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FROM BEN-GURION TO BEGIN- PERSPECTIVES OF THE FINAL FRONTIER

Abstract

Although not a party to the decision to go into space, Israel's first prime-minister David Ben Gurion had a significant effect on its actual being, instrumentally and philosophically. Prime Minister Menachem Begin, who awarded green-light to Israel's space program, was not the driving force behind this project, nevertheless, he was a key figure in the political decision to embark on a national space program. Some argue that without Begin as Prime Minister and Minister of Defense, the ambitious ideas would not have been translated into an actual program. The paper outlines the national perspectives of these two Israeli leaders with regards to space. It draws on the similarities and differences of their approaches, visions and beliefs, which separately but similarly had a crucial contribution to Israel's space program. Ben Gurion and Begin saw themselves as the embodiment of the Jewish people. They were deeply affected by global events and concrete Jewish history to believe that Israel had to develop indigenous capability in order to defend itself in its homeland. This philosophy led each of them to adopt ambitious policies and actions that I return affected the space project. Based on archival research, and interviews this paper traces this piece of history which sheds light on Israel's rout to space.