Many observers of Zionism and Israel emphasize the apparent saliency of ideology, if not unyielding messianism. The historical record is different. At crucial moments of crisis, Israel’s leadership demonstrated compromise and pragmatism. That record is nowhere better exemplified than in the life and work of David Ben-Gurion. The challenge for Israel may well be whether its present leadership can face the challenges of the present and future with the pragmatism that served it so well in the past.