked to Communism caused great havoc for many members of the film industry. This included a few of the filmmakers of and actors in *Gentleman’s Agreement*, including Darryl Zanuck, Anne Revere, Elia Kazan, and John Garfield, who were brought before the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC). On a side note, Garfield was brought before HUAC twice, was blacklisted, taken off the blacklist, then put back on it again. Sadly, it was believed that it was the stress of these experiences led to the heart attack that killed him at the age of 39. William Pechter and Abraham Polonsky, “Abraham Polonsky and ‘Force of Evil,’” *Film Quarterly* 15, no. 3 (Spring, 1962), 53. Also, Robert Nott, *He Ran All the Way: The Life of John Garfield* (New York: Proscenium Publishers, 2003): 297-300.

would simply disappear on its own. However, rather than concede to fear, Zanuck produced the film and included scenes directly reflecting this Jewish timidity.<sup>83</sup>

Another interesting real-life issue projected in the film was how, in order to be better accepted in American society, many Jews changed their names to sound more Gentile-like. In the film, Philip's secretary changed her Jewish-sounding name, Estelle Walovsky, to Gentile-sounding Elaine Wales in order to be awarded her secretarial position.<sup>84</sup> This compares to the real life story of the man who plays Dave's character in the film. John Garfield's name was Jacob Julius Garfinkle, but due to prejudice based on anti-Semitism, he changed his name in order to sound more "Hollywood-ized" and less Jewish.<sup>85</sup>

### **FEAR OF INCREASED ANTI-SEMITISM IN THE LATE 1940S LED TO STUDIES**

The fear of being ostracized and discriminated against for being Jewish was clearly prevalent in America in the mid twentieth century, and with trepidation that *Gentleman's Agreement* would provoke higher levels of anti-Semitism against Jews, a few psychologists conducted studies to investigate the effects of the film on increasing or decreasing anti-

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<sup>83</sup> In one scene, a Jewish man who works for the news agency asks that the article on anti-Semitism not be written out of fear of provoking an increase; however, "Phil" and his boss decide it is an important topic, and Phil's method (anti-Semitism from the perspective of a Christian who pretends to be Jewish) is innovative and had the potential to stir people to positive action.

<sup>84</sup> All of Elaine's "Jewish" traits are subdued and she looks, talks, and acts just like a Christian American. Though she is Jewish, and does not consider herself part of the problem, she makes anti-Semitic remarks about the "wrong type" of Jew. In her opinion, it is the "kikey ones" who make all the "good," assimilated, American Jews, like herself, look bad with their unassimilated, Jewish [fill in anti-Semitic name-calling here] characteristics and traits. Her type of remarks and beliefs were reinforced out of fear of increasing anti-Semitic actions.

This relates well to a survey of college students, taken in a 1949 Roper Commercial Poll (#1949-036: College Students, Oct 1949), that asked, "If Jewish students have trouble getting jobs in certain industries in some parts of the country, [what] would you like to see done about it?" 7% said "Try to educate Jews to change their behavior so they will be less objectionable to non-Jews." Elaine Wales' reaction in the film is a realistic representation of many American Jews who had the strong desire to assimilate into American culture and blend in so well no one would know they were Jews. Roper Commercial Poll, "1949 Roper Commercial Poll #1949-036: College Students," October 1949, United States, The Roper Organization, n.d.

<sup>85</sup> Other examples of Jewish actors who changed their names to sound more American-like include Leo Jacobi, (Barak Ben-Canaan in *Exodus*), who changed his name to Lee J. Cobb. David Daniel Kaminsky took the screen name Danny Kay. Edward G. Robinson's real name was Emanuel Goldenberg, and June Hovick became June Hovock in Hollywood.

Semitism. The results were encouraging, as the majority of people who saw this, and other, topic-related films tended to have a more positive view of Jews.

One study was conducted in 1948, a few months after the film came out. A group of university students were given questionnaires, before and after seeing *Gentleman's Agreement*, to assess if there was a change in their levels of anti-Semitism. The majority of original attitudes of this group did not change in the opposite direction, but their feelings toward Jews were strengthened. Those whose attitudes were initially somewhat favorable toward Jews received the picture more sympathetically and became more open-minded and tolerant. Contrarily, some of the students who were originally anti-Semitic became even more bigoted. Sadly, “26 percent became more prejudiced against Jews,” and of those, the worst offenders alleged that the film was created by Jews in order to “trick” real (Gentile) Americans into believing Jewish lies. Nonetheless, “73 percent showed a change in the direction of a more favorable attitude towards Jews,” exhibiting a significant, positive improvement in perspective.<sup>86</sup>

When asked to explain what they had learned, most people claimed they gained an understanding of “how it felt to be a Jew.” This is a good indicator of empathy, and it is clear that, with a 73% positive change toward a more favorable attitude towards Jews, the film inspired an increase in tolerance. However, what this really meant is the students learned what it felt like to be persecuted for no other reason than having a title (“Jew”) and being *labeled* as different. All of the Jewish characters, including Phil, the “pretend” Jew, are completely assimilated and Americanized and show no real Jewish traits or characteristics (including no physical indicators, such as beards, clothing, or the performance of religious rituals, etc). Though missing the representation of a sizable portion of more conservative and religious American Jews, the film was meant to be a gentle push towards tolerance and understanding of “different” minorities, one tiny step at a time.

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<sup>86</sup> Rosen, 525-536. These numbers are comparable to the results of polls conducted regarding levels of anti-Semitism in the U.S. in the middle of the twentieth century. In this study, the mean amount of change (in the experimental group, as compared to the control group) was 6.63 test score points, with a critical ratio of 2.62, in the direction of increased tolerance toward Jews. Surprisingly, those who said they did not learn anything had the highest level of change towards a reduction of racist and anti-Semitic feelings, displaying a subconscious transformation or the inability to admit past fault.

Furthermore, in their reviews, some film critics suggested that *Gentleman's Agreement* was propaganda. Of the experimental group in this study, 44% agreed and considered the film one-sided propaganda; however, 29% believed the film was propaganda, but the “good kind,” because it “educated the public” about important issues. Additionally, 27% denied the film was propaganda and “staunchly defended the factual nature of the material in the film.” The film is a message about breeding tolerance and kindness to all fellow humans (at least to all Americans), and it is clear 56 to 73 percent of the group understood this lesson to some degree.

Surprisingly, many test subjects whose post-viewing survey scores showed decreased anti-Semitic feelings did not recognize (or admit) a change in their own perspective. On a conscious level, they resisted the idea that they were ever “wrong;” however, based on their answers to the test questions, on a subconscious level, it is clear their perspectives changed towards decreased prejudicial feelings. Additionally, of those (73%) who gained a more favorable attitude toward Jews by watching the film, most missed the “call to duty” to stand up against prejudice - on a conscious level. Nevertheless, most of this group also felt it was important to create more films like this one to help educate the public and increase compassion and open-mindedness. This attitude displays a subconscious desire to take action to promote tolerance and fight bigotry, thus, answering the “call to duty.”<sup>87</sup>

Another study conducted on university students in 1959, about twelve years after *Gentleman's Agreement* came out in theaters, supported the findings of the 1948 study and alluded to a general improvement of American feelings toward Jews in the decade between the studies. The results showed that students in the experimental group were five times more likely to reduce anti-Semitic tendencies compared to the control group (who did not see the movie). 69.3% of students in the experimental group showed a reduction in anti-Semitism after watching the movie, a significant change in perspective. 15% recognized the theme as a call to duty for regular, decent, intelligent individuals to stamp out bigotry and inequality (as opposed to remaining passive), and 82% of this group showed reduced levels of prejudice

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<sup>87</sup> This observation also hints at the idea that those who asserted their anti-Semitic beliefs may have subconsciously learned a little about the dangers of uneducated, bigoted prejudice. For more details of this fascinating study, please see: Rosen, 525-536.

and increased feelings of brotherhood. Another 82% (in addition to the 15%) identified the general theme as the injustice Jews suffer due to anti-Semitic prejudice, and 68% of this group expressed lower levels of anti-Semitism. Additionally, as the message was a universal cry against prejudice and bigotry, 62% of those who decreased anti-Semitic feelings also reduced their expression of racist “anti-Negro” sentiment as well.<sup>88</sup>

Contrary to the earlier (1948) study, in this 1959 study, the worst offenders changed the most. The individuals with the highest initial anti-Semitism were most likely to have larger changes in scores toward the direction of increased tolerance after watching the film, as compared to people with low original scores who had less room to improve. A few of the students with initially high levels of anti-Semitism had negative reactions to the theme and/or were less likely to correctly perceive the premise. However, though they did not see the full implications of the film and/or did not react to it favorably, these students (who were most prejudiced before watching *Gentleman’s Agreement*) had the most room to grow. The study explained that they were the most vulnerable to persuasive appeals of the general theme, which allowed for moderation of extremist viewpoints. Of the 29% whose initial anti-Semitism was “high,” over 83% showed a reduction, and of the 59% whose anti-Semitism began at a “moderate” level almost 68% displayed lowered anti-Semitic expressions after watching *Gentleman’s Agreement*. Of the 12% who started out with low levels of anti-Semitic expressions, 44% decreased their levels even more, as the film reinforced their favorable predispositions.<sup>89</sup>

To address the possibility of a boomerang effect, wherein some subjects might have displayed an increase in anti-Semitism as a result of viewing the film, the results of the experimental group were compared to those of the control group. Twice as many in the control group, who did not see the film, had higher scores of anti-Semitism after the second questionnaire was given, proving that the film was not a cause of an increase in prejudice.

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<sup>88</sup> Overall, there was a 56% reduction in measures of anti-Negro sentiment after viewing the film. Middleton, 679-686.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid, 679-686.

Though there were a few individuals (out of over 329) who were antagonized by the motion picture, their numbers were categorized as statistically insignificant.<sup>90</sup>

The results of both studies demonstrate that the film *Gentleman's Agreement* influenced viewers, and most people showed a significant decrease in anti-Semitism. The studies also reflect overall changes in American perspectives on Jews and anti-Semitism from 1948 through 1959, due to several causes, such as the influence of mass media, including films.<sup>91</sup> Though there were a few who increased bigotry, a majority of the viewers with very strong initial anti-Semitic feelings had the most room to amend their beliefs to become more enlightened and less hateful, and many did. In 1948, the film provoked some of those who were initially anti-Semitic, leading to stronger prejudicial feelings for 27%. Nevertheless, the rest (73%) reduced anti-Semitic convictions and increased tolerance and open-mindedness. This is significant, as statistics from polls taken in the mid to late 1940s on the topic of anti-Semitism show a rate of anti-Semitic attitudes up to 64%.<sup>92</sup> Additionally, by 1960, though 16% held increased levels of prejudice after viewing the film, 84% of viewers who took part in the study considerably decreased feelings of bigotry (or did not change their initial perspective by a statistically notable amount).<sup>93</sup>

Overall, these studies displayed the power that films, like *Gentleman's Agreement*, possessed in influencing the American public to reduce anti-Semitism and other forms of bigotry against "the other." The popularity of this film also brought more renown to the storyline and message. As Fox Studios' top-grossing picture of 1948, it won high acclaim and numerous awards, spreading the important message of tolerance and acceptance across

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<sup>90</sup> Middleton, 679-686. The details of this study are quite interesting. I recommend review for anyone interested in the topic of the persuasion of film, especially regarding race and ethnicity.

<sup>91</sup> Interestingly, many people whose responses showed reduced anti-Semitism explained the moral or message of the film was that Jews are so similar to Christians one cannot always tell them apart. These people learned that, rather than being courteous and civil towards all people because they are people, it is important to be nice to Jews because they might turn out to be Christian. Sadly, this reflected the goal of assimilation and Americanization, and did not press the deeper, significant need to be respectful towards diversity.

<sup>92</sup> These statistics come from a poll conducted by the Opinion Research Corporation, Princeton, New Jersey, 1946. Opinion Research Corporation, "Gallup Poll # 1946-0374: WAC Corps/Elections/Family/Politics," June-July 1946, United States, The Gallup Organization, Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, n.d.

<sup>93</sup> The percent of people who showed a significant reduction in anti-Semitic feelings was 69.3%. Middleton, 679-686.

the States. Among many other honors received, *Gentleman's Agreement* won three Academy Awards in 1948, including the Oscar for Best Director for Elia Kazan, Best Actress in a Supporting Role for Celeste Holm, and Best Picture (20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox).<sup>94</sup> The renown of the film shined more light upon the worthy theme and meaning of the storyline. This caused more people to see the film, bolstering its influence, which helped spread the philosophies of open-mindedness, kindness, and tolerance towards “the other.” Overall, it is clear that motion pictures like *Gentleman's Agreement*, along with other social and environmental factors, influenced the American public in the direction of a more favorable attitude toward Jews and other minorities.

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<sup>94</sup> *Gentleman's Agreement* won many additional awards and nominations. The Academy Awards nominated Gregory Peck and Dorothy McGuire for Best Actor and Actress, Anne Revere for Best Actress in a Supporting Role, and Moss Hart for Best Writing, Screenplay. The film also won three Golden Globe Awards for Best Motion Picture- Drama, Best Motion Picture Director (Elia Kazan), and Best Supporting Actress, Celeste Holm. Other companies that provided nominations and awards to the film include The USA National Board of Review, the New York Film Critics Circle (Award for Best Director), and a nomination for a Golden Lion at the Venice Film Festival.

## CHAPTER 2

### REPETITION STRENGTHENS CONNECTIONS TO HELP *EXODUS* CREATE A PRO-JEWISH IMAGE

The makers of the *Exodus* movie utilized several tools to connect American audiences to the storyline and its heroes with the hope of improving their perspectives on Jews and Israel. Music, biblical associations, modern news stories, advertisements, and American-like images and characters were employed to promote these important goals. By using these tools, a sense of nostalgia could be evoked, “prosthetic memories” could be generated, and bonds between the characters and the audience could develop. More familiarity would allow for a better understanding of Jewish culture, history, desires, and needs, and with a new recognition that the Jewish “other” is not as foreign as first assumed, a positive shift in perspectives could be attained.

### REPETITION STRENGTHENS CONNECTIONS SENSES OF SIGHT & SOUND

The *Exodus* film employs several senses to promote a particular message, ensure clarity of the message, and engrain the message into moviegoers’ memories for lasting effect.<sup>95</sup> *Exodus* affects moviegoers’ sense of vision with beautiful scenery, attractive, popular movie stars, and spectacular actions scenes that delight moviegoers’ eyes. Similar to

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<sup>95</sup> Studies on cognitive learning demonstrate how different human senses, such as smell, taste, hearing, and sight, as well as the repetition of information influence emotions, the ability to learn, and the strength of a memory. Howard Gardner is a theorist who discusses these types of learners with a variety of intelligences and modes of learning. For examples and analysis, see Howard Gardner, *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences* (New York: Basic Books, 2004). According to Robert M Diamond, learning can take place through several sensory channels, and the more channels engaged in learning, the better. See Robert M. Diamond, *Designing and Assessing Courses and Curricula* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2008), 193. For an article that discusses the sensorimotor cortex, or the outer layer of the brain where most sensory information is processed, see: Leif H. Finkel, “The Construction of Perception,” in *Zone 6: Incorporations*, ed. Jonathan Crary and Sanford Kwinter (New York: Zone, 1992), 392-405.

sight, hearing is another sense touched by the film, and includes Ernest Gold's affecting musical score. This powerful instrument connects the film to the audience and evokes emotion. The music is played repeatedly throughout the entire three-and-a-half hour movie, so by the end of the long film, the tunes should be well rooted in the audiences' aural memories. Moreover, in the 1960s, the music was often played on the radio, at parties and dances, and was borrowed by other artists.<sup>96</sup> In addition to reminding viewers of the storyline, other memories were, thus, elicited by the melody, and its familiarity induced various sentiments, even for those who did not see the film.

### **Biblical Associations**

Repetition is another tool utilized to connect to moviegoers: the 1960 film was the latest of numerous earlier versions of an "exodus" story. The title, *Exodus*, character names, a basic narrative, and the values conveyed were recognizable to the millions of people who had read the Bible and/or the *Exodus* novel, and this familiarity likely attracted many moviegoers to the theater. Furthermore, by repeating names, a familiar storyline, and recognizable philosophies, the film likely improved understanding of the plot and retention of the message.<sup>97</sup>

Those who studied the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament and/or identified with Judeo-Christian religious traditions would recognize the numerous biblical names and stories referenced in the modern *Exodus* book and film, creating a link to past knowledge and

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<sup>96</sup> Two famous American piano players, Arthur Ferrante and Louis Teicher, performed their version of the "Theme From Exodus," which became a top hit, landing at # 2 on the *Billboard* Singles Chart. Numerous other artists have borrowed Gold's Exodus music in their own work. Recently, the complete film score was played by the Prague Philharmonic Orchestra in 2009, winning a Sammy Award for best Newly Recorded Vintage Film Score (Conducted by Nic Raine from Tadow Music). Another recent example is Moby, a popular artist who uses Ernest Gold's "Fight for Survival" in his song "Porcelain."

<sup>97</sup> Applying memories, in addition to the use of repetition, to learning is a useful technique studied by many theorists, including psychologist Raymond Bernard Cattell. He explains that adults have highly developed schema, and experience and prior knowledge are major factors in the learning process. See Raymond Bernard Cattell, *Intelligence: Its Structure, Growth, and Action* (New York: North Holland, 1987). Also, regarding schema, perceptions, experiences, and memories, see Jean Piaget and Bärbel Inhelder, *Memory and Intelligence* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973) and E. Tulvig, "Episodic and Semantic Memory," *Organization of Memory*, eds., E. Tulvig and W. Donaldson (New York: Academic Press, 1972), 381-403.

recollections.<sup>98</sup> The Biblical book of Exodus depicts a story of slavery under a wicked Pharaoh and how, with God's help, Moses led his Israelites out of bondage in Egypt to freedom in the Promised Land of Israel. During an annual Passover celebration, Jews across the globe relive this experience by reading the story. Additionally, prayers, such as, "Next year in Jerusalem," and sayings like, "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its cunning," (quoted in the *Exodus* film), are repeated to help reminisce about the glorious past and to have hope for the future.<sup>99</sup>

The ancient history of the land of Israel and the Bible Book of Exodus are also learned and discussed by Christians and Muslims, whose early biblical history is one and the same. This story, of a compassionate God guiding the Israelites from suffering to true freedom in the land of Canaan (Israel), parallels the modern account portrayed in the book and film. This likely elicited reverence in the hearts of readers and viewers who recognized the original narrative. Furthermore, Jesus was born and raised in Israel, and Muhammad is also connected to the land. Hence, in addition to Jewish stories and holy sites, there are numerous historical places in Israel sacred to Christians and Muslims as well.<sup>100</sup>

Consequently, the name "Exodus" evoked religious connections to the history and the land,

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<sup>98</sup> The "Hebrew Bible" is also referred to as the "Old Testament," and is acknowledged and accepted by all three Abrahamic faiths as a legitimate biblical history.

<sup>99</sup> After conquering and living in Israel for centuries, the Jews were kicked out of their Holy Land, initiating the Diaspora, which began in the sixth century BCE. Since that time, there continues an unremitting desire for Jews to return from Babylon to this land. William David Davies explains the desire to "return to" the Land of Israel has "significantly marked Jewish history... In the Jewish experience, both religious and secular, exile has always coexisted with the hope of a return to The Land." Davies also discusses the idea that, "in liturgy and in song... the significance of The Land [is] unmistakably personal and powerful." William David Davies, *The Territorial Dimension of Judaism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 116, 125. Furthermore, during the Diaspora, Jews across the globe (in "Babylon") read the Exodus Bible story out loud during a festive Passover Seder, or traditional ceremonial meal. This holiday celebrates the triumph of their ancestors' freedom to practice their traditions in peace, with dignity, and in the security of their own land, with hope of, someday, recreating this freedom. This custom continues today and is a means of connecting Jews across the globe in a celebration of Jewish culture and history.

<sup>100</sup> Bethlehem, the place where Jesus was born, the Garden of Gethsemane, where Jesus and his disciples prayed before his crucifixion, and the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, revered as the location of his death, connect Christians to this sacred land of Israel, also known as Canaan. The *al-Haram al-Sharif*, or "Noble Sanctuary," located in Jerusalem, includes the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock. This site is known as the third holiest for Muslims, believed to be the location where Muhammad ascended to heaven in his night journey.

and the original bible story of Exodus to the millions of followers of the three Abrahamic faiths.<sup>101</sup>

Purposefully connecting the ancient past to modern day, Leon Uris' 1958 novel bore the name *Exodus*. Uris borrowed the basic tenets of the biblical narrative as a metaphor and comparison to how the Jews of the twentieth century triumphed against the evil pharaohs of the world. Hitler, the British, and the Arabs no longer had the power to enslave or kill Jews, or keep them in the Diaspora or in second-class positions. Relating to readers' Biblical literacy, the novel makes numerous references to the biblical connections of the land and the Jewish heroes of old. Uris wrote, "Every bit of Palestine held another ghost of the former Jewish greatness."<sup>102</sup> "They came to Mount Tabor in the center of the Galilee...It was here that the Jewish Joan of Arc, Deborah, and her General Barak hid with their armies...It was here that Jesus was transfigured and held communion with Moses and Elijah... They passed Mount Gilboa where Saul and Jonathan fell in battle and where Gideon lies- and they passed Bethel and Jericho."<sup>103</sup> Additionally, Uris explains that the last name of the protagonists, Ari, and his father, Barak, is "Ben-Canaan," meaning, the "Son of the land of Canaan," referencing the original biblical name of the Land of Israel. These few examples are representative of the myriad connections to biblical stories most Americans were familiar with, and shows reverence for Christian history, enabling Christians, as well as Jews, to empathize with the film's protagonists.<sup>104</sup> Uris' novel, which depicts these familiar stories, became hugely popular in the US and across the globe, touching the hearts of millions of readers.

The *Exodus* film also mentions biblical history, for example, illustrating where the Jews first landed in the Jezreel valley 3,200 years earlier. As in the Old Testament and Uris'

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<sup>101</sup> The forefather of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam is Abraham, and the Old Testament/Hebrew Bible applies to all three religions as well, which is why the three faiths are sometimes called "Abrahamic" as opposed to "Judeo-Christian." The three religions connect to the Biblical Exodus story, albeit in different ways and with different meanings.

<sup>102</sup> Uris, 225.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid, 217-218.

<sup>104</sup> The storyline was catered to the mostly Christian audience in order to promote Jewish needs, and does not focus on Arab history (possibly partly because the American-Arab population in the US at the time was very small (much smaller than the 2-4% of the population that was Jewish).

novel, moviegoers learn that Mount Tabor is the place where Deborah gathered her armies to fight the stronger, better-equipped Canaanites, and how the ruins of Meggido hold the same stepping stones Joshua walked on when he conquered it thousands of years earlier.<sup>105</sup> King David, Samson, and a comparison of Israel as “David” versus the Arab “Goliath” are also mentioned, and all these references became personal links between the audience and recognizable biblical history.

### **Modern History**

The modern story’s references to events and topics of the first half of the twentieth century became another link to the knowledge and recent memories of individual readers and viewers. In addition to being described in the novel and depicted in the film, the action that took place in the Middle East, from the beginning of the twentieth century through the premier of the movie in 1960, was well documented and recorded in the news. Radio shows, newspapers, and television programs informed the public about the tensions of the 1917 Balfour Declaration, which promised the Jews a homeland in Palestine and the protection of Arab needs and rights, and the British White Paper of 1939, which severely limited Jewish immigration to Palestine before, during, and after WWII. Several forms of mass media illustrated the shocking video footage of the liberation of Nazi concentration and death camps, and expounded upon the Nuremberg trials, in which several Nazis were prosecuted, and many of the horrors that had occurred during the Holocaust were delineated.<sup>106</sup> Furthermore, news brought attention to the plight of hundreds of thousands of Holocaust survivor refugees. This included the heartbreaking, distressing misadventure aboard the real

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<sup>105</sup> Megiddo is also believed to be the future location where the apocalypse will begin and is, thus, a major connection between Christian Americans and this part of the story.

<sup>106</sup> The British White Paper of 1939 severely limited Jewish immigration to territory controlled by the British in Palestine prior to WWII. The numbers allowed into the land was still too high for the native Arabs, but way too low for the persecuted European Jewry who would meet their fate at the hands of the Nazis: the limited numbers of Jews allowed into Palestine/Israel very likely caused a much greater number of Jews to perish in the Holocaust, as they had nowhere else to go. Importantly, the Nuremberg trials, which began in 1945, were widely discussed in multiple forms of mass media. They elucidated, in detail, the methods used in torturous medical experiments on prisoners and the manner in which the killing of millions of Jews and other unfortunate souls was implemented. Though the trials were not mentioned in the book or film, they were thoroughly covered in the news, bringing attention to the events of the Holocaust and sympathy to Jewish survivors, who were viewed as victims (rather than as aggressors or defensive fighters). See Lipstadt, 159-278, and Gartner, 377.

Exodus ship in 1947, when thousands of refugees were sent back to former German concentration camps because there was no where else for them to go.<sup>107</sup> News articles and radio programs also reported on the United Nations vote for the Partition of Palestine, dividing the land of Palestine into a Jewish state and an Arab state, and how the 1948 Israeli War of Independence was instigated by an attack from seven surrounding Arab nations and was “miraculously” won by the small new nation of Israel. With a triumphant victory, the establishment of the modern day State of Israel fulfilled ancient hopes and dreams as Jews re-conquered the same land promised to them by God thousands of years earlier.

Subsequently, the 1956 War, in which Israel, France, and Britain fought against Egypt’s nationalization of the Suez Canal for trading rights, kept the Arab-Israeli conflict in the news. The U.S. did not approve of Israel’s participation in the war, and this brought some tension against Israel, and against American Jews as well, in the form of increased anti-Semitism. However, by 1958, the Cold War began, and the U.S. was motivated to support Israel, a tiny, new democracy surrounded by several Arab nations being courted by The Soviet Union. This quickly brought positive sentiment back towards Israel, as seen in American public opinion polls at that time. Though not everyone was fully aware of the details of this history, much of it was fairly recent news and continuously publicized through 1960, when *Exodus* premiered.

Being repeatedly described in the news, novel, and film, these dramatic events gained recognition, generated sympathy for the millions lost in the Holocaust, and brought attention to the plight of the Jewish survivors and their desperate need for a homeland. In these ways, *Exodus* presented a familiar history for many Americans, allowing the storyline to become more deeply engrained in the audience, both readers and viewers.

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<sup>107</sup> One example that displays how Jews lacked a place to move to comes from a poll conducted August 1946, soon after WWII and the Holocaust had ended. Americans were asked, “President Truman plans to ask Congress to allow more Jewish and other European refugees to come to the United States to live than are allowed under the law now. Would you approve or disapprove of this idea?” 16% approved, but 72% disapproved (12% had no opinion). This study was conducted by Dr. George Gallup and the American Institute of Public Opinion (AIPO), August 1946, published by Hazel Gaudet Erskine, “The Polls: Religious Prejudice, Part 2: Anti-Semitism,” *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, 29, no. 4 (Winter 1965-1966), 649-664. It is possible they disapproved for a reason other than anti-Jewish sentiment, for example, fear of immigrants taking jobs from returning veterans; however, in 1944, 68% said they would allow more English to come to America, whereas this number was only 46% for Jews. National Opinion Research Center [NORC], “NORC Survey 1944-0229,” September 1944, United States, Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, n.d.

## Movie Ads & More Familiarity

Other images in *Exodus* also had the potential to evoke positive (or negative) sentiments, and starting months prior to the premier, numerous newspaper, billboard, and poster advertisements announced the forthcoming film to enhance appeal, nostalgia, and memorability. In order to invoke the sense of vision and increased familiarity for American moviegoers, advertisements made sure to announce that the filming of the movie was “on location in Cyprus and Israel,” with background scenes of farming fields, rolling hills, and landscapes similar to many American ones. Furthermore, with many native, local, Israeli extras, curiosity was provoked and moviegoers were prepared to try to recognize the sites and seemingly exotic people they were looking at.

Furthermore, advertisements touted the famous actors scheduled to take part in the film. The well-known and well-liked movie stars, including Paul Newman, Eva Marie-Saint, Sal Mineo, and Ralph Richardson, among others, heightened the excitement and anticipation for the film. Numerous advertisements were published throughout the country before *Exodus* came out in theaters with images of these glamorous, celebrated stars, and their popularity and endorsement of the film undoubtedly had a positive effect on the movie’s success.<sup>108</sup>

The director, Otto Preminger, and some of the actors were interviewed and discussed the filming process and their reasons for performing in this important movie. Eva Marie Saint, for example, described what she learned while making the film. In regard to the Jews, their long history of persecution, and the creation of the State of Israel, Saint said, “*Exodus* shows the miracle that came about. It’s just an inspirational thing for me... Israel was just a name. But some of the hills were like the hills of Connecticut and every tree was planted by man. You just couldn’t believe it... The people were supermen. They really were... Some people believe the story is exaggerated. I did before... But I don’t now.”<sup>109</sup> Published comments like these, especially from renowned, Christian actors, promoted the film and legitimated its message, setting moviegoers up for a thoughtful and memorable experience.

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<sup>108</sup> Other renowned actors, who were mentioned in many ads and reviews, include: Peter Lawford, Lee J. Cobb, John Derek, Hugh Griffith, Gregory Ratoff, Felix Aylmer, David Opatoshu, Jill Haworth, Marius Goring, Alexandra Stewart, and Michael Wager. Though there are other factors involved, the popularity of many of the actors contributed to the success of the film.

<sup>109</sup> Don Alpert, “Quality Stirs Eva Marie,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 30, 1960, B9.

Ads also discussed when the film would be shown and advised potential moviegoers to purchase tickets in advance, as screenings of *Exodus* were selling out months prior to the premier.<sup>110</sup> This type of advertisement bolstered the appeal by giving the impression that the film must be good if months worth of tickets were already sold. Furthermore, the theatrical trailer boasted that the novel was “The biggest best seller since *Gone With the Wind*,” and the storyline as, “An epic of our time: the birth of a nation.” New actors, like Jill Hayworth, were also mentioned with the knowledge that her character, Karen Hansen, was well known and loved by anyone who had read Uris’ novel within the last couple years.

Announcements mentioned that the film was based on Uris’ extremely popular novel, and that Dalton Trumbo was openly writing the screenplay in his first major film after being blacklisted for allegedly supporting communism.<sup>111</sup> Though many Americans still feared the possible power of communism and influence of Hollywood, the commotion brought about by the open hiring of Trumbo brought more interest to the film. Many news articles discussed the events surrounding the public protests and support of *Exodus*, Preminger, Trumbo, Jews, and Zionists, bringing more attention to the film. Overall, the myriad advertisements, the casting of stars, and familiarity with the novel’s characters and storyline generated more interest in the film and helped embed *Exodus*, and its message, into public memory.

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<sup>110</sup> Details of sold-out screenings can be found in several reviews, including: Pyr, “Exodus,” accessed at Margaret Herrick Library, Los Angeles, CA. Another critic, Lurie, also discussed the sold-out reserved seating in his article in the *Jerusalem Post*. On December 2, 1960, Lurie wrote, “At the present writing the first available Saturday night is in March [1961], the first available weekday... is in May [1961].” Lurie, vii.

<sup>111</sup> Trumbo (along with nine other people who worked in Hollywood), was convicted as part of the “Hollywood 10” for contempt of Congress for refusing to snitch on his peers and for declining to discuss the allegation that he was a supporter of communism. Trumbo served an 11-month jail sentence and was blacklisted from Hollywood, preventing him from openly writing under his real name. However, he continued to write under pseudonyms, and even won a few Academy Awards this way. Communism was perceived as a threat to the Democratic American way of life during the Cold War years. However, in some ways, the ideology behind communism, which purported that everyone would be considered socially, politically, and financially “equal” made sense for Jews, who were consistently deemed second class citizens in almost every nation they lived in, for two thousand years. Hence, there were some Jews who supported communist theories; nevertheless, only an extremely small percentage of American Jews were members of the American Communist Party.

## ***EXODUS*' CHARACTERS CREATE PRO-JEWISH IMAGE BY PROVING ANTI-SEMITIC STEREOTYPES WRONG**

As preconceptions and stereotypes about the immigrant “other” turned from an unfamiliar “somewhat strange” into a “sharply alien” negative, immigrants found methods to blend into the American system in appearance, actions, and culture.<sup>112</sup> Beginning in the 1920s, rather than cultivating diverse immigrant traditions, the doctrine of Americanization through assimilation, acculturation, “entrepreneurial zeal, upward mobility, [and] intermarriage” was the promoted value in American life, and this was reflected in motion pictures.<sup>113</sup> Jews and other minorities began to be reintroduced into movies after WWII; however, their portrayed image was not that of diverse ethnic characters. Certain words, such as “Jewish,” and ethnic, cultural themes, such as Jewish holiday rituals, were still kept off the Big Screen and subordinated to reflect traditional, “white” American values. Several characters portrayed in *Exodus* reflect this societal objective.

### **Ari Ben-Canaan: An American-Like Jewish Israeli**

In *Exodus*, Jewish characters take center stage; however, their Jewishness is ambiguous and, instead, neutral, universal, American-like characteristics are emphasized. The protagonist, Ari Ben-Canaan, a Jewish, native-born Israeli with no typical Jewish features, serves as the main example of assimilationist ideals. Ari is portrayed as very “American” in appearance, actions, and culture, representing conventional American values. He plays a major role in the filmmakers’ attempt at transforming Americans’ perspectives on Jews from an anti-Semitic one to a more positive image. Firstly, Ari’s character is played by the famous Paul Newman, a fantastically gorgeous, well-built, muscular man in his 30s, with golden brown hair and piercing, dreamy blue eyes. The stereotype of Jews as scrawny, weak, and unattractive is aggressively challenged by Newman’s good looks.<sup>114</sup> Secondly,

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<sup>112</sup> These ideas and terms come from Lipmann, 90. When an ideology, such as Americanization, is ardently promoted, any “foreign” lifestyles and peoples move from the category of “somewhat strange” (different) to “sharply alien” (and threatening and/or scary).

<sup>113</sup> Rosenberg, 17.

<sup>114</sup> Sander Gilman discusses the Jewish image in his book, *The Jew’s Body* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 169-193. For example, Gilman explains the “Jewish nose” was stereotyped as large and unattractive, and its shape “indicates considerable Shrewdness in worldly matters; a deep insight into character, and facility of

Hollywood celebrities are very popular, and Newman had starred in many films and was nominated for numerous awards prior to *Exodus*. He was well known and well liked in America for years before this film, thus, his on-screen presence likely attracted many showgoers who desired to see Newman on the Big Screen again.

In addition to Paul Newman's attractive looks, his character, Ari Ben-Canaan, represents the Americanist philosophy of assimilation. He is presented as a very secularized Jew whose religious, ethnic traits are downplayed or minimized.<sup>115</sup> Though it is clear he is a Jewish Israeli, for he repeatedly announces, "I am a Jew," quotes the bible, and repeats the Jewish toast, "L'chaim" (to life), Ari is a nonreligious, secular Jew, who is not seen participating in any religious traditions. He does not wear clothing that signifies Jewish culture, such as a yarmulke (kippah, or head-covering). He does not pray, other than at the burial of his friends, and even then his words are non-religious, and his family raises pigs, which are not kosher animals. He is not representative of any Jewish religious denomination; thus, Ari's secular lifestyle allows the American public to easily identify with the openly Jewish protagonist. The long-held, negative, stereotypical image of an old-world, ethnic Jew begins to transform into a secularized, universalized Jew, whom Americans can begin to recognize as "very familiar," because Ari appears like an American, and holds the same idealized qualities and characteristics Americans strive to attain.<sup>116</sup>

The familiar, historical image of the victimized, passive "Diaspora Jew," is dissolved by the film's characters, in particular, by Ari Ben-Canaan, who is the epitome of the "New

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turning that insight to profitable account." With this demeaning, humiliating stereotype, some Jews attempted to alter their physical appearance in order to "fit in" more easily. One example of this took place at the turn of the twentieth century: A Jewish man had a nose job to cure him "of his "disease," which was his visibility," as being "visibly Jewish" brought anti-Semitic reactions. His Jewish nose caused "suffering!" Thus, surgery removed his "deformity" to help him blend in by making him appear less Jewish and more Gentile. According to the surgeon, this procedure "cured the sense of inferiority" in Jewish-nosed patients.

<sup>115</sup> In general, Zionist philosophy tended to be secular rather than religious, which is another reason Ari's appearance and lifestyle is nonreligious.

<sup>116</sup> This idea is reflected in answers to questions from a 1964 poll: "Roper Misc Poll 1964- ANTISEM in the United States." One question asked whether foreigners should "give up their foreign ways and learn to be like other Americans," and 67% of people concurred with this philosophy. Another question asked if "Jews are becoming more and more like other Americans," and 74% of respondents agreed. In the film, Ari represents the ideal transformation from an ethnic, cultural Jew into a Jew that no one would recognize as Jewish if he did not announce it. Though he is an Israeli, his characteristics are so Americanized he could fit right into American culture.

Jew,” resembling a strong, moral, ethical American leader with revered qualities.<sup>117</sup> Ari and the other “New Jews” are portrayed as masculine, courageous, competent, warriors who can defend themselves, like Americans can, with zeal, devotion, and fearlessness. Against impossible odds, Ari and his fellow makeshift soldiers fight gallantly against enemies from all sides.

In the beginning of the film, with very limited time and supplies, Ari uses brilliant intrigue and completes an absolutely unfeasible task. The first main goal in *Exodus* is to illegally smuggle 611 Jewish Holocaust survivors from the internment camps in Cyprus into Palestine, breaking the British ban on admitting them. As in real life, in the film, the British Mandate prevented Jewish immigration to Palestine to appease the indigenous Arabs who feared a Jewish state. However, the Holocaust survivors had citizenship in no country, and nowhere else to go, and they were desperate to be free in their ancient homeland.<sup>118</sup> With scarce funds, Ari and his Haganah supporters obtain a freighter from a Cypriot friend, and though it barely runs, they name it “Exodus” and prepare it for the forbidden journey.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> Secularism and physical strength was part of the Zionist ideology, hence, the post-Holocaust, Zionist “new Hebrew” or “New Jew” countered the “old Diaspora Jew” in many ways. For example, the focus on physical labor by working the land (in agriculture) offset the old image of Jews being employed only in white-collar professions. Self-defense and the use of arms responded to the long-enduring image of Jews as weak and unassuming. The new Hebrew language, recreated in the turn of the twentieth century by Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, is masculine-sounding with a Sephardic pronunciation that emphasizes its Middle Eastern origin. This modern Hebrew language was adopted to replace Yiddish, the old Diaspora language spoken with a soft Ashkenazi accent. Furthermore, old, traditional clothing styles were discarded for newer and different fashions, and old Eastern-European family names were replaced by new Hebrew names. For more details, please see the article by Itamar Even-Zohar, “The Emergence of a Native Hebrew Culture in Palestine, 1882-1948,” in *Essential Papers on Zionism*, ed. Jehuda Reinharz and Anita Shapira (New York, New York University Press, 1996), 729-730 and several other chapters.

<sup>118</sup> As part of the British Mandate, which gave the British authority over Palestine after WWI, the British had to control borders. In order to appease their Arab allies (for oil, security, future endeavors, and numerous other reasons), the British restricted Jewish immigration (see British White Papers of 1939). Additionally, though a few nations accepted small numbers Jewish refugees before, during, and after the Holocaust, there were hundreds of thousands of survivors left with nowhere to go. Jews did not hold citizenship in the countries they had lived in for generations, and no nation, including the US, was willing to take in significant numbers. Thus, before and during the Holocaust, when Jews were trying to escape, they had nowhere to go, so six million ended up dead. After WWII, hundreds of thousands spent years in Displaced Persons Camps across Europe. Eventually, once the State was formally established, the great majority moved to Israel. Israel is still the only nation to allow any and all Jews to freely immigrate without limitations. The Israelis call this “Aliyah,” which means “to rise up” or “ascend.”

<sup>119</sup> Haganah are members of the early Jewish Defense forces in Palestine. This became the IDF: Israeli Defense Force. Naming the ship “Exodus” was a symbolic connection to the biblical story of Moses, who he led his Jewish people out of slavery in Egypt into the land of Israel. In the movie, the Exodus ship worked to

Ari's men steal a jeep for him to use when he pretends to be an on-duty British officer. He dresses in his medal-decorated British military uniform, which, like many Jews, he obtained as a soldier fighting for the British army in support of the allies during WWII.<sup>120</sup> With his uniform and jeep, Ari dupes the very arrogant, stubborn, anti-Semitic, high-ranking British officer, Major Caldwell, into ordering other British soldiers to follow Ari's phony commands. A younger officer who questions the strange orders is berated by Caldwell, who retorts that the way to rise in rank is by taking responsibility, and signs the papers himself. The audience knows he is signing fake orders, making Caldwell appear extremely foolish as he is so easily deceived by Ari, the Jew. Most amazingly, Ari manages to trick the British military men into signing forged documents, providing him with trucks, supplies, and men, and making them believe the orders came from London and were approved by the leading British Commander in Cyprus. The British soldiers easily fall into Ari's trap, enhancing the Jews' image as clever, witty, and resourceful.

Once all 611 survivors are aboard the "Exodus" ship and they set sail towards Palestine, General Sutherland, the British leader who is portrayed in a very positive, humanistic, pro-Jewish light, realizes his men have been hoodwinked, and blocks the ship from leaving the harbor. When the British say they will board the ship if it does not return to dock, Ari threatens to blow it up with 200 pounds of dynamite, which he has daringly placed in the hull of the ship for this exact reason. It would lead to very bad publicity for the British if the world news reported that six hundred Holocaust survivors committed suicide by blowing themselves up rather than be forced by the British to return to life behind barbed wire.

After being offered supplies and food by the British, Ari, his crew, and all the passengers democratically vote, perhaps like Americans would, to go on a hunger strike and die unless they can be free in the land they have desired to "return" to for two thousand years. After a few days, with the accomplished goal of receiving much worldwide publicity, the British allow the ship to sail to Palestine. This great victory was won by the hundreds of

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bring Jewish Holocaust survivors, Moses' offspring, into the same Holy Land of Canaan/ Israel/ Palestine.

<sup>120</sup> Tens of thousands of Jews from the Yishuv, the early settlements in Palestine, joined the British military in WWII to support the allies in the fight against fascism and Nazism.

Jews who preferred death by starvation over returning to forced imprisonment. The characters in the film, representing an actual hunger strike aboard the real Exodus ship, exhibited extreme shrewdness, absolute bravery, non-violent determination, and faith to achieve their goal. The success of this dangerous mission, in the film, was perceived as a triumphant miracle, and audiences were relieved that the ship's passengers were allowed to sail free. This is but one of many examples where Paul Newman's character, Ari Ben-Canaan, along with the other six hundred Jews, are portrayed as noble and courageous examples of the New Jew.

### **Strong, Steadfast Survivors & Sabras**

Some of the Holocaust survivor passengers aboard the ship also display a greater-than-human level of bravery and audacity, as they transform from weak "Diaspora Jews" into strong, courageous "New Jews." One man adamantly exclaims he and his fellow Jews have lived for too long as subhuman "cowards" and will not leave the ship alive unless he reaches Palestine. When discussing whether to return to Cyprus to appease the British or whether to hold a hunger strike with the possibility of people dying on the ship, the man asks, in reference to the last thousands of years, including the results of the Holocaust, "What is so unusual about the Jews dying? Is that anything new?" Even if they had not learned the grim history of the Jews over the last few thousand years, it is almost guaranteed that, by 1960, every American who saw the film knew at least a little about the Holocaust and that six million innocent people were massacred simply because they were Jewish.<sup>121</sup> Then the man makes a very important point exclaiming, "There is no excuse for us to go on living, unless we start fighting right now, so that every Jew on the face of the earth can begin to start feeling like a human being again! ... Fight, not beg! Fight!" He pleads fervently with his fellow Holocaust survivors to transform themselves from meek Diaspora victims into strong

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<sup>121</sup> In December of 1944, a Gallup poll revealed that 76% of Americans believed many people had been "murdered" in concentration camps, but they generally did not believe in the existence of gas chambers or death camps, and believed the numbers of dead were "probably all lies" and "propaganda." Lipstadt, 242. After the Eichmann Trial (1962), Americans were asked if they knew how many Jews were killed by the Nazis. Though 55% gave incorrect answers, only 12% believed that less than a million had been murdered (3% said less than 10,000), and 9% gave no answer. Most (over 79%) believed at least a million had been murdered and 36% said six million. Studies assessed in Charles Y. Glock and Gertrude J. Selznick, *The Apathetic Majority: A Study Based on Public Responses to the Eichmann Trial* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 138.

and valiant, yet peaceful, warriors by taking a stand together, as Jews and as human beings, to live as free people or die with dignity.

Those aboard the ship decide to unite and strike. If they win, the passengers will be allowed to sail to Israel. If they fail and everyone dies of hunger, their deaths will have been on their own terms and, having brought a lot of attention to their cause, will not have been in vain. Ari, the captain of the ship and the Haganah leader, explains, “The only weapon we have to fight with is our willingness to die,” and “There is no use living unless we start fighting.”<sup>122</sup> This expresses the desperation of the situation: Jews have suffered for too long in other people’s nations. They tried being submissive and obedient, and they tried following the rules, but this has not worked for thousands of years. Instead, they were slaughtered like sheep. The Jews need their own place to live in dignity, and these resolute, heroic survivors are willing to die so others can attain their nation’s existential requirement.

With concern for innocent life, Ari realizes after the hunger strike has begun that the children should be sent back to Cyprus to keep them out of danger. He orders all youth to prepare to return; however, in a display of strength, tenacity, and formidable bravery, some of the women and their young children go to speak to Ari (on behalf of all the mothers aboard the ship) and adamantly declare they will not send their children back to the internment camps in Cyprus. Their babies were born behind barbed wire during the Holocaust, and for the first time, are tasting freedom. They will not force their children to look through barbed wire any more. The children “are free now, and nobody...will ever lock them up again.” The women are prepared to die on the ship with their babies, as long as they are free to die on their own terms. In regard to her newborn son who will likely be the first to die of hunger, one young woman proclaims, “I will not take him back. I will *NOT* take him back!” This noble bravery is laudable and an exemplary model of selflessness, dignity, and vigor. These actions display to the film’s viewers that, in an inhumane world, Jews are extremely capable of exercising their right to self-determination with dignity and valor. From being victims in a hell on earth, these spirited Jews are becoming more than survivors, they are becoming “New Jews.”

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<sup>122</sup> When Ari says “fighting,” he means the Jews need to stand up for themselves as he knows no one else will (see history for details). Preminger, *Exodus*.

This part of the film was based on a real ship named “Exodus” that sailed in 1947 from France with over 4500 feeble Holocaust survivors bound for Israel. The plight of the Jews aboard the Exodus ship ended in disaster with the British refusing to allow them into Israel. After being forced to sail back to France, the passengers refused to disembark and declared a hunger strike, but this ended when the British forcefully boarded the ship. A few survivors were killed, a few dozen were wounded, and the rest were sent back to former German concentration camps that were converted into Displaced Persons camps after WWII ended. The real, historic affair was highly publicized across the globe in 1947 and was, thus, recognizable to those in the audience who were old enough to remember the events from twelve years prior.<sup>123</sup> Though the film’s version of this significant event turns out much better, it is possible the familiarity of the real history helped connect the American audience to the storyline, and promoted sympathy, respect, and admiration for the real Holocaust survivors who experienced this treacherous voyage.<sup>124</sup>

Along with the majority of the early immigrants to Israel, Ari and the other Sabras (native Israelis) are portrayed as having additional characteristics many Americans valued. Ari was raised on a farm, and the noble nature of a hard working, honest, yeoman was long promoted as a cherished vocation of the native Israeli. Hence, his lifestyle was a good connection to nostalgic Americans who reminisced about bucolic life. During their two-thousand-year Diaspora, in many regions of the world, Jews had been banned from owning land and from being farmers, as these revered jobs were reserved for Christians. From the 1880s, when they immigrated to the swamps and deserts of Palestine, the Jews learned how to work the land, creating the fields and farms that bore the fruits of their backbreaking labor. Though they would much prefer to toil in their fields, the Jews bravely took up arms to fight existential, defensive battles. They had no other choice.

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<sup>123</sup> Details are provided by my beloved grandmother, Savta Hela Goltzer who currently resides in Kibbutz Kfar Ma’asryk, north of Haifa in Israel. After surviving Auschwitz, she was passenger #1698 aboard the Exodus ship that was returned from the Port of Haifa to the Poppendorf exile camp in Germany, in 1947. Journalists reported on the British actions taken against the survivor refugees, and portrayed the British as callous, harsh, and evil. Overall, this disaster gave the British bad publicity and granted Jews much deserved sympathy.

<sup>124</sup> This sad situation likely influenced world compassion to eventually allow and support the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine.

In the film, like all real-life Haganah soldiers, Ari laid down his beloved farm tools and picked up weapons to protect himself and his people. Ari and most of his fellow Israelis were portrayed in *Exodus* as gentle, peace-loving farmers; however, when it became necessary for survival, the Israelis, both men and women, became fierce, brave warriors. These traits resembled righteous American cowboys who would protect the innocent and stand up for righteousness.<sup>125</sup> These traits helped create a familiar, idealized impression of the “New Jew” that Americans could not reject and, perhaps, even desired to emulate. The “New Jew” was becoming a positive image of a universal hero.

The American ideals of “entrepreneurial zeal and upward mobility” are also depicted through the Jewish-Israeli characters in the film, albeit in a more communal, socialist fashion. The recent history of Israel and the Jewish people, delineated in the film, strongly align with these principles. For example, Ari’s father, Barak Ben-Canaan, played by the renowned Lee J. Cobb, tells a group of children (and the American moviegoers) a story of how he walked to Palestine with his little brother “all the way from [the ghettos of] Russia” in search of freedom and peace. When he got to the land, it was no paradise; in fact, it was filled with deserts and swamps and “mosquitoes so big they were picking fights with the sparrows.” In order to use the land to construct farms and fields, the immigrants planted eucalyptus trees, which soaked up the swampy water, built irrigation canals to water the fields, and planted trees to create *all* the forests in the land. They built shelters for their community and lived very modestly for many years. Nevertheless, like those who came to Israel from death camps, shtetls,<sup>126</sup> and ghettos across the globe, Barak moved upward. From violent pogroms in his Russian ghetto to living freely on soil cultivated by his own hands (and with the help of other young immigrants), Barak created a wonderful, successful

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<sup>125</sup> Some scholars perceive the cowboy image as a symbol of manifest destiny of the powerful and the displacement of natives, who were perceived as unrefined. However, in my opinion, the image in *Exodus* was meant as a projection of strength, bravery, and old American virtues associated with harsh daily life, working the land, and living in nature.

<sup>126</sup> A shtetl is a “small town” in Central and Eastern Europe, whose mostly Jewish residents were usually orthodox. The shtetl tended to be socially stable and unchanging despite outside influence or attacks, and the spoken language was Yiddish. Sadly, almost all shtetls were destroyed by the Holocaust, as the majority of each community’s members were massacred, and the very few who survived emigrated after the war due to continued persecution.

commune, which he took much pride in. Though his “upward mobility” did not include the building of mansions or cities, like the kind many aspired towards in the US, Barak still succeeded in his endeavors and was very satisfied. His story was similar to the life of early American settlers who learned how to work the Western Frontier. He possessed respected qualities of diligence, ingenuity, kindness, and strength. Because of these positive attributes, Americans could understand and sympathize with the traits, trials, and tribulations of the Jewish Israeli pioneers.

### **Daring, Dauntless, Defiant, Deserving Dov**

The film also utilizes another character, Dov Landau, played by the popular, handsome Sal Mineo, to alter Americans’ perspectives on Jews, with the hope of decreasing and discrediting anti-Semitic attitudes. Dov is a likeable character who suffered tremendously at the hands of the Nazis. After spending time in the hellish Warsaw ghetto, Dov’s entire family was murdered. He was starved, tortured, and sent to Auschwitz, the death camp where a million of his fellow Jews were executed. The audience finds out that, in order to survive, he was forced to take the job of a Sonderkommando, a Jew whose life was temporarily spared because he buried hundreds of thousands of other Jews. He did not want to dig the graves of his family, his friends, and his community members, but if he did not he would be killed. He suffered terrible guilt; however, it was necessary for him to try to live at any and all cost.

Dov describes some very severe and disturbing experiences he endured, taboo subjects, which the American public was not used to hearing about. He explains how prisoners first arriving at the death camps were forced to strip down naked. Whole communities of very humble people, including women who covered almost every inch of their body in clothing to ensure modesty, were forced to undress together, in front of strangers and in front of their entire community, including men, other women, and children. To degrade the Jews a little more, their hair was shaved (to be used as stuffing in Nazi-made pillows), and at this point, those who were strong enough went to shower to prepare for their enervating, work-until-you-die jobs. Most, however, were too weak to work due to years of starvation in ghettos, and were thus sent into a fake shower that spewed not water, but poisonous gas, killing thousands of people within a few painfully torturous minutes. As Dov

describes these historically true, horrifying experiences, he trembles with shame and anguish.

Then his story, once again, got worse: Dov was also thoroughly humiliated and tormented by Nazis, who raped him. Rape was a prohibited topic for movies, especially homosexual rape, according to the Production Code of the Motion Picture Association of America; however, when Otto Preminger was asked to remove this scene, he adamantly refused, as “this is a reference to a very well known historical fact... [of] Nazi crimes.”<sup>127</sup> It was real history, and the story had to be told. Appearing like a feeble, vulnerable little puppy, Dov is in tears as he describes how the Nazis “used me... like you would use a woman.” The pain he displays is palpable, and it is easy for viewers to sympathize with the wounded and distressed young man, even though he is the Jewish “other.”<sup>128</sup>

It is clear Dov suffered horribly at the hands of the wicked Nazis, so it seems natural that he is angry and belligerent throughout the film, seeking revenge for all the hell he and his beloved family suffered. He joins the Irgun, the Jewish freedom fighters/terrorists who attack the British and the Arabs, with the hope of creating a Jewish homeland in Palestine. Dov and his Irgun comrades are done waiting for world political leaders to make a decision about their lives and futures, and have suffered long enough at the hands of oppressors. After thousands of years of intense torture, waiting and “begging” for peace and security, they believe any means or methods utilized to fulfill their goals of creating an independent Jewish state are, in some ways, justified. Since Dov endured such great emotional and physical pain, his reaction, in the form of aggression and violence, is understandable and even somewhat forgivable.

Furthermore, Dov represents the “New Jew” who is willing to die with dignity and a sense of worth for the noble and necessary cause. When pushed up against a wall, the wall being two thousand years of hellish persecution culminating in the Holocaust, Jews, like Dov, decided to fight back and protect themselves, because they felt no one else would. The

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<sup>127</sup> This is quoted in a letter by Otto Preminger to Geoffrey M. Shurlock of the Motion Picture Association of America Inc. March 4, 1960. From the Collections of the Margaret Herrick Library of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, Beverly Hills, CA.

<sup>128</sup> Sal Mineo was a famous star and popular rock and roll singer, so the character he personified may have received even more empathy from those audience members who recognized him.

audience gets a sense that the victimized Dov has become a brave hero, and thus, is worthy of admiration and even support.

### **Kind, Compassionate, Comforting Karen**

On the other side of the Jewish-Holocaust-Survivor spectrum stands Karen Hansen, played by Jill Haworth, whose extremely sad history begins in Nazi-ruled Germany. Her father was a great, well-respected scientist and, according to the novel, her secular, assimilated family lived comfortably with many gentile friends, colleagues, and neighbors. Prior to WWII, when the Nazis took power, Karen's family, like hundreds of thousands of other Jewish families, did not believe Germany would commit horrific acts of discrimination and persecution against the Jewish population. They had lived in the nation for so many generations, considered themselves German, rather than Jewish, and were so successful and well integrated that they did not try to flee Nazi wrath until it was too late.

There was an escape train to Denmark; however, there was only room for one child, and Karen, the eldest, though still very young, was chosen by her father as the one who would be sent away to safety. This miserable, heartbreaking decision, to choose which child might possibly be saved, was experienced in reality by many assimilated European Jewish families. In Denmark, Karen was temporarily adopted and treated well through the duration of the war by the Clements, a Gentile family. Karen's rescue reflects the kind deeds many benevolent Danish families performed to protect their Jewish neighbors.<sup>129</sup>

Filmgoers find out that, after the war was over, Karen found the names of her mother and siblings on lists of those killed in the Dachau death camp, but did not see her father's name on any lists. Thus, she still has hope of finding him. The audience later learns her father survived the war. However, he suffered extreme emotional trauma, presumably due to the deaths of his family and friends in concentration camps, as well as his own ordeal there. Nazi brutality caused him to become catatonic. Moviegoers watch as Karen finds her father

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<sup>129</sup> Many Danes protected Jews from Nazi wrath. In the *Exodus* story, Karen describes how, in an act of solidarity with his Jewish citizens, the Danish king wore the yellow armband the Nazis had commanded Jews to wear. Though this story is fictional, it reveals that there were good people who stood against Nazism to protect the innocent. It is extremely unfortunate that these "good types" were so few in number; perhaps millions more could have been saved.

in Israel, years after the war. He is so psychologically broken and dejected that he does not even recognize or comprehend her presence. As Karen finally concedes that her entire family has been destroyed, the audience weeps with her. All of this horribly sad information is presented to the moviegoers to inform them of the Holocaust and to create sympathy and compassion for Karen and other survivors like her who suffered severely under Nazi rule. This puts into perspective the idea that the only thing keeping Holocaust survivors alive is immigration to Eretz Israel, the Holy Land of Israel, which will be theirs as redemption.

Karen is a young teenager with beautiful, golden blond hair and a very sweet disposition. Referred to as a gentle “child of light,” she is the quintessence of goodness, and manages to turn any negative into a positive. Karen’s character is meant to show the world that Jews are peaceful, loving, and forgiving: though she lost everything and everyone of importance in her life, she lives with great optimism as a peaceful nurturer who gives love and care to all. She trains as a nurse to help orphaned and traumatized child Holocaust survivors and appears to be the only person with the ability to mollify Dov’s pain and anger.

In some ways, Karen is Dov’s counterpart. She and Dov sailed to Cyprus from the concentration camps together, and while he is filled with pain, rage, and resentment, Karen is filled with hope and tenderness. Her sadness is appeased by helping others, and his sadness is healed through her attention and affection. Their differences represent some of the diverse reactions Jews had to the Holocaust; however, they both seek the chance to live in freedom and safety in their historic homeland where they can be proud to be themselves as dignified Jews.

In addition to her extraordinary kindness, Karen becomes a positive link to Christian audiences. She appears very secular throughout the film and only mentions her heritage when she affirms that her parents are Jewish. Displaying great gratitude, she also speaks very kindly of her Christian saviors. As Karen is a very likeable person, who happens to be Jewish, she becomes an easy, heartening example of the film’s message: Jews are good people.

## **Non-Jewish Good, Better, & Ugly Characters Combat Anti-Semitism**

A few characters in *Exodus* reflect moral virtues or unethical traits to convince audiences to alter their perspectives on Jews. “Good” Kitty learns the evils of anti-Semitism and that Jews are regular people. “Better” Sutherland reflects the qualities of a true, refined, fair-minded gentleman. “Ugly” anti-Semitic Caldwell and the Arab-associated Nazi display the ignorance of anti-Semitism and hate, and all these characters are utilized to combat anti-Semitism by teaching American audiences by example.

### **CARING KITTY: THE REDEEMER**

As a kind, compassionate Presbyterian who is clearly proud to be an American, Mrs. Kitty Freemont is the character in *Exodus* with whom Christian American audiences can most easily identify. Kitty is employed to discredit anti-Jewish stereotypes, sway American viewers into understanding that anti-Semitism is dangerous and wrong, and promote Israel as a necessary homeland for Jews and a hospitable, welcoming place for Americans. Social Psychologist Siegfried Kracauer asserts that films must expose and echo prevailing viewpoints, values, and images in order to persuasively influence their audience. This is because portrayals of familiar images, character-types, and ideologies are easier to grasp and accept than foreign ones. Thus, a film’s ideas and characters are accepted and well received when the audience can relate and connect to them. Played by Eva Marie Saint, Kitty is physically attractive, kindhearted, and benevolent, with sentiments, emotions, and experiences many mainstream American viewers would share. As one of their own, Kitty elicits sympathy for Jews and Israel among American moviegoers.

Kitty Freemont, a good-looking, blond woman in her early 30s, has suffered tremendously in recent years. As she begins her vacation in Cyprus, she is a bit curt and standoffish towards her friendly Cypriot tour guide. However, her aloofness is due to the sad circumstances of her recent past, including the death of her husband, who was killed while serving as a reporter in Palestine, and a miscarriage resulting from the stress and pain she suffered at the loss of her husband. Many Americans lost loved ones and had to sacrifice due to wars and economic downturns (such as World War I, the Great Depression, and World War II), so Kitty’s losses and sadness are fairly easy to empathize with. In the beginning of

the film, it is clear she is emotionally drained over personal issues and is focused on herself and her own woes, but she seems like a good person whom the audience can trust and possesses traits and feelings Americans could understand and share. Similar to the self-perceptions of many Americans in the 1960s, Kitty considers herself to be a kindhearted liberal American who does not discriminate against anyone.

While on vacation in Cyprus, Mrs. Freemont receives an invitation to use her skills and knowledge by volunteering as a nurse at the internment camps for Holocaust survivors, but she initially declines. Kitty explains that, due to the personal difficulties she suffered over the last year, she is very tired and emotionally drained. Nevertheless, the audience quickly finds out that Kitty has a more compelling reason for denying the request for her seriously needed services. The camps are filled with Jewish survivors, and for some reason, she feels “strange among them.” When probed as to why, Kitty cannot come up with an answer. She says, “I don’t know anything about them...I can’t think [of a logical reason as to why I feel strange around Jews]. It’s just a feeling I get.” Kitty’s sentiment correlates directly with many mainstream Americans who held slightly anti-Semitic feelings.<sup>130</sup>

Akin to many Americans, Kitty cannot provide a specific explanation for her prejudice, but her mildly anti-Semitic feelings are clearly based on preconceived notions and long-standing anti-Jewish stereotypes. The predominantly Christian-American audience can easily relate to Kitty, the only Christian American in the film. Thus, when she openly announces that she is uncomfortable around Jews, those in the audience who feel the same way begin to relax and not feel guilty about their awkward and slightly anti-Semitic feelings. This fosters a stronger bond to Kitty because the audience can identify with, or at least comprehend, her mind-set. Furthermore, though Kitty has a slight dislike of Jews, she is also

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<sup>130</sup> In a few polls conducted in the mid 1950s, people were asked if they would mind if a Jewish family moved into their neighborhood. 13 to 20% said they would not like Jewish neighbors because they do not know Jews, are not used to them, have nothing in common with them, or just prefer the company of their own group over “others.” In an answer to this sentiment, filmmakers hoped that if these types of people got to know Jews, perhaps they would not fear them as a different “other.” Hence, the goal of the film was to gently introduce Christian Americans (through Kitty’s eyes) to Jews without uncomfortable “real” interactions: American audiences could learn a little about Jews by being entertained in a movie. These polls are from the National Opinion Research Center [NORC]: “NORC Survey #1953-0341-0342: Foreign Affairs & Minorities,” 1953, “NORC Survey #1955-0379: Foreign Affairs,” November 1955, “NORC Survey #1956-0399: Foreign Affairs,” November 1956, and “NORC Survey #1957-0404 Foreign Affairs,” April 1957, United States, Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, n.d.

naturally compassionate and motherly towards those in need of care and support, and many Americans can relate to these sentiments and values as well.

Once a positive connection is established between moviegoers and a film's storyline and characters, the film's potential to influence audience viewpoints increases dramatically. In this case, Kitty quickly becomes a solid link between the moviegoers and the film's message.<sup>131</sup> Moviegoers watch and learn as Kitty has a few casual conversations with Major Caldwell, the arrogant, anti-Semitic British Officer. She witnesses Caldwell's chauvinism and bigotry as he denigrates helpless Holocaust survivor refugees, and as a first-hand witness to the virulence of anti-Semitism, Kitty is pushed into action. Her motherly instincts to protect the innocent and the weak kick in to challenge Caldwell's offensive, inhumane remarks, and she decides to help the Jews by volunteering as a nurse at the Cyprus internment camps. It is here that she recognizes that her anti-Semitic feelings are illogical, and her disposition quickly changes. As Kitty takes a stand, she (and the audience) begins to recognize that Jews are not as strange and unfamiliar as she (and they) first presumed.

In the holding camps, which face shortages of staff, equipment, medicine, food, and clothing, Kitty spends time with Jews, and she starts to recognize the Jewish "other" as human beings. She watches a Jewish doctor perform a procedure on a child, and criticizes his methods. The doctor kindly explains how desperately needed medicines and tools are unavailable; however, his techniques still work properly and save many people. Kitty is embarrassed, but the doctor's gentleness in correcting her allows her to save face, and she realizes she can learn a thing or two from him. This elicits the notion that she can respect and appreciate a Jewish man. Kitty watches children at play, and the very different, unique practices of orthodox Jews praying and taking care of daily needs. Though they seem very unfamiliar to her (and to the American audience), the Jews are peaceful and gentle, and in no way do they threaten Kitty or make her feel uncomfortable or unwelcome. While observing some clearly distraught youth, Kitty learns about the horrors they experienced in the Holocaust. She begins to gain sympathy for the dejected souls who have no home, and in most cases, no parents or families, because they were all slaughtered by the Nazis a few years

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<sup>131</sup> This idea stems from Kracauer in his article, "National Types," 70.

earlier. As Kitty learns about the Jews' history, watching them live as moral, hardworking, normal people, her (and the audiences') compassion for them increases. With the realization that these survivors have done nothing wrong, she exclaims, "They are not dangerous. They are just poor, miserable people."

Throughout *Exodus*, Kitty slowly transforms from an innocuous anti-Semite who keeps to herself and her own business, to a more tolerant person who learns to accept differences, and she eventually gains a full recognition that anti-Semitic stereotypes are a fabricated evil. She also learns that it is just as bad to participate in hate crime as it is to stand idly by and watch as innocents are abused and tormented, which is why she combats Major Caldwell's comments by volunteering to help the Jewish survivor refugees. It is through Kitty's reactions and change-of-heart that the filmmakers intended for American audiences to begin questioning their own anti-Semitic prejudices and to become more open and accepting of the Jewish "other."

In order to win over the American audience for the Jews, Kitty forms two important relationships: with Karen and Ari, the Jewish protagonists who have likeable, American characteristics. Kitty first meets Karen in the internment camps in Cyprus, while Karen is busy relieving the doctor of his never-ending duties and comforting the traumatized, orphaned children. Kitty quickly notices Karen's inner and physical beauty, with her compassionate care and golden locks, and the audience immediately sees these same positive features reflected in Kitty as well. Kitty then makes sure the film viewers notice that Karen "acts, feels, and speaks almost exactly like an American" (a very nice compliment for American audiences). By being compared to an American in a positive light, the "slightly familiar" Jewish character, Karen, quickly becomes "very familiar" and worthy of sympathy. As Kitty begins to love Karen like a daughter, and even offers to adopt her, the audience also finds love for Karen, even though she is Jewish.

Kitty also establishes a relationship with Ari Ben-Canaan, and it is through their interactions that many Americans really begin to learn about and comprehend the history of the Jews and their aspirations, including the desperate need for Israel as a homeland where they can live with dignity and self-respect. Ari and Kitty begin their relationship with a bit of animosity and tension, but they eventually bond through Kitty's care for Karen and Ari's concern for all needy Jews. When aboard the Exodus ship, there is a strong possibility of

grave danger for all the passengers. Kitty believes she is being very noble when she desires to take Karen to safety, and says to Ari, “I am trying to save a Jewish child! Can’t you understand that? Don’t you have any respect for human life?” Ari replies, “You’re late. Lady, you’re ten years late!” in reference to the lack of desperate help the Jewish children needed before and during the Holocaust. “Almost two million Jewish children were butchered like animals... because nobody wanted them. No country would have them. Not your country or any other country.” This horrific history is tersely proclaimed to shockingly emphasize the depressing magnitude of the recent past and to induce a feeling of guilt upon those who may have been able to help, but didn’t: Americans.

Kitty does not understand how or why Ari is willing to possibly sacrifice the six hundred people aboard the ship through starvation or explosives, but Ari explains that with hundreds of thousands of Jews still in need of help, their sacrifice is for a much greater cause, so the Jewish people, as a whole, can live in peace. Ari makes a claim for the future: “nobody wants the ones who survived. Jewish flesh is cheap, lady. It’s cheaper than beef. It’s cheaper, even, than herring.” He explains the Jews aboard the ship are willing to sacrifice themselves so that their homeless brothers and sisters can *live*, with self-respect, in their ancient homeland. Kitty then gains a great admiration for Ari’s strength and for all the Jews’ willingness to sacrifice themselves for the greater good, for the benefit of others, even at the cost of their own lives. In the same manner that Kitty has a change of heart, this scene is also a “call to duty” for Americans, who did not do enough before and during WWII to save the defenseless Jews, to go and help the few who survived, by supporting the new vulnerable state of Israel. The state was won through heroic acts of selfless bravery, like this scene depicts, making the Jews worthy of American assistance.

The interactions between Kitty, the American Presbyterian, and Ari, the Israeli Jew, start out in an uncomfortable, awkward exchange but develop into a slow-budding romance while promoting the highly desired American ambition of assimilation through intermarriage. As she begins to have compassion for the vigor, courage, and benevolence of the Jewish community, Kitty also starts to come to terms with her own attraction to Ari Ben-Canaan, even though he is a Jewish “other.” Ari tells her stories about his family’s past, and the more she learns about him, and the more she witnesses his altruistic and courageous actions, the more she likes and yearns for him. Kitty sees his tough exterior, but also recognizes his soft

heart. This theme, of a tough exterior and tenderness within, is a metaphor for native-born Israelis, who are called “sabras.” A sabra is a cactus fruit that grows in harsh conditions, with a thorny outside for defense, but a tender and sweet inside. Spending more time in Israel with Ari, Karen, and other positive Jewish characters allows Kitty and the American audience to sympathize with Jews and their aspirations.

As Kitty begins to fall in love with Ari, she realizes her transformation is complete: she no longer harbors any anti-Semitic prejudices with a newfound awareness that Jews are *people!* What a revelation! Most importantly, Kitty shares this insight with the American audience, exclaiming, “All these differences between people are made up. People are the same no matter what they’re called.”<sup>132</sup> This is an amazing discovery and confession on behalf of the Presbyterian with whom most Americans would identify and love as one of their own. Her announcement encourages the American audience to come to the same realization: ‘I’m an American, I admire Kitty, and I want to be just like her, so whatever she likes, including Ari (the Jew), I also like.’ Kitty, thus, becomes the ideal recruiter for other “Waspy” Americans to join the Zionist cause, support Israel, and combat anti-Semitism by recognizing that there are no real, meaningful differences between people.

Contrarily, Ari refutes Kitty’s comment, explaining, “People are different. They have a right to be different. They like to be different.... It’s no good pretending the differences don’t exist. They do. They have to be recognized and respected.” Though assimilation is an American goal, Ari asserts the need for Americans to accept diversity. The “other” is different but, clearly, does not denote “bad.” Ari may be perceived as an “other,” but, his characteristics are so admirable that Kitty, and the film’s viewers, learn to respect and love him. Kitty then rebuts Ari’s words and explains she respects diversity, but reasserts her newfound perspective: “You are wrong, Ari. There are no differences.” Kitty has learned that underneath clothing and traditions, people, especially Christians and Jews, are so alike that the dissimilarities do not matter in the big picture.

The relationship between Kitty and Ari reflects a kinship between America and Israel, two nations drawn together by common interests, and between Christianity and Judaism.

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<sup>132</sup> Kitty and Ari discuss differences as they sit above the Huleh Valley and talk about Ari’s family’s history and the biblical history of the Old Testament.

Christianity stemmed from Judaism, and both religions carry the same history and have an appreciation for important biblical sites in Israel. Both religions also promote similar traits, including morality, righteousness, and benevolence. Kitty learns that “in order to be a good Christian, you have to be a Jew at heart.” As a good Christian, Kitty sees the homeless refugees as innocent people worthy of help. She then recognizes the importance and need to support Israel as a homeland for Jews and becomes a Zionist. Furthermore, since Ari is such an admirable person who represents Christianity’s parent religion, it is clear the relationship will be mutually beneficial for both people and for both nations.<sup>133</sup> It is therefore acceptable for Kitty, like America, to become a compassionate, motherly figure, helping care for Ari, the Jewish children, and the incipient Jewish national homeland.

Throughout the duration of the film, Kitty transforms from a Waspish, slightly anti-Semitic bystander into a pro-Jewish Zionist, and eventually her heart takes over. She begins to care for Jews, Ari and Karen in particular, and espouses the Israeli cause with her love and kindness. As Kitty’s and Ari’s (and Karen’s) characters have universal appeal in the United States, they have the ability to connect to the American public to garner support or, at least, sympathy for the Zionist cause.<sup>134</sup>

### **SUPPORTIVE SUTHERLAND: RIGHTEOUS HUMANITARIAN**

Throughout the duration of the story (book and film), General Sutherland, the British commander in Cyprus, functions as a moral, righteous leader who recognizes that all people, including Jews, deserve to be treated with respect and gentleness. He is a British leader who must uphold the laws of the Mandate, which prevents the Jewish Displaced Persons from going to Palestine. However, though the weak and vulnerable Holocaust survivors are being

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<sup>133</sup> Though the subject of intermarriage is sidestepped in the story, the film concludes pointing to a committed, life-long relationship between Kitty the Christian and Ari the Jew. Their religious backgrounds are emphasized through their verbal expressions (“I am a Jew” and “I am a Christian”), but their religious culture is subdued to emphasize their secular, assimilated qualities (i.e. no rituals, clothing, etc, are observed). This is because assimilation and intermarriage were desired qualities in America in the early through mid 1900s, and many American Jews hoped that if they were to blend in enough, and if they could “marry in,” they would be accepted as “real” Americans.

<sup>134</sup> The film takes place in 1947, prior to the creation of the State. The film came out was twelve years after Israel was established as a Jewish nation, but the need for support was still strong.

forcefully held under his jurisdiction in internment camps on Cyprus, Sutherland sympathizes with their suffering and losses. As a moral and righteous man, he treats the Jews humanly and believes their difficult history warrants them a homeland in Palestine.

Because of his care for the Jews, some of the other British military personnel erroneously believe that Sutherland is partly Jewish. Kitty learns and believes this fallacious rumor, as evidenced when she tries to convince him to let the Jews aboard the Exodus ship sail to Palestine. She understands the tremendous hardships that have befallen the Jewish people and believes that able Jews, like Sutherland, should help their kin. Hence, Kitty asserts that, since he is Jewish, he has a duty to help all the other Jews. However, after Sutherland explains he is not a Jew, he takes the idea of benevolence and humanitarianism to a much higher level. He responds, “You ask, how I, as a Jew, could let this happen to other Jews. Now I find myself asking: how can any man let it happen? Jew, Gentile, Buddhist, Mohammedan, no matter what he is!” This is a central question of the film: how can any man stand idly by and allow another human to suffer? Sutherland asserts that all decent, respectable people should not only reject racism and anti-Semitism, but also show respect and kindness to all people. It is not a Jewish problem, it is a *human* problem about *human* suffering that *all* people should feel responsible for and help alleviate.

### **CALLOUS CALDWELL & NASTY NAZI: EVIL VILLAINS**

Opposing Sutherland’s and Kitty’s goodhearted nature is Major Caldwell, the bitter British Officer who, for no legitimate reason, articulates numerous derogatory stereotypes to defame Jews. He serves as a foil to make anti-Semitism appear evil and dangerous. In Uris’ novel, Caldwell is a Nazi-sympathizer with very harsh anti-Semitic sentiments. “And they think Hitler was wrong, Caldwell thought... It was bloody well too bad that the war ended before he could do them all in... The more Jews dead, the better.”<sup>135</sup> These words would be

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<sup>135</sup> Uris, 367. The same attitude was expressed by a brash group of anti-Semites: in a 1964 poll, too many Americans confirmed this belief. 1.4% agreed with this statement: “Sometimes I think Hitler was right in getting rid of the Jews,” and 6.2% agreed that: “Hitler was partly right in trying to get rid of the Jews, but he went too far.” The total percentage of Americans in 1964 who maintained that Hitler was somewhat or very correct in the blatant murder of Jews was 7.6%, equating to millions of Americans. This includes the slaughter

horrifying for anyone who cared about human life, and especially for those who really understood what had occurred in the Holocaust.

The movie's portrayal of Caldwell's level of anti-Semitism is less sinister, and even humorous at times. Preminger wanted to put a lighter spin on the image of anti-Semitism to entertain and teach with humor, and he did not want to provoke the animosity of British moviegoers. When Caldwell first appears in the film, he is wearing a British Officer's uniform and, because the British were America's allies around WWII, he initially has the American audience's respect. In spite of this, it quickly becomes apparent that he is a depraved imbecile and exhibits no respect for human life. In an attempt to make himself look good in the eyes of other non-Jews, Caldwell puts "the other" down by continuously uttering disparaging comments about "those Jews;" however, his remarks simply make him seem sinful and mean.

On one occasion, Ari is disguised in his British Officer's uniform (he had retired from active duty after serving in the British army in WWII), and has a discussion with Caldwell who clearly does not realize Ari is a Jew. Accordingly, Caldwell makes very stereotypical, anti-Semitic comments about the poor Holocaust survivors: "They are troublemakers aren't they? ...And half of them are Communists." Caldwell does not sense the sarcasm when Ari mockingly replies, "yes, and the other half pawnbrokers." These stereotypes, of Jews being communists and pawnbrokers, were common in the first half of the twentieth century, but Ari discredits them with his words and actions.

When Caldwell sees that Ari is preparing to relocate some of the survivor refugees, he happily exclaims they are finally "going to be getting rid of some Jews." Caldwell then suggests that all the Jews should be sent back to Germany and says, "In my opinion, that's where they belong. It's a German matter, let the Germans handle it." Six million Jews massacred because they were "different" is not something to be flippant about, and Caldwell's comments must have offended all the compassionate people in the audience who were aware of the horrors that took place there fifteen years earlier.

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of innocent women, children, and elderly, not as an act of war or a fight against a cause, but simply because they were Jewish. Roper Commercial Poll, "Roper Misc Poll 1964."

The conversation between Ari and Caldwell continues, and while literally standing inches away from Ari, the Jew, Caldwell says, “They look funny too. I can spot one a mile away... one look at that face, and you just know.”<sup>136</sup> In a very comedic, ironic manner, Ari subsequently asks Caldwell to try to find a splinter in his eye. Caldwell looks directly into Ari’s eye and does not realize he is “spotting one.” Ari sarcastically retorts, “With a little experience, you can even smell them.” Caldwell’s anti-Semitic words backfire and Caldwell becomes the personification of idiocy and evil. All viewers who have a sympathetic soul can never relate to his heartless malice. In fact, even if audience members have anti-Semitic dispositions, Caldwell has such horrible traits (especially compared to the righteous Ari), that the audience must completely disassociate themselves from him in order to save face. With Nazi-like beliefs, he is a major villain of the film, representing all that is foul, and viewers are obliged to think and believe the opposite of what he embodies. No one who wants to fit into mainstream society will dare say they want to be like the villain or “wicked witch” of the movie, and Caldwell is the most wicked of witches. He does not cause any physical harm to anyone; yet Kitty, Ari, and the audience quickly realize his vile words can be just as harmful. After the genocide of the Jews in WWII, no American with any morals desired to be associated with Nazism and the language, expressions, and ideology it represented. Overall, Caldwell is portrayed in such a satiric, but negative, light that only the most virulent anti-Semitic, pro-Nazi moviegoers could possibly concur with his opinions.

The other evil villain in the film is the Nazi representative of the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, von Storch, played by Marius Goring. Von Storch’s ideas are so repugnant that they alienate most viewers. He is the “somewhat strange” bully who becomes “sharply alien” to American audiences. In order to make him and the Grand Mufti seem more evil, and to connect to the real history, von Storch employs Nazi symbols, language, and philosophy to

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<sup>136</sup> The *belief* that someone can “look Jewish” was, and continues to be, prevalent. Some Jewish appearance-based stereotypes include big noses, big, puffy hair, dark skin tones and hair, big feet, and big pockets filled with money. Even the Sign Language symbols for “Jewish” include pulling the nose and beard to infer a large nose and long beard, and pinching fingers together to symbolize money. However, there are Jews across the globe in over 80 nations, and include many diverse appearances. As a side note: new acquaintances have often said to me, “*You don’t LOOK Jewish!*” I always think to myself (and I’m *always* tempted to say), “Well, you don’t LOOK dumb!” A 1964 study asked if people agreed with this statement: “You can usually tell whether or not a person is Jewish just by the way he looks.” 43% of respondents said this statement was true. Roper Commercial Poll, “Roper Misc Poll 1964.”

kill the Jews because they are Jews. He wears a white, SS-like suit, holds a white cane, and his blond hair is so light it is almost white, making him appear as a “white devil,” akin to a representation of the Nazi-Aryan image of the fallacious “superior race.”<sup>137</sup> Von Storch attempts to force Taha, the Arab friend of Ari and the Jews, to join the Arab fight against the Jews and destroy the Jewish orphans’ village. He reveals that the Grand Mufti will work “until the last Jew is exterminated.” Apprehensively, Taha exclaims, “There are 650,000 Jews in Palestine!” and von Storch smarmily replies, “Temporarily.” This clearly delineates the eagerness to massacre all Jews in Palestine the same way the Nazis murdered six million in Europe.

Portrayed heroically, Taha refuses to betray or fight against his Jewish friends and neighbors; however, he sadly pays for this decision with his life. Taha is killed, and his body is hung from an entryway in his village, “decorated” with symbols, including the Nazi swastika and the Jewish Star of David painted in blood on his body and on the surrounding walls. The audience’s grief at Taha’s death by the hands of Nazi-Arabs allows viewers to fully discern the connections between bigotry and violence, equating the Nazi Holocaust with the ruthless opposition of the Arabs, who kill those they disagree with- even members of their own tribe.<sup>138</sup> Von Storch and his nefarious actions are a reminder of what happens when people kill based on prejudice, when tolerance and acceptance of diversity are severely lacking, and when anything is deemed more important than human life. It is a very sad moment for all those who yearn for peace and value life, and it prompts increased compassion for the Jews and their friends.

### **Somewhat Familiar vs Sharply Alien**

Another tool employed to convince moviegoers to support the film’s message of reducing anti-Semitism and increasing support for Israel is the contrast between Jews and

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<sup>137</sup> The image of the Nazi-type was a commonly employed stereotype in many WWII films, such as *Casablanca*.

<sup>138</sup> This portrayed alliance, between the Nazis and the Arabs of Palestine was very real. For example, the Grand Mufti of Palestine, Hajj Amin al-Hussayni, was Hitler’s guest in Germany during the war. He spent WWII “supporting the German war effort and German barbarity against the Jews.” He also adopted Nazi language in the anti-Jewish rhetoric he fed to Palestinians. This quote is from Smith, 176-177.

Arabs. Many Americans had not personally come into contact with Jews, and quite a few held anti-Semitic feelings; in spite of this, Arabs were even more unfamiliar and *appeared* barbarous and unrefined to urbane, white, Christian Americans.

In Uris' novel, the (European) Israeli Jews are described as white, educated, refined, skillful, and capable of accomplishing great feats. These "New Jews" wear the respectable, clean, crisp blue and khaki uniform of the Sabra, the native Israeli, and are known for their achievements in a land filled with extreme challenges. For example, Jews cultivated and transformed deserts and swamps into orchards and forests.

In contrast to the clean, organized, hardworking vision of the "New Jew," Arabs are described as, as lazy, dirty, smelly, ignorant, and violent, and Arab women as oppressed. The book stereotypes Palestinians as "the dregs of humanity. The women were encased in black robes- and layers of dirt. [It was hard] to smell the goats but [easy] to smell the women... The children wore dirty rags." The women worked "with enormous loads balanced on their heads," while the men sat "listless" in coffeehouses "motionless or lying down playing backgammon."<sup>139</sup> On the other hand, Jews are portrayed as "the only salvation for the Arab people." For example, the schooling of Taha's Arab children takes place in the Jewish school, displaying the benevolence and generosity the Jews have in helping their neighbors and the high value Jews place up education. The novel also alleges, "Jews are the only ones in a thousand years who have brought light to this part of the world."<sup>140</sup> Similar to the book's image, Jack Shaheen explains the tendency for films to portray Muslims and Arabs as uncivilized "others" who promote terror and violence against Westernized civilizations. He cites examples of where they are illustrated as greedy, evil, and buffoon-like, and portrayed as "assassins and enemies of the United States."<sup>141</sup>

Compared to the novel, the film's portrayal of Arabs is much more neutral and subdued. The "good" Palestinian Arabs, including Taha, his children, and his village

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<sup>139</sup> Uris, 315, 353.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid, 258.

<sup>141</sup> Shaheen explains, "Bash-the-Arab movies make money" and silence on behalf of Arabs with an absence of criticism also maintain these derogatory stereotypes. Jack G. Shaheen, "Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 588 (July 2003), 177, 190.

members, are clean and well dressed in white Arab garb. They are also educated and promoters of peace, tolerance, and kindness toward all people, including the Jews. Taha remarks that it is natural for Arabs and Jews to live in peace, as even the word for peace is similar: Arabs say salam, and Jews say shalom. Additionally, Taha's father was friends with Ari's father and donated land to the Jews to build a children's kibbutz. The audience learns that when Taha's father died, Taha was taken in and cared for by Ari's Jewish family as though he was a brother and son. This is a strong display of camaraderie and benevolence between the "good" Arabs and Jews.

Viewers then learn about the other side, the "bad" Arabs, who cause great strife for the Jews and for peace-loving Arabs like Taha. Because he had befriended the Jews, Taha's father was murdered by the Grand Mufti's thugs who identified with the Nazis. Moviegoers find out the leading "bad" Arab, the Grand Mufti, spent time as Hitler's guest in Berlin during the Holocaust. The Arab Mufti and his cronies are equated with Nazis and, like Hitler, want all Jews exterminated for the sole reason that they are Jews.<sup>142</sup> Hence, "they," the evil, illogical, violence-provoking Nazi-Arabs are portrayed in a negative light, especially compared to the peace-promoting Jews and Arabs.

Moreover, the image of a tiny Jewish "David" who had to fight the more populous Arab "Goliath," aroused the sympathies of the West. The little guy who went through Holocaust hell has come back to fight the pro-Nazi Arabs. With the perception that Jews are more familiar and similar to Americans, the obvious implication is that they should be supported in their fight against the belligerent Arab "other."

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<sup>142</sup> During the years of the Holocaust, in order to learn how to "solve the problems of the Jewish element in Palestine and other Arab countries" by employing "the same method" used in the Axis countries, the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Amin al-Husseini, took a trip to visit Auschwitz, the death camp in Poland where millions of Jews were massacred. He wrote in his memoirs, "Our fundamental condition for cooperating with Germany was a free hand to eradicate every last Jew from Palestine and the Arab world." He spent years with his generous "friend" Hitler in Berlin, learning various methods of massacring Jews. Additionally, al-Husseini tried to incite violence among Arabs, declaring, "Slaughter Jews wherever you find them. Their spilled blood pleases Allah, our history, and our religion." Cited from the article by Sarah Honig, "Fiendish Hypocrisy II: The Man from Klopstock St.," *Jerusalem Post* (April 6, 2001), 8. For other sources on the Mufti, please see David G. Dalin and John F. Rothmann, *Icon of Evil: Hitler's Mufti and the Rise of Radical Islam* (New York: Random House, 2008). Also, Zvi Elpeleg, *The Grand Mufti: Haj Amin al-Hussaini, Founder of the Palestinian National Movement* (Portland: Frank Cass, 1993). Also, Jeffrey Herf, *Nazi Propaganda for the Arab World* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2009).

Furthermore, akin to other authors and historians in the years immediately surrounding the establishment of Israel, Uris wrote about the commonly accepted claim that Arabs want to eliminate the Jewish state of Israel. “The destruction of the Jewish homeland [was] made a “holy” mission of Pan-Arabism,” and many Arabs continuously avow their intent to “throw the Jews into the sea.”<sup>143</sup> Preminger’s film mentions the same goal: according to the Mufti’s associates, the 650,000 Jews in Palestine are only there “temporarily.”<sup>144</sup>

### **The Mission of Each Character**

Each character in the storyline has a special task: to clearly demonstrate the evils of anti-Semitism, to display the value of life and the need for tolerance towards diversity, and to promote Jews and Israelis as positive figures. The good Gentile characters, Kitty Fremont and General Sutherland, show the world that good Christians respect Jews as human beings, learn from and with them, and love them. Though Jews are a little different, their distinctions are surface level and are not important enough to cause conflict or discrimination. The bad Gentile characters, Major Caldwell and von Storch, espouse unwarranted hatred and callousness towards life and demonstrate that anti-Semitism and unjustifiable violence must be prevented or stopped at all cost. Those who choose to hate based on chauvinism or prejudice are brainless and evil and only cause damage to the world, and this includes all forms of anti-Semitism.

On the other hand, Ari, Karen, and all the other good “New Jews,” display virtuous qualities of strength, bravery, benevolence, care, and peacefulness. They show the American audience a wide variety of Jewish traits, all of which are in some ways positive and similar to respectable American values. To boot, these familiar, American-like characters are played

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<sup>143</sup> Uris, 266. Getting rid of all Jews via murder, or “throwing the Jews into the sea,” was and is commonly noted as an ideal Arab solution in regard to how to deal with the Jewish nation of Israel. This began even before the words and actions of the Grand Mufti, Haj Amin al-Husseini, and has lasted all the way through the violent actions of Hamas, the current elected government in the Gaza Strip, who continue to send rockets into Israeli civilian territory with the intent to murder unarmed men, women, and babies. This was described in Uris’ novel, as well as in countless scholarly books.

<sup>144</sup> For a specific historic example, please see footnote above regarding the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem’s comments (“Slaughter Jews wherever you find them”).

by well-liked, famous actors, and with the help of emotive music and a recognizable name and narrative, *Exodus* was cemented into viewers' memories. The moviemakers hoped these features would convince American viewers to support the film's messages: anti-Semitism is barbaric and evil, the creation of Israel was justified based on the history of the Jewish people, Israel is the best Middle Eastern ally for America, and Israel and the Jews need, and are deserving of, American support.<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> For more on the connection between Israel and America, please see Mart, *Eye on Israel*.

## CHAPTER 3

### PROOF IS IN THE BOOK & FILM REVIEWS, ADS, & PUBLIC OPINION POLLS

The small number of *Exodus*' professional book and film reviews and advertisements assessed in this thesis are the tip of the iceberg. Those analyzed here are a portion of large, national, renowned and small, local publications from across the United States. Similarly, the public opinion polls evaluated in this essay are part of a larger collection. Overall, this sample of reviews, ads, and polls represent a cross-section of various American opinions, perspectives, and attitudes.

#### REVIEWS & ADS FOR URIS' 1958 NOVEL BUILT GREAT ANTICIPATION FOR THE FILM

Leon Uris' *Exodus* was published (by Doubleday) in September 1958, and a few professional reviewers, in particular, some in the Jewish press, admonished the book as an inaccurate portrayal of Zionism, an erroneous version of history, and a poorly written novel. All of these opinions are at least somewhat accurate. On the other hand, many critics understood the meaning, intent, and importance of the novel's theme in influencing the American public (and readers across the globe) and promoted it as such. Regardless of the opinions of professional critics, most Americans liked the book, and interest and fascination for it spread across the States, indicating appreciation of its themes. The novel quickly became a huge hit and, within a month of publication, it landed in thirteenth place on the *New York Times* best-seller list. By May of 1959, eight months after publication, *Exodus* was listed number one. It remained at first-place for an unprecedented nineteen weeks, and within two years, millions of copies had been sold.<sup>146</sup> When Otto Preminger purchased the

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<sup>146</sup> Friedman, 162. Also, *St Lawrence (New York) Ogdensburg Journal*, "Between the Bookends," February 20, 1961. Additionally, *The New York Times*, "Uris Book Is Cited: Novelist Gets an Award for Story of Israel's Birth," May 24, 1959, 71. Also, Lewis Nichols, "In and Out of Books," *The New York Times*, August 30, 1959, BR8.

rights to make a film based on Uris' novel, more news articles were published, further promoting the story and creating immense appeal for, and interest in, the future film.<sup>147</sup>

### **Good Reviews Are Great Advertising**

Philip K Scheuer, a critic from the *Los Angeles Times*, described the narrative as a “dramatic theme” about the “rebirth of Israel,” comprising of “three generations, from the resettling of the Promised Land to the present,” and an American on Cyprus “engaged in smuggling refugee children into Israel.” His review teased readers with a sensational plot, called the novel a “Leon Uris Epic,” and instructed readers to “look for “Exodus” to be one of MGM’s biggest” when it hit theaters. This commentary was published March of 1958, six months *before the novel was even printed*, thus becoming good advanced publicity for the forthcoming book and film.<sup>148</sup>

Along the same lines, a special article by Thomas M. Pryor was published May of 1958, in the *New York Times*. It described how the characters in Uris' book “are said to represent ‘a cross-section of the tens of thousands of hapless, desperate men, women, and children seeking refuge from the charnel house of Europe.’ Fifteen years after the Holocaust ended, the survivors’ plight served as a fervent appeal for sympathy. Pryor said the novel had been recently completed and would be turned into a motion picture about the founding of the “new nation [of Israel] being born amidst violence on the shores of the Mediterranean.” This article advertised a dramatic adventure based on true, recent history and likely enticed many prospective readers and movie watchers.<sup>149</sup>

### **Reviews of Novel as Unrealistic or One-Sided**

Though most reviews were positive or at least had positive parts, some critics assessed portions of *Exodus* as unrealistic or misleading. The *Time* literary critic called Uris a

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<sup>147</sup> *St Lawrence Massena Observer (New York)*, “Movie Makers Seek Pre-Sold Audience, Pay More for Rights to Top Books,” April 27, 1959, accessed at the Denver Public Library, Denver, CO. Also, *Motion Picture Herald*, “Best Seller Today, Hit Film Tomorrow,” September 26, 1959, 16.

<sup>148</sup> Philip K. Scheuer, “‘Exodus’ Tells Israel Story,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 10, 1958, C11.

<sup>149</sup> Thomas M. Pryor, “Preminger Plans Movie on Israel: ‘Exodus’ Will Be Based on Novel by Uris,” *New York Times*, May 26, 1958, 25.

“bestseller” and provided high acclaim for the story, but also focused on the exaggerations and biased images portrayed in the novel.<sup>150</sup> For example, the article said, “Gentile, Kitty Fremont, is so often petty minded and petulant” that Uris appeared biased “against shiksas,” and in many ways, this description is fairly accurate.<sup>151</sup> Kitty, representing Gentile Americans, is discovering new adventures, peoples, customs, philosophies, and a very new and different way of life, including the importance of standing up for what is right. In the beginning of the story, her thoughts and reactions, as rendered by Uris, are childlike, naïve, and at times snappish, and her personal desires are sometimes a bit selfish. Nevertheless, Kitty’s reactions were exaggerated to enable the American audience to observe a change in her perspective. Her disposition was also a reflection of apathetic or negative American sentiment towards Jews and Israel.<sup>152</sup>

*Time* also contended that the book’s “partisan trimmings” are quite unflattering and argued, “Too often the author’s flag-waving enthusiasm for Zionism” diminishes the success of the Israelis. Additionally, the caption by a picture of “Author Uris in Israel” labeled Uris “Zealously Zionist.” The majority of the Jewish characters are described as peaceful, civilized innocents, and the aggressive Jews are portrayed as having genuine, significant reasons for their violent actions. Contrarily, Uris described most of the Arabs as “either witless dupes or as ‘the dredges of humanity, thieves, murderers, highway robbers, dope runners and white slavers.’” Uris’ words *are* callous and exaggerated when describing most of his Arab characters. In some ways, he was trying to depict extremist Arabs as provocateurs and the main causes of violence and skirmishes between the Jews and Arabs. This is because if “they,” the very unfamiliar Arabs, are bad, then their opposition, the more familiar Jews, must be good. Uris was successful in creating these binary opposites, clearly

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<sup>150</sup> The *Time* literary critic praised Uris’ previous works as highly acclaimed, called Uris a “bestseller,” and complemented many parts of the *Exodus* novel; however, the article also described Uris’ writing as “two-dimensional,” and like a “TV western,” implying that the novel is unrefined and poorly written.

<sup>151</sup> A “shiksa” can be used as a somewhat derogatory term for a non-Jewish woman.

<sup>152</sup> *Time*, “Bestseller Revisited,” December 8, 1958, 110. An example of American apathy comes from a 1946 poll that asked Americans to accept Jewish and European refugees, and 72% disapproved of the idea. Though there are several factors as to why, this study was conducted *after* the Holocaust, when most Americans knew what had happened (albeit most lacked clear understanding and details). Dr. George Gallup and the American Institute of Public Opinion (AIPO), August 1946, published by Erskine, 649-664.

frustrating this *Time* reviewer, who did not want to see the Arab “other” described so disparagingly, nor the Jewish “in group’s” crimes excused.<sup>153</sup>

Another critic, Harry Gilroy of the *New York Times*, asserted the book is a “passionate summary” of the historical Jewish triumphs and tribulations of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; however, he also believed this “story of modern Israel strains credibility.” Gilroy explained the novel is the contemporary “Biblical cry of ‘Let my people go’ ... addressed to many [modern day] Pharaohs,” the Pharaohs being those who implemented the inhuman treatment of the Jewish people in Europe, the British during their Mandate over Palestine by preventing desperate Jews from entering the land and escaping Nazi wrath, and the violent Arab adversaries of the Jews in that Holy Land. This observation really gets to the heart of the book’s message: the Jews need a free homeland to live in peace with dignity.<sup>154</sup>

Nevertheless, at the same time, in the battle against Pharaohs, Gilroy believed the Jewish characters “become giants... a race of Jewish Tarzans...superman type[s].” The character types *are* exaggerations; nonetheless, their traits are embellished to make the points easily graspable and crystal clear to an audience mostly lacking detailed historical knowledge. Importantly, the larger-than-life images of the very amiable, venerable, super-human protagonists were needed to counter engrained, negative stereotypes to create a more likeable, admirable image of Jews.<sup>155</sup>

On the other hand, Gilroy argued, “the [Jewish] terrorists... while denounced by Barak [Ari’s father, a Jewish political leader], acquire quite a hint of glory.” This “hint” of glory is the portrayed justification or exemption Uris gives to the Jewish freedom fighters/terrorists for their violent actions, as they were victims of great Nazi atrocities and are perceived as defensively fighting for a noble, necessary cause.<sup>156</sup> Nevertheless, *Exodus*’ peace-loving Zionist moderates, including Barak, constantly rebuke and fiercely criticize

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<sup>153</sup> *Time*, “Bestseller Revisited,” 110.

<sup>154</sup> Harry Gilroy, “The Founding of the New Israel,” *The New York Times*, October 12, 1958, BR32.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid*, BR32.

<sup>156</sup> Violent actions include the bombing of the King David Hotel, which was used as the British Headquarters in Palestine during their Mandate.

terrorist actions and, instead, demand negotiations, political discourse, and an end to violence.<sup>157</sup>

In *Commentary*, Joel Blocker's article, "Fantasy of Israel," also shared some gripes about the validity and subjectivity of Uris' story. He asserted that *Exodus* "sacrifices genuine historical complexity for the sake of the epic-sized image," and employs a "simplified and sentimentalized Jewish history, [with] large doses of Zionist publicity pamphlets." Accordingly, Blocker complained that the novel promotes Israel as "brave, pure in its striving for goodness and serenity, unadulterated by the presence of evil or self-interest; a state whose only problem is the savage, sadistic enemies on its borders," as if Israel were a completely innocent state and the cause of all troubles were due to provocations by surrounding Arab nations (and British).<sup>158</sup>

Along these lines, Blocker rightly criticized the manner in which the Arab refugee problem is attributed to "the very nature of war" and quoted Uris' related example: "Every war man has waged has created refugees, homeless, and displaced people...five years after the end of World War II, displaced people [numbered] in the tens of millions." Of course, the Arab refugee problem was, and is, much more complex than merely being the product of "the very nature of war," but Uris did not delve into this. However, Uris also did not thoroughly discuss the cause of, or details regarding, the comparable number of Jewish refugees who fled from surrounding Arab and Islamic nations due to hostilities during and after World War II, and especially after 1948.<sup>159</sup> Nor did Uris delineate other parts of this history, such as the United Nations' decision-making process regarding the partition of Palestine, which, according to Blocker, included Jewish lobbying that took place prior to the vote. However, Uris did portray the high tensions Israelis felt as UN votes were being

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<sup>157</sup> Gilroy, BR32.

<sup>158</sup> Joel Blocker, "Books in Review: Fantasy of Israel," *Commentary* 27, no. 6 (January-June 1959): 539-540.

<sup>159</sup> For a good source on the subject of Jewish persecution, rescue, and escape from Arab lands during and after World War II, see Robert Satloff, *Among the Righteous: Lost Stories From the Holocaust's Long Reach Into Arab Lands* (New York: Public Affairs, 2007). For a specific example from Libya, please see David Gerbi, "Next Year in Tripoli: Will My People -- the Jews of Libya -- Ever Be Able to Go Home?" *Foreign Policy*, last modified March 22, 2012, accessed March 24, 2012, [http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2012/03/22/the\\_last\\_jews\\_of\\_libya?page=0,1](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2012/03/22/the_last_jews_of_libya?page=0,1).

counted, and the jubilation expressed at the results, which called for a partition of Palestine to create both a Jewish and a Palestinian state. There are countless other ideas, events, and problems that occurred in Palestine that Uris did not incorporate into his narrative. This is because *Exodus* is a novel, not an historically accurate and complete textbook. It was meant to teach and influence via entertainment, not as a classroom lecture. If it had been more pedantic, fewer readers would have perused the book.<sup>160</sup>

Moreover, Blocker said Uris “created some of the zaniest absurdities ever associated with Israel’s young generation.” For example, in the book, all Israeli Sabras “dance the *hora* and grow huge mustaches,” and Blocker did not appreciate this exaggeration. However, many Israelis *did* dance the *hora* and grew thick mustaches as a fashion statement, and as a means of solidarity to the Zionist movement.<sup>161</sup> Though Blocker criticized the portrayal of Israelis, he also acknowledged that Uris’ embellishments “function very well in conveying an idea” that “Sabras are somewhat more than human.” To promote a positive image of Jews, Uris portrays “new Jews” as tough warriors: “These were the ancient Hebrews! ...It was the army of Israel, and no force on earth could stop them for the power of God was within them.” This illustration combated age-old stereotypes, demonstrating that Jews were no longer “yellow,” but instead were “fighting [a] battle for respect.” It was an immense challenge to discredit negative, disparaging stereotypes and cultivate the opposite image of Jews as extraordinarily strong and brave.<sup>162</sup>

Blocker also recognized that this portrayal of Jewish strength and bravery is, in some ways, only applied to “Hebrews”/Israelis/“New Jews,” rather than all Jews. He believed Uris juxtaposed “Hebrewness as against Jewishness,” to create a positive, universalized, secular image of super-human Israelis, while inadvertently contrasting it to the stereotype of traditional and non-Israeli Jews as passive, unsophisticated, meek, “Diaspora Jews.” Blocker

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<sup>160</sup> Blocker, 539-540. *Commentary* is a Jewish publication and, accordingly, some of the stronger criticisms by Blocker reflected the more in-depth knowledge and awareness he had of recent Jewish and Israeli history.

<sup>161</sup> My Sabra father, like countless other Israelis, still has his “huge mustache” originally grown in Israel while he served in the army, and the *hora* is still danced at Jewish celebrations, such as Bar and Bat Mitzvahs and weddings. Though some of Uris’ portrayals of Israelis are embellished, the themes and portrayals are largely based on truths.

<sup>162</sup> Blocker, 539-540.

asserted this “predisposes the Gentile to think of Israel in non-Jewish terms,” which is not helpful in reducing anti-Semitism and creating tolerance towards religious, traditional, and non-Israeli Jews, including American Jewry. Nevertheless, establishing any positive association to Jewishness was needed in the late 1950s, as old, defamatory, anti-Semitic stereotypes had existed for generations and continued to thrive. This necessitated the creation of an opposite, stalwart representation of Jews; hence, the icon of the “New Jew” appeared, accentuating brave, strong, moral, likeable Jewish, albeit secular, characteristics.<sup>163</sup>

### **Novel’s Message is Real (Projected via Creative Narrative)**

Contesting Joel Blocker’s interpretation of Uris’ novel, in 1959, *Commentary* published a “Letter to the Editor” by Murray Tate, one of Uris’ readers, who asserted the book “has real power” to influence. He explained, “*Exodus* caught the spirit of the Jewish people’s determination to survive despite the greatest odds. Far from the characters being idealized, they were real in the truest sense of the word... The overwhelming success of *Exodus* is due to the fact that scores of thousands of “little” people recognized its truly great qualities.” Tate portrays the sentiment felt by millions of readers. Some understood and related to the Jewish plight based on personal experiences of racism or anti-Semitism. Others learned, in much greater depth, about the long, two thousand year history of Jewish struggle, including the emotional and physical fortitude and resilience Jews exhibited for the first time since six million were butchered a few yaers prior. Tate’s response is a very important one, as it displays the power this novel has in evoking strong emotions, providing a better understanding of Jewish history and culture, and asserting a positive, strong image of Jews in the West. Many Americans agreed with this assessment and spread the word.<sup>164</sup>

Several critics concurred with Tate’s opinion, including Rudolf Flesch in the *Los Angeles Times*, who reminded readers of Israel’s laudable past: it’s “about the birth of...a nation...the Jewish war of liberation...glory and martyrdom...heroism and sacrifice of the Jewish people.” In his article, Flesch said the novel stirs the American public “because the

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<sup>163</sup> Blocker, 539-540.

<sup>164</sup> Murray Tate, “‘Exodus:’ To the Editor of *Commentary*,” *Commentary* 28, no 1 (July-Dec, 1959): 76.

Jews won their independence with ‘divine inspiration,’ the destiny foretold by the ancient prophets, the heritage of a people who had fought for their freedom.” He also highlighted the book’s “enormous sweep, power, and emotional impact,” and claimed readers are “almost willing to believe that all Jews are heroes... and the world has been made a better place by the creation of the state of Israel.” Flesch knew the narrative was a fiction based on historical events but believed it had a very strong emotional impact upon its readers.<sup>165</sup>

### **Novel is a Positive & Genuine Reflection of the Past**

Though the *Time* literary critic found certain parts of the story disingenuous, the article also asserted the novel had historical validity. *Time* explained that Uris “spent two years and traveled 50,000 miles getting the facts for his story,” and claimed that he “has written a novel as well as history.” The review intrigued readers by explaining that the story describes “the first Zionist stirrings in 1881 to the Arabs war of 1947,” the way Jews make a “dangerous run” to Palestine and “murderous gangs of Jews and Arabs hunt each other out” with well-done battle scenes, and how the “innocent and the defenseless suffer and die.” It also told of “intrigue and chicanery” regarding the United Nations decision to partition Palestine, and “the achievement of the Israelis,” including the way they “won their homeland.”<sup>166</sup>

A few weeks after publication, in October of 1958 and also in June of 1961, the *Los Angeles Times* book editor, Robert R Kirsch, wrote articulate and positive reviews of Uris’ novel. Kirsch called the book a “Powerful Novel,” and explained, “*Exodus* manages to capture the drama, conflict and excitement of the recent history of Israel in what is probably the best novel of Jewish theme since [1950].” Whereas many critics severely rebuked Uris’ poor writing style, Kirsch focused on why, for this subject matter, “content is much more important than form.” He asserted Uris’ strongest quality as a writer was the “moral anguish and anger” that came through in his writing, and described Uris’ literary works as “undeniably powerful in theme...can hardly leave people unmoved...filled with action and

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<sup>165</sup> Rudolf Flesch, “Conversation Piece: A Book with Universal Appeal,” *Los Angeles Times*, February 8, 1960, B5. Though Flesch clearly believed the narrative’s content was moving, he was critical of the writing: “The book’s popular success was not due to its literary value. Its style is poor... The plot is hackneyed.”

<sup>166</sup> *Time*, “Bestseller Revisited,” 110.

melodrama.” Regarding the story’s characters, Kirsch said, “We feel empathy and compassion for them,” and this is extremely important, as empathy and compassion lead to tolerance, kindness, and perhaps even support.

While other critics identified Uris’ work as somewhat biased and imperfect, Kirsch, instead, subtly skirted these observations and emphasized the positive. He displayed concern and sympathy for Uris and the history he chronicled, and asserted, “this is not an easy subject for a Jewish writer.” This is because describing a controversial subject with evenhandedness can be challenging, especially with the intent to convey an important message.<sup>167</sup> Perhaps his kindness towards Uris’ glaring flaws was due to the fact that he was born in Brooklyn, NY, a city with a large Jewish community, or maybe it was because he was writing for the *LA Times*, whose readership also comprised a large Jewish population. Then again, it is clear that, unlike many of his peers, Kirsch was well educated on the history of Israel and the Jews. He reiterated how Uris described, “events from the times of Herzl and Dreyfus,” the first settlements in Palestine, the Balfour Declaration, Jewish-Arab conflicts, terror, internment camps, the immigration effort, the Haganah, the United Nations’ deliberations on Palestine, the War of Liberation, and the motivation of Jewish immigrants “who came from the ghettos of Russia and Poland” and “the concentration camps of Europe.” Kirsch explained that the narrative encompasses “historical segments” with “a clear chronological background,” and asserted the characters are “clearly based on historical figures [that] are easily recognizable to those who have followed the factual books on Israel.” Hence, while it is possible Kirsch’s background influenced his perspective, he was also fully aware and informed about the true history, providing empirical support and legitimacy to his positive review.<sup>168</sup>

Along with demonstrating awareness of this history, it is clear Kirsch truly appreciated the value of Uris’ stories and messages. In his conclusion, he kindly suggested, “those who liked [Uris’ other works] will undoubtedly like this novel,” and “a great many others will be introduced to a new facet of this writer’s work by taking up this dramatic novel.” He believed this served a significant, valuable purpose: introducing millions of

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<sup>167</sup> Robert R. Kirsch, “Powerful Novel Examines Israel,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 5, 1958, E7.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid*, E7.

American readers to the chronicles and moral messages Uris wrote about. His review was thorough; he picked up on Uris' flaws but treated them with concern and sympathy; he explained the historical allegories in the narrative, and gave the book an overall positive evaluation.<sup>169</sup>

In *two* separate articles, both published July 10, 1960 in the Sunday edition of the *Los Angeles Times* (yes, the *LA Times*, again), Kurt Liepman reviewed Uris' *Exodus*. The story was important and popular enough to print two (more) reviews. Liepman informed of how Uris invested years researching for the novel and spent time in Israel covering the 1956 Sinai Campaign as a newspaper correspondent. This is where Uris became more familiar with, and connected to, the culture and history of the land and people. His *Exodus* characters, consequently, became "composites of about six persons he knew," and Liepman said that Uris vouched, "every historical incident in the book was within the framework of truth." The articles told of Uris' observations of the Israeli farmers and Defense Force: He found "Jews as farmers and soldiers with a tough army which likens itself to the U.S. Marine Corps." Liepman also described how Uris "believes the independence of the Jewish state has ended an era of Jewish passivism." All of these sentiments come through in Uris' writing. Based on high sales and additional readership (for example, through borrowing copies from friends and the year-long waiting lists at libraries across the US), it is apparent Uris' fans conscientiously followed the storyline, and empathically understood his beliefs and sentiments.<sup>170</sup>

Uris' book won the Jewish Book Council's annual *fiction* prize for writing the year's best *fiction*, and it topped the *New York Times fiction* bestseller list.<sup>171</sup> Nevertheless, a small number of critics were dismayed over the lack of total accuracy projected in *Exodus*. Instead, they focused on the partisan trimmings, the larger-than-life portrayals of the Jewish heroes, and the negative depictions of Arabs, in addition to Uris' unrefined writing style. On the other hand, many more book reviewers understood that the history and the allegories

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<sup>169</sup> Robert R. Kirsch, "The Book Report: Uris' Strengths and Weakness," *Los Angeles Times*, June 2, 1961, B5. Also, R. Kirsch, "Powerful Novel," E7.

<sup>170</sup> Kurt Liepman, "He Hates to Write: 'Exodus' Author Wrote Midst Din" and "He Hates to Write: 'Exodus' Author Wrote Midst Confusion of Family, Guests," *Los Angeles Times*, July 10 1960, SF13 and WS14.

<sup>171</sup> *The New York Times*, "Uris Book Is Cited: Novelist Gets an Award for Story of Israel's Birth," BR8.

presented in the novel were highly representative of the real events, sentiments, and responses that transpired. They recognized the novel was written as a *fictional* account of the past, *based* on history, but also accepted the value of the novel as an educational tool that could help influence the American public to reject anti-Semitism and support Israel.

### **Mikey, They All Like It! The Novel's Great Success**

One year after the original Doubleday publication, in October of 1959, Bantam printed the paperback version of *Exodus*. This included “a whopping 1,500,000 copies,” according to a *New York Times* review by Lewis Nichols. Nichols insisted, “‘Exodus’ should be selling like bread,” and he was right.<sup>172</sup>

In the *Los Angeles Times*, Rudolph Flesch’s review, “A Book With Universal Appeal,” disclosed that “millions of Americans have read ‘Exodus’...the most successful novel that has appeared in years.” Flesch said *Exodus* made the “Book-of-the-Month Club...by popular demand.” He emphasized how numerous critics originally thought the book would only fascinate Jewish readers; however, he suggested, “‘Exodus’ has a basic appeal for Jews and Gentiles alike...because it deals with...the struggle of a young nation against tremendous odds. It’s the story of our own Revolutionary War against the British, transposed to Palestine during [1947-49].” He connected Israel’s history to America with the universal struggle for freedom and the desire for independence and security, and suggested this compelling association is “why millions of Christian Americans have been reading Mr. Uris’ powerful book.”<sup>173</sup>

The *New York Times*’ literary critic, Raymond Walters Jr., concurred with this perspective and asserted that, while some critics presumed *Exodus* would only be successful among Jewish readers and fans of Uris’ previous works, scores of American “readers liked it,” and spread the word. Walters explained, even “in towns where Jews are as scarce as Mormons,” it became “a favorite.” He also discussed the way Israelis reacted to the novel. Some were surprised the book was so popular in the US. Others feared the “inaccuracies and exaggerations [would] offend those who had lived through the [real] events.” However, most

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<sup>172</sup> Nichols, BR8.

<sup>173</sup> Flesch, B5.

native Israelis approved of Uris' "practical attitude toward history, the way he [made] everything black and white, crystal clear." This makes sense, as foreign topics and new ideas, such as equating Israelis with Americans, and Jews with Christians, can be hard to comprehend, intimidating, and even threatening, but Uris' prose, comparisons, and analogies are simple and easy to grasp, and many American and Israeli readers were clearly "pleased" with Uris' work.<sup>174</sup>

Many newspapers named *Exodus* on their "favorite book list," and many libraries ranked *Exodus* highly due to its extreme popularity. About one and a half years after publication, in February of 1960, New York's *Ogdensburg Journal* exclaimed, "'Exodus,' by Uris, now in sixth place, appears on the [best-sellers'] list for the 70th straight week."<sup>175</sup> A year later, in February 1961, another article in the *Ogdensburg Journal* stated, "Top on the library's fiction list... [is] Leon Uris' 'Exodus,' which sold 4,000,000 copies and was on the national best-seller list for 80 weeks, and has retained its reading popularity at the library for two years."<sup>176</sup> In another early 1961 article titled, "Best Sellers and Hardy Classics," *The Chicago Sunday Tribune* stated "'Exodus,' by Leon Uris [appears] on all of the lists."<sup>177</sup> An Arizona newspaper, *The Casa Grande Dispatch*, explained that many readers yearned for access to the novel: "Additional copies were obtained...due to heavy demand for [the] book."<sup>178</sup> Then, in 1963, four and a half years after publication, and more than two years after the movie version came out, *The Casa Grande Dispatch* declared, "Exodus by Leon Uris" made "both the favorite book and favorite movie list."<sup>179</sup> It had relatively quick popularity across the states, and this renown lasted quite a while. Among hundreds of films and countless books published annually in the United States, *Exodus* stuck out as a popular

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<sup>174</sup> Raymond Walters, Jr., "In and Out of Books," *New York Times*, September 13, 1959, BR8.

<sup>175</sup> *St Lawrence (New York) Ogdensburg Journal*, "Off the Bookshelf," February 19, 1960, 2.

<sup>176</sup> *St Lawrence (New York) Ogdensburg Journal*, "Between the Bookends."

<sup>177</sup> Fanny Butcher, "Best Sellers and Hardy Classics," *Chicago Sunday Tribune*, January 15, 1961, Sec. 2, Part 4, 1-2.

<sup>178</sup> *The Casa Grande Dispatch (Arizona)*, "120 New Books Are Available At CG Library," July 26, 1961, 4.

<sup>179</sup> *The Casa Grande Dispatch (Arizona)*, "A Preference Poll," March 20, 1963, 5.

favorite several years after its making, displaying the powerful impact the story had on the American public.

### **Great Increase in Tourism to the Holy Land Attributed to *Exodus***

Notably, several writers acknowledged that the novel (and film) provoked a great increase in tourism to the new state. Liepman asserted Uris' book "was credited with tripling Israel's tourist business overnight."<sup>180</sup> Walters said, "Many of the record-breaking 50,000 tourists had copies of the book in their luggage," and countless "visitors [to Israel] announced that "Exodus" had not only lured them there but had given them an understanding of the Israeli cause that years of official propaganda efforts hadn't." "Propaganda" is a powerful word, but it is pretty accurate in describing what *Exodus* was to its millions of American (and world) readers. It was meant to inspire, and the increase in tourism directly proves its influence.<sup>181</sup> In his candid assessment in *Film Quarterly*, Gideon Bachmann also affirmed that the story was very influential to the American public, and declared, "Tourist travel to Israel soared" due to the "tremendous emotional impact [*Exodus*] has had... Daily one finds American tourists on the streets of Tel Aviv asking to be guided to the [fictional places *Exodus* describes]." Calling the story "the best promotion campaign Israel ever had," Bachmann said even rival political factions in Israel praised *Exodus*.<sup>182</sup>

In a *New York Times* article from October 1959, Seth King also described the dramatic increase in tourism to Israel, crediting this upsurge to the *Exodus* story. King quoted David Ben-Gurion, the Prime Minister of Israel in 1960, who said that, though the literary quality of *Exodus* was mediocre, "as a piece of propaganda, it's the greatest thing ever written about Israel." King also explained that officials from the Israeli Government Tourist Corporation "have no doubts about the effect the book has had on travel to Israel, and

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<sup>180</sup> Liepman, "He Hates to Write: 'Exodus' Author Wrote Midst Din" and "He Hates to Write: 'Exodus' Author Wrote Midst Confusion of Family, Guests," SF13 and WS14.

<sup>181</sup> Walters Jr., BR8. It seems so strange and interesting to see the word "propaganda" clearly and openly stated in the review, and by readers themselves, who openly admitted how they were strongly influenced by the storyline; however, in 1960, this was an acceptable norm.

<sup>182</sup> Gideon Bachmann, "Now In Release," *Film Quarterly* 14, no. 3 (Spring 1961), 57.

understanding of [the nation's history],” and have “endorsed without question” the book’s promotional value.<sup>183</sup>

The proof is in the tickets: there was an eleven percent increase in tourism by August of 1959, compared to the year before, when Israel celebrated its tenth anniversary as a state, and “all previous records for tourism were broken.” In 1957, 48,118 people visited Israel, and in 1958, the number came to 75,157. Only eight months into 1959, 64,570 visitors had already visited the state. Though there are numerous factors involved, including direct marketing efforts by the Israeli Tourism Corp, many believed, and King asserted, “For months Israelis have been trading stories about the tourists who suddenly discovered Israel from reading ‘Exodus.’” The novel was even compared to the Bible in providing visitors with background literature to the Holy Land. King told of people changing their vacation itineraries, dropping European nations to spend time in Israel instead. He also described how the 370 licensed Israeli tour guides carried a copy of the novel because “the American tourists keep asking them where is this or that village they read about in ‘Exodus,’ or where this battle was fought or who Ari Ben-Canaan is supposed to be in real life.”<sup>184</sup>

Additionally, an “*Exodus* Tour” was set up in Israel to take tourists to the areas described in the novel, with tour guides who served in the nation’s incipient Israeli Defense Force during the 1948 War of Liberation. The real Israeli soldiers were represented as, and in many ways embodied the traits of, the noble and gallant characters in the thrilling *Exodus* adventure. These same “freedom fighters” became the knowledgeable tour guides who led American visitors to the battlegrounds, cities, towns, villages, and kibbutzim depicted in *Exodus*. These soldiers-turned-guides had the ability to provide even further insight and descriptions of the 1948 war, including the hardships, skirmishes, and triumphs that took place. This is quite a story to come home with and share with friends: ‘our tour guide was *just like* the remarkable soldiers in the book!’ Perhaps this would entice others to take the

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<sup>183</sup> Seth S. King, “Exodus and Israel,” *New York Times*, October 4, 1959, xx1.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid*, xx1.

journey of a lifetime to see, learn more about, and experience the enthralling history of the Holy Land.<sup>185</sup>

Further proof of *Exodus*' effect on visitors to Israel was the sharp increase in tourist income and the lack of amenities to serve the high numbers of visitors after the storyline's rise to prominence. "One of the big problems in Israel that still [in February of 1961] has to be solved is that of hotel accommodations." There were fewer than 6,000 hotel rooms in the country in the beginning of 1961, and an estimated 6,000 more would be needed within a few more years. Lawrence Fellows of the *New York Times* said the Sheraton would be the first American hotel chain to be built in Israel and that more luxury and smaller hotels were springing up across the country. Fellows wrote, "the country's net income from tourism last year [1960] was \$25,000,000. The year before, it was \$16,000,000; the year before that [1958], it was only \$12,000,000." Within two years of *Exodus*' publication, the new, small nation's tourist capital doubled, which was quite an impressive feat. Though there were surely other factors in the increase of vacationers to the Holy Land, the *Exodus* story certainly had a great effect.<sup>186</sup>

Additionally, Lawrence Fellows discussed the "profound attachment" American Jews had to Israel, but he also asserted that Christians had a "great interest in the land because of its Biblical associations," leading to trips to the Holy Land. It is a country with something special for everyone. "Viewed from the standpoint of either the Bible or a history book, this little country is one of the great stages of the world." The land is filled with "heterogeneous crowds" from across the globe. Fellows explained, "Gray-eyed Russians, bronzed Syrians, and dark skinned Jews from India are to be found [in Israel]." Additionally, the land holds countless sites that can be appreciated in multiple ways. For example, "the huge columns of red and green stone at Elath [Eilat]," can be admired for their "stark, imposing beauty," or can be appreciated as a "strategic resting place for caravans on the great Spice Route out of

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<sup>185</sup> King, xx1.

<sup>186</sup> The ability for the new state to manage such an immediate, drastic increase in tourism is impressive, especially for such a new country that was simultaneously dealing with a double increase in population (due to more refugees and new immigrants from lands where Jews were still being severely persecuted, including Europe and the Middle East). Lawrence Fellows, "Israel Acts to Ease Its Tourism Growing Pains," *The New York Times*, February 26, 1961, xx41.

Arabia, or as the clangorous, dusty place in the Arabah in which Solomon mined his copper.” Another example Fellows provided is the “pretty ravine at Megiddo, in the north.” This pass felt the weight of the “armies of the Egyptians, the Canaanites, the Israelites, the Romans, the Crusaders, and the British, all of them on their way to build empires or destroy them.”<sup>187</sup> The beauty of the land, the diversity of the people, and the great, tragic history learned through the *Exodus* narrative enticed so many new visitors to Israel that the tourist income increased twofold!<sup>188</sup>

### **Book Reviews, Ads, & Movie Previews Popularize & Promote Film**

Along with a sharp rise in tourism to Israel after Uris’ novel was published, excitement for Otto Preminger’s feature film also grew. This was due to the book’s reviews, movie advertisements, and short written previews of the film. Preminger, like all moviemakers, realized he was “taking a gamble by acquiring [Uris’] book before publication;” however, he took action to ensure his gamble would pay off. He knew that, if the novel was successful, the likeliness of his future film making it big would be much greater. Hence, in addition to marketing support from the books’ publishers, Doubleday and Bantam, additional exposure for the *book* was purchased by the *film director*, Preminger, who paid for newspaper advertisements to buttress the renown of the novel. He also personally took part in a cross-country speaking tour filled with radio, television, and press interviews. Thus, the name “*Exodus*” became a sensation.<sup>189</sup> According to a 1959 article by the *Motion Picture Herald*, “certainly no campaign [was] as intense as the one launched on [the book’s] behalf,” by the film studio United Artists (U.A.), the book publishers, and Preminger. Advertisements included a joint \$100,000 book promotion budget by U.A. and Doubleday, and another cooperative campaign between Bantam and U.A., which included a 100,000-poster mailing and full-page advertisements in the *New York Times*. The ads stated,

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<sup>187</sup> According to a pre-millennial Christian interpretation found in the New Testament, Megiddo is also known as the place where Jesus will return to earth to defeat the Antichrist, Satan, and the Devil in the Battle of Armageddon. Hence, the mention of Megiddo is a powerful connection to religious Christians.

<sup>188</sup> Fellows, xx41.

<sup>189</sup> *St. Lawrence Massena Observer (New York)*, “Movie Makers Seek.”

“READ THE NEW TOP BEST SELLER! ... TO BECOME AN OTTO PREMINGER FILM!”<sup>190</sup>

Moreover, the *Hollywood Reporter* told of how Preminger placed ads in fifteen major U.S. newspapers, and that, for the first time in motion-picture history, reservations were being taken for the forthcoming film starting on the first day of filming! This article also listed the big theatres scheduled to show the film across the U.S. and explained that engagements would be unlimited. These features were unusual for a 1960 movie and created exceptional anticipation for the future film.<sup>191</sup>

The almost certain success of the future movie, based on the huge advertisement campaigns, in addition to “tremendous word-of-mouth publicity,” prompted the *Motion Picture Herald* to hail *Exodus* as “destined to become one of the most exciting and profitable movie ventures in recent history.”<sup>192</sup> Preminger, and all the people involved in the making of *Exodus*, knew what they were doing.

### INFLUENCE OF FILM REVIEWS

Film critics are the authority figures in show business: they have the potential power to effect expectations and convince prospective moviegoers to see or avoid particular films. The labels, descriptions, and classifications critics gave to *Exodus* as either valid or inaccurate, and as generally positive or negative, influenced and affected preliminary American opinions about the film. The reviews of the *Exodus* story, both book and film, were published in a myriad of small, local and large, established, trusted newspapers and magazines that, together, reached all across the United States, providing great advertisement for *Exodus*.

There is limited space in a review, so *Exodus*' critics had to choose the issues they deemed most interesting and useful to their audience in order to gain the highest numbers of readers and prominence as valuable critics. The topics they chose to discuss also reflect their own interests and beliefs. Though not all topics were covered in every review, each one

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<sup>190</sup> *Motion Picture Herald*, 16.

<sup>191</sup> *Hollywood Reporter*, “‘Exodus’ Launches Ticket Sale and Filming Same Day,” March 29, 1960.

<sup>192</sup> *Motion Picture Herald*, 16.

asserted the film would become a highly acclaimed best seller and would likely win many awards. Comments like these drew the curiosity and attention of many Americans.

There was great excitement and anticipation built up for the film based upon the extreme popularity of the 1958 *Exodus* novel. Reviews and advertisements helped reserved-seating-showings of the film sell out months prior to when the producers even finished filming!<sup>193</sup> This led to very high numbers of people seeing the film and vicariously experiencing the “birth of a nation.” There were a small number of unfavorable reviews and responses to *Exodus*, and some professional reviews left out or misinterpreted parts of the main points or messages the film aimed to communicate. Nevertheless, the important ideas conveyed by *Exodus* were imparted to millions of Americans who saw the film (and read the book), and the general reaction, by private citizens and by film critics in big and small newspapers and magazines, was overwhelmingly positive.

In December 1960, two years after the novel, the movie premiered, and the overall sentiment described in most film reviews was fairly positive; however, the reasons many critics called *Exodus* “the year’s best film” were quite varied. The countless reviews explained the story was based on Leon Uris’ extremely successful novel about the rebirth of Israel as a modern Jewish homeland. Most also mentioned the impressive star-studded cast, the spectacular action scenes, the beautiful scenery, the fantastic cinematography, the use of panavision and color, and the renowned musical score by Ernest Gold. With the desire to gauge the entertainment value of the film prior to spending hard earned cash on it, these were subjects most moviegoers paid attention to. These “easy” topics were appealing for critics to mention, as they were not troublesome or contentious but created great interest in the movie and were, thus, good publicity (for both the film and the critics).

The more thorough, supportive, and sympathetic reviews discussed the important messages, balanced character-types, and real, truthful emotions and philosophies portrayed in the film. These reviews also cited the more controversial subjects covered in the film, such as Nazism and anti-Semitism, Jewish history (including the Holocaust), Zionism and the need for a Jewish homeland, Arab-Israeli tensions, and the message of tolerance and acceptance of

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<sup>193</sup> Lurie, 16. Also, Pyr., “Exodus: Important Human Drama,” accessed at Margaret Herrick Library, Los Angeles, CA.

the “other.” Conversely, a few reviews disregarded these significant, influential issues and, instead, concentrated on the film’s lack of historical precision and comprehensiveness and its pro-Jewish stance. Overall, both the positive and less approving reviews, including those that focused on either the historical validity or the interpretive narrative, provided publicity for the film, helping to propel *Exodus* to the tops of the charts.

Read by many people, these articles influenced the American public and likely persuaded many Americans to read, watch, and experience *Exodus*. By simply mentioning the renowned title, the interest in and prominence of the narrative was boosted, because for show business, “any publicity is good publicity,” and *Exodus* had a lot of publicity! With hundreds of advertisements and reviews of Leon Uris’ 1958 novel, countless movie advertisements, and loads of film reviews, *Exodus* became a widely recognized and significant name around 1960.

### Negative Nazis

When the film premiered, a very small number of people disparaged *Exodus* with allegations that the film was produced by Jewish propagandists who wanted to trick “real” Americans (Jewish Americans were not “real” Americans, in their opinion) into believing deceitful Jewish and Communistic propaganda. These public detractors came mainly from a small but determined anti-Semitic white-power fringe group, the “American Nazis.” Their leader, George Rockwell, condemned *Exodus* and the Jews to his small following of fanatic, racist supporters; however, many “moderate” members of society did not appreciate their viewpoints and ridiculed these militant extremists. Even though anti-Semitism thrived in many parts of the nation, after combating Nazism in WWII, anything associated with Nazis was severely scorned.<sup>194</sup>

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<sup>194</sup> When the American Nazis attempted picketing the *Exodus* film, they had stones and eggs thrown at them by people in line to see the film, many of whom were Holocaust survivors. Rockwell is quoted in the *Chicago Tribune* saying that he was supported by a Boston businessman, “who [had] to remain anonymous in order to stay in business.” He also explained he was denied permission to protest in other cities, including New York. Though Rockwell and his men were conducting “a ‘hate’ campaign against Negroes and Jews,” they were strongly resisted in each city in which they attempted wage battle. For details, please see: *Chicago Daily Tribune*, “‘Nazi’ Stoned in Attempt to Picket Movie,” January 16, 1961, 5. *The New York Times*, “2 American Nazis Sentenced for Attack on Boy,” July 2, 1961, 6. *The New York Times*, “10 Nazis Stage Hunger Strike Against Arrest in New Orleans: Rockwell and 9 ‘Storm Troopers’ Await Trial After an Attempt to Picket

The American Legion was another group that protested against *Exodus*, with complaints directed toward Dalton Trumbo, the screenwriter. During the early years of the Cold War, Trumbo refused to tell the House Committee of Un-American activities whether or not he was a communist and, consequently, served a prison sentence for Contempt of Congress for refusing to speak or implicate his peers. The Legion picketed the premier based on Trumbo's controversial past, even though, according to Preminger, three weeks prior to the premier, the Legion said *Exodus* had "special appeal for those whose hearts go out to the people of Israel," and was supportive of its message. This change of heart displayed the lingering impact of McCarthyism's anti-communist philosophy and actions.<sup>195</sup>

### **Historically Misleading?**

Outside of the anti-Semitic Nazi supporters and the American Legion, some reviewers contended that the movie was an inaccurate, misleading, distorted version of the past. A very small number of these reviews were mostly critical, with very little good to say about the entire narrative, but also asserted contradictory points. Nevertheless, the great majority of the reviews that claimed some inaccuracies or misrepresentations in *Exodus* still pointed out its other virtues.

In a review in *Film Quarterly*, Gideon Bachmann demonstrated the influence and strengths of *Exodus*; however, his tone was uncomplimentary and disapproving as he admonished the film for not being truthful enough. Bachmann was in Palestine in 1947 and witnessed the events surrounding the actual Exodus ship as it attempted landing in the Haifa port. British destroyers rammed the *real* Exodus ship, and the Holocaust survivor passengers aboard were cruelly sent to former concentration camps in Germany, which had been turned into refugee camps. In the film, however, the refugees are "miraculously" allowed into the Holy Land, and Bachmann did not appreciate this alternate, kinder version of this horrifying, treacherous event.<sup>196</sup>

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Film..." May 27, 1961, 9. *The New York Times*, "Hunger Strike Goes On," May 28, 1961, 33. *The New York Times*, "11 U.S. Nazis Remain in Jail in Louisiana," May 26, 1961, 21. Lastly, *The New York Times*, "American Nazi Stoned In Boston," January 16, 1961, 22.

<sup>195</sup> *The New York Times*, "Exodus is Picketed by American Legion," December 22, 1960, 16.

<sup>196</sup> Bachmann, 56-59.

Bachmann also did not approve of the manner in which the traits of certain character-types and events are over or under emphasized to convey a more middle-of-the-road, less discomfiting image. For example, during the British Mandate (through 1947), a strict limit on Jewish immigration caused great tension and several skirmishes broke out between the Jews and the British in Palestine; however, the film premiered in 1960, during the Cold War, and Britain was America's ally. If the real 1947 history was fully illustrated, Preminger would have portrayed the British actions in a much more negative light, and with McCarthyistic fear and paranoia prevalent, appearing pro-Communist or anti-British would have angered many. The US also needed English support, so making the British look bad in a Hollywood feature film could have had damaging international-relations repercussions. Thus, as Preminger believed there were good, legitimate reasons, he adjusted his portrayal of history to create a more balanced and, in many ways, benevolent representation of all groups and perspectives, including the British. Bachmann and other realists disagreed with this artistic and politically expedient interpretation and characterized *Exodus* as "sacrilege" with "distort[ed] facts;" however, the modifications do not take away from the true, deeper history or meaning.<sup>197</sup>

An opposing perspective about *Exodus*' presentation of the British is found in *Films In Review*, by film critic Henry Hart, who claimed the film is virulently anti-British; however, Hart evidently did not know the real history and seemed to have forgotten about a few characters. For example, General Sutherland, the compassionate British officer, is portrayed very positively, and Mandria, a Cypriot, explains that Britain is the best "master" one could have (though he gently asks, "Why have a master at all?" referring to his desire to be self-governing, without any foreign control). Also, Barak, the leader of the Jewish

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<sup>197</sup> In addition to America's need for British support in the fight against the Soviet Union and Communism, another reason for downplaying British actions was because there was a sense that Jews, in general, supported Communist ideology. Preminger was Jewish and did not want to project the idea that he supported Communism or was anti-British; thus, many of the severe and unsympathetic actions the British carried out during the Mandate were under-stated. One example of the trouble aroused by these fears occurred around the time *Exodus* was being produced: provoked by fears generated by McCarthyism, Preminger was accused of supporting communism by hiring Dalton Trumbo, and this put both of them in a disparaging spotlight on several occasions. News of the "Hollywood 10," who were convicted for Contempt of Congress and blacklisted from Hollywood, continued to be exploited several years after the accused had served their time. See the article by Bob Thomas, "Round Hollywood," *Adirondack Daily Enterprise*, April 11, 1960, for an example. Also, Bachmann, 56-59.

Haganah, tells his people to deal kindly with the British, as they have treated the Jews as well as possible during their Mandate. There *are* negative portrayals of *some* British representatives: for example, Officer Caldwell is presented as an anti-Semitic buffoon. Nevertheless, Hart never delineated his points and did not mention that the negative portrayal of the British is quite subdued compared to the real history.<sup>198</sup>

*Los Angeles Times* critic Philip K Scheuer also questioned the portrayal of the British, in particular “the constant outwitting of the British,” and asked, “can they have been duped that easily and that often?”<sup>199</sup> The answer to his question is “yes!” as the Jews went to great lengths in their attempt to get into Palestine because it was a matter of life or death. The Jews who “snuck in” came from the pogroms, ghettos, and concentration camps of Europe where they were ruthlessly persecuted. The survivors had no alternative, with no other place to go, and thus, used creative, shrewd means to enter their Holy Land of salvation. The result was tens of thousands of Jewish immigrants cleverly and cunningly entering Palestine illegally under the British Mandate, with the real and serious threat of death or deportation back to former Nazi concentration camps. Though the narrative portrays several “made up” parts (such as the way Ari “dupes” the British officer, Caldwell), the film mirrors real history: many real events and strategies similar to the ones portrayed in the film were employed by the Jews to attain their goals. For example, Ari Ben-Canaan’s valiant, heroic characteristics are based on Yehuda Arzai, a man who, for 19 months, hoodwinked the British command in Italy and smuggled over 5,000 Holocaust survivors to Palestine.<sup>200</sup>

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<sup>198</sup> Henry Hart, “Film Reviews: Exodus,” *Films in Review* 11, no. 10 (December 1960): 611-613.

<sup>199</sup> Philip K. Scheuer, “‘Exodus’ The Record of a New Genesis,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 11, 1960, B3. In March 1958, Scheuer provided a positive review of Uris’ novel (See the section on book reviews for details).

<sup>200</sup> For details, please see Lt. Col. Gershon Rivlin and Murray Teigh Bloom, “The Magnificent Hoax,” *American Weekly*, December 13, 1959. This article describes the astonishing, audacious, innovative duties Arzai undertook to support the pre-state Haganah and the Jewish survivors of the Holocaust. Ari’s character reflects Arzai’s almost superman-like qualities and feats.

### History Restrained to Reduce Tension

Additionally, similar to Bachmann, Scheuer claimed that the antagonisms against the British and Moslems “have been toned down considerably,” not to offend viewers.<sup>201</sup> He said, “Diplomatically... Preminger has done the sensible thing... his policy of appeasement vitiates some of the anger and [passion regarding the history].”<sup>202</sup> Several other reviews agreed with this opinion. A *Variety* article, for example, described the portrayal of the British as the “unhappy role Great Britain played as custodian of the status quo” during its mandate over Palestine.<sup>203</sup> Alton Cook of the *NY World Telegram Sun* also assessed the film’s portrayal of “the last phases of the British mandate over Palestine,” explaining that the British were “depicted as reluctant captors who [felt] compelled to shut off Jewish immigration to prevent bloody outbursts by the Arabs.” Cook explained that Preminger “tried to be both pro-British and pro-Semitic [pro-Jewish]” in order “to base the appeal of his film on drama rather than race...thus weakening the emotional fury of [*Exodus*]’ theme.”<sup>204</sup> From a historical perspective, Preminger’s middle-of-the-road representation, and *Variety*’s, Cook’s, and Scheuer’s observations of this portrayal, are fairly reliable, as some British felt sympathy for the Jews but, for various reasons, many others felt compelled to protect the needs and desires of the native Arab population.<sup>205</sup>

### Hart’s Misleading Review

Although Henry Hart said the film “contains many examples of cinematic virtuosity,” he did not fully approve of the dramatized version of history in *Exodus*. He asserted the film sides with “Judaism and the Jews,” but does so “militantly... *contemporaneously*... [and] discursively... for merely *superficial* propagandistic effects.”<sup>206</sup> He never explained why he

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<sup>201</sup> Philip K. Scheuer, “‘Exodus’ Stirring but Uneven Epic,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 22, 1960, B9.

<sup>202</sup> Scheuer, B3.

<sup>203</sup> Pyr. “Exodus,” accessed at Margaret Herrick Library, Los Angeles, CA.

<sup>204</sup> Alton Cook, “4-Hour ‘Exodus’ at Warner,” *NY World Telegram Sun*, December 16, 1960, 24.

<sup>205</sup> This conflict of interest may be observed in the 1917 Balfour Declaration, in which both sides were promised unattainable, contradictory outcomes. The Jews were promised a homeland in Palestine; however, the rights and needs of the native Arabs were to be protected as well.

<sup>206</sup> Hart, 611-613. *Italics are Hart’s*.

felt this way, and this unproven fallacy is like a burnt pot calling a kettle black. Of course, the film *does* promote a pro-Jewish ideology, but it is *not* militantly or for superficial reasons. With six million Jews recently murdered and unrelenting anti-Semitism and anti-Israel sentiments across the globe, an increase in tolerance and compassion for the Jewish “other” was desperately needed. Hence, the story-makers created an easy way for people to learn important moral perspectives, and they used three and a half hours of historically-based entertainment to endorse these philosophies.<sup>207</sup>

Hart also avowed that the film promotes terrorism and cited the bombing of the British headquarters in the King David Hotel in Tel Aviv as evidence: “This terrorism is presented in *Exodus* as a laudable act.” Nevertheless, in *Exodus*, as in reality, the leaders of the Irgun, the terrorists who committed the violence, express that it is unfortunate anyone died, but justify their action as a need to make a statement to assert their need for a homeland. They do not believe verbal negotiations are working, so they take matters into their own hands with the belief that the British will remove themselves as mediators of the region if threatened. Also akin to real history, the Irgun in the film provide the British with *several warnings* prior to the bombing, allowing plenty of time for all people to leave. Their hope is to spare lives, but still make themselves heard.<sup>208</sup>

Hart also asserted the Irgun is exalted over the Haganah; however, he overlooked the presentation of the Haganah as the story’s heroes who even struggle against their own people to prevent bloodshed. The Haganah strongly reproaches and condemns any and all violence and, instead, espouses negotiation for progress. A Haganah leader (Barak) even kicks his violence-prone Irgun brother (Akiva) out of their household causing a heart wrenching, emotional family rift for many years. On the other hand, the Irgunists are depicted as fearful, somewhat pathetic and wretched, and in constant hiding due to their aggressive, destructive actions. The narrative portrays the Irgun members as desperate for freedom in the nation they

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<sup>207</sup> Immediately after this unproven accusation, Hart called the scriptwriter, Dalton Trumbo, “pro-Communist,” albeit again without any proof, and without making a point to his indictment. Hart, 611-613.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid, 611-613. Hart did not explain that, had the British heeded the warnings, lives would not have been lost. Similarly, an article in *Time Magazine* also cited the actions of a “saintly old assassin,” but lacked explanation and did not mention the sorrow and distress displayed by the “evil terrorists” when they heard people had been harmed. *Time*, “The New Pictures,” December 19, 1960, 69-70.

yearn to call home, and they gain some sympathy for their ultimate *goal* but very little approval for their violent tactics.<sup>209</sup>

### Diverse Perspectives

Several other critics mentioned the same difficult internal dispute, but in more charitable, compassionate, and understanding ways. *Life* magazine, for example, described the “Different ways toward Jewish Freedom,” advocated by members of the Irgun and Haganah, and identified the film’s message as “a hatred of violence and a cry for peace.”<sup>210</sup> Additionally, Richard Gertner of the *Motion Picture Daily*, a New York newspaper, expressed the disagreement as a “conflict between the Irgun and the Haganah over whether the British will be driven out by peaceful or terrorist techniques.”<sup>211</sup>

Unlike *Life* and Gertner’s evaluation of Irgun violence, *Time Magazine* instead echoed Hart’s perspective that the film promotes terrorism, but with a reprehensible comparison. After claiming the film lauded terror and “absolutely absolves the Jews” of violent actions, *Time* advocated the idea that “the kind of blind hatred that excuses the Jewish terror was also used to excuse the Nazi extermination camps.”<sup>212</sup> This analogy is absolutely untenable. The British stopped Jewish immigration to Palestine and, in turn, prevented hundreds of thousands of lives from being saved before, during, and after WWII, and therefore indirectly caused the death of thousands or millions of Jews.<sup>213</sup> Moreover, Arabs

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<sup>209</sup> Hart, 611-613.

<sup>210</sup> Gjon Mili, “A People’s Return [To] The Promised Land: The Movie ‘Exodus’ Relives the Jews’ Struggle for Israel,” *Life Magazine* 49, no. 23 (December 5, 1960): 1-164. To be selected for a review in *Life* was very prestigious, as the magazine only presented analysis of a few films each year.

<sup>211</sup> Richard Gertner, “Exodus, Preminger- United Artists- Panavision 70,” *Motion Picture Daily* 88, no. 114 (December 15, 1960): 1.

<sup>212</sup> Claire Boothe Luce, whose husband owned *Time*, ran the magazine. Some assert she was an extreme anti-Zionist and an ultra conservative isolationist. This sentiment clearly came through in this article. However, there are several other articles that assert she deplored what had happened in the Holocaust and promoted a Jewish homeland and the acceptance of Jewish refugees into America. For one example, see Rafael Medoff, “Clare Boothe Luce and the Holocaust: A CT Congresswoman’s Fight for Justice,” CT News, last modified April 12, 2012, accessed April 18, 2012, <http://www.jewishledger.com/2012/04/clare-boothe-luce-and-the-holocaust-a-ctcongresswomans-fight-for-justice/>.

<sup>213</sup> For British actions and policy toward Palestine during their mandate, please see Bernard Wasserstein’s, *The British in Palestine: The Mandatory Government and Arab-Jewish Conflict, 1917-1929*, (Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 1991) and *Britain and the Jews of Europe, 1939-1945* (New York: Leicester University Press, 1999).

attacked peaceful farm settlements and youth villages. The Jewish actions that took place against these British oppressors and hostile Arabs are *in no way* the moral or physical equivalent of the deliberate state-sanctioned mass murder of millions of innocent people who were starved, severely abused, and killed simply because they were Jewish. This is not to say the violent actions by Irgun terrorists are excusable. Nevertheless, neither is equating Irgunists, who perform destructive acts as part of a strategy to secure a homeland for their nearly exterminated people, with the Nazis, who indiscriminately committed genocide against all the Jews (men, women, children, and elderly) of Europe. Given how vituperatively critical the article was, *Time* failed to mention several core topics in the film, such as the Holocaust.<sup>214</sup> Perhaps, if the meaning of the entire film was assessed in an objective manner, this *Time* article would have appeared more rational, realistic, and less prejudiced.<sup>215</sup>

Similar to *Time*, some of the other more critical reviews, including the one by Hart, decidedly ignored the Holocaust in their reviews; however, many more even-handed and thorough reviews discussed the topic and emphasized its importance. For example, *Life* magazine mentioned the film's discussion of the six million Jews lost in Hitler's crematoria and that, after World War II ended, "the surviving Jews of Europe [and European culture] lay

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<sup>214</sup> There is a discussion on the contemporary use of the word "Holocaust" regarding the timeframe of when the word specifically came to mean the mass murder of the European Jewry in WWII. Zev Garber and Bruce Zuckerman explain that before WWII, the word meant a wholly burnt offering or sacrifice consumed by fire. They assert there is still a religious and sacrificial tone to the word, but it also denotes "the horror of the event ... that evokes the smell of burning corpses in the Nazi furnaces," with the focus on "total destruction" of the Jews. They also discuss the modern labeling of the event by the distinguished writer and Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel, in 1963. For details, please see their article, Zev Garber and Bruce Zuckerman, "Why Do We Call the Holocaust 'The Holocaust?' An Inquiry into the Psychology of Labels," *Modern Judaism* 9, no. 2 (May, 1989), 197-211. Another article, by Jon Petrie, cites pre-WWII uses of the word with various meanings, including "religious sacrifice," and post-WWII Cold War Era connotations including fear of worldwide nuclear destruction. Petrie also discusses the modern label with the particular connection to the genocide of the Jews in WWII. It is published on David Irving's website for Focal Point Publications (FPP). Jon Petrie, "Jon Petrie Investigates the Etymology of the Word 'Holocaust,'" David Irving's Website for Focal Point Publications (FPP), accessed October 18, 2011, <http://www.fpp.co.uk/Auschwitz/docs/HolocaustUsage.html>. There were some writers who used the word prior to WWII more definitive identification, including film critic, Gideon Bachmann, who mentions the "European holocaust" in his review of *Exodus*. In regards to this *Time* article, the lack of reference to the "Holocaust" means the article did not provide mention of the destruction of the European Jews during WWII.

<sup>215</sup> *Time*, "The New Pictures," 69-70. On a side note, in 1938, Hitler was named *Time*'s Man of the Year. The article cites one of his four resolutions for unemployment: put Jews, political enemies, communists, and socialists into concentration camps.

crushed.”<sup>216</sup> *Cue*’s film critic, Jesse Zunser, described how *Exodus* portrayed “Europe’s World War II displaced surviving Jews [who struggle] to reach a haven of safety and self-respect in their ancient homeland.”<sup>217</sup> James Powers of *Hollywood Reporter* mentioned the “concentration camps,” which held the Jewish Holocaust survivors on Cyprus.<sup>218</sup> Additionally, *New York Mirror Magazine*’s critic, H.V.C., expressed that “One of the most heroic and soul-stirring chapters of modern history is the struggle of homeless Jewish refugees from the devastated ghettos and barbaric concentration camps of Europe to reach Palestine and establish a Jewish state there,” and asserted *Exodus* portrays this well.<sup>219</sup>

Moreover, several reviews by Mae Tinee, in the *Chicago Tribune*, explained that the film portrays “an example of stubborn courage and perseverance and a heart-felt cry for peace from a people who have been endlessly pursued by unthinking hatred.” She emphasized that *Exodus* is “a stirring tribute to a staunch people who refused to be stamped out and rose triumphant over the forces of hatred.” Although her comments were slightly ambiguous and unspecific, it is clear to whom she was referring: the *Jewish* people and their sufferings in pogroms and the *Holocaust*, hateful *Nazis*, and other anti-Semitic racists.<sup>220</sup> Additionally, Richard Gertner recognized the filmmakers’ desire to “acquaint the audience with the background of the Jewish refugees and their struggles to get into Palestine,” and a *Variety* article also cited the brutal actions by the Nazis.<sup>221</sup> These few examples of reviews that discuss the Holocaust display an understanding of the significance and value of educating the public on this difficult history. The Holocaust was a major justification in

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<sup>216</sup> Mili. “A People’s Return.”

<sup>217</sup> Jesse Zunser, “New Films: The Rebirth of a Nation, In a Movie,” *Cue Magazine*, December 17, 1960, accessed at Margaret Herrick Library, Los Angeles, CA.

<sup>218</sup> James Powers, “Preminger Film is Over-Lengthy,” *Hollywood Reporter*, December 14, 1960, accessed at Margaret Herrick Library, Los Angeles, CA. (The date of this article is stamped by the Herrick with “Dec 14, 1961;” however, I believe the date is 1960, as this is when the movie premiered).

<sup>219</sup> H.V.C. “Mirror Movie of the Week: ‘Exodus:’ A Nation Is Born,” *New York Mirror Magazine*, December 4, 1960.

<sup>220</sup> Mae Tinee, “It’s the Season for Big Films,” *Chicago Sunday Tribune*, December 11, 1960, 12. Two other articles by Tinee: “Film Story of ‘Exodus’ Called Epic,” and “Feast of Fine Films In December,” printed December 1960 and January 8, 1961 (accessed at the Denver Public Library, Denver, CO). The *Chicago Tribune* published at least eleven reviews of the film *Exodus* beginning in December 1960.

<sup>221</sup> Gertner, 1; Pyr. “Exodus,” accessed at Margaret Herrick Library, Los Angeles, CA.

pushing the Jewish State of Israel into existence, and was therefore a very important topic to delineate in the film and in reviews.

Similar to the way *Time* and Henry Hart avoided discussion of the Holocaust, their reviews also lacked explanation and analysis that would place other related, significant issues into context and demonstrate their profound importance. For example, Hart mentioned “a young Pole from the refugee ship” who swears “he will devote his body, brain, soul and being to the Irgun, without reservation....” However, he never explained why this Pole (Dov) desires to join the Irgun, which is, of course, due to his horrific past as a survivor of the Warsaw ghetto and Auschwitz death camp. Any normal person who lost every member of his family and community, and who was brutally, mercilessly tortured and raped, mentally and physically, to the extent the “refugee Pole” was would likely be filled with just as much hate, desire vengeance, and act the same irate way. This is not to say that Hart should have tolerated or accepted the Pole’s violent disposition, but had he provided more background information, the context would be clarified, and the Pole’s extreme emotions and words would seem more rational.<sup>222</sup>

On the contrary, many other critics did discuss what Dov went through during the Holocaust. James Powers, for example, explained that Dov had been “ravished mentally and physically by the Nazis,” a very taboo subject.<sup>223</sup> Also, in *Close Up*, a Hollywood newspaper, Jaik Rosenstein described Dov as “fanatically revengeful of the Nazis, who trained him as a dynamiter in the human slaughterhouse of Auschwitz.”<sup>224</sup> Additionally, Richard Gertner cited the “the horrors suffered by many Jews at the hands of the Nazis” and noted the “harrowing and blood-chilling” scene in which Dov told about his experiences in “a Nazi concentration camp” as “a demolitionist who dug graves for his own people in order

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<sup>222</sup> Hart, 611-613. *Time Magazine* also describes Dov as a “psychotic youth” who is “apparently restored to sanity by a regimen of mass murder,” but leaves out his sad history and does not provide any other information or explanation. *Time*, “The New Pictures,” 69-70.

<sup>223</sup> Powers, “Preminger Film is Over-Lengthy,” accessed at Margaret Herrick Library, Los Angeles, CA.

<sup>224</sup> Jaik Rosenstein, “Otto Preminger Presents *EXODUS*, Produced and Directed by Otto Preminger, Screenplay by Dalton Trumbo from the Novel by Leon Uris, Staring Paul Newman and Eva Marie Saint,” *Hollywood, Close Up* 3, no. 49 (December 15, 1960): 2.

to save his own skin.”<sup>225</sup> Though Dov’s character is “made up,” these were the same horrors countless Jews suffered during the Holocaust, and thus, warrant mention. Though Dov’s horrific experiences do not excuse his violence, they at least provide context and an explanation for his desire to join the Irgun, and allow for a much more in-depth, balanced, broadminded perspective of this history.

Another issue some reviews avoided or misconstrued are the events on the Exodus ship bound for Haifa. Henry Hart, for example, said “Ari Ben Canaan... orders a hunger strike among the ship-bound refugees;” however, he left out the democratic process that brought forth this decision. Though the scene is made-up, events like this did occur: the real Exodus ship held over 4500 Holocaust survivor refugees, of which my grandparents were two. They, along with the other passengers, *voluntarily* held a hunger strike, which was decided upon via a democratic *vote*, and no one was forced to participate.<sup>226</sup> Thus, Hart’s assertion was not warranted by either the historical or fictional account.<sup>227</sup>

In contrast, several reviews understood importance of the ship scene. For example, *Variety* emphasized that the brave, selfless action that took place on the ship was a representation of “the whole spirit that brought Israel into being.” Though the ship scene is not an exact illustration of what actually occurred, it accurately portrayed the determination and gallantry of the many Jews at this time who held a two-thousand year old yearning for freedom and dignity, and who worked together to make their aspirations a reality. *Variety* asserted it was actions like these that propelled the Jews into establishing their homeland.<sup>228</sup>

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<sup>225</sup> Gertner, 1.

<sup>226</sup> This information was provided by my grandparents, Hela and Mischo Goltzer, and confirmed by several scholarly sources and news articles. One article, for example, interviewed the Skipper of the real Exodus ship, Yeheil Aronowicz, who discussed the process of picking up “4,500 Jews who were living in former German concentration camps in Europe” to take them to Palestine. He tried to break through the British warships blockade, but was “rammed by two destroyers, one from each side, and he had to surrender.” Unlike in the film, the real Exodus ship was denied entry into Palestine by the British and eventually sent to Germany. Referring to the difficult history of the Jews during the 2,000-year Diaspora, Aronowicz said, “It is not only desirable that Jews everywhere return to Israel, but it is necessary. They will be thrown up sooner or later by every other country. They are indigestible.” Aronowicz was 23 years old when he was picked to captain the ship to Palestine, and it was he who named it “Exodus.” *The New York Times*, “Skipper of Exodus Calls Jews ‘Indigestible’ by All but Israel,” February 7, 1961, P21.

<sup>227</sup> Hart, 611-613.

<sup>228</sup> Pyr. “Exodus,” accessed at Margaret Herrick Library, Los Angeles, CA.

## **To Discuss or Not to Discuss? Anti-Semitism as Portrayed in *Exodus***

Anti-Semitism is another difficult issue a few reviews overlooked or snubbed; however, the majority of critics understood the implications of this important topic and discussed it accordingly. Whereas Hart, for example, simply described one of the characters as “a stupid British officer,” he never mentioned the callous, slanderous, anti-Semitic comments this officer (Caldwell) makes.<sup>229</sup> On the other hand, Harrison Carroll of the *LA Evening Herald Express* clearly identified Officer Caldwell as an “anti-Semitic major.”<sup>230</sup> Jaik Rosenstein labeled Caldwell supercilious and racially prejudiced,<sup>231</sup> and James Powers described him as a “young Blimp, fatuous in mouthing tired clichés of prejudice.”<sup>232</sup> Rather than skirting the uncomfortable topic, these critics identified the anti-Semitic British officer for what he was.

In another example, Hart identified Mrs. Kitty Fremont as “someone for Christians to identify with;” nevertheless, he failed to point out her initial anti-Semitic disposition or her change of heart once she becomes aware that “differences between people are made up.” Furthermore, though he mentioned Kitty’s “love interest” with Ari, the Jewish protagonist, Hart did not mention this relationship as a means of supporting assimilation and inter-faith relationships, or of creating tolerance, compassion, and care for other types of people with diverse backgrounds, ethnicities, or religions. By avoiding the topic of anti-Semitism, Hart displayed his lack of understanding and sympathy for yet another very important part of the storyline.<sup>233</sup>

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<sup>229</sup> Hart, 611-613.

<sup>230</sup> Harrison Carroll, “‘Exodus’ Is Strong Academy Contender,” *LA Evening Herald Express*, December 22, 1960, accessed at Margaret Herrick Library, Los Angeles, CA.

<sup>231</sup> Rosenstein, 2.

<sup>232</sup> Powers, “Preminger Film,” accessed at Margaret Herrick Library, Los Angeles, CA. This quote is a reference to a 1943 British film, “The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp,” which takes place in WWII. A British soldier has ideal beliefs that righteous, fair play can win the war against the Nazis, but is informed by an old German friend that the rules of war have changed.

<sup>233</sup> Overall, it seems Hart had outside reasons for condemning *Exodus* so strongly. Perhaps he was simply ignorant of the real history of the Jews and of Israel, or maybe he was anti-Semitic or just did not like or approve of the idea of Jews being portrayed as strong, capable humans. In any case, his accusation of the film’s narrative as “disingenuous and confused” seems to fit his own review much better than the film. His review is

Similarly, a *Variety* article missed this imperative message, labeling the love story between Ari and Kitty “secondary to the broader scope of the drama” and “conventional.”<sup>234</sup> *Time*’s evaluation of the inter-religion relationship is also very comparable as it stated, “The tepid love story of Ari and Kitty can be skipped.”<sup>235</sup> Their relationship is in some ways tepid, as the protagonists come from different religious, cultural, and national backgrounds, and their loyalties differ. Though he clearly loves and needs Kitty, Ari’s life dedication is to his people and his state. Likewise, Kitty is torn between her homesickness for America and the life she used to know and her love for the brave, good Haganah leader who does not seem to have enough time for her. However, the critiques by Hart, *Variety*, and *Time* fail to recognize the importance of this part of the narrative. In the end, it shows two people valuing love, compromise, and benevolence over ethnocentrism and fear. They put aside their differences for the good of their relationship and for the needy and righteous Jews who need their help. Uris and Preminger hoped audiences would empathize with these two protagonists to create a similar loving relationship between Israel and America, and between American Gentiles and American Jews.

Though labeled “conventional” by a few critics, this Jewish-Christian relationship was very unconventional around the time the book and film came out. In a 1949 poll, for example, 78% of people surveyed asserted it would bother them if a near relative married someone of a different faith. In 1964, a similar question asked people if they would mind if their child married a Jew with a good education who came from a good family. Almost 60% said this would be unacceptable.<sup>236</sup> In many ways, presenting a positive image of a mixed-

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one of countless; but it is somewhat important because it was published in *Films In Review*, a renowned magazine, which happens to be the oldest film publication in the United States. Hart, 611-613. *Films In Review* is the moniker for The National Board of Review of Motion Pictures, which was established in 1909 as a reaction against censorship in movies. The magazine published many articles and film reviews and is well known in the industry.

<sup>234</sup> Pyr. “Exodus,” accessed at Margaret Herrick Library, Los Angeles, CA.

<sup>235</sup> *Time*, “Bestseller Revisited,” 110.

<sup>236</sup> Roper Commercial Poll, “Roper Commercial #1949-036: College Students.” Roper Commercial Poll, “Roper Misc Poll 1964.” This idea was projected in *Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner*, a 1967 film about an interracial marriage between a white girl and her educated, ethical, black fiancé. Though her parents are liberal and fight prejudice, it takes time for them to “digest” the idea of her marrying a “Negro,” despite his high quality and class.

religion couple was just as, or more important, as informing people of the struggle to create a Jewish homeland. It was about reducing fear of the “other” and decreasing anti-Semitism by showing two people with different religious backgrounds, but with similar values, coming together with love. This romance proved that “shallow differences” between people can be overcome with education, care, and understanding, portraying the vital struggle to overcome intolerance by accepting religious diversity.<sup>237</sup>

### **Erroneous Criticism**

Furthermore, though some reviews accused *Exodus* of lacking historical precision or comprehensiveness, they paradoxically purported erroneous arguments and did not support their fallacious accusations. In one example, Hart labeled the story a “dubious melodrama” with an “unbelievable end;” but he apparently did not know the events and figures upon which *Exodus* was based.<sup>238</sup> The characters and some of the plot are fictional, but based on reality, and the great majority of the events depicted actually happened. For example, Ari Ben-Canaan’s character and the feats he overcomes resemble the real-life accomplishments of several courageous historic figures, including leaders of the Palmach and Haganah.<sup>239</sup>

Another example of a truthful character depiction is Kitty Fremont, who represents America. At the end of the film, Kitty recognizes and respects the plight of the Jews in their need for a homeland in their ancient Holy Land, and with compassion, she takes up their cause. Though Mrs. Fremont is made-up, there were many Americans similar to her who supported Zionism.<sup>240</sup> The film provides another realistic portrayal of history in the final scene. As in the 1948 war, a relatively small number of Jewish fighters drive off to fight their bigger, better prepared Arab neighbors who had already attacked and avowed the Jews’ total

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<sup>237</sup> Pyr. “Exodus,” accessed at Margaret Herrick Library, Los Angeles, CA.

<sup>238</sup> Hart, 611-613.

<sup>239</sup> One example, as mentioned earlier, is found in: Rivlin and Bloom, “The Magnificent Hoax.”

<sup>240</sup> Americans supported Israel in several ways, such as by providing monetary donations. Another example includes American nurses who went to Palestine during the British Mandate to train others in the profession, care for wounded, and provide needed support for Zionists. For details, please see Nira Bartal, *Compassion and Competence: Nursing in Mandatory Palestine, 1918-1948* (Jerusalem: Yard Izhak Ben-Zvi, 2005).

destruction. These are very credible portrayals of the people and historical events surrounding the War of Independence around 1948.

### **Seems Real...**

Though a few critics questioned the way some of the historic events and actions were portrayed in the film, they understood the depiction was perceived as reliable and realistic by moviegoers. Gideon Bachmann noted, “no publicity, no advertisement, no press release...stated that *Exodus*...is a true depiction of the events that led to the establishment of Israel.” Even so, he asserted, “it is clear... that the press and the public have accepted it as such.” Furthermore, though he did not assent with the way history was presented, Bachmann also explained, “there is nothing in it that is not spelled out” or clarified, making it easy for audiences to truly grasp the history and meaning of the film’s messages.<sup>241</sup> Moreover, Philip Scheuer noted that the scenes were shot in the “actual locations where [they] took place,” and expressed that, “much of it seems like living, documented history.”<sup>242</sup> Though they would have preferred more historical accuracy, some critics understood that moviegoers would learn many historical events from this film.

### **Historical Validity & Evenhandedness**

Most reviews focused on the authenticity of the factually based depiction of historical events and sentiments, and of the legitimacy behind its messages. Though these reviews did not claim historical precision, most asserted or implied credibility and sincerity. For example, the renowned Bosley Crowther of the *New York Times* evaluated *Exodus* as a truthful, historically valid depiction of Israel’s past. In discussing several historic topics portrayed in the film, he affirmed that *Exodus* portrays impressive, courageous, and tough “reactions to awesome challenges” by Jewish heroes.<sup>243</sup>

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<sup>241</sup> Bachmann, 56-59. Bachmann also discussed the great influence the film had on the American public in increasing understanding of Jewish history and the Jews’ need for Israel, and in increasing Christian-American tourism to the Holy Land.

<sup>242</sup> Scheuer, “‘Exodus’ Stirring But Uneven Epic,” B9 and, “‘Exodus’ The Record Of A New Genesis,” B3.

<sup>243</sup> Bosley Crowther, “Exodus,” *The New York Times*, December 16, 1960, 44:1. Also, Bosley Crowther, “March-By of Soldiers,” *The New York Times*, January 1, 1960, X1. Some of the historic topics he assessed as a

In *Close Up's* cover story, Jaik Rosenstein said *Exodus* is based on “historical fact of the Israelis in the founding of their country,” and emphasized that the film projects “restraint,” “honest detachment,” and “affirmation of fact and objectivity.” He labeled the film “a brave work, and a good one,” because even with “all the implicit prejudices and pressures [due to] the politically volatile subject matter,” where either “cringing compromise” or, worse, “vindictive indictment” is the norm, the history was instead treated with dignity. He also avowed that *Exodus* is a “mark of taste” as “not the slightest scintilla of the contrived insinuation [of bias is presented]... On the contrary, it comprises a tearfully touching treatise of man's hope and idealism, his belief in the virtues and his faith in God.” Crowther and Rosenstein, among many other critics, clearly approved of the storyline and its sincere, hopeful messages and stressed the verisimilitude of its depiction of events and attitudes of the past.<sup>244</sup>

### **Balance, Clarity, & History Convey Important Messages**

Most reviews pointed out the extreme length of the film, but also acknowledged the length provides time “to explain things to the audience.” *Newsweek's* Joe Morgernstern said this is important as the film has “high purpose” with significant and worthy messages and a balanced portrayal of the past.<sup>245</sup> In *New York Mirror Magazine*, H.V.C. said, “The gripping, inspiring story... [is a] fast-paced, action-filled drama based on fact,” and affirmed that the riveting historical topics were portrayed realistically.<sup>246</sup>

In *The New Yorker*, Roger Angel also mentioned *Exodus's* extreme length, but contended this is because, “Dalton Trumbo, who wrote the screenplay, [is] wholly tolerant toward all the power factions and ethnic groups that found themselves at each other's throats in the Holy Land.” Angel said the movie was “filmed with painstaking reverence” that

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truthful depiction include: the “liberation of the State of Israel in 1947-48,” the “important story of...a shipload of European Jews from the British blockaded Cyprus to forbidden Palestine,” the “famous liberation of Jewish prisoners from the old fortress at Acre,” and the “post-partition fight of the Jews against the displaced Arabs.”

<sup>244</sup> Rosenstein, 2.

<sup>245</sup> Joe Morgernstern, “New Films: Which Way to the Egress?” *Newsweek*, December 19, 1960, 87-88.

<sup>246</sup> H.V.C., 36-37.

“permits nearly everyone in [the] cast to state his ideological and political convictions.”<sup>247</sup>

Likewise, Justin Gilbert, of *New York Mirror*, affirmed that Preminger employed “temperance, objectivity, and charity” in his production, having “considered both claims and counter-viewpoints of the British, Arabs and anti-Zionist forces, in presenting his well-balanced screen story...[with] a stirring blend of struggle and truth.”<sup>248</sup>

Moreover, Jesse Zunsler, titled his review, “The Rebirth of a Nation, in a Movie” and described the film as having “considerable validity” with “its singular and collective historic significance.” He explained that some of the more extreme viewpoints and exaggerations of the book were modified in the film “to bring the story, the conflicts and counter-viewpoints of British, Arab, and Jew into more accurate focus and balance,” and to reduce tensions and radical perspectives. Zunsler knew his history, and though he understood *Exodus* “has its fair quota” of flaws, he still defended the film’s depiction of history as authentic and tenable.<sup>249</sup>

Similarly, Harrison Carroll stated that *Exodus* portrays a “burning message told in universally acceptable terms of human drama.” He acknowledged the story is “naturally told from the Jewish point of view,” but insisted that *Exodus* is favorable toward non-Jews, as the film portrays multiple perspectives and is balanced.<sup>250</sup> Likewise, James Powers described the storyline as a dependable account of the past, and discussed the multiple perspectives delineated in the portrayal of the “rebirth of the Jewish national home through the eyes of Jew and non-Jew.” Powers expressed that *Exodus*’ version of history was “contrived,” as it is clear the characters are created. However, he acknowledged the story is based on real, historical events, experiences, and reactions many people had.<sup>251</sup>

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<sup>247</sup> Roger Angel, “The Current Cinema: 3:45 Flat,” *The New Yorker*, December 17, 1960, 136-137.

<sup>248</sup> Justin Gilbert, “‘Exodus’ a Stirring Saga,” *New York Mirror Magazine*, December 16, 1960, 36-37.

<sup>249</sup> Zunsler, “New Films,” accessed at Margaret Herrick Library, Los Angeles, CA.

<sup>250</sup> Carroll, “‘Exodus’ is Strong,” accessed at Margaret Herrick Library, Los Angeles, CA. His examples include a “sympathetic British general” who counters the “anti-Semitic [British] major.” Also, “a humane Arab leader” who “holds out the hope that the Moslems and the Israelis can live in peace” balances the cruel Moslem characters who support Nazi philosophy of murdering Jews, plan an attack on a Jewish youth village, and murder a sweet, innocent Holocaust survivor girl.

<sup>251</sup> Powers, “Preminger Film is Over-Lengthy,” accessed at Margaret Herrick Library, Los Angeles, CA. Powers was also one of the few critics who recognized the importance of describing “a friendly Arab, willing to believe a compromise can be worked out [regarding establishing both a Jewish and Arab home in Palestine] until fanatics of his nation murder him to drive home the point that there will be no compromise.”

## Fictionalized but Not Fiction

Even with knowledge that *Exodus* is a fictionalized account of the past, countless reviews focused on the realistic parts and indicated truthfulness. For example, in his *Jerusalem Post* article, Jesse Zel Lurie explained, “Of course [*Exodus*] is fictionalized, but it is not fiction. The strength of the movie is that...it tries to reenact historic fact and it is filmed authentically on the scene where it happened.” He felt so strongly about this that he exclaimed, “Any Palmachnik viewing the film will say: ‘This is the way it was- almost.’”<sup>252</sup>

*Life* magazine’s article, with photographs by Gjon Mili, also discussed many of the historic topics, character-types, and messages the film portrays, and alluded to accuracy and authenticity. For example, *Life* explained, “the movie re-creates [a] real-life operation by the Irgunists,” a prison breakout at the “old Crusader Fortress at Acre.”<sup>253</sup> Additionally, numerous *Washington Post* reviews (there were at least five) explained that several historical events were “re-staged in detail” in the film.<sup>254</sup> Richard Gertner also acknowledged *Exodus* “blends recent history with a fictional story-line.”<sup>255</sup>

In the *New York Journal-American*, Rose Pelswick took a slightly different stance. Rather than declaring *Exodus* factual or fictional, she asserted the film has “historical import,” and instructed filmgoers to “Let the historians decide” on the historical accuracy. Overall, Pelswick’s review was very positive and conveyed legitimacy via the kind assessments and vocabulary she chose to use.<sup>256</sup> These few examples, out of many similar

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<sup>252</sup> Lurie, vii. A “Palmachnik” was a member of the Palmach, the elite fighting force of the Haganah, the original underground Jewish defense league in Palestine during the British Mandate.

<sup>253</sup> Mili, 1-164. Topics this article covered included the tragedy of the Holocaust, the destruction of Europe’s Jewry and culture, “the Jews’ struggle for Israel,” the United Nations vote for the partition of Palestine (to create both a Jewish and Arab state), the British blockade limiting Jewish entry to Palestine, and the five Arab armies who resisted the UN decision for partition and attacked the Jews living in the Holy Land. The description of all these historic events helped teach a little bit of the history to *Life*’s many readers and likely generated interest in the film.

<sup>254</sup> Several reviews by the *Washington Post* have no author. “Escape From Acre,” February 12, 1961, G1; “Opens at the Uptown,” February 21, 1961, C20; “On Guard At Acre,” March 5, 1961, accessed at the Denver Public Library, Denver, CO; “‘Exodus’ For Downtown,” August 4, 1961, B10; and “The Circuit Riders: A Few Above-Average Films,” December 24, 1961, F8. Among other topics, these articles highlighted the film’s portrayal of “the birth of modern Israel,” the refugee ship bound for Haifa, and “the prison break which occurred on May 4, 1947.”

<sup>255</sup> Gertner, 1.

<sup>256</sup> Rose Pelswick, “Impressive Film of Israel’s Birth,” *New York Journal-American*, December 16, 1960,

reviews, assented that the film conveyed a realistic depiction of past events and viewpoints. It is clear most critics either accepted the historic portrayal as truthful, or at least believed audiences would deem it as such.

### ***Exodus* Creates Compassion**

For several reasons, most critics believed that *Exodus* positively affected moviegoers. Gideon Bachmann, for one, felt Preminger put forth an illusory story to help “the world become compassionate.” His assessment is, of course, right on! It is clear Preminger and his countless supporters promoted increased compassion over historical precision. The emotive feelings and memories evoked, the profound desire to conquer hate and fear, and the message of hope for a better future that made up the narrative were significant enough to develop a more miraculous, riveting storyline with a positive spin. Perhaps this is because this “feel-good” movie allowed audiences to leave the theatre with heartwarming thoughts and feelings, which could foster support for Israel and acceptance of Jews as people.<sup>257</sup>

Mae Tinee also indicated that *Exodus* was faithful to the historical events it depicted and labeled the film, “a gripping drama of our times; of triumph and tragedy...”<sup>258</sup> Additionally, Bosley Crowther described the historic adventures portrayed in the film as, “dazzling, eye-filling, nerve-tingling,” and “A fine reflection of experience that rips the heart.” He concluded his positive review by saying the audience “should take from this picture a shaken feeling of having been through a lot of harsh and ennobling experiences.” Tinee, Crowther, and several other critics expected the film to touch audiences’ hearts, a significant objective of the film.<sup>259</sup>

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19. Pelswick described the film’s portrayal of the birth of the nation of Israel, the struggle for Jewish independence, the events that occurred from May through December 1947, and the violent activities of the Irgun, and purported truthfulness.

<sup>257</sup> Bachmann, 56-59.

<sup>258</sup> Tinee, “It’s the Season for Big Films,” 12. Two other articles by Tinee: “Film Story of ‘Exodus’ Called Epic,” and “Feast of Fine Films In December,” printed December 1960 and 8 January 1961. The *Chicago Tribune* published at least eleven reviews of the film *Exodus* beginning in December 1960.

<sup>259</sup> Crowther, “Exodus,” 1. Also, Crowther, “March-By of Soldiers,” X1. Some of the portrayed historic topics he mentions include: the “liberation of the State of Israel in 1947-48,” the “important story of...a shipload of European Jews from the British blockaded Cyprus to forbidden Palestine,” the “famous liberation of Jewish prisoners from the old fortress at Acre,” and the “post-partition fight of the Jews against the displaced

Although Bachmann was not pleased with Preminger's artistic liberty, it is clear he understood the power the story had over the American public. Bachmann acknowledged that even those who knew the film was not a precise historical documentary were "taken in," and he asserted that Preminger "knows his public well... [he] knows what they want," and he provides "something for everyone." Bachmann even admitted, "*Exodus* has won its way into the hearts and pocketbooks of millions."<sup>260</sup> Richard Gertner also expressed that parts of *Exodus*' storyline and characters were created for entertainment value, which proved to be important, as the film would "reach and entertain millions."<sup>261</sup> There was something special about the film that really affected people.

### **Reviews Proclaim: *Exodus* is Good for Everyone**

Though some reviews had components that were unfavorable, most affirmed that the film's message is important for all people to understand and absorb. The *Time* article, for example, exulted the film as a "serious, expert, frightening and inspiring political thriller" that is "good for the soul, whether Jewish or Christian," and declared, "the public will [happily] get its money's worth."<sup>262</sup> Likewise, *Variety* called *Exodus* "a fine and important motion picture," an "important human drama," and "an inspiring picture of a great human struggle." The article demanded, "every effort should be made through exploitation to avoid any attachment of a special interest label."<sup>263</sup> Despite some criticisms, many reviews clearly conceded this is a film all open-minded people can relate to and learn from.

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Arabs."

<sup>260</sup> Bachmann, 56-59. Bachmann also discusses the great influence the film had on the American public in increasing understanding of the history and need for Israel, and in increasing tourism to the Holy Land.

<sup>261</sup> Gertner, 1.

<sup>262</sup> *Time*, "The New Pictures," 69-70. Contrarily, it almost seems *Time*'s enthusiastic praise was an attempt to renege or reduce the unfavorable evaluation of some of the important, key features of the film. This article is important as *Time* is a very popular magazine, read by millions of Americans across the States. Established in 1923, it is also quite old, and by 1960, was a well-read and respected weekly news magazine.

<sup>263</sup> Pyr. "Exodus," accessed at Margaret Herrick Library, Los Angeles, CA.

## Best Pic of the Year

Additionally, most reviews also praised the film and its makers as winners. *Time* commended Preminger for being at “top of his form in every department,” and the script as “clear, intelligent, subtle, witty, swift, strong, [and] eloquent.”<sup>264</sup> Philip Scheuer explained that it is “tough” to pick “best pictures of the year,” but he chose *Exodus* for his “Top Ten” list in 1960, and asserted it would leave a “memorable impression” on viewers. Scheuer also complemented the “powerful character acting,” praised the film as “inspiring,” and asserted that *Exodus* has a “moving finish,” which is impressive because he said he felt like an “emotionally drained spectator” by the end of the long film.<sup>265</sup> In addition, H.V.C.’s article named the film “Mirror Movie of the Week,”<sup>266</sup> and Rose Pelswick called the film an “impressive production,” and said *Exodus* employed a “huge cast,” and presents “spectacular action.”<sup>267</sup>

## Hip, Hip, Hooray! *Exodus* Garners Several Awards

*Exodus* was very popular with the people and won several awards. Ernest Gold’s musical score won an Oscar for Best Music and a Grammy for Best Soundtrack Album. Sal Mineo received a Golden Globe for Best Supporting Actor and a Golden Laurel for Top Male Supporting Performance. The film, the cinematography, several actors, and the soundtrack were also nominated for several other awards.<sup>268</sup> These honors brought even more interest to the name and narrative, displaying the positive affect the film had on the American public.

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<sup>264</sup> *Time*, “The New Pictures,” 69-70. This article is important as *Time* is a very popular magazine, read by millions of Americans across the States. Established in 1923, it is also quite old, and by 1960, it was a well-read and respected weekly news magazine.

<sup>265</sup> Philip K. Scheuer, “Scheuer’s Top Ten,” *Los Angeles Times*, Dec 25, 1960, B3.

<sup>266</sup> H.V.C. “Mirror Movie of The Week,” accessed at Margaret Herrick Library, Los Angeles, CA.

<sup>267</sup> Pelswick, 19.

<sup>268</sup> In addition to the awards *Exodus* won (as seen above), the film was nominated for several other awards in 1961. In the Golden Globes, Ernest Gold’s music was nominated for Best Original Score, and Jill Hayworth was nominated for Most Promising Newcomer. In Laurel Awards, Paul Newman was nominated for a Golden Laurel for Top Male Dramatic Performance, and Lee J Cobb for a Golden Laurel for Top Male Supporting Performance. In the Academy Awards, Sal Mineo was nominated for an Oscar for Best Actor in Supporting Role, and Sam Leavitt for an Oscar in Best Cinematography, Color. *Exodus* also won a “Satellite Award” for Best Classic DVD for Paul Newman’s *Tribute Collection* in 2009.

### **Good Reviews Attract & Entice; Good Films Affect & Inspire**

Almost all of *Exodus*' reviews focused on the legitimacy and validity of the portrayed historical events and viewpoints, the film's ability to affect and influence moviegoers, and its extreme popularity and success. However, regardless of the reviews, in general, if a movie is good enough, once people begin watching, they can forget they are sitting in a theater and begin to truly live and feel the adventures in the film. It is clear, based on the extremely high numbers of moviegoers who experienced *Exodus* in the theaters and appreciated it, that those professional reviewers who endorsed the film had plenty of private critics (movie watchers) who agreed. The movie captured America's attention, and the millions who saw the film had the opportunity to vicariously experience the emotions and adventures of the story's characters. Even with the knowledge that the story was a historically-based narrative, for three and a half hours, moviegoers were sucked into the journey and, in turn, learned a lot about the remarkable history of the Jews and their struggle for nationhood. Whether or not the moviegoers believed the projected history did not greatly matter because, while watching the film, most moviegoers experienced real, raw emotions, allowing the Jewish "other" to become a familiar, heroic, glorious people.

### **PUBLIC OPINION POLLS DISPLAY CHANGE IN AMERICAN ANTI-SEMITISM**

From the 1930s, many public opinion polls were conducted in the United States with questions concerning the issue of American anti-Semitism and, beginning after WWII, studies also focused on the establishment and actions of Israel, the Jewish homeland. The polling groups included: The National Opinion Research Center (NORC), Roper Commercial, with surveys conducted by the Survey Research Center and sponsored by the Anti-Defamation League of Binai B'Rith, the Office of Public Opinion Research (OPOR), Opinion Research Corporation (ORC International), and Dr George Gallup and the American Institute for Public Opinion (AIPO), among others. These pollsters asked the American public questions about Jews and Israel in an attempt to discover how many people were anti-Semitic and to what degree, and to discern American opinions about Israel and Zionism. The

poll questions that are of particular interest for this essay are those that display a change, or lack thereof, in these topics from the years prior to, and after, the modern *Exodus* story.

### **Discrepancies in Opinion Polls**

In the numerous polls assessed in this essay, there are discrepancies, intricacies, and complications that must be assessed and accounted for. For example, each year, the vocabulary of similar poll questions, and the subjects being examined, changed. Even with similar informational inquiries (i.e. similar topics that are regularly investigated), very few polls used the exact same syntax in their questions year after year, especially polls conducted by different companies. This might not seem important if the main inquiry and wording was very similar; however, it is clear that slight changes in vocabulary can drastically change the results for two almost identical questions.

A September, 1946 poll by the American Institute for Public Opinion provides a good example of how a slight change in terminology could change the results of a poll question. One question asked, “About a million Polish people, Jews, and other displaced persons must find new homes in different countries. *Do you think the United States should take any of these displaced persons?*” The answers were: 43% yes, 50% no, and 7% no opinion. The same question was asked, but with a slightly different ending: “About a million Polish people, Jews, and other displaced persons must find new homes in different countries. *Do you think the United States should let any of these displaced persons enter this country?*” The results were: 36% yes, 58% no, and 6% no opinion. These two slightly differently worded questions really asked the same question, at the same time period, to a separate but similar sample group, and the results came up with a fairly large discrepancy in the answers! The difference in the “yes” answer was 7% and in the “no” answer was 8%! This disparity demonstrates how diction can truly affect the outcome of a poll. The results also display Americans’ negative attitude toward immigrants, which was likely due to social, cultural, political, religious, and economic fears of the “other.”<sup>269</sup>

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<sup>269</sup> This study was conducted by Dr. George Gallup and the American Institute of Public Opinion (AIPO), August 1946, published by Erskine, 649-664. Examples of some wariness toward immigrants included fear that new cultures would influence and alter the set lifestyle, and fears that new citizens would take jobs from white natives.

Additionally, the methods of asking questions and calculating and recording answers differed between each poll, even polls from the same company. Many of the polls, for example, were conducted in face-to-face interviews. While certain people might have felt fully comfortable openly and honestly answering strange questions in front of an unfamiliar interviewer, surely, several would not be. Also, some interviewees could have been more comfortable or inclined to give candid answers to someone they could relate to. For example, if a pollster was male, perhaps the results from male interviewees would be more assertive or aggressive than if the pollster was a female (and/or old, young, white, black, or purple, etc). Pollsters' tones could also affect the outcome, as interviewees might have felt compelled to respond to questions with an answer he/she perceived the interviewer wanted.

Moreover, interviewers' and interviewees' moods, their prior personal experiences (recent and distant), and countless other factors likely influenced the results to seemingly simple, straightforward questions. In a NORC poll from 1964, for example, the pollsters were asked to evaluate (give their best guess based upon their personal opinion) the apparent levels of trustworthiness of the interviewees. The pollsters believed 92% of the respondents *seemed* "truthful," 4.7% "evasive," 0.2% "untruthful," and 2.5% were too hard to read (their truthfulness could not be determined by the pollster, based on observation).<sup>270</sup> Most of the interviewees appeared truthful, and though the results are not guaranteed to be completely accurate due to these, and other, various reasons, these polls are the best, most factual, empirically based information available.

### **Polls on Anti-Semitism**

In regard to discovering levels of anti-Semitism in America, a poll question that came up often asked if people had heard criticism against Jews. This type of question, in some ways, allowed interviewees to be open and honest in their answers, as they were (supposedly) telling about what they had "heard," not what they, themselves, felt. The results showed that, around WWII (1940-1946), when some information of the Holocaust was trickling into the US,<sup>271</sup> between 46 and 64% of the population (based on samples of poll takers) said "Yes,"

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<sup>270</sup> Roper Commercial Poll, "Roper Misc Poll 1964."

<sup>271</sup> Though information about what was happening in the Holocaust was seeping into the US, many people

they had heard criticism against Jews in the last six months.<sup>272</sup> The numbers decreased by 1950; the amount of people who said they had heard negative talk against Jews dropped to 24%, and in 1953, the number fell to roughly 22%.<sup>273</sup>

When asked “what kind of criticism?” answers included that Jews have too much business and political power, are communists and radicals, are rich, shrewd, and miserly, and are pushy, loud, aggressive, unsociable, and clannish.<sup>274</sup> In 1955, the same question was asked and 13% said they had heard similar comments about Jews.<sup>275</sup> The numbers steadily declined (with a couple years of small increases, including a 5% increase in 1957, shortly after the Suez War) through 1959, to 12%.<sup>276</sup> While there is always a possibility of inaccurate results from any poll, the wording of this specific question did not change at all throughout the years, providing more consistency and thus more legitimacy to the findings of this poll question. These statistics display an overall decrease in levels of American anti-Semitism from the 1940s through the time *Exodus* appeared.<sup>277</sup>

In 1942, U.S. engagement in WWII had just begun, whereas, by 1945, the results of the Holocaust were starting to be realized. By the 1950s, many Americans understood that something terrible had happened to the Jews of Europe, though knowledge of the details

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did not really believe the results. One poll by Dr. George Gallup and the American Institute of Public Opinion (AIPO), from January 7, 1943 asked, “It is said that two million Jews have been killed in Europe since the war began. Do you think this is true or just a rumor?” Only 47% believed this fact; 29% thought it was a rumor, and 24% had no opinion. Erskine, 649-664.

<sup>272</sup> 1940, 1946: The Opinion Research Corporation, Princeton, New Jersey. See Erskine, 649-664.

<sup>273</sup> National Opinion Research Center [NORC], “NORC 1950,” United States, Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, n.d. Also, NORC, “NORC 1953-0341-0342.” 1,291 people were surveyed in face-to-face interviews.

<sup>274</sup> NORC, “NORC 1950.” Also, National Opinion Research Center [NORC], “NORC 1953-0341-034,” United States, Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, n.d. 1,291 people were surveyed in face-to-face interviews.

<sup>275</sup> NORC, “NORC Survey #1955-0379.” 1,275 people were surveyed in face-to-face interviews.

<sup>276</sup> 1957 poll results came from NORC, University of Chicago. The 1959 poll was by the Gallup Organization, Princeton, New Jersey.

<sup>277</sup> On a related topic, in a 1964 ROPER Poll, almost 40% of Americans agreed that, “Jews have a lot of irritating faults.” (Roper Commercial Poll, “Roper Misc Poll 1964.”). The differences in percentages in this answer are likely due to the distinct syntax and vocabulary of the question. Overall, the results demonstrate the perpetuation of ancient defamatory stereotypes against Jews and a significant level of anti-Semitism, albeit the decreasing numbers from the 1940s forward.

were somewhat lacking and still fairly unbelievable for many.<sup>278</sup> Films like *Gentleman's Agreement* and *Exodus*, and the highly publicized Nuremberg Trials and the Eichmann trial, helped expose the American public to the plight of the Jews and to a little bit of Jewish culture.<sup>279</sup> This allowed for a deeper understanding of Jewish history and provoked a decrease in anti-Semitic tendencies and increased tolerance and acceptance of “others,” in general.

This decrease in American anti-Semitism is reflected in the timing and content of *Exodus*. It would have been much more challenging and troublesome to create such a strongly pro-Jewish and pro-Israel film just a few years earlier. During times of higher anti-Semitism, it is likely moviegoers would have not received *Exodus* so excitedly, graciously, and happily, and instead would have been agitated. Hence, being produced during a time when anti-Semitism was becoming more taboo and less publicly acceptable, the film quickly gained popularity and renown.

Interestingly, there were no studies conducted on the *Exodus* film. In the 1940s and early 1950s, filmmakers were very timid about addressing certain provocative subjects, like anti-Semitism and Zionism, and *Gentleman's Agreement* and the studies conducted on this film reflect this trend. However, by 1960, these topics were more familiar, easily discussed, and projected in mass media. Hence, though there were still trepidations about provoking increased anti-Semitism or anti-Israel sentiment, and though anti-Semitism still existed, these philosophies were generally unaccepted and more frequently fought against. This is reflected in *Exodus'* storyline and in the fact that no studies were conducted on this film.

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<sup>278</sup> In her 1986 book, *Beyond Belief: The American Press and the Coming of the Holocaust, 1933-1945*, Deborah Lipstadt discusses the way American newspapers reported on the atrocities occurring in the Holocaust. She explains that a lot of evidence was presented to the American public; however, many times it with a “tone of skepticism” (p265) and rarely published on the front cover of the publications. Rather, the newspapers that did report on Nazi crimes against the European Jews were in the middle of the column on “page 3 and 9,” in small writing, and lacking any real, dramatic, graphic descriptions. Thus, though there were some reports on what was happening, there was not enough information and emphasis to make a real impact. The press, evidently, had some form of bias against a true, candid, equitable description and presentation of those gruesome events.

<sup>279</sup> For an assessment of how the Eichmann Trial affected the American public, please see: Glock and Selznick, *The Apathetic Majority: A Study Based on Public Responses to the Eichmann Trial*. This book also discusses the Nuremberg Trials.

## Jewish Neighbors

The shift toward a more favorable perception of Jews can be seen in a series of 1942-1955 poll questions that focused on Jews as neighbors, a topic reflected upon in *Gentleman's Agreement*. In 1942, a *Fortune* survey asked, "Which of the following groups would you least like to see move into your neighborhood," and 42% picked Jews.<sup>280</sup> After WWII was over, a 1949 Roper poll asked college students "Which kinds of people would you prefer not to have move into your neighborhood?" 46% preferred not to have neighbors who differed from themselves, and 8.5% specifically answered Jews.<sup>281</sup> A 1953 NORC poll asked for a reaction to a very direct statement: "Suppose a Jewish family were going to move in next door to you..." Over 6.7% said they "wouldn't like it at all" and 10.8% said they "would not like it, but it would not matter too much," for a total of 17.5% of poll-takers who were, at least somewhat, opposed to having Jewish neighbors.<sup>282</sup> In 1955, the same question was asked and a total of 11% preferred not to have Jews in their neighborhood, a reduction of about 6% compared to two years prior.<sup>283</sup>

In 1957, a slightly different, but related, statement was posed to the American public: "The trouble with letting Jews into a nice neighborhood is that sooner or later they spoil it for other people." About 17% agreed, and another 24% were "uncertain" about the possibility of Jews "spoil[ing]" neighborhoods. The small rise in numbers of people disapproving of Jewish neighbors could well be due to the aggressive vocabulary and tone used to ask the question: 'Those Jews ruin neighborhoods, right?' Other possible reasons for an increase in anti-Semitic answers in this 1957 poll could be related to its timing. In October 1956, Israel entered into war with Egypt (Suez War, Oct 29- Nov 7, 1956), and the United States did not

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<sup>280</sup> Erskine, 658. The respondents were a national sample of factory workers.

<sup>281</sup> Roper Commercial Poll, "Roper Commercial #1949-036." Of the group of 2,006, half were freshmen and the other half seniors. Questions were asked face-to-face.

<sup>282</sup> NORC, "NORC 1953-0341-0342." 1,291 people were surveyed in face-to-face interviews.

<sup>283</sup> NORC, "NORC Survey #1955-0379." 1,275 people were surveyed in face-to-face interviews. In 1955, 5% said they would not like Jewish neighbors at all and 6% said it they would not like it but it would not matter too much. Again, in 1956, the question was asked again, and the total percent of those who preferred to not have Jewish neighbors was 11.6%. NORC, "NORC Survey #1956-0399." 1,287 people were surveyed in face-to-face interviews.

approve or Israel' involvement. Because of patriotic sentiment, some Americans may have felt negative sentiment toward Israel and an increase in anti-Semitism, at least temporarily.<sup>284</sup>

In 1964, another similar poll asked Americans, "How would you feel about having Jews in your neighborhood...?" and 7.2% said they "prefer not to have any Jewish neighbors."<sup>285</sup> Of all poll results on this topic from the 1940s through this point, this was the lowest percentage of frank anti-Semitic responses in dealing with the question of Jews as neighbors.<sup>286</sup> Like all other poll questions, the results might be somehow imprecise; however, they are based on empirical research and analysis, and are the closest recorded data available to reach a true assessment of American anti-Semitism in the mid-twentieth century. Though this is not conclusive proof, the timing of this poll (four years after the film came out, and six years after the book) supports the postulation that, among several other influences and inspirations, the *Exodus* story reflected a reduction in, and helped influence the American public to decrease, levels of racist anti-Semitism.<sup>287</sup>

Another display of reduced anti-Semitism is found in the same 1964 poll, where interviewees perceived their own levels of anti-Semitism as decreasing compared to their parents' attitudes and their own viewpoints from earlier years. A question asked, "Compare your parents' feelings towards Jews around the time you were growing up with the way you, yourself, feel now. Would you say your parents felt more friendly towards Jews than you do now, less friendly, or about the same?" Three percent claimed their parents felt friendlier

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<sup>284</sup> Over 6% said they "strongly agreed" with this statement and another 11% "agreed," for a total of about 17%. NORC, "NORC 1957-0404." 1,279 people were surveyed in face to face interviews. Conducted by the University of Chicago.

<sup>285</sup> Roper Commercial Poll, "Roper Misc Poll 1964." 1,975 people were surveyed in face-to-face interviews.

<sup>286</sup> This poll came one year prior to the passage of the Civil Rights Act. This was a tense period in American history; however, this movement might have positively affected the responses to this question.

<sup>287</sup> Among other political, social, religious, and economic reasons, the decrease in anti-Semitism may also be due to the combined influence of other films on the subject, such as *Gentleman's Agreement* (1947), and *Crossfire* (1947). On the contrary, though it seems the level of anti-Semitism dropped in the early 1960s, results from other questions from the same 1964 ROPER poll seemed to say otherwise. One statement said, "Jews are more willing than others to use shady practices to get what they want," and over 41% contended this was "true." A different, positive, statement said, "Jews are just as honest as other businessmen," to which 27% responded: "false." Thus, by the early 1960s, while certain questions and responses appeared to demonstrate a large decrease in anti-Semitism, other questions displayed some persistence in anti-Jewish sentiment, albeit with lower levels overall. These statistics come from: Roper Commercial Poll, "Roper Misc Poll 1964."

toward Jews; however, 12% said “less friendly,” meaning that the younger generation perceived their own feelings as more tolerant and with reduced levels of anti-Semitism compared to their parents. A similar question asked, “Thinking of Jews as a group, would you say you feel more friendly toward them now than you used to, less friendly, or have you always felt as you do now?” Almost 10.8% answered “more friendly,” and only 1.7% answered, “less friendly.” The results of this question could be masked, as it can be challenging, overwhelming, and demoralizing for some people to admit past fault because egos become bruised. Nevertheless, the outcome displays a self-perceived reduction in anti-Semitic philosophy, or at least a desire to seem more tolerant and open-minded, for a significant part of the population.<sup>288</sup>

### **Polls on Israel**

In light of the events of the Holocaust after WWII had ended, many people believed Jews needed, and were deserving of, a Jewish state, and Zionists pushed for the Jews’ ancient homeland in Palestine. After providing some background information, in 1945, a survey asked Americans, “Do you favor or oppose the idea of establishing a Jewish state in Palestine?” and roughly 59% favored the idea. While these people took on the Zionist cause for various reasons, others had different opinions as to what the best solution would be for the world’s Jewry. Some feared that a Jewish state in Palestine would provoke the native Arabs toward violence, and others were simply anti-Semitic and wanted no part in dealing with Jews or decreasing their hardships. In any case, a majority of Americans supported the creation of a Jewish homeland.<sup>289</sup>

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<sup>288</sup> Roper Commercial Poll, “Roper Misc Poll 1964.”

<sup>289</sup> Displaying the lack of interest in current foreign events, until people were asked this poll question, over 57% had never even heard of the Zionist movement and its desire to re-establish Israel as a home for Jews. Office of Public Opinion Research [OPOR] “OPOR Poll # 1945-041: Roosevelt Survey #41,” March 22-27, 1945, United States, Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, n.d. 1,229 people were surveyed in face-to-face interviews. The background information provided by the survey said, “The people who are urging the creation of a Jewish state believe it is the best way to save the lives of many European Jews persecuted and made homeless by the Nazis. They say that if the Jews have a national homeland they will be better able to help themselves.

People opposed to the plan pointed out that there were already more Arabs than Jews in Palestine, that Arabs did not want the Jews in Palestine, and that open conflict would probably break out. They said, “the creation of a Jewish state is not the best way to help the Jews.” For those who favored creating a Jewish state in

Twelve years later, in March of 1957, despite participation in the Suez War (which the US did not approve of), over 60% of people surveyed said they have a “have a high opinion of Israel” or “although Israel has done some things I don’t approve of, in general I think well of her,” as compared to 19% of Americans who did “not think well of Israel.”<sup>290</sup> In April 1957, another poll asked a similar question and 48% felt “very friendly” or “somewhat friendly” towards Israel; less than 8% felt “unfriendly” towards the Jewish state.<sup>291</sup> Again, the discrepancies in these two 1957 poll statistics may reflect the difference in syntax and vocabulary in the questions, but also provide evidence that many Americans supported Israel. Interestingly, when asked, “Compared to a year or so ago, have your feelings toward Israel become more friendly or less friendly?” About 18% said, “more friendly now,” but almost 16% said “less friendly now.” This indicates an increase in congenial sentiments towards Israel for some, but for others, the results likely exhibit frustration at Israel’s role in the Suez War.<sup>292</sup> Ten years later, in 1967, around the time of the Six Day War, American sentiment displayed an approval rating for Israel between 45-56% (which was much higher than the 4% approval of Palestinians).<sup>293</sup> Overall, since before the state was even established, the majority of Americans approved of and/or thought highly of Israel.

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Palestine, a second question was asked: “Do you think the US Government should or should not use its influence in trying to get a Jewish state established in Palestine?” and about 70% said America “should.”

<sup>290</sup> Roper Commercial Poll, “Roper Commercial #1957- 103: Views on Current Events ,” March, 1957, United States, Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, n.d. 1,127 people were surveyed in face to face interviews. The question stated, “The state of Israel has been in the news a lot lately. Which of these statements comes closest to expressing your attitude toward Israel at the present time?”

<sup>291</sup> The question stated, “Which one of these statements comes closest to your own feelings toward Israel today? Very friendly, somewhat friendly, neither, somewhat unfriendly, or very unfriendly?” NORC, “NORC Survey #1957-040.” 1,279 sample

<sup>292</sup> NORC, “NORC Survey #1957-0404.” 1,279 sample.

<sup>293</sup> The 45% came from the Gallup Poll News Service, “Gallup Poll News Service #746,” conducted June 2-7, 1967, United States, Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, n.d. In face-to-face interviews. The 56% came at the end of June, 1967. The Six Day War, which took place June 5-10, 1967, was perceived as a “David vs Goliath” war in which Israel was the little, righteous, noble David. They fought against a huge “Goliath,” the Arab armies composed of several surrounding states, including Egypt, Jordan, and Syria, in addition to Arab Expeditionary Forces from several other states (Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Algeria, Libya, Kuwait, Tunisia, Sudan, Pakistan, and the PLO (Palestinian Liberation Organization)).

## Polls Confirm: Films Reflect & Influence American Sentiment

The reduction in anti-Semitic sentiment and continued support for Israel, as seen in poll responses from the mid-1940s through the 1960s, is a realistic representation of a positive change in American perspectives toward Jews. The sizeable decrease over twenty years is likely due to increased education, awareness, and exposure to the Jewish “other,” based on various political, economic, and social influences, including films! Many films both reflected and reinforced a developing humanitarian movement of tolerance toward the “other.” Even before *Exodus* appeared, polls from these years already displayed a trend towards decreased anti-Semitism. Additionally, movies like *Exodus* and *Gentleman’s Agreement*, as well as several other forms of mass media, contributed to this progressive development. These mass media provided more education about, and exposure to, Jews, the Jews’ plight as a continuously persecuted people (culminating in the Holocaust), and the civil rights movement, helping to enhance feelings of tolerance, geniality, and open-mindedness.<sup>294</sup>

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<sup>294</sup> Though decisive verification linking these poll results to films that contest prejudice and anti-Semitism does not exist, this conclusion is based on educated, informed conjecture, and it correlates with empirical, observed poll statistics. An interesting note: from around 1957 through 1964, the number of polls on anti-Semitism decreased significantly. This reduction was likely influenced by anti-Semitism becoming more taboo and less acceptable during these years. Americans were generally becoming more comfortable with Jews based, in part, upon increased exposure and familiarity via mass media, including films. Additional reasons include greater awareness about the Holocaust and the advancement of the civil rights movement. These issues provoked many Americans to become very sensitive about being called anti-Semitic or racist. Hence, the need for polls decreased and/or the subject was so hypersensitive that no one wanted to even ask about it.

Another interesting point: levels of anti-Semitism have dropped fairly consistently over the last century. A 2009 poll, conducted by the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), concluded, “Anti-Semitic attitudes in the United States are at a historic low, with 12 percent of Americans prejudiced towards Jews.” This number matched a 1998 poll, the lowest percentage in the 45-year history of the poll. Article by *Reuters*, “Poll: Anti-Semitic Views in the US at a Historic Low; ADL Survey: 12 Percent of Americans Prejudiced Toward Jews; Foxman: U.S. A More Accepting Society,” *Haaretz*, last modified October 29, 2010, <http://www.haaretz.com/jewish-world/news/poll-anti-semitic-views-in-the-u-s-at-a-historic-low-1.5156>.

## CONCLUSION

The main hypothesis this thesis has endeavored to demonstrate is that *Exodus* influenced the American public by increasing familiarity and understanding of the Jewish “other” in order to decrease anti-Semitism and enhance support for the Zionist cause. The entertaining narrative, the likeable, heroic characters that the audience could relate to, the exciting portrayal of history, and *Exodus*’ moral and political messages were well received by the great majority of Americans. In addition to these terrific characteristics in the storyline (both the book and film), the film’s movie stars, fantastic visuals, and affecting music created even stronger connections between the plot and the audience. These factors helped *Exodus* inspire a higher level of consciousness, generating open-mindedness and care for the Jewish “other” and for Israel.

The friendships established between the leading Jewish and non-Jewish characters, as portrayed by the long, compelling novel and the three-and-a-half-hour film, encouraged similar bonds between these protagonists and the American audience. This temporary relationship was a significant influence in positively affecting Americans’ perceptions about Jews and Israel. Millions of Americans vicariously felt the fearful, sad, joyful, and triumphant emotions and lived through the dangerous and moving events that the story’s endearing protagonists experienced. This helped establish a prosthetic camaraderie between the audience and the story’s Jewish heroes, such as Ari Ben-Canaan and Karen Hansen, who held valiant, universalized traits, including bravery, strength, kindness, and generosity. These laudable qualities provoked an increase in sympathy for the Jews and the historic struggles they endured, and for the narrative’s important messages of tolerance and acceptance of the “other.”

Moreover, the relationship between Christian Kitty and several venerable Jewish characters showed that “differences between people are made up” but, nonetheless, must be respected. At the same time, “different” does not need to connote “bad,” and fear of the different (but “good”) “other” can be overcome with understanding and care. Mrs. Kitty Fremont changed her perspective from a “soft” anti-Semite into an open-minded Zionist

through education and positive interactions with several Jews, including a romantic relationship with Ari and a motherly attachment to Karen. Kitty's perspective provided audiences with "safe," on-screen contact with great, admirable Jewish characters and the compelling historical experiences they shared. Without having to spend time with "real" Jewish people, Gentiles could begin to become acquainted with the "other" through *Exodus*. It was the hope of the story makers that American audiences would realize that their fear and dislike of the Jewish "other" was unfounded and irrational and would, thus, react like Kitty by positively changing their perceptions about Jews. Through emotional connections to *Exodus'* Jewish heroes, the somewhat different "other" became much more familiar and accepted in American society.

In addition, the profusion of book and film reviews and advertisements that presented these characters, the plot, and other interesting features popularized the *Exodus* name and story. The novel became extremely successful, ranking very highly in the prestigious *New York Times* bestseller list for several months, and millions of copies were sold worldwide. The film also boasted remarkable success, allowing millions of American moviegoers to vicariously experience the exciting, heartrending adventures and emotions the story's characters endured.

The huge number of published reviews of *Exodus* both reflected and augmented the story's popularity and helped encourage millions of Americans to witness the recent ordeals and valiant journey of the Jewish people. Though a few were critical, the great majority of reviews supported the narrative and film. Additionally, with a greater focus on neutral topics (such as the entertaining storyline and talented actors), the positive reviews greatly outnumbered the negative ones. As an added bonus, several critics named *Exodus* as one of the year's best films and fiction novels, and almost all affirmed that *Exodus* was worth the money and time in entertainment value.

Furthermore, all reviews implied or asserted that *Exodus* is either historically credible or somewhat fabricated; nevertheless, though there were discrepancies, many more presented the storyline as authentic, based on truth, and tenable. This likely influenced readers and moviegoers to believe in the usefulness of *Exodus* as a reliable source of history. Overall, the countless reviews increased the renown of the name and storyline, buttressing *Exodus'* success.

In addition to its great popularity, several compelling factors exhibit how, beginning in 1958, millions of people were influenced by *Exodus*' messages and values. Firstly, when comparing public opinion poll statistics on American anti-Semitism from the years prior to and after the story came out, it is clear levels dropped significantly. Polls also revealed increased congeniality and sympathy toward Israel and the Zionist cause during this period. It is clear the *Exodus* narrative both reflected these trends and helped strengthen them. The story would likely not have been as successful twenty years earlier, as Americans would not have been ready to receive and accept its pro-Jewish and anti-prejudice stances. Hence, *Exodus* revealed and reinforced the already growing humanitarian trend toward higher levels of tolerance and lower levels of anti-Semitism.

Secondly, beginning around the time the *Exodus* story came out, there was a noteworthy increase in visitors to Israel. Many new travelers to the Holy Land sought more information about the exciting history and requested visits to the locations described in the novel and projected in the film. Though other factors were involved, *Exodus* played a direct role in this substantial boost in tourism.

Additionally, the many philosophers and sociologists, such as Robert Sklar, Walter Lippmann, and Lester Friedman, who studied the effects of movies on the American public, have contended that films generally have the power to influence public opinion. This is because movies connect to past memories, touch several senses, including sight and sound, and affect emotions. The studies conducted on the film *Gentleman's Agreement* are a case-in-point, displaying a positive change in the great majority of viewers' perspectives, with a decrease in anti-Semitism and an increase in amiability towards Jews. These studies also demonstrated audiences' newfound perspective that (secularized/ Americanized/ assimilated) Jews are so similar to Christians it is impossible to tell them apart.<sup>295</sup>

Moviegoers observed how the Jews (and "pretend" Jews) portrayed in *Gentleman's Agreement* are treated: even though the characters are extremely assimilated and Americanized, they are still discriminated against because of their Jewish title. The film taught audiences that anti-Semitism persists without just cause: even Jews who easily blend

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<sup>295</sup> When asked what they had learned from *Gentleman's Agreement*, several people explained that it is important to be nice to Jews, because they might turn out to be Christian. Rosen, 525-536.

in to their communities with a total lack of visible, cultural, or ethnic traits (and even Christians who pretend to be Jewish), are still persecuted without a legitimate motive. The results of the studies on this compelling film confirmed that moviegoers learned lessons about the evils of anti-Semitism and prejudice: *Gentleman's Agreement* proved to be successful in positively altering audiences' perspectives. This film, therefore, serves as a credible example of the power of films to persuade.

The *Exodus* film came out in 1960, and no studies were conducted on its influence or affect on anti-Semitism. Continued fear of provoking increased intolerance is one possible reason, as anti-Semitism still prevailed in America. However, by the late 1950s, it had become much less prevalent and more taboo to flaunt this type of prejudice, especially with increasing knowledge of what had occurred in the Holocaust. Hence, unlike the state of affairs in America when *Gentleman's Agreement* came out in 1947, when higher levels of open anti-Semitism existed, perhaps there was less of a need for a survey on the effects of *Exodus* in 1960, as most Americans understood the evils of chauvinism and intolerance. The American public was less willing to openly exhibit narrow-minded, bigoted hate, which is another possible reason no studies were conducted on the influence of the *Exodus* film. However, the results of the studies on *Gentleman's Agreement* can be compared to demonstrate the highly probable influence *Exodus* had on its huge audience.

In general, most moviegoers visit theatres for amusement, rather than for educational purposes. Though *Exodus'* narrative presents numerous historical and moral lessons, they are presented via entertainment. For historians and for those who prefer factual, documentaries over fictionalized narratives, the discrepancies in *Exodus'* portrayal of the past could be unnerving. However, even if viewers (and readers) were simply taking in the story as fiction, unless they were truly closed-minded, racist, and anti-Semitic, *Exodus* touched their hearts and taught some meaningful lessons. The engaging, fascinating, educational storyline presented an enormous audience with important ethical messages, such as respect for life, the need to care for all humans, and tolerance for the "other."

It is clear most Americans who read or saw *Exodus* were positively affected by, and learned something from, the entertaining epic. Millions of readers and moviegoers were drawn to the story, displaying the intense intrigue and appeal Americans felt. The widespread word-of-mouth popularity, the scores of positive reviews by professional critics, and the

commercial success of both the book and film, in addition to the several formal honors awarded to the storyline, such as Oscars, Golden Globes, and being listed on several prestigious best seller lists, demonstrate its great success. Moreover, the over fifty-year-long scholarly discussion about the effect of the narrative verifies its renown and influence. These many positive features also confirm that any historical inaccuracies portrayed in the story, in addition to the small number of critical reviews, did not greatly matter to, or negatively influence, the American public's perception of *Exodus*.

Based upon the many reasons outlined above, it is clear *Exodus* had a positive affect on American audiences. The story transformed the Jewish "other" into a more familiar people which helped decrease levels of anti-Semitic sentiment and increase open-mindedness and tolerance. Moreover, it enhanced American understanding and support for the Zionist movement. Mae Tinee of the *Chicago Tribune* called *Exodus* "something special," and it truly was.<sup>296</sup>

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<sup>296</sup> Tinee, "Feast of Fine Films in December."

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