What makes Israeli law Israeli? Why is the word “Jewish” almost entirely absent from Israeli legislation? How did Israel succeed in eluding a futile and dangerous debate over identity, and construct a progressive, independent, original, and sophisticated legal system? Law and Identity in Israel attempts to answer these questions by looking at the complex bond between Zionism and the Jewish culture. Forging an original and “authentic” Israeli law that would be an expression and encapsulation of Israeli-Jewish identity has been the goal of many Jewish and Zionist jurists as well as public leaders for the past century. This book chronicles and analyzes these efforts, and in the process tackles the complex meaning of Judaism in modern times as a religion, a culture, and a nationality. Nir Kedar examines the challenges and difficulties of expressing Judaism in, or transplanting it into, the laws of the state of Israel.

Nir Kedar is a professor of law and history at Bar Ilan University and the Vice President for Academic Affairs of Sapir College in Israel. His main fields of interest are modern legal history, legal and political theory, and comparative law. He has published five books and numerous articles, including Mamlakhtiyut: David Ben-Gurion’s Civic Thought (Hebrew) (2009), which won the 2009 Shapiro Prize for Best Book on Israel.
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A CENTURY OF DEBATE

NIR KEDAR
Bar-Ilan University

Translated by Haim Watzman
To Nadav and Shira
Contents

Introduction: Law as an Expression of Jewish Culture  page 1

PART I SEEKING TO FASHION NATIONAL LAW  15

1 Law and Culture in Early Zionist Literature  17

2 The Hebrew Peace Courts: The Yishuv Judicial System That Failed  29


4 Why a Jewish-Hebrew System of Law Was Not Instituted at Independence  63

5 A Hebrew Constitution for the Jewish State: How the Cultural Dispute Prevented the Promulgation of a Written Constitution  74

6 Jewish Law and Legislation in Israel  83

PART II THE RESURGENCE OF CULTURAL CONFLICT  99

7 Jewish Heritage and a Jewish Democratic State: The Identity Discourse Returns to the Legal Debate  101

8 The Identity Turn and the Jewish and Democratic State  134
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PART III ZIONISM, DEMOCRACY, LAW, AND CULTURE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9  Zionism: Making and Preserving Hebrew Culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Israeli Law as a <em>Lieu de Mémoire</em> of National Identity and Culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Legal Cases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legislation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Index</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>