A thriving, yet small, liberal component in Israeli society has frequently taken issue with the constraints imposed by religious orthodoxy, largely with limited success. However, as this thoughtful new book by Guy Ben-Porat suggests, in recent years, in part because of demographic changes and in part because of the influence of an increasingly consumer-oriented society, dramatic changes have occurred in the secularization of significant parts of public and private lives. Even though these fissures often have more to do with lifestyle choices and economics than with political or religious ideology, the demands and choices of a secular public and a burgeoning religious presence in the government are becoming ever more difficult to reconcile. The evidence, which the author has accrued from numerous interviews and a detailed survey, is nowhere more telling than in areas that demand religious sanction, such as marriage, burial, the sale of pork, and the operation of businesses on the Sabbath. This book makes an important and timely contribution to the study of contemporary Israeli society as new alliances are being forged in the political arena.

Dr. Guy Ben-Porat has been with the Department of Public Policy and Administration at Ben-Gurion University since 2001. He is the author of Global Liberalism, Local Populism: Peace and Conflict in Israel/Palestine and Northern Ireland (2006); a co-author of Israel Since 1980 (2008); and co-editor of The Contradictions of Israeli Citizenship: Land, Religion and State (2011).
Cambridge Middle East Studies

Editorial Board
Charles Tripp (general editor)
Julia Clancy-Smith
F. Gregory Gause
Yezid Sayigh
Avi Shlaim
Judith E. Tucker

Cambridge Middle East Studies has been established to publish books on the nineteenth- to twenty-first-century Middle East and North Africa. The series offers new and original interpretations of aspects of Middle Eastern societies and their histories. To achieve disciplinary diversity, books are solicited from authors writing in a wide range of fields including history, sociology, anthropology, political science, and political economy. The emphasis is on producing books affording an original approach along theoretical and empirical lines. The series is intended for students and academics, but the more accessible and wide-ranging studies will also appeal to the interested general reader.

A list of books in the series can be found after the index.
Between State and Synagogue

The Secularization of Contemporary Israel

GUY BEN-PORAT

Ben-Gurion University, Israel
## Contents

**Figures and Tables**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure/Table</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ix</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Preface and Acknowledgments**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Unpacking Secularization</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Israel: From Status Quo to Crisis</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The State of Marriage: Regulating and De-Regulating Love</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Burial: A Matter of Lifestyle</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Pig on the Plate: From “White Steak” to Pork</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Live and Let Buy: Bargaining for the Sabbath</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Conclusions</td>
<td>213</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Bibliography**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bibliography</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>229</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Index**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Index</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>247</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figures and Tables

Figures

2.1 Economic growth, measured by gross domestic product  page 38
2.2 Ownership of appliances  39
2.3 Religiosity and ethnicity  40
2.4 Religiosity by self-identity  49
2.5 Decline of confidence  51
3.1 Marriage in Cyprus (in thousands)  93
3.2 Is it important to have an Orthodox wedding ceremony?  100
4.1 Support for allowing civil burial  113
4.2 Importance of an Orthodox service  113
4.3 Civil cemeteries  129
5.1 Level of kashrut observance  154
5.2 Pigs raised in Israel (in thousands)  160
5.3 Nonkosher supermarkets across the country  165
5.4 Regulation and authority  170
6.1 Number of fines for violation of Sabbath regulations  208

Tables

2.1 Religious and Secular Israelis  48
2.2 Secular/Traditional Practices  49
3.1 Israelis’ Views on Abortion, Same-Sex Marriage, and Out-of-Wedlock Birth  64
3.2 Support for Civil Marriage  75
3.3 Ethnicity and Marriage  76
3.4 Marriage in the Rabbinate  98
4.1 Ethnicity and Civil Burial  115
<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.1 Ethnicity and Kashrut</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2 Enforcing Kashrut Laws</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1 Support for Commerce on the Sabbath</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2 Shopping on the Sabbath</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3 Ethnicity and Commerce on the Sabbath</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.1 Regulation of Religious Life</td>
<td>219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.2 Religiosity/Secularity and Liberalism</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Preface and Acknowledgments

A study of secularization in Israel may seem strange considering the fact that a separation of religion and state is unlikely in the near future, only Orthodox Judaism is recognized by the state, religious parties hold significant political power, and a 2009 survey indicates that more Jewish Israelis described themselves as “religious” or “very religious” than they did 10 years ago and fewer describe themselves as “secular.” Religion in Israel is welded into the essence of nationality that is built into the Jewish definition of the state and is institutionalized through religious institutions that have a direct bearing on individual lives on intimate issues such as marriage and divorce. The prolonged and lingering failure of secular Israelis to change any of the above was a reason why scholars were dismissive of Israeli secularism:

Most of the issues in the struggle for control of the public domain are usually relatively marginal. . . . Most of the public defined as secular have no interest in these subjects unless the issues affect a specific community directly and generally speaking the tendency is to separate them from the general and comprehensive context, apparently owing to the absence of a consolidated ideology and a secular Jewish organized philosophy ever since the disappearance of etatism. The major reason for the marginality of the struggles over the public sphere . . . is the inability of the state and the majority of the majority of the Jewish population to engage with the major problem . . . separating nationhood from religion and the encompassing character of Jewish identity in Israel. (Kimmerling, 2004: 256)

Studies of religion and politics in Israel may have been right to regard secularism as weak but seemed to have missed important developments that suggest secularization may be part of contemporary life. The expansion of commerce on the Sabbath, a thriving nonkosher culinary
culture, marriages performed without Orthodox rabbis, civil burials, and even an annual lively gay pride parade, all relatively new developments, allude that the religious hold on public and private life may be changing. What is unique about these developments, and why they remained below the radars of social scientists, is, first, the fact that they are not necessarily related to a secular ideology; second, that they occur alongside a religious resurgence; and, third, that they advance outside of formal political processes. These developments fall far short of religious freedom or a full-fledged liberal order, but since the early 1990s secular Israelis have gained new freedoms and choices that defy religious authority.

Thus, while religion remains a strong force in Israeli society and has formally conceded little if any of its authority, since the 1990s secular spaces for marriage, burial, nonkosher establishments, and commerce on the Sabbath have been established across the country. These changes can be explained neither by a growth in the number of Jewish Israelis who define themselves as secular, nor by political struggles that ended in secular legislation. Considering the overall weakness of secularism as an identity or a political force, what can explain these developments? How could these changes have emerged when religious institutions maintained their formal power? Who are the initiators and the beneficiaries of these changes? How should we expect these changes to have an impact on religious power in the near future?

Secularization, as the experience from Israel and elsewhere demonstrates, can evolve even when significant aspects of state and society remain religious and secularism as an identity is embraced only by a minority. This complexity in which secular and religious are not mutually exclusive suggests that modern secularity may be a more puzzling phenomenon than many of the religious explosions of fundamentalism (Berger, 1999). In order to explain these paradoxes as they manifest themselves in Israel this book offers a different perception and interpretation of secularization that rests on five main premises. First, secularization implies the decline of religious authority rather than of religiosity per se (Chaves, 1994). Second, secularization as a process is separated from secularism, a comprehensive worldview associated with a liberal ideology of equality and freedom. Third, rather than the ideological change associated with liberalism, secularization can be the result of economic and demographic changes. Fourth, secularization is a multidimensional process measured in identity, beliefs, values, and practices. And, fifth, secularization advances not only through organized and openly declared
ideological struggles against the Orthodox monopoly in the political arena but also through practical and individual choices related to everyday life.

The disaggregation of the concept of secularization opens up new possibilities for research on both the declining role of religion in society vis-à-vis other systems (political and economic) and the role religion continues to hold in individual lives (beliefs, practices, and values). Accordingly, the focus here is shifted from ideological transformations and political struggles to social and economic changes, both global and local, that create new incentives and to the groups and individuals that take advantage of these changes and become secular entrepreneurs. The secular entrepreneurs identified in the book are agents whose actions, intentionally or not, undermine existing religion–state arrangements. Entrepreneurs can have wide and far-reaching goals of separation of church and state or concrete goals for change, and be motivated by a secularist ideology with commitment to liberal values or by individual economic motivations. Their goals, as the research reveals, are not always clear, mutually exclusive, and available for categorization. Moreover, the goals and their justifications may change according to constraints and opportunities available. The study of structural changes, entrepreneurs, and their targeted followers or clientele provides a nuanced, multidimensional, and dynamic account of Israeli secularization.

Secularization: Theoretical Context

The historical narrative of secularization presents itself as an ideological victory of liberalism that ended in a pluralist public sphere with a shared and neutralized language that secures individual freedom. The more critical accounts of secularization, engaged in this book, argue that it has often been a consequence of changes in social structure and technology and the endorsement of rational procedures in modern social systems, rather than an ideological change related to liberal values. Although secularists often challenged church dogma and the dominance of religion in society, the factors that stimulated the secularization of society owe more to socioeconomic change that has “occurred involuntarily as an autonomous and largely endogenous process, and as an unintended and perhaps unanticipated consequence of that more fundamental process of change” (Wilson, 2001: 39). In the same vein, tolerance associated with secularism was, more often than not, the result not of an ideological-liberal
transformation but rather of the application of rational principles of social organization that no longer saw religion as reinforcing political authority and legitimacy (ibid., p. 46).

The economy – in particular, the global economy and the expanding consumer culture – is expected to influence secularization by creating new choices and incentives that defy the traditions and practices associated with religion and the religious hold over public life. But, although consumer culture often clashes with some religious practices and traditions, it does not necessarily undermine deep-seated religious beliefs and values, and the secularization it underscores may be detached from liberal values and political commitments. Whereas globalization brings forth new motivations and opportunities that, implicitly or explicitly, foster secularization, at different levels, counterforces that resist secularization also make their mark and allow religions in some realms and areas to maintain their stance or even expand. Secularization, therefore, unfolds in different changes, is measured in a decline of religious authority, and is often driven by nonideological forces, and, consequently, its contribution to a liberal order can be limited. Finally, these caveats do not suggest that secularization is marginal. Rather, the different changes and forces, ideological and nonideological, uncoordinated and with different goals, can constitute an institutional change. What exactly is being secularized, by whom, and how, therefore, is context bound and requires an empirical study. These theoretical tools allow an analysis of Israeli secularization and coming to term with its gaps, inconsistencies, and contradictions.

Secularization: Israel as a Case Study

The four issues studied in the book – civil marriage, civil burial, sale of pork, and commerce on the Sabbath – demonstrate dramatic changes that have occurred in the past three decades. These changes, as the study demonstrates, can at most be partially attributed to a secular ideology and to an organized secular struggle. Religious-inspired rules and political compromises between secular and religious elites (known as the status quo), institutionalized in early statehood, restricted private choices of nonreligious Jewish Israelis. Jewish Orthodoxy was granted a monopoly over marriage and burial of Jews, and various restrictions have limited commerce on the Sabbath and the sale of nonkosher meat. Secular Israelis, until the late 1980s, waged different struggles against the status quo that largely failed to challenge the arrangements. Two developments in
the past three decades have changed the balance of power: the large immigration from the former Soviet Union (FSU) and economic growth that included globalization, a neoliberal order, and a consumer society. These changes, together with traditional liberalism and new demands for recognition by non-Orthodox groups, enabled the emergence of a new and different secularization.

Not only have the pace and extensity of secularization in Israel changed, but its underlying rationale and legitimacy have changed as well. Early secularization combined arguments of liberal rights with republican claims that underscored the secular contribution to the public good and the rights this contribution supposedly entailed. In the new secularization, conversely, these arguments have not disappeared but are overshadowed by arguments of market rationality and everyday practical choices that render religious restrictions irrelevant. Motivations, likewise, vary between a secularist ideology with commitment to liberal values and economic goals compatible with market rationality. However, as the research reveals, goals, strategies, and justifications are dynamic and contextual. In each of the four case studies selected – marriage, burial, the sale of nonkosher meat, and commerce on the Sabbath – the status quo agreements (and others that followed) granted Jewish Orthodoxy authority and included restrictions on personal choices.

The changes described earlier and elaborated on in the book have made it difficult to maintain these restrictions as new needs and demands have emerged and different entrepreneurs have attempted to foster change, in both formal and nonformal channels. Although struggles for civil marriage and burial can be described as “ideological” and those for the sale of nonkosher meat and commerce on the Sabbath as “commercial,” in practice these distinctions have often collapsed in the process of change. Entrepreneurs, as this study demonstrates, employ a variety of motivations, goals, ideologies, and strategies that do not necessarily fall into neat categories.

As elsewhere, secularization in Israel is a multifaceted process that interacts with religion rather than eliminates it from public and private realms. Religious institutions retain some of their powers and regain new powers, religious organizations struggle against secularization, and individuals oscillate between religious and secular choices. Rather than adopt a coherent religious or secular identity, the majority of Jewish Israelis continue to maintain at least some beliefs, identities, and practices that can be described as religious – often alongside secular ones. Regardless of the meaning individuals attribute to their desires, choices, demands, and
actions, in practice those may defy religious authority. This dynamic reality, described sometimes as “post-secular,” presents challenges to political systems in countries when the old rules of the game cannot contain the new and often conflicting demands. In Israel, this dynamic reality has stood in stark contrast to a deadlocked political system unable either to maintain the old rules of the game or to establish new agreed rules. Consequently, the religious–secular struggles gradually shifted to other realms we explore in the following chapters.

Main Argument and Methodology

The main argument developed in this book can be summarized as follows. Institutional arrangements of religion and state (the status quo) in Israel are challenged by contemporary changes – economic, political, and demographic – so that a discrepancy emerges between the formal authority of religious institutions and new needs and demands that stem from these changes. Secular entrepreneurs, with different motivations and goals, attempt to provide solutions not only through formal political struggles, but also, when facing a deadlocked system, through the legal system and initiatives that take place outside formal politics. The latter, often taking advantage of changes associated with globalization, circumvent rather than confront existing institutional arrangements and gradually alter them. Institutional changes, therefore, take place either through alternative channels of political struggle or through personal choices devoid of an explicit political goal. Studying these developments requires, first, mapping and tracing secular entrepreneurs and their goals, strategies, and actions, and, second, examining how these initiatives correspond with popular needs and demands.

A combined methodological approach, using both qualitative and quantitative measures, is used in this empirical study of secularization. The first part of the research is a mapping exercise based on secondary materials: newspaper archives, the Internet, and published works. Specifically, this part of the research (a) traces, through media reports and Internet sources, the main agents involved; (b) studies the different organizations and the initiatives taken by them; and (c) detects critical political and judicial decisions relevant to these initiatives. This mapping provides for the second part of this work, a series of about forty in-depth interviews of the agents identified (see the Bibliography for a list of interviewees quoted in the book). These open-ended interviews with “secular entrepreneurs” provided (a) information about the background of the agents/entrepreneurs and their worldviews and perceptions of church
and state relations, (b) information about the goals and strategies of their
ton operation, (c) reports of their relations with state and religious institutions
and how those influence the strategies chosen, (d) details of the constituenc-
ties at which their initiatives aim and of attempts to widen their influence,
(e) reports of their subjective assessment of their impact and future poten-
tial among new constituencies, and (f) details of their perceptions of other
agents/entrepreneurs and of the overall impact that secularization initia-
tives have on Israeli state and society. The interviews, combined with
archival sources and media coverage, provide a rich description of the
perceptions, actions, and relations between different entrepreneurs and
initiatives.

The third part of the research, a detailed survey of the Israeli Jew-
ish public conducted in April 2009, complements the interviews with an
overview of the public’s perception of different aspects of religion and
state in Israel. Respondents were asked about the different aspects of
beliefs, preferences, and practices related to religion and the role of reli-
gion in public life. The empirical data enable the analysis of the different
categories of secularization and present a multidimensional picture of
what it means to be secular in Israel. The survey data are supplemented
by other surveys conducted by different agencies – most importantly, the
Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics. Following the survey, another set of
twenty in-depth interviews was conducted with people surveyed to add
depth to the statistical data.

Five central questions occupy every one of the empirical chapters of
the book. (1) What is the institutional setting (or the “rules of the game”) formed in early statehood and what restrictions does this setting imply?
(2) What challenges did demographic and economic changes present to
this institutional setting? (3) Which secular entrepreneurs attempted to
answer new needs and demands against the status quo? (4) What strate-
gies were adopted by secular entrepreneurs? (5) What was their impact
on existing institutions and public perceptions? These rather specific
questions help explain, first, how new secular motivations and strategies emerge and, second, whether this multidimensional process of seculariza-
tion is likely to be followed by secularism, namely, a liberal and tolerant
societal order.

Outline of the Book

The theoretical framework for the book is set in the following chapter
to resolve, theoretically, the puzzles and paradoxes that the study of
secularization in Israel presents and to provide a comparative view of
Israeli secularization. This requires “unpacking” secularization by three theoretical distinctions. First, secularization as a process is distinguished from secularism as a worldview or ideology. Second, secularization as the decline of religious authority is distinguished from a personal decline in religious belief and identity. Third, institutional change is extended beyond formal political channels to various society-level initiatives and the incremental impact of personal changes. This secularization – the result of external economic and nonprincipled societal transformations – is loosely related to principled liberal values, a coherent secular identity, and liberal political commitments, but amounts to a significant challenge to religious authority. Following Ulrich Beck the focus is shifted from the formal to new political channels of influence “outside and beyond the representative institutions of the political system of nation-states” (Beck, 1996:18).

Chapter 2 merges the theoretical framework developed in the previous chapter with the history of religion and the state in Israel and the contemporary discrepancy between arrangements formed in early statehood and a dynamic secularization process. The general trajectory of secularization is explained by forces that emerged – neoliberalism and consumer society, the mass immigration from the FSU, and various cultural demands for recognition. These new demands and desires were often loosely related to an ideological secularism or a secular identity and more to everyday life needs and desires. The struggle between those forces and counter-religious forces (new and old) translated to various subpolitical actions that occurred outside formal political channels. This general framework is replicated in the following four chapters. Each chapter describes the institutional setting and religious restrictions and the “mismatch” between the rules of the game and new developments. Secular entrepreneurs, detailed in each case, take action to promote change in formal political channels or through the courts. Eventually, however, as demonstrated in each chapter, actions take advantage of loopholes, circumvent rules and regulations, and undermine religious authority.

Marriage patterns and their change are the subject of Chapter 3. Marriage is not only a private choice of two individuals but also, defined and regulated by religious and political authorities, an institution that guarantees the right to a domain of privacy, which itself is defined by public policy (Josephson, 2005). The modern state not only provides an official seal for marriage, but is also involved in its regulation through licensing, distributing benefits, and overseeing duties of the marriage, as well as the process of its dissolution (Eichner, 2006). As with other societal institutions, however, marriage in the Western world has also been affected by
changes in recent years, losing its mandatory status and becoming more flexible. In Israel, marriage controlled by Orthodoxy is a major source of resentment for secular Israelis and a practical problem for a large number of Russian immigrants not recognized as Jews, who therefore cannot marry in Israel. Some secular entrepreneurs have attempted to change existing laws through legislation and the courts, but have so far achieved little. However, new initiatives, based on ideological or economic motivations, provide alternatives of marriage abroad, contractual marriage, and secular or non-Orthodox ceremonies that challenge religious authority and provide an outlet for a growing number of Israelis.

Chapter 4 explores the changes in burial and funeral arrangements, another issue related to the secular demand to choose and design significant rituals. The modern state, as part of the nation-building process, became a party to the design of the rituals of funeral and burial as well as for more mundane responsibilities of the public provision of services and resources required. In Israel, the state entrusted funeral and burial services to religious authorities that enforced an Orthodox procession on the Jewish public and limited alternative rituals. The Orthodox monopoly over burial was another source of resentment for secular Israelis who demanded to take charge of their own funerals or those of their loved ones. This included both the rituals and ceremonies and the aesthetic aspects of the burial, especially the demand to be buried in a coffin, forbidden by Jewish Orthodoxy in Israel. The growing, but still small, demand of secular Israelis to be buried the way they chose was supplanted by the concrete needs of non-Jewish immigrants who were refused burial by the Orthodox cemeteries. Struggles in the political and legal spheres were partially successful in this case, but no less important was the rise of a private burial industry that provided the aesthetic needs and ritual freedoms for those who could afford the price.

For many years, pork was all but banned in Israel as a result of religious objections and limited demand. This began to change in the 1990s, as Chapter 5 shows, when the FSU immigration and a growing connoisseur culture raised the demand for nonkosher products, including pork. Secular entrepreneurs until the 1990s found different loopholes that allowed them to produce and sell pork and struggled with religious attempts to restrict their operations. Whereas the incentive to operate was economic, the political struggles to prevent their closure were couched in the language of liberal freedoms and republican rights, pitted against what was described as “religious coercion.” Since the 1990s, the high demand for pork and the neoliberal setting have rendered the political struggle unnecessary. Even though the formal rules have not changed, the
loopholes proved sufficient, as the number of supermarkets and restaurants that serve pork attest. Struggles, initiated by religious entrepreneurs, have shifted to local arenas in an attempt to keep the sale of pork outside religious neighborhoods.

Commerce on the Sabbath, the subject of Chapter 6, is a marked indication of the erosion of the status quo and the growing rift between religious and nonreligious Israelis who hold different interpretations of the Sabbath. The regulation of the day of rest is a challenge for secularizing and multicultural societies when differences between groups on the day and its public meaning are contested. The declaration of the Sabbath as the official day of rest was one of the tenets of the status quo that restricted commercial activity on the Sabbath. Struggles until the 1980s were largely about secular demands to allow cultural activities on the Sabbath. However, the expansion of consumer culture encouraged secular entrepreneurs to find different loopholes that enabled the operation of businesses on the Sabbath, catering to the desires of many Israelis. Consequently, commerce on Sabbath, like the trade in pork, was powered by economic considerations, but its expansion required even less political action or legal protection. Rather, as the change in perceptions toward the Sabbath included a majority of Israelis and as the decision to shop was almost completely separated from ideology, entrepreneurs could operate almost without interference and the Sabbath, in practice and despite religious objections, became a day for shopping.

Contrary to the stagnant political sphere, in which rules and regulations hardly change, a vibrant civil society in Israel was the setting for various secular alternatives that shift the debates and struggles to new arenas. Secular marriage, secular cemeteries, the sale of pork, and commerce on the Sabbath are all evidence of changes that occur in Israeli public life, all with limited political involvement or interference. But what is the overall impact of this process? And, more important, what are its limitations? In Chapter 7, the concluding chapter of this work, the gap between secularism and secularization will be discussed, reflecting on the findings detailed throughout the book.

Acknowledgments

This research was a long journey – probably longer than I expected. Several institutions and individuals have provided the financial, intellectual, and moral support that made it possible. The field research was supported by research grants from the Israel Foundations Trustees, the Israel
Preface and Acknowledgments

Science Foundation (grant 1041–07), and the Posen Foundation. Their support that has made this research possible is highly appreciated. I was fortunate to have Omri Shamir as my research assistant for this project. His meticulous work, precision, and common sense were of great value to me. Maurice Herman translated parts of this work from Hebrew to English, and his professional work and questions helped reshape some of the concepts discussed here. Fany Yuval helped me make sense of the data collected, often seeing more than I did.

About fifteen years ago, while I was a graduate student at Johns Hopkins, I attended a course by William Connolly titled “Why I Am Not a Secularist.” I am, in spite of this course, (still) very much a secularist but also deeply indebted to Bill for exposing the shaky ground on which secularism often stands and the constant need for critical self-reflection. I came back to this topic a few years later as a lecturer at Ben-Gurion University. A sabbatical year at the University of California, Davis, enabled me to put together my initial thoughts and turn the collected data into a manuscript. Not only the tranquility of California, but also the support of my colleagues – Diane Wolf, David Beale, and Zeev Maoz – contributed to the work. In Israel, my own department of Public Policy and Administration was a strong base of support. I want to thank my colleagues, past and present: Shlomo Mizrahi, Arye Naor, Fany Yuval, Miki Malul, Eran Manes, Ofir Rubin, Ruhama Reshef, and Liel Shalev. Colleagues from the business faculty have often been puzzled over this research but nevertheless have been supportive. My work at the Van Leer Institute in Jerusalem has been immensely important and intellectually rewarding, and the research groups I was involved with provided inspiration and new ideas.

I have had the fortune to present this research at several international conferences. Usually, Jeff Haynes was there. His insights and friendship are appreciated. Yariv Feniger provided valuable assistance and many insights at different stages of this project. Many friends and colleagues have contributed in the various stages of this research: Yochi Fischer, Michael Shalev, Mark Blyth, Bryan Turner, Barry Kosmin, Gad Barzilai, Uri Ram, Jonathan Anson, Yossi Yona, Jose Casanova, Manfred Brocker, Gideon Katz, Michael Philippov, Menny Mautner, Orna Sasson-Levy, Zeev Shavit, Yagil Levy, Ioannis Grigoriadis, Istar Gozaydin, and John Hall. Their advice and insights were invaluable. The responsibility for this book is entirely mine.

A special thanks for the team at Cambridge University Press. Marigold Acland supported this project from its start, and her professional manner and that of the rest of the staff were both helpful and encouraging.
xxii

Preface and Acknowledgments

Moral support comes from the ones closest to you. I am grateful to Rachel, Amir, Anat, Nadav, Segev, and Erez for being there. My loving and lovely daughters, Shira and Talia, always provide just enough distraction to make work enjoyable. Above all, I am fortunate to have my partner, Neta, whose love and patience enabled this work and so many other things.

In my third year of graduate school at Johns Hopkins, Giovanni Arrighi joined the department of sociology and agreed to be my dissertation adviser. His wisdom and intellect could have been paralyzing, if not for his grace, patience, collegiality, and good humor. Giovanni passed away in 2009. As always, I hope this work lives up to his standards.