

CHAPTER 1

Between the Flag and the Banner: Dilemmas in the Political Life of Israeli Women

The political lives of women in Israel have been shaped by an acute dilemma, a choice between their desire to foster national progress and their quest for feminist self-fulfillment. Women who wanted to play an equal part in building the new homeland rejected sex as a basis for political mobilization and interest aggregation; but those subject to gender discrimination found themselves shut out of the national effort. The perplexing choice for women was between participation in collective efforts at the expense of their particular interests, and adopting a feminist position that would guarantee their rights as women. The first option implied subscribing to overarching collective goals and acting from "within"; the second involved adherence to feminism and mobilizing from "without." This book is about the dilemma before Israeli women, the means they have selected to resolve it, and how their actions have affected the status of women in society.

The account is of women's politics in one particular country, but it may be valid for other societies too. The dilemma women in Israel face may well be that of women in emerging nations, especially during periods of social and political upheaval. At such times participants are subject to heavy demands, and the call for loyalty to the common goal is great. Identification with a national movement may impose constraints on the development of partial mobilization centering on issues such as the

cause of women. These constraints, their origins, and their consequences for women in Israel are the major themes of this book.

The underlying argument is that carrying the double burden of predominating common values as well as submission to particular and partial interests obstructs both effective mobilization and influence. Vacillation between two contrasting loyalties weakens effectivity of action and hinders social change. The dilemma is real in that giving up collective values may exact its price in foresaken social rewards; conceding particular interests may take its toll in personal integrity. When a choice is made, however, either because collective (national) demands ease off, or because the group under question is willing to pay the price entailed in breaching established norms, change is more likely to occur. The origins and nature of the quandary of Israeli women and its consequences for political power and influence are discussed in what follows.

Israel as a Case Study of Women and Politics

As we approach the mid-1990s, the literature on the place of women in political life abounds with case studies of various countries. Although these studies ask similar questions (How do women fare in the power game? What are their beliefs? To what extent are they represented in decision-making bodies? Is their political behavior different from that of men? How intense is their mobilization to political life? What shape has this mobilization taken?) and use similar conceptual frameworks (theories of mobilization, theories of patriarchy), the countries where the studies were done may be differentiated by two parameters, which need not be mutually exclusive: rate of political development and type of political regime.

The majority of case studies on women and politics have been conducted, to date, in Western industrialized countries. These cover the United States (Kirpatrick 1974), Canada (Bashevkin 1985), Europe (Lovenduski 1986), New Zealand (Catt and McLeay 1993), and the Nordic states (Haavio-Mannila et al. 1985). Studies have focused on the partisan arena (Lovenduski and Norris 1993), and on women's movements (Mansbridge 1986;

Costain 1992). The subject attracting primary attention among scholars of women and politics is females' share in the political elite, and the processes enabling them to enter decision-making institutions, that is, national and local elections (e.g., Epstein and Coser 1981). Public policy regarding women has also been subject to academic treatment (Gelb and Palley 1987; Gelb 1989; Boneparth and Stoper 1989). With the expansion of feminism, however, instructive case studies have been published on the political life of women in developing countries in Asia and Africa. Good examples are Egypt (Sullivan 1986), Turkey (Arat 1989), India (Panda 1990), Pakistan (Mumtaz and Shanheed 1987), and Malaysia (Danez 1987).

The studies on women and politics in these two types of country have generally reached diverse conclusions. Scholars in the developed industrialized world usually lamented women's minor share in the country's political resources and their disproportionately small contribution in shaping their national life. Even where women have secured impressive political gains, such as in the Scandinavian countries, they were still perceived as being subject to patriarchal norms and structures (Haavio-Mannila and Skard 1985; Siim 1991). By contrast, writers focusing on the role of women in developing countries that have failed to attain the economic standards of the West, generally claim that women have contributed their share in national development, albeit in their own unique way. In Egypt, for example, women were found to play legitimate and important roles in public life. They were described as "agents of change, helping to transform social customs as well as laws and, through work, contributing to increasing production." This was done by concentration in such fields as health, education, and welfare, which are associated with women's traditional interests (Sullivan 1986, 164). In Taiwan, owing to the mandatory reserved-seat system, "women have made significant strides in their political participation and representation over the last several decades that rival the progress that took nearly a century in the United States and Western Europe" (Bih-er, Clark, and Clark 1990, 193).

The second category of country dealt with in these case studies may be distinguished by the characteristics of the political regime. Most studies have focused on women in democratic

societies, which also happen to be economically developed. In conditions of democracy, women's rights are enshrined in constitutional guarantees. Although their participation in political life may be hindered by informal and undeclared male discrimination, they nevertheless enjoy freedom of association and civil liberties. These circumstances have fostered the emergence of a gender consciousness, deemed a necessary condition for promoting gender equality (Rinehart 1992). It is generally agreed by students of women's politics in democratic countries that feminism is on the rise, that increasingly more women tend to participate in politics, and that the gender gap emanating from women's lesser role in political life has gradually been closing.

Studies of women, however, are no longer confined to the democratic, developed world but have been extended to states governed by authoritarian elites, or those that are undergoing processes of democratization. Prominent among the first type is the former USSR (Lapidus 1978; Browning 1987), where women's inequality stood in sharp contrast to the professed egalitarian principles of the Communist regime. According to Soviet theorists, women's interests were adequately represented in the political institutions by male politicians. Feminists, however, attributed women's vulnerability to the glaring absence of women's consciousness. The predominance of class struggle over other forms of social activity had attenuated women's awareness of gender interests. Their omission from positions of power seriously affected their ability to challenge their subordination in all its forms.

Among the nondemocratic regimes are former colonies, where struggles for national liberation had taken place. In the past many studies of nationality ignored sex as a significant issue (e.g., Gellner 1983; Smith 1986). The forces that spawn nationalism appeared so sweeping and all-encompassing as to dwarf problems associated with gender. Women's equality tends to remain a nonissue as long as national redemption has not been attained. Diminution of gender as a basis for women's mobilization is particularly evident when nationalism cannot readily assert itself but requires the investment of major human resources. Under these circumstances gender problems are simply ignored. In recent years more attention has been devoted to

the issue (e.g., Walby 1991). The possible clash between national objectives and feminist interests, however, has not received much attention. In Israel this clash has played a decisive role in the shaping of women's politics.

Serious scholarly attention has been given to women's roles in countries undergoing processes of democratization, particularly in Latin America (e.g., Molyneaux 1985; Alvarez 1990). It has been argued that Latin America's democratic transitions, by all accounts the region's salient political trend in the 1980s, cannot be properly understood without consideration of the role played by women and by feminists; conversely, the changing role of women cannot be assessed outside the context of transition politics. The transition from military authoritarian rule to democracy happened to coincide with the reemergence of feminist movements and the rapid growth of organizations among poor urban women throughout Latin America. As noted by Alvarez (1989, 18) Brazilians witnessed the emergence and development of perhaps the largest, most varied, most radical, and most successful women's movement in contemporary Latin America.

The countries covered by the two sets of case studies—democracies and authoritarian or democratizing nations—leave a lacuna which is filled by Israel. On the one hand, Israel is a vigorous democracy where a variety of interests compete and clash; yet it differs greatly from the Western world in its strong national vision. It is a democracy sustained by the rule of law and the guarantee of civil justice, but it is a "mobilized democracy" where the elite exerts tremendous power over the people. Israel has been placed by the World Bank in the category of high-income economies (World Development Report 1991). With a per capita GNP of nearly \$13,000 in 1992, it can hardly be considered a developing society. Yet the composition of its population, a substantial proportion of which originated in traditional societies in Asia and Africa, and its ongoing war with its Arab neighbors have blurred its image as an affluent country. Furthermore, Israel is a young-ancient nation. It was established in 1948, in the huge post-World War II wave of struggles for independence that swept many countries in Asia and Africa. At the same time, the state was founded on an ancient biblical

heritage. It is mostly a secular society, with less than 30 percent observing religious tenets, but the great majority of the population subscribes to basic principles of the Jewish faith. Finally, Israel is a sovereign state, a member in numerous international organizations. At the same time, it constantly nurtures its relations with the Jewish communities in other countries. Recently a proposal was raised to extend Israeli citizenship to Jews living outside the country (Karmon 1994).

All these paradoxes place Israel in a unique situation, passed over by scholars of women's politics in other corners of the world. Being both a democracy and a mobilized state, an affluent society with marked attributes of "development," the case merits special attention. How do women fit into this myriad and compounded environment? Why do they have to choose between adherence to the (national) flag and the (feminist) banner?

Making Choices: Between the Flag and the Banner

The title of this book intimates that the national flag and the feminist banner were incompatible, if not mutually exclusive. A short review of the discrepancies between the two is in order to demonstrate the reasons for this incongruence.

Democracies can be placed on a continuum extending from a "service state" to a "visionary state." In the first, government is content to provide services and reconcile conflicting interests among different groups and individuals. This pattern prevails in most industrialized states, where the authorities may be concerned with the affluence and welfare of their citizens but they are not guided by, or committed to, a transcendent mission. In the classical description of the Western state, these authorities respond to the public mood and assuage grassroots pressures in order to stay in power. By contrast, in a visionary state, there is more emphasis on mobilization and socialization (Apter 1965, 25). Here "the government has a predetermined vision or goal, and its primary function is to educate and mobilize on its behalf" (Liebman and Don-Yehiya 1987). Where vision prevails, a

highly articulated system of symbols and myths defining the community socializes the population and mobilizes them for the realization of national goals. In a visionary democracy there is constant tension between the collective imperatives of society and particularistic needs of subgroups within it, including women.

Vision is likely to develop in democracies facing intransigent opposition from without and/or rapid social change within. In such circumstances the vision centers on a strong national identity, defined in terms of allegiance to one's nation-state (Gellner 1983, 3). The purpose of national identity is to deepen individual commitment and loyalty to the regime, to increase solidarity among society's members, and to provide them with a sense of a community (Seton-Watson 1977). A "community" in this regard does not consist only of "common institutions and a single code of rights and duties for all the members" (Smith 1991, 9) but also of a strong sense of belonging. Where allegiance to the "vision" pervades, sustained by a comprehensive socialization structure, particularistic groups, including women, may be reluctant to carry their own banner. The sweeping force of national goals obstructs the crystallization of their own needs.

In Israel the two pillars that both necessitate and sustain the national vision are the state's precarious security and its mission of ingathering the exiles. Pursuing goals associated with feminism might conceivably have hindered the realization of these goals.

Women and Security

Surrounded as it was by hostile neighbors, Israel had to cope with external threats and incessant belligerency. These factors have had decisive effects on the country's polity, economy, and value system. The problem of national security has dominated the political agenda, displacing almost every other item. Despite the inception of the peace process, media headlines, government discussion, and public attention still reflect the primacy of security in Israeli life. That questions of survival rank first is evident also from the structure of the national budget. Israel

expends far more on its security than other Western nations. Annual military expenditures have usually exceeded 20 percent of the GNP. The country's well-known defense burden has contributed to a dominance of the economy by the government to a degree hardly known in other democracies. It has been noted that "Israeli policymakers have economic responsibilities that resemble those of Eastern Europe, in the context of aggressive political parties, labor organizations, and other features of the democratic West" (Sharkansky 1988, 5). The impact of security on public life has been accentuated by the lengthy service of Israelis in the armed forces. Every young man has compulsory service in the military for at least three years. Many serve for five years, and continue to do so in reserve units about one month a year, until they are in their fifties.

Living in a state of siege has not been easy for Israeli women, because the host of norms, values, and attitudes that sustain military might have excluded women and driven them to the margins of society. The halo sparkling around the military generated a positive attitude toward the use of force. The image of the Sabra (native-born Israeli) is of a youngster characterized by strength, courage, and action. A general unease with emotion is masked by an ethos of heroism. Emotionalism, a typical feminine characteristic, has been rejected as a form of weakness that is both incompatible with the norm of the pioneer-warrior and ineffective in times of danger. Only recently a heated public debate took place when a senior army commander condemned the display of soldiers weeping over their dead comrade, killed in battle, disapproving such an outlet of emotion.

To this may be added women's lesser contribution to the country's security. Although women recruits march in parades after basic training, and are often shown on television screens abroad carrying their rifles on their shoulders, for the army they are wearing "paper khaki" (Hazleton 1977, 138). In 1949 the Defense Service Law was enacted. After heated discussion in the Knesset, fueled by religious opposition to recruitment of women, it was decided to conscript women for a shorter period than men and to exempt two categories of women: married and/or religiously observant. It was also decided to establish a women's corps entirely separate from other units in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). As women have always been considered

a burden by military authorities, exemption from duty has been easily obtained: A woman merely has to declare herself religious to be excused from army service. Over the years the Defense Service Law has been amended several times but the principles underlying military service by women have remained intact. A Commission on the Status of Women pointed out that:

When the IDF was first established, the state recognized the right of the women to serve in all jobs on a voluntary basis. As time elapsed equality has disappeared. The only considerations are army efficiency and economic ones. Jobs are opened and closed to women on this basis. As a result, the IDF lags behind other armies which are more resourceful in absorbing women. (1978; quoted by Bloom 1991, 135).

At present women serve only twenty-two months in the military; they are not allowed to join combat units. Some progress has been made regarding women's status in the armed forces as increasingly more enter occupations previously closed to them. By and large, however, women soldiers are still the secretaries, the clerks, the telephonists, the nurses, the teachers, and the social workers of the IDF. There are no women pilots, tank crews, or paratroopers. Women do not serve in artillery units nor are they found on battleships. One woman, the commander of the Women's Corps (Chen), takes part in the meetings of the IDF's General Staff, but her rank is lower than that of her male colleagues. Thus, despite the many myths concerning the role of women as soldiers (Yuval-Davis 1985), they serve mostly in subordinate and supportive roles, unless in welfare occupations traditionally held by women. The woman soldier's life, concludes Bloom (1991, 137), "remains sufficiently circumscribed to allow her both to do national service and to return to society understanding her role as a woman." The seeds of duality are sown in the preeminent institution of Israeli society, the armed forces.

The exclusion of women from active service has confined them to nurturing roles and has hindered their entrance to the power arena. Women were expected to contribute to the national effort by sticking to their traditional female roles. The male-dominated society could be benevolent to women as long as they conformed, in their attitudes and activities, to estab-

lished patterns of female behavior. As they could not demonstrate bravery in the battlefield, women had to excel in the kitchen to prove their patriotism. Waintrater (1991, 118) describes how women channeled their anxiety during the October War (1973) "into the things they do best": baking cakes. Their massive engagement in this endeavor resulted in a flour shortage. The women were baking too many cakes, and continued to do so even when the shortage became publicly known. Women were expected to make life easier for the men at the home front, to nurture, to care, and to love. Scores of women volunteers have always swamped the country whenever war has broken out, ministering to wounded soldiers and providing them with goodies to lift their spirits. The normative constraints on women's equality generated by the siege mentality have been summed up by a woman legislator as follows: "The Israeli woman is an organic part of the family of the Jewish people and the female constitutes a practical symbol of that. But she is a wife and a mother in Israel, and therefore it is of her nature to be a soldier, a wife of a soldier, a sister of a soldier, a grandmother of a soldier " (quoted by Hazleton 1977, 141).

When asked, "How do you live in the military milieu, in a society based on the supremacy of men?," the wife of the chief of staff described in a nutshell the impact of the defense requirement on women's status. She said: "It is obvious that we, the women, are 'helpmates' and the husbands, members of the armed forces, can function only owing to the support given to them at home."¹ Breaking the caring tradition would have breached a fundamental norm: doing one's best for the country's survival. Hence women had to choose between the national imperative, relegating themselves to domestic commitments and responsibilities, and a feminist advocacy, which would relieve them of this constriction.

Women and Immigration

Immigration has played a profound role in the process of nation-building: as stated, ingathering of the exiles has been one of the major functions of the Jewish state. Since its creation the state of

Israel has absorbed over two million Jewish immigrants, four times the size of its population when it won independence. The Law of Return, giving the right to all Jews to immigrate to Israel and to automatically acquire citizenship on arrival, highlights the national commitment. Immigration is widely discussed in the media and documented by official sources since its scale is deemed as a major indicator of the nation's strength and the fulfillment of ultimate Zionist ideals. The immigrants are of varied backgrounds and from numerous countries of origin. In the early days of statehood most were either European Jews, Holocaust survivors, or Jews from Arabic-speaking countries in the Middle East and North Africa. The most recent large-scale immigration (some half a million people) are from the countries of the former Soviet Union, which have opened their gates to let Jews out after a long period of severe restrictions. From another corner of the world have come black Ethiopian Jews.

In the country's formative period the hardships involved in immigrant absorption underlined the difficulties in Israel's process of modernization. The majority of immigrants arriving after the establishment of the state came from countries that were relatively deprived and underdeveloped socially and economically (between 1948 and 1954 immigrants from Arabic-speaking countries constituted 51.7 percent). Most of them found it extremely hard to adjust to the advanced economy of the fledgling state, populated mainly by Jews from the developed world. From the perspective of the Israeli authorities, however, there was "no choice" but to "drag these 'backward' immigrants into the modern age—as they saw it, for the (mostly economic) good of the State of Israel as well as the good of the immigrants themselves" (Lehman-Wilzig 1990, 29). While the plight of these immigrants was particularly severe, Israel as a whole suffered its worst economic situation ever. Data reveal that from 1951 to 1953 the per capita national income plummeted by 14.3 percent, and real income fell by 10.6 percent in 1952 alone.

The grave constraints on resources militated against women's economic equality. During the first seven years of statehood, over 400,000 new immigrants came to Israel, swelling the population by approximately one-third. The economy could not absorb such a large number of newcomers into the labor force.

Government employment policy was directed at creating jobs primarily for men, not women, who were left out of the labor market owing to the national imperative of immigrant absorption (Izraeli 1991, 166). With the expansion of the state's economy in subsequent years, increasingly more women joined the labor force. Men's employment needs, however, took precedence over women's. Consequently, unemployment rates have always been higher for women than for men. Furthermore, women were channeled into low-paying and/or "feminine" jobs that would not interfere with the work done by men and would not encroach on the successful absorption of the new immigrants.

Another byproduct of immigration causing women's economic inequality was a growing demand for volunteer service. Although the state guaranteed the basic needs for the immigrants' absorption, the burden of defense and the economic hardships weighed heavily on government agencies and left much to voluntary activity. Women were expected to contribute to the national effort of immigration absorption not through the power of their productive labor, but rather by enfoldng the newcomers in their compassion. As we shall see, women's voluntarism was channeled through party institutions, and was not a product of community or grassroots activity. It therefore posed no threat to state authorities nor did it challenge widely endorsed values. Women conformed to these norms by rallying to the flag and dutifully pitching in. They were encouraged to undertake social work among immigrants, to settle them into their new surroundings, and to accustom them to their new environment. Their contribution to immigrants absorption has been vividly described by Pope (1991, 227):

During the first years after independence, the Council of Women Workers served the interests of the state by focusing on the problem of immigrant absorption. Hundreds of female volunteers were encouraged to undertake social work among immigrants, who were temporarily housed in transit camps. In addition to food distribution and relief work, the Council held Hebrew language courses among women, which helped to foster their new Israeli identity. Together with the Histadrut's Agricul-

tural Center, it encouraged auxiliary farming on small plots in immigrant housing developments, and initiated basic vocational training to enable women to join the workforce.

By channeling their efforts into volunteer activity, women have accepted a secondary role in the country's economy. In Israel volunteer work has a well-established status as a legitimate form of participation in public affairs. Being outside the competitive systems of the labor market and party politics, it is considered, however, a marginal public activity, especially suitable for women (Bar-Yosef and Padan-Eisenstrak 1993). Admittedly, women's movements took pains to prod women to enter the workforce, albeit on two conditions: that work and domestic commitments be in harmony and that the work contribute to the national effort. A woman choosing a feminist course, putting her own needs for fulfillment above the exigencies of the country, jeopardized a fundamental, highly imposing, national norm.

To sum up, it was unusual for Israeli women to turn their backs to the security needs of the country and its mission of ingathering the exiles, even though adherence to these goals was incompatible with gender equality.

The Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this book draws upon a major theme in feminist literature: women's vacillation between operating outside or inside the political establishment; between mobilizing their own resources or those of the male-dominated political elite.

The first option—working from without—is predicated on women's mobilization capacities, their ability to recruit and activate members, to solicit financial resources, and to establish a stable and effective organizational structure. Most important, however, is the enhancement of prospective members' consciousness and identification with the group's cause. It has been widely acknowledged that movements are most readily mobilized

around common interests. On the face of it, women do share interests as much as any other group that attempts to wield political influence. Confronted with widespread stereotyping and inequality in the workforce and in political life, they act to promote equality (Sears and Huddy 1990). A precondition for women's successful mobilization, however, is their awareness of their gender interests (Katzenstein 1987; Rhodes 1990). It has been assumed that when women's consciousness is raised a distinct pattern of feminine attitudes and behavior will follow, manifesting itself in a gender gap. Most research to date on the women's movement in the United States has adopted the mobilization perspective (Freeman 1975; Conover 1984; Mansbridge 1986; Gelb and Palley 1987).

Effective mobilization for the feminist cause involves organization as well as attitude. When women act from without they usually adhere to values not shared by men. They are also inclined to be organizationally detached from mainstream political institutions, being either self-sufficient or relying on the women's constituency at large for human and financial resources. When leaning toward "mobilization," women are expected to cut through the partisan arena and act in concert with other women. They are likely to coordinate their strategies and cooperate within the feminist arena in their efforts to influence policy. In short, when women embark on the course of mobilization, they opt out of mainstream politics, and they tend to let the feminist voice ring out.

The other option noted above—acting from within—implies integration or association with existing centers of power, adherence to widely accepted norms, and concentration on conventional political processes (Klein 1984; Costain 1992). It has been suggested in the literature that links to political parties and elites are indispensable for political influence (Klandermans 1990, 127). Alliance with the establishment provides women with extensive communication and recruitment networks. Studies have shown that influence of nongovernmental actors on policy-making depended not only on consciousness enhancement, but on the extent to which organizations could activate allies with substantial political resources. Ties with the party system and government institutions could thus increase group impact in political

life (Costain and Costain 1987). The implications of the integration theory for women's consciousness and organizational behavior are self-evident: instead of joining women's associations, women make use of existing women's sections and subunits within the roof-organization of political parties and trade unions or any other established political organ, and work in cooperation with its predominantly male elite. Women's promotion of welfare legislation within social-democratic parties or trade unions in the Scandinavian countries is a good example of acting from within (Siim 1988). The integration model thus presumes a low level of feminist identification, organizational links with male-dominated political groups, and alliance with establishment associations rather than with other women's groups.

To sum up, the mobilization theory concentrates on the uniqueness of female interests and the need to confront the male-dominated polity through organizational and ideological means. It assumes that women are fundamentally different from men, and that the difference should be acknowledged and utilized as a political resource. The integration theory, on the other hand, centers on cooperation and alliance with men, assuming that female interests are not exclusively "feminine" and may be shared by men as well. Each of these options has its pitfalls and hazards. Excessive reliance on mobilization may hinder effectiveness. This was the case of the women's movement in the United States struggling to ratify the ERA, as related by Mansbridge (1986). Intemperate resort to integration may be hindered by patriarchy, by men's attempt to monopolize, cajole, and direct women's politics. This was the case in the Scandinavian countries, as we are told by Hernes (1989).

The two-pronged choice—mobilization or integration—has been linked to another major feminist dilemma: private or public. A large body of scholarship has accumulated demonstrating women's inequality in political life and their rarity in policy-making institutions. That women are still "second-class citizens," at least in this respect, has become a truism. A major pretext for the gender bias in politics has been propounded in the distinction between "private life" where women predominate and "public life" where men are most evident (Elshtain 1981). Some scholars have emphasized the significance of the historical,

gender-differentiated separation between the public and the private in the writings of the great political theorists of the past (Okin 1979, 1989; Pateman 1989). Researchers have also focused on more mundane life styles, in which responsibilities are not evenly divided between men and women. The sexual division of labor in the economy and in the home, so it has been asserted, operates to keep women at bay regarding political activity. How to defeat this inhibiting distinction is subject to controversy.

One school of thought argues that the solution lies in freeing women from "biological tyranny" and dismantling all social and cultural structures that are erected upon this tyranny, including the family. The most radical version of this solution calls for test-tube babies to replace biological reproduction (Firestone 1972). More moderate accounts, however, regard women as victims of male subordination, sustained by women's domestic chains. Women's private family roles in marriage, motherhood, and homemaking are the main culprits, impairing their full integration in political life (Sapiro 1983). Increasingly, demands have been pressed to establish women as sovereign rulers over the representation of their lives (Jones 1993, 1993), rather than to mold them in norms forged by a male-dominated world.

According to another school, the isolation and debasement of women under the terms of male-dominated structures must be fought, but not the functions associated with "private" life. Instead of excluding the private life from the public scene, integration between the two should be sought. Instead of eradicating values associated with the private world, women should entertain their own morality of nurturing and caring and share it with men. They "must take care to preserve the sphere that makes such a morality of responsibility possible and extend its imperative to men as well" (Gilligan 1977, quoted by Elshtain 1981, 336). Instead of declaring war on men, the proponents of the private world have urged the expansion of the underlying principles governing its practices. Women's "different voice" in social interactions—a voice that stresses cooperation rather than conflict, maintaining relationships rather than achieving abstract justice, should be sounded in public. Pitted against each other are, therefore, two feminist theories. The first propagates an

intelligible, visible, and clear-cut separation between the female and the male world, arguing that this move is a precondition for the eradication of patriarchy and its associated gender inequality. The second postulates that the public and private arenas should be integrated in way beneficial to both. Turning the personal into the political is likely to eliminate women's disadvantage.

The two theories—mobilization/integration and private/public—could be linked together. Those favoring mobilization endorse self-sufficiency and a concomitant separation between men and women. The proponents of integration may accept the need for cooperation and the benefits attached to a joint activity. Needless to say, a clear choice between these two options—mobilization or integration—exists on paper only, as women more often than not opt for the two strategies at one and the same time. Yet the undeniable tension between autonomous activity and reliance on partisan resources has been seen to limit women's exercise of effective political power (Bashevkin 1985). In Israel this tension is more acute owing to the disparity between the national imperative and feminist interests. Mobilization would have meant women placing their unique needs at the fore, activating the women's constituency, and forging alliances within the women's arena—in short, rallying around the banner. Integration would have implied heavy reliance on establishment political parties and national institutions and adamant adherence to norms associated with these institutions. To track the choices women in Israel have made, three specific research questions were under consideration in this study:

1. *What is the scope and the type of women's organization for political action?* If mobilized for action outside the conventional political structure, women will concentrate on grassroots activity, removed from the partisan arena. If integration is the way chosen, the presence of women will be felt in state agencies and nationally elected institutions.
2. *What are the sources for the emergence of women's voice?* In the mobilization model, women themselves are the source for political power. Enlisting wide constituencies of women

to the feminist cause is a precondition for an effective activity outside the political establishment. Integration could be carried out on the elite level by women activists who derive their power from political parties, regardless of women's consciousness or willingness to take part in public life.

3. *What are the outcomes of women's political activity?* When acting in politics, women attempt to influence public policy. Discerning how much the government responds to outside pressure and how much to internally generated initiatives on women's issues is not an easy task. But when mobilization underlies women's politics, their influence on policy decisions is expected to be clear. Conversely, when integration is the dominant feature, women may gain from the achievements of other actors, not necessarily associated with the women's movement.

Landmarks on the Path to Equality

Historical developments have set the stage for women's politics in Israel. The most notable characteristic in this country is the sharp contrast between legislation on women's equality and reality, between formal regulation and daily life. By any account, Israel is numbered among the few in the world termed "first-wave countries" (Pharr 1981, 173). These are ranked by the rate of advancement in them of women's political rights as this occurred across the world in the last century. Suffrage was granted in pre-state Israel by the British mandate authorities in the early years of the century, some twenty years before the establishment of the state. Although the Jewish population in the country numbered just a few thousand people who were coping with enormous difficulties, the small community granted its women the right to vote at about the same time as the United States and Sweden. When judged by the "threshold of activism," Israel again is in good company, together with the Anglo-American and Scandinavian countries. Women have held high political office; women have organized for political activity; a gamut of legislation upheld women's rights.

Equality between men and women in Israeli society was inscribed in the state's birth certificate, the Declaration of Independence. This document—one of the first of its kind to include sex as a group classification for the purpose of equal social and political rights—specified that "The State of Israel will maintain equal social and political rights for all citizens, irrespective of religion, race or sex." Although the principles of equality spelled out in this document are not endowed with constitutional force, they have been applied as constitutional principles in court. Next, the major steps to make women equal to men were taken in four consecutive phases, corresponding to economic and political changes.

The first phase was in 1951, being the passing of the Women's Equal Rights Law entitling women to legal equality and equal rights to carry out legal transactions. Regulation of personal matters, however, was left untouched under the authority of religious jurisdiction. The law was adopted in one of Israel's most difficult times. The country was still licking its wounds from the devastating war of independence; it was plagued by one of the severest economic crises ever, and it was preoccupied by the absorption of mass immigration. Added to this was governmental instability caused by a deep rift between the central governing party Mapai and the religious bloc on the one hand, and left-wing Mapam on the other. Technically, controversy with the orthodox parties centered on educational facilities for the new immigrants, but the real rivalry was over mobilization of the new constituencies. The government came under severe criticism from the left too, for adopting a pro-U.S. stance when that power was engaged in the Korean War. With the approach of elections to the Second Knesset, which took place in 1951, two years before they were due, what the government needed most was legitimacy. The Women's Equal Rights Law served as the perfect means for buttressing the governing party: it proved that the government did not yield to religious pressures while upholding religious control over matters of women's (and men's) personal status; it catered to the interests of women while not violating those of men. Israeli women took pride in the new law, largely overlooking the paragraphs detrimental to women's status.

The second phase came in the wake of the International Year for Women (1975), when an ad hoc Commission on the Status of Women was appointed by Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. It is true that the creation of the commission was linked with Israel's international standing at the time. Still shocked by the exhausting effects of the Yom Kippur War of October 1973, what Israel needed most in the mid-1970s was international support. The government had to cope with external threats as well as with internal difficulties. In 1975 Israel was subject to a sweeping denunciation by the United Nations General Assembly, which adopted a resolution equating Zionism with racism. Israeli zealots of Gush Emunim, the pro-territories movement, staged demonstrations in areas densely populated by Arabs. In short, the government was in dire need of proving that Israel was a legitimate member of the international community. Establishing a commission to further the women's cause served this end.²

The commission's main function was to act as a fact-finding body. Its comprehensive recommendations, however, served as a blueprint for women's equality. The women's movement applauded the establishment of the commission, which was headed by one of its members. But it rejected any attempt to forge women's interests apart from the national collective ones. Instead, it stressed that the commission should define local circumstances and adjust them to the special needs of the state and its women citizens. It further demanded that intensive dialogue between men and women should be maintained and partnership in rights and duties required by the Israeli reality should be emphasized.³ Women thereby evinced antagonism toward a feminist message. Still, the commission's work generated campaigns identified with the Western feminist movement. Assertiveness-training groups for women were started nationwide and counseling centers for victims of domestic violence were opened.

The commission presented its report and recommendations in February 1978 and these led to the institutionalization of concern for women within the government system. Consequently, the third phase of women's equalization was characterized by large-scale bureaucratization. Israel witnessed a turnover in government when the perennial opposition—the Likud—re-