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# A Resilience–Innovation–Education Model as a Key for Survival and Success: A Comparative Israeli Case Study

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**Abstract:** Start-up and high-tech companies in Israel are recognized as crucial drivers of the nation's economy and are often viewed as national emblems. Israel ranks third globally in the number of university graduates per capita and boasts the highest concentration of scientists per capita. This technological progress appears paradoxical, considering Israel's enduring status as a conflict zone since its establishment, along with the significant influx of immigrants that has strained its resources. This study seeks to explore how Israel has attained such remarkable prosperity and success. To address this inquiry, our research design employs a comparative case study methodology grounded in a qualitative framework that utilizes discourse analysis. One case study focuses on Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai (RIBAZ), drawing on historical accounts, while the second case study investigates Stef Wertheimer through autobiographical research. The qualitative nature of this study poses challenges in establishing causality. While it offers valuable insights, the unique context of the two historical case studies complicates replication and may hinder validation. Our findings suggest that both figures exemplified RIBAZ's ethos, which integrates three key behavioral and cognitive factors: resilience, innovation, and education. These three factors, originating in a specific historical context, may serve as critical determinants in explaining the modern success of Israel.

**Keywords:** Stef Wertheimer; start-up nation; RIBAZ (Rabbi Yohanan Ben Zakkai); resilience; innovation; education

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Academic Editor: Gregor Wolbring

Received: 30 August 2024
Revised: 5 February 2025
Accepted: 11 February 2025
Published: 13 February 2025

**Citation:** Lewin, E.; Abramovich, S.; Lerach Zilberberg, S. A Resilience–Innovation–Education Model as a Key for Survival and Success: A Comparative Israeli Case Study. *Societies* **2025**, *15*, 35. https://doi.org/10.3390/soc15020035

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## 1. Introduction

During the past few decades, research and development organizations, start-ups, and high-tech companies have been considered the growth engines of the State of Israel, almost to the extent of being national symbols. The country produces excellent technology, particularly in the software, communications, security, and biotech sectors, attracting foreign investors, mainly from the West [1]. In the fields of agriculture and control of water supplies, Israel has become a world leader, particularly for developing countries [2,3]. The Israeli economy has been in a constant state of growth since the 1980s, with an impressive performance that reflects the dominance of the medium- and high-tech sector, which constitutes the country's main growth engine and contributes close to 50 percent of Israeli exports. This sector is governed by information and communication technologies (ICTs) and high-tech facilities [1,4].

In their seminal book *Start-Up Nation*, Dan Senor and Saul Singer assert that despite the all-encompassing media coverage of Israel, seldom is it mentioned that, in basic economic measurements, it represents one of the greatest concentrations of innovation and

entrepreneurship in the world [5]. Any account of the Israeli economy and technology can hardly ignore the fact that Israel launched satellites, developed exoatmospheric defense, and belongs to a very small group of countries with such capabilities. At some point during the 1980s or the 1990s, Israel's decades-long investments in defense matured and started to spread into the civilian sector, developing an infrastructure of companies that could now move ahead with high technology. Converting military technology to civilian uses was a game-changer, and a new generation of university and Technion graduates, who worked in advanced communications units during their military service, became a human reservoir for top technology companies like Intel and Applied Materials [6].

There are, nevertheless, various reservations concerning these optimistic accounts. There is a claim that while Israel's macroeconomic indicators are excellent, most Israeli households do not necessarily share this great success. There are also high levels of poverty and inequality, in comparison to countries that are member states of the OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development). High-tech industries and services employ a small minority of Israelis, most of whom are concentrated in Tel Aviv and its suburbs, leaving behind those who live elsewhere and do not have the chance to attend the best high schools and, consequently, the top universities [7]. However, even when referring to these difficulties, one cannot ignore how Israel has established itself as an innovation hub since the 1980s, becoming one of the most technologically advanced countries in the world [2,3,5,6,8,9]. Beyond the various reports in different fields, Israel constantly ranks highly in the annual Global Competitiveness Report [8] and Global Innovation Index (GII) [9]. Israel's high-tech and industrial achievements are also validated by its GDP, the contribution of its high-tech sector to GDP, and the number of scientists per capita.

### *1.1. GDP (Gross Domestic Product)*

GDP is one of the most extensive and closely monitored economic indicators. In the United States, for instance, it is utilized by the White House and Congress to develop the federal budget, by the Federal Reserve to shape monetary policy, by Wall Street as a gauge of economic activity, and by the business sector to forecast economic performance, which informs decisions related to production, investment, and employment planning [10]. We define GDP as the total gross value added by all domestic producers in the economy, plus product taxes, minus any subsidies not included in product values. This calculation does not consider the depreciation of physical assets or the depletion and degradation of natural resources [11,12].

Table 1 illustrates that over a span of 23 years, Israel's GDP per capita increased by 241 percent, indicating an average annual growth rate of over 10 percent. Meanwhile, total GDP rose by 374 percent, which can be interpreted as an average annual growth rate exceeding 16 percent. These figures signify a robust and thriving economy.

**Table 1.** Israel's GDP growth since 2000.

| Total GDP in Billions of USD | GDP per Capita in USD | Year |
|---|---|---|
| 136.0357717 | 21,630.7476 | 2000 |
| 134.6358221 | 20,909.4304 | 2001 |
| 125.0606229 | 19,035.1024 | 2002 |
| 131.2999159 | 19,627.1755 | 2003 |
| 139.9731484 | 20,557.0786 | 2004 |
| 147.083996 | 21,223.9356 | 2005 |

**Table 1.** *Cont.*

| Total GDP in Billions of USD | GDP per Capita in USD | Year |
|---|---|---|
| 158.6704569 | 22,494.6421 | 2006 |
| 184.0521217 | 25,633.6432 | 2007 |
| 220.5310652 | 30,173.3616 | 2008 |
| 211.9700409 | 28,317.0408 | 2009 |
| 238.3640923 | 31,266.6053 | 2010 |
| 266.7918544 | 34,354.7161 | 2011 |
| 262.2823441 | 33,156.2283 | 2012 |
| 297.7327785 | 36,941.8424 | 2013 |
| 314.330062 | 38,259.6811 | 2014 |
| 303.4142768 | 36,206.5222 | 2015 |
| 322.1027904 | 37,690.474 | 2016 |
| 358.2454275 | 41,114.7817 | 2017 |
| 376.6915266 | 42,406.8454 | 2018 |
| 402.4705136 | 44,452.2326 | 2019 |
| 413.2676692 | 44,846.7916 | 2020 |
| 488.5265459 | 52,129.516 | 2021 |
| 525.0024477 | 54,930.9388 | 2022 |
| 509.9014957 | 52,261.6762 | 2023 |

### *1.2. Contribution of Israel's High-Tech Sector to GDP*

The implementation of new technologies constitutes the fundamental activity of the high-tech sector, which consequently exerts a significant influence across various business segments. During the 2020s, the contributions of the high-tech sector accounted for over 16 percent of Israel's GDP, supported by approximately 12 percent of the workforce, equating to around 390,000 employees. This sector comprises more than 7500 companies of varying sizes operating within diverse industries and fields. Among these entities are over 5000 start-ups at different stages of development, alongside approximately 400 publicly traded companies. Over the years, this extensive activity has led to the emergence of groundbreaking technological innovations that have garnered global recognition, including personal computer processors, the invention of DiskOnKey, Waze's navigation system, road safety enhancement systems developed by Mobileye, and the Iron Dome defense system [13].

To date, 400 prominent multinational corporations have designated Israel as a strategic location for establishing research and development (R&D) centers, resulting in Israel having the world's highest concentration of R&D centers per capita. Notably, Israel is home to Microsoft's first R&D center outside the United States, as well as Apple's largest R&D center outside the United States [13–16].

As the local high-tech sector evolves, Israel's focus has expanded beyond start-ups. Since the 1908s, the nation has transitioned from being primarily a start-up nation to a scale-up nation, marked by the emergence of local mega-corporations alongside a long-standing roster of mature and established companies. During the 2020s, numerous Israeli firms achieved unicorn status, that is, private companies not listed in the stock market that are valued, each, over USD 1 billion. Nearly 100 private companies are now valued as unicorns—an exceptionally high figure for a country the size of Israel. In 2021, Israel recorded the highest number of new unicorns globally, at a rate of 5.2 new unicorns per one

million inhabitants, significantly outpacing Singapore, which ranked second, the United States in third, Canada in fourth, and the United Kingdom in fifth [13–16].

### 1.3. Scientists per Capita

Israel boasts the world's highest ratio of scientists and engineers per capita, with 135 individuals per 10,000 people. Additionally, 24 percent of Israel's workforce possess university degrees, while 12 percent hold advanced degrees. In this regard, Israel ranks third among industrialized nations, trailing only the United States and the Netherlands. The country significantly outpaces all others in scientific output, producing 109 scientific papers per 10,000 people, along with one of the highest rates of patent filings per capita. Consequently, with over 3000 high-tech companies and start-ups, Israel has the highest concentration of high-tech firms in the world, second only to Silicon Valley in California. Notably, on a per capita basis, Israel leads in the number of biotech start-ups [14].

### 1.4. GII Rank

Despite occasional criticism regarding its inaccuracies, the GII is regarded as a valuable resource for academics, business leaders, and policymakers, as it encapsulates the essence of intellectual property and other forms of intangible assets [15]. Developed by Cornell University, INSEAD, and the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), this tool assesses countries' innovation performance and monitors their innovation capabilities and efficiency levels.

Within the framework of the GII, global innovative capability is defined as a nation's financial influence concerning the creation, dissemination, and adoption of new ideas and technologies. Eighty indicators are categorized into two sub-indices that together form the overall GII score: innovation input and innovation output. Innovation input includes a variety of factors within the national economy that enable the generation of new ideas. In contrast, innovation output refers to the innovative activities carried out within an economy. Both sub-indices are weighted equally in the calculation of a country's total GII score [15].

Published annually by WIPO, the GII offers performance metrics and ranks 133 economies based on their innovation ecosystems [17]. In the 2024 GII, Israel achieved a ranking of 15 overall, 14 among the 51 high-income economies, and 1 among the 18 economies in its region (Northern Africa and Western Asia). Israel is outperforming several strong economies, including Austria, Italy, Spain, Turkey, and India. Notably, as illustrated in Table 2, Israel demonstrates better performance in innovation outputs than innovation inputs.

**Table 2.** Israel's GII rank, 2020–2024.

| Year | GII Rank | Innovation Inputs | Innovation Outputs |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2020 | 13 | 17 | 13 |
| 2021 | 15 | 18 | 12 |
| 2022 | 16 | 22 | 16 |
| 2023 | 14 | 21 | 13 |
| 2024 | 15 | 22 | 13 |

In the context of the GII, which assesses the effectiveness of converting innovation inputs into outputs, Israel demonstrates a superior capacity to generate innovation outputs relative to its level of innovative investments. According to the GII's performance metrics, which evaluate "expected versus observed innovation performance", Israel is classified as an innovation leader, consistently ranking among the top 25 countries within the index. Despite Israel's notable achievements, it is important to maintain a sense of perspective.

With a population of approximately 10 million, Israel ranks fifteenth in the GII, while countries of similar population size rank higher. For instance, Switzerland, which is slightly larger than Israel and has a comparable population, occupies the top position in the GII. Sweden, significantly larger than Israel but with a similar population, ranks second. Additionally, Singapore, a small city-state with a population of 700,000, ranks fourth. While such comparisons do not account for various relevant factors, including geopolitics and historical contexts, they serve as a reminder that Israel's achievements, despite their significance, should be viewed in proportion [17].

## 2. Research Questions

The statistics can be regarded as nothing short of miraculous, given that Israel has been situated in a war zone since its inception, while simultaneously absorbing significant numbers of immigrants that have placed considerable strain on the country's budget. This was evident during Israel's formative first decades but also in the immigration waves of the 1990s. Given those opening conditions, the question arises, how has this country managed to achieve such prosperity and success? How, in a small and young country like Israel, have start-up companies emerged in greater numbers than in some of the world's leading powers?

The answers to this question are various and diverse, starting with ethnic–hereditary and social–structural factors, such as military service in the IDF or the fact that Israeli society is a society of immigrants [5]. Economists and analysts who tackle this question list different factors as possible answers. Some mention that the successive waves of Jewish immigration were propelled by ideological motivations; among the huge number of newcomers, many were highly educated and skilled workers, creating an instant domestic market and, above all, a rich reservoir of human capital [4,18]. Other scholars cite foreign loans and donations from Jewish communities, reparations from Germany, and, of course, the military and economic aid from the United States. There are also those who mention how Israel's defense needs developed the domestic military–industrial complex that became an unrivaled apparatus of economic and technological advancement [16].

The Israel Innovation Authority asserts that Israel maintains an ecosystem that allows entrepreneurial spirit and flexibility [17]. Others, however, take things one step further to socio-cultural domains, claiming that it is all about *chutzpah*—a Yiddish–Hebrew expression that stands for a combination of audacity and boldness. *Chutzpah* is counted as an Israeli trait, expressed by the ability and the desire to challenge any status quo. It is a typically Israeli motivation to make breakthroughs, to think outside the box, and to search for different ways of completing objectives. The culture of *chutzpah* creates a risk-taking approach, where Israelis do not fear a challenge when they happen to encounter one [19]. In *Chutzpah: Why Israel Is a Hub of Innovation and Entrepreneurship*, Inbal Arieli portrays the unique way Israelis are raised in a tribal community, where creative thinking and the courage to pursue unorthodox thinking are part and parcel of the local environment [20].

To the best of our knowledge, there has been no examination of a millennia-old Jewish ethos in the Israeli context that synthesizes three interrelated behavioral and cognitive factors: resilience, innovation, and education. The integration of these factors produces a substantial enhancement of capabilities. We argue that a clear logical and ideological connection exists between modern Israeli entrepreneurship and the Jewish ethos attributed to Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai (hereafter referred to as RIBAZ, using a widely accepted Hebrew abbreviation). Our analysis begins with a review of the current scholarly literature concerning each of the three aforementioned factors. Subsequently, we examine two case studies from distinct historical periods: RIBAZ, who formulated the triple-factored ethos in the aftermath of the destruction in 70 CE, and Stef Wertheimer, a notable contemporary

Israeli industrialist, best known for his remarkable achievements, particularly in founding industrial parks in Israel and neighboring countries. In both cases, we demonstrate how the factors of resilience, innovation, and education, when intertwined, serve as essential tools for achieving prosperity and success in the face of challenging circumstances.

## 3. Theory

Three essential behavioral and cognitive factors collectively contribute to survival and success: resilience, innovation, and education. Although each factor possesses distinct attributes, it is the interplay among these three elements that constitutes an effective model for achievement and prosperity [18].

### *3.1. Resilience*

Resilience is frequently conceptualized as the capacity to absorb external shocks and effectively navigate significant adversity. It represents the inherent buffer capacity of a system to withstand perturbations. In the context of sports, a team's capability to recover and advance to the latter stages of competitions after experiencing a crucial loss to a rival is termed "bouncebackability". This concept encapsulates the idea of a successful team returning to its prior state. A resilient system is characterized by its ability to regain functionality, thereby mitigating the risk of stress fractures and systemic collapse. Consequently, resilience can be understood as the capacity of an individual, community, or system to endure a disaster while reorganizing to maintain its fundamental function, structure, and identity. Unlike notions of power or strength, resilience emphasizes flexibility, adaptability, and appropriate adjustments to evolving circumstances [21,22].

Positive psychology fosters this attitude in the sense that it offers a valuable framework for understanding and navigating crises by emphasizing resilience, adaptive coping strategies, and the cultivation of positive emotions. During times of adversity, individuals often face significant psychological challenges; however, positive psychology suggests that developing strengths such as optimism, gratitude, and social support can mitigate the negative effects of stress and enhance overall well-being. By focusing on the potential for growth and transformation in the wake of crises, positive psychology not only aids individuals in overcoming challenges but also contributes to their long-term psychological health and flourishing [23–25].

### *3.2. Innovation*

Innovation serves as a catalyst for new pathways toward a better future. However, its meaning has evolved significantly throughout history. In ancient Greece, innovation was primarily understood in a political context, signifying a shift in the established order. Centuries later, the concept transformed to encompass the idea of renewal. It was not until the nineteenth century that innovation came to denote something entirely new, playing a crucial role in political, social, and economic reform. The Reformation marks a pivotal moment in this historical development, as the notion of innovation was utilized to support and reinforce the Reformation movement. During this period, both monarchs and religious institutions sought to suppress innovation, apprehensive of the disruptive spirit it represented. As religious persecutions waned within the Christian world, innovation evolved into a secular term used to articulate dissent, encompassing both political deviation and religious heresy [18].

Innovation is understood as a form of action, occurring specifically when novel elements—such as ideas, doctrines, or activities—are introduced into the world. In this context, innovation is characterized as a deliberate and conscious endeavor. The innovator

operates with a clear purpose, strategy, or design aimed at transforming the social order. To achieve this, the innovator often establishes a distinct sect of followers [26].

Innovation is often viewed with apprehension due to its potential to disrupt the established social order. The innovator devises a strategy to challenge existing systems according to their own objectives. While the origins of innovation may be private, its effects are invariably public. What may initially appear as a minor or inconsequential change can, over time, precipitate a chain reaction, gradually infiltrating the entire system in an imperceptible manner. The conceptualization of innovation during the Reformation persisted for over three centuries. Subsequently, the modern understanding of innovation began to take shape in the nineteenth century, as social reformers redefined it as a tool for progress [26,27].

Joseph Schumpeter, whose theories on innovation and entrepreneurship represent significant contributions to the field of economics [28], defined innovation as the practice of doing things differently. He introduced the concept of creativity as an essential component of innovation that was largely unrelated to innovation before the twentieth century. Creativity plays a crucial role in innovation, as it underscores the initial adoption of new ideas, behaviors, or practices [29].

Since the conclusion of the nineteenth century, the spirit of innovation, or the culture of innovation, has generally been regarded as a positive force. While the tension between order and change, as well as tradition and innovation, continues to be a topic of discourse, innovation is no longer perceived as a threat to social order; instead, it is viewed as a challenge to conventional practices. The innovator is not considered a heretic; rather, they are distinguished from the majority of their peers. Although they may be labeled a deviant in a sociological context—as an original thinker, a marginal figure, a nonconformist, or an unorthodox individual—they are also recognized for their ingenuity and creativity. The innovator serves as an experimenter, entrepreneur, and leader, acting as an agent of change. Historical evidence illustrates that innovation constitutes action that produces societal effects through the introduction of new elements into the world [26,27].

### *3.3. Education*

When examining education, the initial aspect that comes to mind is the acquisition of primarily technical knowledge. In the contemporary industrialized context, the attainment of skills, expertise, and information is crucial. A robust education is essential for individuals to navigate the competitive landscape of modern society. This society is fundamentally structured around individuals who possess high living standards and the knowledge necessary to devise effective solutions to their challenges [30].

Considering the economic, environmental, and social challenges currently facing society, the importance of education has grown significantly compared to previous eras. Contemporary youth must be adequately prepared to address future challenges through opportunities that equip them for their roles as roles as citizens, employees, managers, family members, volunteers, and entrepreneurs [31].

To realize their full potential as adults, young individuals require a comprehensive education that encompasses a wide range of skills and knowledge, particularly in academic subjects such as language and mathematics. Instructional methods should promote not just the retention of information but also the practical application of skills and knowledge. As society transitioned from agricultural to industrial—and, subsequently, to an information revolution—education became imperative at all levels, from primary education to colleges and universities [32,33].

However, education also serves as a vital social instrument that empowers individuals to understand their rights and responsibilities toward their families, communities, and

nations [30]. Education is a process that facilitates the realization of human potential. It fosters the natural and harmonious development of inherent abilities, promoting the holistic growth of the individual. Education enables individuals to adapt to their environment and prepares them to fulfill their duties while understanding the significance of their responsibilities in life and citizenship [34].

At the societal level, education has historically been recognized as a fundamental factor in shaping social structures [35]. Through the process of socialization, education not only preserves culture but also nurtures it for future generations. In this context, education fosters social cohesion, enabling individuals to coexist peacefully and collaboratively within their communities. Simultaneously, education serves as both a tool and an outcome of social transformation and awakening. There exists an interdependent relationship between education and social change; while education acts as a mechanism for instigating desired societal shifts, social change also plays a crucial role in facilitating educational advancements [34].

Education broadens perspectives and enhances the ability to address issues such as injustice, violence, and corruption, among other societal challenges. Education provides individuals with knowledge of their surroundings and fosters a particular worldview. Consequently, education exerts a significant moral influence derived from its intrinsic democratic values, consisting of inclusion, multicultural openness, equality, and individual liberties [36–38].

Overall, when discussing education, we are addressing a crucial element in the advancement of a nation. Without education, individuals are less inclined to generate new ideas, which stifles creativity, and without creativity, national development becomes unattainable. Given these considerations, it is widely recognized that investments in public education contribute to the common good, bolster national prosperity, and promote stability within families, neighborhoods, and communities [31].

### *3.4. An Integrative Model*

The interconnectedness of resilience, innovation, and education is grounded in the scholarly literature of these three interconnected fields. Resilience equips individuals to navigate adversity, innovation drives progress, and education provides the necessary skills and knowledge to foster both. This triad not only enhances personal development but also contributes to the broader socio-economic fabric.

Resilience is not a fixed trait but rather a dynamic process that can be cultivated through supportive environments, including educational settings. Schools that promote resilience through socio-emotional learning and supportive teacher–student relationships enable students to overcome challenges and setbacks [39]. Furthermore, resilience in education fosters a growth mindset, which encourages students to view challenges as opportunities for learning rather than insurmountable obstacles. This mindset is fundamental for developing the skills necessary for innovation, as resilient individuals are more likely to experiment and take calculated risks [40].

Innovation, defined as the application of creative ideas to produce new solutions, is increasingly recognized as a critical skill for the twenty-first century. Education systems that prioritize critical thinking, problem-solving, and creativity are more effective in nurturing innovative capacities [41]. Research shows that curricula that integrate project-based learning and real-world problem-solving can significantly enhance students' innovative thinking. By engaging students in meaningful challenges and encouraging collaborative solutions, educators can cultivate an environment conducive to innovation [42].

Education plays a pivotal role in interlinking resilience and innovation. It provides the intellectual and emotional tools necessary for individuals to adapt and thrive. Effective

educational practices that promote resilience and innovation are characterized by collaboration, continuous feedback, and a focus on student agency [43]. Moreover, educational institutions that embrace diversity and inclusivity often foster a culture of resilience and innovation. By exposing students to varied perspectives and experiences, these institutions enhance cognitive flexibility and creativity, essential components for innovative thinking. There is a constant interplay, then, between resilience, innovation, and education, which is vital for individual and social advancement [44].

The socio-psychological aspects of the interplay between innovation, education, and resilience are fundamental to understanding how both individuals and communities navigate challenges and strive for progress. Innovation frequently arises in environments conducive to creative thinking and effective problem-solving, which are cultivated through educational systems that emphasize critical inquiry, collaboration, and interdisciplinary approaches. Such educational frameworks empower learners to engage actively with content, fostering an atmosphere where questioning and exploration are encouraged [45,46].

Educators play a crucial role in this dynamic by instilling a growth mindset, which is characterized by the belief that abilities and intelligence can be developed through dedication and effort. This mindset encourages students to perceive setbacks not as failures but as valuable opportunities for learning and personal growth [47,48]. Consequently, psychological resilience becomes a vital attribute, equipping individuals to confront the complexities and uncertainties of an ever-evolving world. Resilient individuals are more likely to embrace change, adapt to new circumstances, and apply their educational experiences to drive innovation effectively [49].

Moreover, the presence of resilient individuals within a community fosters a culture of innovation, where collective problem-solving and adaptability become normative behaviors. Such environments encourage collaboration among diverse stakeholders, leading to the co-creation of solutions that address local and global challenges. This communal resilience is further enhanced by educational initiatives that promote social cohesion and civic engagement, thereby reinforcing the capacity of communities to thrive in the face of adversity [50,51].

In summary, the interplay between innovation, education, and resilience not only enhances individual capabilities but also fortifies societal structures, fostering an ecosystem in which communities can flourish and respond proactively to emerging challenges. This holistic understanding underscores the importance of integrating socio-psychological principles into educational practices and policy-making to cultivate environments that support innovation and resilience at both individual and collective levels [51].

## 4. Methodology

### *4.1. Discourse Analysis*

Discourse analysis is defined as the examination of how language is utilized for communication within specific contexts. This rapidly expanding field is characterized by a diverse array of analytical techniques and continually evolving methodologies. Its scope spans numerous academic disciplines while simultaneously developing a robust foundation in theoretical, descriptive, and applied linguistics [52].

Historically, social studies scholars have largely overlooked language phenomena, primarily because they are so integral to daily life that they are only recognized when they become problematic, such as when monolingual researchers encounter unfamiliar languages [46]. However, contemporary researchers now demonstrate a sophisticated awareness of class and regional dialectal variations, with growing attention to the disparities in opportunities often associated with these differences in speech production. Scholars

across various disciplines have also identified distinctions in discourse that are closely linked to immediate interactional outcomes and cultural reproduction [53].

Discourse analysis has been utilized by researchers across a range of academic disciplines, initially emerging within linguistics and subsequently extending to behavioral studies, communication, and cultural studies. Scholars from these diverse fields employ methods and approaches that may be unique or specifically relevant to their respective disciplines. Nonetheless, a commonality among them is that their analyses are both interpretive and explanatory [54,55].

Consequently, discourse analysis encompasses a variety of approaches across multiple disciplines and theoretical traditions. Discourse analysts in fields such as sociolinguistics, sociology, and social psychology are likely to differ in their choice of sources and, to some extent, in the issues and research questions they aim to explore. Nevertheless, a common denominator among all forms of discourse analysis is that they represent a research approach in which spoken or written texts are analyzed as evidence of phenomena that extend beyond the individual [56].

This paper employs discourse analysis to investigate how the language of two prominent figures can enhance our understanding of thought and behavior patterns within the context of historical circumstances. Among the various analytical methods that examine spoken or written texts as evidence of broader phenomena, we have chosen to utilize autobiographical research, which will be elaborated upon in the following section.

### *4.2. Autobiographical Research*

In the realm of discourse analysis, narrative has emerged as a prominent area of inquiry [57,58]. Furthermore, autobiographical research has become increasingly significant within narrative studies [59], thus constituting a crucial methodological approach for this paper.

Social scientists contend that the 2000s marked the advent of the narrative turn, characterized by an increasing interest in the narratives or stories of individuals and groups. This narrative turn developed alongside a new wave of philosophical discourse concerning the relationships between self, other, community, and social, political, and historical dynamics. It also encompasses a critique of the positivist approach to studying the social world and understanding human experience [60]. Narrative inquiry is structured to capture data through the lenses of real-life experiences in an intimate, relational context, enabling researchers to examine specific topics within a controlled yet authentic environment. The incorporation of personal storytelling lends narrative research a degree of effectiveness and viability that allows qualitative researchers to demonstrate their findings rather than merely describe them [61].

However, autobiographical narratives extend beyond mere personal accounts; they encapsulate systems of values, rules, and norms that shape an individual's learning and logical reasoning. When considered as a data source, autobiographical stories embed reflexivity within cultural contexts, providing researchers with a significant framework of both social and individualized contexts for study. The analysis of autobiographies facilitates the contextualization of common themes that emerge within a structured narrative [61].

In recent decades, the study of autobiography has gained significant popularity, and a growing body of the theoretical literature has developed, along with corresponding critiques [62]. While the examination of autobiographies has long been prevalent among historians, its importance has expanded in recent years to the fields of sociology, political science, and literature [63].

Autobiographies serve as representations of everyday situations and events, with individuals experiencing these moments in varied ways. Such daily occurrences are

narrated and reconstructed both materially and imaginatively, within similar and contrasting contexts and perspectives [64]. The study of autobiographies—alongside letters, diaries, memoirs, and even oral histories—enables scholars to gain insights into individuals' thoughts and feelings regarding their lives. This approach emphasizes the power of subjective records to shed light on personal experiences and the broader social contexts in which narrators exist. Despite ongoing debates surrounding historical reliability and representativeness, the insights into the past and the concepts revealed through the exploration of personal narratives have proven to be invaluable [65].

In autobiographical research, the investigator endeavors to reconstruct analytical elements that contribute to a deeper understanding of the subject matter. Memory is recognized as an active process of meaning-making; consequently, the study of life narratives involves the collection of various facts across diverse narrative contexts and the researcher's participation in elaborating memories that construct meaning through the investigative process. Thus, a narrative is a construct in which the researcher plays a significant role, given the unique nature of its production. In autobiographical studies, the researcher is not solely focused on gathering objective facts about past events but rather seeks to understand how the narrator perceived these events at the time and, if still alive, how he or she recalls them in the present [66].

The interpretation of autobiographies allows researchers to explore potential explanations and gather evidence to substantiate their arguments. This approach facilitates the identification of central themes and patterns of behavior and thought, as well as their meanings or symbolic representations [67]. The autobiographical approach inherently involves consideration of the distinction between truth and fiction. Researchers are encouraged to examine the autobiographer's experiences from both childhood and adulthood, evaluating relationships throughout the individual's lifespan as they assess the narratives presented. Consequently, autobiographies hold significant value in cognitive science for understanding and analyzing the emotional experiences of the author [68–76].

In this paper, autobiographical research was implemented in relation to the case study of Stef Wertheimer, whose autobiography was published in English in 2015. However, in the editor's foreword, Lynn Holstein clarifies that it is not a direct translation of the Hebrew text but rather an adaptation that retains much of the original material [77] (p. iv). Consequently, we opted to utilize the English edition solely for the purpose of describing Wertheimer's actions over the years. For the application of autobiographical research, we selected the Hebrew version [78], as it represents the original text and thus provides a narrative that is more authentic to Wertheimer's personal experience.

### *4.3. Comparative Case Studies*

In essence, comparative case study research involves the examination of two or more instances of the same phenomenon over time and across different contexts, aiming to derive general understandings of the phenomenon in question [79]. Comparative case study methodology entails the systematic analysis and synthesis of similarities, differences, and patterns across different data sets derived from case study methods. Each case study can encompass a wide range of data, including individual participants, groups, social structures, political entities, or specific behaviors and policies. This methodology is particularly useful for identifying causal relationships when the use of a control group is not feasible. Proponents of comparative case study techniques argue that they serve as a valuable tool for generating general insights about the phenomena under investigation [80].

In recent years, there has been a noticeable rise in qualitative comparative research. This trend signifies evolving perspectives among social scientists regarding the conceptualization of places, individuals, social institutions, and events that constitute the focus of their

investigations. While global influence questions often examine situational variables identified by researchers, qualitative studies prioritize the context in which the phenomenon under investigation occurs. In comparative case study research, scholars can strengthen the explanatory capacity of their cases through the process of comparing and contrasting, primarily by identifying patterns across different occurrences. This methodological approach allows for the confirmation, development, or modification of theoretical frameworks [81].

We selected two case studies that, despite being separated by thousands of years, belong to the same tradition and share a preserved national ethos. We posit that identifying a common denominator between these two cases, both of whom experienced failures and successes, especially in relation to their fundamental beliefs, could provide a significant key to understanding success. The first case study examines RIBAZ (Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai), a prominent Jewish sage from the first century CE. He was a major contributor to the foundational texts of Rabbinic Judaism (the Mishnah) and is recognized as a spiritual leader whose guidance, along with the ethos surrounding him, facilitated the national survival of the Jewish people and the continuation of Judaism following the destruction of the Second Temple [82]. The second case study considers Stef Wertheimer, who was raised in poverty in pre-state Israel during the 1930s and was expelled as a teenager from a mediocre school in Tel Aviv. Decades later, his family emerged as one of the wealthiest in Israel, and his fortune is now estimated at several billion USD [83]. We aim to identify a common denominator between these two case studies, which originate from markedly different eras and social contexts. Examining their shared beliefs and life perspectives may provide insights into the unique characteristics of the State of Israel and its achievements in the realm of start-up companies.

## 5. The Case Studies

### *5.1. RIBAZ*

RIBAZ is regarded as one of the most significant Tannaim in history, leading the Mishnaic community during the period following the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE. According to sources found in the Mishnah and Talmud, he is especially recognized for his efforts to restore the practice of Torah life in Israel and to adapt regulations to a reality in which the Temple no longer existed. A pivotal narrative that shaped his legacy for future generations involves his departure from besieged Jerusalem and the subsequent establishment of a Jewish center in Yavneh. This story, which appears in various sources with differing accounts, recounted how RIBAZ left Jerusalem to negotiate with the Roman general despite resistance from the extremist factions within the city who opposed his moderate stance. After prophesying to the general that he would ascend to the position of emperor, RIBAZ sought refuge in Yavneh, where he later founded the Center for Jewish Leadership [83–86].

This narrative has provided a foundation for generations of researchers across various disciplines. Historians have examined the actual historical context of the story, debated its plausibility, and identified which details may not align with existing knowledge from other sources about that period (e.g., [87–89]). Meanwhile, Talmudic and textual scholars have focused on analyzing the story itself, including its literary structure and the imagery it presents (e.g., [90]).

According to Rabbinic tradition, RIBAZ enacted legal decrees concerning calendar and liturgical matters to reorganize Judaism following the destruction of the Temple cult. Although his historical biography is limited, Rabbinic sources depict him as one of Hillel's students. He is acknowledged as the last of the Pharisees, with his disciples being the first ordained rabbis. Consequently, he is regarded as a pivotal figure in the transformation of Judaism after 70 CE, one who, in retrospect, facilitated the development of Rabbinic

Judaism as a religion capable of adapting to the loss of sacrificial worship by reinterpreting practices such as daily prayer, study, and the observance of commandments with new significance [91–94].

It is important to note that some scholars contest the notion that the transition from a Temple-centered religion to Rabbinic Judaism occurred immediately and question the overall impact of one individual's decisions, regardless of their wisdom and significance. Recent scholarship suggests that Rabbinic Judaism did not become religiously dominant until the third or fourth century CE. Apocalyptic responses to the destruction of the Temple, which sought a divine intervention, continued to prevail in Judaism at the end of the first century and into the beginning of the second century CE. Some researchers regard the traditions emerging from Yavneh as constructs formed as late as the fourth century. Additionally, Rabbinic narratives frequently employ Biblical archetypes to portray RIBAZ as a new Jeremiah leading a remnant of Israel through the crisis of destruction. These observations prompt the question of whether RIBAZ's state of mind reflects a religious reform in the aftermath of 70 CE or whether it should instead be interpreted as a narrative that retrospectively legitimizes a religious identity [95].

### 5.2. Stef Wertheimer

Stef (Ze'ev) Wertheimer was born in 1926 in Kippenheim, Germany, into a Jewish family that fled to Mandatory Palestine in 1937 to escape the rise of Nazism. During his childhood, he attended the Tel-Nordau School in Tel Aviv but left formal education at the age of 16 to work in a camera repair shop. Concurrently, he commenced studies in optics under the tutelage of Professor Emanuel Goldberg, a prominent researcher and inventor who made significant contributions to various facets of imaging technology in the first half of the twentieth century.

In 1943, Wertheimer enlisted in the British Royal Air Force, where he served as an optical equipment technician during World War II. His deployment to Bahrain involved repairing optical equipment utilized in British military aircraft. In 1945, he joined the Palmach, the elite strike force of the pre-state Jewish community's Hagana paramilitary organization, where he held the position of technical officer in the "German Unit". This specialized guerrilla force was trained in collaboration with British forces to conduct combat operations against the German army if it advanced into Israel. In 1947, Wertheimer contributed to Hagana by working on the development and enhancement of artillery systems. During the 1948 Arab–Israeli War, he served as a technical officer within an infantry brigade.

Following the conclusion of the war, Wertheimer began his career at Rafael Advanced Defense Systems, an Israeli defense technology company that served as the national research and development laboratory for weapons and military technology in the 1940s. However, he was dismissed shortly thereafter due to his lack of formal education. Subsequently, Wertheimer and his wife resided temporarily on a kibbutz, but they departed due to his disagreement with the socialist economic model prevalent in that setting.

In 1952, Wertheimer established his own enterprise in the backyard of his home in Nahariya, founding a small metal shop and tool manufacturing company named ISCAR. The business quickly achieved success, garnering the attention of Discount Investments, which subsequently provided financial backing. In 1968, in response to Israeli efforts to circumvent the French arms embargo following the Six-Day War, Wertheimer founded ISCAR Blades, which originated from his modest private company. This venture evolved into Blades Technology, later becoming one of the largest manufacturers of blades and vanes for jet engines and industrial gas turbines. In 2014, Wertheimer sold his 51 percent stake in Blades Technology to Pratt & Whitney, a prominent jet engine manufacturer.

In 2025, ISCAR ranks among the world's largest manufacturers of carbide industrial cutting tools, serving prominent automotive manufacturers such as General Motors and Ford. The company operates branches in numerous countries across the globe and employs over 5000 individuals. ISCAR is the largest entity within the International Metalworking Companies Group (IMC), which comprises a total of fifteen distinct companies. In 2006, Berkshire Hathaway acquired 80 percent of ISCAR Metalworking Company for USD 4 billion. Subsequently, in May 2013, Warren Buffett purchased the remaining 20 percent of ISCAR for USD 2 billion. As of 2024, Forbes estimates Wertheimer's net worth to be USD 6.3 billion, positioning him as the four hundred thirty-sixth wealthiest individual globally and the seventh wealthiest in Israel [96].

In 1982, Wertheimer established an industrial park in northern Israel and subsequently developed seven additional industrial parks—five in the Galilee, one in the Negev, and another in Turkey. Each of these parks is founded on five core principles— exports, education, coexistence, community, and culture—aimed at fostering economic growth and job creation to promote stability in the Middle East. Wertheimer's vision for these industrial parks is to stimulate industrial activity and provide employment opportunities, thereby engaging individuals in productive work rather than conflict or terrorism. Furthermore, these parks facilitate the development of Arab–Jewish Israeli export companies and encourage coexistence among individuals from both communities. In the late 1990s, Wertheimer initiated plans for an industrial park in the Gaza Strip, receiving support from both the Palestinian and Israeli governments. However, just one week prior to the groundbreaking ceremony in October 2000, the Second Intifada erupted, leading to the indefinite suspension of the project. Despite this setback, in 2002, he testified before the United States House of Representatives, where he proposed a "new Marshall Plan." This initiative called for American investment aimed at revitalizing the Middle East through sustained efforts to promote commerce, job creation, and a free economy in the region, with plans to establish an additional 100 industrial parks that would employ both Israelis and Palestinians in Israel, Jordan, and Turkey.

In 1991, Wertheimer was honored with the Israel Prize for his significant contributions to society and the State of Israel. In 2008, he received the Buber–Rosenzweig Medal, an annual award presented by the German Coordinating Council of Societies for Christian–Jewish Cooperation, in recognition of his active efforts to promote understanding between Christian and Jewish communities. In 2010, he was awarded the Oslo Business for Peace Award, which recognizes private sector leaders who have facilitated transformative and positive change through ethical business practices. In 2014, Wertheimer was presented with the Israeli Presidential Medal of Honor, the highest civilian award bestowed by the President of the State of Israel, in acknowledgment of his exceptional contributions to the State of Israel and to humanity [97–100].

## 6. Findings

### *6.1. The RIBAZ Ethos*

The RIBAZ ethos, exemplified through his actions and passed down to subsequent generations, illustrates a framework of resilience, innovation, and education.

#### 6.1.1. RIBAZ: Resilience

RIBAZ's notable actions, particularly his departure from Jerusalem and subsequent negotiations with the Romans regarding the establishment of an alternative spiritual center in Yavneh, exemplify a remarkable capacity for intellectual flexibility and immediate adaptation to a profoundly challenging situation. This initiative reflects a strategic plan for a national religious resurgence. However, not everyone has praised RIBAZ for demonstrating

resilience; some have critically discussed his actions and challenged his ethos, claiming that RIBAZ fled the struggle while giving up the tenets of Judaism—Jerusalem and the Temple. In Zionist-activist discourse, he is portrayed as a concessionary and exiled figure, as one who surrendered to the foreign occupier and international pressures. RIBAZ's ethos was pitted against the ethos of the Masada fighters, who represented the willingness to fight uncompromisingly until the bitter end, and in the classical Zionist outlook, Masada prevailed over Yavneh [101–103].

Micha Yosef Berdichevsky [104], for example, one of the writers of early modern Zionism, saw the choices that RIBAZ made as a negative factor in the history of the Jewish people; they expressed, in his opinion, an attitude of defeatism and submission to foreign forces. As part of his struggle for the original Israeli culture, Berdichevsky proposed an original reading of the Talmudic text. He argued that the fact that the Jewish people were among the sons of the sages of Yavneh was what made them weak and submissive to foreign cultures. Berdichevsky did not hesitate to criticize Herzl, Nordau, and other major Zionist leaders since, opposing the Talmudic text entirely, he identified himself specifically with the fanatical people of Jerusalem who opposed RIBAZ and tried to prevent him from leaving the city and collaborating with the Romans. According to Berdichevsky's Zionist approach, the fanatical figures—rigid, strict, and strong as cedars—were those who guarded Jewish self-identity against succumbing to foreign influences [96]. Berdichevsky was not alone, and his position was also expressed in later generations in the political struggles between the right and left in Israel. Various writers saw RIBAZ as the father of the Israeli left, the prototype for moderation, compromise, and, worst of all, feebleness [104].

Setting aside this historical–ideological debate, RIBAZ's ethos serves as a model for growth out of failure. RIBAZ, also known as the "father of the future", presented a model of long-term thinking, of willingness to make local concessions with an overall view of future goals. RIBAZ's ethos is the embodiment of the resilience concept, which focuses on containing the blow and preparing for recovery [105].

#### 6.1.2. RIBAZ: Innovation

As an innovator, RIBAZ ignited the imagination of various movements from all shades of the Jewish spectrum and constituted a framework for the development of renewal and breaking new ground. RIBAZ taught that failure and crisis can be a source of inspiration and growth. He not only reestablished and revived the Jewish world after the destruction but also led processes of change and renewal [106,107].

As mentioned earlier, according to the story, the Romans allowed RIBAZ to establish a center for Jewish leadership in the city of Yavneh. The choice of Yavneh meant not only giving up the struggle for Jerusalem; it also had an innovative meaning: The move from Jerusalem to Yavneh reflected an unprecedented change in Judaism. The basis of the change lay in the fact that the destruction of the Temple forced the shift of the religious and social focus from the Temple and sacrificial worship to other areas, such as prayer and Torah study. The realization that there could no longer be a Jewish existence based essentially on a world centered on a Temple led to an understanding of the need for adaptations and modifications of many of the preceding customs.

To this end, RIBAZ amended various regulations that helped control situations of uncertainty and enabled the continuation of Jewish life even in a world without a Temple. These included various procedures related to the creation of the Hebrew calendar, a central component of the proper existence of Jewish life, which was based on the admission of witnesses in the court of the Temple. An additional regulation that helped shape Jewish life after the destruction was the stipulation that the priests who blessed the people in the synagogue should take off their shoes, as the priests used to do in the Temple.

Through this regulation, RIBAZ strengthened the status of the synagogue as the main substitute for the Temple and created continuity with the customs that existed prior to its destruction [102]. RIBAZ amended many additional regulations in various areas of life that presented solutions to various situations created by the destruction and enabled the continuation of Jewish life.

RIBAZ shifted the center of the Jewish world to the spirit, to the "logos of the Torah", since the establishment of the center in Yavneh shifted the focus to the beit midrash and Torah study and laid the foundations for the development of the oral Torah [94]. In achieving this, RIBAZ saved the Torah and Judaism from loss, for now they could also survive their exile and separation from the land. Through this shift of emphasis, RIBAZ's innovation led to the world of the spirit and description of Jews living in the Diaspora as the "People of the Book": he turned Judaism into a religion of thought and spirit, which could exist even without a "body" and without a country [108].

Unlike other religious factions that chose to mourn and focus on the past, RIBAZ taught how it was possible to renew oneself out of a crisis. When the familiar and secure past no longer existed and reality was undermined and unstable, the person who chose to deal with the new situation had to open their mind and heart to regeneration and original thinking. RIBAZ's legacy was that failure may lead individuals and communities to find new and creative paths amid crises.

Innovation and discovering change in destruction and crisis inspired various elements in Jewish society throughout the generations. For example, in RIBAZ and the revolution he led in the Jewish world, the early members of the Reform movement found a historical basis for the revolution they sought to bring about. They perceived RIBAZ as an innovator and reformer who knew how to respond to the challenges of the time. The Reform movement saw itself as his successor, leading processes of change and renewal in the Jewish world, trying to adapt Judaism to the renewed modern reality. Even today, RIBAZ is seen as a role model for the Reform leadership [109–112].

Even in more conservative circles in the Jewish world, RIBAZ's ethos as an innovator took a significant place. During the twentieth century, many new Orthodox educational institutions were called Yavneh. These institutions led to different innovations, each in its own field, and the choice of the name "Yavne" expressed the central message they learned from RIBAZ: in order to revive the Jewish world, it is necessary to adopt creative ways of thinking and integrate them into the traditional world [106]. One example of this in the State of Israel is the first Hesder yeshiva established in Yavneh in 1953 called "Kerem Yavneh". Hesder yeshiva is a program that combines Talmudic studies with IDF military service and allows religious young men to fulfill active duties in the army while maintaining their engagement in Torah studies. The choice of the location in Yavneh and the name of a new form of yeshiva was not at all coincidental, expressing the aspirations of the founders of this yeshiva to break new ground and establish an institution with a unique character that would renew the face of religious Judaism in the State of Israel [112–114].

#### 6.1.3. RIBAZ: Education

Another characteristic of RIBAZ's ethos that has caught the attention of various factions throughout the generations is the choice to establish, first and foremost, an educational institution in Yavneh. As stated above, according to the sources, when RIBAZ accepted Yavneh as a place of refuge, he established the beit midrash "Kerem in Yavneh" there, from which the world of the Torah and Jewish leadership continued to develop. Historians have been divided as to the precise nature of this institution—a beit midrash or a beit din (a center of studies or a center of judicial procedures)—and some diminish its historical value. However, according to the clear ethos established in public memory, RIBAZ put a

lot of effort into setting up an educational institution immediately after the destruction of the Temple. This ethos is reflected in the establishment of many educational institutions, all over the world, that deliberately bear the name "Yavneh".

Indeed, RIBAZ's ethos has surrounded the yeshiva from its inception, and it was considered by those involved in establishing the yeshiva, including those who held completely different Zionist ideologies: Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak Kook and Menachem Ussishkin. Although the yeshiva was established in 1953, as early as 1913, Rabbi Kook, then the rabbi of Jaffa and the colonies, called, in a letter he wrote to the Mizrahi movement, for buying land in the historic Yavneh area and establishing a yeshiva there. In his letter, Rabbi Kook explained the great importance he saw in investing in education as a central tool for strengthening settlement in the Land of Israel. The yeshiva that would be established was bound to draw its strength from "the brilliant vision that encourages all the forces of our spiritual life, from the distant past of Kerem Yavneh," which he saw as a role model of using education to rebuild the land [115] (p. 114). It took several decades for the Mizrahi movement to take Rabbi Kook's advice, but in 1940, the Mizrahi Committee decided to establish a yeshiva in Yavneh [115]. This decision followed the support of Menachem Ussishkin, chairman of the Jewish National Fund, which bought the land and even recruited investors to establish the yeshiva. In his speech before the Mizrahi Committee, Ussishkin explained his motivation to push for the establishment of the yeshiva:

> I am particularly fond of Jerusalem, our holy city. But we have another place in the Land of Israel of great historical value, and that is Yavneh. Yavneh and its sages, headed by RIBAZ, did not save the Land of Israel but saved the Jewish people from extinction. Therefore, it is commanded to revive this historical place and restore it to its ancient glory [116] (p. 3)

Ussishkin argued in his historical analysis that while the establishment of Yavneh did not help prevent the Israelis' exile and loss of land that occurred in subsequent generations, it saved the Jewish people from loss, preserving Jewish tradition and strengthening Torah study [107]. Ussishkin saw great importance in the yeshiva established in Yavneh in the process of renewing Jewish life after the destruction. Therefore, he pushed for the establishment of a similar institution, the necessity of which was even more evident, in his view, against the background of World War II and the destruction of European Jewry. He pinned high hopes on the educational institution, believing it could have a significant impact on the entire Jewish world. Furthermore, at that point in time, after World War II, the Jews again had to be rehabilitated and rebuilt, as in the days of RIBAZ.

Various modern thinkers identified with the emphasis on learning in the ethos of RIBAZ, including liberal thinkers who supported the process of change and even spoke about "beit midrash instead of the Temple" or "Yavneh instead of Jerusalem" [102]. The ethos of RIBAZ, in this modern interpretation, has become a source of inspiration for a movement of Israeli education, learning, and renewal from Jewish sources. The phenomenon of the liberal and secular beit midrash derives its strength from the revolution of RIBAZ, who chose the beit midrash, study, and the spiritual world over sacrificial service in the Temple [102]. In this aspect of RIBAZ's ethos, education is emphasized as a way of coping with crises. The way to succeed and grow out of failure is through investing in education (or spreading your teachings more broadly), which helps to make profound corrections to historical or social failures. Investing in education expresses recognition of failure and a way of coping without evading or obscuring it. In addition, in order to correct the failure and not repeat it, education must be adapted to the changing reality, and sometimes, new ways must be paved in order to grow and succeed.

### 6.2. Wertheimer's Ethos

An examination of Stef Wertheimer's autobiography reveals that his life embodies a similar ethos to that of RIBAZ, reflecting the themes of resilience, innovation, and education.

#### 6.2.1. Resilience

Soon after they arrived in Israel, as a German family absorbed into the Tel Aviv landscape on the Mediterranean coast, the young Wertheimer experienced financial difficulties when, in a business mistake and at the wrong time, his father sold his share in a flour mill. On the transition from the life of a wealthy family to a life of poverty, he testifies: "A psychological analysis would have determined that my early and lasting drive to succeed was born with my father's failure" [78] (p. 29). Other failures would also shape his success. For example, Wertheimer described a disturbing teacher who often hit his students until he, a thirteen-year-old boy at the time, came out to defend his girlfriend Vera when she was slapped. The incident ended with him being thrown out of school and labeled at home as the black sheep of the family. But his unsuccessful experience in the educational framework only pushed him to find another framework in which to study in a different way—by sticking to professionals and autodidactically reading the relevant literature.

Wertheimer's ethos of turning failure into a lever for success is evident far beyond the personal level, especially in areas in which he combined society and industry. This is how he described a meeting with Yigal Allon after the dissolution of the Palmach:

> The guys are confused. Don't know exactly what to do now. Let's decide that the Palmach will dress up as a civic framework in a city like Be'er Sheva and start building a city from scratch that will be all industries that will provide jobs for the residents [78] (p. 64).

The dissolution of the Palmach mixed the personal, the professional, and the organizational. Wertheimer pointed out that, on ending his career at Israel Military Industries, the criticism around him grew; he was under-evaluated to the point that the engineers in charge of him delayed his proposals for improvement and efficiency. According to his description:

> I was different, a Palmach veteran, independent, full of ideas, and ready to be killed for realizing my ideas. After the Palmach was dismantled, the guys who came out of it were treated like they should also fall apart. Respectively, the management tried to turn me into some kind of a junior assistant [...]. The feeling that I was no longer welcome in the large state enterprise pushed me out [78] (pp. 73–74).

Once outside, Wertheimer was not waiting for a huge success, certainly not at the beginning. The wrong choice of the type of knife he manufactured and the fact that the largest potential buyer, Israel Military Industries, was unwilling to take a risk and buy Israeli products left him unable to support his young family. The experience of poverty and misery, which he had known well as a child, returned. However, he treated the economic crisis he found himself in as a crisis that would later lift him up:

> I wasn't worried. I knew I could always come back and support my family from my work as a hired specialist. After all, we have not yet descended into the worst: I have not entered debts that I could not repay, and I have not been enslaved to obligations [78] (p. 78).

The rest of his journey was no better. Even when he finally succeeded in locating the right product, a metal made from carbides, the Ministry of Defense refused to purchase its products from him for years. Nevertheless, it was precisely this situation of failure that

made Wertheimer into an outstanding industrialist, since his conclusion was that instead of closing the business, he should find markets abroad. Consequently, the local failure led him not only to develop international success but also to construct a worldview that stood on its own:

> At the end of 1958, we concluded in ISCAR that production for export was not just a goal but a way of life. In general, in my view, the right of a state like Israel to exist stems from its ability to trade with the world. Over the years, this simple philosophy has become our first commandment: to gain an advantage in [international] markets [78] (p. 93).

Failure as a lever for success was also evident in Wertheimer's behavior when, a decade later, the State of Israel found itself with a security problem due to French President Charles de Gaulle's refusal to supply the Israeli Air Force with Mirage planes. Wertheimer undertook immediately and with considerable success the task of establishing a factory for the manufacture of blades of a complexity he had not yet known and which few others had in the entire world. This is the prominent motif throughout his work, and as Wertheimer himself puts it most explicitly:

> Most entrepreneurs want to prove something on their own initiative to someone—a father, a wife, friends from the officers' course [...]. Freud would certainly have made a fortune if he had opened a clinic in our industrial park. [...] My ability today is to use the lessons I have learned from my failures as a source of knowledge [78] (pp. 239, 352).

Wertheimer connected the concept of failure as a lever for success to his vision on the national level, and he saw the great failure of the Zionist movement as a phenomenon of decline, which he viewed as the key to the future prosperity of the state:

> The Jewish people took the two most important turns in its trajectory in the last hundred years due to severe physical crises. The pogroms of the end of the last century and the beginning of the present century were the first accelerator of national activity; The Holocaust of Hitler was the accelerator for the establishment of the State of Israel. The next turn in the next direction in Zionism must be made by the Jewish people because of the phenomenon of emigration from the country [78] (p. 367).

Hence, for Wertheimer, failure, which by its very nature is supposed to lead to destruction, brought, precisely according to RIBAZ's ethos, a process of survival and, furthermore, prosperity.

#### 6.2.2. Innovation

At the beginning of his book, Wertheimer describes his success in the format of the Tefen model for industrial parks as follows:

> On one hill in the Galilee, which was [...] a rocky hill [...], each worker in the industry produces and exports over $200,000 a year. [...] On the same hill, about 10 percent of Israel's industrial exports are produced, with a turnover of about one and a half billion dollars a year, similar to the entire Jerusalem area [...] while in the entire region that we are talking about, the Tefen region, lives less than one percent of Israel's population [78] (p. 235).

Wertheimer testifies that this model, which has given rise to hundreds of factories and companies, is not only a successful economic model but also:

> A new industrial-socio-cultural entity based on a complete and orderly worldview, which includes values such as education, art, culture, settlement, coexistence, industry, and export [78] (p. 235).

Wertheimer spoke of "an existential need to renew, to catch up, not to indulge in stagnation; to constantly search for the next tool and the next target" [78] (p. 79). According to his autobiography, even as a teenager who was thrown out of school and continued his career as an apprentice with professionals, he had this personal trait, which enabled him—at the same time—to finish his high school studies in the evening at the end of a ten-hour workday: "I continued to read eagerly every book that fell into my hands" [78] (p. 31). Hence, applying this approach to all his enterprises was only natural:

> Ever since I attended a special course in Safed in 1967 on behalf of Harvard Business School in Boston, I have had a weakness for this concentrated and short way of acquiring knowledge and experience and using case studies, especially in the fields of industrial management and coping in a free and competitive market around the world. Many of the ISCAR employees were later sent to these courses for training [78] (p. 135).

Perhaps the pinnacle of innovation, as expressed in Wertheimer's thinking, is that of the entrepreneur, in which he saw the crowning glory of endeavor and industry:

> An entrepreneur is like a creator in the spiritual realm: restless, constantly driven by the idea that permeates him and by his determination to fulfill it. It is quite possible that after succeeding, the entrepreneur will lose interest in his venture or get tired of it—and then hand it over to loyal hands and start initiating and establishing something new [78] (p. 239).

Wertheimer adopted this sense of entrepreneurship as a general concept of innovation that has its validity at the national level. During his short period as a Knesset Member, he spoke quite a bit about posing scientific and industrial challenges as part of a change in social priorities that would lead the State of Israel to a better future:

> Give me a thousand entrepreneurs, and the picture of the Israeli economy will change completely. A thousand smart entrepreneurs will build a thousand small factories in every corner of the country. And if they follow the right path, choose the right products, know the markets and their requirements, export their products wisely, and grow from year to year, we will reach economic independence [78] (p. 201).

#### 6.2.3. Education

Determined to replicate for others the process by which failure becomes success, Wertheimer set out in 1964 together with a friend from his Palmach days to locate youth in the Galilee who would come to an educational framework that would train them to work in industry. Together, they gathered boys who had dropped out of the education system and established a vocational school in Nahariya, the "Tzur" school, in an area located between Wertheimer's various factories:

> These boys from the Galilee became the first core of "Tzur" students. Many of them had not previously been accepted to other educational frameworks. These were children of immigrants, boys from families with many children and of low socioeconomic status. They came to us [. . .] from Nahariya, Acre, Maalot, and other towns north of Haifa and east of Nahariya [78] (p. 119).

About a decade and a half later, when Rafael Eitan was Chief of Staff of the IDF, Wertheimer tried to break through the restrictions and reach the entire young population. In

cooperation with the army, he conducted workshops for various groups of soldiers, officers, and units who would go to the industrial park to expose themselves to the connection between Zionist activity and productive industry. In the workshops, young people were exposed for the first time to the challenge of inventing and designing a product and building a business plan for its distribution [78] (p. 136). In 1992, Wertheimer finally established his "Kerem Yavneh"—the College of Entrepreneurship located in Gan Tefen:

> The goal was to train entrepreneurs with the motivation and ability to implement a business venture in the industry around a concept-topic or concrete product. The college identified, in the first stage, the people who had the same "spark" of initiative, and in the second stage, it provided the selected entrepreneurs with the knowledge necessary to fulfill their potential. The instructors and lecturers at the college provided them with knowledge and experience [78] (p. 138).

Education is not just a means but part of a worldview, and Wertheimer's own "Kerem Yavne" was part of the future of the nation. He expressed the way he believed in it in a letter published in *Maariv*. This was at the time of the completion of the big deal with Warren Buffett, which made Wertheimer the richest industrialist in the State of Israel:

> Education was and is my main mission: education for work, export, creativity, workers' pride, industrial achievement. Education for an independent, open society, not one fortified as a bunker. [Educational investment] in the next Israeli generation, in today's high school students, in soldiers, in young, discharged soldiers [. . .]. How do we make sure they do not leave Israel? [. . .] How do we create an uplifting climate of work, creation, export, and modern workers' consciousness? Only by education [. . .] thorough, comprehensive, both practical and theoretical. Only by an appropriate secondary education system, post-secondary, and even academic-industrial [78] (p. 332).

### *6.3. Comparison of the Two Case Studies*

Table 3 presents a succinct comparison, highlighting key aspects of the contributions made by RIBAZ and Wertheimer. Their efforts in advancing resilience, innovation, and education are particularly emphasized, indicating a resemblance between their ethos' ancient and contemporary forms.

**Table 3.** Comparison of RIBAZ's and Wertheimer's ethos.

| | RIBAZ | Wertheimer |
|---|---|---|
| Resilience | Establishing Yavneh amidst devastation as a future Jewish spiritual center. | Transforming failure into success throughout his life on both an individual and a collective scale. |
| Innovation | Amending new regulations that enabled the continuation of Jewish religious life. | Developing new Israeli industries and inventing and establishing socio-cultural industrial entities. |
| Education | Constructing a Yeshiva in Yavneh in the educational form of a beit midrash. | Founding the College of Entrepreneurship in Gan Tefen in conjunction with various other educational initiatives. |

## 7. Conclusions

The success of the Israeli economy, as indicated by GDP growth and various other metrics, contrasts sharply with the nation's challenging circumstances, including ongoing conflicts and significant national responsibilities, such as the large-scale absorption of Jewish immigrants over several decades, the majority of whom arrived without financial resources. Scholars have already examined this intriguing tension between economic

and technological prosperity and the constrained resources dedicated to fundamental existential needs. Referring to Israel, some have characterized the phenomenon in question as nothing short of a miracle and have endeavored to elucidate the mechanisms by which this miracle manifests.

Drawing upon established theories, this article has presented a model that synthesizes three key factors—resilience, innovation, and education—which, when considered together, may provide a partial explanation for the occurrence of Israel's success against all odds.

As previously established in this paper, resilience is defined as the capacity to endure setbacks while maintaining full functionality and even enhancing prior abilities. Innovation, as demonstrated in our literature review, is characterized by the ability to develop initiatives that foster societal advancement across various domains. We also referred to the scholarly literature that provides evidence of the capacity of high-quality education to empower individuals to fulfill their social responsibilities to their families, communities, and, ultimately, the nation. Drawing on the accumulated scholarly insights regarding these three elements—resilience, innovation, and education—this research proposes an integrated model in which these factors interact synergistically, with each influencing and propelling the others.

Two case studies were analyzed utilizing a qualitative research methodology grounded in discourse analysis to investigate the integrated model within the framework of the Israeli case. The considerable temporal gap between these cases, as well as their affiliation with distinct historical periods, may facilitate the derivation of generalizations that could be relevant to other contexts and time periods.

The first case, drawing on a historical example from approximately two thousand years ago, examined Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai (RIBAZ), who, in the face of the complete destruction of Jewish infrastructure at that time, exhibited resilience, developed a new religious practice that overcame the devastation of the Temple, and actively engaged in education for individuals of all ages. The second case, that of Stef Wertheimer, two millennia later, was analyzed through the method of autobiographical analysis. It is apparent that in this contemporary case, the secret to success was again the three intertwined factors of the triangular model: resilience, innovation, and education.

RIBAZ averted a leadership vacuum by reestablishing the Sanhedrin in Yavneh. This action bore practical significance in maintaining continuity in the court's administration of religious life. More crucially, it conveyed a vital message to the entire nation: life would persist even in the aftermath of the Temple's destruction. Importantly, the foundational components of resilience within the triangular model are widely acknowledged and are often identified as the RIBAZ ethos. Thus, this article has introduced a concept linking contemporary Israeli society to the profound cultural element of RIBAZ's ethos, which has endured across generations. Based on RIBAZ's ethos, and through the continuous cultivation of his perception, Jewish tradition has redefined an offensive ethos into a defensive one, shifting from a perspective that emphasized attacking the enemy to one that prioritizes the containment of its superiority. Although the Zionist tradition sought to reverse this shift by promoting an offensive ethos exemplified by the Masada myth [94,111,112], an analysis of the modern case of Stef Wertheimer underscores the lasting significance and evidenced effectiveness of the RIBAZ ethos embedded in the combination of resilience, innovation, and education.

This study is not without its limitations, which warrant careful consideration. First, the potential for generalization should be approached with caution. Our analysis focuses exclusively on two case studies separated by two thousand years, which limits the applicability of the findings to broader populations or diverse contexts. While this investigation yields profound insights into the specific cases examined, it may lack a comprehensive

breadth. Second, establishing causality presents inherent challenges, as this study is primarily qualitative and, by definition, descriptive and exploratory. Although we offer insights into both the ancient case of RIBAZ and the contemporary case of Wertheimer, the findings do not provide conclusive evidence of cause-and-effect relationships. Third, it is important for readers to recognize that the distinctive nature of case studies poses challenges for replication. Unlike quantitative research that can be conducted under similar conditions, the context-dependent nature of the selected case studies limits their replicability, which may impede the validation of the findings.

The socio-psychological aspects of the connection between innovation, education, and resilience are critical in understanding how individuals and communities adapt to challenges and pursue advancements. Innovation often emerges in environments that foster creative thinking and problem-solving, which are nurtured through educational frameworks that prioritize critical inquiry and collaboration. Educators play a pivotal role in instilling a growth mindset, encouraging students to view setbacks as opportunities for learning and development. This psychological resilience is essential for navigating the complexities of a rapidly changing world, as it empowers individuals to embrace change and leverage their educational experiences to innovate effectively. Furthermore, resilient individuals contribute to a culture of innovation within their communities, promoting collective problem-solving and adaptability. Thus, the interplay between innovation, education, and resilience not only enhances individual capabilities but also strengthens societal structures, enabling communities to thrive in the face of adversity.

Notwithstanding its limitations, this article successfully illustrates the substantial influence of a proposed model in social psychology. The proposed model represents a continuous interplay among resilience, innovation, and education. This integration is essential for both individual and societal advancement. When employed judiciously, it has the capacity to propel societal development. It is thus advisable to undertake analogous comparative studies in other contested societies that have nonetheless achieved success in specific areas. Such additional research is likely to yield valuable insights into the elements that foster societal progress despite prevailing challenges.

The significance of this article resides in its novel paradigm addressing a recurring issue within the research literature, specifically aimed at uncovering the factors contributing to the success of pioneering entrepreneurs and developers. The alternative perspective presented herein holds considerable importance not only for academic discourse in expanding knowledge but also as a vital component in the education of future citizens, entrepreneurs, and, most notably, educators. By embracing the resilience–innovation–education model, we can disseminate this success formula to other societies facing challenges and adversities, extending its application beyond Israel to a global context.

**Author Contributions:** Conceptualization—E.L., S.A. and S.L.Z.; methodology—E.L.; analysis—E.L., S.A. and S.L.Z.; writing—original draft preparation—E.L., S.A. and S.L.Z.; writing—review and editing—E.L. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

**Funding:** This research received no external funding.

**Institutional Review Board Statement:** Not applicable (studies not involving humans or animals).

**Informed Consent Statement:** Not applicable.

**Data Availability Statement:** The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author/s.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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