

Sacrifice and the Creation of Group of Identity: Case Studies of Gallipoli and Masada

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It has often been acknowledged that nations are born of war. Yet recent scholarship suggests that it is not the sacrifice of the enemy that creates a unified group identity, but the sacrifice of the group's own.¹ This essay demonstrates the truth of this hypothesis on the basis of two primary case studies: the 'sacrifices' made at Gallipoli and Masada. I will consider the role of these sacrifices in the formation of Australian and Israeli national identity and in ensuring the enduring cohesion of these nations.² Regarded as a seminal epoch in Australian cultural development and indeed the birthing moment of its national character, the battles fought at Gallipoli during the First World War remain at the core of Australian identity. Similarly the narrative of Masada, describing the moment during the Jewish revolt of 70 CE when 960 'Zealots' took their own lives atop the famous fortress rather than be captured by invading Roman forces, remains one of Israel's most significant and culturally defining national myths. In both narratives, the theme of sacrifice is fundamental. In exploring the reasons for this, it is important to recognise the historical context in which these 'sacrificial narratives' were adopted, being moments of cultural transition for the Australians attempting to break away from the British and for the early Hebrew settlers in Palestine attempting to establish a solid and unified identity.

¹ In their seminal essay, 'Blood Sacrifice and the Nation: Revisiting Civil Religion', Marvin and Ingle assert: 'We construct our identity from the flesh and blood of group members. All enduring groups, national or otherwise, rely on this sacrificial identity'. C Marvin and D W Ingle, 'Blood Sacrifice and the Nation: Revisiting Civil Religion', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 64:4, 1996, 772.

² Whilst in neither case are the 'victims of sacrifice' understood to have been slain directly by the hand of the incipient nation, their deaths are accepted as having been a sacrifice ultimately offered on the group's behalf. Thus the act is a kind of surrogate killing, in which the emerging group is able to reap the rewards of a powerful sacrifice without having slain the victims personally.

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The need for blood sacrifices during such periods of instability is explained by their ritualistic function: if successful, rituals are understood not only to redefine time and space, but also to purify and regenerate the old. Moments of sacrifice are utilised not only as points of cultural origin, but also as a means to the destruction of a stale, unwanted identity. This is true in both the cases presented here. The efficacy of the sacrifice also depends on the nature of the ‘sacrificial victims’. In the cases of Gallipoli and Masada, the victims are acknowledged by their respective nations as being ‘sacred’, as is demonstrated by the collection of their ‘holy relics’. The effectiveness of the sacrifice depends upon the ‘willingness’ of the victim. Further reason still for the importance of sacrifice is found in the concepts of substitution and representation, so prominent in anthropological and sociological studies of sacrifice. The victim does not represent himself, but is a substitute for an ‘other’. Indeed, the victims of Gallipoli and Masada are viewed by their respective nations to symbolise the ‘group ideal’, the very personification of the desired ‘national character’. The victims come to represent the group collective, demonstrated by their portrayal as founding fathers or blood ancestors. Through the sacrificial acts at Gallipoli and Masada, Australians and Israelis effectively committed a symbolic self-sacrifice – the most powerful and effective form of sacrifice. Certainly, the power of sacrifice to instigate unity is acknowledged within the narratives. Were these events not imbued with the ideology of sacrifice, they would surely have been considered both horrific and morally corrupt. The fact that they are culturally understood as acts of sacrifice facilitates the creation of national identities and enduring group cohesion.

Described as being at the very centre of national identity and civil religion,³ the Australian Anzac tradition has remained an intrinsic cultural facet throughout the twentieth century.⁴ Annually, on 25 April, Australians gather to commemorate the fallen in a day so filled

³ Peter H Hoffenberg, ‘Landscape, Memory and the Australia War Experience, 1915-18’, *Journal of Contemporary History* 36:1, 2001, 114.

⁴ The term ‘Anzac’, an acronym for the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps, refers to the men of these two nations who fought during the First World War. Within the Australian Anzac tradition, the New Zealand role is often forgotten.

with ritual, liturgy and solemnity as to have been described by Richard White as serving to fill a religious need within a secular society.⁵ This day is manifestly treated with a greater sense of gravity as a day of national unity than is Australia Day.⁶ Whilst Anzac Day officially commemorates the sacrifice given during all the wars fought by Australians, at the nucleus of the tradition lies one moment in history. At dawn on 25 April 1915, the first Anzac troops landed on Turkey's Gallipoli peninsula as part of the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force, a unit which had been assembled with the purpose of forcing Germany's Ottoman ally out of the War.⁷ Within the first ten days at Anzac Cove, two thousand Australians were killed or died of wounds, making it the greatest loss of life in the history of white Australians at war.⁸ In total approximately seven thousand six hundred Australians died at Gallipoli and, whilst roughly six times that figure died on the Western Front, the period spent fighting at the tiny beach peninsula has remained a seminal moment within Australian consciousness and one which has long been considered the moment of genesis for Australian national identity.

Within the Australian collective memory and the national mythology of the Anzac tradition, the theme of sacrifice is dominant. Anzac Day liturgies provide an annual reminder that almost half of the eligible population of Australia were recruited by the Australian Imperial Force and Royal Australian Navy in the First World War, and two of every three of these were either killed or wounded.⁹ Although the

⁵ Richard White, *Inventing Australia: Images and Identity 1688-1980* (Sydney, 1981) 136.

⁶ In *The Anzac Legend*, Alistair Thompson acknowledges that 'On Australia Day, which commemorates white settlement ... we go to the beach. On Anzac Day, hundreds of thousands of people attend memorial services and marches around the country'. Alistair Thompson, 'The Anzac Legend: Exploring National Myth and Memory in Australia' in S Samuel and P Thompson (eds) *The Myths We Live By*, (London & New York, 1990) 74.

⁷ K S Inglis, *Sacred Places: War Memorials in the Australian Landscape* (Melbourne, 1998) 76.

⁸ In more than three years in South Africa, only one quarter of this number were killed. *Ibid*, 85.

⁹ *Ibid*, 92.

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British had a higher proportion of men at arms, Australian casualties were proportionally far higher, due to the British tendency to position their own troops at the rear and to send the Australians to the front line. A consequence was the creation of a strong sense of being the ‘sacrificial victim’.¹⁰

As the tragic events at Gallipoli represent a seminal moment in Australian history, so too do the events of Masada in the history of Israel. Since its rediscovery and archeological excavation in the early nineteenth century, the narrative of Masada has become one of the most important Israeli national myths.¹¹ Built by King Herod around 30 BCE on an Israeli plateau four hundred meters above the Dead Sea,¹² the fortress at Masada was to become famous for its role in the Jewish revolt of 70 CE. Josephus reports that about ten thousand Romans besieged the fortress up the monumental slopes of Masada and finally conquered the fortress walls, burning down its remaining barricade. The leader of the Jewish rebels, Elazar ben Yair, is reported by Josephus to have realised their inevitable fate and inspired his 960 comrades with impassioned speeches to take their own lives rather than be enslaved by the Romans.¹³ When finally the Romans entered the stronghold, they are reported to have discovered the horror and gore of almost 1000 slain men, women and children. Masada subsequently came to be recognised as the location of the Zealots’ last stand.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ For clarification of this point, a note on Israeli civil religion is necessary. According to M J Aronoff, between one fourth and one third of Israeli Jews consider themselves to be Orthodox or religiously observant, while the vast majority of Israelis retain only certain aspects of tradition or otherwise are not religiously observant at all. Aronoff claims that most do connect their Israeli identities to Jewish history, tradition, culture, ethics and religious symbols, however. Masada and the national rituals it has come to inspire, are listed by Aronoff as highly significant in Israeli civil religion. M J Aronoff, ‘Civil Religion in Israel’, *RAIN* 44, 1981, 2-4.

¹² E Thomas Levy (ed) *The Archaeology of Society in the Holy Land* (London, 1995) 466.

¹³ Flavius Josephus, *The Jewish War* VII, cited in Y Yadin, *Masada: Herod’s Fortress and the Zealot’s Last Stand* (London, 1985) 224-230.

Despite the antiquity of the events at Masada, the narrative has proven to possess the same unifying powers demonstrated by the Gallipoli tradition. According to Yael Zerubavel, ‘Masada is elevated beyond its narrowly prescribed historical and geographical location to embody the Hebrew nation’s life and soul’.¹⁴ The significance of Masada as a unifying narrative is evidenced by the various national, military and religious ceremonies – such as youth pilgrimages, soldier’s oath-taking rituals and *bar mitzvahs* – which have taken place at the site since its rediscovery almost a century ago.¹⁵ Unquestionably, the Masada narrative is a powerful ingredient in both Israeli identity and nationalism.¹⁶

Once again, the theme of sacrifice within the Masada narrative is fundamental to its nature as a unifying myth of national identity. In interviews conducted in the 1970s with numerous Israeli students and adults, Zerubavel reports the subjects to have repeatedly described the Masada defenders as having fought ‘until the last breath’, ‘until the last drop of blood’ and as having ‘died on the altar of our homeland’.¹⁷ Since its excavation in 1932, Masada has seeped into Israeli collective memory as a historical moment in which the ancient national spirit of patriotism was embodied through an act of extreme sacrifice.

In exploring the mechanisms of sacrifice and its ability to create group cohesion and identity, it is important first to establish the historical context in which the group requires either an act of sacrifice or the adoption of a sacrificial narrative. In their discussion ‘Blood Sacrifice and the Nation’, Marvin and Ingle describe a key factor of ‘successful blood sacrifice rituals’¹⁸ as the ability to redefine time and

¹⁴ Yael Zerubavel, *Recovered Roots: Collective Memory and the Making of Israeli National Tradition* (Chicago and London, 1995) 177.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, 195.

¹⁶ A Weingrod, ‘How Israeli Culture was Constructed: Memory, History and the Israeli Past’, *Israel Studies* 2:1, 1997, 234.

¹⁷ Yael Zerubavel, ‘The Death of Memory and the Memory of Death: Masada and the Holocaust as Historical Metaphors’, *Representations* 45, 1994, 76.

¹⁸ That is, those which give rise to enduring unity within the group.

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space. 'Win or lose' they write, 'history begins from this moment'.¹⁹ It would appear, then, that it is during periods of cultural, national or geographic transition that a sacrifice is required. Such moments create instability and a dangerous uncertainty. In her seminal work *Purity and Danger*, Mary Douglas describes the potential violence that lies in transitional states 'simply because transition is neither one state or the next, it is undefinable'.²⁰ In the case studies here, the national group appears to achieve the stability of group cohesion and identity during periods of extreme cultural transition through what is understood to be a sacrifice of the group's own.

The First World War, and the battles at Gallipoli in particular, are often seen to represent the moment of independence for the Australian nation, offering a chance for its true national character to emerge. Despite its Federation in 1901, Australia had not yet succeeded in producing a unique identity. Indeed, the power of blood and war to unify and create a distinct national identity was evidently a component of the *zeitgeist*: the years preceding World War I were filled with the hope and anticipation of conflict, Australians being urged to be 'fit and ready for battle'.²¹ Australian war historian Ken Inglis asserts: 'She was not yet ... the altar [had] not yet been stained with crimson as every rallying center of a nation should be'.²² After the huge loss of life at Gallipoli, Australia's prophetic hopes of a national identity born of blood and sacrifice were realised, reflected in such works as Banjo Patterson's 1915 poem 'We're All Australians Now': The mettle that a race can show/ Is proved with shot and steel/ And now we know what nations know/ And feel what nations feel.²³

¹⁹ Marvin and Ingle, *op cit*, 775.

²⁰ M Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concept of Pollution and Taboo* (London and New York, 2002) 119.

²¹ White, *op cit*, 126.

²² Ken Inglis, 'Anzac and the Australian Military Tradition' in John Lack (ed) *Anzac Remembered: Selected Writings of K S Inglis* (Melbourne, 1998) 21.

²³ Banjo Paterson, cited in D Stanley, 'Parallels between Masada and Gallipoli in History and Literature', *The Australian Journal of Jewish Studies* 16, 2002, 241.

Also at a time of geographic and cultural transition, the Masada narrative emerged as one of great national significance during the formative years of the new Hebrew culture in Palestine. By the time the state of Israel was officially founded in 1948, the site at Masada had become a powerful symbol of national identity, enthusing pilgrimages and arousing inspiration.²⁴ An educational text on Masada for young adults reads: ‘Masada has been the source of power and courage to liberate the country, to strike roots in it’.²⁵

Although the Masada myth is arguably Israel’s most significant sacrificial narrative, another instance of sacrifice has proved to have a similarly unifying effect during the unstable time of the *Yishuv*²⁶ in Palestine, in the years preceding the rediscovery and adoption of the Masada narrative. In March 1920, eight Zionist settlers died in the defense of Tel Hai, a small settlement in Upper Galilee.²⁷ Whilst there had been other fatal disputes between Jews and Arabs in the preceding decade, this event was viewed as the first in which Jews sacrificed their own lives defending the national revival of their homeland.²⁸ The group’s commander and one of its fatalities, Yosef Trumpeldor, became a national hero. Moments before his death, his doctor asked how he was feeling, to which he responded, ‘Never mind, it’s worth dying for the country’.²⁹ Trumpeldor’s willingness to sacrifice himself became a major theme of the commemorative narrative attributed to the events at Tel Hai and his final words soon became a national slogan: ‘It is good to die for our country’. Tel Hai Day became a national memorial day, in which both public and private ceremonies were held for the ‘fallen heroes’. The Hebrew daily *Ha-Aretz* described with excitement that at Tel Hai ‘a holy

²⁴ Yael Zerubavel, ‘The Multivocality of a National Myth: Memory and Counter-Memories of Masada’ in R Wistrich and D Ohana (eds) *The Shaping of Israeli Identity: Myth, Memory and Trauma* (Great Britain, 1995) 110.

²⁵ Shmaryahu Gutman’s introduction to *Ilan, Li-Metsada be-Ikvot ha-Kana'im*, 3, cited in Zerubavel, *op cit*, 68.

²⁶ The ‘*Yishuv*’ is the term given to the early Jewish settlers in Palestine at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries.

²⁷ Although only eight people were killed, a mere 57 000 Jews occupied Palestine at this time, making Tel Hai a proportionately significant sacrifice.

²⁸ Zerubavel, *Recovered Roots*, 39.

²⁹ *Ibid*, 41.

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place has been created' where pilgrims will flock annually.³⁰ This has indeed been demonstrated, pilgrimages to the site having become a national ritual. Following the conflict, several groups adopted the names Tel Hai and Trumpeldor as part of their identity, even despite their opposing political positions,³¹ creating a deep sense of national unity despite superficial divisions. This moment of sacrifice was, in Zerubavel's words, symbolic of 'the rebirth of the nation and the beginning of a new era'.³²

The incidents of group sacrifice presented in the Gallipoli, Masada and Tel Hai narratives are culturally potent not only because they enabled a new beginning, but also because they symbolically demonstrated the death of the old. The purity and regenerative power of sacrificial blood has long been understood.³³ Indeed, Eliade concluded that 'for something genuinely new to begin, the vestiges and ruins of the old cycle must be completely destroyed'.³⁴ Both the Australians and the Hebrews in Palestine utilised a sacrifice of their own members to rid themselves of a stale and unwanted past, and to form a new cultural identity.

It is widely accepted that Australia needed the baptism of a great war in order to shed itself of its colonial nature. The idea of Britain as 'home'³⁵ was still uppermost in Australian consciousness, but worse still was its national and cultural persona as the 'Sodom of the South'. Until 1915, the only understanding of Australians as a 'chosen people' was captured in a popular jest that their ancestors were

³⁰ *Ibid*, 42.

³¹ *Ibid*, 41.

³² *Ibid*, 43.

³³ A culturally relevant example is given by Jacob Neusner, who describes a ritual amongst the ancient Israelite communities in which lepers were 'made clean' through a rite of purification. This involved three separate sacrificial acts, two of birds and the third of three lambs. In order to be purified, the leper was ritualistically cleansed with the blood of the animals, 'Thus the priest shall make atonement for him, and he shall be clean'. Jacob Neusner, *The Idea of Purity in Ancient Judaism: The Haskell Lectures 1972-1973* (Leiden, 1973) 19.

³⁴ M Eliade, *Myth and Reality*, trans W R Trask (New York, 1975) 51.

³⁵ Deborah Gare, 'Britishness in Recent Australian Histography', *The Historical Journal* 43:4, 2000, 1148.

‘chosen by the best judges in England’.³⁶ The Great War offered the Australian nation salvation. Australian Prime Minister W M Hughes declared in 1916 that such efforts had prevented Australia from ‘slipping into the abyss of degeneracy and becoming flabby ... War has purged us, war has saved us from physical and moral degeneracy and decay’.³⁷ The transformation from convict filth to honourable Australians, the rebirthing of an entire national identity, was made possible through the purification of blood sacrifice.

The sacrifice of the early Hebrew settlers made at Tel Hai is also celebrated as the moment when the image of the ‘exilic Jew’ was destroyed and a new, courageous, commanding identity emerged. Tel Hai is celebrated as the site of the origin of the nation,³⁸ annual pilgrimages recognising the moment when it was baptised in sacrificial blood. Tel Hai is described by Zerubavel as providing ‘a point in time in which the Yishuv society could celebrate its origins and highlight its symbolic departure from Exile’, annual memorials of the event commemorating ‘those who sacrificed their lives to bring about this rebirth’.³⁹ A large inscription at the Tel Hai memorial site reads the germane ancient prophecy: ‘In blood and fire Judaea fell; in blood and fire Judaea will rise’.⁴⁰ The Masada narrative was similarly adopted by early Zionists as a myth of renewal, in which the ‘new Jew’ would take up the call to fight and defend what was previously lost. Zionist historian Yosef Klausner writes: ‘Who knows if, in addition to the Torah, the memory [of Masada] ... did not save the Jewish people from stagnation and extinction?’⁴¹ The themes of destruction of the old, regeneration and the creation of the new once again revolve around a core sacrificial act.

Whilst the historical and cultural contexts of ‘successful’ blood sacrifices are significant, examination of the role and nature of the

³⁶ Inglis, ‘Australian Military Tradition’, 461.

³⁷ Prime Minister W M Hughes, cited in White, *op cit*, 127.

³⁸ Zerubavel, *Recovered Roots*, 46.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 45.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ Yosef Klausner, ‘History of the Second Temple’, 1951, cited in Zerubavel, ‘National Myth’, 117.

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victim is also required. Clearly, the victim must hold considerable power to effect the creation of national unity and identity. The extent to which their respective cultural groups have considered the victims of Gallipoli and Masada 'sacred' has been demonstrated by the recognition and collection of their 'holy relics'. Immediately after the battles at Gallipoli, official calls were made for every artefact of war to be added to Australia's collection.⁴² Mass appeals were made for donations, emphasising that 'everything connected with the war and the soldiers is wanted, no matter how small and seemingly unimportant'.⁴³ The creation of war memorials and museums as temples in which to house the sacred objects bestowed a holy character on the Anzac victims. As Webber maintains, such museum objects were not primarily intended to inspire discussion, but rather veneration.⁴⁴ Similarly, the holy atmosphere of the ancient site at Masada is described by the hundreds of volunteers who took part in its uncovering; its excavation and restoration become a national event.⁴⁵ In a detailed account of the history and archaeological excavation of Masada⁴⁶, Yigael Yadin writes that 'to us, as Jews, these remains were more precious than all the sumptuousness of the Herodian period; and we had our greatest moments when we ... came upon the charred sandals of small children and some broken cosmetic vessels. We could sense the very atmosphere of their last tragic

⁴² Kimberley Webber, 'Constructing Australia's Past: The Development of Historical Collections 1888-1939', *Proceedings of the Council of Australian Museum Associations Conference* (Perth, 1986) 165.

⁴³ Pamphlet for National War Museum AWM DRL 6673 621, cited in Webber, *op cit*, 167.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ Zerubavel, *Recovered Roots*, 66.

⁴⁶ Indeed, the account given by Yadin is recognised as having largely shaped the nature of the Masada commemorative narrative as it still exists in popular culture. Within academic circles, however, Yadin has been accused of misinterpreting the archaeological findings and Josephus' narrative due to his eagerness to support the rising commemorative narrative. Indeed, American historian Solomon Zeitlin has described Yadin's work *Masada: Herod's Last Fortress and the Zealot's Last Stand* as 'a distortion of historical fact'. It is significant, however, that such seemingly vital arguments have remained largely ignored and the Masada narrative remains an intrinsic component of Israeli national culture and identity. S Zeitlin, 'The Sicarii and Masada', *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 57:4, 1967, 263.

hour'.⁴⁷ Like the Anzac dead, the defenders of Masada have been accorded the status of the holy within popular Israeli culture, demonstrated by the sanctity bestowed upon their everyday objects.

Several reasons for the sacredness attributed to the victims may be identified. Primarily, the 'willingness' of the sacrifice elevates the victim to a status transcending the human.⁴⁸ In *Purity and Danger*, Douglas argues: 'When someone embraces freely the symbols of death, or death itself, then ... a great release of power for good should be expected to follow'.⁴⁹ The willingness of the victim plays a vital role in each of the cases here. As a new noble Australian identity was being forged in the fiery crucible of Gallipoli's shores, its citizens at home were acutely aware of the genuine sacrifice being offered. Of the contending armies of World War One, the Australian Imperial Force alone was comprised entirely of volunteers, who could thus be celebrated as having truly given their lives willingly.⁵⁰ Furthermore, despite the vast numbers of reported casualties, Australian men continued to join the war efforts. The foreseeable nature of their deaths was acknowledged in such mediums as an epitaph of an Australian soldier buried at Gallipoli's Anzac Cove, which reads:

Halt! Comrades, halt as you pass by.
As you are now, so once was I.
As I am now, so you will be,
So, comrades, be prepared to follow me!⁵¹

Within the Masada narrative, it was the willingness of the victims to die that captured the imagination of the emerging Israeli culture in the early twentieth century. The moving speeches of Eleazar to his people urging them to kill themselves and their families are still read today during national ceremonies atop Masada. 'Let us die before we become slaves under our enemies', Josephus recorded, 'and let us go

⁴⁷ Yadin, *op cit*, 16-17.

⁴⁸ Indeed, this is another aspect of 'successful blood sacrifice' according to Marvin and Ingle, *op cit*, 775.

⁴⁹ Douglas, *op cit*, 220.

⁵⁰ Inglis, 'Australian Military Tradition', 461.

⁵¹ *Ibid*, 88.

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out of the world, together with our children and our wives, in a state of freedom'.⁵² In the 'commemorative narrative' of Masada,⁵³ the most potent theme is the defenders' readiness to die 'as an ultimate expression of their patriotic devotion'.⁵⁴ In the commemorative narrative of Tel Hai, the theme of hopeless outnumbering – 'one hand against many hands'⁵⁵ – similarly highlights an unmistakable willingness to die in the face of impossible odds.

Within this context, it is important to note the contrast in the impact upon Israeli national unity of the Masada narrative and the Holocaust. Whilst the latter has in recent years become a unifying historical event for the Jewish people, Zerubavel describes how Israeli writers avoided dealing with the subject, and Israeli schools devoted little time to its discussion, during the 1940s and 1950s. There was at this time, Zerubavel maintains, a 'suppression of the Holocaust in Israel'.⁵⁶ Many youths are recorded to have rejected a three day mourning period in solidarity with the Jews of Europe, claiming that a gathering at Masada was more appropriate and stating: 'We achieved our goal ... in the field trip to Masada and the gathering there. This was our symbolic expression of our solidarity'.⁵⁷ Unwilling sacrifice, it would appear, does not hold the immediate unifying power of that which is offered freely by the victim. Until new perspectives and ideologies are provided over time,⁵⁸ the

⁵² Josephus, *War Jewish War* VII, cited in Yadin, *op cit*, 228.

⁵³ In a discussion on collective memory, Zerubavel refers to Josephus' account of Masada as 'the historical narrative', whilst that which has been adopted by Israeli collective memory is labeled the 'commemorative narrative'. The latter describes the way in which the events at Masada are idealised to form a national myth of honour and sacrifice. Zerubavel, 'The Death of Memory', 75.

⁵⁴ Zerubavel, *Recovered Roots*, 69.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 45.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 75.

⁵⁷ A meeting of the central leadership of Ha-Mahanot Ha-Olim youth movement, April 1943, cited in Zerubavel, *Ibid*, 72.

⁵⁸ Whilst a sense of unity and identity eventually resulted from the tragic events of the Holocaust, Zerubavel notes that this did not take place until the 1960s and 1970s in Israel. Interestingly, she also describes the emergence of what she labels 'the tragic commemorative narrative' of Masada around this time, which focuses upon the act of suicide far more than does the popular narrative. This later collective understanding of the myth was conducive to a collaborative creation of unity and identity with the

sacrifice must be willing in order to wield the power to create identities and inspire cohesion amongst the group.⁵⁹

For each narrative, the power and efficacy of the sacrifice depends on the belief that the victims are part of the group collective. Marvin and Ingle assert that, by offering the group's own, the sacredness of the group itself is identified: 'For what is really true in any community', they write, 'is what its members ... can be compelled to sacrifice their lives for'.⁶⁰ An offering of the group's own flesh and blood demonstrates immense reverence, sanctifying the essence of a collective identity, which is ultimately made manifest as an independent entity. Yet the reasons for the belief that the victim truly belongs to the group are more multifarious. There is clearly a belief that a willing sacrifice is greater when undertaken altruistically for the benefit of one's own community. But we must also explore the role of representation within sacrificial practices.

In the works on the subject by Hubert and Mauss, Freud and Girard, the concepts of substitution and representation are central.⁶¹ While their theories on the nature and function of sacrifice are diverse, the notion of substitution – the idea that the victim of sacrifice is representative of something 'other' – is universal. 'If substitution is in fact the key to sacrifice', write Smith and Doniger, 'then the only thing that the victim will never stand for is itself'.⁶² Exploring

emerging Holocaust narrative. Certainly, a sacrifice of the group's own is fundamental to all three narratives. Zerubavel, 'Memory and Counter Memories', 112.

⁵⁹ The Warsaw Ghetto revolt of April 1943 was, however, perceived as a unifying moment for the Jewish people and was labeled the 'Masada of Warsaw'. It may be argued that the sacrifice of those who died in the fight against the overwhelming power of the Nazis was unifying primarily because it was willing.

⁶⁰ Marvin and Ingle, *op cit*, 769.

⁶¹ See H Hubert and M Mauss, *Sacrifice: Its Nature and Function*, trans WD Halls (London, 1964); Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo: Resemblances Between the Psychic Lives of Savages and Neurotics* (Harmondsworth, 1938) Rene Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, trans P Gregory (Baltimore and London, 1977) and *The Scapegoat*, trans Y Freccero (Baltimore, 1986).

⁶² B K Smith and W Doniger, 'Sacrifice and Substitution: Ritual Mystification and Mythical Demystification', *Numen* 36:2, 1989, 195.

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sacrificial practices of the Vedic tradition, Smith and Doniger assert that sacrifice itself is a 'substitute for a cosmic operation and prototypical activity that always lies outside the grasp of human practitioners'. Thus, 'sacrifice is always a substitute for an unattainable ideal'.⁶³ These theories relate directly to the use of sacrifice and sacrificial narratives by cultural groups desiring identity and unification. The original identities of the victims are made redundant through the sacrificial act, their new persona transcending to the realm of the sacred as they come to represent an ideal archetype. The 'unattainable ideal' for which sacrifice acts as a substitute – the destruction of an unwanted, weak or degenerate identity and the birth of a new cultural archetype – is thus made attainable. In the cases of Masada and Gallipoli, incipient national groups desiring unification and an honourable identity disregard the original identities of the victims who are considered to be 'of their own' origin, substituting them with characteristics perceived as ideal. The now sacred victims of sacrifice embody the very nature and identity of the desired group collective.

This theme is addressed by White in his controversial *Inventing Australia*. Here he describes the Anzac as having represented the embodiment of the 'Coming Man': the ideal expression of the Australian 'type' coming to stand for 'all that was decent, wholesome and Australian'.⁶⁴ With the 'first revelation of Australian character'⁶⁵ born at Gallipoli, the Anzacs were allocated the role of Australia's founding fathers. These victims came to symbolise a mythological archetype possessing all the specific characteristics that would ultimately embody 'Australianness': bravery, practicality, larrikinism, tenacity, humour and most importantly a strong sense of mateship and egalitarianism. Through the writings of both official historians and popular media, along with countless war memorials and sombre epitaphs, the Anzac came to embody the 'ideal' Australian, upon which the entire national character was founded.⁶⁶

⁶³ *Ibid*, 198.

⁶⁴ White, *op cit*, 125.

⁶⁵ Thompson, *op cit*, 74.

⁶⁶ The extent to which the Anzacs at Galipolli were shrouded in ideology is best expressed in the lines of John Masefield, who wrote: 'For physical beauty and

The degree to which the image of the Anzac is idealised in the Australian consciousness is explored in E M Andrews' *The Anzac Illusion*. Andrews presents an explicit demystification of the Anzac legend, pointing to countless examples of incompetent and shameful behaviour on the part of Australians during the Great War. Andrews contends that neither the uniqueness nor the significance of the Australian soldiers in the First World War were authentic, thus directly contesting the mythological archetype as presented in the Anzac tradition. The Australian battalions trained in Cairo before their deployment to Gallipoli are described as having included a number of rough and undisciplined soldiers who commonly engaged in drunkenness, racism, ill-treatment of Cairo's residents and even looting and rioting.⁶⁷ An act of identity substitution of the ideal for the actual victim was necessary in order to attain cultural rebirth and solidification through its sacrifice.

Similarly, Stanley notes the desire of the new Israeli nationalist movement of the early twentieth century to build not only a 'new world' within the ancient homeland, but also to create the 'new Jew', one who is both physically strong and resolute.⁶⁸ Trumpeldor and his followers embodied the archetypal 'New Hebrew', the 'antithesis of the exilic Jew'. Zerubavel writes 'his centrality to the commemoration of origins was not as an individual but as a collective representation, the model of the new type of man'.⁶⁹ As with the Australians, the characteristics of bravery, steadfastness and an almost fundamental patriotism were embraced in the mythologised defenders of Masada. Indeed, Klausner describes the people of Masada as having been 'the finest patriots Israel knew from the rise of the Maccabees to the defeat of Bar Kokhba'.⁷⁰ Not only devoted patriots, the inhabitants of Masada are depicted by authorities such as

nobility of bearing they surpassed any men I have ever seen; they walked and looked like the kings in old poems'. John Masefield, *Gallipoli* (London, 1978) 19.

⁶⁷ E M Andrews, *The Anzac Illusion: Anglo-Australian Relations During World War I* (Cambridge, 1993) 47-50.

⁶⁸ Stanley, *op cit*, 239.

⁶⁹ Zerubavel, *Recovered Roots*, 44.

⁷⁰ Yosef Klausner, *Jesus of Nazareth* (New York, 1925) 204.

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Yadin as devout and pious Jews, the final brave defenders in the collective stand of the Zealots against the Roman oppressors.⁷¹

The extent to which an ideological character has been substituted for the genuine victims at Masada has since come to light, however. In recent years, scholarly opinion has largely in agreement that the defenders of Masada were very likely the Sicarii, a group of renegade Jews who were driven out of Jerusalem and took refuge at Masada. From here, they are said to have attacked and pillaged the nearby Jewish settlement of Ein Gedi,⁷² where Josephus describes them as having killed seven hundred men, women and children.⁷³ Yadin's archaeological 'evidence' for the devout nature of the 'Masada Zealots' has also been questioned in scholarly circles. There is apparently no evidence at all to suggest that what he describes as the ruins of *mikva* are actually the ritual baths of a temple. Furthermore, what Yadin describes as 'donation jars', Zeitlin asserts were most likely the plunder from raids on surrounding Jewish communities.⁷⁴ Nevertheless, the national myth of the sacrifices at Masada has retained its unifying power, with popular history and archaeology still largely holding to the notion of Masada as 'the last stronghold' of a unified people in the rebellion.⁷⁵

With the victim of sacrifice representing the emerging group ideal or archetype, the process of representation and surrogacy penetrates deeper still. In *Sacrifice: Its Nature and Function*, Hubert and Mauss illustrate the merging of identities which occurs during the sacrificial process. The role of the victim, they assert, is indeed one of substitution. In the process of communication between the sacred and the profane, the victim substitutes symbolically in both spheres. 'Through this proximity the victim, who already represents the gods,

⁷¹ Yadin, *op cit*.

⁷² Alex Weingrod, 'How Israeli Culture was Constructed: Memory, History and the Israeli Past', *Israel Studies* 2:1, 1997, 232.

⁷³ Indeed, Josephus refers to the Sicarii as *lestas*, robbers and brigands. Zeitlin, *op cit*, 302-303.

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, 313.

⁷⁵ Such views can be found, for example, in Thomas Levy's *The Archaeology of Society in the Holy Land* (London, 1995) 466.

comes to represent the sacrificer also. Indeed, it is not enough to say that it represents him: it is merged in him. The two personalities are fused together'.⁷⁶ In this context, the 'sacrificers' are the members of the incipient national groups who, utilising the deaths of the 'victims', attain the rewards of the sacrificial act. The 'god', whom the victim 'already represents' as an ideology or archetype, is the divine essence of the group itself. Thus we may comprehend the tendency of groups to adopt the perceived characteristics of their 'sacrificial victims' as national identities. This process illustrates how the sacredness of the victim penetrates the group, elevating its collective identity and thus generating internal unity and cohesion.

Indeed, a sense of kinship or direct blood ties with the sacrificial dead was constructed within the collective memory of both the early Hebrews in Palestine and Australians at the beginning of the twentieth century. From the battles at Gallipoli arose the idea of an 'Anzac race', whose descendants would come to pay homage to their 'founding fathers' at rest in their Holy Land.⁷⁷ Prophecies ensued: 'The breed that stormed and held the heights of Anzac will grow stronger and more self-reliant as their generation follow ... their well-fed, well-developed bodies will house vigorous and intellectual minds. They will be just, powerful and humane'.⁷⁸ The Zionist settlers and the first generation of 'New Hebrews' wished equally to be recognised as direct descendants of the ancient Hebrews. The Masada commemorative narrative was thus adopted as national myth, in which the victims of Masada were recognised as honourable ancestors who carried the true Zionist spirit.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ Hubert and Mauss, *op cit*, 32.

⁷⁷ This is illustrated perfectly in *The Anzac Pilgrim's Progress*, composed by a survivor of the Gallipoli evacuation and circulated enthusiastically following the Great War: Say, those dead of your and mine/ Make this barren shore a shrine/ All these graves – they'll draw us back/ And forever in our track/ Down the years to come will pace/ Pilgrims of our Anzac race/ God, while this old earth shall stand/ Where but here's our Holy Land? *The Anzac Pilgrim's Progress*, cited in Inglis, 'Australian Military Tradition', 43.

⁷⁸ E J Brody, cited in White, *op cit*, 129.

⁷⁹ Zerubavel, *op cit*, 68-69.

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Exploring the concepts of surrogacy and substitution within sacrificial practices, the final reason for the efficacy of the sacrifices in question is illuminated. With the identities of the ‘sacrificial victim’ and the ‘sacrificer’ fused, the entire group ultimately commits a symbolic ‘self-sacrifice’, this being the highest and most powerful form of sacrifice possible. Smith and Doniger recapitulate the theories of numerous scholars who have hypothesised that all sacrifice is ultimately symbolic of self-sacrifice. Ananda K Coomaraswamy, for example, asserts that to ‘sacrifice and to be sacrificed are essentially the same’, explaining the various ways in which the sacrificer offers himself through ritual.⁸⁰ Undoubtedly in the cases of Gallipoli and Masada the respective groups, who have associated themselves with the victims of sacrifice, have incorporated a strong sense of personal loss and sacrifice into the collective understanding of the event.

For the Australian contemporaries of Galipolli, the personal loss of family and loved ones was sufficient to have created an acute sense of self-sacrifice amongst the emerging national group. Despite the distance of two thousand years, a chance for the Israeli nation also to grieve occurred in 1969 when the remains of twenty-seven persons identified as defenders of Masada were given an official national burial, their coffins, draped in Israeli national flags, carried in procession back to their resting place at Masada.⁸¹ Further instances of self-sacrifice were demonstrated during the pre-state period, when field trips to Masada, though extremely popular, were considered highly dangerous and even life-threatening. Problems with dehydration, searching for tracks, aggressive encounters with Bedouins and the British mandate police are recorded as part of the

⁸⁰ ‘The Brahmanas’, he asserts, ‘abound with evidence that the victim is a representation of the sacrificer himself, or as the texts express it, *is* the sacrificer himself’. Indeed, within Indian ritual and mythological texts, literal self-sacrifice is presented as the ideal form of sacrifice. Ananda K Coomaraswamy, ‘*Atmayajna: Self Sacrifice*’, *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 6:3/4, 1942, 359 ff. Taking this notion to its extreme, Sylvain Levi asserts that ‘the only authentic sacrifice would be suicide’. Sylvain Levi, *La doctrine du sacrifice dans les Brahmanas*, cited in Smith and Doniger, *op cit*, 190.

⁸¹ Zerubavel, *Recovered Roots*, Chapter 11, figure 11.

hazardous pilgrimage, whilst an earthquake in 1927 made the trip up the mountain itself treacherous.⁸² These popular treks continued even after the death of eight people in 1942 after an accidental explosion of a hand grenade during a field trip to Masada.⁸³ In both Israeli and Australian culture the loss of the 'victims' is particularly emotive and therefore unifying because of the group ideals they represent. As the embodiments of the 'archetypal' Hebrew or Australian, their death is felt as a personal loss to their 'descendants' who have also come to embody the Masada or Anzac 'spirit'.⁸⁴

The power of the tragic events at Gallipoli and Masada to unify and shape identities is primarily due to the fact that they are perceived to have been acts of sacrifice. Smith and Doniger write: 'Sacrifice ... is paradoxically an act which becomes distinguishable from suicide [or] murder ... only when its ideology is realised'.⁸⁵ Only then, with a unified understanding by the group that these seminal events from which their identity emerged were indeed acts of sacrifice, can the efficacy of the sacrifice be realised. The horrors at Gallipoli would surely, in any other context, be regarded as sickening and justifiably forgotten. Inglis recounts the carnage of Anzac Cove: 'bodies hanging in all sorts of grotesque and apparently impossible attitudes, bodies without heads, legs and arms without bodies. They trod on, even slept on the dead'. Even the historian and great 'myth maker' of the war C E W Bean recorded having been 'splashed by fresh

⁸² A primary account of such a pilgrimage is given by W F Albright, who describes the many dangers he and his group encountered in their attempts to reach Masada in 1925. W F Albright, 'To Engedi and Masada', *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 18, 1925, 11-14.

⁸³ Zerubavel, *op cit*, 122-123.

⁸⁴ Like the 'Masada spirit', described by Zerubavel as a culturally penetrating force, the 'Anzac spirit' too is explicitly acknowledged within the Australian ethos as the essence of what it means to be 'Australian'. As voiced by Australian Prime Minister John Howard at the Gallipoli Dawn Service 2005: 'The Anzac Spirit has endured through other conflicts and through times of peace. It remains synonymous with bravery, loyalty, tenacity, mateship and humour'. Commonwealth Dept of Veterans' Affairs, *Gallipoli 1915-2005* (Canberra, 2005).

⁸⁵ Smith and Doniger, *op cit*, 216.

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blood'.⁸⁶ The killing of eighty thousand Turks⁸⁷ on their own soil may too have been remembered as barbaric murder.

Interestingly, the issue of murder is barely raised even by the critics of the Masada narrative.⁸⁸ Yet the fact that two women and five children are recorded by Josephus as having been found by the Romans after remaining hidden during the mass slaughter⁸⁹ suggests that a different interpretation of these events is possible. Certainly, whilst the men were moved by the evocative speeches of Elazar ben Yair to take their own lives along with those of their families, no mention of the women or the children's acceptance of their own deaths is made by Josephus. In another context, they may well have been remembered as the victims of a massacre or act of genocide.

Even more significant in the stream of ideology is the absence of any suggestion of suicide within the popular commemorative narrative of Masada. Despite often relaying historical events, the Talmud makes no mention of Masada, a fact often been interpreted by scholars as the sages' disapproval of a collective suicide.⁹⁰ Yet whilst the legalities surrounding the nature of the communal death have been debated within academic circles, the argument has failed to weaken the power and significance of the myth on a national scale. Within the popular narratives, it is apparently taken for granted that the death of the defenders was an act of *Kiddush Ha-Shem*, the Hebrew concept of martyrdom, the only viable reason for taking one's own life.⁹¹ The strength of the sacrificial ideology is also evident in the posthumous honours bestowed upon the remains of the 'defenders of Masada' in their formal national burial in 1969. Such ceremonies are traditionally denied under Jewish law to those who commit the blasphemous act of suicide. Clearly, the fact that the events at Masada and Gallipoli are culturally understood to have been acts of sacrifice is fundamental to the efficacy of the unifying effect.

⁸⁶ Inglis, *Sacred Places*, 85-86.

⁸⁷ *Ibid*, 90.

⁸⁸ Zerubavel, 'National Myth', 120.

⁸⁹ Josephus, *War Jewish War* VII, cited in Yadin, *op cit*, 230.

⁹⁰ Zerubavel, *Recovered Roots*, 200.

⁹¹ Zerubavel, 'National Myth', 118-121.

The sacrifice of the group's own is a powerful method from which group identity and cohesion are created. The myths of Gallipoli and Masada are formative narratives of national identity for Australia and Israel respectively, which embrace the concept of sacrifice at their core. The ability of sacrifice to redefine time and space sheds light on the adoption of such narratives as myths of national origin. So too, the nature of sacrifice as an agent of purity and regeneration accounts for its adoption by cultural groups requiring a transformation of identity. The idea that sacredness and power are born from a willingness to die are fundamental to the ideology of sacrifice. Yet even more so is the idea that the sacrificial victim is not representative of itself. The victims of Gallipoli and Masada symbolise the 'ideal' citizen, the embodiment of a cultural archetype, a depiction that would fail were the victims ethnically estranged from the group. The sacrificial victims embody the entire group collective, allowing a belief that a powerful act of self-sacrifice has been committed by the entire nation. It is of great interest that the groups concerned are sentient of the powers of sacrificial ritual, demonstrated by the ideology of sacrifice explicit in each of the narratives. Thus, the horrors of Gallipoli are made noble and the acts of slaughter at Masada are neither murder nor suicide. Clearly, such an understanding of a substantial sacrifice of the group's own is a powerful force in the creation of national identity and the endurance of group cohesion.

