



# Recovered Roots: Collective Memory and the Making of Israeli National Tradition

*Yael Zerubavel*

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## **Recovered Roots: Collective Memory and the Making of Israeli National Tradition** Yael Zerubavel

Because new nations need new pasts, they create new ways of commemorating and recasting select historic events. In *Recovered Roots*, Yael Zerubavel illuminates this dynamic process by examining the construction of Israeli national tradition.

In the years leading to the birth of Israel, Zerubavel shows, Zionist settlers in Palestine consciously sought to rewrite Jewish history by reshaping Jewish memory. Zerubavel focuses on the nationalist reinterpretation of the defense of Masada against the Romans in 73 C.E. and the Bar Kokhba revolt of 133-135; and on the transformation of the 1920 defense of a new Jewish settlement in Tel Hai into a national myth. Zerubavel demonstrates how, in each case, Israeli memory transforms events that ended in death and defeat into heroic myths and symbols of national revival.

Drawing on a broad range of official and popular sources and original interviews, Zerubavel shows that the construction of a new national tradition is not necessarily the product of government policy but a creative collaboration between politicians, writers, and educators. Her discussion of the politics of commemoration demonstrates how rival groups can turn the past into an arena of conflict as they posit competing interpretations of history and opposing moral claims on the use of the past. Zerubavel analyzes the emergence of counter-memories within the reality of Israel's frequent wars, the ensuing debates about the future of the occupied territories, and the embattled relations with Palestinians.

A fascinating examination of the interplay between history and memory, this book will appeal to historians, sociologists, anthropologists, political scientists, and folklorists, as well as to scholars of cultural studies, literature, and communication.

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