
**“THERE WILL
BE NOT A SINGLE
KATYUSHA”**

The Lebanese population in the 1980s was made up of Shiites, Sunnis, Christian Maronites and Catholics, Druze, and more than three hundred thousand Palestinian refugees who had no civil rights. Although most Lebanese are Arabs and the predominant language is Arabic, many Lebanese citizens do not tie their personal fate with that of the Arab nation. Maronite Christians, for instance, argue that they are descendants of the Canaanites, Phoenicians, and other peoples who lived in Lebanon before the arrival of the Arabs in the seventh century. Ben Gurion believed that because of the composition of the Lebanese population an alliance could be formed with the country's Christians. Before the War of Independence he wrote the following in his diary: "The Lebanese Christians are in a similar state to ours, and it is important for both of us to be neighbors. . . . There is a need for a common political border with Lebanon. A land that has a large Christian community will barely be able to exist in a Muslim ocean."¹

Indeed, there are similarities between the histories of the Christians in Lebanon and the Jews. Fleeing Muslim persecution, Maronite Christians came to Mount Lebanon in the seventh century and aspired to form a country that would be a refuge for the Christians in the Middle East, just as Zionists saw Israel as a refuge for all Jews. But the historical analogy did not affect relations between Lebanon and Israel. Even though many Christians had contact with Zionists, they preferred to maintain normal relations with the Muslims and refrained from forming alliances with the Jews. Already during the War of Independence, Ben Gurion's hopes had been dashed that the Maronites would rebel