Negev Bedouin Identity/ies Development in Segev Shalom

He who has no sheep has nothing
—Clinton Bailey, *A Culture of Desert Survival:*
  Bedouin Proverbs from Sinai and the Negev

Through its policy of land confiscation and forced resettlement, it may be said that the Israeli state has sought over the past four decades to de-territorialize, control, encapsulate, assimilate, proletarianize, and essentially "de-bedouinize" this Arab minority community. As this chapter further reveals, this active policy of social conquest has had little success in accomplishing the state's sought-after goals, but, rather, has only served to strengthen the resolve of the community against these aggressive measures. It has fostered unanticipated consequences that, from a Jewish Israeli perspective, are problematic at best.

As the following suggests, the social changes fostered by the forced sedentarization initiative are manifested by processes of Arabicization and Islamicization, shown in a variety of ways in which the bedouin now express their identity/identities, most especially in the public sphere, as a part of the Palestinian Arab Muslim minority within Israeli society. An active policy of half-measures on the part of the state, seen, for example, in the areas of health and education provision as discussed in the previous chapter, is further elaborated upon in the pages that follow in an attempt to further explain this politicization process.

Although it is, of course, risky to speculate about the future direction and development of identity/identities development in Segev Shalom, I do so here as a corrective to the persistent efforts by a number of other observers who show little reluctance to do so. For, while it is clear that a just resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict would likely be a significant part of this process, it is the contention here that all indications suggest that, for these Arabs at least, concern over Palestinian statehood, while significant, is a low level priority. Rather, the state's *domestic* development policies,

priorities, and agenda, and *not* its foreign policy concerns, are central to staving off what is referred to in the mainstream Jewish Israeli academic and media publications as an impending "*bedouin intifada.*"

The Re-Definition of "Bedouinism" in the Twenty-first Century

Before it is possible to deconstruct twenty-first century Negev bedouin identity/identities development and composition in the post-nomadic Israeli context, it is first necessary to acknowledge and address the changing nature of bedouinism and bedouin behaviors and identity construction, which exist throughout the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) today. While the bedouin of the Negev are situated in a unique and exceptional set of circumstances, their situation must be contextualized within the vast set of changes now taking place in bedouin communities throughout the region.

One of the most recent and complete analyses of the changing meaning and "fluidity of Bedouin-ness" is made by Cole (2003). While Cole acknowledges that there are certain cultural markers (hospitality, honor) that have historically typified bedouin communities, he states from the outset that all/most of bedouin societies and cultures today are in the midst of severe change. Given that bedouinism is a lifestyle and not a national/ethnic group,* it is clear that as the bedouin lifestyle changes, so too is the sense and expression of identity/identities that go along with it.

This is seen most profoundly in the negative manner in which bedouin historically viewed settled life. In recent years, bedouin communities throughout the MENA have accepted a settled lifestyle—some voluntarily, some far less so—with the recognition that it allows and facilitates access to public services, modern conveniences (Cole 2003: 247), healthcare, education, and the like. But such a lifestyle change, Cole argues, in which most bedouin today typically reside in permanent housing, where herds may be "visited" by family members, but are tended by hired hands for wages (2003: 249), suggests that bedouinism, and the nomadic behaviors embedded within it, no longer has the resonance or the relevance that it once had.

Bedouin identity in the MENA does continue to be expressed through tribal connections, however. Unlike the capitalist West, neither geographic/ residential connections to place, nor one's occupation, have replaced tribal affiliation as the primary factor in identity construction. And yet, Cole suggests, as bedouinism declines as an economic and social system, "one might argue that an emergent ethnicity is replacing tribal identities of the past" (2003: 252).

Cole is "hesitant to overstress" this new ethnicity as something greater than Arabness itself and it need not be viewed as such. But what can be said here is that what he is referring to is an "ethnicity" that, unlike the bedouinism of the past, may be defined by what these post-nomads *do not do,* or are *lacking.* The bedouin of today, he suggests, are those who have an ancestral/historical connection to the herd, that is, to those animals they *used to have* (Cole 2003: 259). Their identity is based in large part not upon who they are, but on who they are not (Cole 2003: 254). In a word, bedouin identity in the MENA today is being expressed in terms of *deprivation,* both in terms of what was once theirs and is now lost, as well as in relation to that which is possessed by those around them (culture, access to wealth, employment, and so on), motivating them to "rebellion or resistance against the dominant political economy" (Cole 2003: 253).

The formulation of communal identity based upon perceptions of: 1) who you are, and who you are not, as well as 2) who you perceive yourself to be versus who others perceive you to be, is central to the discussion at hand. A significant aspect of bedouin identity formulation in Arab states stems, in part, from stereotyped images of the bedouin as tribespeople, which differentiate them from the rest of Arab society (Altorki & Cole 2006: 649). In the Negev case, however, bedouin identity formulation today is almost entirely fostered by external forces, that is, based not only upon endogenous changes experienced by similar nomadic peoples throughout the Arab Middle East and the world as a whole in the present-day globalizing era, but, rather, also by exogenous factors rooted in the perceptions and fears of others.

Moreover, much of the academic literature and media well reflects bedouin identity as one of "other," developed as a byproduct of the Jewish/Zionist narrative, rather than as an introspective process to be carried out by those actually undergoing the changes within their community. This narrative is founded largely upon a principle not simply of identifying who is to be *included* in the Israeli collective, but by who is by definition outside of the collective bounds. Thus, the early Zionist movement's "institutions systematically excluded Arabs since their very *raison d'etre was* this exclusion" (Shafir & Peled 2002: 44, emphasis added).

This ideology continues to inform present day Israeli discourse. For example, as the state seeks to conquer and control land/space, terms such as the "Judaization" of Israel/Palestine (Yiftachel 2003: 42) and the "de-Arabization of space" (27) are bandied about, seemingly suggesting that space carries with it the identity of a people, and through the conquest of that land, so too are the people, and the identities they hold, erased or cleansed, "whited-out," and replaced with Jewishness. But, of course, the identity changes taking place among the bedouin of the Negev today are far

more complex and nuanced than this, and such binaries, easy as they may be to understand, do not offer a complete picture of the situation at hand.

For decades, Jewish Israeli scholars have long used such dichotomies regularly in their definitions of the minorities of Israel, typically presenting Arabness as having features which "are often diametric oppositions of features many [Jewish] Israelis see as typical of their own identity" (Rabinowitz 2002: 307). Such binaries thereby foster the use of oppositional relationships (us/them, modern/traditional, urban/rural, developed/undeveloped, advanced/primitive) and so on. In essence, in other words, Jewish Israeli scholars have typically presented the Arab minorities as the "anti-Jews." Such "anti-Jews" may, Rabinovich argues, be typified as providing a counter-narrative to Zionist ideology, as "the underlying emphasis of all these features [of Zionism, based] on modernization, hope, and vision is implicitly strengthened by the depiction of the ultimate *other* as possessing diametrically opposed characteristics" (2002: 319, emphasis added).

The bedouin of the Negev have long been viewed within this context as "peculiar and exotic," living a "life at the margin … [but in] the process of modernization that brings an era to an end" (Rabinowitz 2002: 309–310). Meir's *As Nomadism Ends,* (1997), is but one of many examples of this tradition-modernity continuum, in which bedouinism is at one end and modern Jewish Israeli society is at the other, and the "traditional" lifestyle slowly but surely ceases to exist as patterns of nomadism weaken and stagnate in the face of new processes of sedentarization and development in the modern Jewish state.

Thus, concludes Rabinowitz, the Negev bedouin have long been presented to a receptive Jewish public as both "geographically marginal and politically dependent—the opposite of being metropolitan and self-reliant" (2002: 317). In order to better understand and contextualize this changing sense of identity in Negev bedouin society—as defined both internally as well as by those outside of the community—it will be helpful to examine how identity patterns were first formulated prior to the forced resettlement initiative of the 1960s.

Lastly, it must also be recognized that while such identities as "bedouin" and "Israeli" are quite slippery and malleable and need not (indeed, should not) be equated here with "pastoralist" and "Jew," respectively, so too are such identity markers as "Arab," "Muslim," and similar terms subject to a wide degree of interpretation. While, quite obviously, the Negev bedouin belonged to the larger Arab and Muslim collectives prior to sedentarization, their senses of identity and membership in and with those collectives is undergoing alteration in the post-nomadic period. As but one example, the practice of regularly attending formally held religious prayer services within a mosque setting is not something that was historically part of bed-

ouin culture and society. As will be seen below, this has begun to change in the settled/urban environment, both a reflection of, as well as an incubator for, the development of a variety of newly developing ideals, values, and practices.

Identity in the Negev Before and After De-Territorialization

As discussed in previous works (Dinero 1999; 2004), identity/identities formulation among the Negev bedouin was situated within two interrelated contexts. At the "micro" level, identity formulation stemmed from one's place within one of three different allied groups, *'Arab* (tribesmen), *fellahin* (peasants), and *Abid* (blacks/"Africans"). Members of the *'Arab* are recognized by the others as the "True" bedouin of the region, with the most noble heritage. These tribes originated in the Arabian peninsula (some, like the Azazmeh, via the Sinai), most arriving in the Negev beginning in the latter years of the eighteenth century (Kressel et al. 1991), likely coinciding at some point with Napoleon's Palestinian ventures (Bailey 1980: 36).

Ethnicism in bedouin society may be demarcated by the arrival of the *fellahin* to the Negev thereafter in the nineteenth century. They, as well as a community of blacks who at one time served as slaves to the "True" bedouin, were viewed by the "True" as socially inferior (Marx 1967). These black or "African" bedouin had, until slavery was outlawed with the creation of the state, served in a variety of roles, looking after animals, caring for crops, and carrying out household duties (Beckerleg 2007: 295).

This increased social heterogeneity of a previously homogenous society, combined with greater population pressure on the land, created new political tensions and competition from within for scarce resources. As suggested above, this stratification continued to strengthen throughout the twentieth century and is manifested today in a variety of developmental ways in Segev Shalom and the other planned towns.

In addition to these internal divisions within the in-group, however, traditional Negev bedouin identity was also constructed in terms of how community members saw themselves in counter-distinction from the out-group non-bedouin majority around them. The Israeli case is complicated further by the fact that the non-bedouin, that is, the Jewish Israelis, are also non-Arab, non-Muslim, and are historical enemies to both of these latter groups as a result of the uprooting of the Palestinian Arab population, which resulted during the creation of the State of Israel in 1948.

At the "macro" level of the Negev bedouin world, one may identify two groups, *El-'Arab* (Arabic: Arabs) or *El-Bedu* (Arabic: the bedouin community as a whole), and *El-Yahud* (Arabic: the Jews). Significantly, one need

not embrace the Jewish religion or be an ethnic Jew in order to be considered a member of the realm of *El-Yahud.* That is, anyone not inside the collective is an outsider and is viewed in opposition to "bedouinness," at least as defined within this context.

Just as bedouin attitudes toward the Jews well typify their minority status, Jewish attitudes toward the bedouin similarly fit the dominant group paradigm. Historically, the Arabs of Israel, including the bedouin, have held separate identities as compared to Jewish Israelis. The inability to access "Israeliness" in a nationality sense, due to the separate status held by Israel's Arab citizens, is in part a reflection of an existing system of inequality and seclusion that has plagued the community since the creation of the state (Grossman 1993).

The issue of Israeli identity, of who is or is not an Israeli, is not easily unraveled. Jews who see Israeliness as an extension of Jewishness (or vice versa) by definition exclude the minorities from the equation altogether. Issues related to the Jewish symbolism of what is in truth a binational state, such as the National Anthem and the flag, offer Jewish Israelis a sense of identity that by definition excludes the Arab communities. It is important to note, however, that an expressed sense of "Israeliness" had slowly been on the rise among the Arab communities from the mid 1970s through the mid 1990s, but this trend saw a sharp decrease throughout this sector according to national polls beginning in the late 1990s (Ghanem & Smooha 2001).

Moreover, as will be elaborated upon further below, the idea of one seeing oneself/being seen as "Israeli" also may be moving toward being a *class* distinction, at least as it is beginning to become manifest within the bedouin community. This is significant, stemming from an effort on the part of Israel's planners to use the resettlement sites as socializing agents, drawing together a number of *'Arab* tribes, as well as *fellahi* and *Abid* groups, each of which would reside in its own separate neighborhood (Fenster 1991).

The resettlement initiative has torn the bedouin not only from their geographic roots, but also from their social connections both to one another and to the world in which they were formally situated. At the same time, new internal relationships between the three sub-groups previously at odds with one another, and new connections with the dominant Jewish society at large, have begun to take form. Increasingly, evidence suggests that the Negev bedouin community is internally divided not as it once was, but, rather, between those who have opted for an "urbanized" lifestyle and those who continue to resist the government's relocation initiative. Further, bedouin identity today is increasingly defined by interactions with the dominant Jewish society at large.

Upon first entering bedouin towns today, one is often met with the same repeated refrain, here summed up by a Segev Shalom shopkeeper who lives in the *pezurah,* in an encounter I had with him in early March 2007, when he confronted me in halting, broken English:

> Why did you come *here* [to Segev Shalom] to learn about the bedouin?! You can't learn anything *here*! Do you have a car? Drive out there [pointing towards the hills to the East], go nearer to the mountains. *There,* you will find *bedouin*. *Not here*! When we lived out in the desert, we were free. We lived there without limitations. That's not how it is in the town.

Such attitudes are ever-present throughout bedouin society today, and reflect the views expressed to me years ago that, as the resettlement initiative takes hold and the tent becomes a thing of the past, "there are no more bedouin" in the Negev (Dinero 1999: 25).

Haidar, a local café worker in Segev Shalom, was one of many resettled informants to affirm that town living and the modern values associated with it have negatively impacted bedouin life. He states in 2007:

> No one just sits and drinks and talks like this anymore. It's not like fifteen years ago—it was better then—and it was even better fifteen years before that. Today, everyone is running. They run here, they run there. They have no time for anything. All anyone does anymore is just run.

While such views can be attributed in part to the nostalgia that many communities tend to fall back upon during times of change and transition, this should not in any way weaken the power of the sentiment expressed. If nothing else, the fact that such attitudes sound familiar with the workaday lifestyle of many Americans and other Westerners only reinforces the fact that bedouin identity is not only fluid and layered, but at times fails to connect with the realities of the changes that are now a very real part of bedouin lives and lifestyles.

And yet, from a Jewish planner's perspective, such changes in who and what the bedouin are today well reflect and further reinforce the rationale for the state's resettlement initiative, essentially confirming and affirming the need to facilitate still further the de-nomadization/"modernization" planning process, especially among the youth. As Dudu Cohen puts it (24 April 2007):

> It's clear today that the process that the bedouin are going through is a societal change, cultural change, mentality change, but apparently, you have to go through it. It's not immediate … and so, it's clear to every one that

it's a process. It's a long process that will take its own time … Every society adapts differently to change of this kind. But in the end it will happen, because the bedouin are being absorbed into Jewish Israeli society …

[So now you hear] "Listen, my children want Nike shoes." Once, bedouin didn't think like this. But because he and his kids are walking around the mall in Be'er Sheva, meeting other kids, or his children are studying in Omer [sic] and not in Laqiya, suddenly his children think differently, [they] want different things. So this absorption into the Jewish society, the more modern Israeli society, causes the bedouin to 'go up' a little bit higher.

The planning initiative seeks not only to alter bedouin identity through exposure to "modern Jewish values," but, similarly, to break down the traditional divisions between the *'Arab, fellahi,* and *Abid* sub-groups, "meshing" and interweaving them in a manner that will de-emphasize and eventually break down the historic/traditional bedouin communal structure (Dinero 1999: 25–26). Moshe Moshe, a planner for the Bedouin Authority, has suggested that such interactions are similarly playing a role in the development of a new bedouin culture and identity (15 February 2007):

There's another thing here. I'm not pointing this out in a racist way. *Davka* [Hebrew: on the contrary, of all things] the bedouin themselves point this out. [And that is that] there are the *fellahin.* I'll give you a sentence and I don't care if you quote me anywhere or not, because I say it straight to their faces. The ['True'] bedouin is lazy. He doesn't like to work. He likes it when someone else does the work for him. Let him sleep and let him get up at 11:00 in the morning and say, "Ya, Daughter, where's the *nargeelah* [Arabic: water pipe]? And who does the work for him? The *fellah.* So he doesn't have any choice but to put the *fellah* right next to him.

Now, if the *fellah* wasn't here, what you see here [in the towns] today wouldn't be here. Because he, in essence, gives the stimulation to the ['True'] bedouin to go in the direction of business, the direction of educational enlightenment. He did that—the *fellah.*

As was previously noted, the *fellahi* bedouin have played a key role in the sedentarization process. Still, it is difficult to interpret Moshe's words as less than sharp, even if his sentiment, as well as that of Cohen and other government officials, recognizes the significance of the transitions now occurring within bedouin social structures and the identities that these structures embodied. Thus, this recognition is loaded with certain assumptions, ideology, attitudes, and judgments that are often counter-productive to the developmental goals that they are charged to fulfill.

Before turning to the quantitative data to further illustrate these changes in greater detail, I offer the following unfiltered views as expressed by an ordinary Segev Shalom shop owner (6 March 2007), as they, I believe, stand in stark contrast with the perspective of many Jewish State officials. The views expressed are also useful in the way that this bedouin town dweller, without any prompting on my part, summarizes the issues taking place within bedouin society, as well as how Jewish Israelis view the bedouin within the regional context in which these changes are manifest:

> We're progressing, but we don't really feel it. In the last ten to fifteen years, people have changed for the worse. In the past, if someone died, no one would have a wedding out of respect. Now, someone dies, and their next-door neighbor will have the wedding [anyway]. Or someone is driving to Be'er Sheva and sees someone who needs a ride and drives right past them. People think only about themselves now.

> Why? Because of money. In the past, we had very little. Now people have quite a bit. But in the past, people would just gather at night in the *shiq* of one of the tents and drink and eat and talk about who was sick, who died, who was getting married. Now, in town, everyone has their own *shiq* [Arabic: public sitting area of a tent] in their house. No one sits together. *Everyone wants to be their own sheikh.*

> Before the [2000] intifada, *we were bedouin,* and then there were the Palestinians [in the Territories]. But after the intifada started, they [the Israeli Jews] looked at us and looked at them and said 'you're Arabs. They are Arabs, you are Arabs, it's all the same thing.' [In truth] the Palestinians used to live well. Their world and our world wasn't so different. They lived in villas. Now, we live in different worlds. Things have gotten very bad for them. But the Jews here live in a different world than us too. It is like the difference between 'the heavens and the earth' [a reference to the Hebrew bible].

Data Analysis in Segev Shalom: The Results of De-Bedouinization

The qualitative material above provides one aspect of the changing sense of identity, as expressed internally and as viewed from outside of the Negev bedouin community. Quantitative data gathered over more than a decade in Segev Shalom further informs how identity development is being expressed in the resettled Negev bedouin community.

In order to attempt to parse out how the bedouin see themselves, the 1996, 2000, and 2007 survey respondents were first asked to provide a one

or two word definition of themselves and their families (Table 5.1). Such labels are one form of expression that can be used, along with other criteria, to measure how one sees oneself and situates oneself within the public realm. Such self-labeling suggests shared affinities for some groups, as well as opposition for still others (i.e., who one "is" *and* who one "isn't").

While it is clear that the term *bedouin* was the primary identifying label for over three-quarters of the survey respondents in 1996, with one-quarter choosing alternative primary labels and over 20 percent not including the term *bedouin* as either a primary or even a secondary term of identity, this was no longer true by 2000. The term *bedouin* had been replaced, mostly by the term *Arab* (nearly 40 percent), although *Muslim* was also chosen by more than 20 percent of respondents.

The term *Israeli,* alone or as a suffix or prefix to an identity label, was barely mentioned by survey respondents in 1996, short of the 2 percent who chose it as a secondary label. Similarly, the term *Israeli-Arab,* the identity label of choice utilized throughout Israeli media and government circles, was only cited by 6 percent of the survey respondents as either a primary or secondary identity label. Four years later, the identifier was still not used a great deal, though it was chosen by more than 10 percent of the survey respondents.

By 2007, the picture of self-identification appeared to be somewhat clearer. The percentage of those who chose the *bedouin* identity label were virtually unchanged from the 2000 results. Those choosing the *Palestinian* label similarly held somewhat constant over the study period. But what has changed significantly is the percentage of those who have chosen the *Israeli* label, which has dropped considerably. More dramatically still, the percentage of those now choosing *Muslim* as their primary identity label, *50 percent* of those surveyed, has risen from *less than 10 percent* only a decade earlier. I will return to this issue in further detail below.

Regarding Segev Shalom residents' sense of belonging to the larger Israeli collective, the respondents' answers (Table 5.2) confirm that the vast majority of those surveyed in 1996, 2000, and 2007 *did not* feel that they receive equal treatment under the law, despite the fact that they are Israeli citizens.

Overall, poorer/lower income residents who are newcomers to the town are more likely to state that they feel less equal with other Israelis (*p*=.05). The Tarabeen who have been in Segev Shalom the longest are more likely to express a greater sense of equality with Jewish Israelis than Tarabeen newcomers (*p*=.04). The number that answered "yes" to the question, roughly 20 percent, is just slightly lower than statistics from similar studies asking similar questions about bedouin sense of well-being and inclusion (ex. 29 percent; see Abu-Saad, Yonah, and Kaplan 2000: 57). Although it is appar-

Table 5.1. Identity Labels

	1996 (N=102)	*2000 (N=144)*	*2007 (N=232)*
Arab	0.0	0.0	1.3
Arab Palestinian	0.0	3.5	0.4
Arab Muslim	2.9	21.5	12.5
Arab bedouin	0.0	3.5	2.6
Arab Israeli; Arab Palestinian-Israeli; Arab Israeli-Arab	0.0	9.0	1.7
—*ARAB total*	*2.9*	*37.5*	*18.5*
Palestinian	0.0	0.0	1.7
Palestinian-Israeli	7.8	1.4	1.3
Palestinian Arab	0.0	1.4	0.9
Palestinian Israeli-Arab; Muslim	0.0	4.9	2.6
Palestinian Bedouin	0.0	0.7	0.4
—*PALESTINIAN total*	*7.8*	*8.4*	*6.9*
Muslim	0.0	0.0	11.6
Muslim Arab	3.9	9.7	14.7
Muslim Palestinian	1.0	2.1	4.3
Muslim Bedouin	2.9	9.0	12.9
Muslim Israeli; Muslim Israeli-Arab; Muslim Palestinian-Israeli	1.0	1.4	6.1
—*MUSLIM total*	*8.8*	*22.2*	*49.6*
Bedouin	33.3	0.0	3.4
Bedouin Arab	22.5	2.8	3.0
Bedouin Palestinian	0.0	1.4	0.4
Bedouin Muslim	15.7	8.3	9.9
Bedouin Israeli; Bedouin Israeli-Arab; Bedouin Palestinian-Israeli	3.9	6.9	2.1
—*BEDOUIN total*	*75.4*	*19.4*	*19.0*
Israeli-Arab	2.9	3.5	0.4
Israeli Muslim	0.0	0.0	0.4
Israeli Bedouin	0.0	4.2	0.4
Israeli Israeli-Arab; Israeli-Arab Israeli	0.0	0.0	1.8
Israeli-Arab Muslim	0.0	4.9	0.4
Israeli-Arab Bedouin	0.0	0.0	2.7
—*ISRAELI total*	*2.9*	*12.6*	*6.1*
Other	*2.2*	*0.0*	*0.0*

ent that this sentiment is slowly on the decline for men and women alike, this contention was found to cut across age, gender, and educational lines.

As for expressed identification in religious (i.e., Muslim) terms, the 1996 survey found that use of one of the town mosques was relatively evenly divided (Table 5.3), with half of the respondents (or, in the case of female respondents, their husbands) attending regularly, and half attending rarely or not at all. Interestingly, the percentage of those surveyed attending the mosque dropped slightly in the year 2000. By 2007, however, the trend reversed itself substantially, with nearly 75 percent of respondents claiming regular religious participation.

Table 5.2. *Do You Feel that You are Treated Equally with Other Israelis?*

	1996 (N=102)		2000 (N=149)		2007 (N=221)	
	M	*F*	*M*	*F*	*M*	*F*
No	80	72	78	67	69	62
Yes	9	13	15	15	15	23
Don't know	11	15	7	18	16	15

Sources: 1996, 2000, 2007 Segev Shalom Surveys.

Other factors related to religious observance are also relevant here. Those in the 1996 survey who identified as *bedouin* first (more than 75 percent of all respondents), rather than as *Arabs* or *Muslims,* were significantly more likely to be polygynous (*p*=.04). That is, bedouinness and the "traditional" bedouin practice of having multiple wives were clearly interconnected.

Table 5.3. Stated Regularity of Mosque Attendance/Religious Participation of Respondent/Family Members

	1996 (N=102)	2000 (N=148)	2007 (N=236)
Regular/frequent	48	42	69
Irregular/never	51	58	25
No response/missing	1	0	6

Sources: 1996, 2000, 2007 Segev Shalom Surveys.

And yet, by 2000, the *bedouin* label was far less significant in terms of its connection to polygynous practice. However, those who were polygynous *were* found to be *less* likely to identify themselves using the suffix, prefix, or label *Israeli,* preferring the descriptors *Arab, Palestinian, Muslim,* or *bedouin* instead (*p*=.03).

The 2007 data reveals some interesting twists in this evolving sense of self-identity as it relates to religious practices and behaviors. For example,

those choosing the term *bedouin* as a primary label were found to frequent the mosque more often than those choosing the other identity labels ($p=.03$), most especially those over the age of 40 ($p=.01$). However, the relationship between self-expressed identity and polygyny was to take a turn in the 2007 data. Those in polygynous households were now found to be *more* likely to choose the *Israeli* label as a secondary label ($p=.03$) than the other identity labels, a total reversal from the previous findings. This was especially true for those under 40 years of age ($p=.02$), who are members of the Azazmeh tribe ($p=.01$), with higher overall household incomes ($p=.05$) in the town.

In other words, "Israeliness," based upon this piece of data at least, appears to be evolving into an identity of youth and economic success, expressed by these polygynous respondents (see Dinero 2006, for further discussion) in what those in the West might deem a manner of "conspicuous consumption." Though it is a small *N* (only 47 respondents), a correlation was also found between those who are polygynous and those who chose an *Israeli* label for their primary identity ($p=.04$) as well. I will return to this issue of Israeli identity in further detail below.

Another way of formally expressing one's identity or connection to the larger collective is through political party preference (see Shafir and Peled 2002: 91–92; Smooha & Ghanem 2001) and other similar mechanisms such as voting participation. Such indicators, along with serving in the military, may be viewed as signs of "participation in the democratic process" (Altorki and Cole 2006: 646), or, put another way, as the bedouin's exercising their sense of citizenship and identity within the larger national, rather than tribal, collective.

It has been documented in the media and elsewhere that during the period of this study, overall Negev bedouin support for the Jewish/Zionist political parties declined significantly, paralleling the pattern found among the other Arab minorities, whose support for the Jewish/Zionist parties has similarly declined during this period (see Ghanem & Smooha 2001). In 1992, for example, 17 percent of the bedouin voted for the Labour Party (Illustration 5.1); in the 1996 election, this number declined to only 9 percent ("Comptroller Blasts Government…," 6 May 2002). Structural electoral reform in the early 1990s allowed the bedouin to vote for the Arab parties in large numbers thereafter, splitting their preference for Knesset representation—which saw 60 percent support for the United Arab List in 1996 and 72.5 percent for the Arab parties in 1999—and that for Prime Minister, which continued to favor the Labour candidate (Parizot 2006: 184). Choosing from the Arab party lists has increased significantly since the Six Day War (ICG Report 2004: 5), and, in the most recent election in which Likud's Benyamin Netanyahu ultimately was able to form a ruling coalition

(2009), the Arab parties received virtually all of the bedouin vote ("How They Voted…," 17 February 2009).

Like party choice, voting participation patterns have long been informed, in part, by a lack of direct bedouin buy-in at the local level. As noted in Chapter 3, Segev Shalom and the other neighboring bedouin towns were not governed by local bedouin officials until the elections of Fall 2000 (see "Four Negev Bedouin towns hold first local polls," 19 September 2000). Thus, the impact of instituting local control cannot be overstated. The 2000 elections and those that have occurred since have served to give the bedouin direct rule over their own communities and destinies, not only reflecting "rights and recognition" so essential to a communal sense of respect and honor, but, further, they have also provided the community with a new vehicle through which to express their newly developing sense of post-nomadic bedouin identity.

The data gathered in Segev Shalom bear out these contentions. The 1996 voting rate as determined by the survey results (Table 5.4) was quite similar to previous Arab community participation rates. A number of significant correlations concerning voting patterns also were found among the Segev Shalom survey data. Men, for example, were found to be more likely to vote than women (*p=.03*); in some instances, women who voted stated that their husbands coerced them in their voting choices, a phenomenon that has

Illustration 5.1. Arabic and Hebrew Election Poster in a Bedouin Town: "A Strong Israel with Peres"—1996
Source: Photo by Steven C. Dinero.

Table 5.4. Segev Shalom Voting Participation

	1996 (N=105)		2000 (N=149)		2007 (N=234)	
	M	F	M	F	M	F
Yes	86	63	77	56	61	63
No	13	35	23	44	32	32
Missing/no response	1	2	0	0	7	49

been documented in other bedouin towns as well (Marteu 2005: 281). Also, those whose primary identity label was *bedouin* were more likely to have voted than those with other labels such as *Arab* or *Muslim* (*p*=.00).

Voter participation in the 1999 election in which Ehud Barak was elected Prime Minister found similar, though clearly lower, voting participation rates for men and women alike. That said, those using the *Israeli* identifier were more likely to have voted than others (*p*=.01), although those preferring the label *Arab, Muslim,* or *bedouin* voted at relatively high rates as well. Only those using the label *Palestinian,* some of whom are in fact the second and third wives of bedouin men (who are, of course, Israeli citizens), may not be citizens of Israel, and therefore were less likely to have voted than others in the survey.

The 2007 data sheds further light upon these voting patterns. Although a small percentage of the overall population, those choosing *bedouin* as their primary identity label tended to participate more in the electoral process than those using other identity labels (*p*=.01). Those selecting the *Israeli* label, conversely, were *less* likely to have voted (*p*=.03), particularly members of the Azazmeh tribe (*p*=.02), and those under the age of 40 (*p*=.03). Those stating a preference for the *Israeli* identity label, however, were, predictably more likely to support the Jewish/Zionist parties rather than the Arab or Muslim parties (*p*=.01). This was especially true of those under 40 (*p*=.01) and the Tarabeen (*p*=.00). Lastly, amongst the Tarabeen (though not the Azazmeh), those with higher household incomes had a higher tendency to participate in elections than those from poorer households (*p*=.01).

Finally, among those recent arrivals to the town (arriving within the past 10 years), the Azazmeh respondents were significantly more likely to favor the Jewish/Zionist parties or, even more likely, to state "no party is any good," when asked which party is best able to represent the interests of the bedouin community. Conversely, newcomer Tarabeen tended to favor the Arab/Muslim parties (*p*=.05). Other than time living in the town, no other factor was found that presented a significant difference between the tribe members' party preferences.

Voting patterns reflect a general trend toward an increased sense of exclusion and disenfranchisement. Although Parizot has argued that voting

among the bedouin has been used in the planned towns as "an act of resistance" (2006: 195) and an effort to exercise communal will against state interests, it remains the case that the bedouin of the Negev "have limited influence over national politics considering the little weight of their vote" (Parizot 2006: 200). Nationally, it can be said that "most Arabs in Israel have no confidence in government policy" (Ghanem & Smooha 2001), and this can be measured in part in the bedouin sector by looking at Table 5.5. While it is premature to determine any distinct trend in resident responses, overall satisfaction with the government's ability or willingness to respond to bedouin needs, at least for the moment, has dropped relative to previous responses, and is quite low in any case (roughly one out of four or five respondents).

Table 5.5. *Is The Present National Government Working for the Social/ Economic Interests of the Bedouin Community? (Prime Minister During Survey Period in Italics)*

	1996	*2000 (N=150)* *Ehud Barak*	*2007 (N=236)* *Ehud Olmert*
Yes	n/a	25	17
No	n/a	51	59
Don't know/missing	n/a	24	24

A final survey question concerning political attitudes toward the increasingly popular Islamic parties in Israel further adds to the above data. Respondents were asked to state to what degree they agreed with the following statement: *"The Islamic parties are well-suited to represent the interests of the bedouin community."* Over half of the Segev Shalom respondents agreed with the statement in 1996 (Table 5.6), and about one-third disagreed with it. While the percentage of males agreeing with this statement rose substantially in 2000, women's rates of agreement declined.

By 2007, tribe, education, and income all appeared to now inform the rising sense of support for these Islamic parties. Members of the Tarabeen tribe, for example, who preferred the primary identity label of *bedouin,* showed some greater likelihood of supporting the Islamic parties, although the correlation was not that strong (*p*=.05). Education proved a stronger factor, however; *more* educated men were *more* likely to favor the Islamic parties than the less educated (*p*=.02). Those with *higher incomes* in the town were also *more* likely to express such sentiments of support (*p*=.00).

The 2007 data also offers some insights into the characteristics of those respondents who are most likely to view the government in a positive light. The longer one lives in Segev Shalom, for example, the more likely it ap-

pears that a respondent might offer a more favorable view of the National Government's development efforts in the bedouin sector (*p*=.03). This was especially true of women (*p*=.01), low income residents (*p*=.04), and respondents under 40 years of age (*p*=.05). And yet, this does not provide a full picture of the situation there. Some final correlations may shed yet further light on the issue, namely, comparing how respondents in Segev Shalom answered the above questions as compared to those in the neighboring *pezurah* areas. When asked the same questions, several distinctions were found between the residents living in the two residential environments.

Table 5.6. Expressed Belief that the Islamic Parties Can Help Further the Interests of the Bedouin Community

	1996 (N=102)		2000 (N=148)		2007 (N=236)	
	M	*F*	*M*	*F*	*M*	*F*
Agree	34	78	56	51	51	49
Disagree	46	12	32	27	32	32
Don't know	20	9	12	19	17	19

First, residents of the town were far more likely to express criticism of the government and its bedouin-related policies than those living in the *pezurah* (*p*=.01). Second, it was found that male respondents living in the town also were more likely to express more frequent mosque attendance than those living in the periphery (*p*=.02). That said, male town residents were *less* likely to express support for the Islamic parties than those respondents living in the peripheral settlements (*p*=.01), and both male and female town residents were more likely to state that they feel equal with other Israelis than those living in the periphery (*p*=.00). These statistical correlations each provide an indication of ways in which living in the town is serving as a forum for assimilation as initially envisioned by the state planning authorities. And yet, to a degree, there are also signs of ways in which the towns may be acting as an arena of politicization and further contestation of power in the Negev environment.

Identity as an Expression of Lifestyle and Material Wealth

Overall, the descriptive statistics cited above suggest a shifting sense of identity among the bedouin community of Segev Shalom—which may, to some degree, be a barometer for changes throughout the community as a whole. As noted above, the most obvious change found over the past decade and a half is the fact that increasingly, *bedouin* identity is on the de-

cline, being replaced mostly by expressed identities as *Muslims* and, to a lesser degree, *Arabs.*

As noted, this sentiment is not only measured in terms of the labels with which the bedouin choose to describe themselves, but in terms of their behaviors, attitudes, practices, and beliefs. As a formerly nomadic, now settled, "modernizing" population, the material wealth one has acquired in the resettled environment also says something about who one is, and how one perceives oneself in the ever-evolving global economy. Use of education, healthcare, and other government-provided facilities, all of which were initiated as part of the larger planning agenda, further reveal ways in which change and adaptation play a role in the formulation of the "New Negev Bedouin" identity.

In each survey period, respondents' choices of primary identity labels say much not only about how they see themselves, but also how such views are shaped by personal life situations in the resettled environment. In some instances, correlations between identity formulation and life circumstances were reaffirmed in follow-up surveys, while in other instances, other findings became apparent.

I have noted previously (Dinero 2004), for example, that those who chose the primary label of "bedouin" had lower incomes than others in the 2000 survey ($p=.01$). As a result, they were less likely to own such non-essential material goods as a DVD/VCR ($p=.04$), car (males, $p=.05$) or TV satellite dish (males, $p=.05$). And yet, despite their economic situation, these respondents were *less* likely to raise or grow crops in the town (olives, fruits, vegetables; $p=.03$) as a means of supplementing their incomes.

In 2007, those respondents who chose the term "bedouin" as their primary identity label were isolated out from the rest of the respondents for analysis. Again, it was found that this group was *less* likely to own a DVD/VCR ($p=.02$), *less* likely to own a car ($p=.01$), *less* likely to own a TV satellite dish ($p=.03$), *less* likely to own a clothes washing machine ($p=.00$), and *less* likely to own a personal computer ($p=.01$) than those choosing the other identity labels. Azazmeh tribal members choosing the "bedouin" label were also *less* likely to own a refrigerator ($p=.01$).

As for attitudes toward local services provision, in previous surveys (see Dinero 1999; 2004), those identifying as "bedouin" rated facilities in the town, such as the health clinics ($p=.02$), the mosque (women, $p=.02$), and other social welfare services ($p=.01$), lower than other respondents. Moreover, those using primary identity labels (*Israeli, Israeli Arab,* and *Palestinian Israeli*) were quite similar to those who prefer the primary identity label of *bedouin.* Those using one of the "Israeli" labels were more likely to be critical of town services, such as water service (male, $p=.04$) and the mosque (male, $p=.01$), in previous surveys. Those who used an "Israeli"

identifier were most critical of the town government overall (p=.01) and more likely to state that the government's willingness to respond to resident complaints was no different or even worse than in the past (p=.01) when the town was governed a Regional Council, *Masos,* headed by a Jewish *Rosh Ha'Moatzah,* Ilan Sagie.

Previous findings (Dinero 2004) found that those identifying as *Israelis* tended to live in the town the longest (p=.01), perhaps validating the state's original bedouin town planning agenda of converting the Negev bedouin into "Israelis." Further, at that time, no respondent using the "Israeli" label stated that they came to the town "by force," but rather, stated that they relocated seeking the presumed QOL improvements and opportunities offered by town living.

In the most recent 2007 survey, much of this sentiment was to change, and some clarification appears to now be in order. First, it is becoming increasingly evident that those who identify as *bedouin* and those who identify as *Israelis* have now begun to diverge in terms of their viewpoints, lifestyles, and perceived sense of QOL. A significant difference can now be discerned between those choosing the *bedouin* label and those choosing the *Israeli* label and how they rate service provisions, such as water (p=.05); those who view themselves as *Israelis* are more critical of such services in town, especially the Azazmeh (p=.05).

Second, as noted above, "Israeliness" is increasingly being equated with success and having "made it," while "bedouinness" seems to be connected increasingly with the sense of what one *lacks* or has *lost,* materially or otherwise. Thus, it was found in 2007 that those choosing the *Israeli* identity labels were also more likely to be employed in wage labor positions than those calling themselves *bedouin* (p=.04).

Those who chose the *bedouin* label tend to claim that they relocated seeking a better QOL, or because of a family decision, while those who see themselves as *Israelis* are now more likely to state that they came due to government force, (p=.02). This evolving attitude, which was not present in previous survey findings, is especially apparent among the Azazmeh (p=.02), and those aged 40 and older (p=.01)—that is, the "founding fathers" of Segev Shalom who have been there the longest and are, in truth, the most successful and prosperous. The 2007 data confirm that those choosing the *Israeli* label are more likely to have lived in town longer than the other respondents (11 years or more, i.e., since 1996; p=.04).

What then is one to make of all of these findings? As the bedouin move rapidly away from its historic pastoral nomadic roots and into the unknown, it is clear that identity issues—indeed, an internal identity crisis—will continue to plague the community. This evolving sense of who/what a bedouin is will likely take generations fully to be resolved. In the meantime, how-

ever, what is evident by all accounts is the fact that, as a new sense of "bedouinness" and "Israeliness" struggle to gain traction due to the slippery and uncertain nature of what these identities truly connote, what is flourishing throughout the community is a growing sense of Muslim identity, which is manifest in virtually every aspect of Negev bedouin life. As Abu-Saad, et al. affirm, "those unable to identify with the national corporate identity of the state [will] ultimately seek out other corporate identities with which to identify, such as the Islamic movement and Palestinian nationalism" (2000: 59).

While the data from the past surveys reveals that Palestinian nationalism is not strongly expressed in Segev Shalom, the rise of Muslim identity *is* considerable, and a force that requires further discussion. It is to this topic that I now turn.

Islamicization and the "Inevitability" of a Bedouin Intifada

It has been my contention for some years that, though the bedouin have been cut from their traditional spatial, social, and economic connections with the ongoing resettlement initiative, they have not become integrated into the larger Israeli collective (Dinero 1999; 2004). Rather than align with Jewish Israeli society, the bedouin have been drawn to the Arab and Muslim worlds with which they hold a common sense of social and economic status and identity, built in large part upon shared opposition with the dominant, Jewish Israeli State apparatus.

The issue of Islamicization within bedouin societies in Palestine is not new. Layish (1984) was one of the first to document this phenomenon in the early 1980s in the nearby bedouin community in the Palestinian West Bank. While Layish noted that popular "folk" beliefs and practices "still reign supreme" (1984: 39) and that there was only "superficial orthodoxy" apparent among the bedouin of the Judean Desert at that time, he clearly detected an increasing movement toward the embracing of orthodox Muslim values, ideals, and behaviors, most especially as seen through the increasing reliance and use of the then nascent *shariah* court system. His explanation for this development was straightforward: as these nomads began to settle, they came into more regular contact with orthodox Islam. Further, the more settled bedouin had greater access to formal education, both in their secular as well as religious studies (Layish 1984: 39). Thus, he concluded, "above all what brings the Bedouin closer to orthodox Islam are the exigencies of the modern state" (Layish 1984: 40).

Sheikh Salam Abu-Kalif, Imam of the central mosque (Illustration 5.2) in Segev Shalom since 1992, offers an explanation (28 June 2007) for the

increasing level of Muslim practices, observance, and identity in the Negev bedouin community that parallels Layish's observations nearly 25 years earlier—that is, that the foundation is rooted in the formalized educational opportunities brought about through resettlement. He states:

> In 1983, there were no mosques in the Negev bedouin community. People in those days didn't [even] know the mourning prayers to recite when someone died. They were ignorant, uneducated. But around then ten mosques were built [nearly all in the planned towns]. And today there are many, in the towns and outside. The population has grown so much since then. How old is someone born in '83—24, 25?

> And these young people, what do they want? They feel the need to connect to the Quran. *Slowly but surely people want to know more, they want to learn, to learn the prayers, to learn how to pray. They want to* <u>*read*</u> … Yes, there are some people who still do not understand Islam … But this is mostly among the older people, those who are illiterate, who are uneducated.

The above quantitative data confirm the Sheikh's point, revealing that the bedouin today are showing an increased sensed of identity with the Muslim world through their stated sense of identity, their voting patterns, preferences, and so on.

Further, they are behaving in ways that solidify this connection; mosque attendance, polygyny, veiling in full *hijab* and *niqab* (Arabic: modesty dress, see Chapter 6), and *omra* and *haj* participation have all increased substantially over the past decade, as the bedouin feel a sense of identity and affinity with the greater Muslim world—and, incidentally, they have the ability because of access to global media (El-Jazeera, El-Arabiyya) and improved relations with the Arab states to
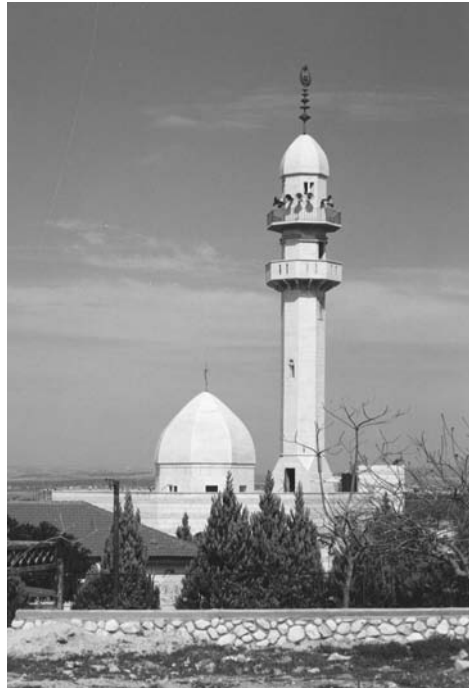
Illustration 5.2. Central Mosque, Segev Shalom
Source: Photo by Steven C. Dinero.

interact with neighboring Muslim communities who themselves now espouse a sense of heightened Muslim awareness.

The involvement of the Islamic movement in local bedouin politics, a process that evolved in the 1980s but truly began to develop fully in the 1990s (Marteu 2005: 280) as the research for this book was under way, is both a cause and an effect of these developments. The movement is now able to make inroads into the community as a result of these changes, and in cyclical fashion, it is able to further a more Islamicist, nationalist agenda, which does raise concern when it often presents a perspective that is "alienated and opposed to the character of the State" (Ghanem & Smooha 2001).

Jewish Israelis are, of course, aware of the changes in bedouin social behaviors and values. In some instances, government leaders further add to this dynamic by instilling fear, concern or distrust about the role and growth of the Arab communities (ICG 2004: 19). And yet, rather than see their role in the politicization of the bedouin community resulting in large part from the forced settlement and dislocation of this historically quiescent, insolated population, the state and Jewish citizenry alike have instead begun a campaign of "awareness" in preparation for what is believed to be an inevitable "bedouin *intifada*" ("A Beduin Powder Keg…," 8 September 2003; "The Bedouin intifada: It's not if, but when," 27 May 2004). The rapid increase in the bedouin population, one of the highest in the world, only further adds to their fears and is described increasingly as a "demographic time bomb." Jewish Israeli media and even a few academics are complicit in this trend, increasingly emphasizing the "non-Israeli" nature of bedouin voting behaviors, rising Muslim behaviors, and the like.

One of the foremost academics in this regard is Professor Arnon Soffer of the Geography Department at Haifa University. In an oft-cited publication (mentioned, for example, in "The Bedouin intifada: It's not if, but when," 27 May 2004) entitled, "Trends among the Bedouin in the northern Negev—A threat to the entire Negev," he writes that:

> It is no longer possible to postpone addressing the Bedouin problem, unless Israeli leaders are prepared to throw up their hands and relinquish the entire Negev … In the Negev, there is a combination of the wildest demographics in modern history (and, perhaps, all time) with physical expansion over land to an extent and with audacity unwitnessed until now.
>
> Both of these phenomena have been accompanied by acts of crime and terror. The entire establishment responds to this development with a show of weakness and trembling knees, and does not know what to do. The Bedouin understand all too well, and the Negev has descended into anarchy.

The "anarchy" he refers to may take many forms, all of which, in his opinion, are examples that the "*intifada*" is not "on its way," but rather, has already arrived (Soffer, 21 June 2007). Burglaries, car thefts, vandalism—what might in the West be referred to as "petty crime"—has taken on nationalistic proportions in today's Negev. In a particularly well-known case, for example, investigators attributed disappearing road signs in the Negev to bedouin who, they suggested, sought through their theft to either encourage an increase in road accidents, or, alternatively, to smuggle the metal from the signs to the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza in order to make more Qassam rockets to be used against Israel ("The Bedouin intifada: It's not if, but when," 27 May 2004).

Statistics also are bandied about in order to prove the "disloyalty" of the bedouin and their outsider status vis-à-vis the dominant mainstream Israeli society. A Haifa University survey finding, that 42 percent of the Negev bedouin reject Israel's right to exist (Ghanem & Smooha 2001), for example, is used in the media ("There's a limit even to Bedouin patience," 20 March 2002) to further this point, though it is not clear from this finding whether those sampled were town dwellers, those living in unrecognized, "illegal" *pezurah* communities subject to demolition (some 40 percent of the bedouin population), or both.

Thus, while one might argue that such charges of bedouin disloyalty leading to hostility, violence or worse are speculative at best, this sort of paranoia is increasingly commonplace throughout the Negev, if not the country. As a result, policies against the bedouin, all in the name of "security," are making the lives of the bedouin increasingly difficult, as Jewish Israelis continue to "otherize" them in ever increasing ways.

Beyond official policy, public sentiment is similarly informed by these views. Perhaps the most infamous example of this sentiment is the case of Shai Dromi, a Jewish Israeli rancher who accidentally killed a would-be sheep thief, a bedouin, when he shot at him as he fled Dromi's ranch in early 2007. In a matter of days, Dromi's story became an instant cause celebre ("License to Kill?," 17 February 2007). Hebrew bumper stickers sporting the text "We are All Shai Dromi" were seen throughout the Negev soon after the event ("The Wild South," 1 March 2007), as support swelled for Dromi's immediate release from jail for what was viewed as a fully justified act, and not a crime.

One final example of the degree to which Jewish paranoia, "otherization," racism, or possibly a combination of all of these, is directed toward the bedouin is the publication in the summer of 2008 that a new program had been launched in the Qiryat Gat schools aimed at discouraging Jewish girls from developing "romantic" relationships with bedouin men ("Video: Kiryat Gat...," 1 July 2008). Designed to warn "innocent" girls about these

"exploitative Bedouin," a video entitled *Sleeping with the Enemy* was designed and shown by the program creators in cooperation with local police and government agencies in an effort to encourage them to steer clear of this "abnormal phenomenon." The video explains how girls need to "be careful" of encounters with such men, for, as Chaim Shalom of the Qiryat Gat Department of Welfare Services explains it, "[the Jewish girl] goes to bed with the enemy, and she doesn't even know it."

The bedouin are, of course, well aware of how they are viewed in Jewish Israeli society. Saeed El-Harumi, *Rosh Ha'Moatzah* of Segev Shalom, put it simply, stating (28 May 2007): "when they look at us, everything they see that is different [from them] they determine that it is either 'extreme' or 'stupid.'" Kher El-Baz, Director of Social Services in the town, states his view about the "otherization" of bedouin identity more bluntly (3 June 2007; emphasis added):

> The way Jewish society sees us is much worse than in the past. This is important in terms of the welfare of my community, as well as the welfare of the bedouin as Israelis, in terms of how they see themselves. It's like when I go to the airport, and I'm treated a certain way. I very much respect security, I care about security, I need it, I benefit from security, but what they do to us is not about security. They know it and we know it …

> Six or seven years ago it wasn't this bad, but in the last year or so it's really gotten worse. This to me is an indication that things in general are worse. And this happens with my credentials. So how is it for others? So our place here, how people feel toward us, is worse I think. Money alone won't change this, it's about perception. Things like the media have to also help.

> If you are a good Zionist, this situation here shouldn't be OK. You shouldn't feel that this is acceptable. Not that some of us are not to blame, but policymakers are the ones who can make the difference … *No other community in Israel has tried harder to become part of Israeli society than the bedouin—to gain a sense of belonging.* The Jews are drafted, but the bedouin will volunteer for the Army, just to belong. We do this because we want to, not because we have to. So what else can we do? Ask what the bedouin feel about their citizenship these days and you'll get some 'weird' answers.

Though many are cognizant of these prevailing concerns as minority citizens in a Jewish State, this process of "otherizing" has, it seems, taken on a far greater edge in recent days. As Kher El-Baz concludes (3 June 2007):

> The Jews are using the fear of Arabs or Muslims to make life here miserable. I ask you, "do I, as a bedouin, have a right to feel like a human being or not?" And furthermore, *Do they see us as citizens, or as enemies?*

There are few answers here, and the trends that appear to be underway amount to a fait accompli. Other bedouin informants, for example, are ready to make the Jewish Israelis' policies and behaviors self-fulfilling prophecies. Perhaps a final statement (6 March 2007) from a 33-year-old named Yusuf who lives in Bir Hadaj, a recently recognized Abu-Basma bedouin settlement some 20 kilometers south of Segev Shalom, may best sum up how many in the bedouin sector see themselves and their newly developing identities as reflected back to them through the looking glass of Jewish Israeli society:

> There are over 1,000 people here [in Bir Hadaj] and yet, we have no electricity service. It's the 2000s, and we are the only people in the world who still have no electricity. How can this be? This is supposed to be a democracy! There is a Jew who lives here in the area who has electricity, water, everything! But the 1,000 bedouin here have nothing. This is a democracy? This is not a democracy. Israel is like Iraq under Saddam. There is no democracy here.

> And there is no work here. The Jews say we are all thieves and deal drugs. Yes, it's true, they are right. And you know why? Because of them! Because we have no choices. Give us all the chance to work and no one will be selling drugs. But when you need clothes and food and you want things like everyone else has, you choose what you have to choose.

> I defended this country. I am a citizen—look at this [he says, showing me his *teudat zehut*, his Israeli photo I.D.], you see, it says '*Medinat Yisrael*' [Hebrew: the State of Israel]. But I am really just a guest here. Where can we go? Gaza? There's a war there. And besides, <u>*this is my country.*</u> I fought them [the Palestinians] in the Army to be <u>here</u>—why should I now have to go somewhere else? But we have no future in this country. One day there is going to be a *ha'fla'a* [Arabic: *lit.,* a big party, that is, a battle] between the bedouin and the Jews, or maybe all the Arabs here. You see, there's just no hope for us.

Data collected in Segev Shalom and the neighboring *pezurah* suggest that for the moment, such views are, fortunately, exceptional. But the level of fear and resentment is growing, and with it, uncertainty has created a sense of anomie that cannot be overlooked. As the previous chapters have

shown, role changes are manifest in every aspect of Negev bedouin society today. But, as the following chapter reveals, none are as relevant, significant or profound as those relating to the changing role of the Negev bedouin woman.

Note

*And, thus, the word "bedouin" is in lower case throughout this text, except when quoted.