

Abstract

This Master's thesis explores the depth of Jewish settler mentality from the radically religious to the secularly pragmatic. The aim is to evaluate their influence on the politics of Israeli governments and Israeli society as a national unit throughout history, and furthermore to point out the phenomenological foundations that the settler movement exhibits from the point of view of national identity, territorial identity and that of religious tradition. This work has been prepared through the careful study of diverse literature which is devoted to the Jewish settlers themselves, their role in the creation of a new identity in the young state of Israel, the general concept of national feelings found in territorial and collective memory, and the correct historical classification of settlement activity including its comparison with similar communities outside of Israel. Through my research I have discovered that not only do the settlers living beyond the Green Line show strong national and religious elements, but that they also tend towards more radical forms of dealing with state authorities as well as how they solve territorial dilemmas. The strong religious foundation of the settlers threatens Israel's position in peace negotiations and the state's position in the eyes of the international community which could lead to an erratic and dangerous downfall of Israeli society. The primary findings remain that although the invasive activity of settlers seems to be the most harmful, the reality is that these intrusive settlements cannot be blamed simply on the illegal actions of radical Jews, but must be realized as a side effect of the housing crisis found in the very heart of Israel which has been plaguing its citizens for years and is forcing even secular residents to move further beyond the Green Line. Even if their motivation is purely pragmatic, their presence in this territory is just as controversial.